

COMMON SENSE

Journal of Edinburgh Conference of Socialist Economists



- *CHIAPAS UPRISING IN MEXICO*
- *THE TIME OF TRIAL BY SPACE*
- *OPEN MARXISM*
- *ON THOMAS PAINE*
- *REVIEWS: ORIGINS OF CRISIS IN USSR
& RECOMPOSITION OF THE BRITISH STATE*

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SCIENCE *as* CULTURE

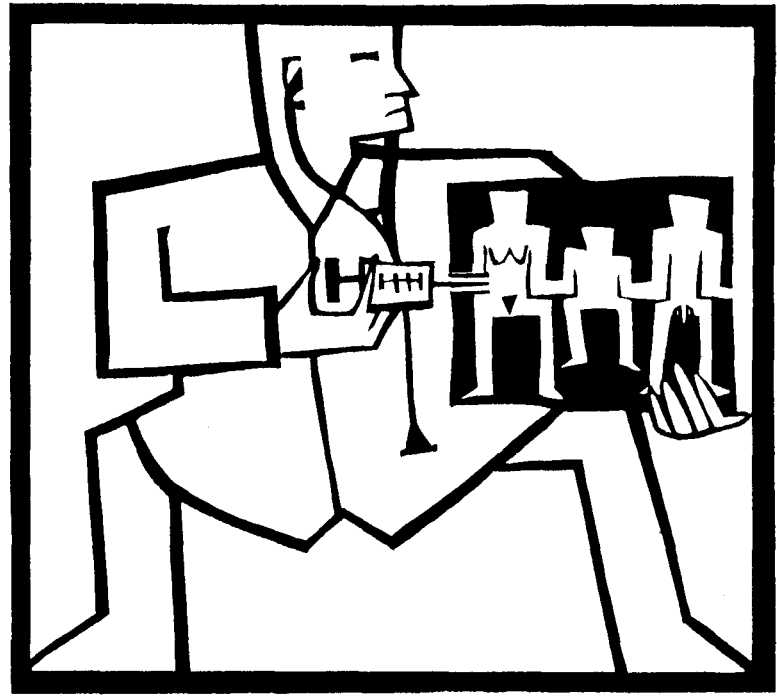
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The Chiapas Uprising and the Future of Class Struggle in the New World Order

Harry Cleaver

If you have come here to help me,
You are wasting your time . . .
But if you have come because
Your liberation is bound up with mine,
Then let us work together.

Aboriginal Woman

Is the armed uprising of the Zapatista National Liberation Army in the Mexican state of Chiapas just another protest by the wretched of the earth in a 500 year history of resistance? Is it just another foredoomed repetition of earlier, failed Leninist attempts to organize the peasantry to join the party and smash the state. Or, are there things about the uprising which are going to have profound effects and can teach us something about how to struggle in the present period? The answer, I think, is that the actions of Mayan Indians in Chiapas and the way they have circulated in Mexico, to North America and around the world do indeed have some vital lessons for all of us.

The Electronic Fabric of Struggle

The most striking thing about the sequence of events set in motion on January 1, 1994 has been the speed with which news of the struggle circulated and the rapidity of the mobilization of support which resulted. In the first instance, from the very first day the EZLN has been able to effectively publicize its actions through the faxing of its declarations, and subsequent communiques, directly to a wide variety of news media. In the second instance, the circulation of its actions and demands through the mass media -- effective because they were totally unexpected and on enough of a scale to constitute

"news"-- has been complemented and reinforced by a spontaneous and equally rapid diffusion of its demands and reports on its actions through computer communication networks which connect vast numbers of people interested in events there both inside and outside of Mexico.

This diffusion, which flashed into conferences and lists on networks such as Peacenet, the Internet and Usenet, was then collected, sorted, compiled and sometimes synthesized and rediffused by particularly interested parties in the nets. For example, the Latin American Data Base at New Mexico State University began to issue a regular compendium of Chiapas News. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy began to issue Chiapas Digest. The Mexican Rural Development discussion group of the Applied Anthropology Computer Network began to compile news and analysis and make it available through an easily accessible gopher site: Chiapas-Zapatista News. The Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas has duplicated those files at its own Lanic gopher site. Information about the existence and paths of access to these sources were passed from those in the know (Mexican specialists) to those who wanted to know (anyone interested in the uprising).

As EZLN documents and news reports circulated they generated and were quickly accompanied by discussion, additional information from those with an intimate knowledge of Chiapas (e.g., academics who had done research in the area, human rights advocates concerned with its long history of abuse) and rapidly multiplying analyses of the developing situation and its background. All of this electronically circulated information and analysis fed into more traditional means of circulating news of working class struggle: militant newspapers, magazines and radio stations.

The Anti-NAFTA Background

The rapidity of this diffusion has been due, to a considerable degree, not only to the technical capacity of such networks but to their political responsiveness and militancy. Basic to this rapid circulation of news and analysis of the uprising in Chiapas, has been the experience of the struggle against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Over the last few years the fight against NAFTA took the form of growing coalitions of grassroot groups in Canada, the United States and Mexico. In each country a broad coalition, such as the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, was constituted by knitting together several hundred groups opposed to the new trade pact. That knitting together was accomplished partly through joint discussions and actions and partly through the sharing of information and analysis about the meaning and implications of the agreement. Increasingly, computer communications became a basic political tool for the extremely rapid sharing among groups and individuals. The same processes of communication linked the coalitions in each country in a manner never before seen in the Western Hemisphere. The Anti-NAFTA campaign as a whole has sometimes been called an "unholy alliance" because alongside the grassroots networks which make up the bulk of the movement a variety of conservatives added their voices to the condemnation of NAFTA, including the leadership of the AFL-CIO and politicians like Pat Buchanan and Ross Perot. Such political manoeuvres to co-opt or recoup an autonomous movement are typical of American politics (whether in the U.S., Canada or Mexico) but these efforts have failed and the character and organization of the movement as a whole survives. Although the anti-NAFTA movement was unable to block ratification of the agreement, efforts to

monitor the impact of NAFTA in order to facilitate struggle against it are ongoing and the goal is clearly its cancellation.

A New Organizational Form

Beyond the particular issue of the agreement, the process of alliance building has created a new organizational form --a multiplicity of rhizomatically connected autonomous groups-- that is connecting all kinds of struggles throughout North America that have previously been disconnected and separate.

The responsiveness of this organizational form to the EZLN declaration of war derives from its composition. From the beginning, the building of alliances to oppose NAFTA involved not only the obviously concerned (U.S. workers threatened with losing their jobs as plants were relocated to Mexico, Mexicans concerned with the invasion of U.S. capital) but a wide variety of others who could see the indirect threats in this capitalist reorganization of trade relations, e.g., ecological activists, women's groups, human rights organizations and yes, organizations of indigenous groups throughout the continent. Through the years of struggle against NAFTA position papers circulated, studies were undertaken, discussion raged about the interconnections of the concerns of all these groups. The anti-NAFTA struggle proved to be both a catalyst and a vehicle for overcoming the separateness and isolation which had previously weakened all of its component groups.

So, when the Zapatista National Liberation Army marched into San Cristbal and the other towns of Chiapas not only did those already concerned with the struggles of indigenous peoples react quickly, but so did the much more extensive organizational connections of the anti-NAFTA struggles. Already in place, and tapped daily by a broad assortment of groups were the computer conferences and lists of the anti-NAFTA alliances. Therefore, for a great many of those who would subsequently mobilize in support of the EZLN the first information on their struggles came in the regular postings of the NAFTA Monitor on "trade.news" or "trade.strategy" either on Peacenet or through the Internet. Even if EZLN spokespeople had not explicitly damned NAFTA and timed their offensive to coincide with the first day of its operation in Mexico, the connections would have been made and understood throughout the anti-NAFTA network.

From Communicative to Physical Action

This same pre-existing fabric of connections helps explain why the incredibly rapid circulation of news and information was followed not only by analysis and written declarations of support, but by a wide variety of physical actions as well. What was surprising from the early days of January right through on into February, was not the widespread and heartfelt demonstrations of support by tiny groups of leftists with traditions of international solidarity work, but the much more important rapid mobilization of other groups who not only took to the the streets, e.g., the huge demonstrations in Mexico and smaller ones scattered through the U.S. and Canada (usually at Mexican embassies or consulates), but who immediately dispatched representatives to Chiapas to limit government repression by subjecting its actions to critical scrutiny, documenting its crimes and publically denouncing them. There can be no doubt that their actions -- and the subsequent rapid circulation of their findings and declarations-- contributed to blunting the states' military counter-offensive, helping (along with all the

other forms of protest in Mexico and without) force it to de-emphasize military repression, accept mediation and undertake negotiations with an armed enemy it quite clearly would have preferred to squash (if it could, which is by no means obvious).

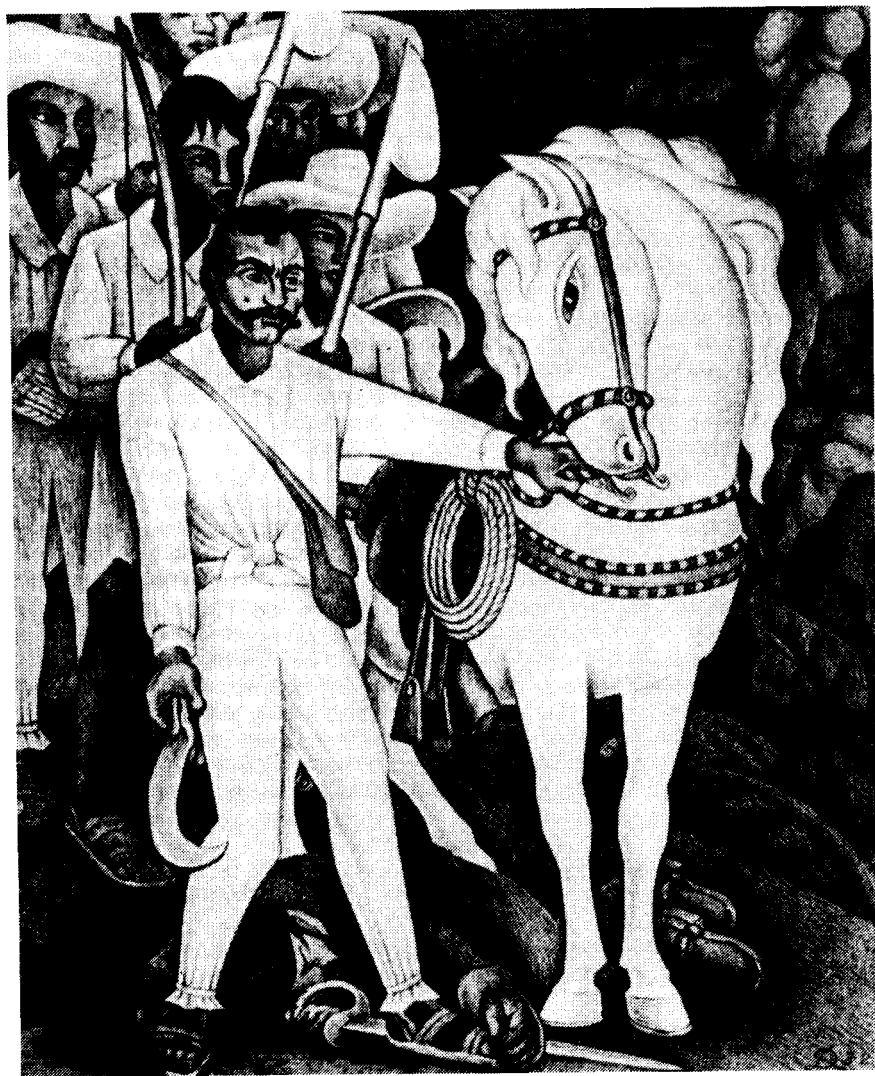
Autonomous Indigenous Movement

Particularly important in these actions were not only groups concerned with human rights, both religious (e.g. the Catholic Bishops of Chiapas, the Canadian Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America) and secular (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Mexican National Network of Civil Human Rights Organizations) --who have been increasing their capacity for such intervention in recent years-- but also the movement of indigenous peoples which has been organizing itself locally and on an increasingly international scale for some time now.

Within Mexico, over the last several years, Indian and peasant groups and communities have been developing networks of cooperation to fight for the things they need: things like schools, clean water, the return of their lands, freedom from state repression (police and army torture, jailings and murders), and so on. Given the fierce autonomy of the participating communities sometimes based on traditional ethnic culture and language-- these networks have been shaped like the electronic web described above: in a horizontal, non-hierarchical manner. Indeed, one term often used by the participants in preference to "networks" --whose term "net" evokes being caught-- is "hammock", the name of a widely used, suspended sleeping device made from loosely woven string that reforms itself according to the needs (i.e., body shapes) of each user. These networks that have been developed to interlink peasant and indigenous communities not only connect villages in the countryside but also reach into the cities where neighborhoods created by rural-urban migrants retain connections to their rural points of origin.

Many indigenous groups with clearly defined Indian culture and languages have not only organized themselves as such in self-defense but have reached out to each other across space to form regional and international alliances. This process has been going on in an accelerating fashion for several years, not only in Mexico but throughout much of Americas and beyond. Spurred into new efforts by the example of the Black Civil Rights Movement in North America as early as the mid 1960s (e.g., the rise of the American Indian Movement) and forced into action by state backed assaults on their land in South and Central America (e.g., the enclosure of the Amazon), indigenous peoples have been overcoming the spacial and political divisions which have isolated and weakened them through alliance and mutual aid.

In 1990 a First Continental Encounter of Indigenous Peoples was organized in Quito, Ecuador. Delegates from over 200 indigenous nations attended from throughout the hemisphere and launched a collaborative movement to achieve continental unity. To sustain the process a Continental Coordinating Commission of Indigenous Nations and Organizations (CONIC) was formed at a subsequent meeting in Panama in 1991.



"Zapata" by Diego Rviera

The central symbol and metaphor of the effort is the Mayan image of the Eagle and Condor with intertwined necks. Tradition has it that the Eagle represents the peoples of North America and the Condor those of the Southern continent. The unity sought is not the unity of the political party or trade union --solidified and perpetuated through a central controlling body-- but rather a unity of communication and mutual aid among autonomous nations and peoples.

A second Continental Encounter was organized in October of 1993 at Temoaya, Mexico. One of the hosting groups at that meeting was the Frente Independiente de Pueblos Indios (FIPI) and one of the members of FIPI was COLPUMALI from San Cristbal, Chiapas, one of the towns where the EZLN offensive began. COLPUMALI stands for Coordinadora de Organizaciones en Lucha del Pueblo Maya para su Liberacion, or Coordinating Committee of Organizations of the Mayan People in Struggle for Liberation. COLPUMALI is reportedly composed of 11 Mayan organizations from the three regions of Chiapas that have seen the most violent fighting since January 1st.

Faced with the violence of the Mexican military's counter-offensive, FIPI sent out a call to CONIC requesting that other Indians in the network come to Chiapas as observers to help constrain the state violence. CONIC responded immediately by organizing international delegations which travelled to the battle zones. When they arrived in Chiapas they were received by the local offices of the Consejo Estatal de Organizaciones Indigenas y Campesinas -- made up of 280 indigenous and peasant organizations throughout the state. This kind of international publicity and pressure forced Mexican President Salinas to meet with 42 representatives of the Consejo on January 25th, a meeting which bypassed official political channels of mediation and legitimized (much to the chagrin of the state) the autonomous political organization of the Indians. (Not only has the EZLN rejected government agencies but it has also explicitly rejected any mediation by representatives of any political parties. In a January 13th communique, the EZLN stated: mediators "must not belong to any political party. We don't want our struggle to be used by the various parties to obtain electoral benefits nor do we want the heart that is behind our struggle to be misinterpreted.") As a result of such international organization and action the positions of both the EZLN and the Indians of Chiapas more generally have been dramatically strengthened in their current struggles. It is that strength which has forced the government to the bargaining table.

The Roots of Organization: Self-valorization

These new organizational forms have not been created *ex nihilo* but have emerged on the material grounds of the self-activity of indigenous peoples. In a period in which affirmations of national and ethnic identity have acquired dramatically negative associations in Europe because of the murderous brutalities being perpetuated in ex-Yugoslavia and in parts of the former Soviet Union, the formation of regional and international regroupings of indigenous peoples in America working together in mutual support provides a striking contrast.

Strictly at the ideological level of national and ethnic identity, the situations in Central Europe and in America have superficial similarities --the affirmation of the right to self-determination within geographically defined spaces. The Bosnians, Serbs, Croates, Azeris, Georgians etc. all assert the right to their own land, languages and cultures, just like the indigenous groups in America.

But at a deeper level of the substance of the social relations embodied in those cultures, languages and relationships to the land there seem to be fundamental differences. Whatever their differences, the desires and goals of the contestants in Central Europe appear to be inextricable (within the present political configuration) from the inherited structures of capital accumulation understood as structures of social command organized through the subordination of life to endless work. The post-communist politicians who have whipped national and ethnic differences into antagonism, hatred and violence show no sign of any social project beyond enlarging their share of social command. That such command should today take the form of mass slaughter, humiliation (systematic rape) and the destruction of communities, while tomorrow it may take the form of factory work, office work and mindless ideology is quite consistent with the experience of the last few hundred years of capitalism. To date, there is no evidence of any fundamental reorientation of the socio-economic order of Central Europe beyond a political reorganization and an enlarged use of market mechanisms to achieve accumulation. Certainly, fundamental questioning does exist among Central European peoples; there are individuals and groups with deeper visions struggling against the current holocaust. Unfortunately, their power is so limited as to make their voices largely inaudible in a region dominated by the sounds of war and hatred.

Among the Indian nations and peoples of the Americas, on the other hand, the affirmation of national identity, of cultural uniqueness and of linguistic and political autonomy is rooted in not only an extensive critique of the various forms of Western Culture and capitalist organization which were imposed on them through conquest, colonialism and genocide, but also in the affirmation of a wide variety of renewed and reinvented practices that include both social relations and the relationship between human communities and the rest of nature. The struggles of the Indians in Chiapas are not only against their exploitation, against the disrespect with which they have traditionally been treated, against the brutality of their repression by private thugs, police and the Mexican military, against the theft of their lands and its resources, but they are also aimed at expanding the space, time and resources available to them for the elaboration of their own ways of being, their own cultures, religions, and so on. They are not fighting for a bigger piece of the pie, but for real autonomy from a social system which they understand very well has always enslaved them and sought to destroy their ways of life, a positive autonomy within which they can self-valorize, i.e., invent and develop their own ways of being. (This is not a process free of conflicts. See the discussion below about indigenous women's struggles.)

Such self-valorization has often been represented by outside observers, and sometimes by those involved directly, in terms of the preservation of tradition, of traditional ways and practices. As a result, indigenous peoples have often been seen as fundamentally reactionary, backward looking folks with static mentalities, conservative survivals of pre-capitalist times. The actual processes of social life within such indigenous communities, however, is much more complex and dynamic than is commonly recognized. From orthodox Marxists who have seen only the "idiocy" of rural life and debated how to convert Indians and peasants into good proletarians to the mainstream political scientists and economists of the post-World War II era who saw only "irrationality" and debated how to modernize rural areas and make agriculture more efficient, it is not an exaggeration to say that urban intellectuals from all points on the political spectrum have misunderstood -- unintentionally or because it served their purposes-- the lives and desires of peasant and indigenous peoples.

Yet, in the last 20 years or so peasants and Indians have succeeded in making themselves heard above the titting of ideologs and planners. This has happened partly because of their own self-activity, the self-organization described above, and partly because of fundamental shifts in the overall class composition which has made many much more willing to listen. Not only have the struggles of all kinds of "minorities" led to greater interaction and cooperation among them, but the qualitative critique of capitalism has led all kinds of people to seek out alternative sources of meaning that they may want to use in their own processes of self-regeneration and self-valorization. On the one hand, indigenous peoples themselves have organized around issues with a wider audience, forming such groups as the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) -- one of those groups which has protested state repression in Chiapas. On the other hand, a seemingly endless assortment of individuals and groups from New Age romantics to militant ecologists have drawn on Indian ideas and practices to reshape their lives.

Nowhere has this been more obvious than in the ecological movement where many have explored indigenous attitudes and practices for inspiration in restructuring human relationships with nature. As a result it should come as no surprise to many that at the center of the conflicts in Chiapas today is land, just as in the days of the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata from which the EZLN took its name. Not only were the Indians of Chiapas mostly excluded from the land reforms that began in 1934 under the presidency of Lazaro Cardenas, but in the years since, local landlords have repeatedly used both legal and illegal means to grab more and more land away from the Indians. The process of original accumulation long ago became permanent and the processes of enclosure have been an endless torture for Indians in Chiapas.

Moreover, the explicit link between the EZLN declaration of war and NAFTA derived, in part, from the latter's contribution to enclosure of Indian lands. Using NAFTA (and an International Monetary Fund "structural adjustment program") as an excuse, the Mexican government changed Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution that protected communal land from enclosure and by so doing made legal its selling and its concentration in the hands of local agribusiness and multinational corporations. Already the Banrural, the government's rural development bank, is pushing forward with massive foreclosures against indebted farmers. The sale of foreclosed land to foreign agribusiness will help generate the foreign exchange to continue paying Mexico's foreign debt. This is what the Indians have seen and this is what the EZLN has pointed out to the world. In late January, inspired by the EZLN's successes, thousands of peasants blocked entrances to a dozen banks in Tapachula, a Chiapan town near the Guatemala border. Their demands? The cancelation of debts and the halting of land foreclosures.

This on-going history of the expropriation of indigenous and peasant lands (which is accelerating the expulsion of people from the countryside into already horribly over crowded and polluted cities) is why the EZLN has labelled NAFTA a "death sentence" to the indigenous population. A death sentence not only because individuals will be killed (many will be murdered and starved as they fight or retreat) but because ways of life are being killed. This is the history of capitalism which American Indians have suffered and resisted for 500 years. The valorization of capital has always meant the devaluation and destruction of non-capitalist ways of life, both those which preceeded it and those which have sprung up seeking to go beyond it. It has come to be fairly widely recognized that among the vast extinctions caused by the ravages of capitalism have been not only animal and plant species but thousands of human cultures. The Indians in Chiapas, and those supporting them throughout the hemisphere are fighting to preserve a human diversity

which is as valuable to all of us as it is to them.

The Refusal of Development

It is the concreteness of the diverse projects of self-valorization which founds the Indians' struggle for autonomy, not only from the ideological and political fabric of domination in Mexico, but also from the broader capitalist processes of accumulation-as-imposition-of-work --which, in the South, goes by the name of "development". In the North we come across the use of this term but rarely, usually in regard to plans to restructure the relationships between poor communities and the larger economy, e.g., community development, urban development. But in the South "development" has been not only the ideology of capitalist domination and of socialist promises but also a strategy of choice ever since the defeat of overt colonialism.

Since the beginning of the EZLN offensive, considerable commentary from both the state and a variety of independent writers have used the language of "two nations" to talk about the situation in Chiapas a term made commonplace by the Conservative British writer and statesman Benjamin Disraeli over a century ago. The two nations, of course, are that Mexico whose development will be spurred by NAFTA and "el otro Mexico" which is backward and left behind. The ultimate solution proposed, as always, is "development". Not surprisingly, within less than a month of the opening of the EZLN offensive, and following the defeat of the military counter-attack, the Mexican government announced that it was creating a "National Commission for Integral Development and Social Justice for Indigenous People" and promised more development aid to the area to expand those investments already made through its previous development project called Solidaridad. On January 27th it was also announced that these regional development efforts (and others in similar "backward" states) would be buttressed by World Bank loans of some \$400 million --loans which will increase the already staggering international debt which has been at the heart of class struggle in Mexico since the early 1980s.

The EZLN's published responses to these proposals have articulated the long standing attitudes of many of Mexico's peasant and indigenous populations --they have denounced these development plans as just another step in their cultural assimilation and economic annihilation. They point out that there have never been "two nations"; Chiapans have already suffered 500 hundred years of the capitalist imposition of work --they have simply been held at the bottom of the wage/income hierarchy. Significantly, in their initial declaration of war, the EZLN wrote "We use black and red in our uniform as our symbol of our working people on strike." (Not surprisingly, the states' negotiator Camacho Solis has called not only for an end to hostilities but for a "return to work".)

The Indians also know that further "development" does not mean the return of their land or of their autonomy. It means a continuation of their expulsion where they are reduced to impoverished wage earners or to a role well known to Indians in the U.S.: attractions within the tourist industry --a favorite "development project" for areas with "primitive" peoples. The government, one EZLN spokesperson wrote, sees Indians "as nothing more than anthropological objects, touristic curiosities, or part of a 'Jurassic Park.'" Of government development programs? The people of Chiapas know them well: "The program to improve the conditions of poverty, this small stain of social democracy which the Mexican state throws about and which with Salinas de Gortari carries the name Pronasol [a so-called "social development fund"] is a joke which costs tears of blood to

those who live under the rain and sun." In a statement issued on January 31st, the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee -- General Command (CCRI-CG) of the EZLN pointed out that "The federal government is lying when it talks about us. . . . There is no greater rupture in communities than the contemptible death that federal economic programs offer us."

But the free trade pact will open U.S. markets to Mexican exports, Salinas and Clinton have promised; Mexico will develop faster. This too the EZLN understands all too well. Chiapas is already an export oriented economy; it always has been: "the southeast continues to export primary materials, just as they did 500 years ago, and continues to export capitalism's principal production: death and misery." Is this just rhetoric? The EZLN knows the facts in excruciating detail: "The state's natural wealth doesn't only leave by way of roads. Chiapas loses blood through many veins: through oil and gas ducts, electric lines, train cars, bank accounts, trucks and vans, boats and planes, through clandestine paths, gaps and forest trails. This land continues paying tribute to the imperialists: petroleum, electric energy, cattle, money, coffee, banana, honey, corn, cacao, tobacco, sugar, soy, melon, sorghum, mamey, mango, tamarind, avocado and Chiapan blood flows as a result of the thousand some teeth sunk into the throat of southeastern Mexico." Do Clinton and Salinas really think they can sell export oriented development to Indians who are already all too painfully familiar with the draining away of the wealth of their land?

NAFTA also opens Mexico to U.S. exports and from the Indians' point of view the most threatening of these is corn, the basic food crop of the indigenous population and an important source of cash income. Although their rejection of cheap food imports has not received the same media coverage as that of rice farmers in Japan or French farmers in Europe (against the GATT), the story is the same: a recognition that a flood of cheap food produced with highly capital (including chemical) intensive methods in the U.S. will drive down prices and drive them from the land. Already they are suffering from low prices for coffee, another cash crop, due to a withdrawal of government support from that production, so their antagonism springs not from speculation but from bitter experience. (The economic impact from low coffee prices has been deepened by the disruption of the current harvest caused by the states' military counteroffensive. While the government has apparently promised some US\$11 million in emergency aid, the Banrural has also said that it would not change its plans to foreclose on indebted farmers.)

The Indians also know that development means ecological destruction. The following passage from an EZLN document is sadly reminiscent of Karl Marx's earliest economic writings on new laws in Germany that made it a crime for peasants to gather wood in the forest. "They take the petroleum and gas away and leave the stamp of capitalism as change: ecological destruction, agricultural scraps, hyperinflation, alcoholism, prostitution and poverty. The beast is not satisfied and extends its tentacles to the Lacandon Forest: eight petroleum deposits are under exploration. . . . The trees fall and dynamite explodes on land where peasants are not allowed to cut down trees to cultivate the land. Every tree that is cut down costs them a fine of 10 minimum wages and a jail sentence. The poor cannot cut down trees while the petroleum beast, every day more in foreign hands, can. The peasants cuts them to survive, the beast to plunder. . . . In spite of the trend of ecological awareness, the extraction of wood continues in Chiapas' forests. Between 1981 and 1989 2,44,777 meters cubed of precious woods, conifers and tropical tree types, were taken out of Chiapas. . . . In 1988 wood exports brought a revenue of 23,900,000,000 pesos, 6,000% more than in 1980. . . . Capitalism is in debt for everything that it takes

away."

The EZLN program would restore the land to its peoples. It would abolish the debts of farmers and demand repayment of the debt owed by those who have exploited the people and their land. The Indians of Chiapas would forget about "development" and begin the reconstruction of their world. They would not do it in one way, through a plan drawn up by a central committee; they would do it many ways, according to their diverse understandings, worked out and coordinated through cooperative efforts.

The Autonomous Demands of Women within the Indian Movement

This refusal of development has grown to include the rejection not only of government sponsored, top-down development plans and projects, but also the reinforcement and strengthening of old injustices in Chiapan societies and culture. Alongside the struggle against land concentration, the exploitation of wage labor and political repression, there has also grown up a critique of racism (discrimination of latinos/mestizos against Indians) and of gender roles and the consignment of women to the bottom of society. The patriarchal character of Mexican society is well known; that of the Indian communities less recognized but often no less real. The struggle for the "survival" of Indian culture has also involved the struggle for its transformation --from within. In this case, as usual, those who have suffered most have been at the forefront of the fight for change.

In traditional Indian society, when the good land was theirs, before they were pushed into poor forest lands often far away from good water sources, life was not so hard. Their agricultural practices were often land intensive rather than labor intensive and they were able to reap an abundant and diverse harvest. But as their land was stolen from them and it became harder and harder to survive on fewer and fewer resources; life became increasingly difficult, especially for women. Some of their traditional tasks, such as food preparation and cleaning, have always involved a lot of work, but the situation worsened. For example, it is generally Indian women who must be up at the crack of dawn to grind corn for the day's bread: tortillas. It is generally Indian women who must haul water for cooking, drinking, cleaning and bathing. It is generally Indian women who cut firewood (now illegal) and haul it home for cooking. It is generally Indian women who do the cooking, and take care of the children, and of the sick. But hard work makes strong women --if it doesn't kill them-- and such women have challenged their traditional roles.

This challenge found support in the EZLN and acceptance from its leaders. Not only were women encouraged to join the EZLN but they have been, according to all accounts, treated as equals to the point that many women have officer status and men and women are expected to carry the burdens of work and fighting equally. When Indian women organized in dozens of communities to produce a code of women's rights, the EZLN leadership composed of Mayan leaders --the CCRI-CG-- adopted the code unanimously. The "Women's Law" included the rights of all women, "regardless of race, creed, color or political affiliation", "to participate in the struggle in any way that their desire and capacity determine", the right to "work and receive a just salary", the right to "decide the number of children they have and care for", the right "to participate in the matters of the community and have charge if they are freely and democratically elected", the right (along with children) "to Primary Attention in their health and nutrition", the right "to choose their partner and are not obliged to enter into marriage", the right "to be free of violence from both relatives and strangers. Rape and attempted rape will be severely punished", the

right to "occupy positions of leadership in the organization [EZLN] and hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces", and finally "all the rights and obligations which revolutionary laws and regulations give". According to one report, when one of the male committee members quipped "The good part is that my wife doesn't understand Spanish", an EZLN officer told him: "You've screwed yourself, because we're going to translate it into all the [Mayan] languages." Clearly, the passage of this Bill of Rights reflects both the problems and ongoing struggles of women within the diverse Indian cultures of Chiapas. What is unusual and exciting about these developments is how those struggles are not being marginalized or subordinated to "class interests" but are being accepted as integral parts of the revolutionary project.

Conclusion?

I began this brief discussion with a question about whether the revolt in Chiapas is just one more local revolt, or something more. I think it is much more. Once we understand its sources, motivations and methods, I think we can learn a great deal. It does not offer a formula to be imitated; its new organizational forms are not a substitute for old formulas --Leninist or social democratic. It provides something different: an inspiring example of how a workable solution to the post-socialist problem of revolutionary organization and struggle can be sought. The struggles of the Indians in Chiapas, like the anti-NAFTA movement which laid the groundwork for their circulation, demonstrate how organization can proceed locally, regionally and internationally through a diversity of forms which can be effective precisely to the degree that they weave a fabric of cooperation to achieve the (often quite different) concrete material projects of the participants. We have known for some time that a particular organization can only be substituted for the processes of organization at great peril. It is a lesson we have learned the hard way in struggle for, and then against, trade unions, social democratic and revolutionary parties.

What we see today is the emergence of just such a fabric of cooperation among the most diverse kinds of people, linking sectors of the working class throughout the international wage and income hierarchy. That fabric has not appeared suddenly, out of the blue; it has been woven. And in its weaving many threads have broken, and been retied, or new knots have been designed to replace those which could not hold. It is not easy to construct a hammock, to use the Mexican word, but we see that it is possible.

In many ways the revolt in Chiapas is an old story, 500 years old. But it is also a very new, and exciting story. The EZLN offensive has taken place within and been supported by an international movement of indigenous peoples. That movement itself has established many connections with other kinds of people, other sectors of the working class, from blue collar factory workers fearing job loss, to white collar intellect workers using the most advanced technological means of communication and organization available. Ever since the rise of capitalism imposed working class status on most of the world's people, they have struggled. In those struggles isolation has meant weakness and defeat, connection has meant strength. Connection comes with mutual recognition and the understanding that struggles can be complementary and mutually reinforcing. As long as workers in the U.S. and Canada saw Mexicans as alien others, parts of the unknown Third World, capital could play the latter off against the former. But struggles throughout the continent have forced a degree of integration that such blindness is becoming easier and easier to overcome. Part of the work of the anti-NAFTA movement involved the assessment of dangers and the discussion of alternative approaches in the light of diverse

situations and needs. Part of the work involved circulating the results of that research and those consultations to a wider audience. The result has been the beginning of a transformation in the consciousness and understanding of the North American working class and a consequent growth in the ability to cooperate in struggle.

Today, the uprising in Chiapas results in continent-wide mobilization. But this is not the only such mobilization. Mexican factories which could once repress militant workers with impunity are now subject to observation and sanction by workers from the U.S. and Canada who are increasingly intervening to constrain repression just as indigenous militants and human rights activists have intervened to help the EZLN. Multinational corporations who could pay off Mexican officials and dump toxic wastes into communities along the border are today subjected to increased scrutiny and sanction by workers and ecologists. When the EZLN demands, as it has, that Chiapan workers be paid wages equal to those North of the border, it is a demand heard, understood and supported by increasing numbers of those Northern workers whose wages are being driven downward by "competition" from the South. When the Indian communities of Chiapas fight for their land, it is increasingly understood by those elsewhere not as reactionary but as the equivalent of the struggles of waged workers for more money, less work and more opportunity to develop alternatives to capitalism.

Today, the social equivalent of an earthquake triggered by the EZLN on January 1st is rumbling through Mexican society. Every day brings reports of people moving beyond amazement and concern to action. Peasants and Indians completely independent of the EZLN are taking up its battle cries and occupying municipal government buildings, blocading banks and demanding their lands and their rights. Students and workers are being inspired not just to "support the campesinos" but to launch their own strikes against domination and exploitation throughout the social factory. How far these aftershocks will reach and how much they will change the world will depend not just on the EZLN or on the Indians of Chiapas, but on the rest of us.

The Time of Trial by Space?

Critical reflections on Henri Lefebvre's epoch of space.

Derek Kerr

"Abstract space, which is the tool of domination, asphyxiates whatever is conceived within it and then strives to emerge"

"'Change life!' 'Change society!' These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space....So long as everyday life remains in thrall to abstract space...so long must the project of 'changing life' remain no more than a political rallying-cry...."

(Lefebvre 1991, pp 370, 59)

The respatialisation of critical social theory

The break up of Eastern Europe, the changing form of the European Union and the general deconstruction of a comparatively stable post-war capitalism have provoked such fragmentation, dissociation and recombination of places, spaces and events at all spatial levels that questions of space and nature have been placed firmly on the political agenda. Numerous protest movements have also demonstrated the way in which "spatial knowledge" is used for the enforcement and contestation of power relations. For example, such knowledge came to the fore in the 1989 People's Movement in Beijing through their strategic use of the Square of Heavenly Peace. Given the cultural significance of this place, "using, occupying, and conquering [it]...became the primary means to negotiate and eventually struggle for the exercise of legitimate power in China." (Pieke 1993 p167) Also the struggles, for example, over common land (Reed 1991), over the shanty houses of Britain (Szczelkun 1993) and over the destruction of the environment are essentially struggles over the spatiality of social existence. All these changes and struggles have resulted in a growing interest in the concept and reality of space and a desire to understand and explain the restructuring of geographical space. While this has been largely pursued through the descriptive empiricism or subjective idealism characteristic of the traditional academic division of labour, there has also been, as Soja (1989) puts it, a growing

"reassertion of space in critical social theory" and an exploration of the intersection of geography and the Marxist tradition.

Harvey, for example, has done much to advance our understanding of the processes of urban and regional restructuring over the last two decades. Significant in this respect has been his attempts to elaborate upon the ways in which these processes manifest themselves in a spatially uneven way in and through the continual production and destruction of the built environment. This emphasis reflects Harvey's belief that "historical materialism has to be upgraded to historical-geographical materialism" and this is to be achieved through "the integration of the production of space and spatial configurations as an active element within the core of Marxian theorising"(1989 pp 6,4). Smith also seeks the integration of nature and space into the Marxian theory of capitalist development and advances the proposition "that uneven development is the hallmark of the geography of capitalism,...the systematic geographical expression of the contradictions inherent in the very constitution and structure of capital." Like Harvey, he draws upon Marx's analysis of capitalism. "For", declares Smith, "when one draws out the spatial implications and dimensions of Marx's analysis, especially in *Capital*, the basis of uneven development theory is then ready at hand." (Smith 1990 pp xii, xvi). Soja disagrees with this interpretation of "Marx's analysis" but shares a common desire. By building on the work of Foucault, Giddens, Berger, Breman, Jameson and, above all, Henri Lefebvre, Soja seeks "to spatialise the historical narrative, to attach to *duree* an enduring critical human geography....to make room for the insights of an interpretative human geography, a spatial hermeneutic." (Soja 1989 pp1-2) This desire, by Soja and others, to redress the balance away from historicism and towards a new spatialised discourse of social change reflects a growing belief that contemporary society is moving into "the epoch of space" (Foucault 1986 p22) in which the innocent spatiality of social life hides consequences for us. As Soja, for example, puts it, "today...it may be space more than time that hides consequences from us, the making of geography' more than the 'making of history' that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world." (1989 p 1) In this way, postmodernism becomes a periodising concept in which geography increasingly matters as a vantage point of critical insight, one which, in Jameson's terms, "raise(s) spatial issues as a fundamental organising concern." (1984 p 89)

The purpose of this review article, however, is not to address this contemporary debate but to return to one of its most important founders - *Henri Lefebvre*. Lefebvre was perhaps the most influential figure shaping the course and character of French Marxist theory and philosophy from the early 1930's to at least the late 1950's. Furthermore, as Soja rightly points out, he became, after the 1950's, the leading spatial theoretician in Western Marxism and the most forceful advocate for the reassertion of space in critical social theory.(1989 p 47) But knowledge of his contribution to this debate is still limited partly because few of his works have been translated into English. More significant, however, is the fact that most Anglephone commentators on Lefebvre have focused on his involvement in existential Marxism and his critique of Althusser and usually pass over his interest in space and spatiality with a cursory nod or even blank incomprehension. (Gregory (1994) p355)

According to Soja (1989 p47), Hegelian influences permeate Lefebvre's early Marxism and this led him to retain a strand of 'objective idealism' within the materialist dialectic. He also took a stance, throughout his works, against dogmatic reductionism in favour of a more open ended dialectic which resulted in, what Soja refers to as, a "flexible, open, and cautiously eclectic Marxism able to grow and adapt without predetermined truncation."

(1989 p 48) Through his engagement with existential phenomenology and Althusserian structuralism, Lefebvre developed what became a continuing theme within his later work, namely to recontextualise Marxism through a materialist interpretation of spatiality and to uncover the role of space in social reproduction and in the continuing survival of capitalism. This theme was stimulated by Lefebvre's involvement in the students movements which culminated in the extraordinary 'movement' of May 1968. It was during this period that Lefebvre became attached to the idea that social space in general and the urban conditions of daily life in particular (as compared to a narrow focus on workplace politics) were central in the evolution of revolutionary sentiments and politics. Seven books were written on these themes between 1968 and 1974, with *The Production of Space* as the culminating work in this sequence. For many, the events of May 68 in France engendered a retreat from, even a repudiation of, historical materialism (eg. Jean Francois Lyotard). Lefebvre however retained his commitment to Marxism, a particular Hegelian version of it which, for Lefebvre, had to be modified to suite modern times. This modification was forged by bringing Marx and Nietzsche into a explosive confrontation with Hegel and was focused upon respatialising critical theory. (Lefebvre 1991, pp21-4) Lefebvre's purpose was "to prise open the sutures between 'immobilised space' and 'realised Reason' by bringing the production of space into human history and disclosing the social processes through which 'abstract space' has been historically superimposed over 'lived space'." (Gregory 1994, p354)

Lefebvre's work is complex but he appears, following innumerable crises of capitalism and the events of 1968, to be attempting to uncover how capitalism has survived, how it might be undermined and what form of society will emerge. For Lefebvre, the survival of capitalism is due to (a) capital's ability to reproduce its relations of production and (b) its ability to achieve this by occupying and producing space. In other words, "capitalism has found itself able to attenuate (if not resolve) its internal contradictions for a century, and consequently, in the hundred years since the writing of *Capital*, it has succeeded in achieving 'growth'. We cannot calculate at what price, but we do know the means: *by occupying space, by producing a space.*" (Lefebvre 1976, pp 20, 21) Lefebvre's aim is, therefore, to elucidate the specificity of the capitalist mode of production of space as this is the space that preserves capitalism yet is also the place in which the final episodes of the capitalist debacle are being played out. He attempts to achieve this aim through modifying Marxism and by then sketching out "the long history of space." (Lefebvre 1991, p116) This history is what Foucault calls a specific "history of the present". As such it embraces a specific sequence of spatialities in the form of a "strategic hypothesis" (rather than the recitation of a chronology) pregnant with political implications which "straddles the breach between science and utopia, reality and ideality." (Lefebvre 1991, p60) In this way Lefebvre hoped to disclose tendencies embedded in the present whose potential realisation was absent from our anticipations of the future. "Today", declares Lefebvre, "everything that derives from history and from historical time must undergo a test.... Why? Because nothing and no one can avoid *trial by space* - an ordeal which is the modern world's answer to the judgement of God or the classical conception of fate." (Lefebvre 1991, p416) Both Marxism and capitalism are on trial; the case for the prosecution must now be presented and challenged.

How Capitalism has survived and did Marx get it wrong?

In his analysis of the survival of capitalism Lefebvre brings to the fore the importance of

the reproduction of the relations of production which he feels "resolves a contradiction in Marx's thought which, to him, could not have appeared as a contradiction." (Lefebvre 1976 p20) According to Lefebvre, Marx's view was that as the productive forces develop they would be constrained by the relations of production and that the revolution was going to leap over these constraints. However capitalism has developed yet the revolution has not come. "So what is essential?" asks Lefebvre, "it is *the reproduction of the social relations*, i.e. the ability of capitalism to maintain itself during and beyond its critical moments." (Lefebvre 1976 p70). For Lefebvre this is an insight which is not adequately developed by Marx, but he feels that this is understandable because its significance only became apparent towards the end of Marx's life. What Lefebvre claims is that during the nineteenth century, the reproduction of the means of production (i.e. labour power, instruments of labour) was the critical moment of capitalism's survival and consequently it was this aspect that was the focus of Marx's work. (Lefebvre 1976 p 43) However, towards the end of Marx's life, the problem concerning the reproduction of the relations of production came to the fore. "The final aspect of reproduction, the reproduction of social relations, does not begin to overtake the reproduction of the means of production until towards the end of the nineteenth century, when it begins to pose new problems." (Lefebvre 1976 p9-10) Consequently it was only in 1863 that Marx came up with the concept of 'total reproduction' as in the "unpublished chapter" of *Capital*. It was then, according to Lefebvre, that Marx realised that "the problem can therefore no longer be a simple one of the reproduction of the means of production, but the *reproduction of the relations of production*." (Lefebvre 1976 p46) For Lefebvre, this insight "has been pushed aside and quite literally *repressed*" by Marxists since Marx and as a result, the question of capitalism's survival could not be adequately addressed, at least not until post 1968. "The central question began to appear on the horizon following the second world war, but with such amazing slowness that it did not actually emerge from the mists until after May 1968. No less than **three** reconstructions of capitalist social relations within half a century were needed before these reconstructions could become the 'object' of reflection, of critical consciousness." (Lefebvre 1976 p 50)

But this belated insight raised another issue that Marx did not address, namely, the issue of space. For Lefebvre, the reproduction of the relations of production implies the ability to reproduce "the land-labour-capital relation, the constitutive trinity of capitalist society." (1976 p8) This, given the 'land' element, therefore implies the ability to occupy and produce an appropriate space. "When the forces of production make a leap forward, but capitalist relations of production remain in tact, the production of space itself replaces - or, rather, is superimposed upon - the production of things in space....space as a whole has become the place where the reproduction of the relations of production is located." (Lefebvre 1976 pp 62,85) This marks a departure from Marx's problematic, which for Lefebvre means industrialisation, rendering it unsuitable for understanding contemporary capitalism: "the problematic of space...has displaced the problematic of industrialisation. It has not, however, destroyed that earlier set of problems: the social relationships that obtained previously still obtain; the new problem is precisely the problem of their reproduction." (Lefebvre 1991 p 89) More significant, however, is the fact that, according to Lefebvre, Marx's *Capital* was an exposition of the capital-labour relation rather than the constitutive trinity of capitalist society. "Marx's initial intention in *Capital* was to analyse and lay bare the capitalist mode of production and bourgeois society in terms of a binary (and dialectical) model that opposed capital to labour....This polarity may make it possible to grasp the conflictual development involved in a formal manner, and so to articulate it intelligibly, but", argues Lefebvre, "it presupposes the disappearance from the picture of a *third* cluster of factors: namely the land, the landowning class, ground rent and

agriculture as such....In the context of this schema the space of social practice is imperceptible; time has but a very small part to play; and the schema itself is located in an abstract mental space....Marx quickly became aware - as he was bound to do - of resistance to this reductive schema" argues Lefebvre. "Such resistance came from several sides, and in the first place from the very reality under consideration - namely, the Earth. On a world scale, landed property showed no signs of disappearing, nor did the political importance of landowners....Nor, consequently, did ground rent suddenly abandon the field to profits and wages." (p 323-4)

However what this reading of *Capital* appears to miss is the fact that Marx was fully aware of the barriers posed to capital by landed property but that this reality could only be understood, concretely, through a prior understanding of the form and contradictory tendencies inherent in the capital-labour relation. By starting with the capital relation Marx did not presuppose the disappearance of landed property, the third factor, but was concerned with rendering the real concrete intelligible. Only in this way is it possible to uncover the contradictory ways in which the *capital relation* attempts to transform, incorporate and subordinate landed property to its sway as a necessary precondition to its very existence. Lefebvre, however, appears to suggest that Marx changed his ideas, between the beginning and end of *Capital*, to account for the empirical reality of the 'trinity' and that it was the eventual awareness of this reality that account for "the peculiarities of a 'plan' that is exceedingly hard to construct - that of *Capital*." (1991 p324) Thus, as Lefebvre puts it, at the close of *Capital* the "issue of land and its ownership re-emerges, and this in a most emphatic way....Lastly, and most significantly, Marx now proposed his 'trinity formula', according to which there were three, not two, elements in the capitalist mode of production and in bourgeois society" (1991 p324-5) This marks a *change* for Lefebvre, as he claims that Marx now realised that his *Capital* should have been based on these three factors and not just two: "And *three*, I repeat, rather than *two*: the earlier binary opposition..., had been abandoned." (1991 p325) Therefore, rather than seeing the 'trinity' as a further concretisation of the capital relation and not just a reality counterposed to a faulty mental schema based on a binary opposition, Lefebvre suggests that Marx abandoned the capital relation in favour of the 'trinity' and that it was this late conversion that partly explains "why Marx failed to bring his work to a conclusion." (ibid.) But if this was the case, then Marx would be no different from Ricardo and the vulgar economy that was to follow.

In this way, then, Lefebvre argues that the point of departure for understanding modern society is the capitalist "trinity", rather than the unmediated capital relation, thereby moving away from Marx in accentuating the *significance* of landed property and in the process *obscuring* the fundamental difference between capitalism and feudalism. Furthermore, Lefebvre suggests that the 'problematic' of land and space is now completely different from that which existed when Marx was writing *Capital* therefore necessitating even more modifications to Marx's "schema". "Each of the concepts of Marxism may be taken up once more, and carried to a higher level, *without any significant moment of the theory as a whole being lost*. On the other hand, if they are considered in the setting of Marx's exposition, these concepts and their theoretical articulation no longer have an object. The renewal of Marx's concepts is best effected by taking full account of space." (1991 p343, my emphasis) In fact, Lefebvre does not favour the Marx of *Capital* as it "envisages a strict formal structure, but one which impoverishes because of its reductionism." (1991 p102). Instead Lefebvre favours the Marx of the *Grundrisse* as here we find "another plan and a more fruitful one", one that is more open ended and hence can accommodate the concepts suitable for modern times. (ibid.) While it is true that Marx's

the production of space. As Lefebvre rightly points out, philosophy, on the one hand, tends to concern itself with "mental" space, a space which is formulated in the head of the thinker before being projected onto reality and which thereby reduces that concrete reality to the abstract. The sciences, on the other hand, do start through a confrontation with reality, but waver between description and dissection. Things *in space* or pieces of space (devoid of content) are described in accordance with a scientific division of labour which artificially divides space into truncated fragments thereby "setting up mental barriers and practico-social frontiers" that frustrates a "science of space". (1991 pp 89, 7) Furthermore, the science of space has affinities with logic, with theories of assemblies, systems of coherence and as such is unable to grasp the contradictions of social space. (1976 p18) A "science of space" is therefore complicit in reproducing the status quo as it fails to uncover the social relationships, including the class relation, that are latent in space. Lefebvre therefore seeks not a science of space but a knowledge (theory) of the production of space as this grasps the genesis and form of space as a whole and has "affinities with dialectical thought, which grasps the contradictions of space." (1976 p18) Such a knowledge requires a "unitary theory", one which can bridge the gap between the space of the philosopher and the space of those who confront and constitute the spatiality of every day life. What is required are concepts that recognise their socio-historical determination and which reach out beyond themselves. It is for this reason that Lefebvre draws upon the "concrete universals" (1991 p72) of *production* and the *act of producing* as these concepts "extend beyond philosophy" and, at the same time, constitute the basis for transcending the particularity of the "scientific" specialists (1991 p15). It is only through the concept of the *production of space* that a knowledge of space becomes possible, one which can reveal the "*truth of space*" as opposed to the "*true space*" of traditional philosophy and its epistemological offshoots. The latter, "true space", *emerges* from the thinking head and has the dual function of reducing "real" space to the abstract and of inducing minimal differences (1991 p398). The "truth of space", on the other hand, is generated by "analysis-followed-by-exposition" and ties space to social practice and to concepts derivative of practice (1991 pp9, 398-9). In this way, the reality of social space reveals itself, renders itself intelligible to the thinking head. "Social space calls for a theory of production, and it is this theory", argues Lefebvre, "that confirms its truth." (1991 p399)

"A new concept, that of the production of space, appears at the start; it must 'operate' or 'work' in such a way as to shed light on processes from which it cannot separate itself because it is a product of them. Our task, therefore, is to employ this concept by giving it free rein without for all that according it, after the fashion of the Hegelians, a life and strength of its own *qua* concept - without, in other words, according an autonomous reality to knowledge. Ultimately, once it has illuminated and thereby validated its own coming-into-being, the production of space (as theoretical concept and practical reality in indissoluble conjunction) will become clear, and our demonstration will be over: we shall have arrived at a truth 'in itself and for itself, complete and yet relative.'" (1991 pp66-7)

In developing the "notions and terminology" involved, Lefebvre gives an interesting elaboration of the concept of production in terms of the rationality immanent to that concept and its content (ie. activity). (1991 pp68-73) As he points out, all productive activity is defined "less by invariable or constant factors than by the incessant to-and-fro between temporality (succession, concatenation) and spatiality (simultaneity, synchronicity)". (1991 p71) The rationality of space is thus not the outcome of a quality

or property of human action in general. On the contrary, it is itself the origin and source of the rationality of action. (1991 p72) This concept of production finds its ground in the *body* which Lefebvre claims has been betrayed, abandoned and denied by western philosophy. (1991 p407, see also the work of Foucault) For Lefebvre, the body serves as point of departure and destination and constitutes the foundation upon which the space of particular society is built. (1991 pp194, 188) "Bodies - deployments of energy - produce space and produce themselves, along with their motions, according to the laws of [discrimination in] space....This thesis is so persuasive", declares Lefebvre, "that there seems to be little reason for not extending its application - with all due precautions - to social space. This would give us the concept of a specific space produced by forces (i.e. productive forces) deployed within a (social and determined/determining) spatial practice." (1991 p171) By defining spatiality as the mode of existence and ever present outcome of productive activity, Lefebvre concludes that space is not just a relation but is "inherent to property relationships (especially the ownership of the earth, of the land) and also closely bound up with the forces of production (which impose a form on that earth or land)." (1991 p85) Though a *product* to be used, to be consumed, it is also a *means of production*; networks of exchange and flows of raw materials and energy fashion space and are determined by it." (ibid.) The implications of this interpretation of social space, is that it cannot be treated as a thing among other things, a product among other products. Rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity. Furthermore, this conception of social space means that there are an unlimited multiplicity, or uncountable set, of social spaces, generically referred to as "social space", which "*interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another.*"(1991 p86-7)

The implications of Lefebvre's conception is that each mode of production produces and expresses itself through its own space. However, because Lefebvre has abandoned the Marx of *Capital* the relation between the "mode of production" and "its" space is never specified. In fact Lefebvre appears to hold to a structuralist conception and therefore fears the reductionism of the spatial to the "economic". "Each mode of production has its space; but the characteristics of space do not amount to the general characteristics of the mode of production;...The reduction of the aesthetic, of the social and the mental to the economic was a disastrous error." (1991 p382) Instead, Lefebvre attempts to develop a *method* which is able to apprehend social space as such, in its genesis and its form, with its own specific time or times (the rhythm of daily life), and its particular centres and, what Lefebvre calls, polycentrism (apora, temple, stadium, etc.) At the basis of this method is a recognition that social space in *all* epochs contains and expresses two interrelated sets of relations, the relations of production and reproduction, which gives rise to what Lefebvre terms their *spatial practice*. The advent of capitalism, however, complicates matters. In capitalist society, social space, according to Lefebvre, contains a "tripartite ordering" which assigns (more or less) an appropriate place to (1) biological reproduction, (2) the reproduction of labour power, and (3) the reproduction of the social relations of production. While inextricably bound up with one another, social space must discriminate between the three in order to "localise" them. (1991 p32) To make matters more complicated, social space in all epochs also expresses specific *representations* of the interaction between the social relations of production and reproduction which serve to maintain these social relations in a state of coexistence and cohesion. These representations are largely symbolic and, in terms of the relations of reproduction, are divided into frontal, public, overt - and hence coded - relations on the one hand, and on the other, covert, clandestine and repressed relations which may or may not be coded.

The above differentiation gives rise to a "conceptual triad" for analysing all epochs, one which is central to Lefebvre's method: "the perceived-conceived-lived triad (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces) [which] loses all force if it is treated as an abstract 'model'". (1991 p40)

Lefebvre outlines this conceptual triad in abstraction as follows (1991 pp33-9):

1 *Spatial practice*: The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. Spatial practice embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion.¹

2 *Representations of space*: This is conceptualised space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers - all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived. This is the dominant space in any society and is tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations. Particularly important is the spatial ordering of towns and cities, as well as the individual buildings.

3 *Representational spaces*: This is space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'. This is the dominated - and hence passively experienced - space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Representational spaces need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness. Redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they have their source in history - in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to the people. Representational spaces thus may be said to tend towards more or less coherent systems of symbols and signs, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art.

For Lefebvre, then, spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces, contribute in different ways to the production of space according to their qualities and attributes, according to the society or mode of production in question and according to the historical period. All that is left is for Lefebvre to trace out the "long history of space", one which is "appropriated through and expressed in terms of this conceptual triad." (1991 p116)

The long history of space

As Gregory points out, two overlapping narratives run through Lefebvre's history of space. The first is a positive account that charts the horizon of "urban society" in which the project of self-realisation is supposed to be accomplished. The second is a more

¹ In capitalist society, for example, spatial practice embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure). This association is a paradoxical one, because it includes the most extreme separation between the places it links together. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society's relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of *competence* and a specific level of *performance*.

negative account that traces a "de-corporealisation" of space in the West, but one which also contains the potential for the space of difference. (1994 p368) The second is the most significant and interesting and is the one which will be outlined. It constitutes a history of the present, and has origins which "lie very far away from us" and a "goal and a significance that are still far distant." (Lefebvre 1991 p409) This historicism is based on a "philosophy" which embraces the "real" and the "possible" in order to open up horizons that are concealed by conventional categories of thought. Those horizons are approached from the past, through a sequence of spaces that culminate in the hegemony of "abstract" space, the space of capitalism. While this sequence is related to a parallel succession of modes of production, as discussed above, Lefebvre rejects what he would see as a one to one reductionism. The schema, while it contains many insights, is therefore largely descriptive and he says little about the struggles involved in moving from one space to the next (and thus bears something in common with the Althusserianism that he rightly rejects!). Within this history, Lefebvre does however make an important contribution by attempting to establish a connection between the history of the body and that of space. What he sketches is a shift "from the space of the body to the body-in-space" a shift which "facilitates the spiriting-away or scotomization of the body." (1991 p201)

In the 'beginning', then, space in "primitive" societies is dominated by analogical space. The physical form of the dwelling and the village itself typically represent and reproduces a divine body that is itself a projection, often in distorted form, of the human body. In the "ancient" world, the built form of the political city inscribes a cosmological space whose elements and configuration are supposed to express the architecture of the cosmos. This would also entail the sacralizing of space around a central point at which the creative force of the gods is focused. These two forms of representations of space display properties of what Lefebvre refers to more generally as *absolute space*. Absolute space being by definition religious as well as political, implies the existence of religious institutions which subject it to the two major mechanisms of identification and imitation. (1991 p236) As guardian of civic unity absolute space condenses, harbours all diffuse forces at play. But as Lefebvre points out, absolute space is complex, being both imaginary and real. "There is thus a sense in which the existence of absolute space is purely mental, and hence 'imaginary'. In another sense, however, it also has social existence...because in the temple, in the city, in monuments and palaces, the imaginary is transformed into the real." (1991 p251) Yet absolute space cannot be reduced to these places, in and of themselves, as it is located nowhere. It has no place because it embraces *all* places. "In short, absolute (religious and political) space is made up of sacred or cursed locations....Everything in the societies under consideration was situated, perceived and interpreted in terms of such places. Hence absolute space cannot be understood in terms of a collection of sites and signs; to view it in thus is to misapprehend it in the most fundamental way. Rather, it is indeed a space, at once indistinguishably mental and social, which **comprehends** the entire existence of the group concerned [e.g. the city state] and it must be so understood. In a space of this kind there is no 'environment', nor even, properly speaking, any 'site' distinct from the overall texture." (1991 p240)

During the decline of the Roman Empire and until about the 10th century, tombs, shrines and relics were central to Christianity. Lefebvre refers to this ritualisation and solemnisation of death as the consecration of a "cryptic space" which was the subterranean locus of absolute space, of the "world". But out of this emerged a space which was relativised and historical, a space of secular life 'freed' from politico-religious space, the space of signs of death and non-body. (1991 p256). Not that absolute space disappeared in the process; rather it survived as the bedrock of this *historical space* and formed the

basis of representational spaces (religious, magical and political symbolism). (1991 p48) This change was seen in the urban landscape which turned the space which preceded it, the space of the 'world', upon its head. "In contrast to the maleficent utopia of the subterranean 'world', it proclaimed a benevolent and luminous utopia where knowledge would be independent, and instead of serving an oppressive power would contribute to the strengthening of an authority grounded in reason." (1991 p256) The great cathedrals, in particular, marked this inversion of space and concentrated the diffuse meaning of space onto the medieval town. They "decrypt" space, marking the emancipation of society from the crypt and from cryptic space. It was from this inversion of space that historical space emerged, the space of exchange and communications, the space of accumulation, in which the urban form and the state played a central role. "The historical mediation between medieval (or feudal) space and the capitalist space which was to result from accumulation was located in urban space - the space of those 'urban systems' which established themselves during the transition." (1991 p268) Space and time were urbanised - in other words, the time and space of commodities and merchants gained the ascendancy, with their measures, accounts, contracts and contractors. (1991 p277-8) Urban space took over the reigns of power from the feudal lords and was fated to become the theatre of a compromise between the declining feudal system, the commercial bourgeoisie, oligarchies, and communities of craftsmen. It further became "*abstraction in action*" - active abstraction - vis-a-vis the space of nature, generality as opposed to singularities, and the universal principle *in statu nascendi*, integrating specificities even as it uncovered them. (1991 p269) Later, in a second spiral of spatial abstraction, the state took over: the towns and their burghers lost not only control of space, but also their domination over the forces of production, as these forces broke through all previous limits marking the shift from commercial to industrial capital. The "economic sphere" burst out of its urban context, that context being itself overturned in the process, although the town survived as a centre, as the locus of a variety of compromises. The transitional period (16th C), then, marked the rise of the town as a unified entity and as a "*subject*" along with a "*code of space*" (e.g. the town was given a written form, described graphically: plans proliferated). "[The town] no longer ascribed a metaphysical character to itself as *imago mundi*, centre and epitome of the Cosmos. Instead it assumed its own identity and began to represent itself geographically...." (1991 p278) By the time it had thus asserted itself, however, its eclipse by the state was already imminent. (1991 pp269, 271).²

This overturning of the town by the "economic sphere" and its eclipse by the state as capitalism emerges gives rise to what Lefebvre refers to as *abstract space*. During this period a change occurred in the "representations of space"; symbolic space was overshadowed by logical space with the rise of linear perspective. The "worlding" of perspectival space was closely bound up with the growth of commercial and banking capital in Renaissance Italy. This turned the visual field into a commodity: that space was rendered a "property" of the spectator who appropriated it. (Gregory 1994 p390) Perspective was not just a visual ideology but also what Lefebvre refers to as a code of space (and what Foucault would have called a technology of power). The same geometrical techniques were used in architecture, cartography and art. While this code of space organised the built form and forms of representation it also erased the living body itself, for, as Gregory puts it, "*this is a space dominated by the eye and the gaze.*" (1994 p392) This process of *decorporealisation* was completed with the production of the

² Katznelson takes a lead from Lefebvre but is critical of his account of the role of the town in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The criticism is that Lefebvre's account is too sweeping and misses the subtlety of the towns role. Perhaps this is true, but it seems to miss the point that Lefebvre was advancing a strategic hypothesis rather than a detailed history of the transition.

abstract space of 20th century capitalism. "By the time this process is complete, space has no social existence independently of an intense, aggressive and repressive visualisation....The rise of the visual realm entails a series of substitutions and displacements by means of which it overwhelms the whole body and usurps its role." (Lefebvre 1991 p286) The abstract space of capitalism, then, is a "phallic-visual-geometric space" (Lefebvre 1991 p289), one which is a medium of *exchange* tending to absorb *use*. This in no way excludes its political use, rather the opposite. It is in this space that the "world of commodities" is deployed along with its logic (calculation, planning, programming) and its world-wide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state. Within this space, the town - once the forcing-house of accumulation and the centre of historical space - has disintegrated. (Lefebvre 1991 pp53, 307) "The outcome has been an authoritarian and brutal spatial practice, whether Haussmann's or the later, codified versions of the Bauhaus or Le Corbusier...." (1991 p308)

Given the importance of the state in the formation of abstract space, Lefebvre outlines his concept of the state, one which is both interesting and at odds with much of the contemporary debate. The state, for Lefebvre, is a *differentiated unity of violence and territory*. "Sovereignty implies 'space', and what is more it implies a space against which violence, whether latent or overt, is directed - a space established and constituted by violence." (1991 p280) The development of accumulation through violence broke the old spatial forms giving rise to the nation state, based on a circumscribed territory, that triumphed over both the city state and the imperial state. The violence inherent in the state's constitution and reproduction originated in nature, as much with respect to the sources mobilised as with respect to the stakes - namely land and wealth. At the same time it aggressed all of nature, imposing laws upon it and carving it up administratively according to criterion quite alien to the initial characteristics of either the land or its inhabitants. (ibid) What is interesting and extremely useful is Lefebvre's emphasis on the spatiality of the state. "Without the concept of space and of its production the framework of power (whether as reality or concept) simply cannot achieve concreteness." (1991 p281) The space is that of a centralised power which sets itself above other power and eliminates it. This insight is worth emphasising. The relationship *between* institutions other than the state itself (eg. university, tax authority, judiciary) and the effectiveness of those institutions has no need of the mediation of the concept of space to achieve self-representation, for the space in which they function is defined by statutes which fall *within* the political space of the state. "By contrast the state framework, and the state *as* framework, cannot be conceived of without reference to the *instrumental* space that they make use of. Indeed each new form of the state, each new form of political power, introduces its own particular way of partitioning space, its own particular administrative classification of discourses about space and about things and people in space." (1991 p281)

According to Lefebvre, the abstract space of capitalism, as expressed in and through the state, has a particular form and nature and "it" is also the space through which the capitalist 'trinity' is rendered concrete. "In this way the capitalist 'trinity' is established in space - that trinity of land-capital-labour which cannot remain abstract and which is assembled only within an equally tri-faceted institutional space: a space that is first of all *global*, and maintained as such - the space of the sovereignty, where constraints are implemented, and hence a fetishised space, reductive of differences; a space, secondly, that is *fragmented*, separating, disjunctive, a space that locates specificities, places or localities, both in order to control them and in order to make them negotiable; and a space, finally, that is *hierarchical*, ranging from the lowliest places to the noblest, from the tabooed to

the sovereign." (1991 p282) Abstract space is thus the mode of existence of, what to Lefebvre are, two processes. First is the intensified commodification of space (e.g. geometric grid of property rights) and *through* space. (Lefebvre 1991 p341; 1979 p289) Second there is the heightened bureaucratisation of space (administrative spaces) and *through* space. (1979 p288) As a consequence, "capitalist and neocapitalist space is a space of quantification and growing homogeneity, a merchandised space where all the elements are exchangeable and thus interchangeable; a police space in which the state tolerates no resistance and no obstacles. Economic space and political space thus converge toward the elimination of all differences." (Lefebvre 1979 p293) The only differences it tolerates are those that result from the need to occupy specific spaces for the production and consumption of commodities as use-values. (This is an aspect that Smith 1990 develops) "This is a space, therefore, that is *homogeneous yet at the same time broken up into fragments.*" (Lefebvre 1991 p342) The homogeneity of abstract space comes therefore largely from the state and as such "abstract space is a tool of power." (ibid. p390-1) Furthermore, according to Lefebvre, abstract space is that space from which previous histories have been removed and in which "lived" time, our time, is no longer intelligible. "With the advent of modernity time has vanished from space. It is recorded solely on measuring instruments....Lived time loses its form and its social interest - with the exception, that is, of time spent working. Economic space subordinates time to itself; political space expels it as threatening and dangerous (to power)." (1991 p95) Interestingly, this reality of capitalism is something Lefebvre criticised Marx for focusing on and it also suggests that a "trial by time" is just as important as the "trial by space."

Lefebvre makes an important point about the built environment in capitalism. Capitalist society no longer totalizes its elements, nor seeks to achieve such a total integration through monuments. Instead, it strives to distil its essence into buildings. Buildings displace monuments and as "the homogeneous matrix of capitalist space, successfully combine the object of control by power with the object of commercial exchange." (1991 p227) As Lefebvre puts it, "the building effects a brutal condensation of social relationships" and "embraces, and in so doing reduces, the whole paradigm of space...." (ibid) Such condensation of society's attributes is easily discernible in the style of administrative buildings from the nineteenth century on, in schools, railway stations, town halls, etc. Housing (which replaces the qualitative concept of residence) also assumes an important place by becoming the space that guarantees reproductivity, be it biological, social or political. (1991 p232) But as Lefebvre argues, "displacement is every bit as important here as condensation; witness the predominance of 'amenities', which are a mechanism for the localization and 'punctualisation' of activities, including leisure pursuits, sports and games." These are thus concentrated in specially equipped 'spaces' which are as clearly demarcated as factories in the world of work. "They supply 'syntagmatic' links between activities within social space as such - that is, within a space which is determined economically by capital, dominated socially by the bourgeoisie, and ruled politically by the state." (1991 p227) These insights on the monument/building differentiation are extremely important, but Lefebvre does not explicitly relate this differentiation to the changing form of social labour. In other words, one way of understanding the importance of buildings, one not advanced by Lefebvre, is in terms of the commodification of labour power. Given the formal separation of society and land through the mediation of modern landed property and the dissolution of the pre capitalist hierarchical order based on personal dependency, then buildings become the primary and inescapable social form in and through which this necessary and unique commodity is organised, controlled and reproduced. Buildings enforce and symbolise a system of

domination that is inherent in the commodification of labour power and the resulting commodity form of social reproduction. Buildings are thus central to abstract space and as such are themselves reduced to abstract spaces (e.g. office blocks designed to offer homogeneous space).

By emphasising space and the capitalist "trinity", however, Lefebvre takes a different tack and tends to over-emphasise the role of the built environment in the survival of capitalism. For him, 'real property' and the 'construction industry', and to be sure also architecture, now play a leading role; they are no longer a secondary form of circulation, no longer a backward branch of industry that they once were. (1991 p335) "Capitalism has taken possession of the land, and *mobilised* it to the point where this sector is fast becoming *central*. Why? Because it is a new sector - and hence less beset by the obstacles, surfeits, and miscellaneous problems that slow down old industries." (ibid) What Lefebvre means by this is not clear, however, for construction is just as old or new as any other branch of production and in fact tends to confront more obstacles than other sectors. In any event, Lefebvre distinguishes the construction/development sector from other branches of production which he refers to as the 'classical' sectors and suggests that the former is replacing the latter. "Capital has rushed into the production of space in preference to the classical forms of production - in preference to the production of the means of production (machinery) and the of consumer goods. This process accelerates whenever 'classical' sectors show the slightest sign of flagging." (ibid) And while noting that the state may have to regulate this sector from time to time, Lefebvre argues that this "does not mean the elimination of the production of space as a sector which presupposes the existence of other forms of circulation but which nevertheless tends to *displace the central activities* of corporate capitalism. For it is space, and *space alone*, that makes possible the deployment of the (limited but real) organizational capacity of this type of capitalism." (p. 335-6, my emphasis) However, while the construction/ development sector's role in the production of space is obviously important, it is not clear why or how this sector should become the leading sector within capitalism in general and in the production of space in particular. It is *all* sectors of society that "produce" space and require developed space in which to function and it is only because of this fact that a specific division of labour has evolved to produce and circulate developed space. The construction/development sector is involved in restructuring urban areas in terms of the 'logic of capital' and it does over-produce and become the object of speculation like any other sector of the economy. But the sector can only continue to operate and acquire exchange value as long as it provides use values and it is not this sector that defines the usefulness of its commodities. Rather, the use value of developed space is defined by capital in terms of its attempts to expand and maintain itself through its continual struggle to incorporate, contain and (re)form social labour.

Contradictions of space to differential space

We now return to Lefebvre central thesis: that the triumph and potential downfall of capitalism hinges on the problematic of space for modern society faces a "*trial by space*" in which space becomes "a matter of life and death." (1991 pp416, 417). "If space as a whole has become the place where the reproduction of the relations of production is located, it has also become the terrain of vast confrontation which creates its centre now here, now there and which, therefore, cannot be either localised or diffused." In fact, we are faced with "*the explosion of spaces*. Neither capitalism nor the state can maintain the chaotic, contradictory space they have produced." The bourgeoisie and the capitalist system "find themselves unable to reduce practice (the practico-sensory realm, the body,

social-spatial practice) to their abstract space and hence new, spatial, contradictions arise and make themselves felt." (Lefebvre 1976 p85; 1979 p290; 1991 p63) Here Lefebvre brings to the fore the new contradictions of 20th century capitalism (e.g. centre/periphery, global/local), but he tends to open up a dualism by referring to these as contradictions of space. "Socio-political contradictions are realized spatially....;it is only *in* space that such conflicts come effectively onto play and in so doing they become contradictions of space." (Lefebvre 1991 p365) Thus, according to Lefebvre, there are "contradictions of space" which are different from and becoming more important than the "contradictions *in* space" which, for him, are "the classical contradictions engendered by history and by historical time." But, argues Lefebvre, "this must emphatically not be taken as implying that contradictions and conflicts *in* space (deriving from time) have disappeared. They are still present...in particular, with the *class conflicts* which flow from them. The contradictions of space, however, envelop historical contradictions, carry them to a higher level, and amplify them in the process of reproducing them." (1991 p333-4; emphasis on class, mine) There is a sense, then, in which Lefebvre appears to accept the abstractions of capitalist society. Class struggle and history are reduced to abstract time and exist *in* the container of abstract space, while this space has contradictions of its own which can then externally "envelop historical contradictions". But by separating out contradictions of space from those *in* space and by reducing class struggle and history to the latter, it is not clear what constitutes the contradictions of space. The result is that Lefebvre tends to reproduce the dualism of space and society that marks much of the past and present debate on (social) space.³ If social relations are inherently spatial and temporal then there can be no separation in/of dualism.

However, contrary to the implications of Lefebvre's particular reading, it is suggested that Marx was *not* limiting his analysis to time, but to uncovering the contradictory constitution of the capital relation (see Bonefeld 1993) as it attempts to transform and express itself through the spatial and temporal modalities of existence. It is the capital relation that continually attempts to subordinate the whole (space) of society to the abstract logic of linear time, the ticking of the factory clock. This abstract time is not the concrete history of capitalism, but rather is the dominant and contradictory tendency through which that history expresses itself, one which continually attempts to reduce the internally related and qualitative nature of *both* space and time to the quantitative metric of value. As such, the form, nature and very existence of "capitalist space" expresses and adheres in and through the contradictory and antagonistic presence of *labour in capital*. This is the dialectic, not one of time nor of space but of the presence of the power of labour within capital, a negative dialectic, a dialectic of negation with no certain synthesis. There can therefore be *no* distinction, real or analytic, between contradictions *in* space and of space as spatial contradictions have no existence apart from this contradictory form of social labour. The history of capitalism *is*, therefore, none other than the struggle over and through space as capital attempts to transform the entire *spatial existence* of society into a machine for the production and *quantitative expansion* of surplus value in terms of the metric of socially necessary labour time. Marx's *Capital* was concerned with laying bear the "differentia specifica" of the capital relation as a living social, hence temporal *and* spatial, form. Considerations of space, therefore, and the geography of capitalism, can only be understood in terms of these contradictory tendencies inherent in the reality of the capital relation, not by mentally abstracting space out and reimposing it on reality as an extra variable. In fact Lefebvre displays a tension in his work for he appears to recognise this in a way that undermines his distinction between contradictions of and *in* space. "Space has no power 'in itself', nor does space as such determine spatial

³ See Smith (1990) chapter 3 on this and for an alternative interpretation of Lefebvre see Soja (1989).

contradictions. These are contradictions of society - contradictions between one thing and another within society... - that simply emerge in space, at the level of space, and so engender the contradictions of space." (1991 p358) If the social is inherently spatial and can only exist as such, then the former cannot be juxtaposed to the latter; social contradictions do not exist in space but express themselves spatially.

Having moved from the contradictory nature of abstract space to contradictions of space, Lefebvre suggests that the latter contains the potential space for the emergence of a new order, that of *differential space*. "The 'right to difference' is a formal designation for something that may be achieved through practical action, through effective struggle - namely concrete differences....This is a 'right' whose only justification lies in its content; it is thus diametrically opposed to the right of property, which is given validity by its logical and legal form as the basic code of relationships under the capitalist mode of production." (Lefebvre 1991 p396-7) But given the emphasis placed on spatiality by Lefebvre, space "itself" appears to become the instrument in moving towards, as well as the goal of, this new order: "space is becoming the principal stake of goal-directed actions and struggles" and as such marks "a transitional period between the mode of production of things in space and mode of production of space." (1991 p410) Space, then, for Lefebvre, is not simply a medium, "its role is less and less neutral, more and more active, both as instrument and goal, as means and as end. Confining it to so narrow a category as that of 'medium' is consequently woefully inadequate." (1991 p411) It is not clear what Lefebvre means here, although he does refer to the possibility that the contradictions of (abstract) space can give rise to "counter projects" and "counter spaces", ones which counter quantity with quality, exchange value with use value, and give rise to differential space. Here, Lefebvre makes an important distinction between *induced* differences - differences internal to the whole and brought into being by that whole as a necessary moment in its reproduction - and *produced* differences which escape the systems rule. He also points out that the latter can in turn become *reduced* differences by being forced back into the system through constraint and violence. In this respect, given Lefebvre's conception of the state as "organiser of space", the state becomes the principal means through which emerging differential space is confined to the "induced" or "reduced" variety. But as space is central to achieving the new order for Lefebvre, the state must become the object of struggle, its "ability to intervene in space must be turned back against it, by grass-roots opposition." (1991 p383) What form this "opposition" takes, nor how space becomes an instrument and goal of this opposition, is not elaborated on by Lefebvre. Earlier in his work, Lefebvre does however refer to the subversive power of the body (1991 p89) and to the importance of class struggle. "Indeed," argues Lefebvre, "it is that struggle alone which prevents abstract space from taking over the whole planet and papering over all differences. Only the class struggle has the capacity to differentiate, to generate differences which are not intrinsic to economic growth *qua* strategy, 'logic' or 'system'...." (1991 p55) But this capacity is limited because the class struggle does not appear to be internal to the capital relation but enters from the outside, for, as Lefebvre puts it, "the class struggle is waged under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie." (1991 p59). Also, as noted above, class struggle and history refer to the contradictions in space, whereas it is the contradictions of space that are important for Lefebvre.

Conclusion

To conclude, then, Lefebvre provides many insights and brings to the fore the forgotten, yet ever present, spatiality of social existence and the ways in which that spatiality is produced, lived and experienced and how it can in turn serve to maintain social relations in

a state of coexistence and cohesion. Particularly important is his elaboration of abstract space, the form and function of the "building" and the processes of urbanisation, and the ways in which space and violence constitutes the essence and modus operandi of the state. In this respect Lefebvre captures well one aspect of the nature of *space* which marks our *time*, abstract space. However, it is argued here, that such insights can be developed in a more theoretically and politically fruitful way by not separating contradictions of space from contradictions *in* space and elevating the former over the latter. This is important because some of the tendencies in Lefebvre's approach reproduce the society-space dualism which means that his account of the spatiality of capitalism is essentially static and becomes an object to be struggled for. While capital may attempt to continually achieve the "annihilation of space by time" (Marx 1973 p 539), this is the process of forming abstract space, capitalist space. It is none other than the continual struggle to commodify labour power and transform the *spatiality* of social concrete labour to the abstract, meaningless and quantitative expansion of alien wealth through the production and realisation of surplus value. Merely to attempt to invert (mentally) this tendency and displace time by space merely obscures the dynamic and contradictory nature of the capital relation and the ways in which this expresses itself in a spatially uneven way through, what Smith refers to as, "the *production of space* in its own image" (1990 p xv). The crucial commodity is labour power and the spatially and temporally changing ability of capital to "contain the uncontainable" (Holloway 1991 p 75) and to transform that power into surplus value. The basis of differential space as a mode of existence, not as goal but as instrument, is this "uncontrollable chaos at the heart of capital" (ibid.), one which continually undermines abstract space and forces capital to keep moving around the globe in search for an impossible "spatial fix".

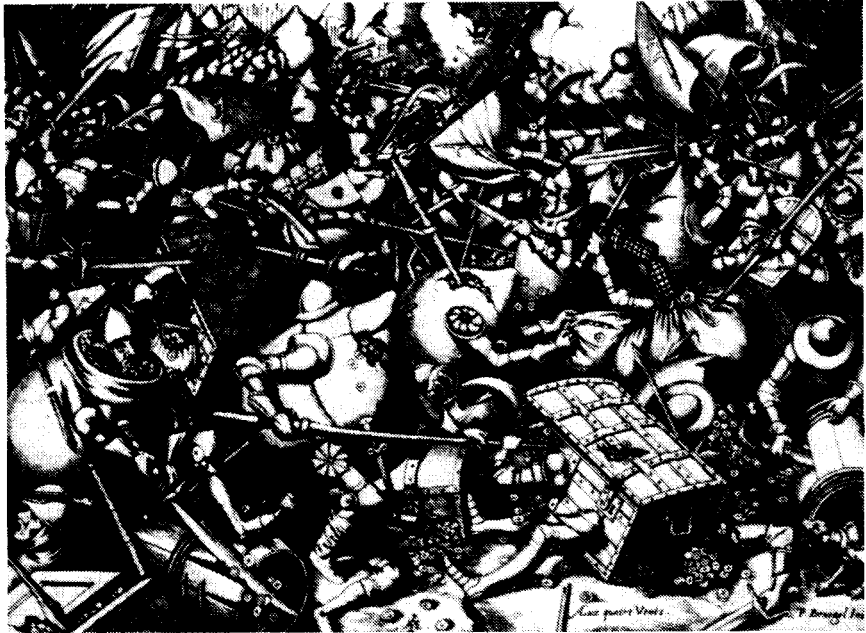
The importance of the debate on the spatiality of capitalism is that it raises to the consciousness the fact that "space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life...." (Soja 1989 p 6) Space is a means by which to bind as well as separate, to include as well as exclude, and precisely by bringing to life a critical conception of space Lefebvre (and the subsequent debate) has "provided some of the tools for decoding the spatial metaphors that 'script' our efforts to integrate, negotiate, and theorise different 'positions'." (Smith 1990 p 171) This is the critical and revolutionary potential inherent in Lefebvre's concept, *the production of space*. More importantly, however, is the fact that the concept of production brings to the fore the question of *form* and directly relates spatiality to the *specific form of labour*. Furthermore, to "change life!", to return to the quotation of Lefebvre's given at the start of this article, space *will* be an "instrument" in the struggle for change, but will certainly *not* be the "goal" of that struggle, as Lefebvre suggests. The goal of struggle is the FORM taken by labour and its abolition as imposed "work". Only by changing the form of labour will life and the spatiality of that life change, but the latter will change as result, as outcome, not as goal. An understanding of the spatiality of life will provide a powerful means of organising struggle. But to struggle against the spatiality of life without changing the form of labour will simply reproduce the abstract space that asphyxiates all of life.

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Open Marxism



The following three papers outline aspects of the ideas underlying the project announced in W. Bonefeld, R. Gunn and K. Psychopedis (eds.) *Open Marxism* (2 vols) Pluto Press 1992. Versions of the papers have been presented at the annual Conference of Socialist Economists, and at the universities of Edinburgh, Lancaster, Warwick, Manchester (Metropolitan), Glasgow, Paris VII, Mexico City and Puebla. A third volume of *Open Marxism* is forthcoming from Pluto Press.

The Relevance of Marxism Today

John Holloway

I am of the generation who came to Marxism after 1968. I mention this because when I use Marxist categories now, I often have the impression that I am speaking Latin, that I am speaking an ancient language that few people understand, a language that may soon be dead. There is no longer the same education in this language as there was ten or fifteen years ago: there are no longer so many people reading *Capital*, for example, which is so basic to the understanding of the Marxist language. And, whatever we think of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, we have to recognise that for many people it implies also the disintegration of Marxist theory. There exists a real possibility that Marxism could die out as a form of expression, just as happened to Latin.

Does it matter if it dies? Does Marxism still have any relevance?

To answer the question, it is worth trying to remember what it was that attracted us to Marxism in the first place. The reply is fairly obvious: we were looking for a radical critique of society, a negative theory of society. Motivated by what we saw and lived - the Vietnam War, the Cuban revolution, the events of '68 in Mexico, France and many other parts of the world, the waves of strikes and militant trade unionism, etc, etc. - we were looking for a theory of the world that would fit with our experience, with our opposition to existing society. We were looking not so much for a theory of society as a theory *against* society. The attraction of Marxism was that it offered us a theory against existing society, a negative theory of society, a theory of our rejection of society, our scream against society. It offered us a theory which was not a sociology, nor an economics, nor a political science, but an anti-sociology, an anti-economics, an anti-political science.

My first thesis is that Marxism is not a theory of society, but a theory against society, and to judge its relevance today it has to be seen in this light

If we take that as our starting point, then the question of the relevance of Marxism today resolves itself into two questions. Firstly: do we still need a theory against society? And secondly: if we do, is Marxism the theory we are looking for?

The first question is rhetorical: it seems to me obvious that we need a theory that gives foundation to a radical critique of society. To be convinced of that, it is

sufficient to think of the misery that can be found in the streets of any city, or of the enormous increase in world poverty in recent years.

The reply to the second question, whether Marxism provides us with the best critique of society, requires more consideration.

It is clear that there are many theories which provide a radical critique of society, and that some of these theories have succeeded in throwing light on aspects of social oppression which have been neglected by Marxism. Feminism is the most obvious example. Also arising from the social restlessness of those years, feminism has succeeded in developing a critique of gender relations in this society which has reached a much wider public than Marxism and which has put down deep roots in the way people behave. It is important to recognise the force of the criticism which many feminists have made of the blindness of Marxism towards gender oppression, and of their more general criticism of the 'machismo-leninismo' of the revolutionary tradition. Green theory is another example of a (sometimes) radical critique of existing society which has succeeded in illuminating important aspects of capitalism which had received little attention in the Marxist tradition.

But, if we accept the criticisms of the blindness of Marxism towards these aspects of capitalism, then how can we defend the claim of Marxism to occupy a central (and unique) position in the critique of capitalism?

The answer is surely that there is a fundamental difference between Marxism and the other forms of radical critique of capitalism. The difference is this: while the other theories are theories of social domination or oppression, Marxism takes that oppression as its starting point. The question of Marxism is not: 'how do we understand social oppression?', but: 'given that we live in an oppressive society, how can we understand the fragility of that oppression?' There is an important inversion here. Obviously, a theory of the fragility of capitalist domination implies a theory of that domination, but the perspective is very different. If we take feminism, for example, we can say that it illuminates social oppression in an important manner, but it does not have a theory of social change, it does not have a theory of the crisis of patriarchal domination. All the categories of Marxism, on the other hand, are constructed on the basis of the historically transitory character of capitalism, the whole analysis of capitalism is developed through the perspective of its fragility. This perspective is expressed in concentrated manner through the central category of *form* (see the contribution by Bonefeld in this issue).

The point can be illustrated by taking the example of neo-liberalism: there are a lot of radical studies showing the socially damaging effects of neo-liberal policies. These studies are often very important, but it seems to me that the cutting edge of Marxism is sharper. The specifically Marxist question would be: 'right, we know that neo-liberalism is nasty, but where are its contradictions? Or, in what sense is neo-liberalism an expression of the fragility, the vulnerability of capitalism?'

It is sometimes said that Marxism does not have a clear theory of crisis, and economists discuss the relative merits of underconsumption theory, disproportionality theory and the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. However, this discussion generally misses the crucial point that Marxism does not *have* a theory of crisis because it is a theory of crisis, a theory of the crisis, the rupture,

the fragility of capitalism. It is an attempt to understand capitalism from the perspective of its contradictions. The theories which seem to convert Marxism into a theory of capitalist reproduction (regulation theory, neo-Gramscianism etc) lose sight of the very core of Marxism.

The second thesis which I wish to advance, then, is that Marxism is not a theory of capitalist oppression but of the contradictions of that oppression. This gives Marxism a special relevance for any person or movement interested in a radical transformation of society.

How can we understand the fragility (or contradictions) of capitalism? *The third thesis that I want to suggest is that the fragility of capitalism is the expression of the power of labour.*

Since this thesis goes against much of the Marxist tradition, it is necessary to explain it.

In the so-called 'orthodox' tradition, a clear separation is made between the contradictions of capitalism, on the one hand, and class struggle, on the other. In this perspective, the contradictions of capitalism exist independently of class struggle: they are objective laws of capitalist development. The development of these contradictions define the objective framework within which class struggle develops. The specific contribution of Marxism to class struggle is understood in terms of the analysis of the objective conditions of struggle. Marxism, from being a theory of struggle, becomes transformed into a theory of the objective conditions of struggle.

In this separation of contradiction and struggle can be found the core of the so-called 'crisis of Marxism'. Certainly, it is has been argued that the idea that objective conditions are on our side played, perhaps, a positive role in stimulating and strengthening the struggle against capitalism, but the more the dénouement of history has been postponed, the more obvious the problems of this approach have become.

The basic problem is that this approach implies a theoretical and often practical subordination of struggle to the objective conditions, and therefore an undermining of the power of labour in its struggle against capital. This subordination of struggle has taken very concrete forms in recent years in the discussions around the concept of 'post-Fordism'. Often it has been argued that the class struggle has to submit to the inevitable tendency towards the creation of a new 'post-Fordist' mode of regulation. A notorious example is provided by the argument made by Stuart Hall during the miners' strike in Great Britain in 1984-1985: according to Hall, it was necessary for the miners to recognise the inevitability of submitting to the 'inescapable lines of historical tendency and direction' - an elegant, post-structuralist expression of pure determinism.

If Marxism is identified with this approach, it is easy to see why people talk of a crisis of Marxism. On the one hand, it is difficult to reconcile many of the unforeseen changes in the world with this idea of 'inescapable lines of historical tendency and direction'; and, on the other, it is clear that this type of Marxism has little attraction as a theory of struggle.

The separation between struggle and contradiction is characteristic of the tradition of Marxist 'orthodoxy', but it is not a feature of Marx's work, nor of a long, almost subterranean tradition of Marxism (Pashukanis, Rubin, Bloch, Adorno, Parnekoek, the young Lukacs, Agnoli, among very many others.). In this perspective, there is no dualism between contradiction and struggle. On the contrary: Marxism is fundamentally anti-dualist. According to Marx, from the early works through the development of value theory in *Capital*, the only creative forces shaping society and its development is labour, human creativity. We are the only gods: human creation (labour) is the only constitutive power in society. There are no objective forces external to labour.

The only social power is labour, but labour is divided against itself. The division of labour against itself is a constant conflict, a conflict between labour and itself, or rather between labour and its alienated form as capital - what we call class struggle. But this conflict is not symmetrical. In the conflict between labour and its alienation, it is clear that the alienation depends on labour, but labour does not depend on its alienation. Capital cannot exist without labour, but labour can exist without capital. Capital depends on labour for its existence. This dependency is at the same time both the contradiction of capital and the class struggle. The dynamic of capitalism is the dynamic of capital's dependency on labour, a dependency that is expressed in the constant flight forward of capital in its ceaseless attempt to free itself from its dependency, in an eternal search for perfect domination, for the total subordination of labour. This flight of capital is expressed most clearly in times of open crisis: what becomes apparent in the fall of the rate of profit, for example, is the cost to capital of maintaining an adequate subordination of labour.

How can we reconcile this vision of the omnipotence of labour and of capital in flight with what has been happening in the world in the last fifteen years? In this time there have been very important defeats of the working class and revolutionary movements in many parts of the world, a deterioration in the living conditions of very large sections of the world's population, an intensification of work, a rise in unemployment, the rise of neo-liberalism, the marginalisation of Marxism in the universities, etc, etc. Under these conditions it seems absurd to say that the crisis is the expression of the power of labour.

Nevertheless, it is not absurd. The capitalist crisis of the 1970s was an expression of the inadequacy of the established relations of domination. The established pattern no longer provided what capital required - both because of the insubordination of labour and because it was costing capital more and more to maintain the necessary subordination. In the face of the inadequacy of subordination, capital did what it always does on such occasions: it converted itself into money and took off in search of better conditions of accumulation and exploitation. It was this liquefaction of capital, this transformation of productive capital into money-capital which provided the basis for the rise of neo-liberalism.

It did so by changing radically the relation between the national states and the global movement of capital, and thus radically changed the nature of the state itself. If one assumes that any state must necessarily try to attract to its territory or to retain in its territory as much of world capital as possible, then it is clear that with the massive rise in the mobility of capital from the late 1970s, the conditions of

existence of the national states changed radically. This change was expressed in the failure of Keynesianism and of interventionist import-substitution policies (with all the corporatist politics which they involved), it was expressed in the rise of the politics and ideology (and culture) of money in all countries during the 1980s, it was expressed in the final collapse of the grotesque myth of socialism in one country, both in its social-democratic form in Western Europe and its 'communist' form in Eastern Europe.

The dominance of money during the 1980s seemed to express the almost limitless triumph of capital. But it was not really like that: the existence of capital in the form of money capital was the surest indicator that capital had not succeeded in recreating its domination over labour to a sufficient degree. In spite of appearances, capital continued to be weak (and dependent). The economic expansion that took place in the richer countries had a largely fictitious basis, sustained by the constant expansion of indebtedness. The fictitious character of this expansion was manifested more and more clearly from the end of the 1980s, with the stock market crash of 1987, growing monetary instability, the enormous fall in the Japanese stock market, the increasing problems of banks throughout the world, and finally the 'credit crunch', the restriction of credit which has been a central element in the economic recession of the last few years. The realisation of the fictitious nature of the expansion was an important factor in the fall of Thatcher, of such happy memory, and in the fall in the prestige of neo-liberalism throughout the world. It is similarly the question of the real or fictitious character of the economic expansion in Mexico which will determine the reputation of Salinas de Gortari in the time that remains to him as President of Mexico. And the basis of everything is the insubordination of work, the fact that capital has not succeeded in subordinating labour sufficiently to secure a stable future for itself. For us that is both a warning and a hope.

The third thesis, then, is that the fragility of capitalism is not the expression of objective laws but of the dependency of capital on the power of labour. This conclusion seems relevant to me, because the precondition of any radical change of society is the theoretical and practical realisation by those without power that the powerful depend on them, the realisation of the power of the powerless. Marxism is the theory of the power of the powerless.

Human Practice and Perversion: Between Autonomy and Structure

Werner Bonefeld

Introduction

In the previous paper on *The Relevance of Marxism Today*, John Holloway emphasises the Marxist understanding of the dependency of capital upon labour. This understanding entails the invocation of class struggle as the movement of the contradiction in which capital, itself, consists. Marxists agree amongst themselves that class struggle is the motor of history. However, there are sharp divisions as to the 'status' of class struggle vis-à-vis capital. For example, class struggle can be seen, as in structuralist approaches associated with Althusser, Poulantzas as well as Hirsch and Jessop, as a struggle which unfolds within the framework of the capitalist structures. Or, as in autonomist approaches associated with Negri, Tronti and others, class struggle can be conceived of as an ongoing struggle by capital to decompose labour's revolutionary existence. These distinct conceptions of class struggle are founded on the differentiation between, on the one hand, the objective character of 'capital', and, on the other, the subjective character of class struggle. This paper assesses structuralist and autonomist approaches to class struggle. The assessment is founded upon an understanding of the *internal* relationship between structure and struggle. I shall discuss this internal relation by emphasising 'labour' as a constitutive power. This emphasis is developed in terms of a dialectical relationship between *integration and transcendence*. These two terms connote the revolutionary power of labour (transcendence) and its mode of existence within the perverted form of capital (integration).

The Problem

Structuralist approaches accept the economics-politics separation inscribed in bourgeois society (see Poulantzas, 1973; Jessop, 1985; and Hirsch, 1978) and propose an analysis of each of these fragmented spheres as distinct regions of social existence. Subsequent historical concrete analysis has to introduce, as exemplified by the post-fordist debate¹, the historically specific combination between different regions so as to show the modalities of their interaction. By taking for granted the fragmented character of bourgeois society, these theories neglect questions of the social constitution of the fragmented character of society

¹ On the post-fordist debate see the volume edited by Bonefeld/Holloway, 1991

and strain to integrate class struggle into their analysis. As Aglietta (1979, p. 67) sees it, class struggle is beyond 'any law'. 'Capital' is not conceived as a social relation in and through labour. Instead, 'capital' is seen as an entity which has its own logic, a logic which stands above class relations. Thus 'capital' is not class struggle because 'capital is the subject' (Jessop, 1991, p. 150). Class struggle is expelled from the analysis insofar as a proper understanding of the concrete, empirical, conditions of class struggle needs to be based on a specification of the capitalist framework within which class struggle obtains and unfolds. Consequently, structuralism emphasises the objective lines of capitalist development. Structures are the only subject recognised by structuralism. Class struggle is treated as a derivative of structural development. The dynamic of capitalist development is located in capital itself. Contradiction is seen as internal to capital, and capitalist development is a result of these contradictions.

Unlike the theoretical suppression of class struggle in structuralist approaches, autonomist approaches place at their centre the self-activity of the working class. Class struggle is seen as primary. The emphasis is on labour's revolutionary power. Autonomist approaches take as their starting point the Marxian notion that all social relations are essentially practical. In that emphasis lies an important difference from structure-centred approaches. The difficulty inherent in 'autonomist' approaches is not that 'labour' is seen as being primary but that this notion is not developed to its radical solution.

Approaches predicated on the notion of labour's self-activity tend to divide social existence into distinct spheres of, on the one hand, a machine-like logic of capital and the transcendental power of social practice, on the other. The emphasis on 'labour's self-activity' is founded on the 'inversion' of the class perspective². This inversion was advocated by Tronti who argued that rather than focusing on capitalist development, the emphasis should be on the struggle of the working class. As Tronti (1965/1979, p. 10) put it, capital uses exploitation as a means of escaping 'its de facto subordination to the class of worker-producers'. Such a formulation destroys the insight that labour is a constitutive power. This is because capital is conceived as a subject in its own right: 'capital' is construed as some-thing which not only reacts to the self-activity of labour but which also 'lives' by cajoling labour's self-activity into serving the capitalist cause. In other words, the inversion of the class perspective is dependent upon two 'subjects': there is the self-activity of labour and capital's cajoling power. The emphasis on 'inversion' does not raise the issue that 'labour' is the producer of perverted forms. Instead, labour tends to be seen as a power which exists external to its own perverted social world: the constitutive power of labour stands external to its own perversion. This perversion is called 'capital'. Labour is seen as a self-determining power at the same time as which capital is a perverted power by virtue of its 'cajoling capacity'. Thus Negri's (1992) emphasis on capital as a 'bewitching power'. The emphasis on the struggle component of the relation between structure and struggle cannot overcome their theoretical separation. The question why does human practice exist in the perverted form of capitalist domination is not raised. *Minus* an interrogation of the question of form, i.e. the specification of the social form in and through which the constitutive power of labour subsists in a contradictory way, notions of labour's autonomy from capital can amount only to a romantic invocation of the revolutionary subject's immediacy (see Bonefeld/Gunn, 1991). Merely invoking labour's revolutionary immediacy tends to externalise structure from subject, so leading to a subjectivist conception which is the other side of determinism's coin. Unlike structuralist approaches, the emphasis is on class struggle, a struggle which remains, however, external

² On this 'inversion' see Cleaver 1992, 1993.

to its object. Capital remains construed in terms of a logic which lies solely within itself and whose inconsistencies, alone, and in abstraction from the contradictions which are constitutive of the capital-labour relation, provide points of purchase for revolutionary autonomisation. The capital-labour relation is understood merely in terms of a repressive systemic logic counterposed to subjective forces in a dualist and external way.

Structuralist and autonomist approaches understand the contradictory constitution of capitalism in terms of two externally related things: in structuralism the contradiction obtains in the form of structural inadequacies and/or dysfunctionalities as between different regions such as the 'economic' and 'political'; in autonomism the contradiction obtains between the autonomy of the revolutionary subject and the capitalist system. Neither autonomism nor structuralism see the contradictory character of capital in and through the constitutive power of labour, a constitutive power which exists in and against and beyond capital. Both the theoretical suppression of labour, as in structuralist approaches, and the theoretical subjectification of labour, as in autonomist approaches, fail to reconcile objectivity with subjectivity and *vice versa*.

Labour and Capital

Contrary to structuralist approaches and to those invoking the immediacy of the revolutionary subject, the task is to trace out 'the inner connexion' (Marx 1983, p. 28) between social phenomena, so as to establish the 'inner nature' (cf. Marx) of their relation. To trace out the inner connection between social phenomena is to theorise the human content which constitutes their social reality as interconnected, as complex forms different from, but united in, each other. In order to theorise this interconnection, the theoretical approach has to specify the constitutive power that makes social phenomena different from each other in unity. Different phenomena exist in and through each other; each phenomenon is the presupposition of the other. This means that one cannot differentiate between an abstract construction of, for example, an economic logic and a political logic, and an existence of these 'logics' (cf. Jessop, 1985) in a real world, a world merely mediated by class struggle. Nor can one divide the social whole into capital logic and subjective power. Structure and struggle involve each other as moments of one process. Diverse phenomena, such as structure and struggle, do not exist as externally related entities one of which is determining and/or dominating the other, but as forms of existence of the relation which constitutes them. The notion of social objectivity can be comprehended, as argued by Backhaus (1969), only when objectivity is seen as an existing abstraction - an abstraction which exists in practice (*daseiende Abstraktion*). Social relations are practical relations. The notion that social relations are founded in and through practice implies a quite different starting point from that taken by those who advocate notions of a fragmented social world. The starting point is the *social constitution* of the *historical movement* of labour. The historical development of labour holds the key to the history of society. This key is contained in the above mentioned abstraction; the human content which, in capitalist society, exists in a mode of being denied.

In every society human beings play the role of producers. However, in capitalist society, the simplest category, i.e. labour, takes on a mystifying character because the material elements of wealth transform from products of labour into properties of commodities and still more pronouncedly they transform the production relation itself into a relation between things. The productive power of social labour exists in the 'perverted' form of value. The 'objective', or factual, existence of 'capital' can thus not be taken as a

conceptual starting point. This is because that which asserts itself to the economic mind as 'objectivity', or 'objective logic', or 'objective being' is, in Marx, understood as alienated subjectivity (as specified in Backhaus, 1992). Labour is an alienated subject by virtue of its social existence as a producer of a perverted world. This means that the practical-critical activity of labour exists *against itself as itself* in the form of the fetishised world of capitalism. The constitution of the world occurs behind the backs of the individuals; yet it is their work' (Marcuse, 1937/1988, p. 151). In other words, the reality in which humans move day in and day out has no invariant character, that is, something which exists independently from them. It is the social practice of labour which constitutes, suffuses and contradicts the perverted world of capitalism. Labour does not exist 'external' to perverted forms. Rather, 'perverted form', including capital's 'cajoling power', exist in and through labour's social practice. Thus 'subject and object do not statically oppose each other, but rather are caught up in an "ongoing process" of the "inversion of subjectivity into objectivity, and vice versa"' (Backhaus, 1992, p. 60 referring to Kofler). Understanding the constitution of perverted forms in this way makes it possible to see the generic as inherent in the specific, and the abstract as inherent in the concrete (see Marx, 1973, Intro.). This view involves a way of thinking which moves within the object (i.e. the social-historical form of human relations) of its thinking. Dialectics does not proceed to its object from outside but from inside. Dialectical thinking attempts to appropriate conceptually the contradictory mode of existence constituted by, and constitutive of, social practice. Dialectical thinking conceptualises itself within, and as a moment of, its object (Gunn, 1989, 1992). Such a conceptualisation of social existence seeks an understanding of the apparently isolated facts of life as comprising a mode of existence of social relations. Dialectics emphasises the unity-in-difference as between structure and struggle. It does so on the basis of the understanding that 'all social relations are essentially practical' and that these social relations comprise the constitutive practical-critical activity of labour.

Any conceptualisation of 'capital' which focuses on its seemingly formal logic (as in structuralism) disregards the distinctiveness of Marx's theory and espouses, instead, the reified world of capitalism as the object and purpose of theory. Further, any conceptualisation which focuses merely on labour's autonomy from capital disregards the historically specific form of labour's existence and espouses, instead, a subjectivist understanding of the ontological constitution of existence to be found - apparently - in the subjectivity of being which constantly escapes the grasp, and which threatens a revolutionary disposal of 'capital'. In other words, human practice is seen as a self-constituting and immediate power, a power which 'capital' has but constantly fails to subvert. In distinction to the ontological conception of labour, the present paper argues that it is human practice which produces the perverted world of capital. It is the contradictory unity of the relation between human practice as commodified work in and through class which constitutes society in terms of a continuous displacement and reconstitution of the 'enchanted and perverted world' of capitalism (Marx, 1966, p. 830). The constitution of social practice as capitalist reproduction presents the concrete substance of class antagonism. The removal of 'capital' into the museum of history can go forward only through the revolutionising of labour's existence as the alienated subject which produces capital.

The social relation which constitutes the mode of existence/movement of labour in capitalist society is the relation between necessary labour and surplus labour, that is, the class antagonism of capital and labour which constitutes the social working day. The capitalist mode of existence of labour is characterised by the continuous compulsion to

revolutionise the relation between necessary and surplus labour in order to increase the latter. However, surplus labour exists only in antithesis to necessary labour. 'Capital' exists only through living labour as substance of value, and hence surplus value. The antagonistic tendency of the social form of labour compels capital towards the elimination of necessary labour which undermines the existence of capital as existing only in and through labour. 'Capital' can not autonomise itself from living labour; the only autonomisation possible is on labour's side. Labour is not external to 'capital'. Labour exists in and against capital, while capital, however, exists only in and through labour. The contradictory existence of labour is manifest in its antithesis to capital's command and in its existence as a producer of capital: labour is value creating. In other words, labour exists against itself as a labouring commodity. The social practice of labour exists against capital and, also, as a moment of the latter's existence. The constitutive power of labour's social practice attains a contradictory existence as the movement of transcendence and integration. This movement is founded upon the asymmetrical constitution of class antagonism. Transcendence and integration do not exist separately, but as the movement of one process - extreme poles of a dialectical continuum that social practice represents. As extreme poles of a dialectical continuum, transcendence and integration constitute a contradictory process that is open to the process of struggle itself. Understanding class antagonism as a movement of contradiction between dependence and separation and conceptualising social phenomena as the mode of existence and mode of motion of class antagonism, it follows that labour is neither internal nor external to capital. Labour exists in and against capital.

In and Against

The term *in and against* seeks to overcome the danger of subjectivism inherent in approaches which stress the primacy of labour's self-activity. Contemporary elaboration of such approaches can be found in the development of thought which invokes the revolutionary subject's *immediacy*. The subjectivism is contained in the understanding of labour as a self-constitutive power. 'Capital' is no longer seen as a mode of existence of labour. Rather, it is seen as an entity which is confronted by its own substance. This dualism between capital and labour is founded on the notion that value is being 'deconstructed' through labour's refusal to participate in capital's own project (see Negri, 1992). The notion of 'alienated subjectivity' is thus destroyed and replaced by the notion of labour as a self-constituting revolutionary subject. Capital becomes merely a 'hypnotising, bewitching force' and as such a counterrevolutionary 'phantasm, an idol: around it revolve the radically autonomous processes of auto-valorisation and only political power can succeed in forcing them, with the carrot and with the stick, to begin to be moulded into capitalist form' (ibid., p. 89). 'Auto-valorisation', for Negri, means the concrete existence of the subjective power'. This power creates and safeguards the space for the values which belong to the exploited classes. In sum, auto-valorisation is the production and reproduction of labour as the subject (see Negri, 1989). This approach presupposes that there are spaces in society which are external to 'capital's hypnotising force' and in which experiments in 'authentic subjectivity' challenge and provoke capital's disenchanted world. This approach neglects the forms in and through which labour exists in capitalism. The essentialisation of the subject remains abstract insofar as its social existence obtains outside society. This is because the notion of 'labour's autonomy' presuppose the existence of a space already liberated from capital. There is thus a dualism as between two presuppositions which stand external to each other at the same time as

³ See Moulier (1989) on this interpretation of Negri's work.

each of these presupposition is supposed to render its contrasting term coherent. The two presuppositions are: the presupposed freedom of the social subject and the presupposed logic of the capitalist system. No answer can be provided as to the constitution of both labour's self-activity and capital's cajoling power. The only answer possible is the denunciation of capital as subordinating labour's autonomy and a study of the changing composition of labour's revolutionary subjectivity which is seen as being in opposition to a presupposed logic of capital.

In sum, the internal relation between capital and labour is transformed into a relation of mere opposition, thus reducing the internal relation between form and substance to a simple juxtaposition of opposition. Thereby, labour is taken as a one-sided abstraction. At the same time, the essentialisation of the subject goes hand-in-hand with the fetishisation of capital as a 'bewitching power'. Contrary to seeing the relation between capital and labour as a social relation *qua* contradiction in and through the forms constituted by this relation itself, the insistence on labour as merely 'against' capital dismisses dialectics as a concept that moves within, and is a moment of, its object. As was reported above, the understanding of labour as existing *against* capital involves a conceptualisation of capital as a machine-like entity. Capital becomes a logic, defined by certain laws whose irrationality provides oppositional space for insurrection. The relationship between structure and struggle is merely conceived of as a relation of cause and effect: i.e. the disruptive and revolutionary power of the working class causes disruption and crisis to which, in turn, capital responds by reimposing its domination over labour (see Negri, 1979). Such a view undercuts the internal relation between structure and struggle and replaces it by a sociological investigation into insurrectionary forms of being which exploit the inconsistencies of the capitalist system. The notion of the presence of labour in and against capital effectively says that labour does not exist outside capital. The class struggle exists only in and against the forms in and through which the constitutive power of labour exists *qua* contradiction. Of course in a sense the class struggle exists in the form of revolutionary separation, but it so exists only as one extreme pole of the dialectical continuum of transcendence and integration, the development of which is open to the class struggle itself. Autonomist approaches disentangle the internal relation between transcendence and integration by construing social practice solely in terms of transcendence.

On the other hand, approaches which stress that labour exists merely 'in' capital dismiss the antagonistic character of capitalism, neglecting the contradictory relation between transcendence and integration. Instead, capital is conceived of as a one-sided abstraction at the same time as social practice is sacrificed on the altar of scientism. These approaches are structuralist-functionalist because what for them really counts are the inescapable lines of tendency and direction established by capital's projects. Labour no longer exists in opposition to capital but is, rather, a part of capital's own project. Structuralist approaches contend that the reproduction of capital is not simply given by the logic of capital. Capitalist reproduction goes forward through class struggle. Structurally predetermined views of social development entail a conception of the subject as merely (but at least) the bearer - *Träger* - of social categories. The subject who bears categories must, at the same time, be the subject who transforms them. But on a structuralist approach, he or she can transform them only by reproducing them. In structuralism, human practice is conceived in terms of 'human agency', that is, as an executor of demands and requirements emanating from extra-human structures. The contradictory logic of capital requires 'human agency' as some-thing which reproduces capital.

The conception of human practice in terms of 'human agency' is based on the notion that the abstract nature of capitalist laws stands above class relations. Class struggle transforms thus from a struggle for human emancipation into a sociological category of capitalist reproduction. Capital is seen as an autonomous subject and labour exists solely within capital. Class struggle becomes subordinate to the internal logic of different regions, leading on to a conception of class only via voluntarism. Structuralism asserts the subjective in the form of a voluntarist conception of class, i.e. a conception of class as a structure-reproducing agency. For example, in Jessop's approach, class conflict 'does not as such create the totality nor does it give rise to [capitalism's] dynamic trajectory' (Jessop, 1991, p. 154). This is because the 'conceptual identity of classes is given by the capital relation itself rather than being constrained by classes which shape the capital relation' (ibid.). In other words, Jessop conceives of 'capital' as a self-relation whose internal logic structures the class struggle in the 'real' world. Class struggle is firmly located within the framework established by the internal logic of capital⁴. Hence, 'capital' is seen as something which determines social relations and the class struggle is treated as a derivative of this 'thing'. The importance of class struggle lies in the circumstance that the institutional logic and dynamic of capitalism needs to be overdetermined by an 'economic class struggle in which the balance of class forces is moulded by many factors beyond the value form itself' (Jessop, 1983, p. 90). In other words, the value form defines the coherence of the capitalist mode of production, a coherence which is achieved, in practice, through the contingent forces of conflict in the 'real' world. Structuralism and voluntarism are complementary (see Bonefeld, 1993). Structuralism depends on a distinction between structure and struggle - each of which, however, is supposed to render its contrasting term coherent. Structure is seen as escaping determinism because it is qualified by agency and agency is seen as escaping voluntarism because it is qualified by 'structural constraints'. However, the intelligibility of structure is seen as deriving from agency and *vice versa*. The dualism between structure and struggle is thus sustained only through a tautological movement of thought. Adding together, eclectically, two fallacious positions hardly amounts to a theoretisation wherein either one of them can be redeemed.

In sum, the problem of autonomism and/or structuralism arises from a conceptualisation that sees labour as existing either merely *against* capital (autonomism) or merely *in* capital (structuralism). Structuralist and autonomist approaches are complementary because both depend on the notion of 'capital' as a logical entity. While structuralist approaches emphasise capital as an autonomous subject, autonomist approaches emphasise capital as a machine-like thing. Both approaches depend on a determinist view of capital inasmuch as capital is perceived fetishistically as an extra-human thing.

The notion of labour as existing in and against capital does not provide simply a middle way out of the problem as, for example, implied by the notion of 'objective laws but also class struggle'. This notion, which is central to the post-fordist debate, construes capital as a one-sided abstraction whose development causes societal effects in terms of social conflict. This view sees the concrete as providing 'empirical indicators' of underlying (i.e. general) tendencies. In this view, the concrete is seen as an expression of more fundamental laws whose existence is logically presupposed. In other words, a distinction is made between the supposedly inner logic of capital and the historical analysis of capitalism. Human practice stands external to the fundamental laws of capital. Unity between structure and struggle is realised not on the fundamental level of the formation of abstract concepts but on the contingent level of historical development within the framework of objective

⁴ See Clarke (1991) for a similar critique of Hirsch's approach. For a similar critique of Poulantzas see Clarke, 1977/1991.

laws. In contrast to such an understanding, the notion of labour as existing in and against capital stresses the internal relation between substance and social form. The presence of labour in and against capital is understood as labour's constitutive power that exists in a mode of being denied in the capitalist form of social reproduction. The notion 'mode of being denied' stresses the social constitution of what asserts itself over social relations as mere thinghood; a contradictory unity through the presence of labour which is also a presence in and against capital. The notion of labour as existing in and against capital makes it possible to understand the contradictory mode of existence of social phenomena and to conceive the movement of this contradiction as one of the transformative power of human practice. In other words, the notion 'in and against' does not entail an externality between two complementary perspectives: in 'and' against. Rather, it emphasises the circumstance that objectivity and subjectivity engage with each other in an internal, nonetheless contradictory, way. I offered the notion of 'alienated subjectivity' to emphasise this point. This notion means that, in capitalism, human relations exist, contradictorily, in the form of relations between things. The critique of political economy amounts to a critique of 'economic categories' *ad hominem*. In other words, human relations do not need to be discovered behind the variant social forms. The critique of fetishism does not entail a division of a social world into appearance (fetishistic forms) and essence (human content). Rather, human relations subsist in and through these forms. They do so in a contradictory way. I offered the notion of an asymmetrical constitution of the capitalist class antagonism to emphasise this point.

Conclusion

Structuralism finishes up by invoking precisely the romanticised subject celebrated in approaches which counterpose the virtues of subjectivity to the alleged fetishism of structures. Equally, approaches predicated on the notion of 'labour's autonomy' finish up by invoking precisely the untheorised object celebrated by structuralist approaches which counterpose the virtue of structure to the alleged existence of class struggle outside any law. Whereas the structuralist version of the subject entails the inescapability of capitalist reproduction as it merely seeks an empirical testing of preformed categories, the notion of 'labour's autonomy', *minus* the idea of an internal relation between structure and struggle, entails the revolutionary testing of a reality which it is unable to comprehend. Both approaches beg the question of the objectivity of subjectivity and, conversely, the subjectivity of objectivity. If one were to integrate form and content, one would be able to analyse the asymmetrical relation between capital and labour (i.e. the notion of capital depending on labour but labour not depending on capital) as a relation of class struggle, a struggle which is constitutive of social reality, which is a constituted social presupposition and at the same time a constituting social practice.

I offered the terms 'integration' and 'transcendence' so as to conceptualise the asymmetrical relation between capital and labour. The dialectical continuum of integration and transcendence emphasises the idea of a practical world in which the integration of labour into the capital-relation and the revolutionary transcendence of capital are neither logically presupposed nor historically determined. The notion of 'integration/transcendence' connotes the idea that structure and struggle stand to each other in a relation of difference-in-unity. Neither are structures identical with labour's constitutive practice nor do structures exist separately from labour. The dialectical continuum of 'integration' and 'transcendence' is founded upon the notion of a 'perverted' world in which the constitutive power of social

practice exists - as itself - contradictorily. It exists in a mode of being denied.⁵

In sum, structuralist approaches see society as an organism which develops according to its own immanent laws. Labour is seen merely as an aspect of this organism. Structuralism sees social practice as a sociological category, so treating human activity in the fetishised form of a commodity. Structuralism presents an apologetic theory of capitalism. Structuralism and autonomism, while complementary to each other, stand to each other in an asymmetrical way. Structuralism depends on a voluntarist understanding of social practice as a structure-reproducing entity. Autonomism depends on a revolutionary understanding of social practice as a structure transforming human activity. Autonomist approaches emphasise the transformative role of human praxis. The emphasis is on 'transcendence', i.e. the revolutionary transformation of a society in which humans exist as commodities. Therein lies an important difference from structuralist approaches. Indeed, autonomist approaches are much more alive to the contradictory unity that obtains between 'integration and transcendence'. The emphasis on 'revolutionary subjectivity' supplies an 'anticipatory perspective' of the revolutionary transformation. Rather than analysing the productivity of labour exploited by capital, they seek to conceptualise the productive forms of communist organisation: that of the self-valorisation of needs. Thus, autonomist approaches focus their attention on the revolutionary liberation of 'transcendence' from 'integration'. Rather than conceptualising the dialectic between integration and transcendence, they pose the question of political power (*Macht*). They do so, however, in a way which contradicts their own research agenda. As was argued above, in autonomist approaches, the subject is perceived as a power which stands external to its own perverted world. Autonomist approaches need thus to be deepened into a critique of the social existence labour as a power which constitutes, suffuses and contradicts perverted forms.

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Marxism and Contradiction

Richard Gunn

Under the rubric of 'Marxism' there flourish two species of social theory which have virtually nothing in common except the name. On the one hand, there flourishes Marxism as a *theory of society*: the image here is of a theorist who observes and reports upon society in some more or less scientific way. The theorist *qua theorist* (though not of course *qua* political actor or citizen or human subject) stands over against his or her theoretical object, viz., "society" construing the latter as an entity concerning which truthful or fallacious judgements can be made. Here belong traditional historical materialism and contemporary conjunctural analysis (as in fordism/postfordism). The notion of theory as "theory of" remains, in this tradition, unproblematised. The main claim is to the effect that Marxism is a more accurate, or searching, "theory of" society than its bourgeois rivals. Theory as "theory of" remains common ground as between Marxist and bourgeois theories alike.

On the other hand, there is a long-standing tradition within Marxism which places the notion of theory as "theory of" - a *theory of society*, for instance - in question. According to this tradition Marxism, if it is a "theory of" anything, is a *theory of contradiction*: but, as we shall see, within the notion of theory of contradiction the notion of theory as "theory of" is detonated. The heroes of this tradition - most of them, as it turns out, unfaithful heroes - are Marx, Luxemburg, Lukács, Bloch, Adorno, Negri and Debord.

Two definitions are needful to clarify the above distinction. First, by "theory of" I understand any theory which seeks to map concepts on to objects. Such theory confronts, at once, two problems: (i) it separates the theorising subject from the theorised object (since otherwise the notion of "mapping" would be unintelligible) thus running the risk of *reifying* the object of the theory concerned. In the case of a *theory of nature* this risk is relatively trivial, inasmuch as nature does indeed seem to consist of "things" which we can eat, fall over or be poisoned by as the case may be. In the case of a *theory of society* the risk is overwhelming because it is not in the least clear that there exists an entity termed "society" about which theoretical remarks can be made. A *particular* view of "society" is accordingly inscribed within the general notion of a "theory of" society, of whatever kind. Need "society" be always an entity (a "something") which externally confronts and conditions us? Hegel, Marx and a host of others reply to this question:

No. The risk run by Marxism as a theory of society is accordingly that of becoming complicit in the alienation to which it is officially opposed.

And (ii): how can we evaluate whether a mapping as between concepts and objects is accurate (valid) or not? The problem here concerns the categories through which, so to say,

like spectacle-lenses, theory looks. Microscopes (I mean this point only analogically) are supposed to clarify the truth of their objects whereas sun-glasses distort and discolour it. What is required, accordingly, is a *metatheory* or *methodology* which will tell us that we are wearing lenses appropriate to their task. But then how are the categories of the *metatheory* to be justified? Only by a further metatheory...and so on. In other words, we are passed up the metatheoretical ladder leading from first-order to second-order to third-order theorisation without hope of halt. *Infinite regress* is therefore the further danger which theory as "theory of" runs. Attempts to halt the regress by averring, say, that first-order theory can (categorially) validate itself (Althusser) or that metatheory can serve solely as an 'underlabourer' (Bhaskar) substitute, for infinite regress, the danger of vicious circularity. Either, it seems, we must pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps or we must be elevated from a thoroughly undefined above.

And now my second definition: By "contradiction" I understand any affirmation to the effect that $A = \text{not-}A$. This may seem an uncontentious definition, but in fact there have been numerous attempts to argue that "dialectical" and "formal" contradictions are species of contradiction which are distinct (e.g. Cornforth, Gunn in a misguided early article, and Lawrence Wilde¹). I see no virtue in such harmonising discriminations. From the works of Hegel and Marx it is clear enough that both accept the possibility of A existing as not- A , i.e., as existing *in the mode of being denied*. The concept of 'alienation', say, in the early Marx declares for nothing else: to be alienated means to exist *as other* than oneself.

The standpoint of contradiction generates formulations such as the following: the social theorist *is and is not* inside (or indeed outside) the society which he or she reports. Society *does and does not* exist. Were the theorist solely "in" society then nothing but a conformist social theory would be possible. Were the theorist solely "outside of" society then **either** social theory would be impossible *per se* (because the meaning of the term "society" is, after all, a social meaning) *or* it would count as just one more positivist confirmation (because how we observe society, however detachedly, remains a function of society itself). Only if we say that the theorist *is and is not* inside/outside society does a space for *critical* theory appear. Similarly, if we say that society *sheerly does* exist then we fall victim to the positivism of accepting - for the purposes of a "theory of society" - only inferences drawn from society as it has existed so far. Alternative possibilities are precluded (or, stated conversely, "theory of" precludes the possibility, signalled by Debord and Adorno, that *societies themselves* - and not just the theories of them - can be "true" or "false" for their part). On the other hand, if we say that society *sheerly does not* exist then we join up with methodological individualism, Thatcherism and the speculations of Rational Choice: with purely *instrumental* reason, in the end. Society exists all too vigorously. Out of the night can come a policeman's truncheon (a social object) no less than a natural object we stumble over in the dark. Hence society *does and does not* exist. Perhaps society is social existence existing - to return to an earlier phrase - in the mode of being denied.

This is why Marxism as a theory of contradiction detonates the notion of Marxism as "theory of": the former projects the theorisation and the destruction of its object in the same breath Marxism amounts to a unique body of theory inasmuch as it announces itself as a social theory (all aspects of our lives being social, including the theoretical aspects) while refusing to sign up for "theory of society" as the designation to be placed against its name.

¹ Lawrence Wilde *Marx and Contradiction*, Avebury 1989.

The remainder of this short paper offers some remarks and inferences on the basis of what has been averred. In addition, it offers some thoughts on the matter: *how to read Marx*.

(i) "Marxist sociologies" are contradictions in terms. Books with titles of this kind need to be consigned to the flames in the same manner as David Hume (referring to metaphysical books, although with not nearly so good a reason) commended. By "sociology" I understand any *theory of society* whatever, whether it be action-oriented or structuralist or Marxist or bourgeois. Marx enunciates a critique of sociology in the same movement as he enunciates in his early writings a critique of philosophy (understood as pure metatheory) and a critique of political economy (especially from 1857).

(ii) If this is so then *Marx cannot have been a historical materialist*. Admittedly he occasionally advertises himself as such (although not by name) in passages of *The German Ideology* and in the Preface of 1859. Just such passages have to be construed as unmarxist, to the extent that contradiction predominates in Marx's thinking. Historical materialism - maybe the least original of all aspects of Marxist reflection - is a "theory of" society not only because it attempts a general reckoning with all hitherto existing modes of production but because, even when conjunctural, it attempts a mapping of concepts on to an object which is none other (Althusser) than the 'society-effect' itself.

(iii) Whoever talks about "society" as the object of his or her theorising risks blinkering him or herself. Society is an artifact, and not at all the more noble if it can be shown (the *sotto voce* purpose of social contract theories) that it is an artifact of a natural kind. Society is that which we reproduce: I intend this definition as the opposite of a functionalism according to which our reproduction is societal. 'All social life is practical', says Marx, to the same anti-sociological effect. Blinkering comes in in the same movement as one methodologically endorses "society". Marx wrote at a time when everyone with a few letters behind their name construed commodity production as eternal. In the twentieth century, "society" stands where "commodity production" once stood: even the Rational Choice theorists who officially deny its existence seek to recompose it through equilibria and unintended consequences. The ontology forced upon us - cosmological ontologies having been whipped from under our feet - is sociological.

Foreclosing upon the possibility of a non-societal social existence (and pinning itself on the horns of the dilemma of *either* a society without social agents or social agents without a society: structuralism and Rational Choice, respectively), contemporary social theory amounts to a *fetishism of society* - of existing society - parallel to the fetishism of commodities against which Marx declared. *Almost all* strands within 1980's Marxism took adumbrations of the future (e.g. postfordism) at their face value and attempted only to follow them through. The span of these schools ranges from outright technological determinism (the C.P.G.B.'s last programme) to determinism in-the-last-instance (Jessop *et al.*). A dash of voluntarism, (at most determinism's other side), gets shot into the cocktail. Their determinism is not accidental: whoever defines his or her theoretical object by the canons of existing reality perforce derives theoretical landmarks from the relation of the present to its past.

The relation of the present to its future is what contradiction brings to light. *I am and am not myself*: there is no way of thinking through such an utterance unless we determine that our future can be radically different from our past. (Our present is merely a transit station.) Writers like Bloch celebrate the notion of existence as, not coinciding with itself

in a present which the past can always-already recapture, but as ek-static towards a future which is *not-yet* but which might yet become. The danger is, of course, that this can become all-too-romantic. For instead of the causalism of a present captured and determined by what lies behind it we have the sheer and open beauty of a present no less captured by what lies before. Voluntarism - action-oriented sociologies, for instance, pitted against structuralist ones - was always determinism's last court of appeal. Our programme is one of deconstructing fetishism. But to effect this deconstruction we have to escape past- and future-oriented *theories of society* at the same time.

Here is how to do it: read Marx. Especially, read his 1857 Introduction to the *Grundrisse*: almost the only true words Althusser ever wrote were to the effect that this Introduction (for which, fatefully, the 1859 Preface was substituted) amounts to Marx's 'discourse on method'. The Introduction is *entirely* devoted to a seemingly academic theme, viz., the role in social theory of *abstraction*. *Abstracting from* what has hitherto existed, says Marx, only reifies it once more: theory places its blessing upon the positivity of the facts it happens to find. Critique suffocates. The lungs of critique regain fresh air when (and only when) *abstraction in* replaces abstraction from. "Abstraction in" is abstraction which exists socially and practically-abstract labour being Marx's example - as distinct from abstraction which has a function of a merely theoretical sort. Abstract labour has practical existence for whoever sets out to sell the use of their labour-power. The abstraction of our communal existence - the state - has practical existence for anyone whose head and a policeman's truncheon make common play. Marx was the first and only social theorist to make "abstraction in" (otherwise: determinate or substantive abstraction) the sole coin of his own theoretical work. By doing so, he remains faithful to - and deepens - the notion of the theorist inside *and* outside society (or better still in and against society) which his earlier writings on the relation between theory and practice proclaim. *Minus* the notion of contradiction, the idea of "abstraction in" is surely incoherent, since a "mapping" of theory on to its object becomes tautologous should the object contain the parameters of the theory itself. Marx here sidesteps tautology by abandoning, not the presence of theory in its object (and *vice versa*) but "mapping". And from here on my alternative ("on the other hand") tradition of Marxism becomes strengthful: only if abstractions are *abstractions in* can we judge social existences, and not just their theorisations, true or false.

A social existence subsisting in and through abstraction is a social existence run through with alienation like a cheese whose inside has been scooped out by mice. The concrete exists solely *qua* abstract and *vice versa*. The particular exists only *qua* abstract (the individual labourer exists only as labour-power) and *vice versa*. Each moment of such a social existence exists only as alienated, i.e., as other than itself and in the mode of being denied. Readers of Hegel will recognize here, in Marx's description of the mode of motion of capital, Hegel's characterisation in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* of sociality within the pre-French Revolutionary *ancien régime*. There is no *society* but only contradiction. Nothing exists but everything ek-sists (although contradictorily). Social structures are - to employ the crucial phrase once more - social struggles obtaining in the mode of being denied. Capitalism is the first really existing non-existing society. *Everything* in Marx is to this effect, from his early writings onwards. For example, 'alienation' is far from being a passive or complete state, or condition: it *is* contradiction; in 1844 Marx reports that alienated labour (the active category) is the key to private property (the social institution) rather than the converse. Alienation divides us not just against our society but, since we are social beings, against ourselves; alienation is shot through - it shoot us through - with contradiction, or, better, alienation is Marx's first-off sketch for the movement of contradiction itself.

If society is, thus, a field of contradiction then (a) we can never escape from it, not even as theorists-of, and (b) it doesn't exist. That is to say - taking the second point first - whenever we say that it exists we have to add that (unlike an "entity" or a something) it is non-existent too. Social theory has to problematise the truth or falsity of the object on to which sociological theory enfolds, or maps. The first point, here, is to the effect that behind the back of the sociological theorist, and with vicious circularity together with infinite regress as its weapons, the abnegation of contradiction demands its blood. The only way to avoid either one of these weapons without succumbing to the other is to enunciate a theory which is neither first-order nor higher-order but *both at the same time*. And this Marxism does. In the first place, we learn from Marx (*pace* the excrescences of the worst passages in *The German Ideology* and the 1859 Preface) that theorisation's reflection on the appropriateness of its own categorial lenses is social reflection: reflexivity is *practical* reflexivity, in Marx. If reflexivity is practical reflexivity ('All social life is essentially practical') then *metatheoretical* and first-order research have to go forward together. They have to advance on the same front. More precisely: first-order theory and metatheory are not two bodies of theory with a single face but rather one and the same body of (active) theorisation competent to face in two ways. Secondly: only if theory's abstractions are construed as abstractions-in rather than as abstractions-from can practical reflexivity's programme be made good. For, then, in reflecting on social existence theory reflects in the same movement upon its own categories and abstractions; and *vice versa*. In other words the conceptions of Marxism as practically reflexive and as a theory of contradiction entail one another, at any rate in terms of the resources which either of these descriptions supply.

And from here breaks out mayhem so far as sociological Marxism is concerned. No longer can it be said that one thing is that thing itself and not another: for the very category of thinghood becomes suspect. Society, for instance, equals asocial or non-social existence. The demonic version of this thesis is the taking in of each other's washing which goes forward as between structuralism and Rational Choice: contradiction has to be denied at all costs. The more (from a revolutionary point of view) blessed version of the same reflection explores the ways in which contradiction need not immediately explode, or detonate, but can move. (On the idea of "movement of a contradiction" see the chapter on money in Marx's *Capital* and discussion of the same topic *à propos* the *Grundrisse* in Negri's *Marx beyond Marx*.) The crucial terms needful for reporting such a movement are 'mediation' and 'form'. Used indifferently within the left-Marxist tradition I am reporting - but also used eclectically, "form" sometimes meaning species and "mediation" sometimes meaning what interrelates two pre-existent terms - mediation and form come to much the same thing. Their convergent meaning is *mode of existence*. The form of value is for example exchange-value, in and through which value obtains. The mediation of exchange-value is money, which (in its developed form) is the only way value can subsist. Value (in the sense of what Negri and the Autonomists call self- or auto-value) can exist only contradictorily as exchange-value, however; and exchange-value can exist only contradictorily as money as each of the world's debtor crises makes plain. Hence, *mode of existence* cannot be theorised *minus* the category of existence *in the mode of being denied*. Contradiction, again: value is not exchange-value nor is exchange-value money. But money can exist only as exchange-value and exchange-value only as value (the presence of labour within capital). The difficulty concerning these circuits concerns not their absurdity but their subsistence. Marx, renouncing moralising socialism, throws himself into these circuits in more than just a scholarly way. He places his theorisation at the mercy of his world's determinate abstractions, counting upon their movement. Nothing

in the world subsequent to Marx suggests that the contradictions he signalled have ceased to move.

The above presentation can be summarised in a very few simple theses: capital *is and is not* labour; theory *is and is not* practice; we *are and we are not* divided in and against ourselves. Society exists, not as the solution to the problem (should we ever be able to map it clearly) but as the problem as such. Maybe our critique of society as a reification - it is all too dangerous - threatens us with a dualism as between revolutionary subject and static object which reifies society once more. If so, this reification has its point. Sociology in its bleaker moments sometimes captures it. Society is the presence of devilment. Read Adorno in his *Negative Dialectics*: 'There is no universal history which leads us from primitive communism to emancipatory humanity, but there is one which leads us from the slingshot to the atom bomb'.

VAT on Fuel¹

Keep Warm - Burn a Tory

The Fuel Tax will be phased in by putting bills up by 8% from April this year, and then another 9.5% from April 1995. In the last budget a totally inadequate compensation scheme was announced for those worst off (mainly pensioners). An estimated 2000 people die each year because they can't afford to keep warm. Most are pensioners. Many more develop chronic health problems.

The Fuel Tax is an attack on our standard of living. Like the Poll Tax it relies on our co-operation. There are already calls for a campaign of civil disobedience involving non-payment, or late payment; fiddles and physical opposition to cut-offs; total non-cooperation with the electricity and gas boards. Local groups formed the backbone of the anti-poll tax struggle, and they will play an essential part in our battle against the Fuel Tax. Contracts for information or help with setting up a meeting to form a group in your area: No Fuel Tax c/o PO Box 85, Balsall, Birmingham B12 9RL

Lothian Communities Campaign Against VAT on Fuel

Statement of Intent

Lothian Communities Campaign against VAT on Fuel aim to include everyone who is opposed to VAT on fuel, whichever of the recommended strategies they feel able to participate in themselves, in order to, make this unjust tax unworkable through the action of grass-roots "people power" on a massive scale.

This will include a wide range of activities and actions, based upon informed choice, such as:-

- The formation of autonomous local groups and networks in every community to resist VAT on fuel.

¹ For the information of our overseas readers, the British government have just recently 'imposed', or are trying to impose, the biggest tax hike on Britain's working population since the 1940s. One new tax they are presently introducing is the addition of Value Added Tax (VAT) on Domestic Fuel Bills. This will increase the prices of gas, electricity, oil and coal, etc. by one fifth (17.5%). When first introduced in 1973 VAT was supposed to be a tax on 'luxury' goods, however, as the capitalist crisis has gone on it has been used to cut income tax rates to the rich (by raising more tax revenue from retail sources) and thus VAT has been added to almost everything, even to a bag of fish and chips. Meanwhile certain goods have had their VAT removed or substantially slashed, these include thorough bred race horses (0%), golf club membership fees (0%) and the export/import sale of antiques on the European market (2.5%). The class nature of sales taxes are obvious but this is a blatant attempt to redistribute resources from the working to the capitalist class. (Editor)

- Collective non-payment and delayed payment of the VAT'element of electricity and gas bills.
- The defence of non-payer's homes to prevent disconnections, coupled with appeal's to electricity and gas workers not to carry out disconnections.
- Using persuasion and, if need be, preventing entry to homes by power company workers for the purposes of reading, or recalibration (card-meters), of meters.
- A campaign of direct action demonstrations against the gas and electricity companies, and against the government, including occupations of showrooms.

It is disgusting that the fuel companies should make massive profits while thousands die each year from the cold. This regressive fuel tax will make this even worse, hitting the poor especially hard.

Similarly, we are pledged to oppose any steps to privatise Scotland's water, and we encourage the local community networks fighting VAT to equally resist water privatisation and other injustices such as racism and the harassment of poll tax non-payers.

Some tips for Tax-dodgers

- pay as late as you possibly can - *always* wait for a red bill.
- refuse key or card meters - you're not obliged to have one (unless you've been caught robbing 'leccy and gas before).
- if your meter is visible from the street, and it's inside your home, cover it or put a curtain up so it can't be read by snoopers.
- each fuel board only has a few meter readers - make appointments for them to come and then miss the visit.
- only a few staff work on actual cut-offs - so there aren't many of them to physically prevent from cutting your supply.
- if you're due a visit from them make sure you have a good mortice lock on front and back doors, and secure windows before going out.
- if you can, change your bill to a false name - you can't then be held responsible for a whopping great fuel bill.
- don't try fiddling a live gas or electricity supply unless you're sure of what you're doing - ask someone who knows, like a friendly electrician or gas fitter.
- don't forget to keep a check on elderly and ill neighbours and friends.

Science and Humanity: Hegel, Marx and Dialectic

Cyril Smith¹

Abbreviations:

Hegel

- Phen* = *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Trans. Miller)
HP = *History of Philosophy, Intro.* (Trans. Knox/Miller)
PR = *Philosophy of Right.* (Trans. Nisbet)
SL = *Science of Logic.* (Trans. Miller)
E1 = *Encyclopaedia (Smaller Logic).* (Trans. Geraets et al.)
E2 = *Philosophy of Nature.* (Trans. Miller.)
E3 = *Philosophy of Mind.* (Trans. Wallace and Miller.)

Marx

- MECW* = *Marx-Engels Collected Works*
C1 = *Capital*, Vol. 1. (Trans. Fowkes).
C3 = *Capital*, Vol. 3. (Moscow, 1971)

It was in the 1890s, when Karl Marx had been safely dead for a decade, that Kautsky and Plekhanov invented 'Marxism'. This total falsification of Marx's work incorporated a story about a couple² of 'Young Hegelians', who extracted the 'dialectical method' from Hegel's system, and transplanted it into a materialist world-view. Then - so ran the tale - they could 'apply' materialism to history. The inventors of 'Marxism' gave their mythical beast the name 'dialectical materialism'.

This fable about Marx was bound up with with another one - equally false - about Hegel. It was a stirring philosophical yarn about an 'Idealist', who believed that the world was made of mind-stuff, of which ordinary matter was no more than a shadow.

¹ Many of the above ideas reflect the discussions I have had with Ute Bublitz, who is currently working on an important book with the preliminary title: *Wealth and Method*. Of course, I take sole responsibility for what I have written here.

² Friedrich Engels has been widely blamed for originating the distortions of Marx's ideas. I am reluctant to follow this fashion. Engels fought all his life as a communist, but, as he himself acknowledged, as the disciple of Marx, rather than an equal partner. Instead of merely pointing to the way that Plekhanov, Kautsky and others took advantage of some of the weaker formulations in his popular theoretical contributions, their relationship to Marx's ideas ought to be assessed very carefully. Unable to do this in the present short article, I have taken the unsatisfactory decision to avoid reference to Engels' writings altogether.

This ghost-world jerked forward in a contradictory, automated dance called 'dialectic'. Spirit, exuding a strong religious odour, pulled the strings which kept History moving, individual humans being mere puppets, and not very lifelike ones, either. The State, which took charge of the workings of society, was supposedly modelled by Hegel on the authoritarian Prussian state.

Many people nowadays know that this is a caricature of the real Hegel. In this respect, he is luckier than Marx, who is still either attacked or praised as if he were indeed the figure depicted by 'Marxism'. (Although the 'Marxists' swallowed the Hegel legend whole, it would be unfair to blame them for it, since it was concocted by the Hegelians.)

This paper, aiming to contribute to the work of correcting these stereotypes, focuses on the meaning each of these two thinkers gives to the word 'science'. It argues that to think Marx and Hegel employ the same 'dialectical logic', is to falsify both of them. Marx meant precisely what he said in the 'Afterword' to the Second Edition of *Capital*: they were 'direct opposites'.

Hegel was no revolutionary, but neither was he the conservative of legend. He was one of those thinkers who tried to illuminate the path of reform in Germany, in response to the French Revolution. After 1819, this path was blocked by the conservative forces in Prussia, and Hegel kept his newly-acquired place in the Berlin Chair of Philosophy only with the greatest difficulty. Some of his students were still less fortunate, and ended up in the prisons of the Prussian state.

Like Schiller, Goethe, Schelling, Hilderlin and others in Germany at that time, Hegel tried to grasp the social developments lying in store for Europe. His study of Adam Smith, James Steuart and Adam Ferguson, gave him a picture of a world governed by individual self-interest, where the mass of atomised, fragmented human beings was condemned to a life of utterly dehumanising labour. Could the fate which had already overtaken England and Scotland be avoided by their country, and, in any case, what had happened to the promise of the Enlightenment?

The backwardness of Germany gave these thinkers a distinctive angle on such questions. Like the Scots whose work they studied so carefully, they were both inside and outside the developing 'civil society'. Vital for them all was an idealised picture of the ancient Greek *polis*, whose harmony was contrasted with the discord of the modern world. (Hegel saw the need for philosophy as originating in the break-up of this harmony in the Fifth Century BC.) They were especially impressed by Ferguson, the Gaelic-speaking Highlander, who pointed to parallels between the polis, the Highland clans and indigenous North Americans, contrasting them favourably with 'civil society'.

Hegel refused to evade such issues by capitulation to conservatism (like Schelling), an aesthetic and romantic search for another world (Goethe, Schiller), or poetry and madness (Hilderlin). Hegel did not ignore the repulsive forms of nascent bourgeois society which were appearing throughout Europe, but, looking them in the face, tried to reconcile them with the advance of humanity towards freedom.

But how could the discordant forces which were tearing modern society apart be grasped as a united whole? Hegel struggled with this contradiction in every one of his major works. It is not hard to see this in his early writings, or in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the

Philosophy of History and the *Philosophy of Right*. It is less easy to perceive, but it is also the unstated question at the heart of the Logic. Hegel believed that to answer it was the task of Science (*Wissenschaft*).

Living with the consequences of nineteenth century natural science as we do, we can easily misunderstand the term 'science', as it was used by Hegel. The modern scientist is taught to think of him- or herself as an individual operator, living by their privately-owned wits and studying objects in an external nature. 'Scientific objectivity' is taken to mean that the thinkers them-selves are excluded from the object of study.

The procedure known as the 'scientific method', restricts itself from the start by accepting its presuppositions and methods as a matter of faith. To follow it guarantees that you can question neither the meaning of what you are doing, nor the validity of your methods of doing it. Indeed, meaning itself can only be thought of as something external to science, imported subjectively - thus illegally - into the world. Why do you want to test that particular hypothesis? Why should failure of a test destroy its truth? What is truth, anyway?

Such questions are banned from science, and referred to another department. During the last century, these impoverished forms of thought became widely accepted as the model for all thinking. They show their bankruptcy most plainly when people try to imitate these procedures and attitudes of the natural sciences in those pseudo-sciences called 'social'. 'Marxism', hearing about the transformation of socialism into a science, assumed Marx was some kind of 'social scientist'.

The conceptions of science held by Marx and Hegel, while opposed to each other, are united in rejecting all of this. Hegel spent his life searching for ways to show how, seen correctly, the antagonistic particles which make up modern society could be understood as parts of a whole. But how could he harmonise the cacophonous clash of weapons on 'the battlefield of private interest' (*PR*, para 289)? He set himself - and philosophy - a tremendous task. In a world of disunity and oppression, he wanted a science which could grasp human society as organically developing towards unity and freedom. Reflecting on the outcome of the French Revolution, he decided that to be self-determined was only possible in the realm of systematic thought.

Hegel saw Science as essentially a *communal* activity, and knowledge as a historical process. To engage in scientific work was to participate in the purposive activity of Spirit, the entire movement of History. Only through it could the isolated individual, the inhabitant of 'civil society', get hold of the picture as a whole.

The task of leading the individual from his uneducated standpoint to knowledge had to be seen in its universal sense, just as it was the universal individual, self-conscious Spirit, whose formative education had to be studied...The single individual is incomplete Spirit, a concrete shape in whose whole existence *one* determinateness predominates. (*Phen*, p 16.)

Reason was the unifying power in knowledge, described by Hegel as 'purposive activity' (*ibid*, p 12). It was not the activity or purpose of any individual thinker which did this work, but the action of Spirit, the subjectivity of an entire social organism. This is what Hegel means when he says:

Everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject* (*ibid*, p 10).

Such knowledge could not base itself in individual opinions, as Hegel explained in his very first lecture in Berlin.

An opinion (*Meinung*) is mine, it is not an inherently universal absolute...Philosophy is an objective science of truth, a science of its necessity, of conceptual knowing; it is no opining and no web-spinning of opinions. (*HP*)

Philosophical science was not spun out of the heads of great thinkers, but was rooted in all the life and work of the whole of humanity.

The possession of self-conscious rationality, a possession belonging to us, to our contemporary world, has not been gained suddenly...It is essentially an inheritance and...the result of labour, the labour of all the preceding generations of the human race. The arts of the externals of our life, the mass of means and skills, the arrangements and customs of social and political associations, all these are the result of the reflection, invention, needs, misery and misfortune, the will and achievement of the history which has preceded our life of today. (*ibid*.)

What science must achieve is not just knowledge of something outside us, but *self-knowledge*, where 'self' refers to the entire spiritual collective. It was at once a subjective and an objective activity, tracing the path taken by the past movement of Spirit, but *only* the past. The method of this science, logic, was itself a science, and thus a part of History. It revealed the pattern of inner connections which bind Reason into a unity. Reason was not a set of external rules to be followed by correct thinking, nor was logic a kind of calculus, merely pointing to the formal links between the forms of objects. The forms were inseparable from their content. The logical structure of Hegel's science had to demonstrate how its objects were *necessarily* connected.

Logic being the science of the absolute form, this formal science, in order to be *true*, must possess in its own self a *content* adequate to its form. (*SL*, p 594.)

A logical judgement - 'the rose is red', 'Socrates is a man' - appears to be an assertion that the subject and object are judged *by us* to have some relationship. But, Hegel believed, in his account of Being and Essence he has demonstrated they belonged together *essentially*. The judgement necessarily gives rise to the syllogism, which itself, through the development of its 'figures', shows how it embodies truth.

The criterion for truth, insisted Hegel, could not be external to systematic knowledge. It was not a matter of showing that the assertions of science were 'correct', by holding them up against some image of a reality external to them, or testing them by applying a rule for correctness. Truth had to be found in the very categories of thought, developed within the system itself.

Hitherto, the Notion of logic has rested on the separation...of the *content* of cognition and its *form*, or of *truth* and *certainly*...(1)It is assumed that the

material of knowing is present on its own account as a ready-made world apart from thought, that thinking on its own is empty and comes as an external form to the said material, fills itself with it and only thus acquires a content and so becomes real knowing. (*Ibid*, p 44.)

To do the job Hegel set it, science had to be organically unified, a living system, which contained its own presuppositions and its own method of development within itself. It did not try to answer questions which were posed from outside, but only those questions which were generated by its own workings. It had to include itself in its conception of the world. And it had to be dynamic, self-developing through continual self-criticism, grasping the contradictions, not just between itself and something outside it, but within its own body.

When it encounters such contradictions,

(t)hinking will not give up, but remains faithful to itself even in this loss of its being at home with itself, 'so that it may overcome', and may accomplish in thinking itself the resolution of its own contradictions. (*E1*, para 11.)

So Hegel's dialectic can't be a set of formulae, or rules, to be detached and 'applied' elsewhere. Dialectic means grasping that the contradictions which confront us at every turn are contradictions of the finite, which science is driven to transcend.

That is what everything finite is: its own sublation (*Aufhebung*). Hence, the dialectical constitutes the moving soul of scientific progression, and it is the principle through which alone *immanent coherence and necessity* enter into the content of science, just as all genuine, nonexternal elevation above the finite is to be found in this principle. (*E1*, para 81.)

At his most optimistic, in 1816, Hegel told his Heidelberg students:

The courage of truth, faith in the power of the spirit, is the first condition of philosophising. Because man is spirit he should and must deem himself worthy of the highest; he cannot think highly enough of the greatness and power of his spirit. For a man of this faith nothing is so inflexible and refractory as not to disclose itself to him. The original hidden and reserved essence of the universe has no force which could withstand the courage of knowing (*Erkennens*); it must expose itself to that courage, bring its wealth and depths to light for our enjoyment. (*HP*.)

Was Hegel an idealist? Does this question refer to a belief that the world was a product of an individual mind, like Berkeley; or that the way we got to know it had to begin with the certainty of the individual 'I', like Descartes; or that we constructed our picture of it by means of individually-possessed categories (Kant)? Then the answer is a decided NO! That kind of idealism, said Hegel, was

a pure *assertion* which does not comprehend its own self, nor can it make itself comprehensible to others. (*Phen*, p 141.)

Hegel claims, however, that his kind of idealism is shared by any real philosophy. It is basically the idea that truth cannot be found in isolated bits and pieces, but belongs only

to the whole picture.

The proposition that the finite is ideal (*ideell*) constitutes idealism. The idealism of philosophy consist in nothing else than in recognising that the finite has no veritable being. Every philosophy is essentially an idealism, or at least has idealism for its principle. ...Consequently, the opposition of idealism and realistic philosophy has no significance. (*SL*, pp 154-5.)

This ideality of the finite is the most important proposition of philosophy, and for that reason every genuine philosophy is *Idealism*. (*E1*, para. 95, Remark.)

However 'mystical' it is made to appear in many standard accounts, the shape of Hegel's system is the direct and precise expression of the task he set philosophy to perform. He is convinced that systematic thinking is the only way that the unity and development of the world can be grasped. The demand that his science be absolute, that is, independent of anything external to it, determines Hegel's conception of Nature, and its relation to Spirit.

Estranged from the Idea, Nature is only the corpse of the Understanding. (*E2*, para 247, Remark.)

Nature exhibits no freedom in its existence, but only necessity and contingency. (*Ibid*, para 248.)

Nature, even at the highest point of its elevation over finitude, always falls back into it again and in this way exhibits a perpetual cycle. (*E3*, para 381, Remark.)

Most striking is Hegel's inability to conceive of anything like historical development in Nature, including the evolution of organisms. (See, for example, *E2*, para 249, Remark and para 339, Remark.)

Now let us briefly illustrate Hegel's approach to social problems with a couple of examples of the way that his dialectic copes with social issues.

(i) The problem of crime and punishment is one to which he gave considerable attention. He defines crime as

the initial use of coercion, as force employed by a free agent in such a way as to infringe the existence of freedom in its concrete sense - ie to infringe right as right. (*PR*, para 95.)

In his attitude to the punishment of a criminal act, Hegel is quite liberal. For example, he is for limited use of the death penalty. While he believes strongly in capital punishment for murder, he is critical of its imposition in England at that time for theft. The idea of punishment as revenge, as a preventative, as a deterrent or corrective, all leave him cold.

Crime is an infringement of 'right as right', and punishment is the 'cancellation' of this infringement. What matters to Hegel is neither the injury to the victim nor the distortion

of the criminal, but the contradiction between the crime and the logical whole. Crime has the logical status of the 'negative infinite judgement', like saying 'a lion is not a table' - correct but pointless. It affirms the total incommensurability of subject and predicate. (See *E1*, para 173.)

Someone who commits a crime - for argument's sake a theft - does not merely deny the particular right of someone else to this particular thing (as in a suit about civil rights); instead, he denies the rights of that person completely; therefore he is not merely obliged to return the thing he stole, but is punished as well, because he has violated right as such, ie right in general. (*Ibid.* See also *SL*, p 642.)

Hegel is quite aware that the prevalence of crime is to be attributed to the conditions of life to which millions of people are condemned. He even had an inkling that there might be a connection between this phenomenon and the rise of 'civil society'. For him, all of this is quite irrelevant. He is concerned only with the relation of crime to the logical structure of society. He can have no conception that the collision between the criminal and his victim's property rights reflects only one aspect of the inhuman character of private property itself.

(ii) Hegel is certain that poverty as a modern phenomenon is the necessary consequence of civil society, and is inseparable from the heaping up of wealth at the other pole. He also admits that he knows no solution to this 'problem', which has deplorable results.

(C)ivil society affords a spectacle of extravagance and misery as well as of the ethical corruption common to both. (*PR*, para 185.)

When a large mass of people sinks below the level of a certain standard of living - which automatically regulates itself at the level necessary for a member of the society in question, that feeling of right, integrity and honour which comes from supporting oneself by one's own activity and work is lost. This leads to the creation of a *rabble* (*Pöbel*), which in turn makes it much easier for wealth to be concentrated in a few hands...

...Poverty in itself does not reduce people to a rabble; a rabble is created only by the disposition associated with poverty, by inward rebellion against the rich, against society, the government, etc...This in turn gives rise to the evil that the rabble do not have sufficient honour to gain their livelihood through their own work, yet claim they have a right to receive their livelihood...The important question of how poverty can be remedied is one which agitates and torments modern societies. (*PR*, para 244 and Remark.)

There is no doubt that Professor Hegel was genuinely sorry for poor people. But he could not allow this to determine his philosophical consideration of the problem. As he says, it is not poverty 'in itself' that causes trouble, but the effect it has on the feelings about society of both poor and rich. Hegel refuses to ignore the problem of 'the rabble', or to avoid the awkward way this uncivil entity threatens the equilibrium of civil society. But his attention has to be focussed sternly on the ability of dialectic to accommodate poverty within the overall conception of the movement of History towards freedom. The State sublated the difficulties of civil society, and this was a logical

result.

Hegel's project is quite magnificent, and, if you want to make sense of the world of civil society, it is indeed absolutely necessary. It also happens to be utterly impossible to achieve. For to complete it would mean to show how the forms of bourgeois society are compatible with freedom - and they are not. By 1831 when Hegel died, these social forms could already be seen to be forms of oppression. However, what had begun to bring this home to many people in Europe was not some new philosophical argument, but the revolt of the new 'slaves' themselves.

In 1839, when Karl Marx was beginning work on his Doctoral Dissertation, he recognised Hegel as 'our great teacher'. Thirty-four years later he could still 'avow' himself 'a pupil of that mighty thinker'. (*CI*, 'Afterword' to the Second Edition.) But as a postgraduate student, he could already see that the Hegelian School was breaking up.

It was not a matter of some errors in the argument. What was wrong was that

philosophy has sealed itself off to form a consummate, total world...The world confronting a philosophy total in itself is...a world torn apart. This philosophy's activity therefore also appears torn apart and contradictory. (*MECW*, Vol. 1, p 491.)

In his Dissertation itself, in 1841, he analysed the positions of the two wings of this school - and accepted neither (*ibid.*, p 85.) The problem for Marx, then and always, was how the knowledge gained in philosophical work could 'turn outwards to the world'.

In 1843, spurred on by the work of Feuerbach, but already going far beyond it, Marx began his first assault on the edifice of the Hegelian system, his *Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Law*. He had no quarrel with Hegel's description of the modern state, which was in any case not a justification of Prussian authoritarianism, as the legend has it, but an account of what a rationally-reformed Prussia might look like.

Hegel is not to be blamed for depicting the nature of the modern state as it is, but for presenting that which is as the *nature of the state*. (*MECW*, Vol. 3, p 63.)

Marx objects to Hegel's logical approach, the false relation he assumes between his scientific exposition and the world it is supposed to be illuminating.

The concrete content, the actual definition, appears as something formal; the wholly abstract formal definition appears as the concrete content. The essence of the definitions of the state is not that they are definitions of the state, but that in their most abstract form they can be regarded as logical-metaphysical definitions. Not the philosophy of law but logic is the real centre of interest. Philosophical work does not consist in embodying thinking in political definitions, but in evaporating the existing political definitions into abstract thoughts. Not the logic of the matter, but the matter of logic is the philosophical element. The logic does not serve to prove the state, but the state to prove the logic. (*ibid.* pp 17-18.)

Hegel has turned upside-down the relation between philosophy and the world. says

Marx. Hegel's method reflects the upside-down, inhuman, irrational way that people live, and in so doing attempts to make it appear as the embodiment of reason.

Marx's theoretical and practical work over the next four decades unfolded the implications of this 'inversion' of the relationship of science to the world. By the start of 1844, in the Introduction to the *Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Law*, (the only part he ever completed), Marx had begun to see that he was looking for the way to 'actualise philosophy', and that this demanded a social power of a special kind.

As philosophy finds its *material* weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its *spiritual* weapons in philosophy. And once the lightning of thought has struck this ingenuous soil of the people, the emancipation of the *Germans* into *human beings* will take place. (*Ibid.*, p 187.)

Both his study of political economy and his conception of communist revolution, which engaged Marx's attention for the rest of his life, began from there. He saw the three great achievements of bourgeois thought as being political economy, Hegel's dialectic and Utopian socialism. These three took the attempt of individual thinkers to grasp the atomised modern world as a totality as far as it could go. In his scientific critique of them, Marx showed that all three of them unconsciously expressed the inhumanity of the world they studied.

Where Hegel's science strove to reconcile the conflicting forces of the modern world, Marx's science set out from the necessity to actualise those very conflicts and bring them to fruition. For instance, if science showed that the state expressed the contradictions of 'civil society' founded on private property, this told us that both private property and the state were unfit for human life, and had to be abolished.

Hegel's dialectic had locked up all the disintegrating forces of modern life into a system of concepts, while Marx's science struggled to *unlock* them. Obviously, then, the latter could never be a closed *system*. It was *in principle* incomplete, open. Marx's science could only do its job when it went beyond the bounds of science as such. Its problems could neither be posed nor solved on the level of knowledge.

The key category of Marx's theoretical work was the one which 'Marxism' sought to evade: the idea of 'humanness'. Without it, notions like 'capital', 'proletariat', 'surplus value', have no meaning. His standpoint, that of 'human society or socialised humanity' (*Theses on Feuerbach*, Thesis 10), enabled Marx to understand that certain forms of human life were beneath the dignity of homo sapiens, not 'worthy of their human nature' (C3, p 820.)

But hidden inside these very forms was a human content, which science had to discover. Within the framework of individualism, inside which men and women had to fight each other to live, they retained, perhaps only in odd corners of their beings, their potential for self-determination, self-creation, self-consciousness and social solidarity. Indeed, it was only because there was a mismatch between this humanity and its inhuman forms, and because people had to struggle to 'fight out' this discrepancy, that it was possible to know which way up the world should go.

Any account of any part of Marx's work which does not centre on this conception - and that includes 90 percent of the huge volume of writings on the subject - any discussion of

'Marxian economics', or 'Marxist sociology', and the like, must be utterly false. It seems to me that the supreme task today, and not an easy one, is to disinter Marx's fundamental insight, and to find ways to articulate it in as accessible a form that we can, free of all academic mystification. Only then can it become the foundation for practical action.

It was his conception of 'humanness' which gave Marx his criterion for truth. For example:

The mediating process between men engaged in exchange is not a social or human process, not human relationship; it is the abstract relationship of private property to private property...Since men engaged in exchange do not relate to each other as men, *things* lose the significance of human personal property. (MECW. 3 pp 212-3.)

To identify Hegel's dialectic with the method of Marx is to deny such a view. For Hegel's conception of science left no room for such a critical judgement - indeed, it was designed especially to preclude it. Humanity, identified as Spirit, just was, and there was nothing more to be said about it. Hegel believed that science had to comprehend the forms taken by human life and consciousness, not to ask 'should they be', but only to show the necessary place of each as a part of the whole picture. This is what Marx means when he referred to

the kind of consciousness - and philosophical consciousness is precisely of this kind - which regards the comprehending consciousness (*begreifende Denken*) as the real man, and the comprehended world as such as the real world. (MECW Vol. 28, p 38.)³

That is why Hegel could consider neither the State nor political economy as subjects for critique. He could only pay tribute to the scientific work of Smith, Say and Ricardo. Marx was also an admirer of these great thinkers. But he saw that when they viewed human society as a collection of individuals inspired by self-interest, they were accurately reflecting the real relations of bourgeois society, and making them appear as if this were the 'natural' way to live.

The understanding of what is and is not human permeates Marx's conception of science. Consider two well-known remarks from Volume 3 of *Capital*:

All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance (*Erscheinungsform*) and the essence (*Wesen*) of things directly coincided. (C3, p 817. See also Letter Marx to Engels, June 27, 1867.)

And earlier, discussing 'prices of production',

Thus everything appears reversed in competition. The final pattern (*Gestalt*) of

³ Gallons of ink have been spilled in interpreting this 1857 Introduction. In almost every case, the assumption is made that, when Marx says he is explaining the Method of Political Economy, and showing its close relation with the method of Hegel, he *means* that he is describing his own method. This entire body of work rests on the single word '*offenbar*', generally translated as 'evidently'. This can't be right, and a reading of the rest of this Section of the Introduction, unencumbered by 'Marxist' prejudice, makes this plain, I believe. This belief would need more space to justify than I can devote here.

economic relations as seen on the surface, in their real existence (*realen Existenz*), and consequently in the conceptions (*Vorstellungen*) by which the bearers and agents of these relations seek to understand them, is very much different from, and indeed quite the reverse of, their inner but concealed (*verhüllten*) essential (*wesentlichen*) pattern and the conception (*Begriff*) corresponding to it. (C3, p 209)

Here, the parallels between Marx's method and Hegel's are plain to see. But only in Marx's case is a further question immediately raised (although rarely by 'Marxists'): why are appearance and essence opposed? Why can't we live in such a way that they do coincide? His struggle to answer such questions is the heart and soul of Marx's critique of political economy, of his conception of history and of his notions of the communist revolution and communist society.

When 'Marxism' thought that Marx had produced a set of 'economic doctrines', a 'Marxist political economy', and when it identified 'Marx's dialectic' with Hegel's dialectic, it was denying Marx's central insight. In presenting the most developed form of his work on the critique of political economy, in the 1873 Edition of *Capital*, Marx explained quite clearly that 'my dialectic is not only different from that of Hegel, but its direct opposite.' Unfortunately, nobody was listening.

Right at the start of his study of political economy, Marx wrote:

The *community of men*, or the manifestation of the nature of *men*, their mutual complementing the result of which is species-life, truly human life - this community is conceived by political economy in the form of *exchange and trade*...It is seen that political economy *defines* the *estranged* form of social intercourse as the *essential* and *original* form corresponding to man's nature. (*Ibid.*, p 217.)

In opposition to this, Marx knew that

since human nature is the *true community* of men, by manifesting their *nature* men *create*, produce, the *human community*, the social entity, which is no abstract universal power opposed to the single individual, but is the essential nature of each individual, his own activity, his own life, his own spirit, his own wealth. (*Ibid.*)

As he put it nearly thirty years later:

The categories of bourgeois political economy...are forms of thought which are socially valid, and therefore objective, for the relations of production belonging to this historic-ally determined mode of social production. (C1, p 169)

These formulas, which bear the unmistakable stamp of belonging to a social formation in which the process of production has mastery over man, instead of the opposite, appear to the political economists' consciousness to be as much a self-evident and nature-imposed necessity as productive labour itself. (*Ibid.*, pp 174-5.)

Marx's critique of political economy cannot be separated from his critique of the Hegelian dialectic.⁴ He showed how Hegel's logic expressed most profoundly the logic of money and capital, and was bound up with the distortion, inversion and inhumanity of the forms of consciousness through which money operated. For Hegel, as for Ricardo, money simply functioned as a 'universal means of exchange', promoting justice and equality (PR, para299.)

Marx, by analysis of the categories of the political economists themselves, showed how this relation's impersonal power arose necessarily out of the nature of the commodity, and enslaved the whole of society, both rich and poor. The *substance*, 'value', transformed itself into the active *subject*, 'capital', and this was what Hegel unconsciously depicted as 'Spirit'.⁵ Where Hegel sees Spirit as the product of human social activity which controls our lives, Marx sees capital.

When Marx unfolds the forms of value, their necessary development into the money-form, and the development of money into capital, he deliberately refers to Hegel's exposition of the Judgement and the Syllogism. Hegel's account shows no way out of the inexorable forward march of the Idea. Marx points to the inhumanity and craziness (*Verrücktheit*)⁶ of these forms, whose apparent 'inevitability' and 'naturalness' he shows to arise from within this inhuman social formation itself.

So these parallel logical processes actually move in opposite directions. Hegel purports to demonstrate that thought can find a place for all kinds of phenomena of the modern world. Anything, indeed, that is to be discovered existing there has to be shown to be there of necessity. However miserable people may be in such situations, they will be consoled when they hear how it is all for the best 'in the end'. The dialectic moves on past their misery, majestically carrying 'us' - 'we who look on' - to the heights of the Absolute.

In Marx, on the contrary, the forms demonstrate in their movement the way the dialectical trick works. They show us, step by step, *how* the inhuman relations inside which we live our lives disguise themselves as 'natural'. This is the direct opposite of his 'great master'. Hegel locks the gates of our inhuman prison, fixing to them the sign 'FREEDOM'. Marx wants to show us, not just that we are imprisoned, certainly not a Utopian picture of what lies beyond the walls, but how we locked ourselves in and thus *how to get out*, that is, to live as humans.

Was Karl Marx a materialist? If this word is used to mean something about 'matter being given to us through our senses', or thinking being a 'reflection of matter', certainly NOT. Such materialism, said Marx, took the standpoint of 'the isolated individual in civil society' (*Theses on Feuerbach*, Thesis 10.) When he called himself a materialist, he wanted to stress how scientific thinking reflected 'the real movement'.

⁴ Books like *The Logic of Marx's Capital*, by Tony Smith, and *Dialectics and Social Theory*, by Ali Shamsavari, typify a type of learned discourse about Marx and Hegel which deletes all distinguishing marks between their methods, or dis-tinguishes them only by vague references to 'idealism' and 'materialism'. Such writers never bother to ask themselves *why* Hegel's dialectic takes the shape it does. Nor do they consider what, if anything, Marx's method has to do with his communism, which, by the way, is never so much as mentioned.

⁵ Hiroshi Uchida's book *Marx's 'Grundrisse' and Hegel's 'Logic'* gives an important exposition of this and related ideas. See also, Patrick Murray, *Marx's Theory of Scientific Knowledge* for a related view.

⁶ In *CI*, p 169, the word is translated coyly as 'absurd'.

Technology reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct production process of his life. (C1, p 493).

But bourgeois society turned technology and natural science into instruments for the inhuman exploitation of both Nature and labour power. This is the root cause of

the weaknesses of the abstract materialism of natural science, a materialism which excludes the historical process. (*Ibid*, p 494.)

By liberating society from fetishised forms, the communist revolution would make it possible for humanity to see its true relationship with Nature. Productive activity was revealed as 'a process between man and nature', in which the human being 'confronts the materials of nature as a force of nature'. When a human being 'acts upon nature and changes it...he simultaneously changes his own nature' and 'develops the potentialities slumbering within nature'. That is why Marx's science - in direct opposition to Hegel's - could see the potentially human role of the natural sciences:

History itself is a *real* part of *natural history* - of nature developing into man. Natural science will incorporate into itself natural science: there will be *one* science...The *social* reality of nature, and *human* natural science, or the *natural science of man*, are identical terms. (MECW 3, pp 303-4.)

Marx could not have done his job without Hegel. By exhibiting the workings of his dialectic in such detail, and so comprehensively, Marx's 'great teacher' had given us a faithful map of our jail. 'All' that Marx needed to do was to turn the map upside down and reverse the arrows on the sign-posts. That is why *critique*, in the special meaning Marx gave that term, was so important for Marx's work. Through gaps and internal contradictions in Hegel's system, Marx could glimpse possible routes for our escape tunnel.

Of course, just as Hegel's task could never be completed, Marx's was also one that could never have an end. In any case, he only had time to begin the study of one particular item on his agenda. If we refuse to be bound by the false notion of 'Marxism', the idea that it possessed the patent on a 'complete, integral world-outlook', then we stand a chance of following Marx's lead and continuing his work into the uncharted terrain of the twenty-first century.

Tom Paine on Common Sense

Richard Gunn

Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, which ridiculed monarchy and argued passionately for American independence from Great Britain, was published anonymously in 1776, the year of the American Declaration of Independence and - perhaps an event of no lesser significance - the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Later, Paine was to become a French Revolutionary, aligning himself with the Girondins and voting against the execution of Louis XVI. His career was that of a professional revolutionary, always in the thick of events, and his fame rests upon the stream of pamphlets and theoretical texts that his defence of revolutionary causes produced. In England, the public hangman burnt Paine's books.

For readers of the present journal, Paine's interest lies in his hamassing together of the notion of revolution and of common sense. The connection is by no means obvious, and indeed in Scottish 'common sense' philosophy, from which the journal *Common Sense* derives its name, it may seem to be denied altogether. The Scots, from the eighteenth century onwards, have tended to link common sense to a 'secular calvinism' and to notions of the 'imperfectibility of man'.¹ Scenarios of revolutionary apocalypse have never much appealed to Scottish philosophers, for good or bad historical reasons, and in general political moderation has been seen as the implication of common sensical views. Paine, an Englishman born in Thetford in 1737 (his father was a staymaker) challenges all of this. For him, the connection between common sense and revolutionary apocalypse was direct and obvious. It is, however, also problematic and so what follows should be seen as the exploration of a theoretical and practical tension rather than as an expression of an alternative view.

In *Common Sense*,² Paine uses the expression 'common sense' only three times. It is omitted from his knockabout and polemically brilliant attack on monarchy - his invective against 'all the crowned ruffians that ever lived' (p.81) - and appears only when his defence of the American Revolution comes on stage. In fact his first two invocations of common sense are to be found in his first three pages devoted to the cause of American independence. In what follows I shall discuss each of his three invocations of 'common sense' in turn.

1. 'In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense; and have no other preliminaries to settle with the reader, than that he will

¹ George Davie *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect*, Polygon, 1986.

² My references are to the Penguin Books edn. 1976.

divest himself of prejudice and prepossession, and suffer his reason and his feelings to determine for themselves; that he will put *on*, or rather that he will no put *off*, the true character of a man, and generously enlarge his views beyond the present day' (p. 81-1).

Read carelessly, this passage could seem to equate common sense in a hopeless and crude way with the gut feelings of the plain man. This is a hopeless equation because gut feelings are not always reliable; because the plain man can be a reactionary man; because 'facts', however 'simple', are theory-based; and because the upshot of such an equation is a relativism whereby one gut feeling counts as no less justified than another. What seems obvious is always something which is socially constructed, so that as a necessary (but not necessarily sufficient) condition of revolutionary theorising the category of obviousness has to be problematised. Were the careless reading of the quoted passage to be correct, Paine's attempt to link common sense with revolution would be, at best, incoherent and self-contradictory at worst.

A more careful reading of the passage can notice that it reports a progressive deepening of the notion of common sense. We start out from common sense specified as 'simple facts, plain arguments'; then we turn to common sense as *divestment of prejudice* and the adoption of *the true character of a man*; and finally we arrive at common sense as a generous *enlargement of views*. That is, the first deepening (from simple facts to the character of an unprejudiced man) links common sense to the notion of individual autonomy, much in the sense of Kant's definition of 'enlightenment',³ and the second deepening (from individual autonomy into an enlarging of views) links common sense back to one of its original meanings as *sensus communis*, that is, as public or shared sense.⁴ This enlarging of views was extremely important to Paine, and entirely self-conscious, because (p. 63) he wished to contend that 'The cause of America is the cause of all mankind'. The turn of phrase 'all mankind' signals an appeal to a *sensus communis* other than that of the gut feelings and 'prejudice' or false obviousness which support the status quo. So far as I know this is the very first time in Western history when the notions of revolution as a 'new beginning'⁵ and of common sense *qua sensus communis* were interconnected in such an explicit way. Paine was appealing *from* 'prejudice' to a revolutionary intersubjectivity, and he was doing it in the name of common sense.

2. Might an incipiently independent America not after all reconcile itself with Great Britain? Paine says that he wishes 'To examine that connection and dependance, on the principles of nature and common sense to see what we have to trust to, if separated, and what we are to expect, if independant' (p. 83).

The most striking feature of this passage is its equation of the principles of 'nature' and of 'common sense'. I think it is here that Paine is most at odds with the Scots. His Scottish contemporaries, whilst well aware of their indebtedness to Stoics and thereby natural law traditions, had learnt *via* their Calvinism (however 'secularised') to mistrust nature-based appeals. Nature itself, and not just human nature, counts as fallen. The Scots could not permit themselves the cheerful and easy linking of common sense to nature which Paine assumes.

³ Kant *On History*, Bobbs-Merrill, 1963, p.3.

⁴ In the 1720s, Hutcheson translated *sensus communis* as 'publick sense'. H-G Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (Sheed and Ward 1971) develops this issue further.

⁵ H. Arendt *On Revolution* Penguin 1973.

This said, Paine and the Scots shared the inheritance of a tradition of natural law. For reasons of space I shall refer only to one - but very influential - representative of this tradition, namely Samuel Pufendorf. Pufendorf, in his *The Rights and Duties of Citizens According to Natural Law*, urges that the content of natural law can be deduced from *societas*, which may be translated either as sociality or sociability. The simple fact of the matter is that Pufendorf's deductions cannot be sustained (each clause in natural law is argued on its merits, rather than being seen as an inference from *societas*) and he seems to leave the status of natural law (human? or divinely prescribed?) entirely unclear. Even the notion of *societas* remains problematic. Is he arguing that sociability has merely a utilitarian justification so that, unless we accepted the duty to be sociable, we would be flying at one another's throats? Or is he saying that we have a distinctively moral duty to be sociable? I think one might cut through much of this by saying that *societas* in Pufendorf links up with common sense *qua sensus communis*. The content of natural law does not have to be derived, deductively, from *societas* because it just is *societas*. It relies upon judgements which, though informal, are not necessarily uninformed. Pufendorf's invocations of God (the alleged author of natural law) can be taken up in the same common sensical way: rightly or wrongly he appealed to a God whom common sense or natural reason could see.

Thus, when Paine links common sense to nature, he is doing it - almost at the end of this natural law tradition - in a highly mediated way. Paine writes simply, for the common man, but his writings are consciously or unconsciously complex. What, for Paine, makes it possible to link common sense to nature is the Pufendorffian conception of *societas* or, in other words, *sensus communis*. The notions of *trust* and *expectation* in the passage above cited both refer (in contrasting ways) to a common world: to a world of enlarged and non-prejudiced thought. As it happens his name for this world is 'America'. As it also so happens, America remained for at least a century after the foundation of the United States a heartland for utopian experiments, and dreams. Most of them failed. Inasmuch as Paine mediates nature to common sense through sociability (his generous enlargement) he helps us to link common sense to revolution and to think of 'America' as a myth.

3. Paine doubts that a British navy would supply the best defence of the American seaboard: 'Common sense will tell us, that the power which hath endeavoured to subdue us, is of all others the most improper to defend us' (p. 105). This is on the face of it the least informative of Paine's common sensical appeals. It seems to go back to gut feelings. However, it contains a *sotto voce* appeal to an enlarged community of enlightened nations, and even to a Kantian notion of universalisability as applied to international law. In place of leaving nation states in the state of nature *vis á vis* one another Paine appeals to a literally international common sense. Paine therefore, agitator though he was in every state where he lived, contends that even (or perhaps only) revolutionaries have an interest in defending international law. Indeed it is possible for an anarchist to say: the laws of nation states mean nothing; patriotism is absurd; but international law is an important human (though certainly fallible) protection against horror. The world of the enlarged imagination and of 'all mankind' which Paine summons has to be world-wide or nothing else. Paine was a patriot only (and always) of states in which revolution occurred.

The difficulties concerning Paine are these. It is not remotely clear how 'simple facts' and 'plain arguments' can be deepened into autonomy; nor is it clear how autonomy can be deepened into a generous enlargement of views of a mutually recognitive and revolutionary kind. Nor is it certain that an appeal to 'nature', however mediated through sociability,

gets one anywhere: Rousseau, for example, contended that the innocence of the state of nature impinged only indirectly, if at all, upon judgements concerning corrupt and/or virtuous social man. If 'nature' refers to sociability then it is not natural, *pace* Pufendorf, and if sociability refers to nature then it is to a nature which is already socially constituted, and construed. Finally, Paine's pragmatic worries about the navy of Great Britain link only vaguely with his concern with 'the cause of all mankind', and with his conception of enlarged judgement: he may have remained a revolutionary patriot, after all.

What is strong in Paine is his refusal to be pessimistic about common sense, his refusal to Calvinise it and his insistence upon its power (*Potentia* not *Potestas*⁶) to open revolutionary gates. By implication, he raises the question of whether or not the term 'common sense' is an appropriate one for revolutionaries to use. As so often, political and terminological debates intersect.

This short presentation of Paine delivers no judgements. It intends only to keep tensions alive. All that I should like to say is that, unless common sense (in some definition of the term) and revolution can be seen as strictly equivalent then one or the other of these projects fails. For example, James Ferrier in the nineteenth century prised common sense away from the intersubjectivity which revolution could be held to have promised, and so threatened to destroy it.⁷ For example, Toni Negri in the twentieth century prised common sense away from intersubjectivity and *sensus communis* into 'multiplicity'⁸ and so threatens us with the fate of a post-modern world. What seems to be required is an intersection as between the vaguely (or not so vaguely) Calvinist Scot and the apocalyptic (or not so apocalyptic) revolutionary Italians. I suspect that Tom Paine might have spun in his grave, with sheer revolutionary delight, were it to be possible - frankly I doubt that it is - for *autonomia* and Scottish common sense to join hands.

⁶ A. Negri *The Savage Anomaly* University of Minnesota Press 1991.

⁷ Debates concerning Ferrier's heritage remain unresolved. Davie's *The Democratic Intellect* (EUP 1961) and Arthur Thomson's *Ferrier of ST. Andrews* (SAP 1985) are, so far, the standard texts.

⁸ A. Negri *The Politics of Subversion* Polity 1986.

Book Reviews

Jennifer Harbury

**Bridge Of Courage:
Life Stories Of The Guatemalan
Companeros And Companeras**

AK Press, Edinburgh, 1994,
264 pp, £7.95.
ISBN 1-873176-61-9.

Reviewed by Ian Fraser

The Latin American region has long been a slaughter bench upon which many thousands of people have been sacrificed. Guatemala, one of the smaller nations of this area, is no exception to this experience. It has a 500 year history of a ferocious life and death struggle between those who produce and those who appropriate. Jennifer Harbury, an American lawyer who began working with Guatemalan refugees in the early eighties, became an eye-witness to this battle. Drawn in deeper and deeper to the Guatemalan struggle Harbury came into contact with those who were engaging in overt actions against the government, the *companeros* and *companeras* revolutionaries. It is their testimonies of why they became revolutionaries and their life in the struggle that forms the basis of this book. For this

alone it serves as an important document of oral history which gives a voice to those who have either been ignored or caricatured particularly by the U.S. media.

An excellent introduction by Noam Chomsky supplies a brief summary of the history of Guatemala from the 1930's to the present day. In a bitterly ironic and biting tone Chomsky displays the perennial involvement of the U.S. in attempting to secure a "stable" environment within which American capital could invest. Up to 1944 this was provided by the dictator Jorge Ubico whose particular claim to fame had been to legalise the murder of Indians by landowners. With his regime overthrown the new social and agrarian reforms caused problems for the CIA and U.S. agribusiness operating in the country. Not surprisingly, then, a U.S. backed coup ensued ten years later and set in progress a system of terror which eliminated anyone who was seen to be in opposition to the government. By the 1980's around 200,000 people were estimated to have either "disappeared" or been killed. Even in January of this year, under the reformist presidency of Carpio, the country's human rights ombudsman, 46 people were executed by death squads that are linked to business interests and the military.

Yet it is against this unrelenting backdrop

of atrocity that the Guatemalan revolutionaries have waged their struggle. What, though, made them become revolutionaries in the first place? This question takes up the first part of the book as ten individuals relate how they decided to head for the mountains and fight. The overwhelming reason for all of them was that their opposition activities in Guatemala city and the towns meant they would eventually be targeted by the military. Interestingly, however, the companera "Anita", who was under the same threat, makes an addition to this. She reports:

"I could have fled the country to safety, but I chose not to. I had made a decision - I had decided to fight. I had decided that when those animals came looking for me, to kill me...they were going to find me with a gun in my hands" (p. 38).

Such sentiments, linked with a desire to struggle for a better future free from oppression and torture, are what motivated these individuals to join the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) and take up arms against the forces of capital. The formation of such a decision was cloaked in the blood of their families, friends and fellow Guatemalans. However, as "Gaspar's" testimony suggests, "for every painful story there is one of beauty" (p. 81) and the "beauty" is the resilience of the Guatemalan people in general and the revolutionaries in particular. This is especially prevalent in part two of the book which considers testimonies on life in the revolution. The solidarity and humanity amongst the group members is both impressive and heart-warming. This is particularly so in the cases of those who had to drop their "male ego" and make an equal contribution to those tasks they had been brought up to believe were the preserve of women. Similarly, women who had been indoctrinated to think in this way

themselves now found it possible to assert their independence and rights within a group which was equally respectful of their wishes. The experience of all individuals within the movement, although at times obviously hard, is an enlightening and educative one as they are taught to think even more critically about the world around them.

Strangely enough, however, the overall feeling one gets from this book is the power of capital rather than the power of labour. Yet for capital to respond to any dissent in such a ferocious manner can only mean that it is threatened by the self-valorising activities of those opposed to it. To be sure, these activities are reported. For instance, we are told about the attempts to set up co-operatives within villages which became so successful that the military constantly tried to destroy them. Similarly, the "new societies" created within the revolutionary movement based on a completely different value system to that prevailing in society are readily evident. However, the instances of the revolutionaries fighting back and "winning" engagements with capital are limited and almost obscured by the weight of those accounts which relay the suffering. This is not to suggest that the atrocities against the Guatemalan people should be ignored but to assert the importance of counter-balancing this with the successful revolutionary resistance that has undoubtedly taken place. For example, the companero "Tomas" points out, "we did not lose all our battles, not even way back...when we had nothing" (p. 198) Yet the general tenor of the book is one of lucky escapes or horrific deaths albeit with tremendous resilience and courage. In contrast, "Tomas's" tale of how the revolutionaries, positioned high amongst the ancient rocks of their ancestors, successfully repelled the advancement of the

military is a salutary one. "Camilo's" account has a similar resonance as he tells of a wealthy plantation owning family that were involved in handing over people to be killed or tortured and who allowed the military to use their land as a military base. In comradely fashion the owner was told by the URNG to cease involvement with the military but he decided to refuse their request. The resulting attack saw the owner and his family vacate the premises with great haste pursuing those soldiers that had already determined it was best to depart. "Camilo" and his comrades then set about burning the cotton sheds and helping themselves to some of the immense number of brand foods that lined the pantry. They concluded that their own food from the villages was far more satisfying. "We just couldn't understand it", says "Camilo", "why would anyone want fast food that was so fast that you couldn't tell the beans from the potatoes without looking at the labels?" (p. 135). Hence, these isolated examples of revolutionary success in engagements with capital and the military are the most encouraging parts of the book.

Sadly, of course, some of the comrades featured are now dead or imprisoned but others fight on with a "new generation" also building the "bridge of courage" to a free Guatemala. The book itself is also "active" in this struggle in that it gives information on support groups in the U.S. that readers can contact. Also, royalties from the book go to a campaign to release those URNG members held as prisoners of war.

The current situation in Guatemala is as tense as ever. The reformist Guatemalan government, along with the military, now negotiates with the URNG and other guerrilla groups. The latter have increased their powers of communication to the rest of the population through their radio

broadcasts which the military has not been able to silence. The revolutionaries now march openly in the towns on the southern coast and even near the capital itself. Encouragingly, discontent has spread to government workers around a 100,000 of whom went on strike in January of this year. Just where all this activity will lead is uncertain but as Harbury herself notes "it does not matter for the people who have patience. They are willing to continue to struggle and to die until the curse of the last five hundred years is broken, and their people are free at last" (p. 204). It is to this end that the book aims to contribute and as such it deserves to be thoroughly recommended.

Werner Bonefeld

The Recomposition of the British State During the 1980s

Dartmouth Publishing Company,
Aldershot, 1993,
ISBN 1 85521 377 X, pp. viii + 282,
£35.00.

Reviewed by Brian McGrail

Compared with the majority of contemporary works on the state, which adopt a "political" textbook tone and/or a purely descriptive procedure, Bonefeld's book, in the true dialectical (Hegelian) tradition of Marxism, deals with the *antagonistic constitution* of the state, especially with its apparently fragmentary existence as a purely "political" phenomenon which is autonomous from "the economy". Hence, not only is state theory dealt with but the very division between state and economy, which lies at

the heart of political economy (including all those political economies that claim to be radical or revolutionary), is undermined. Bonefeld's point of departure is thus the recent debates of the 1980s, closely related to the Marxism of the British Communist Party before its demise, which focused on the so-called Post-fordist restructuring of the capitalist state. The opening chapter (also the Introduction) criticises both Post-fordist and Regulationist approaches to the state/economy relationship, despite their *integration* of the state and the economy into a 'totality', for seeing "the articulation between the political and the economic ... as being constituted by structural laws" (p. 9). As such the analysis of the antagonistic constitution of the state remains undeveloped in these theories since both state and economy are understood as being the products of *objective forces* and/or trends which lie *outside* the realm of subjective action. This leads to "the disarticulation of structure and process" (p. 11) which *fetishises* (or objectifies) both the structures (ie. 'the state' as opposed to 'the economy') *and* the process (ie. 'political' as opposed to 'economic' relations/struggles) - the necessary outcome of which are the complementary twin evils of historical/technological determinism (economism) and idealist subjectivism (Statism). The political becomes a determination of the economic but precisely when the economy is seen as nothing more than a multitude, or sum total, of socially or politically *determined* actions (eg. as in behaviouralist approaches to economics). Each structure is the "subject" of the other structure with the consequence, for this kind of approach, that the notion of an antagonistic subject *in and against* the structures disappears from the vital process of analysing the constitution of the state. The political implications of this theory for the working class are that they are

condemned to play an *external* and/or incidental role in the constitution of the state - a role which is either essentialist (eg. the 'nothing can be done' of trade union economism) or voluntarist (eg. the 'join the political party' of idyllic statism). Within this contextualisation Bonefeld's book may be seen as a repudiation of, and antedote to, the political implications of Post-fordist state theory.

From the outset (specifically Chapter 2) Bonefeld makes clear that his own interpretation of the state/economy relation is *dialectical*, but, not in the 'Classical Marxist' sense of a *contradiction* existing *between* two phenomena (as if political and economic crises emerged from the mismatch of structures themselves, as if "capital ... [was] ... in crisis with itself" (p. 16)), rather, in the 'Hegelian Marxist' sense of an *internal contradiction* in which each phenomenon is the *contradictory form* of the other's existence. Thus, 'the state' is the *political form* in and through which 'the economy' reproduces itself, *and vice versa*, 'the economy' is the *economic form* in and through which 'the state' reproduces itself. Dialectics therefore proceeds from within the object of study giving the subject (and hence theory) an active role in the *internal* constitution of phenomena - "subject and object are internally related" (p. 17). However, in as much as 'the state' reproduces *itself* in and through the economic form of social reproduction (ie. taxation of surplus value) it is the product, or object, of an antagonistic subject, namely labour in and against capital - that is, in and against the extraction of surplus value. 'The economy' is a *reification* of the economic form of the existence of labour in and against capital. Similarly, 'the state', in as much as 'the economy' reproduces itself in and through the political form of social reproduction (ie. the reduction of

labour to wage labour), is a reification of the political form of the same antagonistic relation (capital and labour). The "presence of labour" (p. 17) in and against capital is "the key to this conceptualisation" (p. 17), i.e. of the internal relation of subject/object. 'The state' must thenceforth be understood as a *process* which open-endedly or *undeterministically* has to constantly reduce labour to wage labour, subject to object. "The understanding of the form of the state as a mode of existence of class antagonism explains why the state seeks to decompose class relations on the basis of law and money" (p. 66). It is a process which denies the subjectivity of labour (its autonomy) and is thus a contradictory process. The contradiction lies in the fact that, as a *process*, the state's work is never done – labour as subject constantly re-imposes itself in and through a contradictory social form of reproduction, which *as process* and *as form* has limitations, or is continually open to a radically different conclusion. By this manner of argumentation Bonefeld overcomes the determinism of both mechanistic materialism and idealism so inscribed in the 1980s Post-fordist debates. In place of the determination of labour (and struggle) by structural laws, or the development of policies coincidental with the "relatively autonomous forces of the market" (p. 10) which amounts to the same thing, Bonefeld ascribes to labour the role of "productive and disruptive power" (p. 140) which composes, decomposes and recomposes the political and economic forms of capitalist (class) relations. The state, as the political form of antagonistic class relations, is thus continually recomposed as a means of undermining the composition of the working class which underwrites struggles over the extraction of surplus value – the *antagonistic* basis of capital accumulation.

Chapter 3 shifts the focus of attention to a more substantive level, namely, the most recent crisis of accumulation faced by the capitalist class, and hence the state. Bonefeld chooses the abandonment of the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1971 as the most important indicator of this crisis – the beginning of the crisis but also the culmination of a cycle of working class struggles which brought it on. This event represents the termination of the cosy post-war relation between global money and the national economy which existed in and through the political form of Keynesianism or the 'Welfare State'. It represents the flight of money from its productive base but only in order that money can re-impose its command over labour in and through the global market. Monetarism becomes the theoretical expression of such a 'bypass' operation – it aims to use money-as-command to recompose class relations on terms advantageous to the further accumulation of capital. This necessarily involves the decomposition of the working class *as a class* – the reduction of labour to wage labour. However, such a process is wrought with difficulties given the *productive power* of labour, its integration into the process of social reproduction. The Welfare State is central to the accumulation of capital just as much as it is a burden, and thus, 'dole' has to be seen in the light of it being a 'wage' which 'keeps the peace'. Political stability being a central plank of capital accumulation any decomposition of the working class in and through the money form of social reproduction poses the problem of *recomposing* class relations. Capital requires the assistance of labour – to accept its role as that of wage labour (or labour power). As Bonefeld points out (p. 107-108) Michael Edwards's plans/ideas for the re-imposition of management control at British Leyland lead to confrontation,

disloyalty, bad feeling and low morale which made the 'right to manage' impossible. "Employers could not adopt Edwarde's (1984) prescription and practice ... because it would have undermined the self-discipline of workers necessary to make the intense composition of capital productive" (p.107). The integration of labour was not just required on the shopfloor or in the general 'workplace' but throughout society. Students, the peace and anti-nuclear power movements, environment and local/community action groups, and consumers all had to be equally well disciplined to make society work. Hence Monetarism was abandoned as a feasible project since it failed to guarantee the integration of labour in capital. The imposition of money-as-command or "market forces" lead not only to the destruction of inefficient capitals but to a de-stabilisation of the very basis upon which capital and hence the power of money was reproduced. This eventually lead to the Winter of Discontent which came about as a result of the Labour government's Monetarist policies. Finally, in the wake of Mexico's threat to default on its loans in 1982 (debt being one mechanism through which the power of money attempted to assert itself) and the subsequent collapse of several U.S. banks, monetarism was abandoned on a global scale and new 'growth' policies were instigated as a means of re-integrating labour into the accumulation process. Yet these policies made a radical departure from the Keynesian form of integration just as much as they borrowed from it.

It is in Chapter 4 that Bonefeld moves onto the question of the development of the British state during the 1980s and pulls apart the deterministic 'coherency' of Thatcherism (as a 'political philosophy') which Post-fordists were adept at foisting

on us. The main contradictory development Bonefeld analyses is the way in which Thatcherite policies of constraint (eg. cuts in public expenditure) were only made possible, and therefore largely off-set, by saddling "social relations with an unprecedented weight of debt" (p. 137). Hence, although Thatcher succeeded in reducing public expenditure as a percentage of GDP from 44% in 1983 to 39% in 1989 (now back to 42% in 1992) this can only be properly understood in the context of the government's use of credit expansion as *the means* by which to impose social control. Credit afforded the government the possibility to remove and reduce welfare benefits and, at the same time, increase the volume of taxation whilst reducing its rate. "The government used state budgeting as a means of fragmenting social relations through legal and monetary intervention, including the credit and fiscal explosion which sustained the boom, and the recomposition of the welfare state which guaranteed the convertibility of credit into tax revenue by making the unemployed pay the price of credit growth" (p. 232). In other words, while credit expansion was used to cut higher tax rates it was also used as the argument for imposing austerity measures. As a result "fiscal redistribution softened the impact of the crash of 1987 on financial markets and sustained the boom, domestically and internationally, until the early 1990s" (p. 233). In this manner Thatcher decomposed the wider working class movement. More directly trade union laws were used to substantially curb the power of traditional wage labour associations (also analysed in Chapter 4). Nonetheless, the picture Bonefeld paints is not a deterministically depressing one. "In contradistinction to approaches which are predicated on Thatcherism as a successful hegemonic project, the pacification of class conflict through credit-sustained

accumulation existed only contradictorily” (p. 246). While Thatcherism aided the accumulation of money on the back of credit expansion this accumulation and thus the Thatcherite project itself was purely speculative until debt is turned into means of payment. For anyone living in Britain, indeed on planet earth, over the last 5 years the rest is history - a massive credit crunch and the longest depression since records began. What remains to be said in this review, however, is that Bonefeld does not ascribe this situation to the work of chance, in fact he ascribes it – quite beautifully – to the power of labour:

“Money is not a saleable thing. It exists only in and through labour as substance of value. The unprecedented dissociation between monetary and productive accumulation expresses the presence of labour. The key to turning debt into means of payments is the effectiveness of capital in exploiting labour, and labour’s effectiveness in resisting exploitation by capital” (p. 247).

Here it can be seen that (a) Thatcherism failed to steam roller the working class – the power of labour *in and against* capital – and thus provide the state form necessary to the recomposition of class relations along capitalist lines, and (b) the battle is not over. Bonefeld’s thesis is as much about the theory of history as much as it is about the theory of the state or ‘macro-economics’. Thus, in Chapter 5 (also the Conclusion) Bonefeld not only summarises his critiques of works which emphasise the structural nature of the crisis (whether it is seen as simply a ‘British’ phenomenon or a struggle between fragments of capital, ie. financial versus industrial capital) but optimistically concludes that the recomposition of class relations necessary to the transformation of money (debt) into “truly productive capital ... is still beyond the horizon” (p. 263). We can thus take

heart that it is not just ‘Thatcherism’ which has failed but post-Thatcherism as well.

To conclude I will make two further comments. Firstly, I have found this book immensely stimulating to read as its complexity, although off-putting to begin with, provides a variety of routes to understanding the present condition of the (British) state form once the reader has mastered the viewpoint from which it is being written - post-capitalist and post-socialist. Secondly, it is a work of negative dialectics the joy of which is the ability it affords us to laugh at all the money-bag and socially-concerned state reformers who would try to put us down, however, in as far as it tells us that they (the capitalist class and their ilk) cannot get it right it does not give us insight into what we are getting right and how we are getting it right. The job of another work perhaps? More importantly the silence speaks volumes - the continuing crisis is not that of “capital’s” but ours.

Hillel Ticktin

Origins of the Crisis in the USSR: Essays on the Political Economy of a Declining System.

ME. Sharp Inc, New York, 1992, ISBN 0-87332-888-4.

Reviewed by David Gorman

This book is a demanding read but all the more rewarding for that. As the only empirically grounded theoretical work on the nature of stalinist society, moreover, its importance cannot be stressed enough. It

contains a wealth of material and ideas and in the space of a short review it is possible to touch on only a few aspects of the work. For a more detailed account the reader should consult Paul Smith's review in *Radical Chains* No. 4.

Atomization and Bureaucratic Dependence.

Ticktin stresses that you cannot understand the USSR if you assume that the categories developed by Marx in *Capital* apply to it without modification. It cannot be assumed *a priori* that the law of value operated in the USSR; the categories themselves must be drawn from reality. This can be seen when the category of atomization is examined.

Under the law of value atomization is mediated through money. The individual is independent in so far as there is no direct dependence on other individuals; there is thus a degree of real independence but this is also illusory as there is a *de facto* dependence mediated by the commodity form. Individuals have little real control over their lives; atomised through commodity relations, the population is in fact controlled by the commodity itself – hence commodity fetishism.

In the former USSR, by contrast, atomization was direct: the direct dependence of one individual on another. Because social relations were not mediated by money, there was no space for the illusion of independence to emerge. There was therefore direct antagonism towards the system itself although this antagonism took an atomised form. This, Ticktin argues, contrasts directly with antagonism under capitalism. Under capitalism atomization is through the wage and absolute poverty and so all workers are subordinated to capital within the work process itself. The individual has

no control over his or her own work process and so is forced to collaborate with others to resist the system; there is an inherent tendency towards antagonistic collectivity. In the USSR, by contrast, each individual had a substantial degree of control over his or her own labour process. This was a consequence of the fact that in the former USSR it was impossible to sack workers without finding alternative employment for them. As a result, each worker was able to work out an individual bargain with the management and this in turn inhibited the formation of collectivity; it did so by removing the immediate need for collectivity.

It might be objected that some of these features of atomization are also features of atomization within modern capitalism – the bureaucratic structures of the welfare state are the prime example here – and it must be acknowledged that Ticktin sometimes seems to be contrasting the USSR with an ideal type of capitalism which does not exist. Ticktin is, however, well aware of the existence of relations of bureaucratic dependency under modern capitalism as is shown clearly in his discussion of decline. He locates the question of the USSR within the general context of the global decline of capitalism and the transition to socialism. Essentially, Ticktin sees the form of atomization in the USSR as a necessary result of abolishing money relations without also introducing forms of direct control from below. Bureaucratic dependency in the USSR was a direct result of the obstruction of the process of transition from capitalism to socialism. The development of bureaucratic dependency outside the USSR was likewise a result of the failure of the revolutions of the period of 1917–21. The contrast is between ascendent capitalism and declining capitalism, with the USSR as the most

extreme manifestation of a tendency inherent within capitalism in decline.

This is implicit in Ticktin's account, but his form of presentation sometimes obscures the point. It is the understanding of bureaucratic dependency as a form of social control within declining capitalism which is crucial and according to Ticktin, the book 'is really about this whole question of bureaucratic dependence placed in a political-economic context' (p. 39).

The Elite and the Working Class.

This context of capitalist decline and the transitional epoch is also the basis for Ticktin's understanding of the nature of the ruling group in the USSR. This group is, in Ticktin's view, an 'elite', rather than the 'caste' or 'bureaucracy' that Trotsky thought it was. The terms 'caste' or 'bureaucracy', Ticktin argues, 'imply that the ruling group is really a parasitic part of the working class, and so remains confined by the momentum of the October revolution' (p. 62). By contrast with orthodox trotskysts such as Ernest Mandel, Ticktin rejects the view that the ruling group rests on and defends the 'gains' of the October Revolution. For Ticktin, there are no such gains; or, rather, the gains that did exist have been turned against the working class in order to atomise it.

The so called 'gains' of the October Revolution were in fact forms of defeat. Individualised control over the labour process meant that workers related to their own work process individually rather than collectively to the labour process as a whole. This in turn inhibited the formation of the workers into a class. 'Thus, the worker is doubly controlled: his product is held by others and his work process is such that he is separated from his fellow workers'

(p. 121).

But this does not mean that the ruling group is a class. To constitute a class, Ticktin argues, the ruling group must be able to form a class around the extraction of the surplus product. Under the law of value, control is enforced through unemployment and commodity fetishism; in the USSR, by contrast, 'the worker regards the elite as a usurper to be thwarted to advantage whenever possible' (p. 63). The atomised control exercised by individual workers over their own work process deprived the elite of full control over the surplus product. While workers did not have any choice about working or not working, they did not wholly relinquish control over their labour power. As Ticktin puts it, the worker 'is alienated from his product, but he does not sell his labour power' (p. 83). The result is that the homogeneity of labour under capitalism did not exist in the USSR. Because there was no abstract labour the elite had no way of controlling the production process and so could not controlling the extraction of the surplus.

The formation of classes is central to Ticktin's perspective. His understanding of the political economy of the USSR is essentially dynamic. Emerging from the defeat of the October Revolution, the ruling group attempted to form itself into a class with full control over the surplus product. Lacking the market, however, it was never able to establish more than a limited form of control over the surplus product: 'The system is therefore partly driven by the elite's need to become a class. To change into a class, the ruling group needs to establish full control over the surplus product and hence over the extractive process itself' (p. 61).

The Laws of Political Economy in the USSR.

In Ticktin's view, the fundamental contradiction of the Soviet system, which lay in the control of the workers through atomization, deprived the elite of the power it needed to direct the means of production efficiently in its own interests. It was in the interest of the elite to maximise their control over the surplus product, but full control by the elite over the surplus as a whole required individual control by elite members over their own portion of the surplus. There had to be private property in the means of production. Lacking this, the elite is in a position of permanent instability.

The fundamental law of motion of the USSR was thus one of conflict between organisation and the individual interest of the unit. There was a permanent and endemic conflict between the need of the centre to control and direct the system in the interest of those who control and opposition from all the units below it. There was, moreover, no inbuilt mechanism for reconciling this conflict. Conflict took the form of two conflicting laws: the law of organisation and the law of self-interest.

These two laws of motion were degenerated forms of the law of value and the law of planning. The law of organisation expresses the permanent tension that exists between the need to organise the economy on a centralised basis and the real needs of the elite. Elite 'planning' of the economy led to conflict with the direct producers and thus with the interests of all the individual units in the system. The units constantly reinterpreted commands in their own particular interest and this in turn forced the elite to try to concentrate organisation at the centre. This, Ticktin argues (p. 119), 'was

the economic meaning of the purge period'. Because the elite did not control the labour process, its control over the surplus remained formal. In order to fully control the surplus the elite had to try to dominate the labour process. This could not succeed. The elite continually attempted to assert control through centralisation, but the more they centralised control over the economy, the more they socialised the means of production. The more socialised the division of labour became, however, the more difficult it was to atomise workers around their individual work processes. If, on the other hand, they tried to decentralise, Ticktin argues, the law of self-interest took over, and the individual ignored central control. This resulted in chaos.

As the contradiction intensified over time with the increasing socialisation of the productive forces, the nature of the struggle changed too. In the earlier period workers rebelled through direct sabotage, absenteeism and a high labour turnover. In the post-Stalin period workers began to struggle over the norm: there was a move from more individualistic to less individualistic forms of struggle. This caused ever more intensive problems for the elite. It is easier to deal with workers who struggle primarily on an individualistic basis and in Ticktin's view, 'The Soviet worker has been moving from a position of total defeat to one of increasing strength, which has a series of ramification throughout the economy'. (p. 149).

The Contradiction within Use Value and the ending of the Absolute Surplus.

It is worth looking at this process in more depth. The system was inherently chaotic, held together only by the expansion of the absolute surplus. Once this ended the

problems became insuperable. The expansion of the relative surplus required the subordination of the working class to discipline and this required the imposition of the value form.

Production in the USSR was bureaucratically organised and distribution took place through rationing. The basic contradiction was not between value and use-value but within use value itself. The contradiction lay with the product itself, between 'the imagined nature of the product and its actual nature', or, in other words, 'between the bureaucratic or organised nature of the product and its real form' (p. 134). The use value was thus defective and this led to another contradiction, between the potential use value of a product and its real use value. The result was enormous and ever growing waste. For example, machine tools were so badly made and they broke down so often that the sector of the economy based on the repair of machine tools had to be bigger than the sector producing new machine tools. To compensate for low quality, either more had to be produced or somehow quality had to be improved. But both solutions led necessarily to greater industrialisation and so socialisation of production. This meant greater economic integration which, however, only increased the potential of an even worse product when any link in the chain broke down.

What has happened in the last ten or fifteen years 'is that the growth of the absolute surplus has come to an end because the workforce can no longer be replenished from the farms, the home, or elsewhere' (p. 138). Because it is no longer possible to expand the labour force, it is impossible to continue the rapid construction of new factories. Because it was only through building new factories that new techniques

could be introduced, this in turn has inhibited technical development. In addition, increasing urbanisation has resulted in greater integration of different economic sectors, with the result that failures in one sector automatically transfer to the economy as a whole, causing even more chaos than previously. 'The paradox is that it is an economy with giant plants, trusts and "central planning" that cannot supply or repair itself with any regularity, so that its potential virtue is in fact its Achilles heel. Today the ramifications of failure to deliver on time, construct to specification, or repair as requested are much greater than ever before. The costs are multiples of what they were twenty and more years ago. The effect is to magnify the failure of the Soviet economy' (p. 142).

Looked at historically, the origins of the defective Soviet product can be traced to a conflict in the goals of the regime in the twenties. The aim of the collectivisation programme begun in 1929 was to raise the relative surplus, i.e., to increase the surplus product by reducing the amount of labour-time required to produce goods. Yet it was only the rise in the absolute surplus that permitted growth of the relative surplus and so the growth in productivity. The Soviet elite were faced with the problem of how to raise the necessary surplus to ensure sustained accumulation. They had first to obtain an initial surplus and secondly to sustain reinvestment of that surplus in new technology. They acquired the initial surplus through squeezing the standard of living of the direct producers and obtained the necessary flow of labour to the towns by inducing starvation in the countryside. 'This process, analogous to primitive accumulation, raised the absolute surplus product. In other words, the surplus was raised through the extension of labour time and the reduction of the standard of living'

(p. 145).

The growth of the absolute surplus masked the regimes's failure to increase the relative surplus and generated the appearance of success. At the same time, however, the extraction of the absolute surplus through the extension of labour time and the reduction of the wage, permitted a considerable extension of producer goods production and thus ended with the socialisation of labour and hence the growing power of the labour force. New technology could be introduced and the relative surplus raised only so long as the absolute surplus was expanding. Now this has ended, the regime faces a crisis that can be resolved only by destroying the negative control of atomised workers over the labour process that was established in the thirties.

The Transitional Epoch and the Current Crisis in the USSR.

It is this historical background that explains the nature of the current crisis in the USSR and the problems faced by the elite. Gorbachev's problem was to try to transform the elite into a real social class fully in control of the surplus product. The real historical function of the elite had been to hold together a system that had no basis for being held together. It served no other interest than that of the old order in preventing the emergence of a new form of society and capital allowed it to continue to exist so long as it fulfilled this function. From the point at which the USSR could no longer survive in its old form, however, an orderly transition to the market became necessary and this was the task of Gorbachev and now Yeltsin.

According to Ticktin the transition to the market cannot succeed. The reasons are quite complex but the main point is that the fate

of the USSR does not depend on events in the USSR alone but on the condition of the global economy. The introduction of the market in the USSR requires direct confrontation with Soviet workers and it is not clear that this can succeed. The attempt to introduce the market could succeed if it would result in higher wages, better conditions of work, and an improved standard of living, but all the evidence suggests that it will have – and is already having – the opposite effect. Hence the opposition of the Soviet working class and the difficulties of the regime. Success would require a massive investment and aid package from the west but in conditions of renewed and deepening recession, this is not going to be forthcoming.

But the fundamental reason has to do with the nature of the present epoch itself. Since the beginning of this century, the fundamental social relation of capitalism, the law of value, has been in decline. The global decline of the law of value, which manifests itself in the growth of bureaucratically administered welfare systems, state regulation of the economy, nationalisation, and so on, prescribes the limits within which the Soviet elite can move. It is impossible to introduce the law of value in its pristine form in the USSR when it is in decline elsewhere. And the law of value is in decline globally, primarily because the socialisation of labour under capitalist production relations has resulted in an objective strengthening of the power of the working class which has made it dangerous for capital to continue to exist in its pristine form. The very process that resulted earlier this century in the removal of the USSR from the direct orbit of the law of value ensures also that it cannot return.

This is not an easy book to read. Some of

its arguments, especially those about the laws of motion of the USSR, are better presented in the articles Ticktin has published in *Critique* and elsewhere. Its form as a series of essays, moreover, makes for repetition and sometimes results in a failure to properly link together different parts of the argument. Nevertheless, this should not stop people reading it. The fact that it is a demanding read, and the fact that the reader has often to make explicit the connections that are often merely implicit in the book, it itself a good discipline. The difficulty and challenge of grappling with such a text is itself a rewarding experience. Beyond that, however, whether one agrees or disagrees with Ticktin, his book does constitute the only serious and empirically grounded attempt to theorise stalinism and must form the starting point for any attempt to understand the phenomenon.

of politically disparate writers, activists and radicals who, in their own way, are contributing to the cultural life of Scotland and the emancipatory project in particular.

As the title suggests, the book is a collection of articles which were first presented as lectures to the society between 1990 and 1992. A wide array of topics are therefore covered: three different articles on aspects of anarchism and its relation to more 'mainstream' socialist organisation and history; one on the meaning of 'socialist society'; one on the legacy of Bolshevism; another on Marx's categories; and a final one on the Scottish national question. The most positive element in this collection is the fact that each article is written by someone sympathetic to the political views and points being expressed.

This approach cuts through the 'dryness' of debate which is so often to be found in works solely produced for and aimed at academic and institutional readerships. For example, Farquhar McLay's article *Anarchism in Glasgow* is drawn from his personal experience as a young man who came to anarchism from growing up in 1950s Glasgow whilst Paul Anderson's *What is Bolshevism?* clearly wishes to reclaim the revolutionary principles of that tradition and Hillel Ticktin's *What is a Socialist Society?* reproduces his own, and quite unique, views. Hence, an emphasis evident in Smith's introduction, is the point that co-operation between politically opposed critics *within* the anti-capitalist literary camp is not only possible but desirable, especially in the present period with its contradictory repressed social consciousness in the midst of worldwide working class insubordination. "Look around the world and see how militant workers are today. Workers are more powerful than ever" (p. 3). In this manner

Paul B. Smith (ed.)

Unmasking Reality: Lectures given to the John Maclean Society 1990-92

John Maclean Society, Glasgow, 1993, £4.95

Reviewed by Brian McGrail

Although this book may not be a major work in Marxist/revolutionary theory it is an important publication in the context of the Scottish labour movement and its critical theory. Not only is it published by the John Maclean Society, which continues to keep alive interest in Maclean's life and thought, but it brings together a number of

the book is upbeat and optimistic which makes a pleasant change from the unhelpful and demoralising tomes produced by mainstream socialists in recent times. Reformism may be dead, whether of the liberal (British Labour Party) or authoritarian (Soviet Communist Party) kind, but rather than shed tears true revolutionaries should have cause for celebration at such a lack of reformist vision – Smith's book goes some way towards a reflection on this state of affairs.

However, though the *openness* of the debate is to be welcomed the diversity of topics covered is also a downfall in so far as the book stands as a single volume. A more focused theme would have sharpened arguments and rounded the project through direct criticism and cross-referencing of articles in the volume. Each article expresses differing political views but tend to break off at a tangent in terms of the ground being covered. This fault cannot really be placed at the door of the editor nor

of the lecture organisers (given the difficulty of getting people to present papers). The result, nonetheless, is a book which is much more like one issue of a series or a journal. Reading this work not only leaves one with anticipation of a sequel but with expectation of one in which direct criticism of McLay, Anderson, Ticktin *et al* will be opened up.

Having said this it only remains to be stated that *Unmasking Reality* should be given the thumbs up - not only because of its non-sectarianism but because of the way in which it deals with the issue of left sectarianism. Rather than trying to reduce everyone to the lowest common denominator, that is, to get everyone to diplomatically agree to the same set of principles, *Unmasking Reality's* openness by allowing criticism to flourish helps us to recognise that criticism is a vital part of social reality and not something to be shunned or denied in the name of theoretical purity. So here's hoping for many more years of fruitful debate.

[The John Maclean Society can be contacted via:
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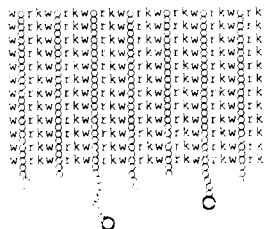
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