FROM PILLAR TO POST?
MARXISM, POST-MARXISM, AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY

by

Julian Mark Prior

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APPROVAL

Name: Julian Mark Prior

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Examining Committee:

Chair: Dr. Michael Howard

Dr. Gary Teeple
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor of Sociology

Dr. John Whitworth
Associate Professor of Sociology

Dr. Jerald Zaslove
External Examiner
Professor of English and Humanities
Simon Fraser University

Date Approved: 20/11/95

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Author:

(Signature)

(Name)

November 20, 1995

(Date)

ABSTRACT

Post-Marxism has emerged as a body of critical social thought which undermines the central pillars of Marxist theory and politics in both its "classical" and "Western" forms. As represented in the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and those associated with the Marxism Today/New Times project in the U.K., post-Marxism comprises a unique blend of anti-economistic Marxism, Gramscian cultural theory, post-Structuralism, and theoretical insights derived from "new social movements." Its reformulation of left politics posits an alternative to the class-based politics of the Old Left in the form of a radical pluralism that deepens the democratic discourse initiated by the popular revolutions in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The roots of post-Marxism are to be found in a series of intellectual and social developments which together constitute the "crisis of Marxism." These include the critique of economic determinism undertaken by the Western Marxist tradition, the "Interpretive Turn" in social theory, the rise of the New Left, new social movements and associated knowledges, and the globalization of capitalist social relations alongside the demise of "actually existing socialism."

Post-Marxism has come under attack from a number of social theorists wishing to defend a Marxist position. Post-Marxists are criticised for distorting Marxism, abandoning class politics and the political-economic critique of global capitalism, and espousing a left reformism. Despite the claims of post-Marxists to have transcended Marxism, I conclude that Marxism is best understood as having arrived at a cross-roads with a number of possible future directions. Two of these paths are represented by post-Marxism and the "one-sided" Marxism it criticizes, while a third path, that of "Open Marxism," avoids the pitfalls of both approaches while incorporating their best insights.

The present historical conjuncture trumpets the death of Marxism from Left and Right alike: the age of "post-Marxism" is upon us.

Jonathan Diskin and Blair Sandler

Repetition is always possible; repetition with application, transformation. God knows in 1945 Nietzsche appeared to be completely disqualified [. . .] It is clear, even if one admits that Marx will disappear for now, that he will reappear one day. What I desire . . . is not so much the defalsification and restitution of a true Marx, but the unburdening and liberation of Marx in relation to party dogma, which has constrained it, touted it and branished it for so long. The phrase "Marx is dead" can be given a conjunctural sense. One can say it is relatively true, but to say that Marx will disappear like that . . .

Michel Foucault

pil·lar (pil 'ar) ***n.*** **1** a long slender, vertical structure used to support a superstructure; column **2** such a column standing alone as a monument **3** anything like a pillar in form or function, as a formation of ore left standing as a support in a mine **4** a person who is a main support of an institution, movement, etc.

post- (post) ***prefix*** **1** after in time, later (than), following *[postnatal, post-orbit]* **2** after in space, behind *[postcava]* **3** coming after in time, often as a rejection of or in reaction to *[postmodernism]*

from pillar to post from one predicament, place of appeal, etc. to another, usually under harassment

Webster's New World Dictionary
of American English
(Third College Edition)
New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Two important and interrelated developments form the backdrop against which this M.A. thesis was researched and written. The first were the landmark events in Eastern Europe during the past five years which have since led many to announce the end of "actually existing socialism" and concomitantly the "death of Marxism." As a committed libertarian socialist I remain as unconvinced by the argument that capitalism has triumphed as I do by the contention that Marxism, as theory and political strategy, has nothing left to offer. The second major influence was the appearance on the intellectual scene of *post-Marxism* following closely on the heels of post-structuralism and postmodern theory. In part my thesis was motivated by a desire to evaluate the relevance of this increasingly influential perspective to radical social theory and emancipatory politics. However much one may want to wish away these theoretical developments, their staying power suggests that they are more than simply the latest in a long line of intellectual fads and fashions.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY AND THE CRISIS OF MARXISM/MODERNITY

The phrase "crisis of Marxism" being nearly one hundred years old has a familiar ring to it, yet in the wake of the unpredictable turn of events in Eastern Europe and recent pronouncements concerning the "triumph of capitalism", the phrase seems to have taken on a qualitatively different meaning. Historically, Marxism has thrived on internal debate and controversy and has had a remarkable propensity for "coming back from the dead" (Bobbio 1987, 168). However, instead of signifying a (potentially) resolvable crisis, the phrase now indicates a sense of "death" or of an "ending" which at the height of Marxism's popularity in the social sciences less than twenty years ago would have been scarcely imaginable.

Following the failed attempt at a military coup in the former Soviet Union in August 1991 and the subsequent resignation of Gorbachev as General Secretary of the C.P.S.U., on 25 December 1991 the red flag was officially lowered over the Kremlin bringing to an end over seventy years of one of the bastions of what has widely come to be known as "actually existing socialism."[1] The fall of the Berlin Wall, the victory of Alexander Dubcek and Václav Havel in the former Czechoslovakia, the demise of social democracy in Sweden, the ousting of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the push to introduce market reforms in China, are events which have produced a remarkably consistent response across the political spectrum. A previously little-known U.S. government official achieved overnight notoriety by claiming that the events in Eastern Europe represented, not only the universal triumph of Western liberal democracy, but the "end of history" understood as competing ideologies (Fukuyama, 1992). A similar triumphalism was heard from many politicians, political commentators, and the Western media.[2] On the political left a number of erstwhile Marxists and radical intellectuals such as Eric Hobsbawm, Robert Heilbroner, and Ralph Dahrendorf, announced the untenability of the political project of Marxism following the upheavals in Eastern Europe. According to Martin Jacques, editor of the now defunct journal of the British Communist Party Marxism Today,

> [I]t is the end of the road for the communist system as we have known it: the central plan, the authoritarian state, the single-party system, the subjugated civil society. Stalinism is dead, and Leninism—its theory of the state, its concept of the party, the absence of civil society, its notion of revolution—has also had its day. . . What we are witnessing is the defeat of socialism in one country and indeed one bloc. (1990, 37)

The horrors perpetrated by self-described "Marxist" regimes such as Pol Pot in Cambodia, Stalin in Russia, and Menguistu in Ethiopa, together with the failure of "centrally planned economies", has bolstered the arguments of those who have announced the failure of socialism. Yet, as the *fin de siècle* approaches, the reality of the Clinton/Yeltsin "New World Order" suggests that it is perhaps too soon to write off Marxism entirely. A combination of long-term structural unemployment, ecological destruction, widespread famine and poverty, and ethnic genocide, continues to check the optimism of those who have so eagerly proclaimed capitalism's global triumph. The supposed "golden age" of the post-war market economy has come to an end and has been replaced by a decline in U.S. economic and military hegemony, the stagnation of real wages, and no visible sign of long-term recovery from the deepest recession since the 1930's (Panitch and Miliband 1992). The imposition of Structural Adjustment Plans by the IMF and World Bank on "newly industrializing countries", together with the implementation of "free trade" zones, has met with widespread resistance manifested, for example, in the recent indigenous uprisings in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. Furthermore, for the former "communist" regimes the road to the "free market economy" appears less than straightforward. The republics comprising the Commonwealth of Independent States are faced with deepening economic insecurity—food and power shortages, rising prices and unemployment—together with ethnic and territorial conflicts, and the rise in popularity of right-wing groups such as the National Salvation Front and Pamyat (an alarming mix of far-right nationalists, die-hard communists and militarists). There have even been calls for the reintegration of the former USSR (Rumyantsev 1994).

Even if it is argued—as many have—that it is mistaken to equate Marxism with the authoritarian regimes of Eastern Europe and China, the crisis of Marxism runs deeper than failed attempts to pose a concrete alternative to capitalism. In particular, the set of methodological

precepts upon which Marxism is based—the "materialist conception of history"—has itself been recently repudiated by a number of social theorists. Writing in 1981, Anthony Giddens sums up this prevalent attitude thus:

> If by 'historical materialism' we mean the conception that the history of human societies can be understood in terms of the progressive augmentation of the forces of production, then it is based on false premises, and the time has come finally to abandon it. If historical materialism means that 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle', it is so patently erroneous that it is difficult to see why so many have felt obliged to take it seriously. If, finally, historical materialism means that Marx's scheme of the evolution of societies. . . provides a defensible basis for analyzing world history, then it is also to be rejected. (1987, 1-2)

For Giddens and other social theorists, the traditional Marxist emphasis on the explanatory primacy of class struggle is unable to account for forms of social conflict and movements for change which either "cut across" class lines, or lie outside of class relationships altogether. Powerful challenges to Marxism have arisen from feminism, movements for national liberation, environmentalism, Third World struggles, and gay, lesbian, and bisexual activism. These movements have often incorporated a critique of historical materialism as a monist, unilinear, and economistic theory which underplays, or ignores, the roles that gender, ethnicity, national identity, and sexual orientation play in the constitution of social life. Instead, a theoretical and political pluralism is sought which rejects Marxism's insistence on the privileged role to be played by the working-class as the "universal agent" of social change. At best, for many on the left the only role remaining for socialism is as part of a "mixed economy" which forms one aspect of a broader emancipatory struggle for democratic freedoms that places at the forefront the issues raised by "new social movements" (Laclau and Mouffe 1992). At worst, Marxism's political project is an anachronistic throwback to an era of open class hostility between bosses and workers, an antagonism now superseded in our emergent post-Marxist era where the working-class has all but disappeared and all that can be asked of the left is to strive for a capitalism with a "human face" (Rorty 1992, 3).

Yet this celebration of "endism" has not stopped at Marxism, socialism, or the working-class. In the field of contemporary social theory there is now also the sense that we have witnessed a much bigger ending; that of "modernity", or the modern era. While there is no precise agreement on what constitutes modernity, for those currently engaged in debates over its alleged demise it is generally thought of as the specific set of social, economic, political, and cultural processes and institutions comprising the period in history from the late eighteenth century to the latter half of the twentieth century. Modernity is said to be characterized by an era of "organized" industrial capitalism (Lash and Urry 1987), a "Fordist" mode of production (Murray 1989), and the conquest and imperialism associated with the hegemonic domination of western nation-states. Socially and culturally, modernity is tied up with secularisation, the "mediazation of culture"[3], the separation between public and private spheres, unique patterns of race, class, and gender relations, and a "sense of the fleeting, the ephemeral, the fragmentary, and the contingent." (Harvey 1990, 11). Philosophically, the discourse of modernity includes the belief in objective science, universal morality, and aesthetic modernism (Habermas 1981), together with other Enlightenment ideals such as progress, reason, technological innovation and universal emancipation (Smart 1992). Grand narratives (self-legitimating "metadiscourses") from Marxism to Liberalism to Parsonian Functionalism are said to be indicative of modern thought (Lyotard 1984) and have been crucial to the formation of the discourse surrounding the "West and the rest" (Hall 1992) as well as the falsely universal and gendered nature of such philosophical dualisms as reason/emotion, mind/body, and nature/culture (Ferguson 1993).

According to sociologists Zygmunt Bauman (1990) and Göran Therborn (1991), both Marxism and socialism were distinctly modern phenomena rooted in the enlightenment ideals of reasoned critical thought, universal emancipation, the liberating power of science, and the planned mastery of nature. In short, Marxism was one example of a modern "grand design" whose aim was to "out-modernize the modernizers" (Bauman 1992, 170). In this respect, it is argued that the revolutions in Eastern Europe which supposedly signaled the end of the project of "Classical Marxism" also suggest "the impossibility now of conceptualizing our reality according to *any*

comprehensive scheme of history and society such as Marxism or positivism (or, for that matter, liberalism in its more normative varieties)" (Kumar 1992, 316 *my emphasis*). For some contemporary theorists of social change history now stands at a point of rupture with its past, and we are now living in, or in transition to, "new times," a new socio-economic and cultural configuration requiring new modes of thought and political intervention. The controversial term given to this alleged epochal shift is "postmodernity".[4]

Debates over this alleged shift have had a profound influence on the state of contemporary social theory.[5] Broadly speaking there are three discernible positions in the "postmodern debate." At one extreme is what Pauline Marie Rosenau (1992) calls the "skeptical postmodernists," theorists such as Jean Baudrillard, Arthur Kroker, or Gianni Vattimo whose philosophical anti-foundationalism and political nihilism represent a concerted attack on some of the cherished beliefs of Western rationalism. Baudrillard, in particular typifies this position with his claim that western consumerism has brought about a "hyperreal" society of simulation and transparency in which "[t]here is no longer any transcendence or depth, but only the immanent surface of operations unfolding, the smooth and functional surface of communication" (1988, 12). Drawing upon the philosophy of Nietzsche, Baudrillard argues that this state of affairs negates the possibility of maintaining a critical distance between an object and its "real" or "true" meaning. Consequently, the only effective political strategy available is an abstention from any kind of openly political position, an ironic detachment which apes the processes of seduction, simulation and transparency which make up the postmodern world.

At the other extreme are those, primarily within the Marxist or neo-Marxist tradition, who question—or indeed reject outright—the concept's usefulness. For Raymond Williams (1989) postmodernism is an ideological perspective that re-writes history to marginalize the emancipatory instincts of some of the best aspects of modernism, while Jürgen Habermas (1981) castigates both the anti- and post- modernism of contemporary conservative philosophy and reaffirms the "unfinished project" of modernity.[6] The eco-anarchist Murray Bookchin (1994) laments the anti-rationalism of what he calls "modern relativism" preferring, instead, the retention of Western

concepts such as History, Civilization, and Progress. Finally, writing from a more orthodox position, Alex Callinicos rejects the underlying premise of postmodern thought, namely, that technological and political changes within capitalism have ushered in a new post-industrial society with a corresponding postmodern culture (1989, 4). Such a position, he argues, is the product of a generation of disillusioned intellectuals who, following the failure of the uprisings in the late 1960's to produce long-lasting change, abandoned Marxism for academic institutions that provide a safe haven from the growing hegemony of the "new right".

Lying somewhere between these two poles is what Hal Foster terms a "postmodernism of resistance", theorists whose aim is a deconstructive critique of modernity which recognizes the emancipatory possibilities opened up by a transition to "new times" (1983, xii). This broad position can itself be further sub-divided into four distinct but overlapping categories; feminism, post-colonialism, neo-Marxism and post-Marxism. For some contemporary feminists the postmodern critique of Enlightenment thought intersects with the feminist critique of patriarchy at enough points to enable at least a tentative alliance between the two (Creed 1993; Nicholson 1992). Similarly, the post-colonialist critique of History as an essentially western construct finds resonance with the postmodern focus on local, marginalised narratives and the rejection of metadiscourses such as Marxism (Williams and Chrisman 1994, 12). Neo-Marxists such as Frederic Jameson (1993) and David Harvey (1990), however, argue that postmodernism is essentially amenable to a Marxist analysis that focuses on changes in the capitalist mode of production. For Jameson, emergent forms of postmodern culture correspond to a particular stage in the development of capitalism—that of "late" or "multinational" capital. In a similar vein, Harvey traces the emergence of postmodernism as a "historical-geographical condition" back to the crisis of Fordism and the subsequent emergence of a post- Fordist flexible regime of accumulation. Both authors argue for the continuing viability and renewal of the political-economic project of historical materialism.

On the other hand, there has emerged recently a number of theorists who reject the idea that Marxism, in and of itself, represents an adequate model for theorizing, and providing a

suitable political strategy for, the postmodern condition. The underlying assumption of this increasingly influential perspective is that the left must move beyond a Marxism which is inherently "essentialist" and "class reductionist", and instead "deconstruct" its more useful theoretical formulations in order to lay the foundation for a radical and plural democratic socialist politics. What has variously been called "postmodern Marxism" (Ritzer 1992), "The New Revisionism" (Miliband 1985), or more generally "post-Marxism," sets itself apart from those attempts to revise or reconstruct Marxism from within Marxism itself, and allies itself instead with efforts to undermine the construction of totalizing frameworks based upon the search for a true foundation for knowledge. Post-Marxists look to the liberatory potential of social movements based upon the emergence of new, "non-class" antagonisms that have arisen from political identities and struggles which have been either ignored or downplayed by other forms of Marxism. For post-Marxists, the crisis of Marxism and modernity makes clear the recognition, not only that we have arrived in a post-Marxist era, but that going beyond Marxism theoretically and politically is both necessary and desirable. For its protagonists, "[t]he post-Marxist perspective. . . is therefore much more than a mere theoretical choice: it is an inevitable decision for anyone aiming to reformulate a political programme for the left in the historical circumstances prevailing in the last decade of the twentieth century" (Laclau 1990, xii).

The focus of this dissertation is on this latter perspective, defined in broad terms as "a handful of writers who want to maintain a direct connection to the Marxian tradition even as they claim to go beyond it" (Witheford and Gruneau 1993, 71)[7]. My aim is primarily exegetical; given the current popularity of post-Marxism in contemporary social theory it is crucial, I would argue, to be able to account for where post-Marxism came from, precisely what it is, and, by examining the arguments of its Marxist critics, to suggest where it appears to be going. In Chapter Two, I locate the origins of post-Marxism as an identifiable strand of social thought in the context of a series of inter-related intellectual and material developments both internal and external to Marxism itself, the sum total of which could be termed the ongoing "crisis of Marxism". Among

the more important of these developments are the critique of economism and other debates within Western Marxism, the "interpretive" or "discursive" turns within critical social theory, the rise of the New Left and associatedly "new social knowledges," and the demise of "actually existing socialism" with the concurrent globalization of capitalist class relations. In Chapter Three, I present an overview of what Jameson has referred to as the "great themes and shibboleths of post-Marxism." In it I acknowledge the danger of reducing divergent positions to a homogeneous body of social thought but argue nonetheless that there exists common threads running through the works of these authors; (a) a shared committment to "deconstruct" classical and Western Marxism in theory and in practice, (b) a non-objectivist theory of the social, (c) the de-linking of culture, ideology, and the state from class relations, (d) the identification of a distinct epochal shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, (e) a similar shift from modernity to postmodernity, and (f) the opening up of a new "radical democratic" and post-Marxist political project made possible by these epochal changes. Finally in Chapter Four, I consider a number of criticisms directed towards post-Marxism by theorists who remain resolutely tied to a class analysis of contemporary capitalism. Despite directing attention to some important weaknesses in the post-Marxist case, I argue that many of these critiques rely on a "one-sided" reading of Marxism which ultimately reproduces the sterile dualism of a reductionist Marxism on the one hand, and a post-Marxist "retreat from class" on the other. I conclude against post-Marxism that contemporary Marxist thought is best seen as having arrived at a crossroads and is currently faced with a number of possible future orientations, the most fruitful of which is a form of "Open Marxism."

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

[1] The issue of how far these regimes can be characterized as "socialist" or "communist" is hotly contested in the social science literature, particularly within Marxism itself. For a representative sample of these debates see Buick and Crump (1986), Chattopadhyay (1994), Cliff (1988), Djilas (1957), Konrád and Szelényi (1979), Kornai (1992), Lebowitz (1991), Mandel (1992), Resnick and Wolff (1993, 1994), and Staniszkis (1992).

[2] For example, Time magazine (December 7, 1992) celebrated the fact that the "miracle" of the free market and Western-style democracy had at last come to Russia.

[3] A "process by which the transmission of symbolic forms becomes increasingly mediated by the technical and institutional apparatuses of the media industries" (Thompson 1990, 3).

[4] Like the concepts to which they are opposed (modernity and modernism), postmodernity and postmodernism are contested terms with little consensus over their nature, origins or usage. In this dissertation I deal with postmodernism primarily as it is conceptualized in the social sciences (see Rosenau 1992). For discussions of how the concept has impacted on literature and the arts, see Foster (1983), Hutcheon (1993) and Huyssen (1984).

[5] I use the term "social theory" here to refer to a wide range of academic work in the human sciences, including sociology, political science, anthropology, philosophy, communication and cultural theory, women's studies, economics etc. Commentary on postmodernism/postmodernity has similarly reached a wide-ranging academic audience, even branching out into fields such as business studies, public administration, and forestry (Rosenau 1992, 4).

[6] A similar position is taken by Barbara Marshall in her Engendering Modernity (1994), although she is critical of the gender-blindness of critical theorists of modernity such as Habermas and Giddens.

[7] Although it seems safe to say that this tradition is composed of rather more than a "handful of writers." If books, journal articles, conference topics and university courses are anything to go by it seems that post-Marxism is emerging as something of an orthodoxy in left-academic circles. The question of whether it has achieved, or is likely to achieve, hegemonic status is something I discuss in the conclusion to this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL ROOTS OF POST-MARXISM

2.1 Introduction

The term "crisis," as John Holloway has noted recently, is suggestive of a fundamental turning point in the trajectory of development of social or physical change, a moment of intensity which can be both "a time of anxiety and a time of hope" (1992, 146). When applied to Marxism, however, the word has most often been used in a pejorative sense to illustrate the periodic problems faced by theoreticians and social movements whose inspiration has come from the writings of Marx and Engels. From 1897 when the phrase "crisis of Marxism" was first used by Thomas Masaryk in the revisionist debates involving himself, Bernstein, Sorel, Croce and Labriola, to the failures of socialist revolution and the rise of fascism in the nineteen-twenties and thirties in Europe, to Althusser's official pronouncement in 1977 of the crisis of communist parties and Marxist theory, the history of Marxism has been littered with references to the difficulties it has encountered in adapting to changing circumstances. Yet, where before these difficulties could be remedied by yet one more re-reading of the "classic works" or by rediscovering Marx's "humanism" (or alternatively purging it of its residue Hegelianism à la Althusser), recent proclamations concerning Marxism's many crises have suggested that the current one is terminal and there is now no turning back. Thus the "dialectic of defeat" (Jacoby 1981) which gave rise to such a diversity of Marxisms has lost its dialectic and, according to a number of recent commentators, we have now entered, theoretically and in lived reality, a "post-Marxist" era.

If forms of Western Marxism, and more recently post-Marxism, have undermined, in Lucio Colletti's words, the "central pillars on which Marx's theoretical edifice rests" (Hoffman 1984, 9), then an immediate question arises: where did the contemporary paradigm known as post-Marxism come from? What are its theoretical origins, the material factors which have encouraged its emergence, in short, what are its "intellectual and social roots"? For some

"reactionary" forms of postmodern theory, of course, the question is immediately disqualified on the grounds that any search for the origins or foundations of knowledge "outside the text" (to use Derrida's phrase) is politically dangerous and will inevitably lead to theoretical closure.[1] I want to argue on the contrary that the attempt to delineate the historical origins of a body of thought is a worthwhile exercise even, as Ritzer and Schubert argue, in order simply to gain a better understanding of the theory in question (1991, 362).[2] In this chapter, then, I attempt to locate the roots of post-Marxism—relatively "undertheorized" in the secondary literature on post-Marxism[3]—in a series of inter-related intellectual and material developments both "within" and "outside" of Marxism which have continually challenged Marxism's status as a relatively self-contained method and theory of class struggle. The sum total of this complex of factors has come to constitute what is usually referred to as the "crisis of Marxism." In this respect, there are four developments essential to the emergence of post-Marxism: (i) the critique of economism carried out by Western Marxism, (ii) the "interpretive" or "discursive" turn in critical social theory, (iii) the rise of the New Left, and the emergence of "New Social Knowledges," and (iv) the economic and political backdrop to these intellectual developments: the globalization of capitalist social relations and the demise of "actually existing socialism." I sketch out each of these developments in turn below.

2.2 Western Marxism and the Critique of Economism

"Economism" refers to "a form of Marxism which emphasizes (and in the view of its critics over-emphasizes) the determination of social life as a whole by the economic base . . . and in general insists upon the determinism of Marx's theory" (Bottomore 1983). Opinions vary as to which strands of Marxism (if any) subscribe to economistic thought. Most commentators equate economism with the "vulgar" Marxism or "scientific socialism" of the Second International in Europe when the rich diversity of Marx's ideas were reduced to "catechisms" (Wallerstein 1986, 1301), and the "guiding thread" of his studies outlined in the 1859 Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy were transformed into a "general theory of history" akin,

according to Engels in his speech at Marx's funeral, to Darwin's discovery of the scientific law of evolution. Others locate the roots of economism in Marx himself, for example in his failure to dissociate himself completely from the objective and mechanical language of classical political economy (Thompson 1978, 83). On the other hand, defenders of the classical tradition (Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg) praise the attention paid to questions of political economy and argue that subsequent developments have represented a retreat from politics to philosophy, from the unity of theory and practice to an exclusive concern with method, and a silence on "the economic laws of motion of capitalism as a mode of production, analysis of the political machinery of the bourgeois state, [and the] strategy of the class struggle necessary to overthrow it" (Anderson 1977, 44/5).

Although post-Marxists have not rejected the classical Marxist tradition entirely—Laclau and Mouffe, for example, praise some elements of what they term "open orthodoxy" (Luxemburg, Sorel, Labriola, Austro-Marxism) as containing the seeds of an anti-economistic Marxism—the roots of post-Marxism lie first and foremost in the critique of economism initiated by the tradition whose name was popularized by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in 1955: to wit, Western Marxism.[4] Like post-Marxism (see Introduction to Chapter Three), there is little consensus over the categorization, periodization, and importance of this tradition, although in terms of their influence on the emergence of post-Marxist thought the writings of Lukács, Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, French Humanist Marxism, British Culturalism, and Althusser figure prominently.[5] Despite differences in focus, this tradition is united by a focus on alienation, ideology, and cultural and institutional practices rather than the "objective laws" of capitalism. Except perhaps for Gramsci, therefore, most of Western Marxism can be seen as involving a flight from questions of political economy towards a "Marxism of the superstructure" (Merquior 1986, 4).

With respect to its key problematics and prominent figures, Western Marxism evolved in two distinct stages (Wollen 1993, 124-135). The first period between the Bolshevik revolution and the Second World War was marked by the publication, in 1923, of György Lukács's History and Class Consciousness and Karl Korsch's Marxism and Philosophy, both of which were written

to counter the "economistic" and "fatalistic" (Lukács) or "vulgar" (Korsch) Marxism of the Second and Third Internationals. Although Lukács's work has been by far the more influential of the two for the subsequent development of post-Marxism—even though it was only translated into French in 1960 and English in the early 1970's—both men had similar aims, namely, the recovery of the Hegelian and humanist influence on Marx typically found in his earlier more "philosophical" writings. Lukács in particular focused on the central roles played by consciousness and praxis in social change, and he further considered the Hegelian concepts of alienation, totality, and the dialectical method to be crucial in understanding capitalist society. He argued that a particular form of alienation— "reification," or the objectification of human relations brought about under capitalism by the commodification of labour—prevented the development of practical class consciousness by encouraging the separation of theory and practice and atomized, contemplative "bourgeois" thought. For Lukács, the working-class was the object of this process of reification but it was also the "collective subject" and in a unique position for understanding capitalism dialectically, as a totality. Through this practical self-knowledge (praxis), the working-class was thus potentially able to transform society by overthrowing capitalism, abolishing the division of labour, and thus destroying reification (McLellan 1979, 158-161).

Ultimately, the vehicle for the transmission of class consciousness according to Lukács was the Communist Party. While History and Class Consciousness had been criticized by Lenin and the Bolsheviks for its Hegelian foundations and an over-emphasis on consciousness at the expense of socio-economic conditions, Lukács wholeheartedly endorsed the centralization and discipline of the Bolshevik Party even if, as Jacoby has argued, his emphasis on the need for freedom within the party was in conflict with his Leninism (1981, 90/1). Korsch on the other hand, along with the "left-communists" Anton Pannekoek and Herman Gorter, and Rosa Luxemburg a key figure in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), steadfastly refused to accept the Bolshevik model and instead looked to the factory councils or "soviets" as the instigators of revolutionary change.[6] Another advocate of factory councils in this first period of

Western Marxism, and with Althusser the leading theoretical influence on post-Marxist thought, was the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci.[7] His major work, written after he was imprisoned in 1926 by Mussolini for his role as leader of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), was published as the Prison Notebooks between 1947 and 1949 (but only widely discussed in the late 1950's and 60's), in which he developed an anti-economistic Marxism, referred to by Gramsci due to the imposition of censorship as the "Philosophy of Praxis." A number of important themes pepper his prison writings including a reworking of the base/ superstructure problematic, detailed historical analyses of social formations, the relationship between state and civil society, and the appropriate revolutionary strategy for capitalist societies at different levels of development.

Two themes stand out in Gramsci's work as absolutely central to the post-Marxist paradigm. These are his elaboration of the concept of "hegemony," and the role of the "organic intellectual" in a particular historical formation. Although the concept of hegemony had been used earlier by the Russian Marxists (particularly Plekhanov, Axelrod, and Lenin), Gramsci's use of the term went far beyond equating it simply with attempts to secure proletarian political leadership of class alliances, to a broader definition which includes efforts by any class or "collective will" (including the bourgeoisie) to achieve, not just political, but intellectual, moral, and cultural leadership (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 66/7). According to Stuart Hall, hegemony

> refers to all those processes whereby a fundamental social group (Gramsci speaks of alliances of class strata, not of a unitary and unproblematic "ruling class"), which has achieved direction over the "decisive economic nucleus," is able to expand this into a moment of social, political and cultural leadership and authority throughout civil society and the state, attempting to unify and reconstruct the social formation around an organic tendency through a series of "national tasks." (1986, 35)

It is therefore a concept that shifts the focus of attention from the coercive nature of political rule to the important task of winning the consent of various social actors via ideological and cultural means. This represents a significant departure from the classical Marxist notion of ideology as "false consciousness" which is instilled in the working-class by those who own and control the "means of mental production" (to use Marx and Engels' phrase in the German Ideology).

Hegemony is not simply imposed on an unwilling class, nor is it a static and universal state of affairs, but it is "always made specific to a particular historical phase in specific national societies" and is "always the (temporary) mastery of a particular field of struggle" (36). The resultant conceptualization is clearly at odds with any simple model of base/superstructure determination. Hegemony may be rooted ultimately for Gramsci in the production and reproduction of material life, but it can never be reduced simplistically to the economic interests of a particular class. Any particular social formation or "historical bloc" (Gramsci's term for the ensemble of class relations "cemented" together by hegemonic practices) always depends for its reproduction, not on "economic laws," but on the process of actively constructing a series of moral, intellectual, and cultural values which come to be seen by the various classes as "common-sense."

Rather than rely on the bureaucratic and centralist vanguard party as the means by which the hegemony of the working-class would have to be achieved before overthrowing capitalism, Gramsci instead looked to the critical relationship between the masses and what he termed "organic intellectuals," which arise from social formations and clarify those formations economically, socially, and politically, to the masses. Unlike "traditional intellectuals" (scientists, administrators, scholars) who exist prior to the emergence of particular formations and "put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group" (Gramsci 1971, 7), organic intellectuals exist in a dialectical, organic relationship with the masses of which they form a strata. Furthermore, the "intellectuality" of which Gramsci speaks is inherent in everybody, not just specialists, although he points out that not everyone functions as an intellectual. The role of the organic intellectual—familiar to Gramsci himself as an activist in the Turin factory council movement before he was imprisoned—is to direct the common-sense based "spontaneity" of the masses in a direction which favours the creation of socialist hegemony as well as encouraging individuals to recognize the intellectual inherent within themselves. In Gramsci's words, each organic intellectual should act "as constructor, organizer, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator" (10). In other words they would be involved not just in

"theory," but in "practical activity" learning from the masses and guiding or directing them at the same time, the goal being to extend the influence of this relationship to the political field and ultimately securing a new historical bloc.

In his classic survey of Western Marxism Perry Anderson argues that Gramsci's emphasis on practical activity and his organic connection to political movements places him in a unique position *vis à vis* the "professional professors" who make up the rest of the tradition (1977, 54). A case for this could certainly be made when comparing Gramsci to the group of theorists located at the Institute for Social Research in Germany (and later New York) known collectively as the "Frankfurt School," whose work straddles the two phases of Western Marxism. Although the members of the Institute followed Lukács in desiring the end of reification and alienation and regarded itself as a revolutionary intellectual tradition, it increasingly came to see the working-class as incapable of revolutionary change by itself and, particularly after 1930 when Max Horkheimer was appointed director, it came to reject all existing political movements including Bolshevism, Stalinism, and Social Democracy.[8] Instead, the Frankfurt School championed the cause of the "autonomy" of theory noticeable in the complex language of some of its major works including the articles published in the Institute's Journal for Social Research, Adorno's Negative Dialectics (1966), and Horkheimer and Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment (1944). This theoretical work anticipated the directions taken later by post-Marxists in that, perhaps more than any other Western Marxist tradition, it incorporated non-Marxist theory into its output. From Eric Fromm and Herbert Marcuse's investigations into the relationship between Marxism and psychoanalysis to Horkheimer's use of the philosophy of Kant, Nietzsche, and Bergson to supplement Marx, the Frankfurt School's revision of Marxism covered a broad terrain encompassing a number of disciplines such as sociology, political science, musicology, social psychology, and literary analysis (Kolakowski 1979, 341-395). Indeed, its varied subject matter—critiques of mass culture, bureaucracy and rationalization, analysis of the object/subject dialectic, critiques of technology and domination, and studies of totalitarianism, for example—parallels to a great extent the subject matter of contemporary post-Marxism, and has

led some commentators to suggest a strong overlap between neo-Gramscian cultural studies, post-Structuralism, and contemporary forms of critical theory represented in the work of Habermas, Giddens, Agger, Giroux and others influenced by the early Frankfurt School (Morrow 1991).

The importation of non-Marxist concepts into Marxism continued into the second phase of Western Marxism, roughly the period immediately following the Second World War to the decline in influence of Western Marxism and the emergence of an identifiable post-Marxist paradigm in the late 1970's. This resulted, in Martin Jay's words, in a "series of adjectival Marxisms—existentialist, phenomenological, structuralist, Hegelian, even Schopen-hauerian—which paralleled on a theoretical level the proliferation of parties and sects on a practical one" (1984, 10). What another commentator has termed the "era of a thousand Marxisms" (Wallerstein 1986) included a proliferation of intellectual currents decisively influenced by the publication just before the war of Marx's 1844 "Paris Manuscripts," and slightly earlier Lukács's History and Class Consciousness. One of the more important currents to emerge in this period was French Marxist Humanism, itself a diverse tradition comprising the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the work of Lukács's disciple Lucien Goldmann, Henri Lefebvre's Hegelian Marxism, and numerous intellectual, political, and avant-garde offshoots such as the Arguments group, Socialisme ou Barbarie (Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis, later to become post-Marxists), Surrealism (André Breton), and the Situationist International (Guy Debord and Raoul Vaneigem). French Humanist Marxism continued to develop themes addressed by earlier Western Marxists, particularly Lefebvre whose Critique of Everyday Life (1947) was an explicit attempt to link Lukács's theory of reification to the everyday world of capitalist consumer culture, arguing in the process that any revolutionary transformation would have to include, not just "macro" economic and political structures, but the totality of everyday life. This tradition also reproduced the same tension between support for orthodox communist parties and workers' councils that had plagued Western Marxism before the war. Some (Sartre, Lefebvre, Breton) opted for the Party even though they became increasingly

critical of Stalinism after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, while others like Debord and Goldmann remained consistent advocates of the council movement (Wollen 1993, 127-130).

French Marxist Humanism was paralleled in Britain by a perspective often ignored in the literature on Western Marxism, yet crucially important for the subsequent development of post-Marxism: British Cultural Marxism (Davies 1993). The roots of this tradition appear in the writings of E.P. Thompson, Christopher Caudwell, Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and others connected with the political movements which constituted the early stages of the British New Left, whose ideas were given a hearing in the journals New Reasoner and Universities and Left Review (which merged in 1960 to become the New Left Review). British Cultural Marxism involved a critique of economism along similar lines to its French counterpart, including a rejection of Stalinism and the base/superstructure model undertaken within the context of British culture and society. The earlier work of Thompson and Williams was later institutionalized (and for some radicalized) in the form of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) located at Birmingham University, which carried out a wide range of theoretical and empirical studies centred on the connections between class, agency, culture, and resistance. Reflecting on the Centre's position relative to Western Marxism as a whole, Stuart Hall has argued that the key texts that emerged from the CCCS

> restored to the debate about culture a set of theorisations around the classical problem of ideologies. They returned to the agenda the key question of the determinate character of culture and ideologies—their material, social and historical conditions of existence. They therefore opened up a necessary reworking of the classical Marxist question of 'base' and 'superstructures'—the decisive issue for a non-idealist or materialist theory of culture. (1980, 25)

As Hall notes, however, questions concerning "the relation between cultural practices and other practices in definite social formations" (27) were never satisfactorily resolved by British Cultural Marxism and there was a decisive turn in the early to mid 1970's to French Structuralism in order to correct this "culturalist" bias. The origins of the Structuralist paradigm include Saussurian linguistics, the anthropology of Lévi-Strauss and Godelier, and Barthes' semiological excursions, but most importantly it received a significant Marxist inflection with the publication

of Louis Althusser's For Marx (1969) and, with Etienne Balibar, Reading Capital (1970). Althusser's project was to move beyond both economistic Marxism, and the Hegelian influenced French Humanist Marxism which was popular at the time, and he attempted this within a framework that prioritized an analysis of the "overdetermined" levels of a social formation.[9] Like Gramsci he rejected the reduction of the specificity of cultural and ideological practices to class relations, and stressed instead the "relative autonomy" of economic, political, and ideological levels which together make up the complex "totality" of a social formation. While the economic level may determine in the "lonely hour of the last instance," each level has a specificity of its own and contributes to the determination of the structure as a whole (what Althusser called the "structure in dominance"). Consequently politics or ideology may come to dominate a particular social formation such as feudalism even though the economic level may ultimately determine this dominance. The result is that with Althusser history comes to be seen as a "process without a subject," in that historical agents, privileged in other forms of Western Marxism, become reduced simply to "bearers" or "supports" of the social structure of production relations (McLellan 1979, 301/2).

As a "relatively autonomous" level of the social formation, ideology for Althusser operates largely on an unconscious level and functions, in Gramscian terms, to "cement" societies together by constituting individuals as subjects through the process of "interpellation."[10] This process takes place within what Althusser calls the "Ideological State Apparatuses" (ISA's), the most important of which are the mass media, the family, and the education system. Hence ideology—"those images, representations, categories through which men 'live,' in an imaginary way, their real relation to their conditions of existence" (Hall 1980, 33)—ultimately serves to reproduce the dominant system of social relations, but only under certain historical conditions; that is, ideology has to be articulated to a particular set of economic (class) relations as the relationship is not automatically given. Althusser, therefore, introduced like Gramsci before him the notion of contingency into the ideological equation. Politics and ideology may be determined

ultimately by the economic level, but their specificity and relative autonomy means that there is no necessary "class-belongingness."

These important Althusserian concepts—relative autonomy, overdetermination, interpellation, social formation, and articulation—together with the related work of Nicos Poulantzas on class formation and the state, were to act as a springboard for a number of influential theoretical and empirical studies throughout the 1970's, including Ernesto Laclau's Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory (1977), Perry Anderson's Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism (1974), and Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst's "pre-post-Marxist" Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production (1975). At the same time Structuralist Marxism had a profound effect on British Cultural Marxism which used the anti-economistic and materialist theory of culture and ideology as the basis for a series of ethnographic investigations into the media and popular culture. Yet, as Gruneau argues, the weaknesses of the Althusserian framework—its negation of agency and "lived experience," its implicit functionalism, and its theoretical abstraction—combined, it should be noted, with the demise of Eurocommunism by the end of the 1970's[11], led former Althusserians to turn once more to Gramsci as a potential way out of the Structuralist/ Culturalist impasse. Rather than conceiving of ideology purely as a dominant social relation, post-Althusserians were able to look to Gramsci's theory of hegemony as containing a sophisticated insight into the historical, relational and oppositional nature of ideological, political, and cultural relations (1988, 21/2).

With the decline of Structuralist-Marxism and the (re)turn to Gramsci undertaken by a number of former Althusserian-inspired social theorists, the Western Marxist paradigm began to wane. The philosophical critique of economism carried out by Lukács, Gramsci, Althusser and others had switched attention from the objective laws of capitalism to the complex interrelationships between economic, political, cultural and ideological relations, and to subjectivity, praxis, and the specificity of cultural practices. In doing so it undermined some of the central foundations of Marxist theory and practice, yet this had been done in the name of an enriched Marxism and in the context of a revolutionary critique of capitalism, a commitment to socialism, and with continued adherence to the materialist conception of history in which class relations were still

accorded a certain degree of primacy. The roots of an eventual shift to post-Marxism had been laid, but other interventions were required, most notably from outside the Marxist tradition.

2.3 Post-Positivism and the "Interpretive Turn" in Social Theory

One of the distinctive features of the economistic Marxism which Western Marxism evolved in opposition to was its grounding in a philosophically positivist theory of knowledge inherited from the Enlightenment tradition of social thought. The main tenets of positivist philosophy originated in the work of the "founding father" of sociology, Auguste Comte. Comte's vision was a scientific study of society modeled along similar lines to the methods of the natural or "hard" sciences which laid great emphasis on the search for law-like regularities among observed facts that could be tested using the scientific method of observation, experimentation, and comparative historical analysis. Like Montesquieu, Adam Smith, and Condorcet before him, Comte believed that the social world was amenable to the same "value free" and objective knowledge that had proven to be successful with sciences such as physics, biology, and mathematics. He believed that positivist philosophy, by using formal models of explanation, was a great advance on earlier "theological" and "metaphysical" idea systems (Ritzer 1992, 14-16).

Unsurprisingly, given the success of the natural sciences positivist philosophy had a huge effect on the revolutionary social theory of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even though Marx openly opposed Comtean positivism preferring instead the method outlined in Hegel's The Phenomenology of Mind (1807) and pursuing a philosophically realist epistemology (Keat and Urry 1975, 96), he was still tainted by the uncritical rationalism of his time apparent in his quest to lay bare the "inner workings" of the capitalist mode of production conceived of as a conceptually graspable objective reality (Antonio 1990, 89). However much he relied on a dialectical method which was anti-positivistic, Marx still believed in the importance of observation, logical argument, and establishing empirically verifiable facts regarding the nature of capitalist social relations. Against his wishes, however, Marxism as "method" and as a theory of class struggle was transformed via Engels's Anti-Dühring and the economistic Second and Third

Internationals into a "general theory of history," which would uncover the scientific laws governing nature, society, and thought. Thus "scientific socialism" and "Diamat" (the shortened name given to the orthodox Communist Party's appropriation of "dialectical materialism") became the official representatives of Marxism as a positivist and unifying philosophy, and justified what it regarded as the "inevitable results" of the supposed immanent demise of capitalism by recourse to the language of hard science—natural laws, absolute truths, linear progress and iron necessity—applied to human history.

This positivist reading of Marxism became increasingly influential, not only in the form of the economistic Marxism of the Second and Third Internationals, but also in other schools indirectly or directly influenced by Marxism such as the Vienna Circle (Otto Neurath's synthesis of logical positivism and Marxism), Althusser's attempt to revive the later "scientific" Marx, and more recent endeavours by Analytical Marxists to weld Marxism to mathematical logic and model building.[12] At the same time, a powerful critique of positivism was mounted by many in the Western Marxist tradition, particularly the Frankfurt School and post-Frankfurt School Critical Theory, French and British Marxist Humanism, and Gramsci's early use of the Hegelian philosopher Croce's anti-positivism. These critiques focus on the "dialectical" Marx, the Marx of the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, and The Grundrisse, and by and large dismiss the "positivist" Marx, the Marx of Capital with its "immutable laws" and "inner workings." Yet, as with Western Marxism's critique of economism, post-Marxists have argued that this critique of positivism ultimately falls back on objectivist assumptions, in particular the privileging of class forces, a foundationalist theory of knowledge, and a theory of society as a fully constituted and ultimately intelligible whole (Laclau 1990). A more complete break with positivism was therefore sought.

This radical break with Marxist and non-Marxist positivist assumptions came via what has been referred to as the "Interpretive Turn" in social theory (Rabinow and Sullivan 1979).[13] Despite early critiques of positivism in the phenomenological insights of Weber, Schutz, and Husserl, variants of positivist and naturalist theory were to remain dominant in the social sciences

at least until the late nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties when a number of influential attacks on social theory's ambitions to emulate hard science were launched from within the philosophy of science. Paramount amongst these were Thomas Kuhn's Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962), Karl Popper's Logic of Scientific Discovery (1959), Peter Winch's The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy (1958), and Ludwig Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations (1953). A common thread runs through these works and their dominant themes—Kuhn's analysis of scientific paradigms, Popper's principle of falsification, Winch's focus on rule-governed "meaningful behaviour" and Wittgenstein's "language games,"—notably a questioning of the popularly held belief in the unilinear progress of science through rational inquiry, value-free observation and deductive explanation. Despite their differences, for all these "post-positivist" philosophers the aim is not to uncover certain general laws regarding human behaviour—indeed they argue that the very subject matter of social science renders this impossible—it is instead to delve deep into the social context within which knowledge is constructed, by focusing on the cultural meanings, intentional actions, symbols, and linguistic devices available to social actors. As Rabinow and Sullivan put it, "[t]here is no outside, detached standpoint from which to gather and present brute data. When we try to understand the cultural world, we are dealing with interpretations and interpretations of interpretations" (1979, 6).

This new logic of the philosophy of science and social science as an essentially interpretive endeavor paved the way for further investigations into the ontology of human experience which post-Marxism has since drawn upon, of which contemporary hermeneutics can be singled out for particular attention.[14] The work of Martin Heidegger, Paul Ricouer, Hans-Georg Gadamer and, more recently, Jürgen Habermas, has drawn attention to the contingent, indeterminate, and partial nature of what counts as knowledge. Unlike positivism and to some extent more "classical" forms of hermeneutics (Dilthey, Schleiermacher, even Weber), contemporary hermeneutics holds that there is no external "archimedean" point outside of any given situation which acts as a firm foundation for discovering "true" knowledge. Instead hermeneutics encourages a sophisticated and intersubjective form of relativism which "suspends"

the quest for truth in favour of a pluralistic understanding of the tradition from which a particular language, text, or knowledge-statement is derived. Since we can never escape the values and prejudices of a particular tradition, however, any attempts at understanding on the part of the interpreter or observer must always engage in what Gadamer, following Heidegger, termed the "hermeneutic circle," which is the continual process of reconciling the objective and subjective components of knowledge, "the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter" (Gadamer 1976, 120). The furthering of knowledge is thus achieved by the attempted "fusion of horizons" of the traditions of both the observer and observed whereby the observer uses the categories and forms of life of the past to reflect back to the present situation. This is achieved in part, according to Gadamer, by acknowledging the crucial role that language plays, not only as an effective means of communication, but as the medium of all understanding of both the observer and observed.

Sharing the hermeneutic preoccupation with language, texts, and meaning, while at the same time rejecting its humanist theory of the subject, are two related traditions that emerged primarily in the work of a number of French social theorists in the nineteen-fifties, sixties, and early seventies: structuralism and post-structuralism.[15] Reviewing the two traditions, Anthony Giddens describes their joint concerns as:

> . . . the thesis that linguistics, or more accurately, certain aspects of particular versions of linguistics, are of key importance to philosophy and social theory as a whole; an emphasis upon the relational nature of totalities, connected with the thesis of the arbitrary character of the sign, together with a stress upon the primacy of signifiers over what is signified; the decentring of the subject; a peculiar concern with the nature of writing, and therefore with textual materials; and an interest in the character of temporality as somehow constitutively involved with the nature of objects and events (1987, 196).

The "structural revolution" constituted a formative moment in the history of the social sciences and its attempt to lay bare the underlying and impersonal structures of human organization traversed disciplinary boundaries, manifesting itself in anthropology (Claude Lévi-Strauss), linguistics (Ferdinand de Saussure), semiology (the early work of Roland Barthes), psychology (Jean Piaget), Marxism (Althusser), and history (the early work of Michel Foucault). By the mid

nineteen-seventies, however, the popularity of Structuralism had waned and an all-out "assault on structure" was waged from within its ranks. "Post-Structuralism," which as Charles Lemert (1990) notes was always inherent in Structuralist thought, was born in the writings of Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and others who formerly worked on or near the Structuralist horizon.

A number of key themes stand out as absolutely central to post-Structruralist thought. First is an "unremitting hostility towards totality" (Jay 1984, 515), a neo-Nietzschean disavowal of holism in any form especially as represented in Marxism's "grand narrative."[16] All totalizing discourses, for post-Structuralists (and subsequently postmodernists), end up as closed and self-legitimating scientific metanarratives which reproduce systems of domination and oppression by marginalizing or excluding that which is deemed not to be "central." In other words, the quest for truth becomes caught up in the "will to power." Second is post-Structuralism's primary subject matter, different modes of linguistic experience, or "discourse"[17] in the case of Foucault, *écriture* (or writing) in the case of Derrida. In focusing on texts and discourses, post-Structuralism argues that there are no hidden or essential meanings waiting to be discovered by recourse to science. Instead, texts and discourses are open to numerous interpretations independent of the intent of authors, and any meaning a text or discourse has is the result of the relations of difference between signs, symbols, words, and other signifiers which enjoy "free play"; hence meanings are never static or fixed. The post-Structuralist method of "deconstruction" is an attempt to open up a text or discourse to the possibility of different readings, to examine the gaps, traces, lacks, absences, and contradictions which together constitute the text. Furthermore, discourse itself is seen as the model for what has been traditionally referred to as "society" such that "everything social is discourse" (Lemert 1990, 243). Finally, deconstruction reveals the way in which power relations are implicated in every facet of human sociability from the domination of large-scale institutions to the regulation of the human body and sexuality. But if these mechanisms of power, knowledge included, are omnipotent, then so is resistance and opposition to various dominant discourses. Post-Structuralism, then, rejects not only totalizing modes of thought, but also political strategies

based on centralization, unification, and the positing of a different "order" (such as communism, for example). It allies itself instead with various local and autonomous "micropolitical" oppositional movements operating at the margins of mainstream political life. It also regards its own deconstructive and genealogical methods as inherently subversive and political. As Foucault contends, post-Structuralist texts have become "tools for the revolutionary deconstruction of the established apparatus. . . bombs for others to throw at the halls of power and wealth" (Poster 1989, 115).

Post-Structuralism has challenged some of the cherished beliefs of Western Enlightenment thought, and it has been joined in its attack by various postmodern social theories in the nineteen-eighties and 'nineties (Baudrillard 1983, 1988; Haraway 1991; Kroker and Cook 1986). With hermeneutics and the philosophy of language, post-Structuralism and postmodernism are indicative of a general "crisis of representation" in the human sciences which has emerged as a result of the contestation of knowledge initiated by the Interpretive Turn. Although Anthony Giddens could write as long ago as 1987 that Structuralism and post-Structuralism are essentially "dead traditions of thought" (1987, 195), the development of an anti-foundational theory of knowledge, the focus on language, texts, and discourse, and the support for micropolitics has had a huge impact on post-Marxism with its commitment to an anti-essentialist theory and radical democratic political strategy.

2.4 The New Left and the Making of New Social Knowledges

Many of the intellectuals later to figure prominently in the development of post-Marxist discourse cut their intellectual and political teeth on the European and North American New Lefts and associated social movements of the late nineteen-fifties, 'sixties, and 'seventies.[18] In the UK the New Left emerged as a critical reaction to the Soviet invasion of Hungary and French/British invasion of the Suez Canal region in 1956, as well as to the accelerating nuclear arms race (Hall 1989). Borrowing its label from the influential French Nouvelle Gauche, the New Left in Britain attempted to steer a middle course between Stalinism and Social Democracy and represented a

coming together of Communist Party dissidents and the independent student left in clubs and universities. Its brand of socialist and communist humanism drew heavily on the anti-economism of British Cultural Marxists such as Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson, together with critical theories of post-war American society found in the work of C. Wright Mills and Alvin Gouldner. Despite its communist humanism, however, the New Left in the UK displayed a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards Marxism. As Hall remarks, "the New Left always regarded Marxism as a problem, as trouble, as danger, not as a solution" (1992b, 279).

A similar ambivalence characterized the early US New Left which was more a product of the Black Civil Rights, women's, and student anti-war movements, than of an identifiable socialist or communist tradition (Buhle 1987). This said, it made liberal use of a number of Marxist-influenced studies of North American society, including Herbert Marcuse's blend of revolutionary utopianism, Freudianism, and critique of western civilization in Eros and Civilization (1955), Michael Harrington's The Other America (1962), a scathing indictment of poverty, racial unrest and urban decay in post-war US capitalist society, and C. Wright Mills's The Power Elite (1956). Despite the fact that the locus of mass politics of the US New Left was predominantly the university campus—what many consider to be its founding statement was drawn up by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in Port Huron in 1962, and its demands were largely centred on democratizing the hierarchical university structure—the "stamp of Marxism," as Paul Buhle reminds us, "remained undeniably there" (222).

Despite their diversity, both the US and European New Lefts were linked by a number of common concerns (Hall 1989; Kolakowski 1979; Levy 1993/4). Changes to the structure of post-war capitalism prompted a revaluation of existing analyses of social relations based upon traditional left theory, and attempted to account for emergent forms of corporate consumer capitalism and the advent of a "post-industrial" knowledge-based economy. Important in this regard was the publication of André Gorz's Strategy for Labour (1964), Alain Touraine's Post-Industrial Society (1964), and Serge Mallet's La Nouvelle Classe Ouvrière (1963), existentialist-influenced works that took as their subject matter the disappearance of the factory based industrial

proletariat and the emergence of an alienated yet potentially revolutionary "new working-class" of highly educated technicians, scientists, and engineers. Concomitantly, the concepts of "revolution" and "socialism" were redefined, the former to depict a long-term process of fostering counter-cultural hegemony rather than an immediate and violent overthrow of the capitalist state, the latter to include a much broader rejection of bureaucracy, authoritarianism and the capitalist work ethic, a redefinition that countered the sterile ideology of "actually existing socialism." Inevitably, this mix of anarchism, Gandianism, and libertarian Marxism, embodied in the pro-drugs, pro-sexual liberation, anti-work lifestyle of the US New Left, incurred the wrath of the Old Left for whom the emphasis on lifestyle, liberation and counter-cultural resistance was a distraction from what it considered was the real task of furthering class struggle and eventually seizing state power.

The New Left also substantially redefined the nature of the "political," broadening it to include aspects of everyday life and cultural practices that were usually considered within the domain of the "private." Politicizing culture in this way required a shift away from conceiving, as the Old Left had done, of conflict as occurring only or predominantly at the point of production, towards a recognition of other social conflicts based around race, gender, and sexuality as well as class. Both the US and European New Lefts were connected in this respect both directly and indirectly with the emergence of "new social movements" which evolved as a response to, amongst other things, racial segregation and discrimination in schools and workplaces, the treatment of women as second class citizens, the denial of basic rights to gay men and lesbian women, and the growing dominance of nuclear power as a source of energy. These movements both created, and were formed by, what Steven Seidman (1994) calls "new social knowledges," new perspectives on society starting from the position of oppressed groups which challenge dominant paradigms of knowledge centred largely on white, male, straight, middle-class Americans. These knowledges contribute to the redefinition of the political by showing how power relations are implicated in science, in the home and community, in the formation of

identity, and in the self/body, as well as the more traditional spheres connected with the economy and the state.

Two of these knowledges and the movements associated with them emerged as formative moments in the shift from Marxism to post-Marxism (Hall 1992b, 282/3).[19] The first was feminism. As a movement feminism emerged in the late 1960's in the context of rapidly changing social, economic and political circumstances including a massive influx of women into the economies of the industrialized west. The left-wing of its "second wave" exposed the patriarchal nature of both the Old Left and the New Left, challenging the subordinate roles that many women were forced to play in unions, socialist and communist parties, and other organizations, and inspiring the development of autonomous women's centres and consciousness-raising groups based upon non-hierarchical structures. As a social knowledge indebted to a long history of women's writing that had been silenced or marginalized in the human sciences, it confronted issues traditionally neglected by the left, including systematic abuse and violence directed towards women, women's lack of control over sexuality and reproduction, damaging media stereotypes, institutionalized male dominance in the workplace, community and home, and the "malestream" gender bias of much academic work in universities and elsewhere. Feminism also pioneered the infusion of political analysis into the realm of the "everyday." As Hilary Wainwright wrote in 1979:

> Much of the oppression of women takes place "in private," in areas of life considered "personal." The causes of that oppression are social and economic, but these causes could only be revealed and confronted when women challenged the assumptions of their personal life, of who does the housework, of the way children are brought up, the quality of our friendships, even the way we make love and with whom. These were not normally the subject of politics. Yet these are the problems of everyday life, the problems about which women talk most to other women. . .(Rowbotham, Segal and Wainwright 1979, 13).

Much feminist work in the nineteen-sixties and early 'seventies took Marxism as one of its central problematics. For many feminists, the insights provided by Marxism into the oppressive and exploitative nature of capitalism proved attractive, and a number of important feminist publications, among them Margaret Benston's article "The Political Economy of

Women's Liberation" (1969), Juliet Mitchell's Women's Estate (1971), and Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James's The Power of Women and the Subversion of Community (1973), worked with Marxist conceptual categories. Where these feminists parted ways with Marxism was with the latter's "sex-blindness," its neglect of unpaid domestic labour in the home and the double work-day endured by women, and, with respect to Engels' claim that the first step for the emancipation of women was to enter the workforce *en masse*, the myth that liberation lay in paid work outside the home.[20] Subsequent Marxist-influenced feminist work introduced the notion of a mutually dependent "dual system" of oppression: capitalism, which involves the systematic class exploitation of working-class men and women, and patriarchy which is the name given to the universal system of male dominance over women (Eisenstein 1979). These theoretical insights in turn bolstered the growth of women's groups committed to Marxist- and Socialist-Feminism, such as Bread and Roses in Boston, the Chicago Women's Liberation Union in the US and the Toronto Women's Caucus in Canada, and it further increased the participation and influence of women in revolutionary organizations such as the Socialist Worker's Party in the UK and the Young Socialists and League for Socialist Action in Canada, organizations which had by and large been male dominated.

The second formative moment in the development of post-Marxism as far as the making of new social knowledges is concerned, was provided by debates over race and identity. Both Marxism and second-wave feminism were criticized for prioritizing class and gender respectively, and emphasizing an unproblematic unity of oppression of men and women as workers, or women as victims of patriarchy. In the case of feminism, a "third-wave" emerged in the nineteen-seventies and 'eighties built around the development of a distinctly black feminist ontology and epistemology in the works of feminists of colour such as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Barbara Christian, and Patricia Hill Collins (Stanley and Wise 1993, 222). This moment took as its target a monolithic women's movement which, despite important advances, had legitimized the colonization of women's experiences by largely white, middle class, Western women. A similar critique of the heterosexist bias of second-wave feminism was initiated by lesbian and bisexual

feminists and other sex radicals. This emphasis on the differential oppressions and experiences of women was later to be taken up by post-Structuralist and postmodern feminists who have further problematized the social construction of categories such as "woman," "race," and "gender" (Nicholson 1990; Barrett and Philips 1992). In the case of Marxism, a long history of influential Black theorists such as W.E.B. DuBois, C.L.R. James, and Richard Wright had drawn attention to the ways in which racism, slavery and colonialism were built into the very heart of capitalism, and had criticized the Eurocentric bias of much Marxist work (Robinson 1983). The late nineteen-seventies and 'eighties saw a number of influential theorists who made similar criticisms of Marxism's failure to pay adequate attention to questions of race and ethnicity, and, as represented in the work of Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Kobena Mercer, and others, were responsible for the shift to a distinctly post-Marxist analysis of race and class.

The legacy of the New Left and the making of new social knowledges has been that the question of class which is central to the Marxist analysis of capitalism, was relativized alongside a plurality of other determinations including race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. As such, the New Left and new social knowledges continued the trend apparent throughout the Western Marxist tradition of displacing the working-class and its relationship with capital as the primary subject of revolutionary social change. The different social conflicts which these knowledges gave voice to reached their apogee in the cataclysmic events around the world in the late nineteen-sixties, where seemingly diverse yet connected social movements precipitated a global capitalist crisis (Cleaver 1979, 4-7). From student and worker unrest in France, Italy, and Eastern Europe, to anti-imperialist uprisings in the "Third World"and the Black Power movement in the US, and from industrial sabotage and the revolt against work in factories to demands for a more inclusive curricula in universities, the analysis of capitalism as essentially a class system seemed to have been shown up for what it was—at best a partial account of events in the "real world." Yet paradoxically, the events of 1968 and 1969 were to mark the end of the New Left in the US and Europe as severe economic recession and a backlash against the gains won by various social movements followed the upheavals which had failed to produce the kinds of revolutionary

changes its participants had hoped for. The aftermath of 1968 saw an increasing dissatisfaction with Marxism typified in the general retreat of radical public intellectuals into the university system and the increasing commodification of radical thought in a proliferation of books, specialized journals, and academic conferences. Where intellectuals continued to engage with the ideas of Marxism in the public sphere, this usually took the form of a virulent anti-Marxism such as that found in the work of the Althusserian-inspired Nouvelle Philosophie in France. In this general context of fragmentation and discontent, the only route available for the left to take (apart from the economism of the Old Left) was for many a "Eurocommunist" strategy which sought a broad based alliance of left-reformist groups whose aim was to democratize the capitalist state as a transitional step on the road to socialism.[21] It was precisely in these post-'68 times of turmoil that, in the mid-nineteen-seventies, an identifiable paradigm of *post*-Marxist social thought began to emerge.

2.5 The Globalization of Capital and the Demise of "Actually Existing Socialism"[22]

Ideas, of course, do not emerge in a vacuum, and the intellectual roots of post-Marxism have evolved against the backdrop of a particular set of social, economic, and political relations. These can be summarized as the gradual but marked decline in the fortunes of radical working-class movements including trade unions and the mass parties of the left together with the countries of state "socialism," and concomitantly the spread of capitalist social relations to all areas of the globe, developments which have since prompted post-Marxists to radically temper demands for revolutionary social change.

The trajectory of Western Marxism, for example, has been influenced by the failure of the western working-class to break decisively from capitalism, debates over the types of social relations inaugurated by the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, and the threats posed by the rise of fascism in the nineteen-thirties (Anderson 1983). Furthermore the fragmentation of the international communist movement following the outbreak of the first world war meant that early monopoly capitalism gained a solid foothold and managed to successfully integrate the working-

class into its dynamic. It was in this context that much of the Western Marxist tradition shifted attention away from the objective laws of capitalism which were clearly not leading to its destruction, towards the realms of ideology and class consciousness in which were sought reasons for the failure of working-class revolution. As the class structure of capitalism changed still further and, for post-Marxists at least, gave the lie to Marx's predictions of a polarization between capitalists and wage labourers, other Western Marxists searched for new revolutionary subjects to replace the working-class, or in the case of some members of the Frankfurt School, abandoned the search for revolutionary subjects altogether in favour of a philosophical critique of capitalist society.

The decline of the left after its high point during the revolutionary upheavals in eastern and western Europe prior to the onset of fascism, has manifested itself in the declining membership of socialist and communist parties, the loss of political and economic clout of trade unions, the virtual elimination of the factory council movement, and the switch to "free market" economies of formerly "socialist" nation-states such as China, Nicaragua, Cuba, Vietnam, and Russia and her former satellites. Even social democratic parties around the world whose "socialism" in reality amounted to little more than "liberalism with a social conscience" (Teeple 1995, 157), have dwindled along with the erosion of Keynesian economics, the welfare state and social citizenship, and hard won gains for workers in the form of higher incomes, better working conditions and increased political democratization. In short, the left in both its "revolutionary" and "reformist" guises has suffered a massive reversal of fortunes from the unbridled optimism apparent in the growth of workers' movements at the turn of the century. Such defeats cannot help but have a huge and lasting impact on the shift from Marxism to a post-Marxist discourse.

The demise of the left has accompanied a series of fundamental changes to the structure of world capitalism from its early market and monopoly stages to what Mandel (1975) calls "late capitalism." This shift has been associated with a number of important features including decompositions and recompositions of various classes, the emergence of a trans-national capitalist class and supra-national state forms, the shift from national economies to a global division of

labour, changing production techniques from "Fordist" to "advanced" or "post"-Fordist methods, the emergence of "free trade" blocs, and the development of new information and communication technologies. These sea changes have had repercussions in a number of areas. For example the massive growth in the world-wide communications and media networks has increasingly meant that cultural, ideological, and political practices have come to be mediated through these global concerns such that, in late capitalism, "all of life *presents itself* as an immense accumulation of spectacles" where "everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation" (Debord 1983, paragraph 1, *emphasis added*). Global restructuring—which can be seen by and large as a counter-attack by capital following successful working-class struggles that had secured increases in real wages, collective bargaining and access to basic social services—has also had a profound effect on gender relations worldwide including a vast influx of women's paid labour into the economy, the "feminization of poverty," higher rates of unemployment for women, and the intensification of female unwaged labour (Allen 1989). Similarly, "race" relations have been affected by capital's reorganization and relocation of millions of low paid workers world-wide including the forced expropriation of the common-lands of indigenous peoples world-wide. Politically, the counter-attack by global capital has taken the form of the rise of the New Right advancing neo-liberal policies based on, amongst other things, the dismantling of the Keynesian Welfare State, attacks on unions, cuts to public spending, deregulation and privatization, and the unmitigated promotion and protection by governments of private property rights (Teeple 1995, 75-127). While the rise to hegemonic status of neo-liberal economics has been accompanied by the rhetoric of the "triumph of capitalism," especially following the collapse of state "socialist" regimes, underlying such rhetorical claims are a broader set of socio-economic changes:

> The promulgation and progressive realization of the neo-liberal agenda are not to be grasped as an "ideological victory," as if a set of political ideas were sufficient to cause such profound changes. Rather, the changes are best viewed as the consequence of the arrival of the global economy, and as such they form the political assertion of the demands of internationalized capital in search of new avenues of accumulation. (126)

These changes have taken their toll on formerly Marxist intellectuals. On the one hand, the globalization of capitalism has contributed to the widening gap between intellectuals and social movements by increasing competition for jobs in universities and colleges and furthering the commodification and institutionalization of radical thought at the expense of radical "public intellectuals" (Jacoby 1987). At the same time, as Alex Callinicos has noted, New Right policies of the late nineteen-seventies and 'eighties have created a buffer for sections of the middle class (including the intelligentsia) in the form of an "overconsumptionist" lifestyle which has led to the proliferation of post-Marxist and postmodern analyses of fragmented culture, images, consumer goods, and styles (1989, 7). Furthermore, many former Marxists such as those associated with the Marxism Today/New Times perspective, have accepted wholesale the equation of the collapse of state "socialism," and the demise of the organized left in general, with the ends of socialism and revolution respectively. Whether we accept these explanations for the rise of post-Marxism or not, it is clear that, as a set of theoretical propositions which vehemently asserts the relativity of truth claims, post-Marxists have been remarkably insensitive to their own historically situated discourses. This has had the consequence of exposing post-Marxism to attack on the grounds that it is merely a product of left disillusionment and the rightward shift of political positions, a "new idealism" whose inadequacies must be highlighted by recourse to a rigorous historical-materialist analysis of the socio-economic conditions in which it emerged. This, however, pre-empts the argument I consider in Chapter Four. For now, it is necessary to turn from its intellectual and social roots directly to post-Marxism itself as it has emerged in the work of an expanding group of social theorists from the late nineteen-seventies on.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

[1] For classic statements of this anti-epistemological position, see Hindess and Hirst (1977) and Rorty (1979).

[2] The goals of this chapter bear some similarity to George Ritzer's attempts at a systematic study of sociological theory which he terms "metatheoretical analysis" (*Mu*) (Ritzer 1991; 1992; Ritzer and Schubert

1991). Ritzer's four-fold analysis of the origins of a particular theory (internal-intellectual, internal-social, external-social, external-intellectual factors) is, however, excessively formalistic; would the influence of the New Left on post-Marxism, for example, qualify as an internal or external, social or intellectual factor? While my aim in this chapter is essentially the same as Ritzer's—an analysis of the social roots of post-Marxism "as a means of attaining a deeper understanding of theory" (1992, 651)—I avoid any rigid categorizations of the various determinants in order to bring out the way in which the various material and intellectual factors are interdependent.

[3] Ellen Meiksins-Wood's (1986) landmark critical study of post-Marxism, for example, devotes only a small section to its intellectual roots as do the articles in New Left Review by Ralph Miliband (1985) and Norman Geras (1991). The exceptions are Chilcote and Chilcote (1992) and Ritzer and Schubert (1991) both of whom trace the emergence of post-Marxist theory back to attempts to resolve the "crisis of Marxism."

[4] Other labels for this body of thought include "Hegelian Marxism" (Agger 1979) and "Critical Marxism" (Antonio 1990).

[5] Since Althusser was critical of what he saw as the Hegelian and humanist bias of much Western Marxism, he is often left out of accounts of this tradition (see Jacoby 1981). I have included him here because his deep suspicion of the economic reductionism of the Second International and his attempts at reformulating the base/superstructure problematic have had a profound effect on the subsequent development of post-Marxism.

[6] For sympathetic accounts of "council communism" see Jacoby (1981) and Shipway (1987).

[7] Although Gramsci also saw the parallel need for a revolutionary political party (McLellan 1979, 178).

[8] As McLellan notes, however, the earlier work of the School seemed to favour the political critique of Leninism embodied in the Council Communist movement, while later Herbert Marcuse revived issues of revolutionary politics (1979, 260/1).

[9] "The (economic) 'contradiction' is inseparable from the total structure of the social body in which it is found, inseparable from its formal *conditions* of existence, and even from the *instances* of the social formation it animates; it might be called *overdetermined in its principle*." (Althusser For Marx, quoted in Callinicos 1982, 60 *author's emphasis*).

[10] This concept which Althusser borrowed from Lacan refers to the way in which individuals are "hailed" or "called" to certain structures of dominance through ideology and ideological practices (see Eagleton 1991, 142/3).

[11] For as Laclau notes, the project of Althusserian Marxism was indissolubly connected with attempts at revising the practice of the French Communist Party (1990, 179).

[12] For Analytical Marxism see Roemer (1986) and for an overview of the Vienna Circle of Logical Positivism see Diesing (1991).

[13] Also referred to as the "linguistic," "cultural" or "discursive" turn in the social sciences.

[14] See Bleicher (1980) for a summary of contemporary hermeneutics, and Stone (1994) for the relevance of the work of Gadamer and Heidegger for post-Marxism.

[15] See Sturrock (1986). Although primarily a French tradition of thought, Structuralism also emerged in the work of non-French theorists such as the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the Russian school of

semiotics, and Edward Sapir and Noam Chomsky, both Americans. Similarly, post-Structuralism includes the prominent figures of the Americans Paul de Man, Geoffrey Hartman, and J. Hillis Miller.

[16] In Jean-François Lyotard's words, "Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; Let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name" (1984, 82).

[17] Referring to the importance of Foucault's work, Stuart Hall defines discourse as "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—i.e. a way of representing—a particular kind of knowledge about a topic . . . A discourse does not consist of one statement, but of several statements working together to form. . . a discursive formation" (1992, 291).

[18] Martin Jay includes in his list of "generation of 1968" intellectuals Stanley Aronowitz, Samuel Bowles, Jean Cohen, and Herbert Gintis (1984, 19). Stuart Hall has on a number of occasions charted the emergence of a post-Marxist cultural studies from the ideas and movements of the New Left (1992b; 1989) and Ernesto Laclau has indicated that, while his experience in Argentine political movements was formative, the events of 1968 and the proliferation of what he and Chantal Mouffe call "new antagonisms," confirmed his subsequent theoretical work (1990, 180).

[19] Hall makes this point in reference to the evolution of British cultural studies, but a similar argument could be made with respect to post-Marxism as a whole.

[20] For example Dalla Costa writes "[t]he independence of the wage earner means only being a 'free individual' for capital, no less for women than for men. Those who advocate that the liberation of the working class woman lies in her getting a job outside the home are part of the problem, not the solution" (1973, 33). Dalla Costa and James insisted that unpaid domestic labour was productive in the sense that it produced surplus value for capital by reproducing labour power.

[21] This Eurocommunist strategy was articulated in Nicos Poulantzas' The Crisis of the Dictatorships (1975/6) and State, Power, Socialism (1978), books which, as Ellen Wood (1986) notes, had a marked effect on post-Marxist political strategy.

[22] I am grateful to Gary Teeple for suggestions regarding the material reasons for the demise of the organized left outlined in this section.

CHAPTER THREE

POST-MARXIST THEORY AND POLITICAL STRATEGY

3.1 Introduction

Post-Marxism has arrived on the contemporary intellectual scene as the latest in a long line of theoretical engagements with the ideas of classical and Western Marxism as represented primarily in the texts of Marx and Engels, Lukács, Gramsci, and Althusser. The history of Marxism has been punctuated by numerous attempts to qualify some of the central tenets of Marxist thought via "interested" readings of classical Marxist texts, resulting in the "era of a thousand Marxisms" from the late 1950's on. Despite their differences, what perspectives such as "Marxist-Leninism," "Critical Theory," "Structuralist Marxism," "Marxist-Feminism," and "Political Economy" have in common is a commitment to the ontological and epistemological primacy of basic Marxist categories such as class struggle, relations of production, the labour theory of value, commodity fetishism, and alienation. As I have shown in Chapter Two, these revisions of Marxism have sought ultimately to retain the explanatory primacy of the "Materialist Conception of History," together with the classical Marxist belief in revolutionary social change. Where Marxists have incorporated issues of concern to critics of Marxism—gender, culture, nationality, ethnicity, for example—this usually takes place within a framework in which class is still accorded a certain degree of primacy, even in the loose sense of "conditioning" or "setting limits" to the playing out of various social conflicts.

As Ritzer and Schubert (1991) note, however, recent neo-Marxist writing has taken a more explicitly *post*-Marxist direction. That is, while Marxist concepts remain a point of reference for many theorists, a tradition has emerged drawing upon a unique blend of poststructuralism, neo-Gramscianism, feminism, liberal-pluralism, and cultural theory, which involves the importation *en masse* of concepts which have traditionally been marginal or absent from Marxist thought. Post-Marxism, therefore, signifies a paradigm shift, a "qualitative" or "totalizing" break with Marxism in its classical or Western forms (Dandaneau 1992). Yet, despite

a shared desire to move beyond Marxism, post-Marxists continue to stress their intellectual indebtedness to the tradition of classical and Western Marxism. According to one of post-Marxism's foremost proponents,

> . . . I haven't rejected Marxism. Something very different has occurred. It's Marxism that has broken up and I believe I'm holding on to its best fragments. . . it [is] a question of a rather more subtle process of continuity and discontinuity than is evoked by the idea of simple 'rejection.' (Laclau 1990, 201)

As an intellectual current which judging by publications and conference topics is beginning to achieve something of a hegemonic position in left-academic circles, post-Marxism has representatives across a wide range of disciplines including sociology, cultural studies, political theory, philosophy, women's studies, geography, and anthropology. While emerging primarily from those writing in the Western intellectual tradition, it has gained popularity among "Third World" academics and activists tied to social movements, particularly in Latin America (Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Chilcote 1990). Among its more renowned adherents are Jean Cohen, Claude Lefort and Frank Cunningham (Philosophy/Political Theory), Steven Seidman and Barry Smart (Sociology), Fred Block and Claus Offe, (State theory), Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (Economics), Kobena Mercer, Angela McRobbie and Lidia Curti (Cultural Theory), Paul Gilroy, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi Bhabba (Post-Colonial theory) and Michèle Barrett and Laura Kipnis (Feminist theory). Also claiming to work within a post-Marxist problematic are those whose writings form the substance of this chapter; theorists associated with the New Times/ Democratic Left project in Britain, including Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Stuart Hall[1], and Martin Jacques.

Having said this, there is a danger in reducing what is obviously a heterogeneous group of social theorists to a homogeneous body of thought called "post-Marxism" (Bodemann and Spohn 1989, 118). Just as there are conceptual and political differences between some of the post-Marxists listed above, there are also no clearly defined boundaries between post-Marxism and perspectives such as Socialist-Feminism, Analytical Marxism, or post-Frankfurt School Critical Theory.[2] Nevertheless there are, theoretically and politically, a number of clear points of

commonality between post-Marxists which have been acknowledged, not only in the secondary literature, but also by post-Marxists themselves. These central tenets are summarized below.

3.2 Key Theoretical Tenets

Deconstructing Marxism

While Marxism remains the starting point or the problematic for much post-Marxist theorizing, there is at the same time an explicit rejection of the idea that Marxism can be "patched up", "saved" or "reconstructed" by, for example, ridding it of its economic determinism. Instead, the crisis of Marxism has provided an opportunity for the deconstruction of the texts of classical and Western Marxism in a way that seeks "to recover their plurality, to grasp the numerous discursive sequences. . . which constitute their inner structure and wealth, and guarantee their survival as a reference point for political analysis" (Laclau and Mouffe 1992, 4)[3]. Hence, the Marxist canon is treated as simply one more "discursive surface" or "language game" open to potential deconstruction; like any text or discourse it is constituted by continually shifting meanings, lacunae, and tensions which, once revealed, create the possibility of further creative and innovative developments.

The starting point for this deconstruction is often Marx's allegedly more "economistic" work, or secondary developments of this work.[4] Most notably, Marx's 1859 Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy is often cited by post-Marxists as the definitive account of the materialist conception of history presumably adhered to by most, if not all, Marxists. In a famous passage from the Preface, Marx writes:

> In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general . . . At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production . . . Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the

> economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out . . . In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production . . . This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of human society to a close (Tucker 1978, 4/5).

This statement, meant by Marx to be the "guiding thread of his studies", is used by post-Marxists to illustrate what are seen to be the inherent weaknesses in Marxism. These are, in sum, *class reductionism* (the idea that, under capitalism, all antagonisms are ultimately reducible to the exploitative capital/wage labour relationship at the level of the relations of production); *economic determinism* (the "inner workings" or "laws of motion" of the economic base—particularly the progressive growth of the forces of production—condition or determine ideology and the political/legal superstructure); *essentialism* ("Behind the empirical and contingent variation of concrete situations, there is an essential objectivity whose laws of movement rule historical transformation" (Laclau 1990, 21)), *scientism* (this essential objectivity is only amenable to a naturalistic Marxist science); and *teleology* (Marx's analysis of capitalism is presupposed by the inevitable triumph of a class-less society signaling the "end of pre-history"). Furthermore, as an analysis of capitalism developed primarily in Western Europe around the turn of the twentieth century, Marxism is said to suffer irrevocably from a Eurocentric and evolutionist outlook that tainted much social theory at that time. This is evident in the "stagism" of passages like the Preface or the Communist Manifesto where Marx and Engels appear to assign a linear development to historical change in the form of different modes of production. As such, for post-Marxism, like all attempts at grand theory Marxism has little purchase on understanding the complexity brought about by the profound changes to capitalism during the second half of the twentieth century. Even those elements within Marx's work and subsequent developments of Marx and Marxism which attempt to eliminate economic determinism and class reductionism always fall back on the grounds of some assumed a priori correspondence between the economic

and political/ideological, even in Althusser's much heralded "last instance." Post-Marxism advocates dispensing with this "unicentric" approach in favour of a "polycentric" analysis of the heterogeneity of power relations that displaces class from the centre of the analysis (Cunningham 1987).

A "Non-Objectivist" Conception of the Social

For post-Marxists, this deconstructive move has taken a wider berth than Marxism to include all strands of Western philosophical thought guilty of what Derrida terms the "metaphysics of presence" (Laclau 1990, 161). Simply put this is the idea, prevalent in the greater part of nineteenth and twentieth century social theory, that "society" is by and large an objective "fact," a pre-existing entity or totality whose dynamics and structure are amenable to social analysis on rational and scientific grounds. Even though Marxism in stressing how conflict and struggle is endemic to this "logic of the social" occupied a critical position in relation to Enlightenment thought, for post-Marxism it is still part and parcel of what Laclau calls the "imperialism of reason" (1991/2, 56) in so much as it has portrayed capitalism as a self-regulating totality of social relations whose "essence" is a particular set of class relations. In other words it has consistently affirmed a certain "closure" or order to society (for example, through the base/superstructure distinction), and by doing so marginalizes those differences which do not "fit" within its assumed unity of thought. Marxism is, then, for post-Marxists, a classic example of Lyotard's totalizing "grand" or "master" narrative; like Hegel, Christianity, or Liberalism, it searches for ultimate truths or foundations for knowledge which, once revealed, can act as a springboard for social change.

Not all aspects of Marxist thought were guilty of this "objectivism," however. According to post-Marxists the groundwork for the ultimate dismantling of totalizing thought came with those thinkers in the Marxist tradition who attempted a rethinking of the traditional base/superstructure model, particularly Gramsci and Structuralist-Marxists like Althusser. Here, society is not a closed order whose superstructural "elements" can be reduced simplistically to a

determining economic "base," but instead the social is viewed as analogous to a language so that meanings can be derived from the relations of difference between, in the case of Althusser, the overdetermined elements or levels which make up a particular totality. With Gramsci this decentring went even further; social formations, or more accurately "historical blocs", are the product of historically contingent class struggles over cultural, intellectual, and moral leadership, carried out on the terrain of ideology and politics. Yet both Gramsci and Althusser were, for post-Marxists, guilty of a "residual essentialism'; despite the attention paid to relations of difference, overdetermination, and hegemonic struggles, they still relied on the notion of determination "in the last instance" by the economic level (Althusser) or by class formation (Gramsci), and concomitantly both still viewed the social as an objective and ultimately intelligible structure (Laclau and Mouffe 1992, 76).

With post-Marxism on the other hand, the very notion of society as "real" and "objective" has been called into question. Gone is any notion of the social as a fixed, stable, pre-existing entity amenable to analysis and representation, together with any distinctions between "essence" and "appearance." Drawing upon the post-structuralism of Foucault and Derrida together with Lacanian pyschoanalytic theory, post-Marxists stress instead the open, "non-sutured," and radically contingent nature of the social. Any order that a society has is the result of the hegemonic articulation of discursive elements which are constantly in flux. Nothing is fixed and there remains only the "traces" or "scars" of (always) incomplete attempts at fixity or suture among the elements which constitute the field of differences. There are no "laws" of history, politics, or economics, and no "totalities" of social relations; reality is open, plural, and contingent.

One of the first post-Marxist attempts at this (thoroughly post-structuralist) de-centring of the logic of the social came in the post-Althusserian work of Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst (1977a;Cutler et al. 1977). In Mode of Production and Social Formation they reject their earlier use of Althusserian concepts such as relative autonomy and mode of production, together with all attempts at a "rationalist epistemology" of the real. Hindess and Hirst posit instead that there can

be no separation of the real from discourse, and that there is necessarily no correspondence between elements in a social formation where before a determining relation had been assumed. Nothing exists outside of the discursive realm and there are no truths or essences to be found. All that can be done from Hindess and Hirst's point of view is to establish the internal consistency and logical rigour of concepts, and to examine the "conditions of existence" that give rise to elements within a particular social formation.

This position was later to be attacked by post-Marxists for its alleged "essentialism of the elements" (Laclau 1988, 253). While the primacy accorded to discourse by Hindess and Hirst was praised, it was argued that their deconstruction had gone too far. In a series of books and articles which for many define the post-Marxist paradigm, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe develop a theoretical elaboration of a non-objectivist conception of the social which accorded a central role to discourse, at the same time as it showed how the social could not be equated with a series of autonomous, free-floating discursive elements. While, like Hindess and Hirst, they affirm that all objects are constituted in and through discourse, Laclau and Mouffe equate the social with those attempts to "pin down" or "fix" the various discursive elements into a "system of differential entities—that is, of moments" (1992, 111). These moments, which for Laclau and Mouffe can be both linguistic and extra-linguistic, are called "nodal points" (from Lacan's *points de capiton*), and together they form the (always precarious and instable) social or discursive formation. The limits to the objectivity of the discursive formation, what prevents the social from fully establishing itself as a positive essence, is provided by what Laclau and Mouffe term the "constitutive outside", an indeterminate discursive field dominated by antagonism and negativity. The result is the "impossibility of society":

> The incomplete character of every totality necessarily leads us to abandon, as a terrain of analysis, the premise of *"society"* as a sutured and self-defined totality. "Society" is not a valid object of discourse. There is no single underlying principle fixing—and hence constituting—the whole field of differences. The irresoluble interiority/exteriority tension is the condition of any social practice: necessity only exists as a partial limitation of the field of contingency. (1992, 111)

The process by which the different elements are fixed by social actors into nodal points is described by the concept of articulation, the "creation of something new out of a dispersion of elements" (Laclau 1990, 183). Crucially for Laclau and Mouffe, this process takes place hegemonically and politically. The concept of hegemony which had played a large part in countering economic determinism in the Marxist tradition is further radicalized to refer to the ensemble of articulatory practices of social agents, the historically contingent struggles of social groups, which together make up a social formation or historical bloc. It is this attempt at securing an always incomplete hegemony which, according to Laclau and Mouffe, constitutes the very fabric of what is usually referred to as "society." Echoing Foucault's insistence on the omnipresence of power relations, they assert that all acts of hegemonic articulation are "political through and through" (1992, 173), in the sense, not of some epiphenomenal level of the social, but as the very "essence" (although Laclau and Mouffe would probably reject this word) of the constitution of the social. It is with this insight that we can speak of Laclau and Mouffe's non-objectivist conception of the social as based upon the primacy of political relations; any "unity" or "positivity" of the social is ultimately the result of the incomplete and historically contingent political struggles of social groups.

Autonomy of Ideology/ the State /Culture

Post-Marxism differs fundamentally from what it sees as the essentialist treatment of ideology, nation-states, and culture in those strands of classical and Western Marxist thought which conceive of each as determined by the mode of production, "ultimately" or otherwise. As Yuezhi Zhao puts it, for post-Marxism:

> [s]ince there are no social interconnections outside of an articulating practice, there is no way of theorizing about determination in the last instance by the economy. The mode of production is only a conceptual construct, it does not exist on its own right, and thus cannot be granted any ontological priority. (1993, 75)

The consequences of this conceptual shift is that ideology, the state, and culture are, in Ellen Wood's words, "autonomized," that is they are de-linked or detached from any necessary correspondence with relations of class (1986, 47-75)[5]. More accurately perhaps, post-Marxists assert the primacy of the ideological, political, and cultural, in relation to the "economic"; as I have already shown, all relatively fixed moments of the social (including the economy) are hegemonically and discursively constructed.

This can be illustrated by looking at the concept of ideology. Seen as either a level of the social totality (Althusser), ruling ideas (Marx), or false consciousness (Engels), the various Marxist theories of ideology are rejected in favour of an approach which severs ideology from any necessary correspondence with class interests or economic levels. Interests are not "objectively given," instead they are multi-dimensional, open to negotiation and depend, fundamentally, on their hegemonic articulation in a given socio-historical formation. In this respect, for many post-Marxists the concept of ideology has become meaningless as it refers to discursive practices which do not depend on a priori interests or objects which pre-exist discourse (Zhao 1993)[6]. For other post-Marxists, the concept retains its usefulness as long as it is detached from any notion of economic determination, even in the much heralded "last instance"[7]. Once ideology is autonomized in this way, the central role it plays in constituting various subject positions via signification, representation, and other discursive practices, becomes clear. This is particularly visible in Stuart Hall seminal analysis of Thatcherism as a distinct and novel hegemonic political project which emerged in the U.K. in the nineteen - seventies (Hall et al. 1978; Hall 1988a; 1988b).

Post-Marxism also claims to move beyond the classical Marxist treatment of the state form as the "executive committee of the bourgeoisie" as well as more recent attempts by neo-Marxists such as Miliband and Poulantzas to assert the relative autonomy of the state vis-à-vis capital. Extending the work of Poulantzas, post-Marxist theorists of the state from Claus Offe to Fred Block conceptualize the multiplicity of nation-states as potential "terrains of struggle," autonomous from both capital and civil society. Severed from any necessary class belongingness,

the state becomes, not an object to be "seized," "smashed," or "abolished," but potentially democratized in the process of allowing a pluralistic civil society to flourish (Pierson 1984).

Finally, post-Marxists posit the centrality of culture to any understanding of social life. Orthodox Marxism is criticized for neglecting or downplaying the role of culture, particularly in its "popular" forms. In Hall's words, "[c]ulture has ceased to be, if it ever was, a decorative addendum to the 'hard world' of production and things, the icing on the cake of the material world. The word is now as 'material' as the world" (1991, 62). Politics and economics are, instead, seen as constituted *in and through* cultural practices (McRobbie 1991, 6). Despite claiming to work within the problematic of neo-Marxism, particularly the work of E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, Althusser, and Gramsci, the expanding and transnational field of cultural studies appears to have moved away from the critique of political economy altogether. From questions of ownership, control, and class struggle, the focus of post-Marxist cultural studies[8] is now on pleasure, consumption, subcultures, resistance, identity formation, and oppositional meanings; what could be termed the "cultural practices of the everyday." Of particular interest are processes of formation of cultural identities at the intersection of "race," class, gender, and sexuality. This is apparent in the diverse and eclectic subject matter of post-Marxist cultural studies; from people living with A.I.D.S. to punk rock, to "postcolonial" identities (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 1992).

Fordism/Post-Fordism

Although Angela McRobbie in her survey of New Times theory makes the observation that post-Marxism has abandoned the terrain of neo-Marxist conceptual categories (1991, 17), there is one area where post-Marxists have sought to retain an emphasis on political-economic structures: the analysis of changes to post-war capitalism. Drawing upon a popularized reading of the political economy of the French Regulation School (Aglietta 1979; Lipietz 1987) together with Gramsci's insights into the creation of hegemonically contested historical blocs, post-Marxists identify a series of major political-economic transformations in Western capitalism at the centre of

which is the transition to a new "neo" or "post"- Fordist "regime of accumulation."[9] While opinions differ within post-Marxism as to the hegemonic status of the concept of post-Fordism[10] there is agreement that something approaching an epochal shift has occurred, ushering in "new times" which have profound consequences for contemporary modes of theorizing and the renewal of a politics of the left.

The post-Fordist thesis is premised on the existence, prior to the late 1960's in Western capitalist and state "socialist" societies, of a relatively stable mode of mass production and consumption known as Fordism after the revolutionary production system initiated in the automobile industry in the US by Henry Ford. The four pillars of Fordist production—standardization, mechanization, scientific management (Taylorism), and the mass assembly line—were subsequently exported to other industries such as food production, household goods, and agriculture, and were instrumental in the creation of the mass worker, a relatively highly paid but largely un- or semi-skilled employee engaged in closely monitored, repetitive, manual work (Murray 1989, 39/40). The institutional arrangement which mediated the social fabric of this Fordist regime of accumulation and helped secure its reproduction—in Regulation School parlance the "mode of regulation"—included the protection of national markets by a Keynesian interventionist state, the formation of a social security net, industrial collective bargaining between unions and management, and social democratic consensus politics. For Joachim Hirsch, "[g]rowth, modernity, progress, individualism, consumerism, work discipline, administrative 'feasibility,' statist social reform and egalitarianism were the dominant normative values which held together this economic-political hegemonic structure of Fordism" (1991, 18).

Theorists of post-Fordism—both Marxist and post-Marxist—argue that this Fordist regime of accumulation began to break up in the early 1970's as the tendency for the falling rate of profit reasserted itself leading to rapidly increasing inflation, high unemployment and a fall in productivity. As Murray notes, the crisis of Fordism was initiated in part by the industrial and cultural revolts against the dominant order in the late 1960's, which forced capital to seek new labour processes and modes of technology especially as the failure to manage the crisis using

Keynesian policies became apparent (1989a, 42). The resultant structural change in the mode of production and consumption was labelled "neo" or "post"-Fordism. Stuart Hall lists the main features of the emergent new times as follows:

> a shift to the new "information technologies"; more flexible, decentralized forms of labour process and work organization; decline of the old manufacturing base and the growth of the "sunrise," computer-based industries; the hiving off or contracting out of functions and services; a greater emphasis on choice and product differentiation, on marketing, packaging, and design, on the "targeting" of consumers by lifestyle, taste, and culture rather than by the categories of social class; a decline in the proportion of the skilled, male, manual working class, the rise of the service and white-collar classes and the "feminization" of the work force; an economy dominated by the multinationals, with their new international division of labor and their greater autonomy from nation-state control; and the "globalization" of the new financial markets, linked by the communications revolution (1991, 58).

Examples of post-Fordist production techniques in practice include the "Just-In-Time" system employed by the Japanese car firm Toyota, British retail outlets such as Sainsbury's, Habitat, or the Burton clothing chain, and in particular the flexible production and distribution techniques of the Italian clothing firm Benetton (Murray 1989a; 1989b).

In general post-Marxists welcome these changes viewing them as a unique opportunity to cast off what they see as the outmoded factory-centred productivism of the old left. In particular the left should, it is argued, learn from the hegemonic project of the New Right which capitalized on the crisis of Fordism to push through its program of "authoritarian populism" involving an attack on unions and cutbacks in state spending (Hall 1988b). While New Times theory cautions against portraying post-Fordism as a total rupture with a previous regime of accumulation, its proponents nevertheless give the impression that capital and the New Right has resolved the crisis of Fordism; the left must face up to the fact that these economic and cultural changes are here to stay.

Between the Modern and Postmodern

Despite the tendency to conflate post-Marxism and postmodernism in the commentary on contemporary social theory, post-Marxism stands in a distinct if somewhat ambiguous relation to

postmodernism. If post-Marxists welcome postmodernist discourse then they do so in a manner which is a far cry from the celebratory rhetoric of, for example, Jean Baudrillard, for whom, not only is it a given that postmodernism has arrived, it is also impossible to forge any kind of critical or oppositional project from within its boundaries. Post-Marxism, on the other hand, is best seen as a critical postmodernism, a "postmodernism of resistance," which questions the key projects of modernity yet refuses to dispense with it altogether. As Hal Foster writes:

> A postmodernism of resistance, then, arises as a counter-practice not only to the official culture of modernism but also to the "false normativity" of a reactionary postmodernism. In opposition (but not *only* in opposition), a resistant postmodernism is concerned with a critical deconstruction of tradition, not an instrumental pastiche of pop- or psuedo-historical forms, with a critique of origins, not a return to them. In short, it seeks to question rather than exploit cultural codes, to explore rather than conceal social and political affiliations. (1983, xii *author's emphasis*)

This radical deconstruction of modernity, like the deconstruction of Marxism to which it is related, finds much to be critical of yet much that is also valuable. Some post-Marxists, for example, criticize the reliance of modern thought on false theoretical universalisms, rationalist epistemology, a Cartesian view of the (male) subject, and an uncritical acceptance of materialism (Barrett 1992). For others, modernity has failed to deliver on its promise of progress and freedom, either in the capitalist West or former countries of "actually existing socialism." Many, however, wish to hold on to what they see as the emancipatory possibilities of Enlightenment thought, particularly the critical humanist tradition and the values of equality which arose from the democratic revolutions in Europe (Laclau 1990, 83). In this respect, post-Marxism can be said to be *between the modern and postmodern*, or as Mouffe says, "both modern and postmodern" (1993, 10).

This can be illustrated by Anthony Giddens' contention that we are currently living at a unique conjuncture in history which he terms "radicalized modernity" (1990). This period is characterized by four key features, "the *dissolution of evolutionism*, the *disapperance of historical teleology*, the recognition of *thoroughgoing, constitutive reflexivity*, together with the *evaporating of the privileged position of the West . . .*" (52/3 *author's emphasis*), which together suggest the

move towards a new institutional order. As with other post-Marxists, however, Giddens remains cautious as to whether these transformations signify a new postmodern epoch; "[t]o speak of post-modernity as superseding modernity appears to involve that very thing which is declared (now) to be impossible: giving some coherence to history and pinpointing our place in it"(47).

Others are less guarded particularly those post-Marxists working within the field of cultural studies. The advent of new information and media technologies and the globalization of capitalist social relations has led, it is argued, to a new postmodern culture which dissolves the distinction between "mass' and "elite" culture, and enables previously marginalized voices to emerge. This shift, as Laura Kipnis argues, renders untenable the vanguardist and elitist pretensions of modernist art, culture, and theory, and instead makes possible the construction of left postmodern cultural and political practices through a critical engagement with popular cultural forms (1993, 116). Similar attention to the enabling features of postmodern culture is present in the collection of writers in the Cultural Studies anthology edited by Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler (1992), most of whom work explicitly within a post-Marxist perspective. Yet there is a warning here also. Even as postmodern culture and postmodern intellectuals celebrate difference, marginality, and local discourses, there is a tendency, as bell hooks (1993) and Cornel West have noted, to exclude or appropriate "Otherness," black women and black popular culture in particular. Despite crucial insights such as the critique of essentialism, postmodern culture and thought remains deeply ethnocentric, a preserve of white, male, academics, and an example of "European navel-gazing" (West 1993, 391). As such, West and hooks warn us to remain suspicious of the claims of postmodernism.

On the whole, then, post-Marxists, like Foucault before them, affirm no clear break between the modern and postmodern and argue instead that a series of transformations in knowledge, institutional structures, and cultural and political practices are under way. They situate themselves somewhere between Habermas and Baudrillard, between outright defenders of modernism and postmodernism respectively. Where they insist that we are indeed living in postmodern "new times," as many post-Marxists do, they advocate, not a playful, apolitical

deconstruction of modern thought, but concentrate instead on the opportunities for radical politics opened up by current transitions. It is to a consideration of this political strategy that I now turn.

3.3 The Politics of Post-Marxism

The method of critical deconstruction advocated by post-Marxists has itself been portrayed as an overtly political act in so far as it guards against the discourse of closure which often accompanies totalitarian thought. Nevertheless, post-Marxists have gone to great lengths to ensure that the political consequences of this paradigm shift are not confined to the often abstract post-structuralist practices of academics, but relate directly to the interests, identities, struggles, and policies of concrete social groups. Ernesto Laclau is not alone when he claims that "[t]he post-Marxist perspective . . . [is] much more than a mere theoretical choice: it is an inevitable decision for anyone aiming to reformulate a political programme for the left in the last decade of the twentieth century" (1990, ix).

As with the theoretical deconstruction of Marxism, the political strategy advocated by post-Marxists begins with a direct engagement with the politics of Classical Marxism and the traditional left. Many post-Marxists were at one time or other involved with traditional left organizations—Laclau, for example, was formerly a political leader of the Trotskyist-influenced PSIN (Socialist Party of the National Left) in Argentina, and the British New Times theorists previously staffed the upper echelons of the orthodox Communist Party of Great Britain—while the New Left provided many with a foundation for the critique of the authoritarian and bureaucratic nature of "Marxism in practice." The list of fundamentals rejected by post-Marxists in their search for a radical politics for the twenty-first century is impressive and certainly more complete than their quest to keep alive the theoretical contributions that Marxism has made. For example, post-Marxists dismiss the idea of a pivotal role played by class struggle and class consciousness both in the constitution of social identities and as the impetus behind social change. The working-class it is argued, especially in its traditional organizational forms such as trade unions and political parties of the left, no longer (if it ever did) occupies a privileged place in

social struggles, a centre around which diverse groups can unite. The very idea of revolution as a fundamental change in the social relations of production, or as a Jacobin-type seizure of state power by the "proletariat organized as the ruling class," is seen by post-Marxists as outmoded, leading inevitably to authoritarianism. The Marxist concept of democracy embodied variously in the notion of proletarian rule, the "democratic centrism" of Leninist parties, the stateless "administration of things," or in a planned and coordinated economy of freely associated individuals, is seen as radically insufficient and exclusionary of extra-class identities. Finally, the Marxist goal of socialism or communism, conceived of as a harmonious post-capitalist order is criticized as a utopian and totalitarian ideal. In short, the very foundations of Marxist revolutionary politics have been cut from underneath those who continue to search for radical alternatives to capitalism. The message is clear: socialism or communism both as an alternative post-capitalist society and as a "universalist unifying ideology" (Aronowitz 1993, 43) has been historically exhausted.

Given, however, that post-Marxists still situate themselves within a radical "left" discourse—even though increasingly they are coming to reject the labels "left" and "right"[11]—what is the political strategy they offer? The politics of post-Marxism are largely based on a set of assumptions regarding the identities and interests of social actors relative to changing discursive formations or hegemonic blocs. Broadly speaking post-Marxists argue that Marxism was mistaken in assigning a set of "objective interests" to social agents which were fixed relative to their existence as class subjects or "bearers" of economic categories. In other words, the idea that the working-class has a privileged role in enacting social change—a "historical mission" in Second International parlance—falsely assumes a fixed, stable, and necessary relation between socialism and the conflict which supposedly arises inevitably from the wage labour/capital relation. Instead, post-Marxists deny that there is anything inherently antagonistic about social relations of production under capitalism which result in the formation of stable and unifying class identities.[12] Rather than search for a privileged agent of social ~~agent,~~ change post-Marxists carry out a "de-totalizing" or "de-centring" of the subject such that any given social formation will

contain a "plurality of diverse and frequently contradictory [subject] positions" (Laclau and Mouffe 1992, 84). For example, the advent of post-Fordism with the associated commodification, bureaucratization, and homogenization of everyday life has led to a proliferation of new antagonisms which extend far from the capital/wage labour relation centred around the point of (industrial) production. As Laclau puts it, contemporary "disorganized capitalism"

> is an increasingly less classist society, because the unity of group positions on which the Marxist notion of "class" is based no longer obtains. We have exploitation, antagonisms, struggles, but the latter—workers' struggles included—are increasingly less *class* struggles. (1990, 165 *author's emphasis*)

Yet there is at the same time a reluctance on behalf of post-Marxism to reject workers' struggles *tout court*. While Laclau points to evidence of a decline in class inequalities and the fragmentation of what was considered the "traditional" working-class, he still points out that Marx's class theory did "correspond well enough to what was occuring in the field of his historical and political experience"(164). However, while the concept of class continues to be a useful tool in analysing "workers in a mining enclave, for example . . . since one finds a fundamental continuity and stability between all their subject positions" (165/6), it is clear that with the fragmentation and decentring of subject positions brought on by post-Fordism, workers' struggles are simply one set of struggles which exist alongside those that have sprung up from a plurality of new antagonisms which themselves have resulted in the emergence of new social movements.

Although some post-Marxists have expressed doubts over the "newness" of these movements (Laclau and Mouffe 1992, 159) there is close to unanimous agreement that the plurality of collective struggles that have emerged over the past three decades are without precedent historically. In both organizational structure and the nature of the issues they pursue new social movements are manifestly different from the political parties and unions which comprised the Old Left, and their "newness" is thus attributed to the fact that they are "non-class" movements pursuing issues long marginalized and negelcted within traditional workers'

organizations. For example, while orthodox Leninist parties stressed the need for centralism, party discipline, and a hierarchical leadership structure, new social movements tend to be de-centralized, non-hierarchical, and grass-roots oriented. While the goals of the old class based movements were internationalism, the fostering of class unity, the overthrow of capitalism and the state, and the socialization of the economy, new social movements more often deal with issues of locality rather than globalism, difference and pluralism as opposed to unity, the discourse of resistance and rights in preference to revolution, and the "life" or "identity" politics of the everyday instead of the "politics of production." While there have been overlapping concerns such that some organizations in the New Left attempted to learn from both the politics of Marxism and the emerging New Social Knowledges, since the late nineteen-seventies there has been a marked and steady decline in the fortunes of traditional left organizations at the same time as the number and diversity of new social movements has proliferated. It is hardly surprising in this context that post-Marxists such as Laclau and Mouffe and the New Times theorists have thrown their weight behind these movements as representing the future of radical politics.[13]

A far from exhaustive list of new social movements might include the following: feminist movements (both "second" and "third wave"); ecology and environmental organizations; anti-consumerism/consumer rights groups; peace and anti-militarist movements; lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-sexual activists; black and Third World nationalism; indigenous rights groups; youth and children's rights advocates; AIDS activist groups; anti-prison and anti-psychiatry movements; disabled rights groups; radical religious movements; animal rights organizations; traveller communities and squatters movements. While the literature on new social movements often divides the movements into sub-types (Eder 1993; Boggs 1986) or counterposes them to "economic justice" organizations such as anti-poverty groups, tenants associations and trade unions (Aronowitz 1993), in practice new social movements struggle on a number of social, economic, cultural, and political fronts. Furthermore, although new social movements are often seen to be incompatible with the parties and unions of the Old Left, there are examples of movements working closely with "left" political parties such as PT (the Brazilian Workers' Party)

and M-19 in Columbia, and with what Hilary Wainwright (1994, 198) calls the "new parties" in Europe—Die Grünen (the German Green Party), Socialistisk Folkeparti (the Danish Socialist People's Party) and the Dutch Green Left. Some developments within contemporary unions such as Solidarnosc in Poland and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) also suggest a convergence of the demands of new social movements and traditional unions, culminating in the emergence of "social movement unionism" (Waterman 1993). Nevertheless, post-Marxists still point out in this regard that with their emphasis on autonomy, diversity, grass-roots democracy, and coalition building, new or non-class social movements ensure that, as Stuart Wilks argues, "a return to the old-fashioned politics of the left is a return to a stage in history which has long since passed" (1993, xii).

It would be mistaken, however, to assume that post-Marxists advocate an "enclave politics" (to use Laclau and Mouffe's term), a form of identity politics that is unable to forge alliances across issues, a purely "negative" politics of reactive anti-systemic demands (Laclau and Mouffe 1992, 189). Similarly post-Marxists make it abundantly clear that they are not searching for a new "centre" or "universal agent" to replace the working-class such as Marcuse's "Great Refusal" (students, the underclass, and black liberationists), Gorz's "non-class of non-workers" (unemployed, short-term, and part-time workers), or Maoisms' privileging of "Third World liberationists." Instead, and consistent with their neo-Gramscianism and post-Structuralism, post-Marxists argue that various struggles (including those of workers) must be politically articulated towards the creation of "chains of equivalence"[14] or democratic alliances between the different autonomous social movements. While such hegemonic constructions are necessarily complex and precarious, there is, if you like, a "universalizing" or "totalizing" principle in effect here. What post-Marxists term "radical democracy" or the "egalitarian imaginary" provides the discursive logic whereby the right balance of autonomy and unity between social movements can be achieved. The principle of radical democracy has its roots in the ideals of the various democratic revolutions in Europe and the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in particular the discourse of rights, universal suffrage, equality, constitutional government, and

liberty. What is potentially liberating about these ideals for post-Marxists is that, when *radicalized*, that is, when the implications of equality, freedom, and universal rights are extended to all spheres of society, to the multiplicity of plural subjects rather than to particular groups or classes, the project of radical democracy becomes, in Laclau and Mouffe's words "infinitely more ambitious in its objectives than that of the classic left" (1985, 152). Thus, while radical democracy serves as a political imaginary or articulating principle in a similar way that socialism or communism did for the traditional left, the principles of democratic discourse based on the idea that agents of change cannot be established a priori ensures that a New Left will not fall into the same trap of "holistic excess" that plagued the Old Left. The impossibility of ultimately suturing a society—the underlying theoretical principle of post-Marxism's political strategy—guards against universalism and ensures that the pursuit of radical democracy will be an ongoing and open-ended process, not a closed order signifying the "end of pre-history."

This begs the question, what of socialism or communism conceived of by Marxists as the abolition of capitalist relations of production? Does the rejection of the political project of the Old Left mean that post-Marxism must accept Fukayama's "end of history," the historical inevitability of class inequality, market relations, and the private ownership of wealth? While it may be the case for post-Marxism that the discourse of contemporary radical movements draws from the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and the American Bill of Rights rather than from the Communist Manifesto (Bowles and Gintis 1987, ix), there is apparently a place for "socialism" in the project of radical democracy. For Laclau and Mouffe and other post-Marxists, however, socialism can only be one part of a broader struggle for the deepening of liberal democracy, a partial fight which must be articulated with the struggles and demands of a plurality of social groups. What post-Marxists mean by "socialism" in this context is not explicitly spelled out, although there are scattered references to a "democratization of private corporations and the state" (Mouffe 1993b, 110), a mixture of state regulation, planning, and the market (Laclau 1990, 52), a "complex equality" of private and public ownership and distribution of goods (Lent 1994, 234)[15], and competing systems of "worker and consumer co-operatives and

individual traders, each with a differently structured relationship to capital markets and consumers, and different ideas of participation in work (Mulgan 1989, 387). Whatever form a socialized economy will take, for post-Marxists it is wholly achievable within the bounds of the liberal democratic state. Socialism must be part of the extension of the principles of the democratic revolution, and must never subsume the principles of pluralism, autonomy, and individual rights to the collectivist utopianism of the Old Left's revolutionary strategy.

Finally, the role of the intellectual in mediating this counter-hegemonic strategy of radical democracy is vital for post-Marxists. Post-Marxism rejects the idea of the "traditional" intellectual who stands separate from the group that s/he speaks for, in favour of Gramsci's support for organic intellectuals who arise from the multiplicity of social struggles and attempt to discursively "cement" counter-hegemonic ideas and strategies into a new historical bloc. In practice, this has meant learning from the radical post-Fordist strategy initiated by the New Right, a central topic for post-Marxist writing since the early nineteen-eighties when the British journal of the Communist Party of Great Britain Marxism Today first pioneered the analysis of Thatcherism as a powerful hegemonic ideology. In the context of the rise to prominence of Thatcherism and the disintegration of the labour left in Britain, the post-Marxist organic intellectuals who comprise the Marxism Today/New Times groups have seen themselves as, in a memorable phrase, "trying to do what Thatcherism does, only with a bit more 'caring'" (Hall 1988b, 282). With the demise of the CPGB and the subsequent mutation of the Marxism Today/New Times projects into the Democratic Left and its various offshoots (Demos, Signs of the Times)[16], British post-Marxists have set themselves up as something of a grass-roots thinktank operating on the fringes of established political organizations like the British Labour Party, while at the same time attempting to articulate the struggles of various non-aligned feminist and anti-racist groups to the project of radical democracy.

3.4 *Post*-Marxism or Post-*Marxism*?

> The idea of Post-Marxism is that the questions that Marx posed remain central for understanding and transforming our social world. However, the answers that Marx offered no longer suffice, and just as Marx sought to transcend Hegel, so too, those who pursue the Post-Marxist project seek to transcend Marx. (Block 1987, 35)

Unquestionably, the claim of post-Marxism is a bold one: to have made Marxism in its classical and Western forms redundant, to have exceeded or *transcended* it. For post-Marxists, new times require that we go beyond a Marxism "with guarantees," with the comforts afforded a position which can fall back on notions of determination in the last instance by class struggle or the economy, beyond the positing of a central and necessary relation between working-class interests and socialism. These guarantees are seen as no longer viable in our postmodern era which calls into question not just Marxism, but all grand narratives which embody universal and foundational claims to knowledge. The future of a critical and radical theory must necessarily start from a de-centred and deconstructive theory, with the production of local and marginalised knowledges, and from the lessons to be learnt from the political practices of new historical agents.

Yet, as I have demonstrated in this chapter, this "postmodernism of resistance" does not wish to dispense with Marxism entirely. As Laclau and Mouffe stress in the introduction to Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, "if our intellectual project in this book is *post*-Marxist, it is evidently also post-*Marxist*" (1992, 4 *author's emphasis*). Hence the *aufhebung* of Marxism is supposedly carried out in the spirit of Marx himself using insights gleaned predominantly from Gramscian and Althusserian Marxism, in order to "stand on his shoulders" in our novel historical period.

On closer examination, however, the link with the Marxist tradition seems to have become more tenuous than post-Marxists are prepared to acknowledge. Post-Marxist theory and political strategy has moved well beyond the crude economic determinism of the Second International and Stalinism, but it has also appeared to have moved beyond any recognisably *Marxist*

methodological, epistemological, and political position. While post-Marxists claim that the discourse of antagonism, hegemony, and radical democracy represents a fruitful line of thought visible yet repressed in the Marxist tradition, the consequences of their radical deconstructive move are that some equally productive and fundamental concepts have been displaced. Gone, for example, is the language of class struggle and the importance of alienation, of the need to conceive of capitalism as a "totality," of the centrality of the wage labour/capital relationship, of the materialist method, and of the desirability of ending class exploitation, of moving beyond capital. As such, without at least some attention paid to these crucial concepts, it would be difficult to justify the label "Marxist" at all. Indeed, as Norman Geras has pointed out, post-Marxists have come to share a common theoretical position with non-Marxists, ex-Marxists, and even "common-or-garden anti-communism," despite their insistence that they are working within a Marxist problematic (1990, 120).

The rejection of the fundamental tenets of historical materialism, of the excesses of modernity, and of "actually existing socialism" in all its forms, are ideas with a large following in contemporary social theory. Certainly post-Marxism can be said to have *transcended* Marxism, if by this is meant exceeding the barriers or limits of the Marxist paradigm, or existing independently from its central tenets. The question of whether post-Marxism has made Marxism redundant or *surpassed* it is another question entirely, and is the subject of the next chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1] Hall's position relative to post-Marxism is somewhat ambiguous. In earlier work (Hall et al. 1979; Hall 1983) he opts for a "Marxism without guarantees" where issues of materialism, ideology, determinacy, and political economy remain firmly on the agenda. In this respect commentators have often located Hall somewhere between Orthodox Marxism and post-Marxism/postmodernism, or as Witheford and Gruneau put it, "Between the Politics of Production and the Politics of the Sign" (1993). I would argue, however, that Hall, particularly in his later work, shares much in common with post-Marxism as defined in this dissertation, especially with respect to the political implications of New Times theory.

[2] For example Ritzer and Schubert (1991) include in their definition of post-Marxism the Analytical Marxism of John Roemer, Jon Elster, and E.O. Wright, as well as the neo-Marxian postmodern theories of David Harvey and Frederic Jameson. In his discussion of Western Marxism J. G. Merquior (1986) takes an even wider berth including Cornelius Castoriadis, Immanuel Wallerstein, Joachim Hirsch, Perry Anderson,

and Agnes Heller in his list of those working on or near the post-Marxist horizon. Finally, in his survey of major philosophical thinkers, John Lechte (1994) labels as post-Marxist Theodor Adorno, Hannah Arendt, and Jürgen Habermas.

[3] According to Fred Block (1987, 194) the German word *Aufhebung* best describes this attempt to hold on to the insights of Marxism while simultaneously "moving to a higher level."

[4] Some post-Marxists, for example, use G.A. Cohen's Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence (1979) as a springboard for their subsequent deconstruction (see Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 78; Laclau 1990, 13).

[5] Wood notes that this shift began, in the case of Laclau and Mouffe, with Laclau's earlier work, in particular his Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory (1977).

[6] For Zhao there are parallels to be drawn between the post-Marxist rejection of the concept of ideology, and the "end of ideology" thesis popularized by Daniel Bell and others in the nineteen - fifties.

[7] See, for example, Barrett (1991).

[8] This does not imply that all critical analyses of culture and cultural practices are post-Marxist; see, for example, Gruneau (1988).

[9] According to Bob Jessop, a regime of accumulation refers to "a particular combination of production and consumption which can be reproduced over time despite conflictual tendencies" (1991, 71/2).

[10] See the contributions by Michael Rustin and Paul Hirst in Hall & Jacques (1989).

[11] This is illustrated by the number of books and articles written from a post-Marxist perspective which include the phrase "Beyond Left and Right" in the title. See, for example, Giddens (1995) and Marquand (1989).

[12] The post-Marxist concept of antagonism is derived from Derrida's notion of the "constitutive outside" as the quality which prevents the ultimate suturing of social identities. In stating that there is nothing inherently antagonistic about relations between, say, feudal lord and serf, or worker and capitalist, Laclau and Mouffe are not saying that these relations do not involve inequality or subordination but that they are only transformed into sites of antagonism (and from there to collective struggle) via discursive practices which lie outside of these relations and which continually negate the construction of subjectivity. (1992, 153/4)

[13] They are not alone in this; anarchists, neo-Marxists, and even those Marxists hostile to post-Marxism have not been slow to catch on to the important implications of new social movements to a renewal of left politics. See for example Boggs (1986); Bookchin (1990); Cleaver (1993); O'Connor (1988).

[14] ". . . equivalence is always hegemonic insofar as it does not simply establish an 'alliance' between given interests, but modifies the very identity of the forces engaging in that alliance" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 183/4).

[15] The phrase "complex equality" developed by Michael Walzer in his Spheres of Justice (1983) is used as an alternative to the social democratic concept of "simple equality" wherby wealth is redistributed from rich to poor by the state. Walzer's complex equality according to Adam Lent prevents the intrusion of the state into civil society, while protecting the autonomy of spheres of distribution such that, for example, "[i]nstead of money simply being redistributed from rich to poor, major commodities might be distributed according to

wealth, while health is distributed according to need, education is distributed to all freely, and political power according to electoral success" (1993, 98).

[16] For a sympathetic summary of the trajectory of the New Times project, see Davey (1994). British post-Marxists have not confined themselves to influencing the left-wing of political life; a number of centrists and right-wingers are to be found among the ranks of these offshoot organizations.

CHAPTER FOUR

REVENGE OF THE "CLASS WARRIORS?" POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE CRITIQUE OF POST-MARXISM

4.1 Introduction

If Western Marxism has involved, as Anderson and others have argued, a fundamental shift from politics to philosophy and from a "Marxism of the economic base" to a "Marxism of the superstructure," then it would be mistaken to assume from this that questions of political economy have disappeared from Marxism altogether. Indeed, despite post-Marxism's origins in a primarily philosophical critique of economism there has continued alongside Western Marxism's gradual evolution into post-Marxism a strong tradition of Marxist political economy that has stuck resolutely to the task of defending the main assumptions of historical materialism, and providing detailed critical and scientific studies of capitalist social relations. The roots of this tradition stem most obviously from a reading of Marx's Capital and from the subsequent development of Marxist political economy in, for example, Rosa Luxemburg's Accumulation of Capital (1913), Rudolf Hilferding's Finance Capital (1910), Nikolai Bukharin's Imperialism (1915), and later, Paul Sweezy's The Theory of Capitalist Development (1942). While Marxist political economy was largely stifled by official Russian "communism" and marginalized by Western Marxism's critique of economism, a revival of sorts occurred in the early nineteen-seventies as attention turned once more to Capital as providing an explanation for the global capitalist crisis (Cleaver 1979, 7-9).

These studies have included—but have not been confined to—analyses of the dynamics of the capitalist mode of production including such phenomena as imperialism, periodic crises, capital accumulation, rates of surplus value, and the fluctuation of wages and prices. Among the important works in this field are Baran and Sweezy's Monopoly Capital (1964), Paul Mattick's Marx and Keynes: The Limits of the Mixed Economy (1969), James O'Connor's The Fiscal Crisis of the State (1973), Ernest Mandel's Late Capitalism (1975), Michel Aglietta's A Theory of

Capitalist Regulation (1979), and Immanuel Wallerstein's two volume The Modern World System (1979/80). At the same time, the categories of Marxist political economy have been applied to a whole range of fields including history (Maurice Dobb, E.P. Thompson, Bryan Palmer, Eric Hobsbawm), ecology (Ted Benton, James O'Connor), studies of the capitalist state (Ralph Miliband, John Holloway, Nicos Poulantzas), philosophy (G.A. Cohen, Norman Geras), feminism (Johanna Brenner, Pat and Hugh Armstrong, Selma James), studies of the labour process (Harry Braverman), Third World and (under)development (Samir Amin and André Gunder Frank), and cultural studies (the Leicester/Loughborough School of Mass Communications, the Glasgow Media Group).

If this revival has failed both to live up to Anderson's hope for a reconciliation between politics and theory (1983, 29) and to achieve paradigmatic status into the nineteen-nineties, then theoretically at least this rich vein of social thought has proven to be more steadfast than rumours of political economy's demise would have us believe. Despite the apparent swing to post-Marxist positions within the realm of critical social theory from the mid to late nineteen-seventies on, Marxist political economy has continued to sustain itself making a strong showing in books and journals such as Monthly Review, Capital and Class, Studies in Political Economy, Rethinking Marxism, and New Left Review. It is not surprising, therefore, that given post-Marxism's undermining of the "central pillars" of Marxism in the process of claiming to have surpassed it, there has been a concerted counter-attack launched in recent years by a group of Marxists Laclau dismissively refers to as the "Class Warriors," theoreticians of the so-called "hard left" who, for Laclau, remain dogmatically tied to a class essentialism (1987, 30). This critique of post-Marxism by Ellen Wood (1986), Norman Geras (1990), Terry Eagleton (1991), Ralph Miliband (1985) and others, is three-pronged. First, post-Marxists are accused of a fundamental misreading of Marx and a distortion of the Marxist tradition; second, class conflict and working-class agency is reaffirmed as central to an understanding of late capitalism and its transcendence; and third, socialism rather than "radical democracy" is reasserted as the way forward for an emancipatory left politics.

4.2 Distorting Marxism

First and foremost, post-Marxism is criticized for presenting "an impoverishing caricature of the Marxist tradition" (Geras 1990, 128) and "an egregious misunderstanding of Marxism" (Wood 1986, 54), accusations that are partially reinforced by Laclau's admission that "in our book [Hegemony and Socialist Strategy] we have dealt with Marx's work only marginally. . ." (1990, 181).[1] In particular, one strand of Marxism—Second International Marxism-Leninism—is taken to represent the theoretical and political deficiencies of Marxism in general to which is attributed, variously, technological determinism, essentialism, functionalism, class reductionism and a tendency towards totalitarianism. Paradoxically, then, post-Marxism is guilty of the very "essentialism" it claims lies at the root of many of the problems of modern social thought. Its deconstruction aims to recover the plurality of insights the Marxist tradition has offered and yet, as Geras puts it, it involves a parodying reduction of "the whole tradition to a few dogmatic absolutes" (1990, 73).

More substantively, a close reading of Marx himself, as opposed to, say, Althusser or G.A. Cohen, suggests that some of these alleged deficiencies are questionable. The example of technological determinism is a pertinent one here. For Laclau and Mouffe (and other post-Marxists), Marxism relies upon a conception of social transformation as a mechanical reflex of the progressive augmentation of supposedly "neutral" forces of production to which is attributed a general and universal law of historical change. As Wood (1986, 55-59) has forcefully argued, however, Marx went to great lengths to show how the relationship between the growth of productive forces and social change depends upon struggles involving real active human beings involved in definite social relationships centred around the labour process. The production and reproduction of material life is fundamentally a *social* phenomenon characterized by relations of class exploitation which do not limit themselves to the "economic sphere" alone, but penetrate the fields of politics, ideology and culture. To dismiss simply as "reductionist" or "economist" a whole series of attempts within Marxism to theorize the complex nature of the links between

economic, political and ideological processes in ways that emphasize the mutual interplay of the ensemble of social relations is, again to use Geras's words, a "travesty of the tradition."

Related to this is the dual assertion that Marxism ignores the political relations of domination involved in the extraction of surplus labour and that it mistakenly assumes there to be a priori "objective interests" of the working-class which correlate straightforwardly with socialist political practices. Again, Wood provides ample evidence to counter this claim (1985, 143-146, 152-159). In the first case she shows how dotted throughout Marx's three volumes of Capital are several references to the political and antagonistic nature of the production process. For Marx, capitalist production involves a constant struggle by capital to extract the maximum amount of surplus value from "living labour," through, for example, the imposition of machinery on the labour process, or the reduction of wages. This antagonistic process is not simply "economic" but political through and through; it involves a constant struggle between capital with its "vampire-like" hunger for surplus value and a working-class which resists capital's domination by attempting to shorten the working day or raise wages, a struggle embedded in relations of power and conflict. In fact, if anything, as Wood points out, it is *capitalism*—not Marx or Marxism—that is guilty of economism, for it is capitalism that attempts to reduce living, labouring, creative human beings to objects in the productive process, to commodities (145). In the second case, Wood argues that Marxism does not assume an unproblematic correspondence between the objective conditions and interests of the working-class and socialism, or for that matter between the material conditions of women and feminism. In stating that interests only exist in the moment of their political or ideological articulation, post-Marxism conflates material reality and discourse. It implies that:

> people *have* no material interests; they only have more or less autonomous *ideas* about their interests [. . .] From this perspective, a caveman would be just as likely to become a socialist as would a proletarian—provided only that he come within hailing distance of the appropriate "discourse" (1985, 153/4).

On the contrary, according to Wood, Marxism merely claims that under capitalism workers as an exploited class have an interest in ending that exploitation; whether or not these interests become political objectives or actions is another question entirely.[2]

The upshot of this tendency to misread Marxism is that, as both Wood and Geras acknowledge, we are offered a set of dualistic theoretical choices. On the one hand, a version of Marxism which despite its anti-economistic strains is still essentialist, class reductionist, and technologically determinist; on the other, post-Marxism, which affirms plurality, contingency, autonomy, and indeterminacy. There is no room for a sophisticated theory of "relative autonomy," for example, or a theory of determining conditions as "essential factors which, as in the earliest uses, set certain limits or exert certain pressures. . ." (Williams 1988, 101), or a conception of historical materialism as a critical, open, and empirical method (Sayer 1987). Consequently, for the Class Warriors at least, post-Marxism mirrors in its extremity the "economism" which it sets up as a (straw) target. The result is a "culturalism" in which "it is now politics, not economics, which reigns supreme" (Eagleton 1991, 213/4).

4.3 Bringing Class Back In

If post-Marxism involves, above all, a "retreat from class," then Marxist political economists have been concerned to bring class back into the picture, especially in the light of the popularity of new social movement analysis. Let me briefly recap at this stage the post-Marxist displacement of class from the centre of analysis. Marxism is said to have mistakenly privileged class agency both ontologically and epistemologically, leading to the charge of class reductionism. It is said to be out of step with the vast changes to the social formation of the last four decades which has seen the emergence of new "non-class" movements arising from antagonisms not located at the point of production but centred largely around issues of cultural identity. The working-class has not fulfilled its revolutionary "historic mission" (as supposedly assigned by Marx) nor has the class structure of late capitalism simplified as Marx predicted. Workers'

struggle and the conflict between capital and wage labour still exists but they are one among many struggles which can be articulated towards a number of different political projects.

Marxist political economists, on the other hand, have reaffirmed the basic tenets of historical materialism, namely that the production and reproduction of material life is essential to human organization and existence, and that, quoting Marx, "the specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers [*i.e.*, the specific mode of exploitation] reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure" (Wood 1985, 149). In other words, under capitalism, the exploitation of wage labour by capital plays a determining role in the constitution of social relations. It is not that a particular configuration of classes *causes* developments in fields such as politics or ideology as this would be class reductionism. Instead, class can be seen as a "critical decisive factor" in the larger arena that is "social being," an analysis that Miliband calls "class relationism" (1985, 9). Marxist political economists, then, reject the *either/or* choice offered by post-Marxism (*either* simple class reductionism *or* absolute autonomy of politics, class, ideology, etc.) in favour of the analytical primacy of class struggle.

Marxists deny that they have put forward a monolithic and economistic account of the class structure of advanced capitalism. They argue that the working-class has undergone a series of structural changes—an "accelerated process of recomposition" to use Miliband's phrase—but this does not mean, contrary to Gorz, that the working-class has simply vanished. While there may have been a decline in absolute numbers of factory workers since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the number of wage labourers, unemployed, and welfare recipients in Western industrial nation-states has increased (Miliband 1985, 9).[3] Marx himself, according to Wood, was well aware of the complexity and changing structure of the working-class, focusing as he did on intermediate strata, "immaterial labour," and "unproductive" labour (1985, 151). In general however, despite the heterogeneity of the working-class under late capitalism, Marxists continue to assert a fundamental antagonism of interests between capital and labour and, even if labour has yet to make a decisive break with capital, there are abundant examples of continuing class

militancy and solidarity which suggest that post-Marxism is mistaken in its suggestion that relations of class exploitation have diminished in importance.[4]

Leading on from this, the reply of the Class Warriors to post-Marxism's emphasis on the importance of new social movements has been to acknowledge their importance at the same time as they continue to privilege working-class agency as the crucial factor in overcoming capitalism. Responding to the rise of the women's movement, for example, Perry Anderson claims that the rule of capital is "gender-blind" and feminism, by itself, is unable to generate a collective movement capable of overthrowing capitalism. Instead, Anderson argues that, because of their structural position in the capitalist production process, the working-class defined by him as the "immediate producers" must play the central role as the lever of revolutionary change (1983, 92/3).

Both Wood and Miliband make similar arguments. Wood (1988) contends that capitalism can conceivably operate despite gender emancipation and racial equality—both included under her rubric "extra-economic" goods. Echoing Anderson, she states that capitalism displays a "structural indifference to the social identities of the people it exploits [which] makes it uniquely capable of discarding extra-economic inequalities and oppressions" (20). She concludes that while socialism may not automatically secure the aims of gender emancipation and the elimination of racism, it will at least facilitate their achievement by subordinating the economy to the democratic control of communities. Miliband points out that a significant number of people who constitute the working-class are also a part of "new social movements." He also argues that while a black worker or a female worker may perceive their experience of exploitation and oppression as occurring primarily at the site of race or gender, this "cannot be taken to imply that it is therefore an accurate representation of reality." Furthermore, the identity of these workers, whether they are conscious of it or not, has been indelibly imprinted with their status as workers. He continues:

> A white woman worker experiences super-exploitation and double oppression; and a black woman worker experiences them threefold—as a black, as a woman and as a worker; and these multiple oppressions are of course combined. To oppose gender and class, to make gender or race or whatever else the defining criterion of 'social being,' and to ignore or belittle the fact of class, is to help deepen the division that are present within the working class (1985, 10).

Like Anderson and Wood, he too accords primacy to "organized labour" in struggles against capitalism as the system's ultimate "gravedigger" (13).

This privileging of working-class agency and class interests *vis-à-vis* new social movements and knowledges can also be found in recent critiques of post-Marxism by Carol Stabile and Barbara Foley. According to Stabile, the strategy of displacing class from the centre of analysis common to both post-Marxism and some forms of feminism has had the effect of reducing politics to a "turf war among discourses" (1995, 102). By looking at recent controversial media issues including the O. J. Simpson murder trial and Dan Quayle's outspoken reaction to the American television series Murphy Brown, Stabile shows how many feminists have moved away from analyzing the economic content and context of popular culture and instead "have translated their political energies into symbolic actions and debates that have a distant relationship to the lived experience of many women in the United States" (1994, 57). Stabile argues that class should be reestablished as a central category of analysis, enabling a more sophisticated understanding of race and gender as well as putting back on the agenda issues such as abortion rights, the global division of labour, and cutbacks to health and welfare spending. Similarly, Foley (1992) encourages contemporary social theorists to refocus their attention on class relations as they pertain to an understanding of the totality of contemporary global capitalism. Against what she terms the "Cold War liberal anti-communism" pervasive among many post-Marxists, Foley argues for the need for "more and better class analysis" applied to such issues as the situation of the post-Soviet eastern bloc, ethnic conflict, and the superexploitation of people of colour in the Third and Fourth Worlds. Provocatively she concludes:

> What Marxism needs at the present juncture is not a revised paradigm that relegates class to one among several "factors" working in mutual overdetermination. Rather, it needs to develop a series of auxiliary hypotheses

> that retain class as the central, essence- (yes, essence) determining category for social analysis while taking into account the changed realities of the monopoly-era global economy, as well as the political/ideological forces that operate as barriers—admittedly, formidable barriers—to the formation of revolutionary class consciousness" (127).

In sum, then, post-Marxism is criticized for abandoning the terrain, not only of class, but of any attempt at a systematic understanding of political-economic processes. The post-Marxist descent into discourse and radical indeterminacy effectively severs any connection between class, ideology, and politics, and makes each a product of discursive articulation. For the Class Warriors, it is one thing to argue that class, politics and ideology are historically contingent and therefore open to constant negotiation and rearticulation. It is another thing entirely to deny that these discourses have their roots in material conditions—alienated, racist, patriarchal or otherwise—in which it is in people's interests, whether they recognize it or not, to change.

4.4 Socialism versus Radical Democracy

This counter-argument is carried through to its logical conclusion in the critique of post-Marxism's reformulation of a left political agenda in the shape of a deepening of the project of radical democracy. On one level post-Marxist politics are simply dismissed as representing a retreat from a revolutionary to a reformist position typified in the allegiance shown to social democratic organizations such as the British Labour Party (Eagleton 1991, 205). On a deeper level, however, Marxist Political Economists have made a number of more substantial criticisms of the radical democratic project which has led them to reassert the class politics of socialist transformation as put forward by Classical Marxism.

An initial criticism of post-Marxist politics is that it sets up a straw target of the old socialist left which it equates with a "mechanical Marxism" and then summarily dismisses by counter-posing it to the novelty of "non-class" social movements. As Lorna Weir (1993)—herself sympathetic to many of the claims of post-Marxism—notes, there is no simple binary opposition between "old" and "new" social movements. Feminism and the peace movement, for example,

were much in evidence well before World War Two, and the old socialist left often included substantial links to movements for racial and gender equality. Kenneth Tucker (1991) makes a similar argument with respect to movements such as revolutionary syndicalism, anarchism and council communism which are either ignored by post-Marxists or else labelled "productivist" and "totalitarian" and equated with the Old Left.[5] This ignores the fact that these "old" movements often displayed many of the features attributed to "new" social movements such as autonomy, radicalized notions of democracy, and hostility towards vanguardism and bureaucracy. It also for Tucker prematurely jettisons the centrality of the notion of the idea of unalienated labour which, accusations of productivism aside, "may still provide the best model for emancipation" (94). In fact, as Michael Burawoy argues, the straw target of old left politics which post-Marxism finds it so easy to reject is in reality the dogma of Marxism-Leninism which justified the oppressive regimes of state socialism in eastern Europe and elsewhere. With the demise of "actually existing socialism," then, which post-Marxism often tends to equate unquestioningly with the end of socialism and Marxism, opportunities are opened up for "the *liberation of Marxism* from forces which have often distorted and stunted its growth" (1990, 9, *author's emphasis*).

As to the practices of new social movements themselves, post-Marxism is said to have ignored the ways in which movements centred around issues of cultural identity have rarely posed a radical and systematic opposition to capitalism and have often been diverted into single issue and reformist parliamentary practices. As Anderson (1977) argues in his long critique of Gramsci published in New Left Review, the idea of a "war of position," a long drawn out guerrilla warfare in the cultural sphere, ignores the tremendous power of the coercive state apparatus and its willingness to protect ruling class interests should they become threatened. Simply put, while the effectiveness of contesting the hegemony of dominant groups through oppositional cultural practices should not be underestimated, neither should the role of state violence in ensuring that micropolitical action by people is kept in hand. For, in Sivanandan's words, ". . . the moment they [new social movements] threaten to change the system in any fundamental way or go beyond

the personal politics of health, food, sexuality etc., they come up against the power of the state" (1990, 17).

Post-Marxism is also criticized for assuming a utopian vision of social transformation given that it rejects the possibility of pre-existing interests outside of the discursive and hegemonic articulation of politics (Wood, 1985, 160-163; 1986, 64-70).[6] In asserting that there is no privileged agency of radical democratic change other than a vague and ahistorical reference to "popular movements," post-Marxism fails to outline a concrete political strategy for achieving a democratic and socialist society alluding instead to an inherent belief in new social movements to achieve change via the creation of democratic alliances. Two problems follow from this. First, as Wood notes, the emphasis on the self-emancipation of the working-class conceived of in the traditional socialist project is abandoned in favour of an appeal to the "organic intellectuals" of social movements who, since oppressed and exploited people have no objective materials interests, must impart interests and consciousness to them.[7] Second, the whole post-Marxist political strategy involves a "verbal conjuring trick," in that it conceptualizes away "the contradictions between capitalism and socialism by transforming the revolutionary tradition into an unbroken continuity between one form of democracy and another" (1980, 69/70). Post-Marxists such as Laclau and Mouffe claim that their radical democratic project, of which "socialism" is one component, is possible within the boundaries of the liberal democratic state. As Wood argues, however, the starting point for this argument—the so-called "egalitarian imaginary" resulting from the democratic revolutions in France in particular—turns out to be a vacuous reformulation of a bourgeois liberal pluralist discourse built around vague notions of "rights," "equality," and "citizenship." There is no room in this argument, then, for a more radical and indeed socialist definition of democracy which "expresses the interests of the working class against capital by restoring the meaning of popular power and extending it to the classless organization of social production" (68/9).

What we are left with then, in essence, according to Marxists like Wood and Geras is a rootless left reformism which has long since relinquished class politics and which leaves intact the

basic contradiction between capital and labour. In the face of this retreat from class, Class Warriors such as Wood, Geras, Miliband (1989) Mandel (1994), Löwy (1991) and Callinicos (1991), have retained a faith in a vision of socialism unrefracted by the prism of post-Marxism, and untainted by the travesty of "actually existing socialism." They have continued to uphold the belief in a classless communist society as conceived of by Classical Marxism, together with the overthrow of the capitalist state by a politically conscious working-class. While the precise nature of the transition and of the future society varies among contemporary Marxists such that, for example, Miliband supports the idea of state ownership with a series of checks and balances exercised through popular power while Callinicos's vision includes a market-less, centrally planned communist economy, they are united in the belief that despite post-Marxism's admonitions to the contrary, a democratic socialism with the working-class as its primary agent is still a viable and indeed necessary option.

New Times?

It is in the context of these debates that some have argued for a productive third way between, as Witheford and Gruneau (1993) put it, the "politics of production" and the "politics of the sign," between the Marxism of the Class Warriors and the postmodern Marxism or post-Marxism of, say, Laclau and Mouffe.[8] It will be remembered that New Times theorists such as Stuart Hall and Robin Murray while absorbing many of the insights of post-Marxism, particularly its political vision, have nevertheless paid more attention to political-economic structures and processes than discourse theorists in general have done. This in turn has prompted a more sophisticated response from Marxist political economists.

The central thesis of the New Times theorists (Hall and Jacques 1989) is that capitalism has undergone a major structural transformation from a Fordist to a post-Fordist regime of accumulation involving the introduction of new information technologies, flexible specialization, quality control, and a multi-skilled workforce. These changes, it is argued, have had profound consequences for a realignment of left politics which have suffered in the wake of Thatcherism's

capitalization on the gap in ideological hegemony brought about by the crisis of Fordism and demise of social democracy in the nineteen-seventies. A new radical left politics must disassociate itself from the Fordist factory-based Old Left and come to terms with these transformations, for example by embracing a politics of identity based upon consumerism.

This New Times version of the post-Fordist thesis has come under attack on a number of fronts. First, the accuracy of the view that capitalism has changed fundamentally from a Fordist to a post-Fordist regime of accumulation has been questioned (Levidow 1990; Tomaney 1994). While there are studies that have shown the operation of flexible modes of production and distribution particularly in Japanese and Italian firms, there are equally instances of the continuation of traditionally Fordist methods globally, particularly with the export of Fordism to the Third World. For example, Levidow cites a number of studies which have shown that the labour intensive exploitation of workers, particularly of immigrant and refugee women, continues on a large scale. Despite the claims of the theorists of post-Fordism that current methods of production enable workers to have more freedom over their jobs, work for large sectors of the population is still characterized by "low wages, long hours, no job security, family labour and even unofficial labour" (69). Furthermore many jobs in the contemporary global economy forbid workplace organization in the form of trade unions. Levidow argues instead that contemporary capitalism is best characterized as a combination of "neo-Taylorism," "ultra-Fordism," and "neo-Fordism," which involves "revived labour-intensive methods . . . a further deskilling and regimentation of labour . . . and an upgrading of mental capacities" respectively (72). Levidow's argument is supported by John Tomaney for whom, although there is a "grain of truth" in the theory that workers enjoy more flexibility and autonomy, the degree of flexibilization has been exaggerated. Where there have been changes in technology and methods of production, for Tomaney these have consistently been accompanied by increased discipline and control over the labour force (53).

This leads to the second criticism of the post-Fordist thesis, namely that New Times theory has suffered from technological determinism. Although derived from the French regulation

theory of Aglietta and Lipietz which with its roots in Marxist political economy focuses on the conflict between the forces and relations of production, the New Times approach privileges technological change as the driving force behind changes in the labour process or the particular form of the state (Levidow 1990, 65). Such arguments mystify the balance of political and economic forces which are at the root of technological change, particularly in the case of the current attempts at global restructuring following the crisis of Fordism. These resulted, not from simple technological advance, but from the global cycle of class struggles in the nineteen-sixties and 'seventies (Tomaney 1994, 52). Focusing exclusively on methods and modes of production, therefore, displaces from the picture the use to which technology is often put to regulate and accomodate working-class revolt, as in the long wave of industrial militancy and sabotage in Europe in the late nineteen-sixties. As such, the language of New Times "prematurely forecloses the future by obscuring diverse strategies for management control and revolutionary sources of worker revolt" (Levidow 1990, 78).

The upshot of the debate over post-Fordism, as Tony Smith (1994) argues, is that regardless of which model is used to represent changes to the capitalist mode of production, the essential fact remains; the antagonism between capital and labour in the form of structural coercion in the labour market, the real subsumption of labour under capital, and increased rates of exploitation continue on a large scale. Consequently, Marxism with its focus on class conflict and underlying political-economic structures remains as relevant as ever in the context of the contemporary global economy with its restructuring of relations of production. Furthermore, the continuing antagonism between capital and labour on both a North/South axis and within nation-states in the First World, means that self-organized and independent unions are still crucially necessary, despite what post-Marxists in general may say about the alleged demise of "old" labour politics. Indeed, this leads on to a third criticism of the New Times project, notably that the political conclusions they draw from the taken for granted shift to post-Fordism are misguided. New Times politics are said, for example, to buy into the pseudo-choices, "individualism" and supposed "diversity" of the capitalist marketplace which ignores the plight of those who do not

have access to these resources (Sivanandan 1989, 20). They are "idealist," preoccupied at their heart with the hegemonic project of the New Right in the guise of Thatcherism at the expense of considering the possibilities for a political transformation of Thatcherism's "underlying structural determinants" (Jessop, Bonnett, and Bromley 1990). They involve a watering down of the radical project of transformation outlined by original Regulation Theory which offered a collectivist solution to the crisis in Fordism as opposed to the "modest reforms and coalition politics" of New Times (Barbrook 1990). Above all New Times theory and the politics it offers to the left displays the same time-worn rhetoric of the "death of class" which characterizes post-Marxism as a whole. According to Levidow:

> As the link is broken between people's social identity and their specific productive role, a greater sense of alienation from that role could just as well spread revolt against capitalist work-discipline. Exploration of such possibilities is pre-empted by proclaiming the demise of class conflict along with its traditional centres. According to the 'New Times' scenario, we should learn to love new technology, to make the best of its supposed imperatives in our post-Fordist era. (1990, 60/1).

However, this is not to deny that vast changes to the capitalist social formation have occurred, particularly over the last forty years or so. Despite the assertions of post-Marxists like Barry Smart that the Class Warriors have sought simply to reduce the complexity of the (post)modern world "to the inviolable tenets of a chosen version of Marxism" (1992, 216/7), a number of contemporary Marxists have argued that, if there is indeed a case to be made for the observation that we are living in new times, then historical materialism in its various guises is more than adequately equipped to account for these changes. In fact it is argued that Marx himself writing in the mid-nineteenth century anticipated the huge transformations in social, political, and cultural life brought about by the need for the capitalist class to constantly revolutionize the means of production.[9] The task thus becomes one of critical engagement with these global changes using the tools of Marxist Political Economy.

Perhaps the most sustained effort to analyze the novelty of the contemporary period from this perspective is present in the work of Fredric Jameson (1993; 1990; 1989; 1988). Unlike

Class Warriors such as Alex Callinicos who dismiss the idea that there is something qualitatively "new" about the present era and who reject outright the concept of postmodernism, Jameson places himself fairly and squarely within the discourse of the postmodern with its emphasis on fundamental shifts in cultural and aesthetic forms and practices, while at the same time remaining tied to, in Stuart Hall's words, "an absolutely unquestioned faith in the logic of classical marxism" (1990, 31). Against what he perceives as the "faddish" excesses of post-Marxism, Jameson searches for an explanation for postmodern culture in systematic changes to the structure of post-World War Two capitalism. Just as the artistic and cultural moment of modernism was integral to the "imperialist" or "monopoly" stage of the capitalist mode of production, so the current "late" or "multinational" stage ("the purest form of capital yet to have emerged, a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas" (1993, 26)), has as its cultural correlate postmodernism with its blurring of the boundaries between "high" and "popular" culture. Late capitalism for Jameson is characterized by a number of features, among them a new international division of labour, the flight of production to the Third World, the introduction of new media and communication technologies, processes of decolonization, and the demise of "communism" together with the crisis of organized labour. As a cultural "structure of feeling" (a term borrowed from Raymond Williams) corresponding to this economic infrastructure, postmodernism is a concept that forces us to grasp the relationship between the economic and cultural; hence, in Jameson's words, "we cannot *not* use it" (xxii). Used critically the concept of postmodernism highlights one of the crucial ambiguities of the contemporary era. On the one hand postmodernism has led to a "democratization of culture" in that formerly marginalized groups and sub-groups have found a space for the affirmation of collective identity and difference. At the same time, however, this has taken place within class relations of domination and subordination, especially "cultural imperialism," commodification and the power of corporate business elites. The result is that, for Jameson, there can be no purely "cultural politics" because postmodern culture and corporate power have become inseparable (1990, 31).

If Jameson wishes to engage with new times and form a progressive politics using the concept of postmodernism within the framework of political economy, then there is one crucial sense in which his use of the concept differs considerably from other postmodern theorists including post-Marxists. A dominant theme in postmodernism and post-Marxism is that New Times represents a fatal blow to all aspects of totalizing thought including the grand narrative of Classical Marxism. From Nietzsche to the French Nouveaux Philosophes to Laclau and Mouffe, all attempts at grasping the totality of a social formation or establishing collective unity as a basis for political strategy are perceived as being linked inevitably to "totalitarian" thought. Jameson's analysis of postmodern culture on the other hand retains aspects of the Marxist grand narrative through his emphasis on modes of production, stages, and the unity of postmodernism. In a pointed attack on post-Marxism's retreat from these fundamental issues, he writes:

> The conception of capital is admittedly a totalizing or systemic concept . . . anyone who believes that the profit motive and the logic of capital accumulation are not the fundamental laws of this world, who believes that these do not set absolute barriers and limits to social changes and transformations undertaken in it—such a person is living in an alternative universe; or, to put it more politely, in this universe such a person—assuming he or she is progressive—is doomed to social democracy with its now abundantly documented treadmill of failures and capitulations [. . .] Without a conception of the social totality (and the possibility of transforming a whole social system), no properly socialist politics is possible." (1988, 354/5)

Revenge of the Class Warriors?

Ultimately then for the Class Warriors and other Marxist political economists, post-Marxism must be situated within the particular social, economic and political climate within which it emerged, a climate dominated overwhelmingly by a crisis in (Party) Marxism, the trials and tribulations of the left in general following the debacle of Stalinism and the eventual failure of the 1968 uprisings, and the emergence of a powerful and global New Right ideology which has captured the hegemonic space offered by these crises in leftist thought and politics. It is also the product of long term changes to the structure of the capitalist mode of production theorized by post-Marxists as a shift to a post-industrial consumer society, at least in the West. In abandoning

historical materialism and retreating from class politics, post-Marxism sets itself up as a "new idealism" poorly equipped to deal with the harsh reality of contemporary global capitalism. Its political pessimism and flight into discourse involves a fundamental move, as Sivanandan puts it, "from changing the *world* to changing the *word*" (1990, 23, *my emphasis*).

And yet the crucial question remains: has the counter-attack on post-Marxism by Marxist Political Economy been successful? Or alternatively has post-Marxism indeed made Marxism redundant? Is it likely to be the case, as Ritzer and Schubert (1991) argue, that contemporary radical theory will draw less and less on the concepts of Classical and Western Marxism for its insights, and more and more on post-Structuralism, classical liberal theory, and the knowledges which have emerged from new social movements?

The first point to make is that the Class Warriors—Ellen Wood, Norman Geras, Ralph Miliband and others—have indeed made some telling criticisms of post-Marxism, certainly enough to shed a good deal of doubt on its assured claim to have superseded or transcended Marxism. For example, Geras's observation that post-Marxism offers a simple choice between a class reductionist analysis on the one hand, and an absolute indeterminacy on the other, seems to me to be a valid point.[10] The consequence of this abandonment of class is that even those forms of social theory which attempt to establish class discursively as an important entry point into the analysis of an overdetermined social totality are marginalized as "essentialist" (Graham 1991; 1988). Similarly, Wood's argument that social classes do have material interests which cannot simply be dissolved into contingent discursive articulations has a logical resonance in a world still crucially shaped by the production and reproduction of material life. Clearly to dissolve everything social and material into discourse is to mirror "economism" in its extremism and in the process impedes the analysis of the complexity of economic, ideological, cultural and political forces at work in the modern world.

Indeed there are passages in Laclau and Mouffe which suggest that they oscillate between an absolute pluralism and the kind of "residual economism" and "essentialism" which they claim to have obliterated from the Marxist tradition. While on the one hand Laclau and Mouffe claim

that the social relations of production must be viewed simply as one discourse among a multitude of others which constitute subject positions, on the other they claim that, under capitalism at least, class relations are central particularly when they talk in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy of the structuring effects of the commodification of social life and the logic of capitalist accumulation (1985, 103; 160-162).[11] Granted the centrality of relations of production are seen as (ultimately, in the last instance?) *politically* and *hegemonically* secured, for example through the Keynesian interventionist state mediating the demands of capital and labour. But it would be difficult to see how this invalidates Marxism unless of course Marxism is reduced to a sterile and ahistorical theory of history which attempts to "read off" all conflicts as the expression of some underlying economistic logic. Even if we ignore the myriad attempts within Marxism to assert the centrality of relations between classes and class struggles as opposed to bases, superstructures and modes of production, we can look back to Marx himself for evidence of the polar opposite of economism. Not for him a passive interpretation of the "laws of the motion" of the capitalist economy but a ruthless critique of all things existing from the point of view of advancing the political struggles and self activity of the working-class with the aim of eventually breaking with its domination by capital.[12]

Furthermore, Marxists have argued that it is a mistake to abandon the political-economic analysis of late capitalism as the majority of post-Marxists have undoubtedly done. The disillusionment and retreat of the left into academia is perhaps understandable—but surely not justified—in an age where capital *appears* to have triumphed, and the self-professed regimes of "official" Marxism have crumbled. Yet there are two points to make here. On the one hand, as Steve Vieux has argued recently, any social theory claiming critical status has to be equipped to deal with current attacks on welfare, rising levels of poverty, increasing gaps in income and wealth, and structural forms of racism and sexism, as well as, one might add, systemic levels of environmental degradation, in order to sustain its "critical" status. On the whole it seems that, with its "retreat from class," and its denial of any order or structure to social life, "culturalist" strands of social theory such as post-Marxism and postmodernism are poorly equipped for the

task (1994, 28). On the other hand, post-Marxism's willingness to abandon the quest for a global alternative to the current structures of exploitation and oppression in the wake of the demise of "actually existing socialism," plays into the hands of the totalizing aspirations of neo-liberal economics and its reactionary political counterparts. Post-Marxists have undoubtedly played a valuable service in shifting the issues and practices of new social movements to the centre of social analysis—even if this has involved a certain recuperation of the radical potential of such movements—but the consequence of this has been to obsfucate one of the major elements in any struggle for emancipation, namely the question of the contestation of private or state ownership of the means of production. The fact remains that an important prerequisite for liberation of any kind involves the ability for humans to "freely associate" outside of the cash nexus, the state, and the capitalist domination of work. In this vein, as Noam Chomsky remarks, "the essential element of the socialist ideal remains: to convert the means of production into the property of freely associated producers and thus the social property of people who have liberated themselves from exploitation by their master, as a fundamental step towards a broader realm of human freedom" (1987, 49). What is unfortunate about the political strategy offered by post-Marxism is that they have accepted wholesale the rhetoric of the market and despite all the talk of "socialism," "democracy," and "freedom," this essential ideal is wholly conspicuous by its absence.

Yet there is a note of caution here as well. While the Class Warriors may have enacted "revenge" on post-Marxism in as much as they have kept issues of political economy and socialism on the agenda, their attacks have tended to reproduce a sterile dualism between a retreat from class on the one hand, and a class reductionism on the other. Sophisticated forms of "class relationism" (Miliband) notwithstanding, the Class Warriors have continued to privilege the primacy of class without really showing concretely and empirically how class "sets the limits or boundaries" within which other determinations are played out. There is a notable lack of analysis of the balance of class forces, for example, in both Wood and Geras's attacks on post-Marxism. The result is that when they make the argument for the primacy of class over new social movements, this primacy is asserted in an abstract and ahistorical manner. The "working-class"

continues to be identified with its official organizations such as trade unions and leftist political organizations while issues of race, gender, and sexual identity are treated merely as non-economic "add-ons" to a class analysis which becomes, on the contrary, very *un*sophisticated.

Other problems exist as well, for example with respect to the wish to return to the old "vanguardist" politics of the left, the Class Warriors' unfortunate practice of making a fetish out of what Marx "really said," or the assertion, in Geras's case, of an "axiomatic relationship" between socialism and democracy (Witheford and Gruneau 1993, 80). On the whole, then, the revenge of the Class Warriors should be seen as only partial—perhaps in the long run not even enough to halt the apparent juggernaut-like rush of social theory towards a post-Marxist paradigm. The dualism is thus reproduced: on the one hand a "fundamentalist" Marxism which clings desparately to the Classical Marxist paradigm and a "one-sided" reading of Marx, and on the other an "eclectic" Marxism which attempts to bring in a whole host of issues "external" to Marxism, in the process undermining the central pillars of historical materialism to the extent that it renders its affiliation to Marxism questionable.[13] The question of a third way between these two poles has been posed, and in the case of New Times theory found wanting. In this context, what are the possibilities for moving beyond this impasse?

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

[1] A similar admission of reliance on secondary interpretations of Marx is made by Anthony Giddens in his Central Problems in Social Theory (1979). Giddens writes, "I shall be less interested here in what Marx might have been concerned to say, than with analysing how far any of the views which have supposedly been based on Marx's writing can be regarded as potentially valid" (150).

[2] Terry Eagleton makes essentially the same point in regard to feminism: "[T]here is a good case for arguing that there is indeed an internal relation between being a woman (a social situation) and being a feminist (a political position). This is not, needless to say, to claim that all women will spontaneously become feminists; but it is to argue that they *ought* to do so, and that an unmystified understanding of their oppressed social condition would logically lead them in that direction" (1991, 211).

[3] A similar point is made by Callinicos who notes the large influx of women and Third World labour into the global workforce with the result that "[o]n a world scale there are more industrial workers that at any time in history" (1989, 125).

[4] Wood gives the exmple of the miners' strike in Britain between 1984-85. The actions and aims of the miners and their leaders was greeted with suspicion by the majority of post-Marxists, who felt it merely reproduced the politics and positions of the "Old Left."

[5] Tucker finds Jean Cohen in particular guilty of these ahistorical assertions.

[6] Hence Wood labels post-Marxists the "New True Socialists," echoing Marx and Engels' critique of utopian socialism in the Communist Manifesto.

[7] The consequences of this have been noted by Lumley and O'Shaugnessey (1985, 286) who argue that a marked cultural elitism has emerged among post-Marxists who consider themselves to be the organic intellectuals of various social movements despite (or perhaps because of) the apparent de-radicalization of their work as a result of the need to be accepted by educational institutions.

[8] This position is argued by Mike Emmison, Paul Boreham and Stuart Clegg, who state: "What is required is a sociological framework in which neither the indetermination of the free-floating signifier nor the determination of the privileged economic subject holds sway" (1987/8, 130).

[9] "Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relationships, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind. The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere." (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848) in Tucker (1978, 476). The relevance of Marx to an understanding of late capitalism is well brought out by Marshall Berman (1982).

[10] Thus Geras writes: "No Marxist has to choose, consequently, between the most extravagant economic reductionism and what the authors here commend to us, just plurality. She or he can recognize, for example, that there are genuinely distinct types of polity within capitalist societies, important differences in the form of the capitalist state; within limits, always some variety of possible political outcomes; and still argue that capitalist relations of production, and the configuration of classes they define, are primary to the explanation of such polities" (1991, 75).

[11] There is also a case for arguing that Laclau and Mouffe reintroduce the notion of "totality" which they are so adament in claiming is an impossibility. While stressing that this would not involve an "underlying principle that would unify 'society'," they nevertheless assert that in regard to the relative fixity of hegemonic practices "a certain notion of totality could be reintroduced . . . [that is] an ensemble of totalizing effects in an open relational complex" (1985, 103).

[12] This is not to say that Marx was never guilty of economistic thought. It is merely to point out the passages in Capital where the impression is given that capitalism operates according to certain economic "laws of motion" are only part of the picture. As Lebowitz (1991) argues, Capital was part of a projected six book whole which was to include a book on Wage Labour presumably to include a more developed analysis of working-class self-activity only hinted at in Capital. The tradition of Marxism which has subsequently elaborated upon working-class self-activity is usefully summarized by Cleaver (1979).

[13] The terms "fundamentalist" and "eclectic" are from Lebowitz (1992). The "one-sidedness" of fundamentalist Marxism refers to the tendency prevalent among the Class Warriors and others to take as their starting point the categories and concepts of *capital* rather than the struggle *against* capital.

CONCLUSION:
MARXISM, POST-MARXISM AND BEYOND

There are today two senses in which it is possible to speak of post-Marxism. The first more general usage refers to the overwhelming structure of feeling that dominates political consciousness as the *fin-de-siècle* approaches, a feeling widespread among many on the left as well as the right and also vigorously promoted by the mass media. Post-Marxism in this sense corresponds to the idea that we have arrived in a post-communist era brought about by the bankruptcy of Marxism both in theory and in practice alongside "successful" attempts at global capitalist restructuring. For those who hold to this definition and still identify themselves on the left of the political spectrum, the solution to the inevitable inequalities thrown up by capitalism's "triumph" is to curb the excesses of the so-called free market by providing perhaps a minimal level of social programs. Certainly here there is no question of a return to either the language, politics or ideas of Marxism—even watered down in its social democratic form—as leftists and liberals compete against the New Right with their own particular version of a "modernized" reformism. Even the British Labour Party, while certainly never Marxist still arguably with its roots in "socialist" discourse, has recently abandoned its commitment to nationalization and common ownership as previously enshrined in Clause Four of its constitution.

The second more precise definition refers specifically to an increasingly influential perspective in the social sciences, one dominated by a number of erstwhile Marxists who have come to reject the central principles of historical materialism and socialist political strategy while at the same time claiming to have kept alive what they consider to be Marxism's most relevant ideas. As I have argued in this dissertation, the origins of post-Marxism in this sense are to be found in the complex of social and intellectual developments which have come to be popularly known as the "crisis in Marxism." Most notably these have included the critical interventions of anti-economistic Western Marxists and cultural theorists such as Lukács, Gramsci and Althusser, "post-Positivist" philosophies of science, language and discourse, the knowledges and practices

that have emerged from the New Left and new social movements, and, crucially, events on the world stage that has seen capitalism consolidate its position relative to the demise of "actually existing socialism" in its many forms. While post-Marxists claim to have surpassed Marxism, a powerful counter-attack on its retreat from class analysis and class politics has been launched by contemporary defenders of historical materialism and socialism. According to this position post-Marxism is merely a symptom of intellectual malaise stemming from the horrors of Stalinism and the globalization of capitalist social relations. It not only reduces a rich tradition of historical materialist thought to the straw target of "economistic Marxism" (which it then has no problem deconstructing), it also having rejected the primacy of class and consequently having emptied political strategy of any socialist content leaves contemporary radicals and large sections of the global population at the mercy of neo-liberal economics and its ideologues. While there is much to be said for this critique of post-Marxism, I have argued that it is ultimately inadequate and serves to reproduce a theoretical dualism between, on the one hand an "anything goes" eclectic pluralism, and on the other a one-sided or "fundamentalist" Marxism which continues to pay lip service to issues of "race," ethnicity, gender and sexual identity.

In terms of popularity in the social sciences it seems at this stage that out of the two perspectives post-Marxism is gaining the upper hand. The field of cultural studies, for example, dominated almost entirely by theorists of discourse, identity, and postmodernity, has been tremendously successful in branching out to university departments around the world from its relatively humble beginnings as a group of graduate students and faculty at Birmingham University. Post-Marxism itself has initiated something of a paradigm shift in social theory comparable to that of the discursive turn in the philosophy of social science in the 1950's and '60's. It has made it virtually impossible to talk of a progressive and critical social theory that does not challenge the notion of the immutability of categories such as "truth," "interests" and "democracy," and its assertion to the contrary of the precarious nature of social cohesion and its relationship to discourses of power, domination, and resistance has had a profound effect on how we view social reality. Politically as well post-Marxists have drawn attention to processes of

identity formation and the subtle ways in which modes of signification in everyday life sustain and reproduce systems of domination. The temptation is there, of course, to simply dismiss efforts to construct such a "micropolitics" as a game for privileged academics retreating from the harsh reality of global capitalism and the dismal failure of "actually existing socialism." But it would be premature to dismiss the importance of identity politics, alliance building, and the hegemonic potential of the radical democratic imaginary even if coalition politics are often a far messier business than post-Marxists such as Laclau and Mouffe imply. Current world conditions may be giving the lie to the post-Marxist "retreat from class," but a Marxism which fails to include a politics of the everyday, of the local and particular, is an impoverished Marxism indeed.

It is tempting also to conclude from this that the Class Warrior perspective is hopelessly outdated, representing a retreat to a pre-post-Marxist position that regurgitates all of the old problems of classical Marxism and its numerous crises. There is, however, another way of looking at this. If we recall John Holloway's argument which I used to introduce Chapter Two that every crisis presents an opportunity for renewal and hope rather than despair, pessimism, and disintegration, then the current crisis of Marxism terminal as it may seem may in fact present yet another opportunity for revival, at least in the social sciences. This argument is premised on a cursory review of the current state of Marxist social theory which reveals, despite its supposed death or transcendence, a remarkable diversity and breadth of scope which transcends disciplinary boundaries. While post-Marxists such as Ernesto Laclau may insist that "Marxism as a *foundation* of [left] discourse has certainly come to an end" (1990, 25, author's emphasis), the evidence seems to suggest that post-Marxism constitutes only one of the many "Marxisms" vying for position in the social sciences at the present juncture, as incidentally does Class Warrior Marxism. Rather than a straightforward trajectory "from pillar to post," then, I would argue that a better conclusion is that the crisis of Marxism has pushed Marxism in the direction in which it now finds itself, that is, at a critical crossroads in its development. Post-Marxism and Class Warrior Marxism represent two of the possible paths that Marxism could take but it would be premature at this stage to conclude that we have witnessed the completion of the long march from

Classical Marxism to post-Marxism, just as it would be short-sighted to argue that what is needed at this stage is simply a return to the politics and theory of orthodox Marxism as some of the Class Warriors have argued. Both of these positions represent theoretical dead-ends, and it is perhaps an unfortunate consequence of these entrenched positions that debates between proponents of post-Marxism and fundamentalist Marxism respectively have tended to degenerate into unproductive polemics and name-calling.[1]

Currently there are no shortages of contenders amongst the many Marxisms for the title of "third way" between what are considered by many to be the polar opposites of post-Marxism and Class Warrior Marxism. These include the diverse group of theorists who make up post-Frankfurt School Critical Theory, the Analytical Marxists, Marxist-Feminists, neo-Gramscian theorists, Ecological Marxists, the "New Structural Marxists,"[2] and Postmodern Marxists, and as Chilcote and Chilcote (1992) rightly observe, these competing Marxisms are likely to survive and flourish along with post-Marxism and Class Warrior Marxism for the foreseeable future. On the surface, then, it seems as though the future for Marxism in the social sciences looks bright. As Chilcote and Chilcote put it, "Marxism in theory and practice may be experiencing a revitalization as contemporary international capitalism reshapes both capitalism and socialism in their political and economic content" (103). If we delve a little deeper, however, it can be seen that this conclusion is problematic. It relies on a definition of Marxism as simply one social science "paradigm," worldview or ideology amongst others whose usefulness is presumably determined by its ability to make sense of society, to provide more or less adequate conceptualizations about the nature of contemporary social relations. While there can be little doubt that many important insights can be gleaned from philosophical interpretations of the social situation, such assumptions contribute to the endless debates, fads and fashions which have resulted from the academicization of Marxism. To view Marxism as a paradigm, as "philosophy" or even "political economy" is to purge it of its most radical content as a weapon in the hands of those whom capital puts to work for its own ends. It forgets that Marxism is inherently *political* in that its primary aim is to give voice to those subjectivities whose self-activity continually strives to break free from capitalist control and

domination. Marxism is ultimately nothing if it is not a politically engaged intervention in capitalist crises and struggles which attempt to go beyond capital.[3]

If a future living and relevant Marxism should be inherently political, then it should also be "Open." In other words rather than being used to constitute a passive theory *of* society, the concepts that Marxism uses must be flexible enough to continually relate to social practice and subvert the static and reified categories which have traditionally been used by social theory, particularly those which separate out "economics" from "politics," or "structure" from "human action." A particular example of how such an "Open" Marxism could be utilized is in the analysis of class. Class has often been conceptualized—by Marxists and post-Marxists alike—as a thing, as an economic category into which individuals are slotted, rather than as a relationship of struggle and antagonism over the production and reproduction of material life. As E.P. Thompson amongst others argued, however, classes are not static entities or homogeneous masses but are made and remade, decomposed and recomposed, divided and united, and it is the (often unintended) consequences and outcomes of these movements and actions of real, living, struggling human beings that should comprise the subject matter for contemporary class analysis. Such struggles, particularly as they occur in the context of contemporary "late" or "postmodern" capitalism, are inherently gendered and raced, and they often take place far from the "point of production,"—but they are still vital determinants of social life in so much as these social relations give rise to forms of domination such as imposed work, states, capital, money and profit which stifle human creativity and self-activity. For post-Marxists, of course, we must now say *adieux* to these anachronistic (class) subjects who, in their traditional sites of action, have (at best) been reduced to one among many different contemporary struggles against oppression while the Class Warriors on the other hand remain resolutely tied to a political economy which uses the closed categories of capital with its inherent contradictions and inexorable forces. Where "Open" Marxism offers a possible way out of this impasse is in its emphasis on the heterogeneous human subject which continually struggles against capitalism's propensity to reduce it to a wage (or unwaged) labourer, an appendage to a machine, a spectator in a social factory. This

struggle—which takes place over land, machines, wages, bodies, conditions of work etc., and not simply "discourse"—still has a crucial determining effect on the constitution of social life. Yet to assert its centrality mechanistically, to dissolve its explanatory potential into a pluralistic "melting pot" of different determinisms, or else to jettison the concept entirely, is to do a grave injustice to its empirical relevance.

It may be argued at this point that this kind of "Open" Marxism was always present in the writings of Marx himself and that, once again, we are faced at this juncture with a "return to Marx." Such an assertion would probably be greeted with horror by post-Marxists who have spent the best part of the last two decades attempting to disqualify such a move on the grounds that their deconstruction of Classical and Western Marxism makes it unnecessary. Yet the weaknesses in the post-Marxist case together with the welcomed burial of official Soviet and Leninist Marxism means that such a return cannot be ruled out, not with the intention of discovering (yet again) a "true" Marx or arguing over what he "really said," but in order to contribute to a vital, living, and open critique of capitalist domination with a view to its supercession.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

[1] For example, see the exchange between Geras (1987; 1988) and Laclau and Mouffe (1987) in New Left Review. Although there can be no doubt that issues of a critical and substantive nature are discussed, one is left with the overall impression that both Geras and Laclau and Mouffe are more concerned with scoring cheap points and saving academic face saving rather than any genuine effort at advancing critical social theory.

[2] Chilcote and Chilcote (1992) include among the ranks of New Structural Marxists Ira Gerstein, Erik Olin Wright, Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff, and Michael Burawoy. New Structural Marxists work with many of the same categories of analysis as 1960's and '70's Structuralist-Marxism (mode of production, class, overdetermination etc.) but they take a far more action-oriented approach and focus on the intersections of class with other forms of power and domination including race and gender.

[3] This argument is derived in part from the Introduction to Cleaver (1979). A long history of politically engaged libertarian Marxism exists but has been marginalized in the literature on the subject. The argument I make below benefits from this libertarian Marxist position, especially as it is manifest in contemporary journals such as Common Sense, Midnight Notes, Capital and Class, and the Discussion Bulletin.

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