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Hegemony and Critical Realism

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis seeks to develop a theory of hegemony. For too long this concept has been understood solely through its deployment by Antonio Gramsci. By employing a critical realist analysis - both to Gramsci's work and to others - a number of clarifications and distinctions are made which help give the concept greater explanatory power and make its scope more visible.

Given that Gramsci often holds an irrealist philosophical standpoint, it is argued that a realist conception of hegemony is to be found implicitly in his political writings. Following this, an implicit conception of hegemony can also be found in other political writers - most notably Lenin and Trotsky. The realist content is implicitly given by the relation between the political theory - often conceived as a strategy - and the nature of the reality analysed.

Employing critical realist terminology, it will be argued that the world is comprised of enduring structures and mechanisms and that these exist in the social as well as the natural world. The task of social science is not simply to identify sequences of events, but to study the underlying generative mechanisms which operate in different ways, exercised or unexercised, giving the world a multi-layered character.

The concept of hegemony should therefore be employed as part of a social scientific method. The complex nature of hegemony reflects the complexly structured conditions in which it operates. Given that society is both the ever-present condition and reproduced outcome of human agency, hegemony operates within the context of the reproduction, preservation or transformation of social structures. Thus hegemony sheds light on the relationship between structure and agency and provides strategy with an objective basis. In this way it relates closely to the critical realist concept of the transformational model of social activity - although it gives this model a more political and strategic basis.

This thesis will therefore argue that hegemony has an objective rather than simply an inter-subjective basis. Instead than seeing hegemony simply as a relation between different social groups, this thesis will analyse the relation between these groups and social structures - and the reproduction, preservation or conservation of these structures. It will also make a distinction between two types of hegemony. Hegemony1 has a more functional role in securing the cohesion of the social system and the reproduction of the basic structural processes. Hegemony2 concerns concrete hegemonic projects and practices, emergent out of the hegemony1 conditions, but giving these conditions a particular expression.

In this way the relation between critical realism and hegemony is drawn out. Hegemonic projects cannot be understood as involving discrete elements at the level of hegemony2, but must be related to the underlying structure of society and the functional requirement of hegemony to secure the unity of the social formation within this complex but open context.

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Chapter 1
Critical Realism and Hegemony

Introduction

The concept of hegemony is usually used to indicate the ways in which different social groups achieve dominance and leadership in society. In its more complex form the concept becomes associated with political projects, social alliances and historical blocs. Hegemony is thus a construct, made up of different groups and different interests. Within this certain elements dominate and direct.

However, this view is one-sided. It defines hegemony according to agency as if hegemony were simply the conscious project or cunning plan of different social groups. Hegemony becomes an intersubjective affair to be worked out by or between different groups of people.

Such a usage relies on the mistaken view that history and politics are simply products of important people or groups. But of course Marx and Engels said that we make history under conditions not of our own choosing. Two crucial questions immediately arise. First, what are the conditions under which hegemony operates? Second, what makes hegemony a necessary social feature?

These questions push the study of hegemony away from a simplistic examination of agency towards more material, objective factors. This thesis concentrates on how the agential aspect of hegemony coincides with its basic structurality.

Method: Critical Naturalism

The concept of hegemony therefore extends beyond simple political, cultural, humanist or hermeneutic interpretations. Since it is part of an understanding of the conditions of society, it should be treated as a *social scientific* concept. We will therefore take up a position of *critical naturalism* on the basis that the social sciences can be treated along similar lines to the natural sciences, using similar methods of analysis.

We will reject the idea, as is found in versions of positivism, that there is an identical correspondence between the methods of social and natural science. There are important qualifications which will be developed below. However, we can put philosophy to work on some common perspectives.

Above all, we must stress the primacy of being over thought, the ontological over the epistemological (theory of being over theory of knowledge). Being is precisely the condition for knowledge. Given that knowledge is possible and is meaningful, this pre-supposes that the world itself is a certain way. The practice of science shows that the world is intelligible.

Thus we can establish a transcendental argument. But rather than moving from knowledge to the mind, we will look at what is presupposed in the world itself. Given that certain things are intelligible, this pre-supposes that the world is structured in a particular way. Knowledge reflects the fact that the world is ordered and intelligible.

There is therefore an ontological distinction between knowledge and its object. Scientificity is founded on a theory's ability to explain social or natural objects. This knowledge may develop or change. One theory may replace another. But this once more proves the separateness of thought and object. Indeed, an ontological realm must exist if scientific change is to be

meaningful.

This separation of thought and object can be extended to a distinction between practice and structure. The process of knowledge is, after all, just one form of social practice. Indeed, knowledge itself can be divided into a number of sub-practices; scientific, aesthetic, technical, linguistic, and so on. More precisely, we should say that these various practices intersect one another.

However, we should also talk about structures, both social and natural, which are not reducible to particular practices. These structures range from, say, the atomic, to the economic. The purpose of science is to examine them.

The Transitive and Intransitive

To develop this distinction between epistemology and ontology, Bhaskar develops the concepts of transitive and intransitive.

Our knowledge of the world is *transitive.* This knowledge is actively embodied in a set of theories which form a kind of raw material for scientific practice.

This transitive knowledge corresponds to an Aristotelian material cause or antecedently established knowledge which is used to generate new knowledge. This includes established theories, models, methods, facts and so on. [1] Science, although it studies the intransitive, produces a transitive object.

The *intransitive* is that which science seeks to study. Intransitive objects of knowledge are those structures, processes and mechanisms which exist independently of us in a relatively enduring state.

Therefore, whilst science is a transitive process with antecedent knowledge that is dependent on human activity, its objects are intransitive objects which do not depend on either. As Roy Bhaskar says:

> The intransitive objects of knowledge are in general invariant to our knowledge of them; they are the real things and structures, mechanisms and processes, events and possibilities of the world; and for the most part they are quite independent of us... They are the intransitive, science-independent, objects of scientific discovery and investigation.[2]

The intransitive world is largely a transfactual world comprised of structures and mechanisms which are relatively enduring. This makes scientific practice possible. The identification of scientific laws and relations is dependent upon the relatively enduring, transfactuality of the intransitive. We can thus make an ontological argument; given that scientific investigation is intelligible, this pre-supposes that the world is structured in a certain way and that these transfactual structures, processes and mechanisms are open to investigation. It is the fact that the world is structured which makes science possible.

This position has radical consequences for any theory of science. A distinction must be made between the transitive identification of causal laws and the intransitive causal mechanisms themselves. There is a distinction, for example between the theory that isolates the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, and the actual economic mechanisms in operation.

Those theories that rely simply on an identification of a pattern of events or on empirical invariances, fail to sufficiently identify the deeper causal mechanisms which generate these events. Bhaskar therefore identifies three differing levels of scientific inquiry and their philosophical underpinnings.

Empirical, Actual and Real

The crudest form of empiricism defines the world according to human experiences. By making this direct relation it thus removes the intransitive dimension of those objects that exist independently of human experience. As

Bhaskar states, its ontology is based on experience and its sociology based on the passive individual.[3]

This crude empiricism can be dismissed rather easily. There are many events that are not experienced, yet they nethertheless occur. An explanation of the world cannot therefore be reduced to our experience of it.

However, this sort of empiricism provides the base for another set of philosophical positions which Bhaskar calls actualism.

Actualism recognises that events occur whether we experience them or not. It therefore moves beyond the crudity of the former position.

However, this version of explanation is still tied to a Humean conception of causality and is present in much philosophy, most obviously positivism. Therefore scientific laws depend upon constant conjunctions of atomistic events or states of affairs. The status of scientific theories is then decided upon the basis of whether or not they can be confirmed or falsified by various instances. But to simply posit that A causes B fails to adequately analyse the underlying mechanisms that produce such events. Indeed, Humean accounts effectively deny that such mechanisms exist.

The failure of actualism lies in its conflation of the closed conditions under which experimentation takes place and the open nature of the real world. It fails to take account of the fact that the world itself contains many more mechanisms than do the closed conditions of scientific experimentation.

Reality is thus treated or defined as if it were simply an extension of the conditions under which experimentation occurs. Yet this actual is very much the determinate object of the empirical. It operates on the basis of seeking constant conjunctions of events which are then used to explain causal occurrences. Ceteris paribus reality is produced.

By basing its explanation simply on constant conjunctions, actualism, at best, fails to effectively move beyond the occurrences of these events. In

effect actualist accounts deny the existence of underlying structures. In particular actualism sees everything in terms of the exercise of powers. Yet the openness of the world means that there are a whole number of powers present in such processes, some of which may not be realised. We know, for example, that water boiling at 100 degrees centigrade is dependent upon air pressure.

Indeed, to treat the world as a closed system, as actualism does, is to remove the need for scientific experimentation. Scientific closure is necessary precisely because the world is open and complex.

The realist conception therefore moves beyond experiences and events to the underlying mechanisms, or what Bhaskar calls the generative mechanisms. These are the structures that generate the events or the powers of things. In open systems a whole number of these mechanisms operate together, for example, labour relations, money circulation, foreign trade and so on.

These structures and mechanisms operate in different ways, exercised or unexercised (as *tendencies*), and determine things in various combinations. This gives the world a multi-layered character. Thus critical realism is a depth realism.

Critical realism is founded on a conception of *ontological depth*. It posits the existence of a certain layer of structures or mechanisms, but seeks to move beyond and explain what generates these. When a stratum of reality has been described, the next step should be to examine what mechanisms underlie or intersect with this level and so on. This is a radical approach focusing on processes of emergence and change.

The world is *stratified* in the sense that these structures and mechanisms are ordered in a certain way. Science itself reflects this; for example, biology is rooted in and emergent from physics. We can also see this sort of layering

or stratification in society.

However, a reductionist argument must be rejected. It is not possible to explain a biological process simply in terms of physical ones. Nor is it possible to explain political events simply in terms of economic conditions.

Traditionally Marxist explanation has been based on a rather crude base-superstructure relationship. We will argue instead that society is comprised of a multitude of strata and that structures inter-relate and co-determine one another. Within this economic structures are dominant, but they are not autonomous or determinant.

Critical Naturalism and Social Science

Critical realism argues that the social world can be studied along similar lines to the natural world and that therefore social science is as valid a practice as natural science. However, Bhaskar outlines three important differences.[4]

Founded on social relations, social structures are *ontologically* different from natural ones in the sense that they are praxis and concept dependent - that they are dependent on human activity and human conception of that activity. The objects of social science are thus of a historical nature, far more specific than are the objects of natural science. Social science is law-like but historical.

Epistemologically social science differs in that, unlike natural science, it is not possible to create the kind of closed conditions under which experimentation takes place. This means that social science should not primarily be predictive - as is the case with positivist and Humean approaches - but should instead primarily be explanatory.

The critical realist method proceeds as (1) the causal analysis of an event, (2) a theoretical re-description of the component causes, (3) a process

of retrodiction from the re-described component events or states to the antecedent processes that might have produced them and (4) an elimination of alternative causes. The theory must be checked empirically.

There is also an important *relational* difference in that social sciences are part of their own field of enquiry - that they are a product of the very social formation which they seek to analyse. There is thus an inter-connection between social concepts and the social objects which they seek to explain. Consequently, the explanatory nature of social science must develop on the lines of an explanatory critique. Critical realism is given a radical edge in its debunking of certain ideologies and their relation to the social structures and material practices that produce them. It is possible, for example, to develop a critique of classical economics by re-examining the economic structures it seeks to explain.

The hermeneutic tradition is therefore correct to see that social science deals with a pre-interpreted reality which has been conceptualised by social agents. It is wrong, however, to reduce social science to a study of such meanings and conceptions.

Such a position reduces social science to a study of behaviour and not of the structures through which this behaviour takes place. And such a focus on behaviour cannot but be inspired by the Humean conception of behaviour as causally regulated and rule governed.

Bhaskar directs his attack at Peter Winch.[5] He argues that while Winch concentrates on concepts, meanings, reasons and rules, and that human behaviour only exists through concepts, he cannot explain:

a. What explains the rules themselves?

b. What explains the agent's rule observance on any particular occasion?

c. What explains the acquisition of the rules by the individual in the first

place?

d. What distinguishes where a rule is broken and where it is changed?[6]

The hermeneutic tradition is therefore wrong to see social science as reducible to a study of rules, meanings and understandings. Social science is concerned not just with actions, but with the material conditions for such actions. Likewise, beliefs cannot be studied separately from the material practices in which they are inscribed. Thus:

> social reality is not identical to the conditions of its intelligibility; and the meaning of an action is not equivalent to its occurrence.[7]

Critical realism therefore goes beyond hermeneutics in looking at the social structures which lie behind human action and understanding and which make them possible. Social causality is not reducible to the question of rules or understanding, but is the material product of social structures and practices.

The Transformational Model of Social Activity

Social structures do not exist independently of the activities they govern. Nethertheless, the conditions for social activity exist intransitively. Societies pre-exist the human agents who live in them and are a condition for their activity. However, the ensemble of structures, practices and conventions require human agency for their reproduction or transformation.

The *transformational model of social activity*, in trying to grapple with the relation between structure and agent, is set up in opposition to both voluntarist (e.g. Weberian) and reified (e.g. Durkheimian) conceptions of society. Social structures exist in virtue of human activity, but they also determine that activity. Human action is necessarily dependent on the

existence of these social structures, however, the structures themselves depend upon being reproduced through such activity. Agents have some conception of this activity, but they reproduce or transform structures rather than create them. Therefore:

> Society is both the ever-present *condition* (material cause) and the continually reproduced *outcome* of human agency. And praxis is both work, that is conscious *production*, and (normally unconscious) *reproduction* of the conditions of production, that is society.[8]

The transformational model of social activity therefore allows us to locate praxis within the nexus of social structures without, however, turning agents into simple bearers of these structures. Structures definitely have primacy so that people in conscious activity, mostly unconsciously reproduce these structures. However, these agents have the *potential* to engage in transformative practice, albeit within specific limits.

A worker may consciously act to produce a product. However, the unintended consequence of such action is to produce profit and to contribute to the reproduction of the capital - labour relation. A mild transformation would involve struggling for higher wages. More radical transformational activity would transcend this situation, questioning the production process itself.

The nature of this transformative activity provides a key point at which critical realism and theories of socialist hegemony coincide. This is the point at which the dialectics of reproduction/transformation and enablement/constraint are made concrete.-

Critical realism is of direct concern to socialists in the sense that it conceptualises the relation between social structures and human activity in a radical sense based on reproductive activity and transformative capacity. It avoids both the demoralising structuralist position that structures reproduce themselves and are all powerful, and the voluntarist humanism that believes that everything can be explained in terms of human activity.

To the process of reproduction, we can add the class struggle dynamics of transformation and conservation. These processes are therefore very much linked to strategies and this immediately poses the question of hegemonic projects. However, critical realism keeps these strategies very much within the potentialities allowed by the structural conditions. Indeed we will go on to define hegemony in a structuralist sense.

Any socialist strategy must be located in a very precise, material context. It must start from what is, not some ideal future scenario. Critical realism points to how such a strategy should be based on the transformation of a specific set of social structures. Theoretically this requires a close study of such structures and a development of an immanent critique leading to a plan for action.

Critical realist theory therefore emerges, not just as an analysis of structures, but as a critique of these structures and their effects.

Its radicality lies in its focusing on structures and underlying causes and not just states of affairs. In terms of political strategy, this leads to a far more radical approach, analysing the inter-connectedness of social structures and their hierarchical nature, pointing to the most decisive areas of conflict.

This structurally based analysis therefore challenges the significance of knowledge based on a particular group or 'world view'. Critical realism

develops a complex view of society which breaks from the 'flat ontologies' offered by the various ideologies, e.g. classical economics. It also breaks from a sort of praxis-ontology that defines the world on the basis of social action.

Instead critical realism offers a critique and de-mystification of these ideologies, pointing to the link between such ideologies and the material structures and mechanisms that produce them. A hegemonic struggle must challenge not just the ideologies, but the social structures as well.

Finally, critical realism can act as a philosophical 'underlabourer' to Marxist social science, acting, not as an alternative, but as a complement. Whilst critical realism may not make strong social scientific claims in its own right, it may make strong philosophical claims about social scientific practice. In particular we will develop its emphasis on scientificity, historicity and specificity, all of which clarify key errors in Marxist theory.

Philosophy

Bhaskar develops the status of philosophy as an underlabourer to the sciences whose job it is to clear away the weeds and to clarify our concepts. He states:

> Philosophy, then, like science, produces knowledge. But it is knowledge of the necessary conditions for the production of knowledge - second order knowledge... [9]

This 'second order knowledge' or conceptual science can, however, be used to great effect. By rendering explicit what was already implicit critical realism attacks the philosophical basis of other theories such as the Humean conception of atomistic events or the Kantian construction of ideal models. The objects of critical realism are the enduring structures and mechanisms of the real world. Critical realism is able to establish a priori transcendental

arguments as to the existence of these and the status of our knowledge of them.

Critical realism also unmasks what Bhaskar has termed the *epistemic fallacy*. This conflates the state of the world with the knowledge we have of it. It reduces statements of being to statements of what we know, confusing ontology with epistemology. Bhaskar therefore points to how Kant sees the problems of philosophy as the conditions, limits and forms of knowledge, whilst Wittgenstein, committing a *linguistic fallacy*, reduces the problems of philosophy to the conditions, limits and forms of language. Both cases involve the denial of ontology and the collapse of the intransitive dimension. Bhaskar later goes on to link these errors to a basic anthropomorphism.[10]

In Dialectic, Bhaskar develops these points out and relates them to questions of structure and intransitivity, absence, totality and praxis. The epistemic fallacy is connected to other forms of *irrealism* such as actualism's reduction of powers to their exercise, flat ontologising, atomisation and detotalisation. On all these questions philosophy has a crucial role to play.

Similarly, whilst Bhaskar insists on the irreducibility of the intransitive, his transitive is necessarily flexible. Philosophy must recognise knowledge to be transient and influenced by social, historical and ideological factors. Consequently, critical realism advocates *epistemic relativity*. This is to be relativistic about the transitive but not about the intransitive object. It is also very much opposed to judgemental relativism which holds that there are no rational grounds for preferring one belief to another and that essentially all beliefs are equally valid.

Critical Critical Realism?

Unfortunately it now looks as if Roy Bhaskar has moved away from his earlier critical realist project and his specific conceptions of philosophy and social science. Of course critical realism was always going to grow in scope. The implications were always wider than its more limited ambitions.

Critical realism has been used in a variety of ways. Its role as a philosophical underlabourer meant that it made no specifically Marxist claims. Yet the early critical realism seemed to stand in a careful balance with Marxist social science. This has now been lost.

Indeed the development of what Bhaskar calls dialectical critical realism seems to be an attempt to *replace* Marxism.

Whilst it is certainly true that Bhaskar continues to develop important insights, his work as a whole is going down the philosophically dubious road of systematisation.

Bhaskar's book Dialectic marks out four areas or dialectical categories; structures and non-identity, absence and negation, open totality and transformative praxis. Some of these are already familiar terrains. However, Bhaskar's 'second edge' is key to the transformation of critical realism. It makes all-powerful the category of absence and is aimed against 'ontological monovalence'.

Bhaskar's claim that absence and non-being have primacy over presence and being is speculative to say the least. By daring to venture into the realms of cosmology, Bhaskar is somewhat over-extending the role that philosophy can play.

Bhaskar tries to make absence all determining, but only ends up trivialising things. If he cannot say that the absence of A causes B, he then

tries the absence of the absence of A.

The trouble with seeing everything in terms of absenting is that it takes the place of determination. This only serves to make dialectical critical realism even more abstract and moves the analysis away from a study of concrete social relations and what absences there may be in them. The speculative element is left to predominate.

Bhaskar's movement towards the primacy of non-being can only be seen as an imposition. It is an attempt to use absence as the objective basis for a dialectic of freedom. Thus freedom is seen as the absenting of constraints.

This dialectic of freedom represents Bhaskar's shift from philosophy to politics. He attempts to turn critical realism into a philosophy of emancipation. This couples with Bhaskar's analysis of structures and his conception of transformative praxis.

The strength of the early critical realism lies in its focus on the particular and its rejection of universalistic theories. Unfortunately Bhaskar's new dialectic of freedom has precisely this universalistic character. He fails to uphold the specificity of social structures and actions and thus fails to define the particularity of freedom. Instead, it seems, freedom comes from without.

Hence Bhaskar fails to ask, what kind of freedom? For whom and for what? Those of us who still believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat would see the need to impose constraints on certain freedoms, as well as seeing that new sorts of freedom develop out of different material situations. The forms that freedom takes certainly cannot be assessed simply on the basis of absenting something.

That is why, like the early structuralists who were attacked for their pessimism, we will turn to a dialectic of enablement and empowerment. Structures, and the transformation of such structures gives us, not freedom, but power. This gives a more positive conception of structures and a more

concrete conception of social possibility and human agency. However, this empowerment must be examined in its class particularity.

Complementing Bhaskar's dialectic of freedom is a faulty conception of agency and a universalistic conception of power. Dialectical critical realism rejects notions of class analysis in favour of ubiquitous master/slave relationships. This is founded on a deliberate ambiguity and a wrong turn to power relations as definitive.

Ultimately Bhaskar's project is to provide an emancipatory theory for the new social movements and radical petit bourgeoisie. This is fair enough, except that it imposes on his underlying philosophy and distorts it. We old fashioned Marxists will therefore have to make do with the early critical realism and leave Bhaskar to his own concrete utopia.

Hegemony

This thesis will be concerned with the concept of hegemony and its place within a social science. In this sense there is no direct relationship between hegemony and critical realist philosophy. Indeed, we have criticised Bhaskar for conflating philosophical positions with his own brand of prescriptive politics.

However, critical realism will be used in an underlabouring role against various usages of the concept, giving hegemony a realist basis. The *consequences* of critical realism's intervention will be political.

But there is a direct linkage between the idea of hegemony and some of the claims made by critical realism. Both critical realist accounts of society, and the conception and use of hegemony see society as structured and stratified in a certain way. Hegemony's role is to forge a political and consensual unity and direction out of this differentiation. Hegemony

represents a multi-levelled social organisation that reflects a multi-levelled reality.

Thus it would seem that critical realism can tell us something about the conditions under which hegemony operates and about the materiality of hegemony and the conditions of its emergence.

The closest association lies with the reproduction and transformation of social structures. Bhaskar's transformational model gives our understanding of hegemonic practices a more developed theoretical basis. Rather than defining hegemony on the basis of political relations it can be defined in more structural terms.

However, theories of hegemony also modify our understanding of the transformational model. The precise character of the working class means that a process of transformation must be carefully directed and focused, not just on the transformation of a structure, but on the capture of political power. Any meaningful transformative process will take place across a wide range of social bodies. Maintenance must be directed through the state.

A theory of hegemony would seem to be the best suited strategy for such transformative praxis. It is concerned with how social structures inter-relate with human agency and the class struggle. It clarifies the relationship between theory and practice informing both how we analyse political processes and how we act upon them.

Perhaps, after all, this is an alternative attempt to infuse critical realist philosophy with Marxist political ideas.

Notes

1 R.Bhaskar, A Realist Theory of Science, (hereafter RTS), (Hassocks and New Jersey 1978), p.21.

2 RTS, p.22.

3 RTS, p.242.

4 See R.Bhaskar, Reclaiming Reality, (hereafter RR), (London 1989), pp.185-86.

5 R.Bhaskar, The Possibility of Naturalism, (hereafter PON), (Hemel Hempstead 1989), Chapter 4.

6 PON, pp.144-45.

7 PON, p.142.

8 PON, pp.34-35.

9 PON, p.8.

10 See R.Bhaskar, PON, p.133 and Dialectic, (London 1993), pp.10-11, 397.

PART ONE

A Theoretical History

Chapter 2
Gramsci's Realist Hegemony

Introduction

Antonio Gramsci has become synonymous with the concept of hegemony with many books having been written on the subject. Our interest, however, is with the concept itself. To a certain extent this means prising the concept away from an exclusively Gramscian interpretation.

Gramsci has become a terrain for a constant war of positions between different interpreters. We try to avoid this approach. Rather than trying to find the 'correct' interpretation, we will look to a more full-scale reconstruction based on critical realist guidelines.

Roy Bhaskar himself has thus far written only a few lines on Gramsci although what he has written is significant. His critique makes three points - overly dismissive in tone - but important as a guide. These are:[1]

a. Gramsci sees objectivity in terms of a universal subjectivity asymptotically approached in history but only finally realised under communism. Gramsci rejects realism as 'religious residue' and sees Marxism in humanist terms, as the expression of a subject rather than as a knowledge of an object.

b. Gramsci wrongly sees in Marxism "all the fundamental elements needed to construct a total and integral conception of the world".[2] This leads to (non-Marxist!) natural science being regarded as 'bourgeois ideology'. Against this Bhaskar argues that the historicity of knowledge on which Gramsci properly insists, does not refute but actually depends upon the idea of the otherness of its objects.

c. There is thus a double collapse in Gramsci's philosophy. His subjectivism collapses the intransitive objects of knowledge into the transitive (historical) processes of knowledge. Gramsci's historicism is expressed as an intersubjective idealism. Secondly, Gramsci collapses what can be called the intrinsic and extrinsic conditions (that differentiates internal necessity and external contingency).

We will take up these issues, although we will make a distinction, missing in Bhaskar's critique, between (1) Gramsci's explicit philosophical positions (which Bhaskar rightly attacks on realist grounds) and (2) Gramsci's more implicit realism - for as Bhaskar says, all theories have an implicit ontology[3] - which can be found in his political analysis.

The Philosophical Influences

The unique character of Gramsci's thought is revealed through a study of his influences. In his work we find the concerted study of practical, political, historical and 'superstructural' aspects so prominent in Italian culture from Machiavelli through to Croce, Gentile, Labriola, Mondolfo and Sorel. These influences reveal the strengths and weaknesses of Gramsci's own thought. On the positive side, Gramsci develops a strong grasp of the political and the historical factors without, however, acquiring the scope of Marx's synthesis of German philosophy, French politics and English economics. Gramsci's specifically Italian theoretical development produces a strong sense of the political and historical at the expense of the economic. Moreover, Gramsci's sense of the political is accompanied by over-subjective, voluntarist and even idealist influences.

In Machiavelli there is a practical realism and a concept of praxis which Gramsci makes much of, stating that:

> In his treatment, in his critique of the present, he expressed general concepts ... and an original conception of the world. This conception of the world too could be called 'philosophy of praxis', or 'neo-humanism', in as much as it does not recognise transcendent or immanent (in the metaphysical sense) elements, but bases itself entirely on the concrete action of man, who, impelled by historical necessity, works and transforms reality.[4]

This passage indicates how Gramsci strives to get away from speculative and idealist philosophy by means of a practical realism. Like Machiavelli, Gramsci wants to "bring everything back to politics"[5]. But by focusing on human action, this realism will be limited to a praxis ontology - seeing reality simply in terms of human actions. To try and move beyond this Gramsci brings in a Crocian understanding of the will. The product is surprisingly realist:

> If one applies one's will to the creation of a new equilibrium among the forces which really exist and are operative - basing oneself on the particular force which one believes to be progressive and strengthening it to help it to victory - one still moves on the terrain of effective reality, but does so in order to dominate and transcend it (or to contribute to this). What 'ought to be' is therefore concrete; indeed it is the only realistic and historicist interpretation of reality...[6]

Machiavelli's ideas, whilst often limited to practical action, are important to a realist interpretation of hegemony. Machiavelli was the first real theorist of hegemony, indeed, as Croce notes, "with the Marxians, Machiavelli returned to Italy".[7] Machiavelli takes social reality and looks at the possibilities for collective actions and attainable goals. He also inspires Gramsci's interest in force and consent writing:

> it is desirable to be both loved and feared; but it is difficult to achieve both and, if one of them has to be lacking, it is much safer to be feared

than loved.[8]

However, Machiavelli, showing his modern attitude, appears to move away from simple force, accepting that consent has become an essential part of leadership. It is interesting that he gives ancient examples of pure force, and more modern examples of consent, or what he calls a 'civil principality'.[9]

Machiavelli emphasises the need for a strong social hegemony indicating that cultural and civil ties must be made. Otherwise:

> Like all other natural things that are born and grow rapidly, states that grow quickly cannot sufficiently develop their roots, trunks and branches, and will be destroyed by the first chill winds of adversity.[10]

Clearly Machiavelli left a deep influence on Gramsci, emphasising realist, political and practical aspects. Gramsci often refers to the force and consent relationship as Machiavelli's centaur, half human and half animal.[11] He also calls Machiavelli the first Jacobin, a man concerned with the practical problems of uniting the Italian state, culture and people, by giving spiritual leadership and forming a collective bond against the 'barbarian' forces. However, such a project requires specific strategies. For this reason, Gramsci turns to Machiavelli's The Art of War making much of tactics and battle strategies, of the qualities of the generals and the people and using the imagery of fortresses with walls and ditches.

But this practical realism is limited and Gramsci needs a broader conception of history and human will. Gramsci's turn to Croce is made possible by practical realism's rejection of metaphysics, driving Gramsci into the clutches of idealism. As the famous passage goes:

> in the case of a very common expression (historical materialism) one should put the accent on the first term - 'historical' - and not on the second, which is of metaphysical origin. The philosophy of praxis is

> absolute 'historicism', the absolute secularisation and earthliness of thought, an absolute humanism of history. It is along this line that one must trace the thread of the new conception of the world.[12]

Gramsci's position is based on a misunderstanding of what historical materialism is. Rather than being the view that materialism is historical, it refers to a materialist theory of history.

However, Italian idealism and in particular Benedetto Croce often elaborated the view that whilst Marxism had revived a theory of history and a Machiavellian conception of political praxis, it succumbed to an economic reductionism and a crude materialism. In this way Marxism had lost the true insight of its Hegelian origins; history as the unfolding of spirit.[13] Returning to Hegel's philosophy Croce writes:

> It was necessary to preserve the vital part of it, that is to say, the new concept of the concept, the concrete universal, together with the dialectic of opposites and the doctrine of degrees of reality; to refute with the help of that new concept and by developing it, all panologism, and every speculative construction of the individual and of the empirical, of history and of nature; to recognise the autonomy of the various forms of spirit, while preserving their necessary connection and unity; and finally, to resolve the whole philosophy into a *pure philosophy of spirit.*[14]

We can see in this passage themes which recur in Gramsci's writings; the concrete universal[15] (and world-views), a hostility towards both empiricism, positivist sociology and speculative thought, and above all, a conception of human will.

Croce, Gentile and others developed specific conceptions of history, in particular, in order to explain the Italian situation. The influence of the Risorgimento, the struggles of the new ruling class, and ultimately, the rise of populism and fascism, provided the greatest of influences. All of these events

emphasised the need for moral, cultural and intellectual leadership. In such circumstances a specifically Italian form of voluntarism emerged.

Voluntarism can be explained as a particular conception of history that sees it above all as the product of the human will. It is thus a subjective conception, that history is simply the outcome of peoples' actions and ideas. Croce thus puts forward the view that history is essentially the struggle for the ideal of liberty. But against Hegel Croce argues that the development of liberty must be fought for by people in historical situations (although this is arguably Hegel's position as well). Force is compatible with liberty, but only if it represents the putting of ideals into effect. The history of liberty, synonymous with the development of Spirit, is not pre-determined, it resides in our every action, particularly in the actions of the intellectual elite. Again, this form of idealism can be seen to tie in with Gramsci's practical realism - his conception of action and the role of intellectuals in turning ideas into reality.

But this voluntaristic conception of history is a complex product combining a critique of Hegel's philosophy of spirit with Machiavelli's political praxis, perhaps best synthesised in Vico's concept of human spirit as the passion that precedes the moment of reason - again conjuring up the Machiavellian image of the Centaur, both animal and human. Italian voluntarism then develops in different ways, from the idealism of Croce who holds that all reality is merely mental activity, to the subjectivism of Mondolfo who argues against the passive conception of the subjective, seeing it instead as the source of imaginative voluntary activity.[16] This voluntarism is not confined to idealism. The Marxist Antonio Labriola also argues that history is the product of people rather than 'the logic of things'.[17] Against all this we can return to that famous passage in Marx where:

> Men make their own history, but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted.[18]

But Croce understands history as the dialectic between the practical and the ideal, unified by spirit and historically represented by liberty. Spirit is divided into theoretical and practical activity. This position follows on from the influence of Croce's one time mentor, the Marxist Labriola.

Labriola was almost wholly responsible for the spread of Marxist ideas in Italy. He first makes use of the term 'philosophy of praxis' to denote Marxism. Rejecting any strict mechanical science, Labriola develops a science of history and politics based upon human actions, but set within a materialistic framework. The difficulty in carrying through such a project is reflected in the oscillations Labriola's thought takes between a more voluntaristic conception of the political superstructure, and a more determinist and mechanical conception of the economic. Despite brave attempts, Labriola is ultimately unable to break out of the straightjacket of Second International thinking.

Labriola's construction of a Marxist science based upon praxis and historicism obviously greatly influences Gramsci. It also reflects the irrealist trend to collapse the distinction between history and philosophy, also prominent in Croce so that "philosophy serves no other purpose than as a 'methodology of historical thought'".[19] Gramsci is against those, like Bukharin, who attempt to separate philosophy from human praxis. The collapsing of dialectical materialism into historical materialism is also the aspect of Gramsci's thought most forcibly criticised by Louis Althusser.[20]

Gramsci takes up Labriola's conception of the self-sufficiency of Marxism and the scientific status of historical materialism in relation to what he saw as 'external philosophical ideologies' (hence Gramsci's statement that Marxism contains "all the fundamental elements needed to construct a total

and integral conception of the world").[21] Such a position leads to a rejection of whole areas of scientific knowledge in favour of an intersubjective, all-inclusive Marxism. The assumption that Marxism is the only necessary science entails the implicit view that the world is neither complex, stratified nor differentiated, but immediately readable, given the subjective tools of Marxist 'scientific' praxis. Labriola and Gramsci do allow that the theory of historical materialism is itself subject to historical changes. But this then undermines the claim that Marxism is self-sufficient and autonomous.

Georges Sorel also carries great influence because of his rejection of a cold, scientific theory of Marxism. His embracing of an ethical conception of revolutionary activity is inspired by a Bergsonian creative urge, to be found, not in the heads of intellectuals, but in the spontaneity of the working class. Thus in his Reflections on Violence, Sorel embraces revolutionary syndicalism, seeing the ultimate creative event as the general strike.

Sorel develops a cultural, moral and human perspective. Discarding theories of economic catastrophism, he emphasises the moral and cultural collapse of society. This struck a chord with Italian historicists who could see that the cultural crisis was actually matched with economic expansion.

For Gramsci, Sorel's ideas easily fit with those of Machiavelli and Croce. The striving for an ideal would inspire the workers to rise above the decadence of bourgeois society. Sorel expresses these desires in the form of a myth:

> by means of them it is possible to understand the activity, the feelings and the ideas of the masses preparing themselves to enter on a decisive struggle; the myths are not descriptions of things, but expressions of a determination to act.[22]

Gramsci was much influenced by the idealist notion of myth, merging it with

Machiavellian politics:

> Machiavelli's Prince could be studied as an historical exemplification of the Sorelian myth - i.e. of a political ideology expressed neither in the form of a cold utopia nor as learned theorising, but rather by the creation of a concrete fantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organise its collective will.[23]

But Gramsci's feelings for Sorel are mixed, for he came to reject much of the syndicalist and spontaneist character of Sorel's thought. In particular, Gramsci's experience of syndicalism in Turin and the failure of the factory councils, and his later break with *Ordine Nuovo* meant that he came to rethink his earlier influences and the spontaneist and voluntarist humanism of Sorel. Gramsci turns instead to the struggle to form a revolutionary party based on the vanguard giving intellectual and political leadership.

The diversity of these influences makes it easy for different commentators to emphasise some aspects of Gramsci rather than others. Gramsci's relation to Croce, Gentile and Labriola is often counterposed to his Marxism. More recently, Laclau and Mouffe have offered a Sorelian reading of Gramsci in order to undermine his Leninism.

Philosophy Undermined by Hegemony

The analysis above emphasises the irrealist influences on Gramsci's philosophy. They become intermeshed with Gramsci's conception of politics. We can summarise some of the worst aspects of this process as:

1. Attempts to reduce historical method to a philosophy of praxis.
2. Collapsing dialectical materialism into historical materialism.
3. Voluntarism regarding the human will or a fetishisation of intellectuals and

their role.

4. A lack of economic analysis or an over-emphasis of superstructure.

5. A hostility towards materialism and non-social scientific matters

6. The idea that Marxism is self-sufficient and that reality can be reduced to social and historical matters.

7. The reduction of social and historical perspectives to a cultural outlook or world-view.

8. The tendency towards a praxis ontology which over-emphasises ethico-political leadership.

9. An intersubjective humanism.

10. A tendency towards spontaneism and syndicalism.

11. The difficulties balancing consent with coercion.

Here we are starting to move away from some of Gramsci's more philosophical statements. His political analysis is infused with these philosophical notions; it also counters some of them. The process of extraction is a complex one.

First there are problems with Gramsci's (expressed) understanding of what philosophy itself is. At times philosophy becomes subsumed by hegemony, becoming part of the world-view of the hegemonic groupings. It is related to common sense, although perhaps a higher form of expression, but nevertheless derives from the intersection of human praxis, organic expression and hegemonic struggle. Philosophy becomes entwined with the Machiavellian unity of thought and action. Indeed hegemony comes to represent the coming together of philosophy (as Gramsci understands it) and politics.

'Philosophies', for Gramsci, are tied up with the leading role of intellectuals in shaping organic blocs and normative action. Above all they are

an expression of world-views, derived from hegemony in the sense that they are the expression of groups seeking domination or moral leadership. It is not possible to separate this conception of philosophy from hegemonic leadership and political praxis. Put another way round, hegemony becomes the concretisation and realisation of the philosophical subject.

And yet Gramsci is partly correct to say that there is no 'philosophy' as such, but rather 'philosophies', just as there are ideologies or practices. But we must counter the relativistic or overly-historicist implications of this. Philosophy is not simply something that is done by different groups and we cannot understand one philosophy simply by comparison with another. Philosophy and philosophical claims must be examined in relation to the world that produces such claims and to the social and scientific knowledge we have of this world. We may accept that there are a number of different philosophies, but we do not accord them equal status or fall into a kind of judgemental relativism whereby we regard one philosophy as as good as another, or the historicist variation of this position, simply one world view amongst many. Having said this, it is still possible to offer some defence of Gramsci's position, against the charge of relativism, as Paggi has tried to do in saying:

> Gramsci's brutal assertion that philosophy is bourgeois or proletarian does not mean that there are two philosophies according to class perspectives, but that there are two ways of doing philosophy: one conservative and one revolutionary, depending on their acceptance or rejection of the symbiosis of philosophy and existing social conflicts.[24]

This may well be true, but it is also this practicality, as we have said, which leads Gramsci to adopt rather strange philosophical positions. Walter Adamson makes an interesting argument which is that Gramsci is aware that from Machiavelli he is inheriting a certain relativism with regard to praxis and

world-views. He counters this threat by taking up Croce as part of a turn to teleology. Thus the world-view of the proletariat is seen in terms the struggle for the freedom of the universal class.[25]

This theme can certainly be developed upon. Gramsci is therefore soft on idealism because his real target is metaphysics. And if we argue that Gramsci's materialism is founded on a conception of praxis, then the Modern Prince quite easily becomes the collective will of the universal subject.

But whilst it is true to say that Gramsci never attempts to justify this Hegelian conception of the proletariat, it is not clear whether he turns from historical relativism to essentialist teleology, or from the teleology to historicism. What is clear, however, is that the 'fusion' is a complex and very interesting one.

Realism

It is possible to make the case that Gramsci is explicitly realist and that his idealist formulations have some other purpose - aimed at positivist sociology, speculative philosophy and so on. Esteve Morera makes the best case for a realist Gramsci based on Gramsci's attempts to analyse real historical processes like passive revolution or the war of positions.

Morera makes the point that Gramsci's concern is not to question the existence of an objective reality but to look at the extent to which humans can gain an understanding of it. This knowledge is necessarily social and historical. So we find Gramsci writing that:

> it is difficult not to think in terms of something real beyond this knowledge ... in the concrete sense of a 'relative' ignorance of reality, of something still unknown, which will however be known one day...[26]

Morera finds an array of realist statements to quote back against the anti-

realist ones, so for example Gramsci admits that the relations of forces, closely connected to the structure are "objective, independent of human will, and which can be measured with the systems of the exact or physical sciences".[27]

However, it would be wrong to draw the conclusion that Gramsci is a realist on the basis of such statements. At best, it is fair to say that there are serious tensions in his work. This makes it possible to perform a realist reconstruction of Gramsci's work - something Morera does through the concept of historicism.

Perhaps more than anything, the instability of Gramsci's philosophical framework means that we must look to his political analysis to find Gramsci's realism.

Gramsci extends the scope of hegemony so that it is applied not just to proletarian leadership, but to society as a whole. An extended conception of hegemony is also used in the sense that it refers not just to external relations between groups, but to internal relations within groups. This gives hegemony a complex character which straddles many social layers and cuts across many social structures. Central to this conception is the reproduction or transformation of society.

In developing a political strategy, Gramsci has to deal with actual political situations and to engage, as best he can, in an analysis of the class struggle and of Marxist theory. Gramsci's political writings outline a theory of social explanation which is not limited to empirical 'facts' or practical decisions, but necessarily involve a degree of abstraction.

This means that the practical realism that Gramsci inherits from Machiavelli develops into much more than just the empirical realism implicit in most philosophies. This materialism, although tied to the present tasks, is very much based on past history and future strategy. It responds to the

immediate reality by looking at the possibilities and goals to be achieved. This is set in the context of historical processes and past hegemonic crises.

Gramsci's realism is expressed through a complex analysis of social relations, the balance of class forces and the mechanisms of domination, coercion, consent and leadership. Whilst this does not guarantee a realist explanation, it does allow for the possibility of setting some of Gramsci's theoretical concepts, particularly hegemony, within a realist framework. If Gramsci's concerns about political strategy, ideology, articulation of interests and historical development can be dealt with in conjunction with a conception of objective reality as structured and stratified - which the very existence of hegemony implies - then a rewarding area of political analysis can be opened up.

Gramsci's extension of the concept does, however, pose real problems which Perry Anderson is meticulous in pointing out. These flow from a confused understanding of what is encompassed by (i) civil society (civil, social or private sphere), (ii) political society (public, political or state sphere) and (iii) the economy (is it part of civil society or is it under the control of the state?)

Anderson points to three conflicting descriptions of the state.[28]

(I) The state contrasts with civil society:

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

(II) The state encompasses civil society:

> State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion.[30]

(III) The state is identical with civil society:

> By 'State' should be understood not only the apparatus of government, but also the 'private' apparatus of 'hegemony' or civil society...[31]

And:

> In actual reality civil society and State are one and the same...[32]

This poses real problems if we are to try and understand where hegemony is located and how it operates. Again, there are three different conceptions of hegemony.

One interpretation is that hegemony is located within civil society whilst coercion is confined to the state. This could be read into Gramsci's separation of the East, where the state is everything, and the West which has a strong civil society. Strategy is likewise dichotomised into the war of manoeuvre and war of position.

Such a conception is wrong. Hegemony is just as much concerned with the state as is shown through the operation of state bodies like parliament and the judicial system. The working class cannot simply win hegemony through the 'capture' of civil society, it must also deal with hegemony as expressed through the state. To counter bourgeois hegemony the state must be smashed.

Another formulation is that the state includes both political society and civil society. In effect civil society loses its independence. The best expression of this position can be found in Althusser's later conception of Ideological State Apparatuses which exist alongside Repressive State Apparatuses.

The third and best formulation is that the state and civil society are

distinct, but that hegemony operates across both. This is consistent with the view that hegemony is a combination of consent and coercion. The best expression of this relation is that the dominant hegemony operates through the state in order to best organise civil society. This is not to say that hegemony has any privileged location, for it must operate through both. This leads to a more structural conception of hegemony.

Gramsci's writings on hegemony include a formulation which sees it in terms of the unity between structure and superstructure. Thus he writes:

> Structures and superstructures form an 'historical bloc'. That is to say the complex, contradictory and discordant *ensemble* of the superstructures is the reflection of the *ensemble* of the social relations of production.[33]

Whilst this is no doubt a clumsy description, it is an important step towards a realist position. Structures and superstructures co-determine one another. Gramsci cites Fordist production as a clear example of this combined character. The historical bloc is being defined, not simply on the basis of the relations between groups, but on the basis of the relations between groups and structures. This is again clear when Gramsci writes that:

> what is involved is the reorganisation of the structure and the real relations between men on the one hand and the world of the economy or of production on the other.[34]

This means that for a group to become hegemonic it must have behind it both the economic conditions and the political and cultural conditions which allow that group to put itself forward as leading. Inevitably, the combination of economic and political factors produce a number of different class determinations or fractions. The different classes have a heterogeneous

character, stratified over a number of different social structures.

Hegemonic projects therefore reflect this stratification and are based, not simply on social groups, but on the objective social relations which divide them. Hegemonic projects seek to unify different strata, whilst trying to divide the opposition forces.

The realism of Gramsci is therefore clearly present in his analysis of 'the relations of forces'. First he talks of a relation of social forces closely linked to the structure. These relations are objective and reflect the development of the material forces of production and the emergence of social classes.[35]

The second moment concerns the relation of political forces, the degree of homogeneity, self-awareness and organisation of the social classes. The first level of this is the economic-corporate one which is marked by a consciousness of unity but a lack of solidarity. After this comes a consciousness of a solidarity of interests, but this is confined to economic interests. The third and most political stage occurs when this corporate consciousness is overcome. An intellectual and moral unity arises and political parties emerge. This is for Gramsci the moment when structure passes into superstructure.[36]

Gramsci's third moment concerns the relation of military forces. This must be developed and aimed at the opposition forces as a decisive war of manoeuvre.

Gramsci's notion of catharsis is in keeping with this analysis Here a process of realisation takes place, again concerning structure and superstructure, so that the subject comes to see the structure not simply as a constraint, but as a potential source of freedom. It is possible to draw parallels here with Bhaskar's notion of the dialectic of freedom as absenting absences. This process of realisation is important, for it is not simply a process of self-

awakening, but of recognising one's objective interests, out there in the world.

However, we should take on board Morera's reservations about the mechanics of these formulations and interpret them as temporal processes of an uneven nature which may combine in various ways.[37]

Ultimately the state is key to the organisation of hegemony. The ruling hegemony organises through the state, bringing together differing interests and forging them into an economic bloc. The state combines political leadership with intervention into the economy. This is a clear break from an instrumentalist conception of the state. The ruling class does not simply organise the state, but rather, the state helps to organise the ruling class.

A hegemonic crisis where classes become detached from their traditional parties is therefore much deeper that a mere electoral crisis. It represents a real crisis of authority in the face of objective conditions. Gramsci makes the implicitly realist point that these parties are not always able to adapt themselves to new circumstances, to new tasks, thus showing that history is to be understood not simply in terms of the actions of groups and their organisations, but in terms of the relations between these groups or parties, and historical processes which are founded on social structures, the most dominant being economic. Such a crisis would be a crisis of the historical bloc as understood as the relation between structure and superstructure.

Finally, then, we will touch on the question of the passive revolution which reflects an attempt to organise the superstructure in line with structural developments. In this conception the ruling class compensates for its weakness by carrying through a reorganisation of civil society so as to preempt any activity from the masses themselves.

This reorganisation must take the form of a modernisation that is in line with the structural developments which are taking place in the economy and

which seeks to foster and cultivate these changes. In this way a ruling bloc can try and head off any potential crisis through a far reaching reorganisation that creates the impression of progress. Gramsci's analysis of Italy points to how the bourgeoisie attempted to deflect from its own weakness by developing Fordist production techniques, the effect of which was widely felt so that:

> through the legislative intervention of the State, and by means of the corporative organisation - relatively far-reaching modifications are being introduced into the country's economic structure in order to accentuate the 'plan of production'...[38]

Again we see the realist implication of Gramsci's admittedly strange formulation of the historical bloc as a convergence of economic structure and politico-ideological superstructure.

Historicism

Reaching an understanding of historicism is a key problem of social analysis. In particular the problem of understanding both necessity and contingency and of incorporating them into a conception of scientificity that recognises the necessarily historical character of theory. Therefore Morera defends Gramsci's historicism on the basis that it is compatible with a realist conception of causality and historical necessity:

> Gramsci's historicism is not a denial of the concepts of historical causality or laws, but merely an attempt to produce a conception of them that is suited to the complexities of the historical process and that takes account of the open character of that process. Furthermore, he seeks to give explanations for social phenomena that avoid reference to ahistorical entities, be they metaphysical laws, transcendental categories, or empirical constructions about the nature of the brain. Ultimately, historicism means precisely this: that all explanations of

> social phenomena should be based on strictly historical, or what he sometimes calls immanent, causes.[39]

The particular conjuncture cannot be grasped by pretending that history is a simple mono-linear process which ends up in confirming the historical subject. Historical reality is complexly structured and differentiated. Particular conjunctures can only be understood as the coming together of various historical processes and mechanisms and the various groups of people who act within this context, upon the world. Historically these different groups, processes, structures, contradictions and so on move at varying speeds and in different directions, some more developed than others, some more progressive, some more conservative. To understand the conjuncture one has to grasp this wider historical field, to know what historical forces are causing particular events and why. Morera applies these different criteria to Gramsci's historical analysis. Concepts are unavoidably historical:

> Theoretical concepts, such as class or hegemony, have a temporal dimension which defines them as much as their synchronic characteristics. They are, in short, each of them an abstraction that holds for a series of inter-related phenomena over a period of time, not simply a matter of series of properties in a static whole.[40]

In an important comparison with the Annales school and with aspects of structuralism Morera argues that the concept of hegemony can bring together the synchronic and diachronic. It involves historical categories to distinguish social groups with-differing degrees of homogeneity, consciousness and organisation. Thus:

> Structure, conjuncture, event; these are the elements of the situation, each with its specific rhythm, its temporality, and all linked together in a dialectical unity, a unity of contradictory forces.[41]

Complementing the concept of hegemony is the idea of the historical bloc. In Gramsci the historical bloc creates a unity between structure and superstructure. The triumph of a hegemonic project is to be sought in the specific relation of forces that characterise a given structured situation. Against those who would have it that hegemony is purely an ethico-political concept, we can quote Gramsci's statement that hegemony "must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity".[42] Further, the historical bloc represents the "unity between nature and spirit (structure and superstructure), the unity of opposites and of distincts".[43] Leaving aside the Hegelian tone of such a statement we can see that hegemony is not regarded as an ethico-political phenomenon, but as the ethico-political aspect of the historical bloc.

Althusser's Contribution

Louis Althusser writes that hegemony is "a remarkable example of a theoretical solution in outline to the problems of the interpretation of the economic and the political".[44] His notes on Gramsci in Reading *Capital* display both the strengths and weaknesses of his structuralist analysis and indicates the advances that can be made by a critical realist alternative.

The strength of Althusser's analysis lies in his ability to employ a symptomatic reading of Gramsci's work. He rightly rejects a humanist analysis of Gramsci's 'absolute historicism' on the basis that these:

> are primarily critical and polemical in meaning; their functions are, first and foremost: (1) to reject any metaphysical interpretation of Marxist philosophy, and (2) to *indicate,* as 'practical' concepts, the site on which the Marxist conception should be established and the direction it

should take...[45]

As far as Althusser is concerned, 'historicism' is valid if it corresponds to the practical role of Marxism or to the unity of theory and practice:

> By presenting Marxism as historicism, Gramsci is stressing an essential determination of Marxist theory: its practical role in *real history*. One of Gramsci's constant concerns is the practico-historical role of what... he calls the great 'conceptions of the world', or 'ideologies'... In this respect ... Marxism cannot claim to be the theory of history unless, *even in its theory,* it can the think the conditions of this penetration into history, into all strata of society...[46]

But it is on these questions of theory and practice that Althusser himself falls down. His structuralism has a tendency to collapse into theoreticism or scientism, stressing intrinsic necessity at the expense of extrinsic historical contingency.

It is certainly true that Althusser makes an important break from essentialist theories by developing his concept of overdetermination. This does give an element of contingency to his analysis. But this is done in a synchronic rather than a diachronic way (see Chapter 8).

Althusser correctly points to Gramsci's (historicist) tendency to collapse science into history, to blur the distinction between historical materialism and dialectical materialism. But is Althusser really correct to insist on their absolute separation? The charge of idealism that can be levelled against Gramsci can quite easily by turned on Althusser, that his talk of the theoretical object of the science of history as distinct from 'real history', his rigid separation of the thought object and the real object, his tendency to stand the theory of history outside or above real history, all suggest that we can only know knowledge and that this knowledge is somehow separate from the social, historical world.

A critical realist conception sees things in their distinctions and upholds the specificity of both a scientific discourse and a philosophical method. However, rather than seeking to impose an autonomous dichotomy upon these specific practices, it is necessary to see the relationship between the various scientific practices and philosophies as a structured and stratified relationship. Whilst it is necessary to look at what is specific about each mode of enquiry, it is also necessary to look at their inter-relations, both with each other and with the 'outside' world. Whilst Gramsci's approach is too historicist, Althusser's is too internal. Instead, to put it in critical realist terms, we must look at how transitive knowledge is structured and differentiated, and how the transitive is related to the intransitive world.

Only in this way is it possible to start separating science from ideology. We cannot rely on theories producing their own internal proofs of scientificity. Instead we require an epistemological relativism based on a recognition of the inescapably historical aspect of knowledge. Thus Gramsci's historicism must be judged according to its potentially explanatory character and not just by a measure of its internal consistency.

A Dual Conception of Hegemony

In his transformational model of social activity Bhaskar tries to develop an explanation of the relationship between structures and agents. Society is both the ever-present condition (material cause) and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency.[47] The various social structures are reproduced through human agency although this is largely an unconscious process. It is possible, however, that human agents, within very definite limits, may transform such structures, or that another group of human agents may try to prevent transformative activity taking place. This is where the question of

hegemony comes in.

It can be seen that two concepts of hegemony are starting to emerge, one structural and the other political or agential. The political usage is the normally accepted one - hegemony concerns organising political agents around certain projects. But hegemony is also defined in a structural sense. It intersects with the process by which social structures are reproduced or transformed. In a certain sense this process is automatic - agential reproduction is largely unconscious. But the world is complex and different structures coincide and conflict. This means that hegemony will always play an important role in *securing* the reproduction of these structural combinations. By virtue of the world being an open system, hegemony is necessary to secure social cohesion. Indeed the necessity of hegemony is proved by the fact that various hegemonic projects are possible at all.

If we bring together these structural and agential definitions of hegemony we can say that hegemony provides the political class struggle moment in the interaction between structures and agents. This is a clear rejection of the humanist approach which defines hegemony simply in terms of the inter-relations between groups of agents. The humanist approach cannot explain either what generates hegemonic processes or struggles, or what these struggles are about. We cannot understand the class struggle by simply referring to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Ultimately, what determines both these forces are the objective structures of capitalist society. Likewise, hegemony cannot be understood simply in terms of the struggles between different agents. We must look for the material causes of hegemony. Agents are involved in relations, both with each other, and with social structures and practices. A hegemony or hegemonic project should therefore be seen as an articulated attempt to preserve or transform such structures and relations.

Gramsci is well aware of this. It would be ludicrous, therefore, to try

and reduce his analysis to simple political, ethical or strategic concepts. This is clear when Gramsci writes that:

> incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity), and that despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them.[48]

In this quote hegemony concerns the efforts of the political forces to conserve certain social structures. This hegemonic project is both motivated by structural contradictions, and limited or undermined by them.

Gramsci also assesses the historical bloc, not simply as a historical relation between different social agents, but as the relationship between what he calls the economic structure and the politico-ethical superstructures, realised through the competing activity of different social groups and classes. This gives us a concept of hegemony as emergence - hegemony is not created by social groups, it is realised by them. This conception of hegemony as a conscious process of trying to conserve or transform social structures or relations, within very specific structural limitations coincides with a critical realist perspective on social practice as outlined by Andrew Collier as:

> practice tending to take over or destroy certain institutions (politics of change) or to defend them from such attacks (politics of conserving). The transformation of social structure is necessarily a political act, but their *reproduction* is not; the task of politicians who defend the existing order is not to cause its reproduction, since the system in a sense reproduces itself; it is rather to ward off threats to that reproduction.[49]

From this it can be seen that hegemony implies a conception that the world is complexly structured with diverse human practices and intentional human activities. It attempts to deal with the relations and conflicts between social

groups and in doing so must analyse the social structures and practices through which human activity takes place (is enabled). It can show how articulated beliefs and ideas provide the causal motive present in Bhaskar's transformational model of social activity. It can provide an historical account of conjunctural moments without necessarily becoming overly historicist. It can examine the ethical and political aspects of processes whilst retaining an adherence to structural explanation.

Hegemony and Strategy

What gives Gramsci's writings their realist nature is his attempt to theoretically analyse actual historical processes and to move from this analysis into considerations on strategy and tactics for the working class. Unlike theorists such as Lukács, Gramsci's does not impose a philosophical framework on his conception of these tasks. This allows the political element to dominate.

But even now, there are still problems. Gramsci's writings on political strategy have also become a battleground for competing tendencies. This is helped by the confusions that Anderson, amongst others, has outlined concerning Gramsci's theory of hegemony, the state and civil society. This has opened up a space for Eurocommunists, in particular, to argue for reformist strategies. The slow battle of attrition that Gramsci describes as the war of positions has been interpreted as a gradual capture of the institutions of civil society whilst a challenge to state power itself is indefinitely postponed.

It is certainly possible to extract this position from Gramsci's writings. He places too much emphasis on the ability of the working class to win sections of civil society *prior* to the revolution. The working class gets embroiled in a permanent counter-hegemonic formation - expressed for

example in Gramsci's notion that political parties carry out in civil society the same function that the state carries out in political society.[50]

Ernest Mandel writes the standard critique of Gramsci which is essentially correct.[51] He argues against the possibility of constructing and maintaining a hegemonic alliance through a long drawn-out process of a war of positions. Such a strategy that seeks to capture civil society before any war of manoeuvre against the state ends up yielding to reformism. This can be attributed to the fact that the proletariat, whilst it is the agent of social change, is also economically - and thus to a large extent politically and culturally - disenfranchised. A hegemonic capture of civil society might have been possible for the property owning bourgeoisie under feudalism, but it is not possible in the same way for the working class under capitalism. The working class bloc cannot maintain itself over a long period on such limited resources. Rather, as Mandel argues, the revolutionary struggle comes quickly and decisively.

But whilst this is certainly true and must be stated against those who advocate such a strategy, this does not mean that the struggle for hegemony is not a valid strategy. It is certainly not feasible to capture civil society through a Eurocommunist type strategy, but on the other hand, without some kind of strategy the 'decisive moment' will never arrive. Only a coherent strategy can give spontaneous developments a revolutionary direction and outcome.

Here we can see the importance of Gramsci's break with economic determinism - although this is not unique to Gramsci as the next chapter will argue. Whilst it is true that there is a crisis tendency in capitalism, there is not an essential consciousness of the working class which will lead it to socialist revolution. Such an outcome must be worked towards which involves giving political leadership across civil society in the here and now.

Mandel is therefore not entirely correct when he suggests that Gramsci

over-estimates the ability of the working class to achieve dominance. For Gramsci makes a very important distinction between dominance and leadership (or in other translations, rulership). The latter is a much more creative and flexible process which does not depend upon absolute dominance although it seeks to achieve it. This is made clear in Gramsci's quote:

> The politico-historical criterion on which our own inquiries must be grounded is this: that a class is dominant in two ways, namely it is 'leading' and 'dominant'. It leads the allied classes, it dominates the opposing ones. Therefore a class can (and must) 'lead' even before assuming power; when it is in power it becomes dominant but it also continues to 'lead'.[52]

This is the important strategic issue that should be taken up. It is not possible to reduce the struggle for leadership to the question of one's ability to take power. The struggle for leadership is a constant process by which the working class vanguard advances its alternative proposals and fights for its political independence. Because the terrain on which the revolutionary forces fight is a complex and differentiated one, the question of leadership takes on different forms and nuances. Revolutionaries must be prepared to fight within each of these areas for leadership - *whether or not this can be achieved* - by advancing political demands and seeking to build up their own hegemony and to link the struggles across the board. Without such a strategy, spontaneous developments will simply pass by and a real mass base will never be created. The war of manoeuvre can only be reached after such wars of positions.

Such a hegemonic strategy takes account, not just of the problems of organising revolutionary forces, but of the conditions under which this organisation takes place. Hegemony is not just a good idea, one plan amongst many, but the only realistic way of organising political forces given the nature of the social character of these forces. The working class is not a homogenous

bloc. It is therefore necessary for a hegemonic project to unite these different groups, as well as the potential allies of the working class. But this can only be done through leadership.

And so the question of hegemony can run alongside the more traditional notion of the united front. The two must not be conflated, however, since hegemony is a strategy while the united front is more of a tactic. But tactics must have a context, and that context cannot simply be provided by the conjunctural moment, but must come from one's political strategy.

The united front is therefore not identical to the war of positions, but it is an important part of the war of positions, largely of a defensive character. And it is precisely because of this that the united front is defined politically. The purpose of the united front is not simply to make common cause with other forces in order to 'advance the interests of the class', but also to provide the opportunity to win political leadership away from those currently misleading the workers. The dual purpose of the united front is to make common cause with other forces, and to win leadership away from those forces. The latter expresses the convergence with the war of positions, for it is only possible to understand the united front if it is seen as part of a wider strategy to win political leadership. Without this element the united front is nothing.

Notes

1 R.Bhaskar, Philosophy and the Idea of Science, (herafter PIF), (Oxford 1991), pp.165, 72-74.
2 A.Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, (hereafter SPN), (London 1971), p.462.
3 RR, p.2.
4 SPN pp.248-49.
5 SPN, p.249.
6 SPN, p.172.
7 B.Croce, A History of Italy, (Oxford 1929), p.52.

8 N.Machiavelli, The Prince, (Cambridge 1988), p.59.
9 Ibid., pp.30, 34.
10 Ibid, p.23.
11 Ibid p.61.
12 SPN, p.465.
13 See B.Croce A History of Italy, pp.154-55 and My Philosophy, (London 1949), p.64.
14 B.Croce What is Living and What is Dead in Hegel, (London 1915), pp.203-4.
15 Hegel's understanding of the concrete universal is taken from Rousseau's analysis of the general will which develops through the historical community and is embodied in the laws of the state.
16 T.Nemeth, Gramsci's Philosophy, (Brighton and New Jersey 1982), p.37.
17 J.Femia, Gramsci's Political Thought, (Oxford 1982), p.92.
18 K.Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' in Surveys from Exile, (Harmondsworth 1973), p.146. See also Engels' letter to Joseph Bloch.
19 B.Croce, History as the Story of Liberty, (London 1941), p.138.
20 L.Althusser and E.Balibar, Reading *Capital*, (London 1979), pp.128-37. See later comments on Althusser.
21 SPN, p.462 and notes on Labriola pp.386-88.
22 G.Sorel, Reflections on Violence, (New York 1975), p.32.
23 SPN, pp.125-6.
24 L.Paggi 'Gramsci's General Theory of Marxism' in C.Mouffe (ed.), Gramsci and Marxist Theory, (London, 1979), p.121.
25 W.Adamson, Hegemony and Revolution, (Berkeley 1980), p.135.
26 SPN, p.368.
27 SPN, p.180. Gramsci is also forced into a realist position when discussing the natural sciences - which conflicts with his conception of the physical sciences as being a part of human history. Morera produces some other notable quotes some of which are dubious in their implications, eg. "scientific theories reflect an unchanging reality" Quaderni del Carcere, 4 vols., (Turin, 1975), vol.2, p.1445, knowledge must fit reality not the other way round vol.1, p.332, Marxism is "the theory of history most fitting to reality and truth" vol.2, p.1467, and on the importance of French realism vol.2, p.1250.
28 P.Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci' in New Left Review, no.100, pp.12-13.
29 SPN, p.238.
30 SPN, p.263.
31 SPN, p.261.
32 SPN, p.160.
33 SPN, p.366..
34 SPN, p.263.
35 SPN, p.180.
36 SPN, p.181.
37 E.Morera, Gramsci's Historicism, (London 1990), p.151.
38 SPN, p.120.
39 Morera, op.cit., pp.114-14.
40 Ibid., p.83.
41 Ibid., p.91.
42 SPN, p.161.
43 SPN, p.137.

44 L.Althusser, For Marx, (London 1979), p.114n.

45 L.Althusser and E.Balibar, op.cit., p.127.

46 Ibid., pp.127-28.

47 PON, pp.34-35.

48 SPN, p.178.

49 A.Collier, Scientific Realism and Socialist Thought, (Hemel Hempstead 1989), pp.152-53.

50 SPN, p.15.

51 See E.Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, (London 1978).

52 This is best translated by Buttigieg in A.Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 6 vols., (Columbia 1992), vol.1, pp.136-7. See also SPN, p.59.

Chapter 3
Classical Marxism: Lenin and Trotsky

Introduction

Our central argument about Gramsci's writing is that whilst he often subscribes to an openly idealist or subjectivist philosophy, he is a realist in the sense that his *political* concepts are realist concepts. Gramsci's realism comes, not from his explicit philosophical framework, but from his analysis of real political processes and the *implicitly* realist method he uses. Hegemony becomes a realist concept once it is separated from Gramsci's talk of human will and instead linked to real material processes and class relations.

If it is the case, therefore, that Gramsci is a realist by virtue of his sophisticated political analysis, then so too, this chapter will argue, are Lenin and Trotsky. Indeed we can go further and argue that the way in which Lenin and Trotsky analyse concrete political situations allows us to extract an implicit notion of hegemony. This runs contrary to attempts by non-Marxists to slur Lenin and Trotsky with the idea that their analysis is non-sophisticated, wooden, and dogmatic.

Indeed Eurocommunists have made much of the fact that Lenin and Trotsky's analysis can explain, at best, only the situation in the East. Gramsci is seen, therefore, as an *alternative* to classical Marxism, a 'theorist of the West', a third option to Trotsky and Stalin. Such a view is based on pure prejudice. There are volumes of writings by Lenin and Trotsky on the situation in the 'West', which are actually more explanatory and sophisticated than Gramsci's. It was Lenin who wrote:

> The whole difficulty of the Russian revolution is that it was much easier for the Russian revolutionary working class to start than it is for the West European classes, but it is much more difficult for us to continue. It is more difficult to start a revolution in West European countries because there the revolutionary proletariat is opposed by the higher thinking that comes with culture, while the working class is in a state of cultural slavery.[1]

As well as this, we will argue how such unpopular Marxist notions as the united front and democratic centralism flow from a keen understanding of how hegemony operates. Indeed these concepts are based on a realist understanding of the world *as it is* rather than on the idealist alternatives that try to promote bourgeois democracy, new social vanguards, humanism and so on.

Lenin

Lenin's early writings develop the theme that the proletariat fights for its hegemony in the context of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Much of this comes from writers like Akselrod - the first to coin the phrase 'the hegemony of the proletariat in the democratic revolution'.[2]

Lenin therefore associates the striving for proletarian hegemony with a principled and consistent struggle for radical democratic demands. Only the proletariat is able to display these qualities:

> From the proletarian point of view hegemony in a war goes to him who fights most energetically, who never misses a chance to strike a blow at the enemy, who always suits the action to the word, who is therefore the ideological leader of the democratic forces, who criticises half-way policies of every kind.[3]

Thus the role of the working class was limited by objective circumstances -

the stage of development in Russian civil society. But it was still possible for the working class to play an active and radical role in fighting to extend the boundaries of political debate and struggle. Lenin makes this point in his Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution:

> We cannot jump out of the bourgeois-democratic boundaries of the Russian revolution, but we can vastly extend these boundaries, and within these boundaries we can and must fight for the interests of the proletariat...[4]

However, as Lenin developed the ideas of class leadership based on the vanguard of the working class and the struggle for political independence, his concept of hegemony gets more closely attached to the struggle for state power and the application of the leading role of the proletariat through the state. The struggle around national-democratic demands naturally grows over into a struggle for political independence and working class forms of democracy. The context of national-democratic demands soon gets superseded by the need to take power. Working class hegemony is secured during the course of this struggle.

Lenin's theory therefore leads to an acceptance of a process of permanent revolution. In the same sense that Marx used the term, the working class initially struggles to carry the bourgeois-democratic revolution to its conclusion, to make its demands permanent. But in doing so, the working class moves naturally into the struggle for its own demands and interests.

Lenin's realism flows from his rejection of the kind of mechanical materialism which led to the betrayals of the Second International. This mechanical viewpoint gives history an inevitable and teleological character. This soon leads to an opportunist political practice.

The key question for the likes of Bernstein was not, therefore, how to make the revolution, but how to take advantage of the revolution once it

inevitably came. Hence there is no need for any active revolutionary practice. Instead the task of the workers' organisations is limited to the struggle for reforms that improve the conditions of workers under capitalism. This reformist practice is tied to a reliance on the capitalist state. Once those states entered into war, the Social Democrats followed with them.

At a philosophical level Lenin strove to avoid this mechanical materialism. He was responsible for returning the active political element to history. This is clearly visible in Lenin's political writings, but it can also be found in his philosophy.

Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, written in 1908 still has a rather mechanistic character and a cruder materialism. This is understandable given that Lenin's politics also had a more mechanical outlook reflected in the fact that the Russian revolution had to complete its bourgeois-democratic 'phase' before a workers' revolution was possible. At a philosophical level Lenin refers to the fact that thought is a 'reflection' of reality.[5]

However, the later Philosophical Notebooks display a changed approach. Thought's 'reflection' of reality is given a more complex basis, developed through abstractions, concepts and laws, acting much more as a mediation.[6] Thought is given a more dynamic role. Philosophy is no longer a mechanical reflection of reality. The active element is restored.

Therefore, although thought-reality and politics-history are distinct relations, Lenin's philosophical shift gives both the former elements - thought and politics - a more dynamic character. In critical realist terminology, we could say that Lenin is giving more weight to the transitive domain - the practice of thought and political practice.

Lenin was always a realist, insisting on the separation of thought and matter. But by breaking with the mechanistic view of history, Lenin was able to see these material processes as a specific combination of different

contradictory factors. Lenin's theorisation of political practice flows from his analysis of the dynamics of the objective situation.

The study of the dynamics of the imperialist phase of capitalism is therefore Lenin's starting point. Social concentration leads to monopoly. The ownership of capital is separated from the application of that capital to production. Finance capital is separated from productive capital. This makes capital more mobile and more parasitic. It also leads to an imperialist foreign policy reflected in wars and state rivalries.

Lenin's realism stems from the fact that his political concepts and ideas are given a very precise form based on the objective context. He takes up the matter of democracy not as some kind of abstract or universal ideal, but as a product of concrete circumstances. What does democracy mean in the imperialist epoch? What does it mean in Russia or in Germany in this epoch? How does the working class take up the struggle? For Lenin, the sell-out leaders of the Second International had failed to address these questions. Their general formulations were flawed by a failure to relate concrete demands to the reality of the objective context, the political and economic dynamics:

> Kautsky broke with Marxism by advocating in the epoch of finance capital a 'reactionary ideal', 'peaceful democracy', 'the mere operation of economic factors,' for *objectively* this ideal drags us back from monopoly to non-monopolist capitalism, and is a reformist swindle.[7]

However, Kautsky himself was not simply inventing his false concepts. His ideas were likewise a product of the objective situation. Social democracy, in its legal form, had come to represent certain privileges; first the benefits gained by the Western European working class through imperialism, second, a particular layer of this working class, the labour aristocracy, who had more exclusive interests. Lenin's analysis of the development of the working class

and its political parties, saw it in this stratified form. The revisionists were theorising objective developments; the conservatism of the labour aristocracy, the sectoral interests of the labour bureaucracy, the relationship of those parties to the state and so on. As Lukács puts it, revisionism is tied to realpolitik.[8] Lenin's cruder but more graphic explanation is that:

> The social-chauvinists are ... *bourgeois* within the working class movement. They represent a stratum, or groups, or sections of the working class which *objectively* have been bribed by the bourgeoisie (by better wages, positions of honour, etc.), and which help *their own* bourgeoisie to plunder and oppress small and weak peoples and to fight *for* the division of the capitalist spoils.[9]

We can therefore draw out Lenin's full position. The objective situation is dominated by the imperialist phase of capitalism and colonial exploitation. This gives rise to new social compositions. Ruling blocs can be strengthened by the incorporation of privileged sections of the working class. This also has the effect of undermining working class hegemony. The task of revolutionary socialists is therefore to fight for the political independence of the working class and to break the alliances with the bourgeoisie and the state. Any alliance with the petit bourgeoisie must involve resolving the contradictions that oppose the petit bourgeoisie to the working class and winning them to the hegemony of the proletariat. This will be part of a general process in which the ruling class suffers a crisis of hegemony whilst the working class strengthens its counter-hegemony. A revolutionary situation emerges:

> when it is impossible for the ruling class to maintain their rule without any change; when there is a crisis, in one form or another, among the 'upper classes', a crisis in the policy of the ruling class, leading to a fissure through which the discontent and indication of the oppressed classes burst forth.[10]

A revolutionary situation does not depend simply on the position of the working class. It requires a simultaneous crisis of bourgeois hegemony located within a structural crisis of society. Thus:

> for a revolution to take place it is not enough for the exploited and oppressed masses to realise the impossibility of living in the old way, and demand changes; for a revolution to take place it is essential that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way. It is only when the *'lower classes' do not want* to live in the old way and the 'upper classes' *cannot carry on in the old way* that the revolution can triumph ... revolution is impossible without a nation-wide crisis.[11]

The totality of these objective changes is a revolutionary situation. But Lenin allows for a regeneration of a concept of hegemony by breaking from mechanical materialism and making the subjective factor a necessary component of the revolution itself. Here lies the close connection between Lenin's realism and his implicit concept of hegemony. This relationship now develops through Lenin's understanding of the proletarian dictatorship.

Lenin and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat can be found in Marx and his writings on the Paris Commune, but is Lenin who really takes it up and develops it. The concept had become all the more crucial because of the immediacy of the struggle for power and the problems of holding on to power in such a weak society.

The need for the dictatorship of the proletariat is both objective and subjective. First it is demanded by the nature of the objective situation - the social crisis and the need for restructuring and defence. Secondly its necessity stems from the nature of the working class and the difficulty it has in securing

hegemony.

Lenin's analysis of Russian society led him to the conclusion that a situation of dual power existed. In effect, two counterposed hegemonies stood side by side. Alongside the bourgeois government stood what effectively amounted to a workers' government based on the soviets. These bodies had sprung up from below. They developed their own rules and laws, their own forms of proletarian democracy. Lenin's new position on permanent revolution led him to the conclusion that although state power was in the hands of the bourgeoisie, overall political power was passing over to the Soviets. The March revolution prepared this situation. Two powers cannot exist together within the same state. The situation of dual power therefore represents a transitional phase in the revolution's development.[12]

Consequently, the dictatorship of the proletariat was the only realistic course. The only alternative is bourgeois dictatorship. The idea that there might be a third way is petit-bourgeois utopianism that flies in the face of the objective situation.[13]

As Balibar has argued[14], the dictatorship of the proletariat is neither a tactic nor a strategy but a *reality* borne out of a historical tendency, rooted in the nature of capitalism and the painful transition out of it.

Kautsky's opposition to the revolution and his talk of democracy is therefore meaningless. Lenin argues that Kautsky has become a liberal who talks of democracy but fails to ask for what class? Kautsky talks of pure, non-class or above-class democracy.[15]

In any case, bourgeois democracy had been established through a violent dictatorship over the majority of the population. In contrast, the proletarian dictatorship should repress only a violent minority of the population - the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. But there is also the international element which may intervene. Consequently, the transition to

socialism will take an entire epoch, until then the bourgeoisie still cherishes the hope of restoration.[16]

Lenin argues that the proletariat needs to establish its hegemony through state power. It is only after victory that it can hope to win the support of the majority of the population. Then state power can be used to win over the masses from the bourgeois and petit bourgeois forces. He writes:

> the proletariat must first overthrow the bourgeoisie and win *for itself* state power, and then use that state power, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat, as an instrument of its class for the purpose of winning the sympathy of the majority of the working people.[17]

The Proletarian Dictatorship is therefore not simply a negative concept to keep control, but the most realistic way of using and directing state power to win over the masses and to demonstrate the superiority of working class rule. Like all hegemonies, this is based on coercion and consent:

> The dictatorship of the proletariat means a persistent struggle - bloody and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative - against the forces and traditions of the old society.[18]

Christine Buci-Glucksmann rightly argues that Lenin's concept of hegemony is not synonymous with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Hegemony is the function of the working class as a whole.[19] The relationship to the vanguard is a dialectical one. She likens Lenin's formulation to Gramsci's because:

> In both cases, what is involved is a concept closely linked to that of the dictatorship of the proletariat, without however being identical with this. Hegemony *qualifies* the proletarian dictatorship, in particular its expansive character.[20]

This is reflected in Lenin's realist distinction between the party, the vanguard and the masses. The party will play a leading and directing role, but the working class in general will enjoy social hegemony. For example, Lenin disagreed with Trotsky's view that the trade unions should be brought under direct party control. They, along with the soviets, represent the *social* hegemony of the working class as a whole. The dictatorship of the proletariat concerns the more specific *political* role given to the party and the vanguard.

Democratic Centralism and the Theory of Hegemony

For many, democratic centralism is an outdated product of Russian political conditions. In a postmodern vein, opponents of democratic centralism claim that because today's world is supposedly more complex and heterogeneous, political organisation must be founded on some sort of democratic pluralism.

Such an argument is nonsensical. It is precisely because reality is complexly structured that organisational discipline is necessary if any meaningful changes are to be made. To argue for pluralism as an alternative is to play the game on capitalism's terms. As effective leadership and direction are removed, any attempt at a hegemonic project descends into incoherence. Instead of pluralism we get fragmentation and the reinforcing of alienated identities.

Such objections fail to understand the connection being made between a theory of organisation and a hegemonic project. Lenin's writings on democratic centralism are not mere organisational concerns. They are political matters relating to the organisation of the political vanguard.

Hence democratic centralism refers to the organisation of the party as a *vanguard party*. Recognising the stratified nature of social groups and classes, the Leninist theory of organisation seeks to relate first to the political

vanguard and the most advanced workers and through them to the broader masses.

Although there are competing definitions, we will define the vanguard here as the most politically developed sections of the working class with good political instincts formed by participation in the class struggle.

Leninism's historic break with social democracy is founded on an idea of the revolutionary party as an *active, organic* party which relates to the political vanguard by organising it. Democratic centralism therefore extends beyond the organisation of the party to the vanguard as well:

> The democratic centralism of the Communist Party organisation should be a real synthesis, a fusion of centralism and proletarian democracy. This fusion can be achieved only when the Party organisation *works* and *struggles* at all times together, as a united whole. Centralisation in the Communist Party does not mean formal, mechanical centralisation, but the *centralisation of Communist activity*, i.e. the creation of a leadership that is strong and effective and at the same time flexible.[21]

In this sense Leninism is conceived as a *more* democratic form of organisation than social democracy. It rests on activity, organisation and participation. In contrast, social democracy rests on a passive relationship to its base, organising it socially, but keeping it separate from the political leadership.

Leninism sees itself as organising the most conscious layers in society and directing them through hegemonic leadership. This means that the revolutionary party takes on an important role and status. Hence Lenin's famous words:

> Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of *all* classes and strata to the state and the government ...

> We must 'go among all classes of the population' as theoreticians, as propagandists, as agitators, and as organisers.[22]

Strongly rejecting adaptation to spontaneous consciousness, stressing instead the need for direction and leadership, Lenin argues that although the party is involved in the day to day struggles of the workers, it stands above them. Lenin is saying that class political consciousness needs organisation and leadership. This cannot be established through adaptation to spontaneous consciousness or sectoral interests of particular groups. Marxist consciousness sees things in their totality.

The party, therefore, is not simply an amalgam of different experiences. It tries to collectivise these experiences on a higher plane. By stressing the need for the most advanced theory[23] Lenin rejects the empiricist view that the party represents the mere collectivisation of experiences. The party must know something of the totality of structures, relations and conditions in which these experiences take place. Experience alone is only partial and often misleading.

There are three dialectical relationships contained in the concept of democratic centralism. First is the differentiation between democratic centralism in theory - as a principle of organisation - and democratic centralism in practice - as related to specific tasks. Second democratic centralism needs to be seen as a specifically organisational question and as an eminently political matter. Political and organisational matters are both unified and distinctive. Finally there is the difficult relationship between the democratic and the centralist components of the concepts.

However, it is necessary to stress that democratic centralism should be seen as a strongly democratic concept. It seeks to allow for the fullest freedom of discussion and internal debate whilst recognising the need for the party to offer clear direction and leadership in action. This is based on the recognition

that the revolutionary party seeks not merely to intervene, but to hegemonise.

That such a means of organisation is necessary is derived from the role the party is required to play and the tasks that it faces. Of course the very practical and political nature of these tasks means that it is possible to abuse democratic centralism. But again, a process such as the Stalinisation of the CPSU cannot be seen in isolation from the very real and material pressures being exerted.

We have argued that democratic centralism depends on a realist view of the world. It is based on the practical needs of the struggle for hegemonic power - as opposed to idealist notions of democratic plurality. This is so precisely because the masses are seen as diverse rather than homogeneous. The real world is seen as a complex set of relations into which the party must intervene. This complexity requires that the party is unified in its activity and that it seeks to unify the vanguard around it. Given the complexity of the real world, the key political struggle is therefore to capture state power in order to direct the necessary changes.

Thus the concept is intimately tied to the struggle for political hegemony seeking to organise the vanguard around the party and the masses around the vanguard. The party needs to be centralise in order to play a clear and leading role. Within the party there is freedom of discussion. But this discussion must be reconciled with clear leadership. Hence the slogan, freedom of discussion, unity of action.[24]

Trotsky

Trotsky has a firm grasp of the complex requirements for revolutionary leadership, founded on the understanding that a revolutionary situation does not develop uniformly, but by successive waves of ebb and flow. Gramsci and

others are quite wrong to accuse Trotsky of favouring frontal offensives against a war of positions.[25]

The possibility of a frontal attack on the Russian state is attributed to the peculiarities of Russian combined and uneven development. In the West, as Trotsky states time and time again, a more careful war of positions must take place. It is therefore:

> necessary to understand that it will not be possible to overthrow the bourgeoisie automatically, mechanically, merely because it is condemned by history. On the highly complex field of political struggle we find, on the one side, the bourgeoisie with its forces and resources and, on the opposing side, the working class with its various layers, moods, levels of development, with its Communist Party struggling against other parties and organisations for influence over the working masses. In this struggle the Communist Party ... has to manoeuvre, now attacking, now retreating, always consolidating its influence, conquering new positions until the favourable moment arrives for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.[26]

The situation in Russia is not simply that of a frontal assault. In any case:

> The ease with which we conquered power on November 7, 1917, was paid for by the countless sacrifices of the Civil War. In countries that are older in the capitalist sense, and with a higher culture, the situation will, without doubt, differ profoundly. In these countries the popular masses will enter the revolution far more fully formed in political respects.[27]

Trotsky repeatedly makes the point that an under-developed civil society makes the capture of state power easier. However, it also makes the maintenance of state power more difficult. The proletariat will have to slowly extend its hegemony through the development of a stronger civil base. In the West, on the other hand, the proletariat faces a more difficult initial struggle for power. It will find it more difficult to build up its bases in civil society.

However:

> after the conquest of power, the European proletariat will in all likelihood have far more elbow room for its creative work in economy and culture than we had in Russia on the day after the overturn. The more difficult and gruelling the struggle for state power, all the less possible will it be to challenge the proletariat's power after the victory.[28]

Such statements are commonplace in Trotsky.[29] We will therefore make a divide between Trotsky's analysis of combined and uneven development and then his analysis of the West.

Combined and Uneven Development and Permanent Revolution

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution flows from his analysis of combined and uneven development. For the purposes of realism - to avoid voluntarism or objectivism - it is necessary to maintain the distinction between these two concepts.

Combined and uneven development is an objective process. It is a phenomenon of the more backward nations which are subjected to a peculiar combination of different stages of the historic process. Under pressure from external influences these countries are forced to modernise and develop capitalist features, to take up new forms of economic production and social organisation. This leads to a strengthening of the working class. However, this is combined with a backwardness of culture and a strong agrarian base. This gives the country's development an uneven character.

The bourgeoisie is in a weak and compromised position. It is almost entirely dependent on foreign capital and investment. It thus assumes a

comprador character without establishing strong national roots. It cannot command a social base of support and is overly reliant on the state. It is unable to play a hegemonising role due to its inability to give national and democratic leadership:

> Living historic societies are inharmonious through and through, and the more so the more delayed their development. The fact that in a backward country like Russia the bourgeoisie had decayed before the complete victory of the bourgeois regime, and that there was nobody but the proletariat to replace it in the position of national leadership, was an expression of this inharmony.[30]

From these features of combined and uneven development Trotsky develops the theory of permanent revolution. Objective conditions prevent the bourgeoisie from playing a leading role. It is incapable of uniting the nation around a set of national and democratic demands. It is caught between the peasantry, the feudal aristocracy, foreign capital and the developing working class.

Here Trotsky's notion of hegemony is highly developed. Leaving aside the matter of how the word itself is used, it is commonly argued that whilst Lenin and Trotsky had an idea of hegemony in relation to working class leadership, they did not extend this hegemonic role to class leadership in general. Only Gramsci, it is argued, applied the matter of hegemony to the ruling class as well. Yet let us quote Trotsky on this matter:

> no historic class lifts itself from a subject position to a position of rulership suddenly in one night ... It must already on the eve of the revolution have assumed a very independent attitude towards the official ruling class; moreover, it must have focused upon itself the hopes of intermediate classes and layers, dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs, but not capable of playing an independent role. The historic preparation of a revolution brings about, in the pre-revolutionary period, a situation in which the class which is called to

> realise the new social system, although not yet master of the country, has already concentrated in its hands a significant share of the state power ... [But] If the new class ... [is] placed in power by a revolution which it did not want, [it] is in essence an already old, historically belated, class.[31]

From this analysis Trotsky develops a new understanding of hegemony and the historical tasks of the working class. The bourgeoisie is unable to carry through the tasks of the democratic revolution. The peasantry, despite forming the majority of the population, is incapable of playing any kind of independent role. The rest of the petit bourgeoisie is similarly incapable of economic and political independence and is subject to deep internal division. Given that the bourgeoisie is unable to accomplish its national-democratic tasks, it is necessary that the proletariat hegemonises the masses under its own leadership. By doing so it takes the struggle beyond the limits of the specific democratic demands. The peculiarities of combined and uneven development and the dynamic of permanent revolution give the working class an *objectively* revolutionary role.

This should not, however, tempt us into committing the error of objectivism. There is nothing guaranteed about the fate of permanent revolution. It is founded on the specific objective conditions of combined and uneven development. But this does not give permanent revolution an objective character. The process of permanent revolution is founded on objective possibilities, however, its success depends on subjective factors of leadership and proletarian hegemony. The working class must be able to successfully construct and maintain its alliances and to resolve the problems being faced by the peasantry.

Trotsky was also careful to avoid a voluntarist position. Objective conditions would allow the working class to seize power in Russia but would also constrain the exercise of that power. The conditions in Russia allowed for

a temporary triumph. The task of constructing a firmer socialist hegemony is dependent on the victory of the European proletariat. This is in line with the position that it will be easier to seize power in the East, but more difficult, owing to the deficiencies of economic and civil society, to maintain social control. The revolution must not just be permanent in the sense that it extends beyond the unsolved national and democratic demands. It must extend beyond the nation itself.

Trotsky's theories of combined and uneven development and permanent revolution are very much realist theories. Permanent revolution is seen as a historical *possibility*. The potential for working class leadership is founded on what objective material conditions exist. These conditions have to exist if working class hegemony is to be possible. Thus hegemony is given a very specific historical role and clear material limits.

At a philosophical level Trotsky's theory also marks an important break from idealist and teleological influences. "The laws of history", he writes, "have nothing in common with a pedantic schematism".[32] History does not have to go through a series of pre-ordained stages. In Russia, it was not just possible, but necessary, to fight for the proletarian rather than the bourgeois revolution. Such a conclusion is based, not on universalist teleology, but on concrete dialectic conditions - principally the structural crisis derived from an overdetermined form of development - and the consequent crisis of bourgeois hegemony. The coincidence of particular historical factors gives development "a planless, complex, combined character".[33]

It is not surprising, therefore, that Trotsky rejects productive forces determinism and the associated schematic view of history:

> But the day and the hour when power will pass into the hands of the working class depends directly not upon the level attained by the productive forces but upon relations in the class struggle, upon the

> international situation, and, finally, upon a number of subjective factors: the traditions, the initiative and the readiness to fight of the workers.[34]

This is what makes possible a meaningful theory of hegemony. History is not a pre-determined process. It is about the objective conditions of possibility. History does not pass mechanically from one period to another. Rather, it combines different, often opposing, elements. In Russia these conditions seriously constrained the ability of the bourgeoisie to play a leading and dominant role. Its hegemony could be challenged by the working class due to the peculiar historical conditions.

From these conditions, and from the objective needs of the workers and the peasants, Trotsky articulates the historical tasks facing the working class. It is necessary for the workers to lead an alliance with the peasantry. It is necessary to take up national and democratic demands. It is also necessary to go beyond these.

From this it is possible to see how Trotsky's theory of hegemony extends beyond the specific concerns of the working class. What are the possibilities of assuming an independent role? How does a group relate to intermediate layers? When does a class exhaust its historic role and when can another class take power? All this is in Trotsky's analysis.

Writings on the West

It is clear from an analysis of Trotsky's writings on Russia and China that the Eastern states are not to be dealt with by straight forward frontal attack. The peculiar objective conditions and the weakness of bourgeois hegemony gives the working class particular possibilities. However, taking state power is still a complicated tactical affair. The 'division' between East and West should not

be seen as a division between wars of manoeuvre and position. It should be seen in terms of different objective conditions, different levels of historical development, and specific hegemonic relations. These vary from one state to another. Tactics, therefore, must be assessed in relation to the particular situation, whether in the East or the West.

Trotsky's writings on Britain represent an analysis of a particularly stable and hegemonic situation which, nevertheless, is beginning to fall into decline. The working class is potentially very strong. Its consent is therefore vital to the ruling class. Trotsky notes that "the organised unity of the working class has long existed in England." Unfortunately this unity has been achieved through "the political unity of the working class with the imperialist bourgeoisie".[35]

Central to this analysis is therefore the role played by social democracy in relation to the interests of the ruling class and the struggles of the working class. A party such as the Labour Party is a workers' party by virtue of its base in the working class and its relation to the trade unions. Its politics however, are those of class compromise. The interests of the social democratic leaders are tied to the capitalist state and the bourgeois nation.

Through the complicity of social democracy the bourgeoisie is able to build a historical bloc which incorporates the labour bureaucracy as subordinate allies of the ruling class. The British state rests on the back of the working class through the intermediacy of this bureaucracy.[36]

With such an entrenched bourgeoisie, revolutionary tactics require patience and serious preparation. The most important task is to expose the labour bureaucrats in the eyes of the masses by revealing their subordination to the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. This is best done through the tactic of the united front which seeks to put the bureaucrats on the spot and force them to chose sides. The united front can mobilise the masses whilst highlighting the

weakness of their leaders. It is part of a wider strategy to win their base away from them.

There is no doubt that Trotsky's analysis has its schematic side. Britain is an economically advanced society. This gives a firmer base to the superstructural forms of civil society. The ruling class then makes use of this to secure consent through ideological means. Thus Trotsky combines a degree of economic determinism with an instrumentalist conception of class rule. At its worst moment this leads Trotsky to make wild predictions about the coming British revolution based on selected empirical evidence mainly centred on various political crises. The fact that these crises did not lead to a revolutionary situation is often attributed solely to the crisis of working class leadership. The failure of a revolutionary situation to materialise is a result of the treachery of the social democratic leaders. This ignores the real material forces, the ideological and political structures which, amongst other things, determine the role of the social democrats. Hegemony, for Trotsky, is given a more shallow, surface role. It is the way in which classes organise. When this organisation is seen to be in crisis, Trotsky mistakenly sees this as a crisis of the whole system. He fails to see that hegemony has a deeper, more material basis as inscribed into the structures of social life, as securing the cohesion of the social whole. Hegemony is seen in an instrumental rather than in a structural way.

However, despite this, Trotsky's understanding of the social whole is better than most. He certainly rejects a crude determinism even if he does remain trapped by the base/superstructure metaphor. The relationship between the two is given a complex character. It has its own particular forms rather than some universalistic basis. And determination, as Althusser might say, is only in the last analysis. Trotsky writes:

> the question itself boils down to the inter-relation between the basis and the superstructure and to the inter-relation of bases and superstructures of different countries with one another. We know that superstructures - state, law, politics, parties and so on - arise on an economic basis, are nourished and determined by this basis. Consequently, basis and superstructures have to correspond. And this happens in fact, only not simply but in a very complicated way. A powerful development of superstructure (the bourgeois state, bourgeois parties, bourgeois culture) sometimes holds back for a long time the development of the other superstructures (the revolutionary proletarian party), but in the last analysis - in the *last analysis*, not immediately, the basis reveals itself nevertheless as a decisive force.[37]

Further, Trotsky's method at least allows for a concept of hegemony which is more than most deterministic analyses allow. Although this needs to be given a firmer basis, Trotsky is able to pick out the main features of a hegemonic crisis. The crisis of historical leadership has a particular importance regarding the petit bourgeoisie, the class historically caught between the two main classes and which looks to them for leadership. On the situation in France, Trotsky writes that:

> The political crisis of the country is above all a collapse of the confidence of the petit bourgeois masses in their traditional parties and leaders. *The discontent, the nervousness, the instability, the fluidity of the petit bourgeoisie* are extremely important characteristics of a pre-revolutionary situation.[38]

The position of the petit bourgeoisie would be crucial to Trotsky's analysis of fascism in Germany and Spain. The failure of the working class to exert leadership over this layer would result in the petit bourgeoisie becoming the focus of reaction.

On Spain, Trotsky's subject matter is similar to Gramsci's Italy. In particular Spain was an example of a weak bourgeoisie unable to provide national leadership and offer itself as a hegemonising force. In contrast to the

hegemonic position of the British bourgeoisie:

> The history of Spain is the history of continual revolutionary convulsions... The petty rivalry of the juntas was only the outward expression of the Spanish revolutions' lack of a leading class. Precisely because of this, the monarchy triumphed over each new revolution. A short time after the triumph of order, however, the chronic crisis once more broke through. Not one of the many regimes that supplanted each other sank deep enough roots into the soil.[39]

As in Italy, the left wing of the bourgeoisie, led by young intellectuals, set itself task of converting Spain into a republic. Catholicism led the reaction against this. The bourgeoisie was too young and too weak to remove the influence of the old feudal order. Hence "the cracks and gaps of bourgeois society are filled in Spain with declassed elements of the ruling classes, the numerous seekers of positions and income".[40] In contrast to this slum leadership, at the bottom of society are slum proletarians and declassed workers.

The Spanish bourgeoisie cannot play the historic role associated with the French and British bourgeoisies. It appeared late on the scene and as a consequence is dependent on foreign capital. As a result, it is unable to establish for itself a sufficient social base. Its dependence on foreign capital and domestic feudal interests deprives it of independence. The big bourgeoisie is objectively unable to come forward as a leader of the nation.[41]

Trotsky does not, therefore, start from the tasks of the working class. He starts from the objective situation and the position of the ruling class and then proceeds to outline the necessary strategy. In Spain, the immediate task for the communists is not the struggle for power itself, but the "struggle for the masses".[42] Here is a clear case of hegemony being a pre-requisite for revolution. Revolutionaries must avoid any "premature attempts at decisive battle".[43]

The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany

Trotsky wrote that the emergence of fascism in Germany was due to a combination of a number of factors. Underlying everything is a deep structural crisis along national and economic lines. There then exists a crisis of the ruling bloc. The working class is also beset by internal differences. This gives the petit bourgeoisie an elevated importance.

The petit bourgeoisie is usually little more than a supporting class. It does not have the social basis or the forms of organisation necessary to mount a challenge to the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. In particular, "the petit bourgeoisie is *characterised by the extreme heterogeneity of its social nature.* At the bottom it fuses with the proletariat and extends into the lumpen proletariat; on top it passes over into the capitalist bourgeoisie".[44] It leans on various forms of production whilst lacking collectivity.

However, despite this compromised position, the petit bourgeoisie is of immense importance to the functioning of the system:

> The economically powerful big bourgeoisie, in itself, constitutes an infinitesimal minority of the nation. To enforce its domination, it must ensure a definite mutual relationship with the petit bourgeoisie and, through its mediation, with the proletariat.[45]

In other words, whilst the big bourgeoisie may enjoy economic power, this is useless unless it can put together a political alliance which gets other classes to support its interests.

Trotsky is concerned with the moribund nature of social democracy. For him, social democracy or reformism is characteristic of petit bourgeois influences within the workers' movement. Thus social democracy is founded on the material privileges of the labour aristocracy and on the narrow, sectoral

influences of the bureaucrats and trade union leaders. It constitutes a political and ideological defence of these strata.

Because of its relation to the capitalist state and its adaption to parliamentary democracy, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) becomes increasingly tied to the interests of the system and hence to its failures. Economic crisis in turn leads to a political or hegemonic crisis in which all of the major political parties are discredited. Despite playing a subordinate role in the ruling alliance, the SPD also suffers from the crisis of leadership. And because of the SPD's relationship with the working class, the workers too face a crisis of their own leadership.

Thus fascism arises as a mass movement as a result of a deep structural crisis which is reflected at a political level in the futility of parliamentary rule. Each of the traditional political parties suffers from a failure to give leadership. The ruling class maintains control at the economic level, but in the political sphere it suffers a crisis of political representation of these interests. The working class organisations, in part due to their compromises with a system in decay, also fail to take control of the situation. Fascism assumes a *political* significance due to this paralysis on both sides of the class struggle. *However, it assumes this significance within the context of the ruling class maintaining economic power.*

The fascist programme is a product of the frustration of the petit bourgeoisie with the social and economic order. However, the fact that fascism can only come to power with the support of the bourgeoisie means that this programme, as a programme aspiring to political independence, can never be implemented as initially intended. The fascist programme of the petit bourgeoisie becomes increasingly torn away from reality and is reduced to ritualistic acts. The illusions are reduced to a naked bureaucratic masquerade. [Fascism p.406] Fascism descends into bonapartism.

Consequently, Trotsky draws the conclusion that: "Fascism is a specific means of mobilising and organising the petit bourgeoisie in the social interests of finance capital."[46] However, this mobilisation of the petit bourgeoisie is a dangerous matter. The social demagogy of fascism is of danger to bourgeois interests. The bourgeoisie does not therefore willingly turn to fascism. Rather, fascist rule is a last ditch attempt by the bourgeoisie to maintain power over the working class when all other means have failed. Consequently, fascism evolves out of the failure of the parliamentary system and the paralysis of social democracy.

But whilst Trotsky has the correct starting point - the structural crisis and the consequent crisis of social hegemony - his explanation of the role that fascism plays is increasingly an instrumentalist one. Fascism is the means by which monopoly capital mobilises the petit bourgeoisie and the declassed layers against the organised working class. It attacks the parliamentary system. Fascism acts as a battering ram. It is used by the bourgeoisie to annihilate the organisations of the working class once traditional methods have failed. Once in power, the interests of finance capital predominate. A bonapartist regime takes over.[47]

This analysis is one sided if the 'battering ram' theory is allowed to predominate. The ruling class does not simply take up fascism and decide to use it against the working class. It is certainly true that the ruling class turns to fascism in despair, promoting it and financing it. This makes fascism's path to power the more easy. But fascism has its own dynamics which grow out of the structural crisis.

A crisis of legitimacy reflects a deeper structural crisis. Fascism is not simply a battering ram to be used by the bourgeoisie in such situations. It is itself a product of this crisis. Fascism is not therefore an instrument to be used in crisis, its growth is a structural feature of the crisis itself and as such cannot

be separated from it. The growth of fascism is not attributable to a hegemonic crisis at the surface level of political representation. Fascism grows out of a deeper material crisis although it manifests itself at the political and ideological level. Trotsky is right, therefore, to relate the growth of fascism to economic crisis and structural dislocation. It is only in this context that we should allow ourselves to talk of fascism as a battering ram.

By emphasising the structural and hegemonic features of Trotsky's writing, a satisfactory reading can be achieved. Certainly it is necessary to emphasise the stratified character of social reality and class relations. From this is it possible to understand the importance of achieving a social hegemony and the strategies employed by each class:

> The class itself is not homogeneous. Its different sections arrive at class consciousness by different paths and at different times. The bourgeoisie participates actively in this process. Within the working class, it creates its own institutions, or utilises those already existing, in order to oppose certain strata of workers to others. Within the proletariat several parties are active at the same time. Therefore, for the greater part of its historical journey, it remains split politically. The problem of the united front - which arises during certain periods most sharply - originates therein.[48]

This notion of class stratification could be read in an instrumentalist way as a simple case of divide and rule tactics. A realist analysis however, would start from the divisions which exist in the world itself which form the ontological basis for class differentiation. Thus whilst divide and rule tactics may be a conscious project of the ruling bloc, the initial divisions are not created by the ruling class. They exist objectively and are made use of during the course of the class struggle. Objective divisions exist independently of any particular conscious class project. However, the particular nature of the dominant social structures and generative mechanisms allow for certain groups to become

dominant and to construct their own hegemony out of these divisions, whilst undermining attempts at a counter-hegemony. Then such social divisions can be made use of for class purposes. Hegemony, given this objective casting, is about securing cohesion of one's own side and of emphasising the divisions of one's opponent within the context of definite material relations. In this context, Trotsky's emphasis makes sense when he writes:

> Fascism is a particular governmental system based on the uprooting of all elements of proletarian democracy within bourgeois society. The task of fascism lies not only in destroying the Communist vanguard but in holding the entire class in a state of forced disunity ... It is also necessary to smash all independent and voluntary organisations, to demolish all the defensive bulwarks of the proletariat, and to uproot whatever has been achieved during three-quarters of a century by the Social Democracy and the trade unions.[49]

From this analysis, Trotsky outlines the necessary strategy to confront fascism. Here Trotsky is closest to Gramsci whose own concept of hegemony is developed out of the need to confront the fascist threat and the disorganisation of the working class. He has a cautious approach based on the recognition that the coming struggle is principally a defensive one, albeit an active defence. He recognises that an offensive by the Communist Party would come up against the bloc between the state and the fascists and would lead to defeat.

A war of positions requires an active defence of the self organisation of the working class and its institutions in society. The workers have built up their own bulwarks and strongholds - the trade unions, political parties and so on. Social democracy had played a progressive role in building up these working class bases. Now the fascists wish to remove them as part of their strategy of smashing working class power. It is necessary to unite, therefore, with the social democrats in a common struggle for the defence of these

bodies.

This leads to the policy of the united front. It has a dual character for it both closes ranks with other forces against the common enemy, whilst at the same time questioning the ability of the social democratic leaders to carry through the struggle in the interests of the working class. It is a case of pushing the social democrats as far as they can go in the struggle against fascism whilst recognising the fact that ultimately to defeat fascism, it is necessary to overthrow capitalism itself. This means that the united front tactic must allow for both unity of action and the political independence of the forces concerned. As Trotsky famously stated:

> March separately, but strike together! Agree on how to strike, whom to strike, and when to strike! Such an agreement can be concluded with the devil himself, with his grandmother, and even with Noske and Grezesinsky. On one condition, not to bind one's hands.[50]

Unfortunately, Trotsky was almost alone in seeing the threat of fascism taking power, of the defensive character of the working class struggle and of the need to apply the united front tactic between the communists and the social democrats. Trotsky criticises the Italian Communist Party, with the exception of Gramsci, for over-estimating its own strength and possibilities and of under-estimating the possibility of fascism coming to power. The Italian CP, including Gramsci, had always failed to understand the importance of the united front tactic.[51]

The German situation was even worse. The Stalinists decided that there was in effect no difference between fascism and social democracy and that the condition of the working class was no better off whoever was in power. Instead of forming a bloc with the social democrats, Stalin's German puppets decided to call them social fascists and to cut themselves off the majority of the working class. Trotsky noted with despair that:

> the proletariat is abandoning its positions without battle and is beating the retreat without plan, without system, and without direction. The enemy is unleashed to such a point that it does not constrain itself from discussing right in public where and how to strike the next blow: by frontal attack; by bearing down on the Communist left flank; by penetrating deeply at the rear of the trade unions and cutting off communications, etc. ... The bourgeoisie enjoys full freedom of manoeuvre, that is, the choice of means, of time, and of place ... The proletariat combines nothing at all and does not defend itself. Its troops are split up, and its chiefs discourse languidly on whether or not it is possible to combine forces.[52]

Bureaucratism

Although the bureaucratisation of the Soviet Union was the major theme of Trotsky's later writings, we will deal with it only briefly here, from the point of view of its realist basis.

Trotsky notes that the problem of the bureaucratic degeneration of a workers' state had not really entered into the heads of many Marxist theorists. Marx, for example, had not reckoned with a revolution in a backward country and Lenin could not have foreseen such a prolonged isolation of the Soviet state. The Soviet state, nevertheless, was gripped by a bureaucratically parasitic caste, a symptom of material want, cultural backwardness and the dominance of 'bourgeois law'.[53]

Therefore, the force behind the Soviet bureaucracy is not Stalin or any other figure but the conditions of social and material isolation, of scarcity in objects of consumption[54], of unproductive labour, of civil war and foreign intervention. Stalin arose as a Bonaparte, rising above a politically atomised society, a personification of social and material degeneration.

Rather than reducing history to leaders and events, Trotsky bases his analysis on material laws and processes. The Bolsheviks had themselves come to power "not through the personal superiority of their leaders, but through a

new correlation of social forces."[55] However, they came to power within definite material conditions, those of economic and cultural backwardness. Without the spread of the revolution abroad, these social conditions would catch up on them. As Trotsky puts it; "the most powerful locomotive cannot perform miracles. It cannot change the laws of space, and can only accelerate movement".[56]

In particular Trotsky links the rise of bureaucracy to "the heterogeneity of society, the difference between the daily and the fundamental interests of various groups of the population."[57] So bureaucracy arises because of a lack of hegemony in society. This turn is presupposed by basic material forces. As a result, it is not possible to truly reconcile the different interests of the various groups. The bureaucracy therefore rises above society imposing its own rule through the political apparatus. This rule is based on the defence of privilege. However, it is not class rule. It has no independent economic role or property rights.Rather, the bureaucracy feeds off the working class in parasitic fashion.

To overthrow this bureaucracy requires a political rather than a social revolution. Trotsky is thus able to sufficiently distinguish between the exercise of power by a hegemonic group and the material basis of society. He defines the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state according to the material basis of that state rather than its leadership - whose own degeneration is a product of these material factors.

Culture

Stalin's policy of proleCult was an idealist invention which Trotsky rightly exposed. It attempted to impose a working class culture on society. At one level the theorists of this policy can be attacked for believing that a culture could simply be introduced without regard for the material conditions present

in the USSR. At an ideological level, however, prolecult reflects only too well the conditions present in the degenerating workers' state. For at the end of the day, prolecult represented a crude ideological justification, not of working class culture, but of the power of the bureaucracy and their stranglehold over social life. Prolecult came to represent not working class culture, but what workers were expected to think. It had a patriotic aspect derived from Stalin's socialism in one country. Prolecult was an attempt to convince people that socialism had already arrived.

Trotsky's opposition to prolecult was based on a recognition that it is not possible to impose socialist culture. It must be allowed to evolve through new social structures. Such a process takes a considerable time and runs alongside the general transformation of society into a socialist one. Until this process is well under way, the dictatorship of the proletariat is seen as an abnormal period for art in which it has difficulty in finding roots. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a transition phase born out of the fact that the working class is still unable to hegemonise all areas of social life

The years of socialist revolution will be ones of fierce class struggle in which most efforts will be spent on taking power rather than on cultural development. Only once power is achieved and established can culture start to take a new turn in its development. The working class, by definition, is culturally disenfranchised and alienated. It cannot be compared to the bourgeoisie who enjoyed a degree of cultural autonomy many years before assuming political power. Those who talk of proletarian culture in relation to bourgeois culture are therefore comparing two quite dissimilar things and are wrongly identifying the historical destiny of the proletariat with that of the bourgeoisie:

> It is fundamentally incorrect to contrast bourgeois culture and bourgeois art with proletarian culture and proletarian art. The latter will

> never exist, because the proletarian regime is temporary and transient. The historic significance and the moral grandeur of the proletarian revolution consists in the fact that it is laying the foundations of a culture which is above classes and which will be the first culture that is truly human.[58]

The proletariat unlike other classes in history, does not have access to property and the means of production. It cannot just make working class culture. It must first make a revolution and hold power. This is different to the pattern of a classical bourgeois revolution where the bourgeoisie already holds a significant degree of economic and cultural hegemony. The weakness of the position of the working class in bourgeois society makes it impossible for it to establish its own hegemony to any great degree until it actually takes political power:

> The bourgeoisie came to power fully armed with the culture of its time. The proletariat, on the other hand, comes into power fully armed only with the acute need of mastering culture. The problem of a proletariat which has conquered power consists, first of all, in taking into its own hands the apparatus of culture - the industries, schools, publications, press, theatres, etc. - which did not serve it before, and thus to open up the path of culture for itself.[59]

This makes necessary the dictatorship of the proletariat - an exceptional period of crisis management where state power is held by a class still too weak to establish full social hegemony. Building up a socialist culture at a deeper material level is a long task. By the time the working class has been fully able to develop its own cultural basis, it will already have ceased to exist as a proletariat. Trotsky's analysis is therefore represents a rejection of culturalism and its idealist implications in favour of a materialistic conception. The working class is faced not with the matter of creating socialist art but of creating the material conditions for socialist art.

In this sense Trotsky is able to move beyond the culturalism of Gramsci's analysis. It is not possible for the working class to establish full cultural hegemony prior to taking power because of the very objective basis on which the working class exists. As a disenfranchised class:

> The proletariat is forced to take power before it has appropriated the fundamental elements of bourgeois culture; it is forced to overthrow bourgeois society by revolutionary violence for the very reason that society does not allow it access to culture.[60]

The weakness of the position of the proletariat within bourgeois society and the lack of an economic and cultural basis makes the question of working class hegemony all the more dependant on revolutionary political leadership and direction. The period of the proletarian dictatorship should be seen as reflecting this need for leadership, extending from the leadership of the working class to the leadership of society as a whole. This period is a transitional, emergency period which reflects the weakness of the proletariat's material base and the need to begin laying the necessary conditions for a future communist society. Only then can the matter of a socialist culture fully emerge.

Realism and Trotsky's Anti-Teleology

Trotsky is able to separate out the different areas of life and culture giving each its own degree of autonomy and resisting the temptation - that Gramsci was prone to - to give Marxist science an all subsuming character. Nethertheless, Trotsky maintains the linkage between each social field and the totality which Marxism seeks to explain:

> It is unquestionably true that the need for art is not created by economic conditions. But neither is the need for food created by economics ... A work of art should, in the first place, be judged by its own law, that is, by the law of art. But Marxism alone can explain why and how a given tendency in art has originated in a given period of history; in other words, who it was who made a demand for such an artistic form and not for another, and why.[61]

The point is therefore to maintain that things have meaning and validity, whether scientific or artistic, in themselves. They do not necessarily have an intrinsic class character. However, all things, as social products, are subject to class determination to a greater or lesser extent. This is the case with science where:

> All science, in greater or lesser degree, unquestionably reflects the tendencies of the ruling class. The more closely a science attaches itself to the practical tasks of conquering nature (physics, chemistry, natural science in general), the greater is its non-class and human contribution. The more deeply a science is connected with the social mechanism of exploitation (political economy), or the more abstractly it generalises the entire experience of mankind (psychology, not in its experimental, physiological sense but in its so-called 'philosophical sense'); the more does it obey the class egotism of the bourgeoisie and the less significant is its contribution to the general sum of human knowledge ... As a general rule, the bourgeois tendencies have found a much freer place for themselves in the higher spheres of methodological philosophy, of *Weltanschauung*.[62]

Scientific practice can therefore be seen as being its own distinct field with its own distinct object. However, how that knowledge is reached depends, to greater and lesser degrees, on the pre-existing sōcial character of the knowledge and methods employed. In critical realist terms, the social conditions within which scientific practice takes place gives the transitive domain a class character which is then reflected in the ability that science might or might not have to explain the intransitive object of its study.

Philosophy, in its practical, underlabouring role should therefore be used to give us knowledge of the necessary conditions for the production of knowledge. Although Trotsky obviously never said anything like this, the critical realist theory of science can be matched up with Trotsky's views on art where the task is not to try and 'create' some new form of art, but to create the necessary *conditions* for a new kind of art. In both cases the relationship is one that is concerned with the relations between a particular social practice, the material conditions within which this practice takes place, and the social character of these material conditions.

Trotsky's realism is derived from his concern to study the particular and the concrete. "There are no abstract truths", he writes.[63] Trotsky thus avoids most slippages into speculative metaphysics, although to an extent, all Marxists of this period were committed to a certain amount of mechanistic philosophical speculation in regard to dialectical materialism or the adherence to the base/superstructure model.

Trotsky's desire to examine the concrete situation is reflected in his rejection of Kondratiev's theory of 'long waves' of economic development. His concern is that Kondratiev's theory can be used to suggest that economic processes simply evolve through a number of pre-determined cycles. Trotsky's stress is instead on what he calls 'external' factors, i.e. social factors of a political or ideological nature which are external to the logic of the cycle of capital but which are necessary for its functioning. In this sense Trotsky is closer to the economists of the 'regulation' school whose stress is on the social processes by which economic mechanisms are regulated in order to secure their functioning and reproduction, than he is to say, Ernest Mandel, who has modernised the 'long wave' theory. This debate we will return to in a later chapter.

Trotsky's stress is above all on social processes. The concrete situation

is a product of a combination of various processes, giving this situation a particular rather than a universal character, whilst maintaining certain general features. This stress on processes - such as combined and uneven development or bonapartist degeneration - is important from a realist standpoint. Indeed, Trotsky makes the point that idealist thought sees the complexity and multiplicity of the object but not of the process.[64]

This is important in terms of seeing how classes are constituted and how the class struggle evolves. Class is not seen as some kind of uniform object whose only task is to realise its consciousness or its true interests. Class is seen as belonging to a process, a complex combination of different factors, economic, political, ideological, which gives that class a stratified character. As a result, the task for Marxism is to relate to the political vanguard of the working class and through them reach out to the broader layers:

> The unity of the proletariat, as a universal slogan, is a myth. The proletariat is not homogeneous. The split begins with the political awakening of the proletariat, and constitutes the mechanisms of its growth. Only under the conditions of a ripened social crisis, when it is faced with a seizure of power as an immediate task, can the vanguard of the proletariat, provided with a correct policy, rally around itself the overwhelming majority of its class. But the rise to this revolutionary peak is accomplished on the steps of successive splits.[65]

This may seem like basic stuff, but it constitutes a fundamental split between the Leninist conception of class and, for example, Stalinist and reformist appeals to populism and the general interest which is to treat the mass of the people as one lump with no basic conflict of interest. Both Stalinism and old style reformism uphold a teleological ideology which maintains that the common interests of the mass of the people will gradually bring about change in the system. This acts as a convenient excuse for not offering leadership to the class struggle and for surrendering political hegemony to the bourgeoisie

in return for one or two privileges. Trotsky's understanding of the differentiated nature of class struggle immediately places strategy and tactics high on the agenda. Whilst these may have particular ends, the overall perspective is an openly anti-teleological one:

> The very need for the party originates in the plain fact that the proletariat is not born with the innate understanding of its historical interests. The task of the party consists in *learning*, from experience derived from the struggle, how to demonstrate to the proletariat its right to leadership.[66]

Trotsky's whole life was driven by concrete conditions and contradictory combinations of particular processes and factors. The period in which he lived was an uncertain one in which the greatest amount of analysis was required. By and large he resisted the temptations of idealist speculation succumbed to by Lukács and Gramsci and remained committed to a realist view of the world in both senses of the word:

> But the misfortunes which have overwhelmed living people? The fire and bloodshed of the civil war? Do the consequences of a revolution justify in general the sacrifices it involves? The question is teleological and therefore fruitless. It would be as well to ask in the face of the difficulties and griefs of personal existence: Is it worthwhile to be born? Melancholy reflections have not so far, however, prevented people from bearing or being born. Even in the present epoch of intolerable misfortune only a small percentage of the population of our planet resorts to suicide. But the people are seeking the way out of their unbearable difficulties in revolution.[67]

Political Investigation

Hegemony in classical Marxism especially emphasises the role of leadership, something which today's commentators want to abandon. The post-Marxists

and Eurocommunists have liquidated the question of class leadership into the general concerns of 'popular struggle' and 'people's revolution'. These theories are no more than new editions of previous bourgeois ideas. Against this Lenin wrote:

> abuse of the word 'people' ... shall not be used to cover up failure to understand the class antagonisms within the people. It insists categorically on the need for complete class independence for the party of the proletariat. But it divides the 'people' into 'classes', ... in order that the advanced class, which does not suffer from the halfheartedness, vacillation and indecision of the intermediate classes, may with all the greater energy and enthusiasm fight for the cause of the whole of the people, at the head of the whole of the people.[68]

Lenin recognises the plurality of society. But from this fact he draws proper realist conclusions - that the different layers must be united behind the proletariat and its vanguard. The unity of the masses is based on a genuine struggle for hegemony, rather than on some irealist notion of overcoming reification or achieving Lukácsian class consciousness.

It is therefore absolutely necessary to return to hegemony some notion of leadership and direction. However, we must also recognise a weakness in theorists like Trotsky which tends towards an instrumental viewpoint. Hegemony is not given sufficiently deep structural roots. Consequently, Trotsky tends to see a crisis of political hegemony as a crisis of the whole system. This might have been the case in Russia. But in Britain and France there are more developed fortresses and earthworks and more entrenched layers of the ruling class and its associates.

Lenin and Trotsky were both realists. However, the most fruitful exploration of this realism lies not with speculation over philosophical positions, but with their concrete engagement with the specific conditions of the class struggle. From this is left a strong legacy of strategy, method and

tactics, crucial to a proper understanding of hegemony.[69]

Notes

1 V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, vol.27, (Moscow and London 1965), p.464.
2 See N.Harding, Lenin's Political Thought, (London 1977), p.47.
3 Lenin, 'Working Class and Bourgeois Democracy' in Collected Works, vol.8, (Moscow and London 1962), p.79 .
4 V.I.Lenin, Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, (Peking 1975), p.47.
5 V.I.Lenin, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, (Peking 1976), pp.195, 218.
6 Eg. V.I.Lenin, Philosophical Notebooks, Collected Works vol.38, (Moscow and London 1961), p.182.
7 V.I.Lenin, Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism, (Peking 1975), p.136.
8 G.Lukács, Lenin, (London 1971), p.56.
9 V.I.Lenin, Between the Two Revolutions, (Moscow 1971), p.99.
10 V.I.Lenin, 'The Collapse of the Second International' in Collected Works, vol.21, (Moscow and London 1964), p.213.
11 V.I.Lenin, 'Left Wing' Communism, an Infantile Disorder, (Moscow 1950) p.69.
12 See V.I.Lenin, Between the Two Revolutions, p.84.
13 See V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, vol.28, (Moscow and London 1965), pp.463-64.
14 E.Balibar, On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, (London 1977), p.134.
15 V.I.Lenin, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, (Peking 1970), p.29.
16 Ibid., p.35.
17 V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, vol.30, (Moscow and London 1965), p.263.
18 V.I.Lenin, Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder, p.30.
19 C.Buci-Glucksmann, Gramsci and the State, (London 1980), p.179.
20 Ibid., p.182.
21 A.Alder (ed.), Theses Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International, (London 1983) p.235.
22 V.I.Lenin, What is to be Done?, (Moscow 1947), pp.75, 78.
23 Ibid., p.27.
24 V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, vol.10, (Moscow and London 1962), p.380.
25 Eg. SPN, p.236.
26 L.Trotsky, The First Five Years of the Communist International, vol.2, (London 1974), p.7.
27 Ibid., p.221.
28 Ibid., p.222.
29 Eg. L.Trotsky, Writings on Britain, vol 1, (London 1974), pp. 26-27, Vol 2, p.27, Problems of Everyday Life, (New York 1973), pp.19, 20.
30 L.Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, (London 1977), p.334-35.
31 Ibid., p.224.

[32] Ibid., p.27.
[33] Ibid.
[34] L.Trotsky, The Permanent Revolution, (New York 1969), pp.62-63.
[35] L.Trotsky, The Crisis of the French Section, (New York 1977), p.65.
[36] L.Trotsky, Writings on Britain, Vol 2, (London, 1974), p.248.
[37] Ibid., Vol 1, pp.27-28.
[38] L.Trotsky, Whither France, (London 1974), p.46.
[39] L.Trotsky, The Spanish Revolution (1931-39), (New York 1973), pp.71-72.
[40] Ibid., p.72.
[41] Ibid., p.74.
[42] Ibid., p.128.
[43] Ibid., p.130.
[44] L.Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, (New York 1971), p.212.
[45] Ibid., p.280.
[46] Ibid., p.441.
[47] Ibid., p.155-5.
[48] Ibid., p.163.
[49] Ibid., p.144.
[50] Ibid., p.139.
[51] Ibid., p.191.
[52] Ibid., p.350.
[53] L.Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed, (New York 1972), pp.55-56.
[54] Ibid., p.112.
[55] Ibid., p.87.
[56] Ibid., p.172.
[57] L.Trotsky, New Course , (London 1972), p.33.
[58] L.Trotsky, Literature and Revolution, (London 1991), p.50.
[59] Ibid., p.220-21.
[60] Ibid., pp.223-24.
[61] Ibid., p.207.
[62] Ibid., p.226.
[63] Ibid., p.252.
[64] Ibid., p.211.
[65] L.Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, p.394.
[66] Ibid., p.165.
[67] L.Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, p.1192.
[68] V.I.Lenin, Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, p.122.
[69] This chapter has not adequately touched on the crucial questions of the united front and the transitional method. This is because the main emphasis is on retreiving a concept of hegemony which is a strategic concept as opposed to the united front and the transitional method which involve tactical and programmatic questions beyond the scope of this thesis. Of course, these concepts have serious strategic implications. However, we have only just begun to clear the ground for such an analysis. So rather that denying the necessity of an analysis of these concepts, we are saying that their importance is such that they require a much fuller and more serious analysis. However, we might just say that the stratified nature of the working class and the role of the labour aristocracy and bureaucracy gives the united front tactic a real importance. The point is to engage the mass social democratic parties in

action, whilst putting the reformists on the spot before their base. It thereby poses the question of leadership, of programme and tactics. It is therefore clearly part of a wider hegemonic strategy to win over the majority of the class conscious workers.

The united front tactic works in tandem with Trotsky's notion of the transitional method which forms a bridge between the more basic and immediate demands of the class struggle and the tasks of a socialist revolution. It combines basic agitational demands to win the vanguard with radical propaganda demands to win the vanguard, combining realistic practical involvement with socialist perspectives and programme.

Chapter 4
English Debates

Introduction

It took a while for Gramsci's work, and in a more general sense the concept of hegemony, to become influential in the English-speaking world. The Prison Notebooks were held by the Italian Stalinists whose only consideration was to use them to justify their own renegade practice. Gramsci's work therefore surfaced in a delayed, selected and distorted form, enveloped in the machinations of the PCI.

The growth of Eurocommunism within the Stalinist movement offered the possibility to re-launch Gramsci in his full splendour. The 'schizoid' Gramsci could now be permitted his moments of revolutionary exegesis on the understanding that he would give his final endorsement to the reformist strategy of 'capturing' the hegemony of civil society sans revolution.

In these circumstances, the new political Gramsci was born. But in a theoretical sense, hegemony was open to a wider interpretation. In the English debates of the 1960s, usually conducted through New Left Review, a competition began to see who could best apply Gramsci's concepts to English conditions. We will here examine a. the limiting influence of Western Marxism and the possibilities now offered by critical realism, b. the need to separate hegemony from the Gramscian model, c. the limitations of empiricism, historicism and humanism on the one hand, and a non-agential structuralism on the other.

Western Marxism

The Western Marxist tradition was an important influence on the attempts to develop a specifically Anglo-Marxism. The development of New Left Review is crucial. Under Stuart Hall and E.P.Thompson, the journal focused on problems of English culture and political traditions. However, it was already drawing upon Western Marxist theory before its new editor Perry Anderson made it more cosmopolitan. Whilst both Thompson and Anderson attack Western Marxism for its theoretical elitism and its removal from popular struggles, both draw heavily from it.

It is striking that Western Marxism is much influenced by a series of defeats and the twin triumphs of fascism and Stalinism. After Gramsci, interest turned from politics to philosophy, hence the importance of Lukács and subjectivist-humanism. Its next impetus is provided by the Second World War and the renewed defeats of the workers' movements across Europe. Finally, we can see in the 1950s and '60s a reaction, now spread as far as Britain, to the Stalinist invasions of Eastern Europe.

Although it saw itself as a response to these situations, it would be more truthful to say that the effect of Stalinism and fascism was to drive Western Marxism further and further away from the masses and political struggles. Hence Gramsci, posthumously claimed by the movement, is the only political theorist of the 'school'. And as Anderson notes[1] , 'hegemony' was the only non-speculative Western Marxist concept.

However, Gramsci, with his general lack of economic emphasis, is used to justify a move away from analysis of economic structures towards cultural superstructures. Next, Western Marxism removes the political emphasis as well turning to culture and ideology. This connects with the other dominant trend in Western Marxism - the turn to philosophy.

In the 1960s, Marx's early works, in particular the 1844 Manuscripts, and the newly available Grundrisse, reopened the question of Hegel's influence. European idealism, Anderson notes, began to make its mark as Western Marxism "paradoxically inverted the trajectory of Marx's own development"[2]. The renewed concern with Hegel matches the turn to class consciousness and mass psychology. This in turn gives weight to a humanist reading of Marx, downgrading the scientific claims of the mature works.

The English debates do have a number of important features which break from normal Western Marxist practice - allowing Anderson to write the highly condemning Considerations on Western Marxism. Firstly, whilst cultural analysis plays a central role on both sides of the debate, there is also a full scale analysis of historical factors. Secondly, the debate is shaped by the need to understand the politics of the present. Anderson and Nairn examine British history in order to analyse the 'origins of the present crisis'. Thompson's political analysis is very much concerned with building up a protest movement, hence the 'May Day Manifesto' with Williams and Hall, and the involvement with CND. Finally, and most importantly for this chapter, the debates are centrally concerned with the concept of hegemony.

These debates span the divide between conjunctural and historical analysis, and the theoretical tradition of Western Marxism, thus offering the possibility of radical intervention into both spheres. It makes possible a debate between historicism and structuralism, Anderson being most complexly caught between the two. It lays the basis for a theoretical development of the concept of hegemony, and a historical development of structuralist analysis. For this reason these debates are of importance to a critical realist perspective which seeks to bring back into alignment the notions of structure and agency.

Hegemony and the Human Base

The overriding concern of Raymond Williams, E.P.Thompson and those around them is for an active humanist Marxism that rejects dogmatism and schematism. Thompson, a dissident from the Communist Party, seeks a restatement of Marxism as an emancipatory project. Williams too is concerned with the creative potential of human situations and experiences. Together, Williams and Thompson were part of a New Left which sought to respond to the political situation by creating a new sort of British Marxism that was eminently humanist. This movement also marked the coming together of cultural and historical analysis as a powerful alternative to social scientific theoreticism, economic schematism and political dogmatism.

A crucial article in support of this perspective is Williams's 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory' which hits out at the classic schema. But Williams's contribution is novel in the sense that whilst the trend against the economic determination of the base usually emphasises the political/cultural/ideological superstructure, Williams instead proposes to extend the concept of the base. He moves away from a narrow economic conception, towards a broader definition that includes a whole range of human relationships and processes. The base is not simply an economic one; it is a human base. The base and superstructure are brought into alignment through the key humanist notion of praxis.

Williams critiques Lukács, arguing that whilst the notion of totality is key, a more structured notion is required. At this point hegemony achieves its prominence. Hegemony goes beyond a simple notion of totality in that it presupposes something total; something lived at a depth (the human base), rather than being merely superstructural or manifold. It is deeply saturated in the consciousness of a society. Above all, it is not something which is given

but is a relation that is actively lived, and thus meaningful:

> We have to emphasise that hegemony is not singular; indeed that its own internal structures are highly complex, and have continually to be renewed, recreated and defended ... it is a set of meanings and values, which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming.[3]

Thus the emphasis is on lived conditions of human agents and a cultural and historical perspective. Williams is hostile to any social scientific abstraction of mechanisms and structures which denies a proper role to human experience and agency. Such a position can also be found in E.P.Thompson's work.

Thompson's Theory

The historical works of Edward Thompson stand out proudly against static theoretical analysis. Thompson acts as an archaeologist, re-examining history from the point of view of the oft forgotten masses. His is a history from below, of popular movements, customs and traditions, common experiences, quiet dissatisfaction and open revolt. It rejects the view that history is created from the top down, whether this is done by the ruling class, or by some abstract mechanism or structure. Above all, history is the embodiment of the class struggle, an active, dialectical process in which classes do not just clash, but interact and evolve.

The Making of the English Working Class contains much important historical analysis. Most of this is not in dispute. What does cause problems is Thompson's anti-theoretical methodology. Yet as a Marxist, Thompson does have a largely implicit, but occasionally elaborated theoretical position on what history is and how it should be studied. Also he does get involved in theoretical debates with other Marxists over theory and methodology. In the

first case we shall study The Making... and other works, in the second case, The Poverty of Theory

The theme of The Making... is expressed in the famous opening:

> *Making*, because it is a study in an active process, which owes as much to agency as to conditioning. The working class did not rise like the sun at an appointed time. It was present at its own making.[4]

The aim of Thompson's analysis is to shift the study of class from objective factors - in particular the mode of production - to subjective factors. As a Marxist, Thompson must accept some form of structural analysis, hence he does write that "class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born - or enter involuntarily"[5]. However, Thompson is less subtle than Williams, for whilst Williams tries to explore the complex interrelation between objective processes and subjective human factors through the workings of hegemony, Thompson prefers to admit that objective processes are important and then discard them:

> If we stop history at a given point, then there are no classes but simply a multitude of individuals with a multitude of experiences. But if we watch these men over an adequate period of social change, we observe patterns in their relationships, their ideas, and their institutions. Class is defined by men as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition.[6]

This begs the question, how do people live their own history, what gives structure and meaning to history? As Bhaskar might ask, given that history is meaningful and open to concrete analysis, what does this tell us about the nature of historical relationships? Does history take place according to human whim, when lots of individuals get together and 'relate', or does history contain analysable structures, processes and mechanisms which provide a set

of conditions in which individuals and groups act, rather than being reducible to individuals' actions? This is reflected in Thompson's conception of class:

> By class I understand a historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness. I emphasise that it is a *historical* phenomenon. I do not see class as a 'structure', nor even as a 'category', but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships.[7]

Thus class has no objective being outside of a set of lived human relationships. It is not derived from an analysis of the base and superstructure, nor from the basic relations of production. Yet Thompson cannot give the basis on which these relationships are constructed, or why these occur, nor what they are, other than on simple empirical and human grounds. He never gets to grips with what these relationships really are because he reduces relationships to the experiencing of them:

> class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.[8]

Thompson does go on to mention objective productive relations. But this reference is merely incidental. The key thing for Thompson is not class itself, but class consciousness and experience. Class must ultimately be constituted subjectively. Effectively class is reduced to class consciousness.

More Theory

Thompson's attack on Althusser in The Poverty of Theory is based upon similar themes to those outlined in the preface to The Making of the English Working Class. Above all, Thompson is concerned to argue that active historical processes cannot be reduced to static theoretical categories. Althusser's error is to de-historicise and de-socialise. Class is reduced to a static category. People "are not the makers but the vectors".[9]

This criticism, in its limited way, is correct. Althusser's use of Marx's term Träger is rightly notorious. However, Thompson turns this into an argument that class struggle is the prior concept to class and that classes arise out of struggle.

Such a position is decidedly anti-objective, not to mention illogical. If class arises out of struggle, then what does struggle arise out of?

So although Thompson rightly criticises Althusser's "self-generating conceptual universe"[10], he wrongly defends an empirical approach to the real. Against structuralism's self-regulating, self-validating systems, Thompson proposes a return to the openness of experience.

Thus Thompson fails to move beyond the first stage of the critical realist model and ends up reducing the real world to our experience of it. He refuses to take the next step and develop a more abstract theory posing the question of plausible structures and generative mechanisms.

Critical realism does see the need to make a further step in which the explanatory power of the theories constructed ~~are~~ *is* then subjected to empirical scrutiny. This whole process is similar to Marx's method of abstracting from the concrete, then returning. Unlike empirical realism, it seeks to understand a lot more than simple experiences.

That this process moves from the abstraction of stage two to its

empirical application in stage three is a recognition of the open nature of the world. Model building, theory construction, or in the case of the natural sciences, experimentation, if it is to make any headway, must make certain assumptions, develop with a degree of 'closure' etc. Theory is always incomplete and must be continually subject to empirical testing. The trouble with Thompson's position is that having recognised the incompleteness of theory, he seeks to turn from it altogether. Thompson criticises the middle 'theoretical' stage from the limited empirical perspective of the first stage rather than from the third stage of empirical application of developed theory.

Humanism and Moralism

For both Thompson and Williams, the foundations of socialism reside in human relations. Complex processes such as economic ones are subsumed into human relations:

> there is an economic logic and a moral logic and it is futile to argue as to which we give priority since they are different expressions of the same 'kernel of human relationship'.[11]

This is to say that economic processes are reducible to and determined by human relationships. The complex structures and mechanisms of capitalist society are reducible to human relations on which it is founded. In contrast Marx argues for *social* relations:

> We have seen how the capitalist process of production is a historically specific form of the social production process in general. This last is both a production process of the material conditions of existence for human life, and a process, proceeding in specific economic and historical relations of production, that produces and reproduces these relations of production themselves, and with them the bearers of this

> process, their material conditions of existence, and their mutual relationships, i.e. the specific economic form of their society ... Those conditions ... are on the one hand the presuppositions of the capitalist production process, on the other its results and creations; they are both produced by it and reproduced by it.[12]

Williams's position is more complex since the human base is broadly defined to include a number of socio-economic 'human' relations, bound together by a hegemonic process that combines 'objective' human relations and 'subjective' human intentions. Thompson's position is more schematic, inverting the base superstructure relationship and giving hegemony a superstructural role. In both cases, the tendency is to reduce the social to the human, rather than seeing the social as including both human practices and relations, and the material conditions which Marx describes above. In critical realist terms, Marx understands history to have intransitive, stratified social processes upon which transitive human practice is dependent.

By reducing objective social structures to the human practices that these structures contain, humanism denies that society can be analysed scientifically. Marxist analysis becomes the expression of the subject rather than the knowledge of the object. This is reflected in Thompson's empirical history of suffering and resistance. Social formations are judged not scientifically, but morally. History becomes a succession of good and bad humans. This inevitably leads to the view that there is some sort of human 'essence' from which society deviates - hence the humanist emphasis on suffering, alienation and reification. Often a teleological conception emerges in which history becomes an affirmation or expression of the human subject. This is little surprise since the classical humanist position of Feuerbach and others is based upon an inversion of Hegel's teleological schema and a replacement of Absolute spirit with human essence. As Marx makes clear, we cannot come to terms with the social by starting with the human, we must

come to terms with the human by starting with the social:

> Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the *human* essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of social relations.[13]

Thompson has set his sights on freeing consciousness from its social shackles. History becomes a process of championing popular expression, common struggle and human enlightenment. It is a process whose primary focus is on romanticism rather than materialism.

History is viewed by Williams as 'the long revolution' for human self-expression:

> It is a genuine revolution, transforming men and institutions; continually extended and deepened by the actions of millions, continually and variously opposed by explicit reaction and by the pressure of habitual forms and ideas.[14]

But there is a danger of this long revolution becoming ahistorical in the sense that it is given a universal human character, acting upon history rather than derived from it. Williams and Thompson draw inspiration from the romantic movement, the intellectual dissent of those Thompson terms the 'free born Englishmen'. This makes up part of Thompson's history along with the heroic resistance of the masses in creating their own customs and values and in resisting aspects of ruling class hegemony. This hegemony becomes the historical terrain of struggle whilst history becomes the people's resistance to intrusion from above on their way of life:

> hegemony is not just imposed (or contested) but is articulated in the everyday intercourse of a community, and can be sustained only by concession and patronage (in good times), by at least the gestures of protection in bad.[15]

Certainly hegemony is a lived experience, and Thompson is right to accuse 'structuralists' like Anderson of seeing hegemony too much as an all or nothing relationship between the hegemonic class and the dominated class or group. At the historical level hegemony is lived and contested, but it is much more than this. It cannot be reduced simply to its historical expression, it exists, as Williams hints, at a deeper, more fundamental level as a necessary function of the structures of society. Hegemony is derived from the actions of people, but it is also derived from the intransitive structures of society. It is in denying this that Thompson is fundamentally wrong.

Often Thompson's historical analysis implies that social structures and mechanisms exist. But Thompson is always concerned to move away from such a position and to emphasise the transitive elements such as customs and conceptions as if they have primacy over the intransitive. As the following passage indicates, structures are derived from collective values, rather than collective values from social structures:

> Collective values are consciously held and are propagated in political theory, trade union ceremonial, moral rhetoric. It is, indeed, this collective self-consciousness, with its corresponding theory, institutions, discipline, and community values which distinguishes the nineteenth-century working class from the eighteenth-century mob.[16]

Thompson's is a Morrisian-Marxism founded upon the primacy of human practice and moral argument. It undermines a theoretical, materialist analysis and hence reduces the concept of hegemony to its concrete expression in human practice. This leaves no place for a theoretical conception of hegemony as a necessary and complex connection between social structure and human praxis.

Arguments

> By its eternal compromises gradual, peaceful political development such as exists in England brings about a contradictory state of affairs. Because of the superior advantages it affords, this state can within certain limits be tolerated in practice, but its logical incongruities are a sore trial to the reasoning mind.[17]

The problems that Engels had with analysing the development of English society meant that he never wrote the planned follow up to The Condition of the Working Class in England. As time drew on the problem became more pronounced - having the earliest bourgeois revolution was not, in the long term, the best way to ensure the most advanced capitalist society This was the theme that was to surface in the 1960s as the consequences had apparently reached crisis point.

Anderson and Nairn's position can be sketched out as follows. The English revolution allowed for the growth of capitalism in Britain. However, because it occurred so 'early', the bourgeois class was in a weaker position than in subsequent bourgeois revolutions. In fact, the revolution was primarily a fight between sections of the aristocracy which overshot its political intentions, creating a vacuum into which the emerging bourgeoisie stepped. But the bourgeoisie was still too weak to carry through the revolution on its own terms and was forced into a compromise with the aristocracy. In this fused bloc, it was the aristocracy which remained hegemonic. It was "a bourgeois revolution by proxy"[18].

Because the political revolution came long before industrialisation, the bourgeoisie was unable to develop a true ideological legacy to reflect changing material conditions. As the working class grew, it had neither bourgeois nor socialist ideology to turn to or interact with. As Anderson puts it:

> In England, a supine bourgeoisie produced a subordinate proletariat. It handed on no impulse of liberation, no revolutionary values, no universal language.[19]

The British working class thus developed a practico-corporate consciousness, enshrined in the structures of British labourism. The interests of imperialism meant that domestic interests were tied to foreign interventions. That Britain remained unoccupied and undefeated after two world wars meant that the old social structure was preserved but with the labour aristocracy now incorporated into it. The old aristocratic forms, combined with the decline of the Empire thus define the nature of the crisis facing an antiquated, but unchallenged social formation. For Nairn British society was neither feudal nor modern but "obstinately and successfully intermediate".[20]

From such a situation develops a peculiar hegemony of the elite, for many years untroubled by social conflict, but now totally inadequate at dealing with political and economic crisis. Its ideology and world outlook is dominated by traditionalism and empiricism. This is compounded by the historical dominance of the City institutions over the state and of an overseas mercantile sector over national industry.

Anderson and Nairn aim to expose the archaic nature of a ruling patrician elite whose 'amateurish' personnel and conservative traditions stretch back to an aristocratic and agrarian past. Its continued existence is owed to the half-heartedness of the industrial bourgeoisie, and the defensive, subordinate character of labour. Thus the traditions of the conservative agrarian aristocracy not only persisted, but in many ways dominated and shaped the ruling bloc; it was the hegemonic fraction of a hegemonic class bloc.

In contrast, the working class has had no socialist or even bourgeois ideology to take up as its own. As the earliest mass working class, it was

acutely aware of itself, but found no adequate means to develop its revolutionary potential. Instead it developed a subordinate, corporate consciousness, in a Gramscian sense, a group that is aware of its own immediate interests, but has yet to move beyond them. It is conscious of its class, but its acceptance of this means that it is unable to transcend it. In effect it reproduces and reinforces its class subordination. This polarity of hegemonic and corporate is central to Anderson's thesis:

> If a hegemonic class can be defined as one which imposes its own ends and vision on society as a whole, a corporate class is conversely one which pursues its own ends within a social totality whose overall determination lies outside it. A hegemonic class seeks to transform society in its own image, inventing afresh its economic system, its political institutions, its cultural values, its 'modes of insertion' into the world. A corporate class seeks to defend and improve its own position within a social order accepted as given. The English working class has been characterised since the mid nineteenth century by the distinction between an intense consciousness of separate identity and a continuous failure to set and impose goals for society as a whole ... The very intensity of its corporate class consciousness, embodied in a distinct, hermetic culture, has blocked the emergence of a universal ideology in the English working class.[21]

Thompson's response, 'The Peculiarities of the English' raises some important questions about Anderson's analysis. The model of hegemonic class and corporate class is too schematic, leaving one class as ruled and one class fraction as ruling, with little in between. The notion of hegemony is unstratified and seems to exist at one all encompassing level in a one way direction that leaves little room for localised hegemonies, or non-dominant relations. Rather than being a set of complex relations, hegemony is often reduced to being the property of the class or group which dominates.

Anderson admits that his analysis is only intended as an initial attempt which must by its very nature make assumptions and be schematic. There is at

least a potentially correct position in Anderson which highlights the reasons for the dominance of a traditionalist conservative elite and an inert and anti-intellectual labour movement. The chief reason that Thompson objects to this 'model' is that it attempts to analyse British history from a non-subjective position that does not try to pretend that British history is simply one long line of heroic resistance.

But a lot of Thompson's criticisms are valuable, even if his alternative is less plausible. He correctly links Anderson's schematic conception of hegemonic-corporate relations to the overemphasis of the political moment of revolution:

> I am objecting to a model which concentrates attention upon one dramatic episode - *the* Revolution - to which all that goes before and after must be related; and which insists upon an ideal type of this Revolution against which all others may be judged.[22]

Anderson's conception seems to be that revolution is usually decisive and that the peculiarity of the English situation is its indecisiveness. Here is possibly a case of Gramscianism going too far. For Gramsci's key concern, like Anderson's, is the peculiar nature of the (Italian) social formation, the incompleteness of the bourgeois revolution, the lack of a hegemonic intellectual class, the 'superstructural' functioning of civil society and so on. In order to analyse Italian history, Gramsci used a basic model - the French one - its social forms, hegemonic blocs, civil society and revolution. Given the lateness of the Risorgimento, he is more entitled to use this as a basic starting point than is Anderson who imposes the French model on upon an English revolution many years previous.

Anderson makes a two-way comparison between France and England - maturity and prematurity. The more 'complete' nature of the revolution in France, for Anderson means a more enlightened and combative working class.

But in some senses, Anderson is making the same error as Thompson - he is holding to an impressionistic conception of political struggle and ideas. This does not take into account the matter of organisational forms, an aspect in which the British labour movement is far ahead of France. As Anderson's later essay 'The Light of Europe' starts to acknowledge, the political traditions may have been stronger in France, but the organised movement is weaker.

Anderson's Francophilia is unfounded in the political and ideological senses as well. The more 'complete' bourgeois character of the French revolution and its richness of legacy has left a fairly satisfied and comfortable bourgeoisie that has had no real need to rebel, or to produce a radical ideology. The 'progressiveness' of the French revolution is therefore just as likely to produce a rather stagnant theoretical legacy, Althusser's 'French misery'. The initially revolutionary character of the French bourgeoisie meant that:

> it had long been able to assimilate intellectuals to its revolution and to keep them as a whole at its side after the seizure and consolidation of power. The French bourgeoisie had successfully carried through a complete, clear revolution, driving the feudal class from the political stage ... it had set the seal of its own command on the unity of the nation in the process of revolution itself, it had defeated the Church and then adopted it, but only to separate itself at the right moment and cover itself with the slogans of liberty and equality ... With a few important exceptions ... French intellectuals accepted this situation and felt no vital need to seek their salvation at the side of the working class ...Thus it was that the forms of bourgeois domination themselves long deprived the French workers' movement of the intellectuals indispensable to the formation of an authentic *theoretical* tradition.[23]

Furthermore, the most clear cut and simple bourgeois revolution, that of the United States, has perhaps the most disorganised 'corporate class' of all the advanced social formations. The absence of an aristocratic rump has not prevented the US working class from being fully co-opted. So Anderson's

theme of English peculiarity does not really hold.

The Nairn-Anderson 'models' are also faulty in their use of the base-superstructure equation. The most striking example is Anderson's point that:

> After a bitter, cathartic revolution, which transformed the structure but not the superstructures of English society, a landed aristocracy, underpinned by a powerful mercantile group, became the first dominant capitalist class in Britain ... the bourgeoisie won two modest victories, lost its nerve and ended up by losing its identity.[24]

Certainly this is a bizarre formulation. If we are to use the base/superstructure metaphor, then how can the base change without the superstructure changing? Even if the superstructure appears to remain the same, it is different by virtue of its relationship to a changed base. The whole point of the base/super-structure theory is to argue that the base is, to some extent determining of the superstructure.

In any case the whole base/superstructure schema is clumsy and imprecise. Critical realism moves away from this to conceive of a set of structures, some with more primacy than others, with non-deterministic relationships that are co-determinant, dialectical and stratified. The base analogy can be maintained by virtue of the concept of mode of production. This maintains a dialectical inter-relation in that the mode of production entails relations of production whose reproduction entails complex social structures which thus re-enter into the equation.

Anderson's theme is that the structure changes due to the development of capital and a bourgeois class, leading to a revolutionary confrontation with the landed aristocracy. However, revolution comes too early and forces a compromise. The old superstructural forms of the aristocracy are maintained and much of civil society remains in the grip of aristocratic hegemony. The

superstructure is out of sync with the base, rendering it vulnerable to subsequent crises.

In the wrong hands, such a theory can quite easily be used to justify the extension of bourgeois hegemony as part of some unfinished, modernising process. In fact Anderson even makes the case himself:

> The international pressures of contemporary capitalism require a radical adaptation. The unfinished work of 1640 and 1832 must be taken up where it was left off.[25]

What should be emphasised is not the persistence of a hegemonic aristocratic fraction, but of aristocratic and feudal residues which persist within the hegemonic bloc and throughout society. This is not to argue, as Anderson and Nairn are prone to do, that these aristocratic residues determine the character of the dominant bloc, rendering it incapable of dealing with 'modern' problems, but rather, that they have some bearing, as indeed they do in other countries.

Similarly, Nairn and Anderson are right to stress the weaknesses of the British labour movement, but they overemphasize its corporateness, rendering it almost incapable of playing any progressive role. Nairn takes the rather ultra-left view that the working class was granted its own political organisations in order to give it its own paternalist, self-policing regime.[26] Such a position moves from a structuralist concept of hegemony to an instrumentalist, conspiratorial one. Taken to its logical extreme, this position would say that the establishment of working class organisations, particularly the Labour Party, was actually a defeat for the working class. In reality, the establishment of a labour movement was a hard fought victory and an expression of collective potential. Nairn and Anderson take a non-dialectical view of this matter, unable to see that the organisations of the labour

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movement represent contradictory structures. These are both a functioning part of capitalist society, restraining working class activity and susceptible to the hegemony of the ruling class, yet at same time, provide the best means by which the working class can express itself in action and develop its own counter-hegemony. In rightly challenging Thompson's glorification of the labour movement, Nairn and Anderson allow themselves to be trapped into an extreme counter position which leaves no space for the revolutionary potential of these structures and organisations, or of the possibility, in some cases, of their transformation.

Whilst some of Thompson's points are valuable, his overall position is well described by Nairn as nationalist-populist aimed at uncovering the nation's hidden history:

> Odd as it may seem, the deformation of Englishness by her state-history has generated a late but unmistakable variety of left-nationalist popular culture.[27]

This position theoretically justifies uncritical adaptation to the politics of movementism, accepting them on their terms and their programme. Thompson rejects the need for a hegemonic leadership based upon the politics of the vanguard in favour of politics 'from below' based on the spontaneous consciousness of the working class, a consciousness which is sometimes radical, but just as often, reactionary, or at best confused.

Thompson and others, by analysing history and society from the perspective of working class and oppositional traditions and culture, give this level of expression a totalising character, thus losing sight of the complex historical processes and social structures which underlie these expressions. Nairn and Anderson are accused of being economistic, but by making culture the dominant level, Thompson and Williams oppose any sort of radical

political perspective. The process of change becomes a 'long revolution' of gradual reform and piecemeal progress.

It would be wrong, however, to describe the Nairn/Anderson account as one of 'history from above'. Rather, the key feature of a more structuralist history is its analysis of *underlying* features. Unlike Thompson's humanist account, Anderson and Nairn are able to develop a position of ontological depth which can develop from an empirical analysis of culture and traditions by asking what these presuppose about social reality. Only after analysing these underlying structures and generative mechanisms can we assess the possibilities open to human practices operating within these processes. The critical realist transformational model of social activity does allow for meaningful human struggle and activity, whilst also reasserting the primacy of social structures as the necessary condition for this human activity.

As far as the concept of hegemony is concerned, Thompson's usage has a certain flatness. The term is taken up because it can be used to emphasise human praxis as primary over social situation, of cultural practice over economic mechanisms, and of common sense over social science. Similarly, Williams takes up the concept in order to reject the base superstructure model, and with it the primacy of the economic:

> hegemonic has come to include cultural as well as political and economic factors; it is distinct, in this sense, from the alternative idea of an economic *base* and a political and cultural *superstructure*...[28]

The result is that hegemony comes to be associated with only one level of expression with no underlying causes. Although Williams's position is more complex, it reduces the underlying structures to human structures. A realist position must counter this with the argument that hegemony can only operate under conditions of social and material causality. Thompson's history tends to

see hegemony simply as a relation between social agents, whereas really hegemony is a relation between social agents based upon a relation between agents and social structures and mechanisms.

Further, hegemonic relations presuppose a political battle over the reproduction, conservation and transformation of these structures. It is thus an eminently political rather than a simply cultural concept. Anderson's strength is that he emphasises a political reading of hegemony founded upon questions of power, civil society and the state. Whereas Thompson tends to argue that hegemony generates its own conditions - just as the working class was present at its own making, Anderson looks at what it presupposes - objective interests, social processes, human practices, generative mechanisms, material conditions and historical relations. In contrast to a realism that starts from what is, Anderson quips that "Thompson's work is haunted by political or intellectual junctures that failed to occur".[29] Ultimately Thompson's work is of an idealist nature.

Williams's Experience

Williams's 'human base' position offers very little. Without any structural analysis, there is no way of assessing the potentials of different social groups. By focusing on our shared humanity, it suggests that the key question is one of numbers rather than influence. It cannot assess the different potentials that groups possess according to their different relationships to social structures and mechanisms. It suggests that we judge human progress on the basis of the accumulation of small victories at the personal level.

By reducing social positions and potentials to a shared humanity, such a position is unable to differentiate between different groups and classes. Not only is the historical role of mobs and eccentrics wildly over-exaggerated, but

in theory, the humanist position is unable to tell the difference in potentiality between the peasantry and the proletariat. Humanity does not form the base. Rather, there is a complex social base which ascribes different positions and abilities to different humans.

However, there are possibilities of developing some of Williams's points on the spatio-temporal possibilities of location provided that this is taken in a realist direction. This is to examine the nature of experience and identity in relation to space place and time. We can assess emancipatory projects in terms of the broadening or universalising of experience or identity through conflicts of feeling, knowing and situatedness. In Williams's subjectivist terms, we might examine how, through struggle and changed perception of one's place, a coal miner might pass from wage-labourer to class militant, transcending many of the limitations of the localised role of wage labour by universalising other aspects of class experience.

But it is necessary to insist that Williams's key concept of the structure of feeling is linked to the objective conditions which give rise to those experiences. The deepening or development of experiences are the result of the dialectical nature of reality which gives rise to certain possibilities.

Economic and social positions and relations have a determining influence which cannot be overcome through the construction of some sort of cultural alternative. Williams's position sees too much in terms of experience and too little in terms of structure, hence the lack of an objective consideration of the possibilities and limitations derived from those material conditions.

Whilst Williams identifies hegemony with a lived cultural process, unlike Thompson he allows that hegemony is structurally emergent. In distinguishing between practical and abstract senses of the concept, Williams writes that a lived hegemony "is a realised complex of experiences, relationships, and activities". Although this may sound like Foucault's rather

flat notion of *dispositif*, the key word is 'realised'. There is clearly some sort of (unformulated) recognition that hegemony also exists at a deeper structural-functional level in terms of its role in the reproduction of the capitalist social formation and that the various practical, lived 'hegemonies' are structurally emergent or 'realised' out of this.

The Weaknesses of Structuralism

Althusserian forms of structuralism can play a positive role in challenging the humanist view of history which advocates a mono-linear expressive totality and a universalised history. Instead structuralism argues for a complex totality of different structures, each with their own specific histories. Thus it concentrates on the particular.

However, the contribution of Nicos Poulantzas to the English debates - 'Marxist Political Theory in Great Britain' also highlights structuralism's tendency towards one sidedness. Rightly, and insightfully, Poulantzas argues that Anderson and Nairn tend to reduce the notion of hegemony to the class consciousness or world view of a particular group or subject. They are equally guilty of subjectivism and humanism because of a "monist insistence of unity" whereby "history becomes the unilinear, temporal becoming of [a] 'subject'"[30]. That Nairn and Anderson also end up moving towards a position that sees history according to world-views (or more to the point, the peculiarities of world-views) is indicative of the Western Marxism, Gramscianism and culturalism which clearly influences both sides of the New Left divide. Poulantzas's article challenges the humanist notion of hegemony which reduces it to Gramscian world-views and cultural expressions.

But it is not clear that Anderson and Nairn are wholly guilty. Their analysis of world-views and ideologies, although couched within a reductive

hegemonic-corporate relationship, does presuppose the social structures, processes and generative mechanisms which give rise to them. Poulantzas's oversight is indicative of his own weaknesses. Whilst accusing Anderson of overplaying the conscious element of hegemony, Poulantzas emphasises the structural element of hegemony almost to the exclusion of any conscious application:

> The domination of these classes or fractions in the 'power bloc' relates to relatively macrochronic objective structures - to 'phases' of the relations of production as a whole (not, therefore, to tactical 'compromises' or 'alliances'). This contradictory unity is realised under the aegis of the hegemonic fraction.[31]

In arguing this, Poulantzas separates the notion of political hegemony from class consciousness. Political hegemony becomes an 'expression' of a purely objective process mechanically derived from the unity of the social formation:

> The internal unity of the dominant ideology derives from the fact that it 'expresses' the 'Marxist' unity of a social formation as a whole founded as a determinate mode of production ... its internal coherence, comprehensible if related to the overall unity of the formation, corresponds to the 'political hegemony' - not to the class consciousness of the bourgeoisie.[32]

'Political hegemony' is reduced to an expression of structural determination, with no dynamics of its own. Hegemony comes to represent the intransitive way of things, devoid of any transitive development. Poulantzas's picture is of a closed system which mechanically reproduces itself until it breaks down. Hegemony, likewise, is a non-historical closed process that is unaffected by the class consciousness of social agents. As Wood notes:

> Purely 'structural' conceptions of class do not require us to look for the

> ways in which class actually imposes its logic, since classes are simply there by definition.[33]

Hegemony does have its roots in the socio-economic structure of society. Against humanists like Thompson, it must be stressed that hegemony is not reducible to class consciousness, expression or world-views. Poulantzas is right to argue that hegemony is rooted in the way things are, in the objectivity of social structures and interests. But he is wrong to deny all else. Intransitive structures form only the material basis upon which hegemony develops. These structures enable and define the nature of hegemony (as they do class). But hegemony is then actualised when classes become conscious or partially conscious of their interests and powers and seek to act upon them. Hegemony is equally a conscious process which develops its own characteristics according to social consciousness, world views, and most fundamentally, class struggles. The hegemonic process reflects in some way, agent, group and class conceptions of the processes in which they are involved. Hegemony does not simply represent a certain structural way of things - although this is its material pre-requisite, it is above all, a certain recognition of social processes and social interests, leading to conscious attempts to act upon this situation. Conscious actions - to defend, transform or conserve social interests, embodied in social structures, themselves generate different dynamics. Hegemony has a dual nature and location - transitive and intransitive, structural and manifest.

Comparing Poulantzas's arguments with Williams's shows that they tend towards opposite weaknesses. Williams emphasises the actual social expression of hegemony and its relationships whilst not developing its structural role in securing the cohesiveness of the complex social formation. Poulantzas, however emphasises a structural-functional notion of hegemony without allowing for its emergence in the concrete, historical interactions of

intentioned social agents. Having said this, however, whilst hegemony has a conscious expression, this must primarily be explained by reference to the structures rather than the agents. Agents, particularly in the process of reproduction, have conscious intentions which have very different outcomes and effects. Hegemony may well be intentional, but the overall process is very different to what the agents are conscious of. Consciousness is social and ideological and hence subordinate to much wider material developments beyond what agents conceive. This after all is the meaning of ideology's 'falseness'. In this respect, Poulantzas's insistence on structure over agency is necessary.

Nicos Poulantzas

Poulantzas starts with the specificity of the capitalist mode of production and, consequently, the capitalist state. An analysis of the capitalist mode of production reveals the importance of the separation of the producers from the means of production. Exploitation is thus realised through the exchange relations rather than through any extra-economic coercion. This means that the capitalist state enjoys relative political and institutional autonomy from the production process. Consequently, the state can play a unifying role by setting itself up as a national-popular state.

The institutional and functional separation of the political and economic gives the capitalist state this universalising ability. Political struggle takes place for control of this universalising instance. The capitalist state thus comes to represent, not the economic interests of the dominant classes, but their political interests. This gives hegemony a central importance.

Poulantzas argues that hegemony involves more than simply securing the consent of the dominated classes, it also organises the dominant power

bloc. This is done through the institutional ensemble of the state itself, its functional role being to organise the hegemony of the power bloc and mobilise consent to this.

This is not an easy task since, as the debates over the English revolution, and indeed, Marx's own writings illustrate, we cannot talk of monolithic, cohesive classes, but rather of distinctive class fractions, as well as different social strata and categories. Hence there is also a dominant class fraction inside the dominant power bloc; hegemony within hegemony.

Poulantzas develops these points in his famous polemic with Ralph Miliband - again conducted through New Left Review. Miliband's view is that the state is the instrument of a particular class. This is based on a simplistic reading of the famous remark in the Communist Manifesto that the "executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie".[34] Against this, Poulantzas argues that the state is capitalist not because it is controlled by the capitalist classes, but rather because of its objective place or function in the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. The state enjoys a relative autonomy from any one class precisely because of its role in organising different classes and fractions into a power bloc under the hegemony of a particular fraction. The state would not be able to perform this function if it was simply the instrument of one particular class.

However, just because the state is not reducible to a particular capitalist class, this does not mean that the state has a neutral or non-capitalist character. The state assumes a capitalist character in relation to its objective place in capitalist society. Its role is to secure the social cohesion and unity of class society necessary for capital accumulation. This presents a fundamental contradiction. The state is required to secure the reproduction of class domination necessary for capital accumulation, whilst at the same time

presenting itself as a universalising, national-popular entity, i.e. excluding class struggle from its centre.[35]

But if the state contains this contradiction, so too does Poulantzas's work. There is a clear and evolving conflict between an analysis of the state's structural-functional role in securing the cohesiveness of a social formation and the state and its institutions as the effect of the class struggle. Poulantzas gradually abandons structuralism so that in his final book, State, Power, Socialism he argues that the state should not be regarded as an intrinsic entity:

> it is rather a relationship of forces, or more precisely the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions.[36]

Poulantzas no longer refers to the structurally determined role of the state in securing the unity of the capitalist social formation. Rather, the state comes to be regarded as embodying class positions and class practices, thus allowing the dominated classes to build up centres of resistance within the relatively independent apparatuses of the state itself. As Jessop notes[37], the structural determination of hegemony or the class unity of the state as a functional imperative of the reproduction of the social whole gives way to the view that these are simply structural-institutional effects of the class struggle. In fact Poulantzas ends up taking positions not that dissimilar to E.P.Thompson:

> Just as the relations of production and the social division of labour do not constitute an economic structure outside (before) social classes so they do not belong to a field external to power and class struggle. There are no social classes prior to their opposition in struggle.[38]

This shift towards a view of the state as an institutional condensation of social relations and the class struggle affects Poulantzas's conception of hegemony. Again this is best noted by Jessop:

> Poulantzas sometimes relates hegemony to the structural determination of political class domination rooted in the objective coordinates of state form and sometimes to the field of political class position with its notions of strategy, alliances, etc.[39]

Jessop in fact argues that hegemony does not belong to Poulantzas's most abstract levels but rather to the level of juridico-political institutions and the class struggle. Hence the structural determination of hegemony is grounded in the particular form of political class domination existing in a given state system.[40]

The root of the problem is that Poulantzas is unable to satisfactorily combine the structural determination of hegemony with its political expression and class development. In terms of the transformational model of social activity, Poulantzas cannot reconcile the social structures from which the functional role of hegemony is derived and processes of reproduction and transformation which necessarily reflect class positions and class practices as they are concretely and consciously expressed through hegemonic projects. Instead we find in Poulantzas a dualism.

There are three particularly prominent trends in the development of Poulantzas's thought which can be questioned. The first is the shift in the conception of the state and hegemony from a structuralist to a relational analysis. Moving away from the Gramscian distinction between political and civil society, Poulantzas comes to see that state and its apparatuses (Ideological State Apparatuses and Repressive State Apparatuses) as cutting across all aspects of social life. Particularly noticeable is the importance Poulantzas attributes to the ideological class struggle. The battle for control of the general interest, and the juridico-political apparatuses whose role is to interpellate class subjects as individuals.

Poulantzas's second trend is to overemphasise the tendency towards interventionist and exceptional forms of state. This is connected to his view

that the state cuts across all forms of life and that institutions and apparatuses are embodiments of class relations and practices. This, we can say is a reflection of Poulantzas's error in rejecting the distinction necessary (at least at a theoretical/analytical level) between political and civil society. There is a tendency for Poulantzas to over-politicise his theoretical analysis, marked also in his notion of the interventionist state whose role is not only to secure the political and ideological conditions necessary for capital accumulation, but also to intervene into the economic processes themselves, in particular it secures the reproduction of labour power. There is clearly some correctness in this position which implies a more dialectical relationship between the political and the economic. But it leads to the view that monopoly capitalism requires an 'interventionist' state of an authoritarian or strong character. These 'exceptional' states are marked by their increased control over social life and the economy and the rise of bureaucracy and administrative apparatuses.

These developments are never concretely explained by Poulantzas. For example, the 'exceptional' form of state is exceptional from what? Why should Western bourgeois democracies be considered by implication to be normal? Poulantzas's economic arguments, tending towards a theory of state monopoly capitalism, likewise fail to substantiate themselves. In fact, the arguments concerning the development of monopoly capitalism and interventionist states are still inextricably tied to a political problematic increasingly motivated by a rejection of Leninism, the third trend in Poulantzas's work.

The trend towards economic intervention necessitates authoritarian states. However the paradox involved here is that whilst state power is strengthened, the ability to hegemonise is weakened. This occurs both within the power bloc which is now dominated by a fraction of monopoly capital and between the power bloc and the dominated masses.

Since Poulantzas's position is now that the state and its apparatuses are the effects or institutional embodiment of class relations, the weakening of hegemony means that the whole set of state apparatuses are now also vulnerable, making it possible for the dominated classes to capture state apparatuses. Thus the class struggle takes place within the state itself. In effect the state becomes a strategic terrain.

This represents Poulantzas's first break with Leninism. Since the state, and in particular the 'exceptional' state intervenes into all areas of social life right up to securing the reproduction of labour power, then the class struggle is reflected and condensed within the state. Thus Poulantzas rejects the traditional idea of 'smashing' the state, instead arguing that we should seek to capture the state by means of a war of positions rather than by any frontal attack.

This is quite clearly a Eurocommunist position, a rejection of the necessity of revolution in favour of the democratic road to socialism. But it is combined with another trend in Eurocommunism, the 'popular struggle' which, as we shall see, also attracts theorists like Ernesto Laclau. The justification for the popular struggle lies in Poulantzas's belief in the rise of authoritarian states. The strengthening of the state necessarily weakens the ruling hegemony. Direct involvement in the economy sharpens the divisions within the power bloc and weakens the structures of consent. The authoritarian nature of this process thus defines the mass struggle as a popular-democratic struggle. The logic of this position, as we shall see in the next chapter, is that the working class should subordinate itself to the popular masses, giving up its specific, economic demands in order to articulate the national-popular consciousness of the masses. Hence the role of the vanguard is lost and the struggle for working class dual power is replaced with a struggle for popular power within the existing apparatus. This whole position

is clearly outlined at the end of State, Power, Socialism where:

> the real alternative raised by the democratic road to socialism is indeed that of a struggle of the popular masses to modify the relationship of forces within the state, as opposed to a frontal, dual power type of strategy.[41]

Fractions, Strata, Social Categories and Bureaucracies

Perhaps Poulantzas's most useful contribution is his concern with breaking social classes down into fractions and other social groups. Clearly there are potential dangers involved in taking this process too far, for it can end up overstressing social divisions amongst the struggling classes rather than their potential revolutionary unity. But this analysis of social groups and fractions adds another dimension to the cohesive, unifying role of hegemony.

Poulantzas's strength is to stress that hegemony is not simply about gaining consent from the dominated classes, but is also a matter of unifying the dominant power bloc as well as competing blocs, alliances and projects.

This is made clear in Poulantzas's brief essay on the English revolution, an analysis which clearly shows the culturalist bias of both Thompson and Williams and Anderson and Nairn:

> Since the commercial bourgeoisie was insufficiently developed and the industrial bourgeoisie was almost non-existent, neither could take over the leadership of the process. This revolution might therefore appear *premature*, when regarded from an exclusively political point of view. But if we consider the ensemble of the relations of the formation, the revolution happened *at the right time,* since it made possible to dispose of the problem of the dominance of the CMP [capitalist mode of production] over the other modes in agriculture; i.e. to liquidate small-scale production ... In the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Britain, this problem could be solved only by initiating the revolutionary process in an apparently *impure* form under the

> leadership of a fraction of the landowning bourgeoisie which was already on its way to establishing its independence from the feudal nobility. In other words, the revolutionary process had to be initiated on the political plane and under the leadership of a fraction which, politically speaking, was still a fraction of the nobility.[42]

Poulantzas distinguishes between different social groups and fractions on the basis that concrete social formations contain within them "an overlapping of several modes of production, one of which holds the dominant role".[43] This allows Poulantzas's to develop his important distinctions between fractions, categories and strata.

Fractions correspond to different interests, powers and relations within classes, they are the substratum of eventual social forces. These differences must again be related to structures and generative mechanisms, for example, fractions exist within the bourgeois class based upon finance capital and industrial capital.

Social categories are defined as social ensembles with 'pertinent effects', with a specific over-determining relation to political and ideological structures. Social categories do not have the same autonomy as class fractions and are comprised of various classes and fractions, but are unified by their structural relations and functions. The most notable examples of social categories are the bureaucracy and the intelligentsia.

Finally Poulantzas refers to social strata, the secondary effect of the combination of modes of production in a social formation. Poulantzas here specifically refers to the labour aristocracy. The key distinctions therefore, are that fractions are determined by economic differentiations where as social strata are defined by political and ideological structural determinants. Social categories are a result of a drawing together of diverse agents who are united by their function, for example, the various bureaucracies.

The potential danger is to overemphasise political and ideological social

differentiations rather than the inter-relation with economic factors. This leads to Poulantzas granting certain fractions, and even perhaps social categories such as the bureaucracy, a political autonomy which tends to undermine the more basic economic distinctions. Nevertheless, these distinctions do help clarify the nature of political alliances, strategies and blocs, elevating hegemony to a crucial significance.

Against both instrumentalism and economic determinism, Poulantzas's analysis allows a genuine role to be given to political processes. Due to the fact that classes and social groups have many different determinations, political and ideological as well as economic, an important significance is given to the construction and maintenance of political blocs. These blocs unite the various social groups through a negotiation of interests.

An economically dominant class is thus not immediately assured of political power. This must be achieved through a power bloc which "constitutes a contradictory unity of *politically dominant* classes and fractions *under the protection of the hegemonic fraction*". This unity is never assured since the class struggle and the particular rivalry of interests is constantly present. Thus the bloc is far from being a fusion, indeed the specific interests of the hegemonic fraction within the bloc ensures a certain polarisation.[44]

Poulantzas goes on to talk of supporting classes, comprised of those groups who lend their support to the power bloc whilst requiring no real sacrifices from that bloc. The classical case is the petit-bourgeoisie. However, such a vague notion of supporting classes is rather unsatisfactory. Maybe the petit-bourgeoisie is not offered any real political concessions and does not form part of the power bloc, but it certainly gains a number of economic concessions which can then be defended through certain apparatuses. The 'support' of such supporting classes must be maintained, therefore, through continuing hegemonic relations.

Poulantzas's notion of supporting classes is also inadequate since it seems to be confined to the petit bourgeoisie. However, there are many other groups who may support the power bloc and who gain clear concessions for doing so. The problematic position of the labour aristocracy is one example. It is clearly not a supporting class because its class determination lies within the working class. However, one of Poulantzas's important insights is to argue that class determinations and class positions do not necessarily correspond. Thus in a particular conjuncture, a section of the petit-bourgeoisie may take up a working class position without actually becoming a part of the working class. The labour aristocracy, representing an economically privileged stratum of the working class can clearly be seen to be taking up the positions of the dominant classes and defending them ideologically and politically. We can thus term the labour aristocracy a supporting stratum.

In lending their support to the power bloc, the labour aristocracy is granted a number of concessions. As well as economic privileges, it is also rewarded with the necessary ideological and political powers to maintain its status as a privileged stratum over the mass of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. In Britain we can see that the post-war hegemony is very much a product of these sort of concessions to sections of the working class as well as the petit-bourgeoisie.

Thus we require another distinction. The labour aristocracy are clearly not integrated into the power bloc itself. However their status as a supporting stratum is not a passive one as Poulantzas seems to suggest. There is a clear hegemonic relationship between the forces of the power bloc itself and the most active supporting elements. This relationship is based upon the granting of a number of concessions and a maintenance of certain privileges, however small. A group like the labour aristocracy lies neither within the power bloc, nor simply with the dominated masses. They thus form part of a broader, more

historically motivated alliance.

The distinction that is necessary is therefore between the ruling *power bloc*, and the *historical bloc*. The historical bloc is made up of the power bloc and the supporting classes and strata. These supporting elements do receive a number of small concessions but do not enter into the actual power bloc. We can then talk of the more general hegemonic order which controls and pacifies the masses, again through certain concessions if necessary.

In the post-war hegemonic order, the ruling class rebuilt and reconstructed its hegemonic relations through incorporating sections of the working class and the labour bureaucracy into a closer historical bloc, whilst granting major concessions to the working class in general. Welfarism provided the ideological cement for this new hegemonic order.

The question of the labour bureaucracy is more problematic. These leaders are not simply bureaucrats of the labour movement, although this is quite clearly their social base. By taking office, the labour bureaucracy becomes part of the state bureaucracy as well. There does not seem an adequate way to classify the labour bureaucracy based upon Poulantzas's definitions. In a sense it is a privileged stratum of the working class. But through the unifying function of bureaucratic interest and governmental office, the labour bureaucracy could also be defined as a social category. And the actual interests that the labour bureaucracy has in defending capitalism and lending support to the ruling class suggests that it actually gains an autonomy from the working class if not from its organisations, thus giving it more the character of a fraction.

This suggests that Poulantzas's categories need to be employed in a flexible manner, allowing that social groups may be constituted in a number of different ways, a combination of different determinations which are not fixed but continually being reproduced. In a certain sense, the labour

bureaucracy has actually risen above the ranks of the working class in parasitic manner, to the point where it actually enters the ruling power bloc itself, albeit as a junior partner. This certainly gives the labour bureaucracy a bourgeois character, although it is not a fraction of the bourgeoisie. However, we clearly need to acknowledge the divisions within the labour bureaucracy between left and right elements, and the social bases to which these elements belong.

There are two structural factors which give the labour bureaucracy its peculiar character. First is the contradiction contained within the structures of the labour movement which are at the same time both structures of the working class - and hence sites for a working class counter hegemony, and, also, structures of capitalist society - and hence also integrated into bourgeois hegemony. The second structural determination of the labour bureaucracy lies in its contradictory relationship to both the labour movement structures of the working class which are its power base, and the structures of the capitalist state. We can therefore say that often the labour bureaucracy straddles the working class and the bourgeoisie, but that it does so in a political and functional sense, rather than in a full social sense. This does, however, give the labour bureaucracy a sort of autonomy which allows it to participate in the power bloc despite the fact that it is a privileged section of the working class. However, the precariousness of this social position means that the labour bureaucracy is vulnerable to a challenge from the organised rank and file, as must be the case if the trade unions are to be turned into revolutionary organisations.

This recalls Lenin's description of the Labour Party as a bourgeois workers' party that is organically related to the working class but which has bourgeois politics. A reworked Poulantzian analysis is clearly compatible with this position. For Lenin is effectively arguing that the labour bureaucrats

derive their power and social base from the organised working class, but through their political and functional relation to the capitalist state, take up bourgeois class positions.

This contradictory class position compromises the labour bureaucracy. Its working class base means that it can play only a secondary role within the ruling power bloc, chiefly called upon to discipline its own ranks. Its status within the ruling bloc depends upon the balance of class forces and the state of capitalism.

We can therefore develop a concept of *contradictory political location* of which the labour aristocracy and labour bureaucracy are both variants. This is in contrast to the notion of contradictory class locations which according to theorists like Erik Olin Wright accounts for the bureaucracy and other state positions. For the distinction that we are making here is a determination of a more 'superstructural' or political nature. The notion of contradictory political locations, rather than contradictory class locations implies that class is determined at a more fundamental level - in relation to the means of production, but that class position is a more fragile construct by virtue of its more 'superstructural' or political determination.

The labour bureaucracy is inherently divided. Its relationship to both working class and capitalist organisations means that a left-right division is always present in some form. At one extreme are bourgeois elements drawn into the labour bureaucracy by its social-bureaucratic function. In times of class struggle these divisions will clearly emerge as class base, class position and social function conflict. In the case of the Labour Party, the most bourgeois organisation, this will result in an explosion. Thus, despite apparent strength, the labour bureaucracy is extremely vulnerable in times of class conflict. As American activists (rather than Poulantzas!) would say, once the struggle begins, the bureaucrats are invariably taken out in the cross fire.

Fascism

Poulantzas's analysis of hegemonic blocs and political processes is also helpful in developing an understanding of fascism. Poulantzas rightly sees the main weakness in Trotsky's account of fascism as a tendency to see fascism in terms of an economic rather than a political crisis. Such a position can easily degenerate into an instrumentalist conception which sees fascism simply as a 'battering ram' to be used against the workers' movement in times of economic difficulty. Thus Poulantzas adds the necessary analysis of the political and ideological crisis under which the hegemony of the ruling classes suffers a crisis of legitimacy.

However, Poulantzas's arguments should be incorporated into Trotsky's analysis rather than being posed as an alternative, for the overall arguments are wrong. Firstly, it is not correct to say that fascism is representative of a political crisis rather than an economic crisis. The specific political crisis we are dealing with here is itself a product of an acute economic crisis. Secondly, Poulantzas presents fascism as an exceptional form of the capitalist state. This implies that democratic bourgeois states are normal - a position which displays the Eurocommunist illusions in bourgeois democracy. Thus for Poulantzas, the struggle against fascism takes the form of a struggle against an authoritarian state, rather than any specifically revolutionary process. This struggle takes the form of the popular-democratic struggle, the Eurocommunist form of the popular front, rather than Trotsky's united front. Such a policy tail ends the social democrats and bourgeois forces, the very people who, as Trotsky's analysis shows, have contributed to the rise of fascism.

The following will therefore try to incorporate some of Poulantzas's

best points into Trotsky's overall analysis. The most important point is to develop an understanding of fascism as intimately liked to a crisis of hegemony, and hence a product of specific political, ideological and cultural factors as well as the more general economic ones. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the dominant classes in an economic sense - objectively derived from the mode of production - and the hegemonic classes and fractions in the social formation. These, in certain conjunctures do not always correspond - fascism is precisely such a moment.

The growth of fascist parties corresponds, as Trotsky rightly notes, to the weakness of the left and the failure of its leadership. However, Trotsky perhaps underemphasises the political weakness of the traditional parties of the bourgeoisie, instead focusing more on the economic weakness of the ruling class. We can say, therefore that fascism begins to grow at a time of structural crisis, taking advantage of the ensuing crisis of hegemony of the bourgeoisie. The most striking aspect of this situation is the crisis of the political representation of the bourgeoisie. The role of the traditional bourgeois parties in securing the necessary political, ideological and cultural conditions necessary for capital accumulation is undermined. This crisis of representation is no mere electoral crisis, but a serious crisis of hegemony, reflecting political, cultural and ideological weaknesses.

The crisis of legitimacy that affects the bourgeois parties reflects a crisis of hegemony at quite a deep structural level. Thus fascism is no mere instrument to be used in times of crisis. Rather, it is very much a part of this crisis, organically linked to the political, ideological and economic spheres. It has its own dynamics and represents an organic development based on structural dislocation. Given that fascism reflects the political weakness of the bourgeoisie, it is wrong simply to ask whether or not the ruling class will look to fascism to solve its problems. Fascism grows under conditions of structural

crisis. We must therefore also ask, what ability and desire the bourgeois classes have to turn against the rise of fascism.

It is true that the classical conditions of full economic crisis and the revolutionary threat of the working class need to be in place if fascism is to stand a chance of coming to power. In this case of course the bourgeoisie turns to fascism as a last resort, financing the movement and giving it a cover of legitimacy to rule on its behalf. These conditions also secure the petit-bourgeois mass base necessary at both electoral and organisational levels.

But even if these conditions are not in place, fascism as a movement is still a threat. It highlights a crisis in the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, hence, in a structural sense, it fills a vacuum vacated by bourgeois politics. This hegemonic crisis can mean that fascist parties are in the position to set the political pace. This can be seen in terms of state racism, immigration laws and anti-working class legislation such as anti-union laws. Across Europe we can say that the extreme right parties are not fascist in the classical sense, being more of an authoritarian nature. But it would certainly be wrong to ignore the fascistic or neo-fascist aspects of these organisations and the forces behind them.

Notes

1 P.Anderson, Considerations on Western Marxism, (London 1976), p.80. Most of these themes can be found in Anderson's book although it is striking that Anderson seems to commit most of the 'crimes' that he condemns and adheres to whole areas of Western Marxist thinking.

2 Ibid., p.52.

3 R.Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory' in New Left Review 82, pp.8-9.

4 E.P.Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, (Harmondsworth 1968), p.9.

5 Ibid., p.10.

6 Ibid., p.11.
7 Ibid., p.9.
8 Ibid., pp.9-10.
9 E.P.Thompson, The Poverty of Theory, (London 1978), p.46.
10 Ibid., p.13.
11 E.P.Thompson, 'The Long Revolution' Part 2, New Left Review 10, 1961 p.38.
12 K.Marx, Capital Volume 3, (Harmondsworth 1981), p.957.
13 K.Marx, 'Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach', in K.Marx, Early Writings, (Harmondsworth 1975), p.423.
14 R.Williams, The Long Revolution, (Harmondsworth 1965), p.10.
15 E.P.Thompson, Customs in Common, (Harmondsworth 1993), p.345.
16 E.P.Thompson The Making of the English Working Class, p.463.
17 F.Engels 'On Certain Peculiarities of the Economic and Political Development of England' in F.Engels and K.Marx, On Britain, (Moscow 1962), p.529.
18 P.Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis' in English Questions, (London 1992), p.17.
19 Ibid., p.35.
20 T.Nairn, The Break-up of Britain, (London 1981), p.19.
21 P.Anderson, op.cit., p.33.
22 E.P.Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English' in The Poverty of Theory, p.257.
23 L.Althusser, For Marx, (London 1977), p.25.
24 P.Anderson op.cit., p.29.
25 Ibid p.46-47.
26 T.Nairn, 'The Fateful Meridian', in New Left Review 60, p.19.
27 T.Nairn, The Break-up of Britain, p.304.
28 R.Williams, Keywords, (Glasgow 1976), p.118.
29 P.Anderson, Arguments Within English Marxism, (London 1980), p.206.
30 N.Poulantzas, 'Marxist Political Theory in Great Britain'in New Left Review 43, p.60.
31 Ibid., p.70.
32 Ibid., pp.67-68.
33 E. Meiksins-Wood, 'The Politics of Theory and the Concept of Class: E.P.Thompson and his Critics', Studies in Political Economy vol.9, p.50.
34 K.Marx, 'The Communist Manifesto' in K.Marx, Political Writings: Volume 1, (Harmondsworth 1973), p.69.
35 See B.Jessop, Nicos Poulantzas, (London 1985), p.64.
36 N.Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, (London 1978), p.128.
37 B.Jessop, op.cit., p.134.
38 N.Poulantzas, op.cit., p.27.
39 B.Jessop, The Capitalist State, (Oxford 1982), p.186.
40 B.Jessop, Nicos Poulantzas, p.139.
41 N.Poulantzas, op.cit., p.259.
42 N.Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, (London 1973), p.169.
43 Ibid., p.71.
44 Ibid., p.239.

Chapter 5
Posts and Structures

Introduction

An interesting recent development has been the unfolding relation between various so-called 'post-Marxisms', post-structuralism and deconstruction. This is often specific to the development of British theory and represents the fallout from the Althusserian and culturalist (often Gramscian) turns of the 1970s.[1] What is often retained from this is the central role of hegemony. This trend has been given official sanction by Jacques Derrida's recent turn to Marx.

Deconstruction has not been at all sympathetic to Marxism. This can be said at both a theoretical and an institutional level. American academia has taken it to the forefront of its assault on emancipatory discourses.

At a theoretical level, deconstruction claims radicality all for itself. True subversion lies in the text and the radical nature of word-play. Politics and identity are strictly textual matters. To make any claim beyond this is to descend into metaphysics.

It is natural, therefore, that deconstruction should be hostile to Marxism, a theory which claims to represent a social scientific outlook. Marxism is based on materialism. It is ontological. It tries to establish a basis for meaning that lies outside of the text. For deconstruction this is impossible. Meaning can only be conferred through the text. To try to move beyond the text is to try to move beyond the sole basis for meaningfulness.

Yet various 'deconstructors', including Derrida himself, have claimed an interest in Marxism. We will investigate the situation with Derrida and

with the discourse theorists Laclau and Mouffe, all of whom have tried to link deconstruction to radical politics, invoking in different ways strategy and thereby hegemony.

Derrida's Spirit

The starting point for Derrida's project is his opposition to the 'metaphysics of presence'. He is not choosy about his targets - the transcendental ideality of Husserl, or the notion of subjective identity are just as much targets as any materialist thesis. For Derrida they all commit the same error of 'foundationism' whereby traditional notions of presence always rely on the foundations of origin or final cause.

From Saussure, Derrida takes up the notion of the negativity of language. Self-identity is really only a result of a self-contained system of internal differences. For structuralism meaning is never identical with itself but the result of difference and articulation. Signs have no positive meaning in themselves, only through their relations.

Structuralist linguistics therefore severs the connection with the referent or real external object referred to by a sign. The word 'book' does not refer to a real book. The relationship is an arbitrary one based on social convention.

But whilst structuralism is correct in suggesting that words derive meaning through their relations with other words, it would be wrong to suggest that they therefore do not refer to anything outside of language. Words refer to things outside language *by virtue* of their relation to these other words.[2]

Structuralism points to the unstable, arbitrary nature of meaning. Derrida's project of deconstruction goes further and attacks the whole system. The logocentric tradition has sought to impose an identity for meaning, to

seek a transcendental signified which could stabilise meaning around a fixed point. Traditionally, logocentrism has elevated certain terms over others. Deconstruction seeks to subvert these hierarchies.

Derrida's notion of differ*a*nce tries to re-open the uncertainty of language. It has a double meaning according to spatial differing and temporal deferring. Thus identity is only established according to how it differs from or delays something else and is the result of a self-contained system of internal differences and articulations. The connection between the signified and the signifier is never fixed. It is deferred leaving a chain or trace based, not on presence, but on displacement, dislocation and effacement. Derrida attacks logocentrism which seeks to impose a fixed identity or presence. For Derrida this represents a privileged power relation. He attacks it by demonstrating that meaning is about the endless play of signification and that an identity can be overcome. Meanings are dispersed or disseminated.

Identity has to be established over the other, yet it is differ*a*nce which makes this identity possible. It represents an indeterminacy and openness. Thus identity can be broken down through the play of differ*a*nce by reference to the other on which it depends.

Derrida calls his book on Marx Specters of Marx because, like anything else, it is marked not so much with presence as with differance and deferral. The ghost represents not the presence of a presence but the presence of a past and of something to come. The ghost imposes not identity but subversion.

Derrida also claims the spectral character of some Marxist concepts. In particular the commodity form and Marx's notions of fetishisation and ideology:

> In other words, as soon as there is production, there is fetishism: idealisation, autonomisation and automatisation, dematerialisation and

> spectral incorporation, mourning work coextensive with all work, and so forth. Marx believes he must limit this co-extensivity to commodity production. In our view, this is a gesture of exorcism...[3]

Marxism, however, would stress the production and origin of this 'spectrality' and would emphasise the materiality of ideology - as a product of material processes - rather than the ideality of the material. And we might add that underpinning everything is the spectrality of abstract labour power. But we say this knowing full well that abstract labour has never produced anything.

More importantly, Derrida cannot resist Marx and Engels' famous quote from the Communist Manifesto: "A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of Communism". At that point in time and history, communism did not exist, but its spectre held Europe in fear. Now, after the fall of the so-called communist regimes, Marxism can never exist as a system. But contrary to fashionable thought, its spirit will live on. Neatly summarising the book, Derrida writes:

> The spectre that Marx was talking about then, communism, was there without being there. It was not yet there. It will never be there. There is no Dasein of the spectre, but there is no Dasein without the uncanniness, without the strange familiarity ... of some spectre. What is a spectre? What is its history and what is its time?[4]

Hence communism will never come into being (Dasein) as a presence such as a system or a coherent movement. However, our being-in-the-world will continue to be affected by the spirit or trace of Marxism as the memory or the trace of being.

Derrida is being mischievous in two ways. First he is 'conjuring' up the spirit of Marx against the 'present' world order. But he is also 'conjuring' up the spirit of Marx to undermine what we might call the corpus of Marxism. For Derrida is dragging the spirit of Marx out of the body of Marx*ism* which

as a tradition he almost totally discards. And of course, Marx's thought is cleansed of the 'metaphysics' of presence and identity. Derrida likes Marx's spectre because it has a floating, translucent, bodiless nature.[5]

So along comes a new neologism - ontology/hauntology. Thus to invoke the 'spirit of Marxism' is necessarily to undermine its ontological body. The bodily remains are left to 'the work of mourning'. It is a farewell to 'ontological Marxism' and its dialectical materialism, its concepts of labour, mode of production and social class.[6]

But why should Derrida still be interested in Marx? Quite simply because the time is out of joint: disarticulated, dislocated, dislodged, deranged, "both out of order and mad. Time is off its hinges".[7]

We know this - although we would insist that there is a method to this madness. It is the mad logic of capital and imperialism. In moments of weakness, in the face of politics, Derrida admits this. Hence his desire to confront the theorists of the New World Order.

Even if it is only in a 'spiritual' or critical sense, Derrida is at least defending something in Marx, making some sort of stand against the triumphalism of the new neo-liberal Right. Given his theoretical location, it would have been far easier for Derrida to join the march.

So importantly, Derrida attacks the postmoderns lined up behind Fukuyama's theory of the end of history. Despite its complexities, Fukuyama's work can only end up by endorsing the new neo-liberal Right, the Cold War victory and the barbarism of the New World Order.

Derrida, despite his irrationalist, postmodern following, does have a commitment to reason insofar as he wishes to examine the limits and errors of this reason. His aspirations are in this sense closer to Kant's project of a critique of reason that to the attacks most of the postmodernists have launched on reason itself. He wants to explore the limits and boundaries of reason from within.

So Derrida *has* to defend something of the Enlightenment and something of Marxism. He wants to defend those who resisted reactionary, conservative, anti-scientific or obscurantist temptations, did not renounce an ideal of democracy and emancipation, but who in a deconstructive spirit, believe in an Enlightenment to come. Rather than defending the 'dogma' of Marxist or Enlightenment politics, Derrida, once more, defends a certain spirit of Marxism and the Enlightenment:

> if there is a spirit of Marxism which I will never be ready to renounce, it is not only the critical idea or the questioning stance ... It is even more a certain emancipatory and *messianic* affirmation, a certain experience of the promise that one can try to liberate from any dogmatics...[8]

The messianic must be thought of as a promise - a promise made now even though what is promised is not here. Curiously, Derrida seems to think that the promise is intimately linked to the question of democracy: "the very concept of democracy as concept of a promise that can only arise in such a *diastema* (failure, inadequation, disjunction, disadjustment, being 'out of joint')".[9] Democracy is not so much a future democracy as a democracy to come.

By picking out democracy as representative of the promise it could be said that Derrida is returning to a metaphysical identification. In his defence we can point to a conception of democracy as an open ended, pluralistic system of differences intimately connected to the play of discourse. This promise of a new messianism plays a central theme for Derrida. Thus he criticises Althusser for dissociating Marx from both eschatology and teleology rather than separating them. Eschatology is for Derrida a positive thing; it is the promise to come. And so we again tie in with spectrality - not actual law but the 'undeconstuctibility of a certain idea of justice'. Not the political body but the spirituality of ethics. And finally: "Barely deserving the name

community, the new International belong[ing] only to anonymity".[10]

Unfortunately, the playfulness of his approach leaves us with nothing concrete. Derrida's concept of a new International is little more than a linguistic gesture, a spontaneous thing, based on critical opposition to the state and international law, and on an unspecified ideal. Anything more prescriptive than this would be a cardinal ontological sin.

By raising the idea of the new International he is haunted by the spectres of other Internationals. In comparison, Derrida's politics represent no more than a liberal consensus or minimum programme. Opposition to unemployment, homelessness, economic conflict, the free market, foreign debt, the arms industry, nuclear weapons, inter-ethnic wars, capitalist phantom-states and international law. But predictably, nothing positive in its own right.

Interesting and broadly agreeable aims, but hardly a radical hegemonic project. Above all, what Derrida's International lacks is the concrete question of methods, direction and leadership. Unsurprisingly, Derrida has no class analysis. Instead he offers us a 'link of affinity, suffering and hope'.[11] He fails to offer any relationship to those who can and will fight for these aims. Instead we are left with a 'community' of intellectuals.

Which is not surprising given Derrida's influences here. For if he is really offering a hegemonic project which seeks to articulate radical elements around a certain discourse, he is doing so in a mythical rather than a concrete way. Against Gramsci's organic intellectuals, we have non-organic intellectuals with political roots not in reality but in ideality. Georges Sorel seems to be an 'absent' ghost here.

Sorel's emphasis on the moral, cultural and intellectual collapse of society (today represented by Fukuyama), can only be overcome by an ideal. Hence mythos replaces logos. Sorel's 'reflections on violence' offer a parallel with Emmanuel Levinas whose conception of violence is marked by an

attempt to free the self form the *il y a* (there is), of anonymous being. Levinas connects this to the promise of justice, the messianic.

But if Sorel's call to arms is based on an expression of a creative, almost poetic urge, there must be a historical warning. For if Derrida is ridding Marxism of its scientific metaphysics and offering a Sorelian poetics of myth instead, then who decides on the politics? It is no surprise that the politics of Sorel and the politics of Heidegger eventually coincide on the wrong side of the barricades.

This emphasises the central importance of a correct notion of hegemony. Firstly, Derrida has a narrow, one-sided usage of the concept which relates it exclusively to the act of (discursive) domination and suppression.

However, the post-Marxists around Laclau and Mouffe have been quicker than Derrida to see that the play of differance and the indeterminacy it creates provide a terrain for a new reading of hegemony. Thus Laclau and Mouffe develop a conception of political strategy based on the coincidence of differ*a*nce and hegemony. Not surprisingly they pick out the liberal themes of democracy and pluralism which are tied to the indeterminacy of their terrain. But we can see that Derrida has the same implicit notion of hegemony when he talks of the emancipatory promise of the new International and democracy and justice to come.

Unfortunately, this concept of hegemony in Derrida and in Laclau and Mouffe, is really little more than another word for articulation with an element of decision. It is true that there is a close relation - for articulation around a certain centre is connected to domination and suppression as well as a certain fusion or cohesion of elements thus articulated. But without wishing to sound too metaphysical, surely hegemony loses its true meaning once it is separated from its materiality.

For realists, hegemony retains its functional role as a factor of social

cohesion and its strategic role as an articulator of action within the context of the preservation or transformation of social structures. The discursive is important in terms of the role of ideology, but this role can only be understood by reference to the material conditions within which it is set. Why one discourse is more powerful than another is an extra-discursive question. The origin and function of ideology is a material question.

An Inability to Act

Derrida is rather changing the script when he praises Marxism as the radical spirit behind deconstruction - that deconstruction only has sense or interest as a radicalisation *'in the tradition* of a certain Marxism' - deontologised.[12] Academics have largely used deconstruction to justify the world as it is and to attack Marxism and other emancipatory discourses. For there is nothing intrinsically radical in deconstruction; it attacks not just oppressive, dominant discourses, but any discourse, emancipatory as well. But some form of deconstruction, in itself, is not necessarily wrong. Provided that we ignore the philosophical ramblings against metaphysics in general and accept it as a historicised critique of power and privilege within the Western metaphysical tradition, it could be a useful tool for textual analysis.

Derrida's grammatology is hard to refute. Indeed it is surely compatible with Marxism (or realism for that matter) to say that, within writing, the "play of differences supposes, in effect, syntheses, and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element be *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself". This analysis can incorporate something akin to overdetermination, as well as the idea of processes and dialectics. Indeed, in some respects, Derrida's conception of writing may be considered an advance on Althusser, since it incorporates a temporal or diachronic element, against

the fixity of synchrony, based on an "interweaving of elements", each 'element' "being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system".[13]

The irrealist error of deconstruction is to raise these insights above their station, promoting textual practice not as one practice among many, but as the only practice of significance (or the all constituting terrain of practice). Everything else is bracketed off from enquiry as outside the text. So although it exists, we might say, following Wittgenstein, that "a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said".[14] We can see the effect of such a move in the evolution of Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst where history, for them, no longer refers to actual historical processes, practices and events, but to historical texts, as if history itself could just be bracketed off.

Deconstruction is therefore no *substitute* for radical politics. By claiming exclusivity, deconstruction inhibits the power of its own insights. What is striking about Derrida's Specters of Marx is its inability to offer any coherent political message

Derrida moves to politics by embracing eschatology, reducing social emancipation to a mystical and symbolic status. He cannot say anything concrete about a project of social emancipation for to do so would be to embrace concepts like presence and identity. It would be to undermine the play of differ*a*nce. So emancipation is given an elusive character. It is a promise based on a creative and poetic urge. Logos is replaced by mythos. Politics assumes a creative, aesthetic character. But politics cannot be based on some kind of creative urge alone. Attempts to do so have ended up embracing spontaneity.

Prescriptive politics is often accused of being elitist. The Bolsheviks and the Jacobins were both attacked for insisting on the need for political direction and leadership. This leadership comes from without in the sense that

it seeks to lead and direct spontaneous developments rather than adapt to them. Hegemony in this context requires leadership.

What is hardly stated, however, is that embracing spontaneity is far more likely to lead to an elitist political position. History is full of examples.

Georges Sorel, so much admired by Laclau and Mouffe, based his politics on the creative urge. His supporters began by advocating the syndicalism of the revolutionary movements in Northern Italy. Many of them ended up as fascists. Heidegger, mentor of Derrida, likewise based his politics on the moral, cultural and intellectual collapse of society. He too became a fascist. Then we have the elitism of a whole number of writers - Nietzsche, Lawrence, Yeats, or the Italian Futurist movement - for whom art, culture and politics merge into a symbolic form of expression. All these writers emphasise spontaneity and the power of the will. All of them embrace the symbolic. And ultimately, the spontaneity of the many is replaced by the symbolic acts of the few.

So at stake is really what politics is all about. Does it move in a social scientific direction, making certain claims about the way society is and offering practical solutions to these problems? Or does politics take on a spontaneous, artistic and expressive form? Derrida's philosophical position - his attacks on metaphysics, identity or indeed of any ontological claims - commits him to political symbolism.

So whilst Derrida is keen on the idea of democracy as representative of the promise, his interest is not with any particular form of democracy, but with an open ended, pluralistic system of differences intimately connected to the play of discourse. But because of this it becomes no more than a regulating ideal, an abstract, neutral play of differences which avoids any commitment to any particular democratic process.

As far as the actual, concrete, political nature of democracy is concerned, Derrida is trapped. He wants to say something but he cannot. He

wants to talk about social issues, but why should we listen? He is opposed to poverty, the free market, the arms industry and international law. But he cannot offer anything positive. He would be committing an ontic fallacy if he were to make any claims about the world.

Beyond the Text?

When Derrida says that there is nothing beyond the text, he is not saying that only the text exists:

> it was never our wish to extend the reassuring notion of the text to a whole extra-textual realm and to transform the world into a library by doing away with all boundaries...[15]

Rather, everything that we come across is mediated textually. We cannot step outside of this and see things 'as they are'. Meaning is conveyed through the text.

To a certain extent this is true and need not be seen as an irrealist position. Indeed we can compare Derrida's notion of text to Althusser's notion of ideology. The world is not confined to the text or ideology, but our access to the world is mediated through them. We cannot step outside these relations - they shape our conceptions of the world and mediate our relationship to it.

However, Althusser never resolved the ideology/science dichotomy. His conception of ideology as a map which we use to guide us through the world gives ideology a material basis. But he is unable to provide a view of science that is both socially grounded and non ideological.

Derrida goes a stage further and gives up these claims to understanding or explanation. In consequence, Derrida's politics do not flow from an analysis of society, but have a symbolic and aesthetic character. So whilst, for

Althusser, the separation of the thought object and real object may result in the idea that we can only know knowledge (or we can only know the transitive), for Derrida this can be reformulated as; there is nothing beyond the transitive.

Deconstruction's collapse into textualism is founded on the idea that language represents the unity of life and the ideal as both part of the living world and the source of the ideal. It soon transpires that language is no longer simply part of the living world but *becomes* the living world itself. Language does not simply represent reality, it *becomes* reality.

There are two very different views of philosophy on offer. In the case of Marxism, philosophy acts more as an underlabourer to (at least what claims to be) a social scientific body of theory. The basis of this philosophy is ontological. It makes objective claims about the nature of the world and its material nature. It acts as an immanent critique - analysing society and offering a programme of change which flows from this analysis. The science, the philosophy, and the politics very much go together.

Marxism seeks to develop a socialist strategy in relation to objective social structures, practices and activities. It is based on the possibility of changing such structures. This requires an analysis of what the dominant dynamics are within a society, and what group of agents are in the best, or most strategically located position, to change things.

Deconstruction limits itself to the functioning of language or the text, and the status of meaning within it. To the extent that everything is mediated through language, we are not allowed to go beyond it. This makes it impossible to locate any fundamental human needs or interests. It leaves Derrida unable to make any kind of convincing case for socialism.

Another Attempt

The relation between hegemony and socialist strategy is taken up by Laclau and Mouffe, but in a post-Marxist, irrealist form. They open their book Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (hereafter HSS) with the claim that:

> It is no longer possible to maintain the conception of subjectivity and classes elaborated by Marxism, nor its vision of the historical course of capitalist development, nor, of course, the conception of communism as a transparent society from which antagonisms have disappeared ... we have constructed a concept of hegemony which, in our view, may be a useful instrument in the struggle for a radical, libertarian and plural democracy.[16]

In the authors' opinion Marxism contains an essentialism which emphasises class and the economic. The growing importance of the concept of hegemony indicates a recognition (although not a resolution) of the problems of this view. Laclau and Mouffe seek to exploit the use of hegemony to subvert and deconstruct the Marxist discourse. Freeing hegemony from essentialism allows it to operate within conditions of radical contingency. It becomes defined as the articulator of discourse.

To escape essentialism, discourse theory draws on Derrida, Heidegger and Wittgenstein. However, Laclau and Mouffe's project cannot be explained purely in philosophical terms. It is a product of a journey through and out of Marxist theory and politics. This journey, for all its theoretical posturing, can be given a simple name. It is, to use Ellen Meiksins Wood's description, "a retreat from class".

The Ideological Road to Idealism

In an earlier essay, 'Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci'[17], Chantal Mouffe

has argued that a concept of hegemony can deal with some of the problems in Althusser - that it can bring political autonomy to ideology whilst leaving determinism in the last instance to the economic. But unlike most Althusserian analysis, hegemony is seen not so much as a structured and differentiated alliance, but as a complete fusion of political, economic, intellectual and moral objectives through the intermediary of ideology. Thus ideology is given primacy as a practice producing subjects.

Mouffe's analysis stresses the importance of Gramsci's conception of leadership. But emphasis is laid upon the intellectual and moral aspects of leadership. This, according to Mouffe, takes Gramsci's analysis beyond Lenin's 'instrumental' conception of class alliances which focuses too narrowly on a 'fundamental class'. Rejecting the view of hegemony as the articulation of class interests, Mouffe sees it as a 'higher synthesis' of many elements which fuse into a 'collective will' which becomes the new protagonist of political action. Tying these points together we can see that Gramsci's notion of a collective will (a concept bearing considerable Hegelian influence), is used by Mouffe to denote the outcome of the hegemonic articulation of ideology.

In this way Mouffe, who sees hegemony as a concept which challenges various forms of reductionism, commits precisely such an error, reducing her analysis to ideology. Whilst she is quick to stress the material nature of ideology, this is limited to its inscription into social practices and apparatuses rather than to economic and political structures. In her striving against class and economic reductions, Mouffe ends up giving ideology primacy over the economic and political, the very basis on which ideology's materiality depends. Ultimately groups are reduced to the hegemonic articulation of ideological practice. In such an equation the relationship of a group to the mode of production or to social structures means practically nothing. From here it is only a short step to discourse theory, idealism and post-Marxism.

Ernesto Laclau has a similar fascination for ideology. Again taking up the Althusserian debate his book Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory he criticises Poulantzas for failing to see ideology as the primary determinant of class. As Meiksins Wood notes, class, for the time being, maintains its theoretical purity but loses its historical significance. Ideological divisions become more significant than class contradictions, the identity 'people' more important than class.[18]

In developing a critique of Poulantzas Laclau therefore over-exaggerates the significance of Althusser's concept of interpellation as the basis for the constitution of subjects. By focusing on the idea of interpellation through ideology Laclau opens the door to a discursive conception of hegemony and a Eurocommunist rejection of class:

> The notion of the specific autonomy of democratic interpellations is implicit in the concept of 'hegemony', of democratic ideology as the domain of class struggle and, consequently, it permits Marxist theory to overcome class reductionism.[19]

The role given to the working class is to 'disarticulate' the 'interpellations' and offer its own hegemonic project around the 'democratic-popular' interests of the 'people'. Laclau introduces these arguments in an essay on fascism but it soon becomes clear that he is more ambitiously attempting to dissolve class interests into bourgeois democracy. As Wood notes:

> For Laclau, the appropriate strategy is not to stress the specificity of socialism, not to reclaim democracy for socialism by challenging the limits of bourgeois democracy with alternative socialist forms, and, finally, not to pursue the specific interests of the working class but to dilute them in an indeterminate 'stew'. We now have a theory of ideology to accompany the theories of class and the state which are needed to underpin the strategy of popular alliance and the building of socialism by the extension of bourgeois-democratic forms, all by-passing the direct opposition between capital and labour.[20]

By means of theoretical trickery, Laclau still tries to uphold the importance of economic and class relations. But "classes exist at the ideological and political level in a process of articulation and not of reduction".[21] Thereby Laclau separates the economic from the ideological and political and reconceptualises class as determined by the hegemonic interpellation of ideology:

> If class contradiction is the dominant contradiction at the abstract level of the mode of production, the people/power bloc contradiction is dominant at the level of the social formation.[22]

Given, however, that Laclau accords the ideological level almost total influence, the existence of class at the level of productive relations is of little importance. This is doubly so since Laclau has previously (in a postscript to his essay on feudalism) stated his new doubts about the concept of mode of production - a concept which is soon abandoned altogether.

Laclau and Mouffe's common interests become clearer and clearer. Both are rejecting the fundamental concepts of Marxist theory and socialist practice. In particular they reject a class analysis, which they describe as 'reductionist', and a Marxist politics which they call 'sectarian'. Thus the concept of ideology becomes more and more important. Laclau and Mouffe's escape from class is achieved at a terrible price. Rejecting class interests means rejecting objective, material class relations (or at least the idea that they have significance). In shifting emphasis to ideological articulations, Laclau and Mouffe slip further and further into the world of ideas. The real world is denied any importance outside of ideological discourse. Ultimately Laclau and Mouffe become idealists.

Eurocommunism

Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical views owe a lot to the political influence of the Eurocommunist movement. Based on an impressionistic analysis of capitalist development, the movement rejected the contention that the working class retains a central, strategic position within capitalist society. The displacement of the working class from the socialist project is therefore connected to the belief that we are living in 'new times'.

Of course the abandonment of class by the world's Communist Parties is hardly new. The Stalinists abandoned the class struggle years ago, replacing it with the popular front and with international support for the Soviet Union - which really meant support for the Soviet bureaucracy. However, in the past, the Stalinists have always seen the need to intervene into working class struggles, to contain them so to speak. Eurocommunism, by contrast, proclaims the death of this traditional working class. In Britain the key examples have been the defeat of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike (note the disdainful references to Scargill in HSS), the impact of Thatcherism and Social Democracy's corresponding 'New Realism', and internationally, the collapse of the Soviet Union. As such, Stalinism no longer feels the need (or perhaps more to the point, no longer has the ability) to constrain class activity. Instead it offers a meek 'popular-democratic' project. The bad old days of class struggle are over.

This is backed theoretically with the claim that the working class is dead and that we live in a new, (post-) society where the project must be the extension of 'democracy'. This has found new agents in the 'new social movements', rooted in the popular-democratic, liberationist milieu, and often hostile to class politics. The new leaders are the intellectual elite who, having spotted that material class interests no longer inspire people, take it upon

themselves to convince them of democracy instead.

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy

With HSS the priority Laclau and Mouffe give to ideology is shifted to the all encompassing role of 'discourse'. Hegemony is given a central role because of its ability to articulate discourse, creating and modifying social identities.

In fact, the concept of hegemony is crucial to the maintenance of Laclau and Mouffe's discursive reality. It helps break down the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices so that everything is constituted according to its discursive articulation. It is not so much that objects do not exist outside of discourse, but that they have no significance outside of it. Thus:

> What is denied is not so much that objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside of any discursive condition of emergence.[23]

But this idea that an object only acquires an identity through discourse is a clear example of the epistemic fallacy. To say that without discourse the object is meaningless is to say that its natural properties are insignificant until discursively articulated. And this leads to the idealist notion that changes in description lead to changes in the object itself. Changes in our idea of the object are seen as altering the actual being of the object.

In an exchange with Norman Geras, Laclau and Mouffe stress that they are not idealists. They make a (rather Heideggerian) distinction between a thing's being (which depends on discourse) and its existence (which does not). This allows them to argue that:

> What actually distinguishes idealism from materialism is its affirmation of the ultimately conceptual character of the real. ... Idealism ... is the affirmation, not that there do not *exist* objects external to the mind, but rather that the innermost nature of these objects is identical to that of mind - that is to say, that it is ultimately *thought*.[24]

But this is a very specific sort of idealism that Laclau and Mouffe are defining - a sort of objective idealism such as Hegel's. Their own idealism is of an intersubjective nature. Laclau and Mouffe's world of forms is inextricable from the community of 'we' and reduces material things to the conceptions that a community has of them. Thus HSS makes the remarkable idealist statement that it "is evident that the very material properties of objects are part of what Wittgenstein calls language-game, which is an example of what we have called discourse."[25]

The distinction that Laclau and Mouffe make between the *being* of the object (in or through discourse) and the *existence* of the object (outside it) reduces being to discursive description/re-description and renders existence meaningless. Thus, a "move away from idealism cannot be founded on the *existence* of the object, because nothing follows from this existence".[26]

Again, Laclau and Mouffe try to shift the terms of the debate. Materialism no longer concerns what exists, but how objects are articulated through discourse. That an intransitive realm exists is insignificant compared to the object's transitive 'being'. This gives absolute power to the hegemonic battles within discourse. If a society holds the view that an earthquake is an act of God, then so be it. The result is a cultural relativism. This is noted by Geras when he argues that:

> a pre-discursive reality and an extra-theoretical objectivity form the irreplaceable basis of all rational enquiry, as well as the condition of meaningful communication across and between differing viewpoints. This foundation once removed, one simply slides into a bottomless, relativist gloom, in which opposed discourses or paradigms are left

with no common reference point, uselessly trading blows.[27]

Of course we know that in social practices such as science, people do not simply trade blows with other people's ideas. Rather, they can only assess these ideas by investigating the real object that lies behind these ideas. The transitive practice of description depends on the intransitive status of things as independent of our knowledge of them.

This can be turned into an incommensurability argument. For if Laclau and Mouffe want to sustain their conception of a hegemonic struggle between competing, descriptive discourses, then for these to be incommensurable rather than just unrelated, they must have a common referent outside of themselves. But by denying extra-discursive reality any significance, Laclau and Mouffe sever the reference relation. Therefore any clash between discourses becomes incomprehensible since there is no intelligible way of comprehending either discourses themselves or conceptual transformations.

Anti-Marxism

Laclau and Mouffe's reaction against Marxism is present in almost every aspect of their theory - whether it is in rejecting economic determinism, class politics, any notion of relatively durable interests and identities, dialectical analysis or the conception of a structured totality. They reject science in favour of what is effectively ideology, offer us discourse in the place of material structures and practices, replace dialectical relations with atomised externality and replace objective interests with hegemonically articulated subject locations. But just as Laclau and Mouffe conceive of hegemonic articulation as a game, so in HSS Marxism is given a set of cards by which it cannot fail to lose. The fact that Marxism has to be set up in such a way only highlights the hollowness of discourse's victory. It is set up as monolithic,

totalising, mono-linear, reductionist, determinist, essentialist, devoid of any richness or diversity.

When it comes to discussing *economics*, Laclau and Mouffe present Marxism at its most narrowly reductionist. Rather than looking at productive relations, they focus on productive forces. To attack such a deterministic approach might be permissable if applied to the work of Plekhanov, or more recently G.A.Cohen. But if we are to read someone like Althusser, let us judge him by the standards of Geras who can see that:

> what Althusser put forward was neither the single, omnipotent cause nor the mere multiplicity of meanings. It was a conception of the primacy of one type of structure within a group of structures, of a *hierarchy* of causalities of uneven weight.[28]

That the economy has a certain privilege in the structural hierarchy can be justified on the basis of the centrality of production and distribution within every society. Relations of production constitute the specific form of appropriating surplus labour. This then maintains the distinctiveness of relations and forces of production whilst also insisting on their unity. The fact that productive forces require organisation means that they have a specific social character which is very different from the mechanical definition presented by Laclau and Mouffe. This complexity is stressed by Marx who argues:

> How, indeed, could the single logical formula of movement, of sequence of time, explain the structure of society, in which all relations co-exist simultaneously and support one another?[29]

On this basis we will argue for a theory of society based on the centrality of the mode of production, but not reducible to economic relations. That class enjoys a privileged status is due to its grounding in these relations although

they also confer upon class a complex character. Rather than reducing our analysis of hegemony to 'subject articulation', we will give it a material content based on the nature of these social conditions and the role it performs in relation to them.

This takes us to the next question which is that of class or group *interests* and the matter of their objectivity. But since Laclau and Mouffe deny that the material world has any significance outside discourse, interests are deprived of their intransitive status. This is clarified by the passage:

> Ours is a criticism not of the notion of 'interests' but of their supposedly *objective* character: that is to say, of the idea that social agents have interests of which they are not conscious. To construct an 'interest' is a slow historical process, which takes place through complex ideological, discursive and institutional practices ... 'Interests', then, are a social product, and do not exist independently of the consciousness of the agents who are their bearers.[30]

If interests are a social product, and yet these interests are not objective, then accordingly, the social is not objective but is a mere bundle of ideas. But whilst idealism reduces the social to the ideal, realism holds the position that ideas are a social product. An interest represents a relation with the world. For this to be meaningful, we must say that people have an interest *in* something. Interests cannot just be reduced to subjective wants, needs or desires. They must correspond to something real which is an issue for them.

To argue that interests are purely subjective and that agents are always conscious of their interests is to argue that interests are products of the mind (here in fact Laclau and Mouffe retreat from the Wittgensteinian 'we' back to the 'I' and from discourse to ego). It cannot account for the development of interests or their status. From where does the mind get its interests from?

Realists would argue that our interests come from our interactions with

objective things (or relations) They vary according to these relations. Therefore a worker will develop an interest in performing wage labour in order to feed the family. But workers also have an interest in overthrowing property relations, the primary source of their enslavement. There is nothing wrong with saying that this is an objective interest despite the fact that workers only move towards such positions in extreme situations. That this is so is because agents are mostly engaged in the *unconscious* reproduction of social structures and only in certain situations do agents become aware of the need to transform these structures. It is therefore a basic materialist position that interests and ideas are not the same thing. The ruling ideas in society derive from its material structure and assume an ideological, mystical, fetishised character. It is precisely such ideas that prevent a realisation of objective interests, until, that is, there is a movement of struggle or a crisis in the material structure that underlies such ideas. It is only when a crisis develops in this system of structural relations that agents become aware that they have an interest in transforming these relations.

The concept of hegemony allows that particular groups or classes may articulate what they see as their interests through a hegemonising project or historical bloc. But interests are not reducible to this process as Laclau and Mouffe would argue. That a hegemonic project can articulate interests at all pre-supposes that there are objective interests that can be articulated. There is no doubt that the two become intermeshed so that hegemonic projects develop interests in their own way. But there still remains the crucial difference between the articulation process and that which is articulated.

Hegemony represents not the primary origin of interests but their mediation under particular conditions by certain groups. A progressive or radical hegemonic project would seek to make agents aware of their interest in transforming social relations whilst a conservative hegemony would promote the interests of a privileged group and the conservation of social relations.

On the question on *essentialism* we should turn to Andrew Collier's essay, 'The Materiality of Morals'. Taking up the critical realist concern with the relatively enduring character of social processes, it deals with the essence of these processes in terms of Spinoza's notion of the conatus. The conatus is a thing's essence simply in the sense of being "the set of mutual relations of motion and rest by virtue of which that individual persists rather than disintegrates".[31] This allows us to conceive of the necessary and contingent aspects of a structure or mechanism in a non-essentialist and non-teleological way. By contrast, Laclau and Mouffe, by repudiating 'essentialism', end up denying any necessary internal nature (conatus). All relations are understood as external, contingent, extrinsic, not-necessary or accidental. It might be wondered how anything can hang together.

The conatus of an individual person can be developed further. Collier combines the conatus theory - a tendency to persist in its being - with the idea of the inorganic body (from Marx and Heidegger) so that the human conatus will possess interests that are not just inside the physical human body but also external, objective interests. On this basis we must surely admit that the highest form of a person's interest (or the development of the conatus) will come through a project of social transformation of society so that we can enjoy a more meaningful relationship with the world around us. This is praxis driven by informed desire and considered being.

Political and Strategic Implications

The position developed in HSS is one of absolute relativism. All notions of relatively enduring, intransitive structures, mechanisms, interests, identities, needs, relations or even things, are denied. Because of this, it might be wondered on what basis discursive and hegemonic practices might be said to

exist. Apparently it is because of the antagonism between contingency and necessity although why this should be the case is anyone's guess.

And the status of discourse theory is another problem. For either it has the status of a meta-discourse (in which case Laclau and Mouffe are themselves guilty of essentialist, metaphysical, logocentic privileging), or discourse theory is merely one discourse among many (in which case there is nothing to stop us ditching Laclau and Mouffe for something more exciting).

Whilst most of the American school of deconstruction would be quite happy to exist in this playful state of contradiction and non-commitance, this will not do for a book supposedly dealing with hegemony and socialist strategy. So Laclau and Mouffe are forced to make a Rortian turn to pragmatism in order to try and break free of an absolute relativism. The result is the worst possible concept of hegémony whereby it effectively ends up defining the bounds of reality. Laclau argues:

> It is a question of pragmatically constructing a hegemonic centre which articulates a growing range of social discourses and logics around it, and thus gives rise to a relative 'universalism'.[32]

We might add that "the limits of my hegemony are the limits of my world". By making such a shift, Laclau and Mouffe commit themselves to a praxis ontology whereby they reduce the world (or our conception of it) to the occurance of action within it - an actionistic actualism.

This actualistic praxis ontology is therefore unable to give any grounds by which we might identify a progressive political project or even the 'popular-democratic struggle' that Laclau and Mouffe constantly refer to. They have already ruled out the possibility of a progressive hegemonic project transforming existing social relations.

In fact we can develop this further and say that Laclau and Mouffe's theory has an ontological flatness which ends up ushering back in a form of

atomistic empiricism. Their theory lacks any ontological depth because structured, stratified, dialectical, intrinsic or necessary relations, connections or mechanisms are denied through the all-encompassing hegemonic articulation of contingent, external elements. It is only through hegemonic articulation that things acquire an identity, governedness or gatheredness. With no scientific investigation of underlying relations, we must observe empirically the arbitrary moments of the atomistic parts.

A political side effect of this atomistic conception of social elements with no intrinsic natures is that Laclau and Mouffe argue for the essentially neutral character of these elements prior to their articulation. This conveniently allows them to deny that there is anything essentially bourgeois about bourgeois democracy. Thus workers and the oppressed have no intrinsic interest in developing their own forms of democracy, but must instead concentrate on developing democracy as it actually is. HSS not only defends bourgeois democracy, it also articulates the bourgeois ideology of neutrality. No strategy is offered even to the new social movements, never mind the class struggle.

HSS can at best only offer some sort of discursive amelioration of a contingent moment. The nature of the project requires a denial of any scientific understanding of society. So with no points of reference and no way of defining what socialism and democracy are supposed to relate to, and with a denial of the conditions under which hegemony operates, there is no coherent reason why strategy should be possible at all.

A Return to Althusser

There is no doubt about the influence that Althusser has had upon Laclau and Mouffe and other post-structuralists. But it is also possible to see the ways in

which Althusser's more troubled statements have been distorted and mis-used. We will set out three such areas.

1. There is the problem of Althusser's separation of the thought object from the real object and a corresponding separation of theory from its social and historical conditions. Such a position allows an easy escape route to idealism and the idea that we can only know knowledge and that the real world is somehow insignificant unless discursively constituted.

Against this, critical realism poses the relation between transitive thought or knowledge and the intransitive objects of that thought. Therefore, whilst our knowledge of the world is transitive, it is knowledge of the intransitive. This intransitive is the condition for the intelligibility of transitive knowledge. Therefore, just because intransitive objects are relatively invariant to our knowledge of them, this does not mean that our knowledge is relatively independent of the objects.

2. It is necessary to reject the exclusivity of Althusser's conception of practices and structures. These must be recognised in their distinctiveness, but must also be seen as inter-connected and dialectically codetermined. This means rejecting the path that leads from 'relative autonomy' to absolute autonomy and the schematic notion of 'determination in the last instance'(see Chapter 8). Such a position allows for the economy to be determinant in no instance and has led to a rather easy abandonment of the concept of mode of production (as for example with Hindess and Hirst).

Critical realism insists on the inter-connected and stratified character of the social and natural worlds. It also upholds the dual determination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors and the dialectics of being as constituted through these relations. The economy, therefore, is present (to varying degrees) in every instance, whilst other social structures are present in the

economic. Thus we can conceive of a social hierarchy of mutually determining and reinforcing structures, processes and relations (see Chapter 9 for how the conditions for economic reproduction need to be socially secured - thus giving a key role to hegemonic state strategies).

3. It is necessary to reject Althusser's later conception of Ideological State Apparatuses. Such a position, particularly once developed by Poulantzas, leads to a Eurocommunist strategy of 'capturing' civil society. It leads back to the unsatisfactory reading of Gramsci which gives so much strategic primacy to the war of positions that the war of manoeuvre, and the nature of the state, is forgotten.

It is important instead to defend Althusser's materialist conception of ideology as grounded in social practices. This is at its best in the early Althusser:

> So ideology is as such an organic part of every social totality. It is as if human societies could not survive without these specific formations, these systems of representations (at various levels), their ideologies. Human societies secrete ideology as the very element and atmosphere indispensable to their historical respiration and life.[33]

The stress that we must make is therefore that ideology is the product of a number of material practices, but that it is not a single practice in its own right. A basic error of Laclau and Mouffe is to focus increasingly on ideology (and then discourse) as a single totalising practice *within* which hegemonic struggles occur. This is also a problem with Derrida and the all enveloping nature of the text. Once this sort of totalisation takes place, the Althusserian conception of ideology as a lived relation *to the world*, is replaced with ideology, discourse or text *as the world*. The result is the effective

abandonment (even if not denial) of the intransitive dimension.

Notebooks from Prison

Laclau and Mouffe's 'post-Marxism' is typical of a current trend which is to combine the worst elements of deconstruction with a relativist language-game theory. This attempts to deal a double-blow to Marxism's main thrust. At a *theoretical* level, discourse is reduced to hegemony, whilst, inversely, at a *practical* level, hegemony is reduced to discourse.

Theoretically, such postmodernist theories attack the idea of truth or knowledge. In a Nietzschian-Foucauldian world of power struggles, meaningfulness is judged, not in relation to the real objects of the world, but on the basis of theoretical ascendency.[34] Hegemonic struggles decide what counts as truth. This truth is established over competing discourses, rather than in relation to any object of enquiry.

Then, just to hammer home the point, the postmodernists turn to language-game theory in order to further extend their relativism. Judgements are given meaning by criteria internal to the language-game. Knowledge is relativised to whichever discourse is hegemonic. As Christopher Norris has argued, right wing-ideologues who deny the existence of the gas-chambers, are simply playing a different sort of game. Likewise, if 'reality' is considered a mere product of language-games, then Baudrillard's absurd claim that the Gulf War was a media construction, goes unchecked [35].

Practically, such an approach ties the theory of hegemony to discursive articulation, denying any effective relation to non-discursive structures. So without a relation between hegemony and other social structures, there is no possibility of it playing the kind of transformatory role envisaged by critical realism. Indeed, instead of changing the world, we can only change our

descriptions of it. Of course, postmodernists would claim that these are one and the same thing. But then the problem arises, why should one description of the world be better, or more desirable that another? Indeed, what is the basis for a socialist strategy?

To properly conceive of hegemony is to locate it within structural relations which make clear its limitations and its conditions of possibility. That hegemony is possible is due to the fact that human agents play an active and fundamental role in the reproduction of these social structures. Under conditions of structural tension and heightened human awareness, the transformation of these structures becomes a possibility. Such a process requires a hegemonic project which can unite agents around a programme or a set of interests and a collective, structurally located so that it is in a position to effect a transformation and to counter those forces hostile to such a project.

Post-Marxism, post-structuralism and deconstruction do not allow for such a project. Whilst they may develop a concept of hegemony, they deny the necessary conditions for hegemony's meaningful operation, i.e. relatively enduring social structures, practices, interests, identities and relations.

Whilst some sort of structural analysis is maintained, this is invariably reduced to discourse or text. Rather than seeing hegemony as strategically located on the terrain of objective relations, it is instead held to be the articulating element of various discourses. The reduction of being to discourse means that hegemony is sustained by means of an epistemic fallacy.

Critical realism, by contrast, holds that the world is comprised of real structural relations independent of their discursive description. The meaningful nature of transitive discourse pre-supposes the intransitive structures and objects to which it refers. Hegemony is therefore not reducible to a role as articulator of discourse. The nature of such a project is defined by the relations between social structures, human practices and group interests. Otherwise hegemony is thrown to the winds of arbitrary signification with

nothing to hold it down or define it.

Politics means a lot more than discursive or textual articulation and a serious socialist strategy requires much more than simply subverting accepted significations. The fact that neither Derrida nor Laclau and Mouffe can offer any sort of coherent strategy is testimony to their imprisonment in discourse as well as the antinomies of their own particular notebooks.

Notes

1 A very interesting book on this subject is Antony Easthope's British Post-structuralism, (London 1988). In contrast to American schools of deconstruction, British theorists often passed through Marxism, and in particular, Althusser. The result is that these theorists are forced to maintain at least some semblance of radicalism and seriousness.

2 See, for example, A.Collier, Critical Realism, (London 1994), p.5.

3 J.Derrida, Specters of Marx, (New York 1994), p.166.

4 Ibid., p.100.

5 Ibid., p.99.

6 Ibid., p.88.

7 Ibid., p.18.

8 Ibid., p.89.

9 Ibid., p.64.

10 Ibid., p.90.

11 Ibid., p.85

12 Ibid., p.92.

13 J.Derrida, Positions, (London and Chicago 1981), p.26.

14 L.Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, (Oxford 1967), 304.

15 J.Derrida, 'Living On/Borderlines' in H.Bloom et al, Deconstruction and Criticism, (London 1979), p.84.

16 E.Laclau and C.Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, (HSS), (London 1985), p.4.

17 In Mouffe (ed.), Gramsci and Marxist Theory, (London 1979).

18 E.Meiksins Wood, The Retreat from Class, (London 1986), pp.49-59, and 'Marxism Without Class Struggle' in Socialist Register, 1983, pp.264-65.

19 E.Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory, (London 1977), p.141n.

20 Wood, The Retreat from Class, p.53, and Socialist Register, p.266.

21 E.Laclau, op.cit., p.161.

22 Ibid., p.108.

23 HSS, p.108.

24 E.Laclau, New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time, (London 1990), p.106.

25 HSS, p.108.

26 E.Laclau and C.Mouffe, 'Post-Marxism Without Apologies' in E.Laclau, New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time , p.111.

27 N.Geras, 'Post-Marxism?' in New Left Review, 163, p.67.

28 Ibid., p.62.

29 K.Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, (New York 1963), pp.110-11. See also the passage "the mode of production, the relations in which productive forces are developed, are anything but eternal laws..." on p.122. Althusser makes much of these passages in L.Althusser and E.Balibar, Reading *Capital*, (London 1979), pp. 97-98.

30 E.Laclau and C.Mouffe, op.cit., p.118.

31 A.Collier, The Materiality of Morals' in Studia Spinozana, no.7, 1991, p.75.

32 E.Laclau, op.cit., p.219.

33 L.Althusser, For Marx, (London 1977), p.323.

34 To be fair to Foucault, this is more commonly the position of his postmodern followers. Certainly the late Foucault argues for a more complex position, for example; "...we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies ... We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-bloc, a point of resistence and a starting point for an opposing strategy". M.Foucault, The History of Sexuality, vol.,1, (Harmondsworth 1981), pp.100-101.

35 See C.Norris, Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War, (London 1992).

PART TWO

Theoretical Questions

Chapter 6
Two Concepts of Hegemony

Introduction

We found that Gramsci's elaboration of hegemony refers not just to hegemonic projects, but to a deeper level of organisation. The historical bloc, he argues, connects the structure and the superstructure.

For a group to become hegemonic it must have behind it the economic, political and cultural conditions which allow it to put itself forward as leading. These conditions form the basic material background out of which hegemonic projects emerge.

Hegemony is therefore concerned, not just with the construction of a ruling bloc, but with the reproduction of the social structures that create the material conditions for such a bloc.

Gramsci gives as an example the idea of the passive revolution. Here the ruling bloc maintains its hegemony by advancing a dynamic of social reorganisation and modernisation. Thus hegemony is linked not just to social alliances but also to structural processes. The success of a hegemonic project depends on how well it can relate to these objective developments. Class interests must be advanced in relation to the dominant trends in the capitalist economy.

We have seen, however, that classical Marxism has often developed an instrumentalist conception of society which sees it simply in terms of the interaction of different groups, rather than as the inter-relation of groups, structures and mechanisms.

Trotsky, for example, sometimes gives hegemony a more shallow,

surface role related to the way classes organise, failing to give it a deeper, more material basis as securing the cohesion of the social whole. Hegemony is seen in an instrumental rather than in a structural way.

This sometimes comes across in Trotsky's analysis of fascism. He argues that fascism is the means by which monopoly capital mobilises the petit bourgeoisie and the declassed layers against the organised working class. He then compares it to a battering ram that can be picked up and used.

However, the ruling class cannot simply wield fascism for its own purposes. Fascism is not an instrument to be turned to. It has its own dynamics which reflect a deeper level of structural crisis.

Fascism grows out of this material crisis and is manifested at the political and ideological level. The project around fascism is a response to a hegemonic crisis, not the cause of it.

Indeed, both Trotsky and Gramsci have analysed how particular hegemonic projects in Italy, Spain and to a lesser extent Germany are a product of the historical weakness of hegemony in general. This weakness of hegemony is deeply rooted in the nature of these societies - their economic structure, national and political development, ideological relations and so on. Italy, for example, had a historical crisis of bourgeois hegemony of which fascist hegemony was one manifestation. This clearly points to the two levels of hegemonic crisis.

We have also argued that humanist accounts of history are unable to maintain this distinction since they end up reducing such processes to their expression. Humanism's rejection of a structural analysis means that the world is reduced to one level of appearance with no underlying causes. Hegemonic projects end up defining their own conditions of expression.

Critical realism counters this with the argument that hegemony can only operate under conditions of social and material causality. It is therefore necessary to examine the social whole and its different structures and

mechanisms, each of which has its own dynamics. It must study the nature of these various relations and the types of co-determination or conflict that are taking place. Within all this we must focus on the dominant dynamic of capital accumulation.

It is the work of structuralists like Poulantzas that starts to get to grips with these underlying mechanisms. In Poulantzas's definition, hegemony performs a structural-functional role. It secures the cohesion of the social formation.

However, we have also argued that Poulantzas goes too far. Whilst humanist accounts reduce hegemony to its expression, structuralist accounts tend to reduce hegemony to its functional determination. Instead we should examine both aspects of hegemony - its function and its expression. That hegemony performs a basic social function allows groups to develop projects that express their own particular interests.

There is never a direct correspondence between hegemony's function and its expression. The 'interests' of capital do not necessarily correspond to the different interests of the politically dominant ruling class. Indeed some ruling class strategies may run counter to the general interests of capital accumulation.

And a theory of hegemony must also distinguish between the *dominant* class at the economic level, and the *ruling* class in relation to politics and the state.

We will deal in a later chapter with the contradictory character of Thatcherism - an ideology usually associated with new economic strategies - those of monetarism and laissez-faire deregulation. However, whilst in one way Thatcherism was in line with new trends in capital accumulation, in another way Thatcherism hindered such developments through its political contradictions - its message for the aspiring petit bourgeoisie mixed with the more traditional Conservative influences of Empire, militarism, the City and

so on. The political constitution of Thatcherism was clearly not an ideal basis for facilitating effective capital accumulation.

Finally we saw that post-structuralist and discourse-based theories of hegemony are unable to make this distinction between the levels at which hegemony operates. Hegemony is as flat as the post-world in which it operates.

These accounts usually reduce hegemony to the articulation of discrete elements. In the case of Laclau and Mouffe, hegemony is reduced to the articulation of subject positions within discourse. More generally, those deconstructionists around Derrida reduce the hegemonic process to the capture of 'floating signifiers'. Hegemony becomes a textual matter, cut off from the material world. Hegemony's relation to the reproduction of social structures is lost.

At best, post-structuralist accounts (such as Foucault's) reduce hegemony's location to practices. This is an ontologically flat description. It cannot say where hegemony comes from, or give any political specification. Indeed it makes any political project impossible by detotalising and de-collectivising any sort of representation. Identity is turned into fragmentation. Political action is reduced to discussion.

Hegemonies, One and Two

Throughout part one we have come up against two levels of the hegemonic process. We will therefore make a distinction between a deeper hegemony that operates at a structural level and a surface hegemony which is embodied in conscious hegemonic projects. This can be formalised as:

Hegemony1: which plays a basic role in securing the cohesion of the social

system. It ensures the reproduction of basic structural processes. It is fundamental to the unity of all human societies. It is a basic material necessity concerned with the inter-relation of the different parts of the social whole. Of particular importance is the relation between the state and the economic system.

Hegemony2: which concerns concrete hegemonic projects and practices. These are emergent out of the hegemony1 conditions, but give these conditions a particular expression. Hegemony2 centres around different social groups and classes, the interests that they represent, and the political blocs and alliances that are constructed.

The two levels of hegemony are distinct but also linked. Hegemony1 is expressed through hegemony2 projects. In turn, hegemony2 projects are dependent on and determined by the basic material conditions given by hegemony1. This hegemony1 is the pre-existing cause for hegemony2. But hegemony2 is the manifestation of this cause. Thus the distinction is between hegemony's basic material necessity and its actualisation through concrete projects.

Hegemony is a societal concept as reflected by Gramsci's extension of its applicability to the way in which a group rules *in general*. It has a complex character, stratified across a number of social layers and organising a number of different relations.

We have seen how hegemony is layered. It organises the relations between different social groups *within* a ruling bloc. It also organises the relation between the ruling bloc and wider layers in society. These wider layers are themselves stratified. Some groups are closely implicated in the bloc, others lend a degree of support, others may require more direct coercion.

Further, the dominant hegemonic process may itself be undercut by

other hegemonic processes. These may be sub-hegemonies, or even counter-hegemonies. Some hegemonies may feed of the dominant hegemony, others may be in direct conflict.

However, to adequately explain these processes we must go beyond them and look at the basic material conditions which give rise to them. These conditions include hegemony1 relations.

Hegemony may be stratified throughout society taking on local, regional, national or macro forms. However, the distinction we are making is not that between different forms of expression - national versus local for example - but is an analytical distinction between hegemonic projects and processes and a deeper structural relation. This distinction is necessarily an analytical one. It is an abstraction based on a model of how society works.

Central to this conception is the reproduction or transformation of society.

Transformational Model of Social Activity (TMSA)

Society is both the condition and outcome of human agency. Social structures do not exist independently of the activities that they govern. They are reproduced through intentional human activity, although this activity has prior material causes.

But although activity is intentional, agents' understanding of the wider processes is limited. There are much wider social consequences of reproductive activity which the agent is mostly unaware of or unconcerned about. As Bhaskar writes:

> the TMSA requires that the present actions which serve to reproduce social structure only be intentional under *some* description, not under the description of reproducing the structure concerned (which would

make all social reproduction or persistence the product of conscious acts).[1]

Hegemonic/counter-hegemonic struggles are necessarily a key part of the TMSA. But hegemony is equally present in a negative sense. The absence of a challenge to a certain social practice or structure is the mark of a stable hegemonic system. We must say that these structures are therefore relatively enduring in a hegemony1 sense. The various structures are smoothly reproduced through human praxis.

Sometimes a ruling group may consciously mobilise hegemonic support for a set of social structures and practices. This is the case when projects of social re-construction or modernisation take place. An example would be the re-structuring that took place after the Second World War. Here the re-organisation of production methods corresponded to a reorganisation of state intervention and political practice. A new ruling bloc was created. This fits in with Gramsci's notion of the passive revolution.

More often, a ruling group is forced to mobilise to conserve a situation and to guarantee the reproduction of various structures. This hegemony2 project will be based on perceived interests although the consequences involve structural reproduction.

Whatever the case, these sorts of hegemony2 projects necessarily involve intentional causality although social structures are a necessary condition for this. Intentional agency is a necessary condition for reproduction of these social structures.[2]

For normal reproduction this intentional activity is relatively docile and non-political, reflecting the wider hegemony1 across society. Social structures and processes are taken for granted and their functioning is unchallenged. Agents' conception of their activity is confined within these structures.

The process of transformation is much more political and requires more

active intentional activity which challenges the working of the system and poses an alternative. A hegemony2 battle may challenge particular social and political practices and the activity of certain groups, but a real transformational struggle will go beyond hegemony2 practices and challenge the deeper structural processes at the root of society. This is the moment, for example, where strike action starts to challenge the whole labour process itself. The target becomes not just the hegemony2 of the bosses' strategy, but the hegemony1 of capitalist production processes. To an extent this situation has been approached by the more political recent strikes such as the British Miners' Strike of 1984-85 and the 1995 French battles against the Plan Juppe. When such struggles truly move to the level of hegemony1, conflicts emerge between agents and the structures themselves.

The Dual Nature of Hegemony

The New Left debates over the nature of the British social formation highlight the problem of combining the structural determination of hegemony1 with its political expression and class development at hegemony2.

Hegemony derives from what Bhaskar terms power1 situations - the objectivity of social structures and interests. These intransitive structures form the material basis upon which hegemony develops.

However, Poulantzas is unable to give an adequate account of how hegemony is then actualised through different political projects. He is unable to express how classes consciously act on the interests and powers that they have. The structuralist accounts fail to give hegemony a sufficient conscious, transitive aspect.

If we make the necessary distinction, we can then give the political activity embodied in hegemony2 a real and active dynamic reflective of the

open character of society. Although it is materially pre-supposed by and dependent upon hegemony1, hegemony2 represents a process with its own characteristics. Rather than simply representing the processes themselves, hegemony2 necessarily entails some form of agential conception of these processes based on various forms of group or class understandings.

Hegemony2 represents conscious political activity linked to the defence or transformation of a given situation. The level of consciousness is variable. Indeed this conscious activity will have differing degrees of unintended consequences. Nethertheless, hegemony is a praxis which is, in turn, based on certain reasons and intentions which cause the course of action. Bhaskar writes:

> The intentionality of praxis is shown in the capacity to transform the world in a way which... would not otherwise have occurred[3]

We have now established two levels of hegemony - the structural and the agential. It is necessary, however, to make another point. Hegemony2 is *emergent* out of hegemony1. This means that hegemony2 is determined by the basic structure of society. However, hegemony2 is not reducible to hegemony1. Although a great deal can be explained by examining the material cause, this is not sufficient as an explanation. Hegemony2 develops its own dynamics which need to be analysed in their specificity.

Therefore, the growth of fascism as a hegemony2 project may be linked to a hegemony1 crisis in the basic structure of bourgeois society. This hegemony1 crisis may be represented by a crisis of capital accumulation, a crisis of bourgeois political representation, and a crisis of cultural hegemony. However, whilst this greatly advances an explanation of fascism, it is not sufficient. It is also necessary to study the dynamics of the hegemony2 project itself - its aims, its programme, its political representatives, its social base,

how it has cultivated its relations to big business, its international context and so on.

However, we have seen that hegemony2 programmes like fascism are frustrated by the general hegemony1 conditions. The demands of the petit bourgeoisie are soon replaced by the needs of big business. This gives the structural determination of hegemony1 a primacy over the political expression of hegemony2. However, the hegemony2 project may develop these contradictions in a number of different ways.

Comparing the structuralist analysis to the humanist one reveals opposite errors. The structuralist interpretation concentrates on hegemony1 and the structural role that it plays in securing the cohesion of the social formation. Humanists emphasise hegemony's expression through human activity. Neither is therefore able to develop a conception of *emergence*.

Therefore we must state that the structural-functional role that is played at hegemony1 emerges through the concrete, historical interactions of intentioned social agents at hegemony2. It is not so much the case that agents create hegemonic projects, but that hegemony is realised by them.

For hegemony2 projects to take place, objective social divisions and distinctions must already exist at a deeper level. This allows certain groups to become dominant and to construct their own hegemony out of these divisions. Indeed a hegemonic project may consciously seek to develop these divisions, or alter them. In other words, these hegemony2 projects are emergent out of the material conditions present in society and the requirement of hegemony1 to reproduce the social formation.

Hegemony1 provides the necessary conditions for the possibility of hegemony2. That hegemony2 projects are possible is due to the way the conditions for economic reproduction have to be socially secured.

The hegemonic processes represent the political moment in the reproduction of the structures of the social formation. Hegemony combines

the structural aspect of reproduction with the political moment of agency. The fact that social structures need to be reproduced and that this is done through varying degrees of intentionality, gives hegemony its important social place.

In many ways the process of reproduction is automatic. However, because society is an open system, some sort of hegemony or political intervention is required if the complex of social structures, generative mechanisms and human practices are to function together.

In particular, the process of capital accumulation must be facilitated. This is done politically through state intervention into the economy. In other words, the conditions for capital accumulation are socially secured through various mechanisms - political and ideological as well as economic. Hegemony operates through the state to achieve this.

The state has a functional relation to the economy as represented by hegemony1. Out of this basic relation comes the more complex problems of the realisation of this function through particular hegemonic projects.

However, this hegemony is affected at the hegemony2 level by the particular interests of the dominant groups and class fractions. The balance between capital accumulation and class interests is not always a stable one. Conflicts may emerge between class interests at hegemony2 and the broader process of capital accumulation and state intervention where hegemony1 is responsible for securing the conditions for social cohesion.

Bhaskar's Hegemony

Roy Bhaskar has only just started to theorise a concept of hegemony. He writes:

> As a complex may be hierarchicised, this opens the way for concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony, and a fortiori for counter-hegemonic

hermeneutic struggles.[4]

The trouble here is that Bhaskar is giving hegemony a restricted role. He limits hegemony exclusively to hermeneutic struggles at a level of relations called power2. Yet this power distinction itself provides a basis for a realist reworking of the hegemony concept.

Power1, Bhaskar argues, represents "the transformative capacity intrinsic to the concept of agency as such". He contrasts this with power2 relations as "possessed, exercised, mobilised, manifest, covert, indirect, mediated".[5]

Power1 relations are seen as enabling. They emerge through social structures as a basis for our activity. Power2 refers to a level of expression.

To emphasise this idea of the positivity of power1 'pouvoir' let us quote Foucault:

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him may belong to this production.[6] .

So we can see that if Bhaskar is restricting hegemony to power2 struggles, he is limiting hegemony to its expression or exercise and cutting it off from its basic materiality.

This is precisely the error that is committed by the humanist tradition. It seems, in his efforts to theorise a notion of praxis, that Bhaskar has strayed too far from a structuralist analysis.

Bhaskar's restriction of hegemony to the terrain of power2 results, in effect, in hegemony being seen as a conscious agential process. Thus Bhaskar defines hegemony as a process of struggle. Yet hegemony also exists by virtue of an absence of counter-hegemonic struggles. We have argued that the most

stable hegemonic systems lack a concerted hegemony2 struggle. Social hegemony may be deeply inscribed, existing at the level of hegemony1 reproduction of the social formation.

Thus Bhaskar fails to link hegemonic practices to the crucial matter of the reproduction, conservation or transformation of social structures and to his own TMSA.

This move away from structures means that Bhaskar's description also makes too much of a concession to a one-sided, post-structuralist, conception of hegemony as a hermeneutic practice. This reduces hegemony to the role of an articulator of discourse. Hegemony then becomes a battle over description and re-description.

Again this sees hegemony as a relation existing between agents, albeit in a wider structured context. Yet we have argued that, by virtue of the process of reproduction, hegemony also represents a relation between agents and the structures themselves. And hegemony operates not just within but also between various social structures and practices.

Hegemony operates through the state and therefore develops a hegemony2 character by virtue of the nature of the state itself and its rule *over* society. But the state is also a unifier of deeper societal divisions. A strong hegemony is therefore not simply a power2 or state hegemony but a hegemony1 or civil hegemony which operates across rather than simply over society.

Civil Society

We can illustrate this in relation to the Russian revolution. As writers like Gramsci and Trotsky admit, the weakness of Russian civil society, as well as the economy, led to a situation in which state power could be seized, but

where a strong civil hegemony was a more difficult and longer task.

This, to a certain extent, is a product of the peculiarities of the Bolshevik project. A working class revolution necessarily entails difficulties in trying to reconstruct society given the weakness of the working class and its historical disenfranchisement.

However, the problem can also be attributed to the general historical weakness of Russian civil society. This is admitted by Trotsky when he argues that revolution in the East is easier to make but harder to maintain, whilst in the West the process is longer, but ultimately more stable.

Thus the task in Russia was not simply to make a revolution, but to create a firm civil society. This task cannot be achieved through a Stalinist style imposition. It is a longer material process. Trotsky argues that a new working class culture cannot just be imposed. Instead it is necessary to create the *conditions* for the development of a socialist culture.

This is a recognition that hegemony is much more than simply the decisions of the ruling group. Indeed, even the dictatorship of the proletariat is distinct from the question of wider social hegemony. The stability of the Russian revolution depends not only on the hegemony of the Bolshevik party, or even on the dictatorship of the proletariat, but of the hegemony of the whole working class over society. As Buci-Glucksmann has argued, hegemony *qualifies* the dictatorship of the proletariat and determines its expansive character.[7]

However, we are not saying that hegemony2 = state whilst hegemony1 = civil society. This would be a simplistic reduction. Rather, we are saying that hegemony1 has a deeper material basis *which is reflected in civil society* - but it is linked to a number of factors including the economy and also the basic relations between economy, civil society and state. Hegemony2 projects may be more or less successful in drawing upon this hegemony1 basis. The experience of Russia shows that it is possible to take power at a hegemony2

level, but that maintaining a firm social basis means that this hegemony2 needs to create the conditions for the development of a more secure society at the level of hegemony1.

More generally, revolutions occur when there is a fundamental *structural* crisis in society. This means that there is a crisis at the level of hegemony1 - affecting the unity and cohesion of the social formation. This necessarily entails that taking power is a difficult task - for power is seized precisely at a time when the basic unity of society (hegemony1) is most undermined. The crisis at hegemony1 undermines not only the old order, but also the efforts of the new to grow - in Gramsci's words, "the old is dying and the new cannot be born"[8]. In terms of the socialist project, this necessitates the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat where emergency measures are taken to ensure the development of society.

National Distinctions

Since early modernity hegemony has been connected to the national project. And whilst the nation is connected to the state (even if only in terms of an aspiration), it is also connected to a wider forging of identity around social, political, historical, cultural and economic factors.

Nationalist ideologies must therefore be seen as attempts to mobilise support around a national project. In reality this national project represents the hegemonic interests of one or more groups. But by constructing a social project around the nation state, nationalism can act in passing off the interests of a certain group as the national interest and in constructing belief in shared community that cuts across notions of class, and other forms of social stratification.

The ideology of nationalism therefore acts to legitimate the political

practice of a leading group, and its struggle either to maintain power, or to achieve it. It may, however, take on contradictory forms according to its social base and the dynamics of struggle.

We have seen recently in former-Yugoslavia how in some cases nationalist movements would seem to create their own basis or even their own nation. But this only points to a more fundamental weakness. The collapse of former-Yugoslavia cannot simply be attributed to the actions of a few nationalist leaders. Rather, the actions of these sections can be attributed to the severe hegemonic crisis, itself a product of economic collapse. Consequently, those around Milosevic made a deliberate turn to Serb nationalist demagogy in order to mobilise the masses around a new social project.

Tragically, some of Milosovic's strongest supporters are the former Marxist dissidents around the *Praxis* group - intellectuals like Markovic and Stojanovic. But this is nothing new.

Gramsci argues that social groups must struggle in some way to be national. But we also see this significance in reverse - the majority of parties of the Second International were unable to overcome their own national basis despite political statements to the contrary.

What is quite clear is that whatever nationalist ideologies are espoused, these are only expressions of deeper social and historical features - the development of culture and civil society, economic standing, historical legacy and so on.

Gramsci identifies this in his study of Italian history. Society was characterised by a basic lack of unity - expressed in particular by the economic, political and cultural conflict between north and south. Politics is marked by uncertain leadership resulting in oscillations between despotism and constitutionalism. There is clearly a problem at the level of hegemony1. A social group needs to act as a locomotive to pull through basic structural

change, but how is it possible, Gramsci asks, to build a train out of the Northern urban force, the Southern rurals, Sicily, Sardinia and so on?[9]

Where there was some more rooted hegemonic rule, it was of a traditional character:

> although the course of events in the Risorgimento revealed the enormous importance of the "demagogic" mass movement, with its leaders thrown up by chance, impoverished, etc., it was nevertheless in actual fact taken over by the traditional organic forces - in other words, by the parties of long standing, with rationally-formed leaders, etc.[10]

The Moderate Party was more organic in its relation to the ruling classes whilst the Action Party lacked any concrete programme. The likes of Garibaldi were thus controlled by the influence of the Moderate national bloc.

If we look more generally we can pick out different forms of historical development and hegemony.

1. Early 20th century Italy and Spain.

Here Hegemony1 is noticeably weak. The capitalist economy is in an underdeveloped state and is dependent on foreign capital. This is matched by a weak civil society, lacking a strong, unifying class leadership, or any kind of stable historical bloc. It is not so much that the historical bloc is unable to bridge the relation between 'structure' and 'superstructure', but rather that it represents, only too well, the weaknesses of both.

In both these societies national divisions are prominent - although the Spanish state has enjoyed relative stability. What is lacking, however, is a stable unifying force. Instead, more traditional forms of ideology - clerical and feudal, still predominate. Hegemony2 is based on a dominance of coercion over consent. This reflects the deeper disjuncture between state, politics and

economy. Hegemony2 is weak and turbulent, with progress followed by reaction, as traditionalists vie with an emergent but weak intelligentsia.

The task of a hegemonic leadership is to try and carry through a project of social modernisation as a passive revolution, keeping revolutionary sentiments within a moderate, national framework, forging a link between the 'national' and the 'popular'. This compares also to the situation in Greece where politics was divided between those who emphasised territorial expansion and those who emphasised social expansion and modernisation. Hegemony must be developed at both levels one and two, matching 'structure' with 'superstructure'.

2. Germany 1930-40s

Here hegemony1 is in acute crisis. Deep economic problems cause a structural disjunction. In turn, there is a crisis of political representation. A division opens up between the economically dominant class and political leadership. There is also a cultural crisis and a lack of authority.

In such a situation, there is dissatisfaction amongst the traditional supporting classes like the petit bourgeoisie. In these rare instances, such classes can be mobilised into action. Matching the bourgeois crisis is a crisis of the workers' movement. The political vacuum allows fascism to emerge.

Thus at the level of Hegemony2, fascism and Bonapartism emerge as a result of deep class divisions which are unmediated by social hegemony.

3. Britain 20th century

Britain, according to Gramsci, is traditionalist, conservative, and ossified in its social structure.[11] Its traditional intellectuals were drawn from the old land-owning class.[12]

At hegemony1 there is a relatively stable social hegemony. An established parliamentary government contributes to the ideological self-legitimation of the system. It has a strong bourgeois state, parties and culture. An imperialist legacy has strongly shaped national culture.

The working class is relatively strong but is co-opted. Ideologically, the working class is dominated by labourist and corporatist conceptions which may allow mobilisations, but only from within the system. Thus the dominance within the workers' movement of the 'gradualist' variant of reformism. The workers' movement is ideologically weak and divided between different strata.

Hegemony2 is reflected in consensus politics where even Labour governments effectively act as national governments. Sections of the labour leadership have been co-opted into rulership through the post-war project. This we shall examine in a later chapter.

Hegemony and Ideology

The metaphor of social cement has been used to describe the role played by both hegemony and ideology and it may seem, after our elaboration of hegemony1, that the terms are virtually synonymous. We will therefore begin to distinguish.

Most obviously hegemony is broader than just ideology. It encompasses not just ideological processes, but the material forms which generate ideologies - the institutions of the state, its repressive apparatus, education, welfare, economic processes, national institutions and so on. Hegemony concerns the articulation not just of ideas, but of many practices - ideological, cultural, political and economic.

There are two false conceptions of ideology. One is the reductionist

view, sometimes found in Gramsci, which links it to world views and to the effects of class rule. This position reduces ideology to hegemony2 political projects which simply reflect the 'ideas' of the ruling class. Here ideology is given a straightforward, instrumental nature, as a class tool.

Another false view gives ideology a more objective basis but reduces it to a superstructural role. Again this error is found in Gramsci, but in its classical form, ideology comes to mechanically reflect the determination of the economic base.

It is Althusser who makes the great leap forward in rejecting the base/superstructure and the class instrumental views. Instead Althusser conceives of various ideologies which are secreted by social practices. These range from the most fundamental processes of production to forms of literary criticism or sports coverage.

This breaks from the class instrumental view. Instead, ideology is seen as a basic material pre-requisite for the functioning of all societies. It is related to basic human practices so that "there is no practice except by and in an ideology".[13]

Althusser also breaks from the view that there is one basic ideological form - as presented by the base/superstructure model. Ideologies are plural and overdetermined.

In general, ideology is a lived relation between people and their conditions of existence in the world. It is part of the process by which we experience the world and reproduce it. In fact it forms an imaginary relation to the real relations which individuals live.[14] But ideology itself is very real. It is an active material force. It is related to social practices.

It is due to ideology's basic materiality that particular ideas have the force that they do. The fact that bourgeois ideas have a hold over the working class is not due to the superiority of these over socialist ideas. Rather, they have some kind of rootedness in the material conditions of day to day life, the

social conditions which in turn affect social consciousness.

Ideology is secreted by the various material practices which humans are engaged in. It enables them to live their relations with these processes. Its nature, as Althusser puts it, is not so much of a conscious form, but in fact is more of an unconscious process. It is here that ideology may contain the element of concealment or even falseness (in Heideggerian terms we could call it the ground of inauthentic understanding.) Hegemony, however, does not necessarily depend on this inauthenticity.

Ideology is like a plan or a map which allows us to operate. But drawing on Heidegger again we can say that we only really become aware of this process when we lose the map or fail to understand it. Ideology is a vital process which cannot be escaped or lived around, although Althusser's critics should note that he leaves plenty of room for intentional action:

> So ideology is not an aberration or a contingent excrescence of History: it is a structure essential to the historical life of societies. Further, only the existence and the recognition of its necessity enable us to act upon ideology and transform ideology into an instrument of deliberate action on history.[15]

Likewise we have argued that hegemony is essential to the historical life of society, and that, at another level, it can be developed into concrete political projects. Hegemony and ideology are very closely related. They intersect as concrete projects are constructed.

However, hegemony1 is specifically concerned with the unity of the social formation, or aspects of it, securing the conditions for reproduction. Ideology, by contrast, is more closely connected to specific human practices. Ideology is intrinsic to these processes whereas hegemony is more extrinsic. Whilst hegemony forms a hierarchical structure, ideologies are more separate and distinct.

Whilst hegemony helps secure the cohesion of the system and the reproduction of social structures, ideology is the means by which subjects function within their social practices.

Ideology is intrinsic in the sense that it is secreted by human practices which in turn are governed by social structures. They are adhered to in an almost unconscious way as a way in which social agents operate in a given social environment. It is only when certain agents consciously intervene that ideologies may be said to be external constructs which have been put together in order to serve certain interests. But here ideology is again intersecting with hegemony.

We have accepted a very structuralist and functionalist account of ideology which sees it as intrinsically related to social practices which in turn are determined by social structures and mechanisms. But we can do so only because the functioning of ideology in itself is insufficient. Therefore, the social formation is not reproduced in an automatic way through the relations between structures, practices and ideology. Rather, the reproduction of the social formation needs to be *secured*. Because of ideology's close proximity to human practices, it cannot play this wider role.

In the reproduction of social reality, hegemony deals with the extrinsic relations necessary for the reproductive process. It is insufficient to say that structures are reproduced because practices are ideologically regulated. Hegemony1 is necessary to secure the relations between different structures, and between structures, mechanisms and practices. Once this is stated, we move away from structural determinism, whilst the realist strengths of structuralism are maintained. An analysis of hegemony1 combines the functioning of structures with their overdetermination, which in turn opens a space for the active intervention of a hegemonic process which adds a contingent and agential dimension. None of this is possible if our study is restricted to an examination of ideology 'producing subjects'.

Whilst this latter process is tied to representation - and may be said to be distorted by the Althusser, Derrida, Lacan axis - hegemony is more concerned with organisation. Therefore, whilst ideology may be said to rest on 'false' beliefs - albeit coming from the material structure of reality, e.g. Marx's account of commodity fetishism - hegemony cannot be reduced to this. Indeed, at a basic level, it is the state which is the most powerful hegemonic force. Certainly it would be foolish to reduce hegemony to a set of false beliefs.

We have stressed the extrinsic character of hegemony, however, hegemony may be intrinsic to a certain structure or practice. But in this case hegemony acts as the extrinsic articulator between different ideologies within that practice. For practices may not simply produce an 'ideology', but usually produce ideologies. Such a process needs organisation, and where ideologies clash a decision must be made. Thus in current production and management practices the idea of flexibilisation currently has hegemony over older corporatist methods. So we can say that hegemony has an extrinsic relation, not just between mechanisms, structures and practices, but between ideologies as well. Where hegemony is more or less confined to a particular ideological field, or to certain structures or practices, we can say that it has a more regional character. But in its wider role hegemony spans a range of such locations. We can say this because of the stratified nature of social reality and the way in which different forms of reproduction takes place across the social spectrum.

The theory of hegemony as an articulator also implies a sense of power which ideology does not necessarily entail. This operates in different ways from the more basic material sense of power relations as enabling to more concrete forms of struggle and dominance. Hegemony implies power relations - either power to or power over (in any case one dialectically requires the other).

Our conception of ideology has so far focussed on its deeper social role as an intrinsic aspect of social practices. However, as we move further into the concrete we can see that ideologies can also be constructed - out of this social basis - into more elaborate theories. We may draw a distinction between a more intrinsic ideology - most fundamental of which is commodity fetishism - and an elaborated theoretical ideology like classical economic theory. The latter is in part determined by its inability to get to grips with the former. But we can say that there are theoretical discourses, world views, mentalities and ways of life which are not simply intrinsic or secreted, but have a more complex basis.

But as we have argued, it is here that ideology intersects with hegemony2, for such ideologies are *articulated ideologies*. They are constructed around certain nodal points - beliefs, positions, interests and so on. We may even go so far as to say that they have a certain logos.

However, having identified this intersection, it would be wrong to then reduce hegemony - even hegemony2 - to ideological articulation. Such a position is found in the works of Laclau and Mouffe where subjects are interpellated outside of any real material structure. Both ideology and hegemony get submerged in the workings of the 'text'.

Then at the level of hegemony2, the reduction of hegemony to ideology effectively reduces it to world views, or a kind of willed subjectivity. This is clearly wrong.

But it is at the level of hegemony2 that the two coincide most closely. Here it is possible to say that ideologies are constructed around a world view which reflects the interests of the dominant group. But again, in this relation, hegemony is the articulator whilst ideology represents.

Thus Gramsci is correct to talk of 'historically organic ideologies' which are structurally determined in the sense that they are necessary to a given structure and that they organise human masses and create the terrain on

which they move.[16]

Such ideologies are historically organic in the sense that they combine their social function with the active intervention of historical forces. And this active intervention of historical forces is part of the hegemonic project. Ideology then becomes the means by which hegemonic struggles are expressed and represented. Articulated ideologies assume a more explicit political character, serving certain interests.

We must conclude this chapter with a warning. For the concept of ideology has caused huge problems to Marxists. Yet we must remember that Marxism is not analytical philosophy and that the Marxist understanding of the world makes it impossible to apply precise categories. Thus there should be no counter position between different forms of ideology - either in its intrinsic sense or as an articulated discourse. The world is complexly structured out of a multitude of relations. For critical realism the objects of knowledge are not things as such (for this would represent a form of atomism), but relations, processes, causes, mechanisms, contradictions and dialectical determinations. This means ideology cannot be defined in such a precise way - indeed it would be ideological to try to do so. Just as ideology itself spans many social fields, so too must the concept.

But by noting the complexity of ideology we can also examine how it is closely related to hegemony. As it spans society hegemony interacts with ideology in its different forms. In securing the conditions for the reproduction of the social formation hegemony1 must interact with the intrinsic ideologies secreted by human practices. But as dialectics teaches us, hegemony and ideology do not simply extrinsically relate to one another, they are also intrinsically linked so that hegemony is also what it is by virtue of its relation to ideology. This is most apparent at the level of hegemony2 where the concepts cannot be properly separated although we can say that whilst

ideology is the articulation of ideas, hegemony articulates other social features as well.

Notes

1 R.Bhaskar, Plato etc., (London 1994), p.95.
2 R.Bhaskar, Dialectic, p.154.
3 Ibid., p.278.
4 R.Bhaskar, Plato etc., p.94.
5 R.Bhaskar, Dialectic, p.153.
6 M.Foucault, Discipline and Punish, (London 1977), p.194.
7 C.Buci-Glucksmann, Gramsci and the State, (London 1980), p.182.
8 SPN, p.276.
9 See SPN, pp. 87, 98.
10 SPN, p.112.
11 FSPN, p.263.
12 Much favoured by the cultural theorists around Perry Anderson, this view appears in Gramsci, SPN, p.18.
13 L.Althusser, Essays on Ideology, (London 1971), p.44.
14 L.Althusser, For Marx, (London 1977), pp.233-4.
15 Ibid., p.232.
16 SPN, pp.376-77.

Chapter 7
Objectivity and Intersubjectivity

Introduction

The next step we must take is to establish in what kind of way hegemony has an objective validity and on what basis this objective validity is to be understood. This involves the question of the concept of intersubjectivity. First intersubjectivity may be opposed to objectivity. Second it may in fact claim to represent, or be the nearest approximation to, objectivity.

What is at stake is not just the concept of hegemony, but the concept of the society within which hegemony is located. Does this society have an objective basis in the way that the natural world does? Or can it only be understood as a set of intersubjective relations? And can these intersubjective relations themselves claim objective validity?

Our argument is a critical naturalist - or indeed a critical hermeneutic - one. Human society is distinct from the natural world in the sense that it contains intersubjective relations and is mediated through knowledge, language and other systems of understanding. But it is not exhausted by this conceptual basis. Society is also a part of the natural world and has a basic material context.

The distinction between intersubjective and objective accounts of society is therefore a distinction between those approaches - like the hermeneutic one - which give primacy to processes of mutual understanding, communicative behaviour, normative consensus and so on, and those approaches which give primacy to the material structure of society, the generative mechanisms and economic mode of production as well as the

process of the material reproduction of such structures.

In terms of hegemony, we are distinguishing between intersubjective accounts which give primacy to the hegemony2 processes of agential interaction, group interests and particular hegemonic projects, and a more objective account which examines the hegemony1 basis of the reproduction and cohesion of the social formation, and the relation between agent and structure.

The Philosophical Tradition

Intersubjective accounts of human activity tend to make two reductions which nevertheless must be distinguished.

1- An ontological reduction which reduces *society* to human forms of action, behaviour and meaning. Such an approach is anthropomorphic, often embracing a praxis ontology which defines the social, and the limits of the social, on the basis of human practice alone. The social world is reduced to human activity.

Such an approach looks at human practices whilst denying or minimising the effect of social structures. At best these social structures are reduced to the forms of human activity that they govern. Consequently intersubjective accounts of society shift emphasis from an analysis of intransitive social structures, to the transitive processes of human understanding. This explains the individualistic, consensual and linguistic aspects of these accounts.

2- There is also the epistemological matter of the status of *social science*. This is linked to the fact that the social world is seen as distinct from the natural

world. The effect, however, is a rigid separation of the methods of social and natural science based on this conception of radically different subject matters.

It is common for the intersubjective approach to view social science as a conceptual science. Its role is thus reduced to the study of meaning, rationality, behaviour and other forms of human interaction. Our complaint is that, whilst these aspects need serious examination, social science is not exhausted by such an examination. Indeed we can only properly understand the conceptual basis of social science if we can also explain the objective structure of the social world which forms, shapes and generates human action and knowledge. Yet many approaches to social science either deny that society has an objective or intransitive structure, or claim that it cannot be studied.

If we adopt a realist position, we can then develop a view of social science as an *explanatory critique*. This recognises the conceptual - or perhaps more to the point, ideological, character of social relations - whilst also attempting to examine the processes that underlie these ideas. By attempting to explain the prior material basis, it is possible to analyse and debunk the various ideologies that are secreted by material practices.

We can see that the intersubjective view of the social world commits the epistemic fallacy, reducing social being to social knowledge and abandoning the intransitive dimension as either not applicable or unknowable.

But the intersubjective activity which takes place is dependent on pre-existing social material causes. Activity is not between one person or one group and another, but between agent and structure.

For example, we cannot simply speak of the relation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but rather, we need to look at the relations between the proletariat and bourgeoisie and the capitalist mode of production. To deny this is to reduce the capitalist mode of production to the activities of

the bourgeoisie creating an instrumentalist view of history - and the conspiracy theory that the bosses simply sit down and decide how the economy will work. In reality we know that it is the economy which largely determines the way the bosses work. The bosses and workers are both the products of a system.

Agents do have some role in determining how social structures may develop, but this is through the sort of mechanism characterised by Bhaskar as the transformational model of social activity. Unlike natural structures, these social structures are dependent on human practice and some human conception of this practice. But this is of a limited nature.

The social world has an ontological status, rather than being merely conceptual, subjective or intersubjective. This means that it is comprised not just of human actions or even just practices, but of social structures and generative mechanisms which are relatively independent and enduring. Like the structures of the natural world, social structures, when we study them, have an intransitive status. And whilst these structures are dependent on human activity for their reproduction, but this is on the basis that:

> people, in their conscious human activity, for the most part unconsciously reproduce (or occasionally, transform) the structures that govern their substantive activities of production.[1]

Thus we are also rejecting the humanist accounts which reduce society to the expression of groups and individuals, whilst ignoring structural determinations and constraints. And likewise such accounts reduce hegemony to its expression, rather than its conditions of being. Such a view is ontologically flat, reducing society to a surface level of operations, without developing the kind of depth analysis which is necessary if we are really to develop any kind of meaningful explanation.

The Hermeneutic Turn

The hermeneutic tradition can be traced back to many sources, but it is Kant who stands out as the most significant influence, leading to the dominance of neo-Kantians.

The world is knowable insofar as it is knowable *for us*. Hence the emphasis in Kant is on the knowing and reasoning subject and meaningful objects.

Hermeneutics moves towards rejecting Kant's individualistic transcendental consciousness, replacing it with an intersubjective social basis - a shift from the monological to the dialogical. The world is meaningful to us as part of a society. The transcendental aspect of the Kantian approach remains. The emphasis is on the necessary conditions for the knowledge and experience.

However, whilst transcendental realism would seek to locate these necessary conditions in the structure of the world, the neo-Kantians locate them in rational intersubjective activity and mutual understanding. There thus remains a transcendental universalism founded on what is considered to be the meaningful social interaction of the community.

Hegel helps hermeneutics break from Kant's emphasis on the transcendental consciousness. Through Hegel self-reflection is radicalised into a social and historical form.

Heidegger also helps to historicise understanding which is seen as the disclosure of meaningful experience, embedded in a practical context. Thus understanding is fundamental to Dasein (being-there). And Dasein is not simply cognitive, but is pre-structured and located in time. In this way Heidegger 'ontologises' hermeneutics. Understanding is both the horizon and the structure of Dasein.

For Dilthey human interaction and mutual understanding is mediated by the intersubjectivity of language and symbols. This forms the basis of our actions and understandings which in turn is the basis upon which we objectify ourselves - a self-formative process. Dilthey's intersubjective understanding - verstehen - looks for the possibility of a universally valid interpretation.

Implicit in (particularly the early) Dilthey is the individualistic and psychologistic view that the social world is created by the mind. Gadamer seeks to move beyond this through his use of Heidegger. Dasein incorporates ontological questions of temporality, otherness, 'throwness' and so on.

In the process of understanding there is a fusion of horizons which goes beyond our own private understanding and which embraces a historical horizon which is related to the past. The horizon forms our range of vision, but it is not fixed. It is something into which we move and which moves with us.

This gives understanding a critical aspect. Thus Habermas claims to side with Gadamer against Wittgenstein on the basis that language can reflect on its own conditions - rather than being a given set of games. Thus more emphasis is given to the conditions for meaningful dialogue and the problems of interpretation.

However, the result is that objectivity is now intermeshed with intersubjectivity. The notion of a fused horizon means that we are always inside our situation. We have a hermeneutic circle whereby texts can only be understood as representative of a world view, and world views can only be understood as a synthesis of such texts. Understanding, rather than being related to gaining knowledge of an object, is tied instead to the processes by which we reach agreement. Objectivity is now inseparable from the intersubjective context. Philosophy's role is reduced from examining the world, to examining the necessary conditions of knowledge, and the problems

and uses of language.

The Hermeneutic Method

Hermeneutics was initially confined to matters of interpretation in relation to a text. Gradually its field was extended resulting in the position that interpretations effectively define the social world.

The result is an emphasis on language and a distinction between the method of the natural and social sciences which, it is claimed, have radically different subject matters. The unfortunate consequence of such an approach is to leave the natural sciences in the grip of a positivist methodology. This effect is still visible even as late as Habermas (who has never adequately got to grips with the status of science and who describes the method of natural science as rational-instrumental).

In contrast hermeneutics poses the social scientific method as conceptual, focusing on meaning. Social studies therefore focus on conceptual connections - for example between behaviour and human understanding - and view the social world as a system of rules and social practices.

The emphasis on meaning results in human behaviour being connected to an intersubjective rationality. This implies a transcendentally universal notion of reason, tied to a dialogical conception of human practice. Reason is linked to human practice, whilst human practice is linked to processes of mutual understanding and meaningful interaction. Society is seen as rule governed, its basis is one of consensual activity.

Habermas begins a critique of the hermeneutic tradition arguing that the problem of interpretation has been reduced to this consensual basis. This fails to see that forms of social activity, and their conceptual basis, may be false or misleading. In particular, Habermas is keen to stress the distortion caused by

political and economic factors.

But Habermas leaves us with a *critical* hermeneutics without really challenging its basic assumption of a conceptually defined social world based on intersubjectively valid, rational social activity. His conception of distorted communicative behaviour is only valid if we accept the premise of an ideal speech situation.

This leaves intact the fundamental error of the hermeneutic tradition - the epistemic fallacy. Thus hermeneutic accounts reduce social reality to the conditions of its intelligibility, and reduces objects to our conceptions or descriptions of these objects.

The rationalism involved here is clearly a problem, for by reducing human interaction to its conceptual aspect, hermeneutics implies that agents are fully aware of their reasons and motives. Yet critical realists have argued that intentions and meanings are often either not known, or only partially known to agents.

And here is the crux. By giving primacy to questions of human interpretation, meaning, understanding and rationality, hermeneutics constructs a social ontology that is based on intersubjective human practices. This undermines the view that society is a structured entity, within which human activity plays a reproductive or transformatory role.

This immediately affects how we can conceive of hegemony. According to the intersubjective view, hegemony's basis lies in either a- the universally valid conditions for rational human consensus, or b- the distortion of an ideal situation. These views would presumably correspond to the notion of hegemony as both consensus and domination. But it is defined through the idealist notion of universal human rationality, rather than being given any material basis in the actual structures of the world.

We will insist therefore that a realist conception of hegemony is

incompatible with an intersubjective view of society which reduces our conception to forms of human behaviour and understanding. Instead hegemony is concerned with the unity of the social formation and with the reproduction, conservation or transformation of social structures. It is only through this process that the particular projects of human agents can be understood.

Wittgenstein's Language Games

If hermeneutic accounts reduce social reality to the conditions of its intelligibility, Wittgensteinian accounts go a stage further, questioning intelligibility itself. Thus, in the famous remark, we should not look for meaning but rather for use. Rather than inquiring into understanding, philosophy's concern should be with description.

Thus, whilst Kantians and hermeneuticists reduce philosophy to the problem of knowledge, Wittgensteinians reduce philosophy to questions about language. And as Wittgenstein says in the Tractatus, "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world".[2]

The early Wittgenstein assumes that only truth functional propositions are meaningful and that the world is made up of facts. Simple objects fit together to form states of affairs which in turn make up reality. "The world is everything that is the case"[3] and the "world is the totality of facts, not of things"[4]. As a consequence, reality is elucidated through the use of language. "The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts."[5]

Wittgenstein's early philosophy is solipsistic. The subject does not belong to the world but is a limit of the world.[6] He argues:

> In fact what solipsism *means*, is quite correct, only it cannot be *said*, but

it shows itself.

That the fact that the world is *my* world, shows itself in the fact that the limits of the language (*the* language which I understand) mean the limits of *my* world.[7]

The view in the Tractatus is that the world is my world and the way I live it determines its structure. This is important because Wittgenstein's break from this position is founded on a new concept of the intersubjectivity of the social world - most famously the private language argument. Obeying a rule becomes a practice which cannot be done privately.

So Wittgenstein moves from a solipsistic theory of the subjective certainty of inner experience, where our reality is a picture made up of propositions - reflecting a state of affairs - to an external, intersubjectively valid knowledge. Wittgenstein demonstrates how the sameness of meaning is based on our ability to follow a rule. This is intersubjectively valid, for how else would we know that we were following the rule correctly? Thus Wittgenstein's private language argument leads to the view that rules are social and that they provide the grounds for use and consistency.

But whilst Wittgenstein makes an important shift from private meaning to social usage, he is consistent in that his philosophy remains trapped in the study of language. Thus philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday.[8]

It is open to speculation whether or not Wittgenstein would allow for a social science which can study extra-linguistic practices and social structures. His own writings make no such reference, although we can see in the Wittgensteinian Peter Winch a reduction of the social to its conceptual basis.

Wittgenstein, however, is solely concerned with the task of philosophy. He argues that its role is to describe rather than to explain - hence the argument that we should look at use rather than meaning. He goes on to say

that "we must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place".[9]

It is clear that Wittgenstein offers description as an alternative to explanation. But can we adequately describe something without some sort of depth explanation? The consequence is an ontological flatness which suggests that things can be known at their surface level. This brackets off what lies behind language games, effectively denying that it has any bearing on the description. Hence:

> Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us.[10]

And of course, "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent".[11]

Combined with his notions of rule following and the private language argument, we can see that Wittgenstein's social ontology is founded upon intersubjective practices rather than on objective structures. Whether or not they do exist, since they have no bearing on philosophy's role, nor on our ability to give a description, external structures might as well not exist. Intersubjectivity has replaced objectivity.

But this is problematic to Wittgenstein's arguments. For he cannot say why a particular language game might take place, nor what it might represent, nor how it is determined. Language games just are, and we must ask no further than that. We are left with a surface description of human practices, with no ability to understand or criticise them.

There are also relativistic implications since it is only possible to criticise a language game from within it. And without an account of any underlying structures, each language game becomes its own foundation.[12] Lyotard uses this to his advantage to argue that language games are

incommensurable, each with their own separate and distinct narratives.

Finally, Wittgenstein's remark that we should not look for meaning but rather for the use can be taken in two directions. 1- We can go in the direction of Derrida and conclude that the search for a theory of meaning is a lost cause. 2- We can follow Jürgen Habermas and focus instead on questions of usage, practice, action, pragmatics and communicative action. This we will now investigate.

Habermas and World Views

Taking up the Kantian tradition, Habermas's emphasis is on knowledge, reason, Enlightenment and modernity. His social emphasis is on the loss of meaning, reification, distortion and emancipation. Central to his work is the Kantian belief that we have a practical interest in reason. As with Kant:

> Self reflection is at once intuition and emancipation, comprehension and liberation from dogmatic dependence.[13]

By extending this, Habermas can argue that historical materialism is a theory of society with practical intent.[14] Thus Marxism is seen as a critique rather than as a science or philosophy, expressing the fact that we have a practical interest in our freedom. This takes on a universalistic form (also to be found in the later works of Bhaskar).

Marx's advance over Kant is almost reduced to his emphasis on action. But this itself is criticised by Habermas for Marx throws together interaction and work as praxis - whereas Habermas is insisting on the distinction between what he reductively calls "instrumental action" - in particular economic activity, and communicative action.[15] By bringing the two together, Marx reduces the study of society to a scientific practice - thus undermining

epistemology and the basis for knowledge and understanding. Marx, according to Habermas, screens out reason and fails to grasp the normative content of modernity.[16]

This completely misses the point. As Bhaskar has written:

> it may be argued that Marx understands labour not just as technical action, but as always occurring within and through a historically specific society and that it is Habermas, not Marx, who mistakenly and uncritically adopts a positivistic account both of labour, defining it as technical action, and of natural science, which he sees as adequately represented by the deductive-nomological model.[17]

Much has been made of Habermas's supposed shift from a critique of ideology to a study of the lifeworld and how it is reified and distorted. The early emphasis on knowledge-constitutive interests is replaced by a theory of language and communication.

But Habermas is consistent in his project - and in his errors. The early emphasis on ideology is now absorbed into his theory of communicative action. Marx is criticised early on for failing to realise that power and ideology stem from the distortion of communication - rather than production. Habermas later reformulates this in terms of Marx's conflation of the lifeworld and system.

The system/lifeworld distinction refers to different spheres of social reproduction - material and symbolic - and their corresponding forms of human action - strategic and communicative. Habermas conceives of the system in a positivistic way, whilst seeing the lifeworld as intersubjectively constituted and symbolically structured.

We realise ourselves under conditions of intersubjective communication. These communicative practices in turn reproduce an intersubjectively shared lifeworld. This lifeworld, argues Habermas, "is

bounded by the totality of interpretations presupposed by the members as background knowledge".[18]

This has a linguistic foundation. Language fulfils the function of reaching understanding, coordinating actions and socialising individuals. It has become the medium through which cultural reproduction, social integration and socialisation takes place.[19]

The lifeworld is defined as a correlate of processes for reaching understanding. It is intersubjectively shared, so that mutual understanding forms a common horizon. This lifeworld forms the background for communicative action which in turn reproduces it.

Class consciousness, interests and action are all constituted intersubjectively.[20] This means that action is organised around intersubjectively shared values. No connection to material structures is made. They belong to the system. Instead, society is seen as woven out of language games, rules and practices.

As we would expect, Habermas attacks positivism for failing to establish the connection between knowledge and human interests. But like the rest of the hermeneutic tradition, Habermas's leaves unchallenged positivism's assumptions about science, technology and the realm that Habermas calls the 'system'. Habermas therefore implicitly inherits a positivist ontology (epistemic fallacy) and explicitly fuses the lifeworld of communicative action with an instrumentalist conception of labour, power and money.

However, Habermas's only real interest in the 'system' concerns how it comes to constitute a threat to the lifeworld. Thus, the capitalist 'system' distorts the lifeworld, encroaching on it, and causing reification and cultural impoverishment. Consensus is distorted by the influence of power and money. This leads to a crisis of the lifeworld - a loss of meaning and freedom as it is

colonised through monetarisation and bureaucratisation. The lifeworld ends up becoming a satellite of the system.

Here the influence of the Kantians is at its most troublesome. Rejecting Wittgenstein's 'positivism' of language games, Habermas argues that "language games only work because they presuppose idealisations that transcend any particular language game; as a necessary condition of possibly reaching understanding".[21] Habermas is arguing that there is a universally valid transcendental basis for communicative action and the lifeworld. The material intrudes on it and distorts it. However, it plays no role in constituting the lifeworld. This position is worse than postmodernist conceptions which at least include extra-linguistic structures as part of the text. Habermas, however, radically separates the two realms so that material structures have no bearing on how communicative action is initially constituted.

It is as if the intransitive intervenes into and distorts some ideal type of transitive behaviour, rather than the intransitive being constitutive of the transitive. This generates a dualistic separation of discourse from other material processes. Since their only role seems to be to distort, the argument is that discourse would be better off without them. According to Habermas's ideal speech situation, validity is not context bound but is the "transcendental moment of universal validity".[22]

But there would also seem to be a contradiction here. For if power and money distort communicative action in the lifeworld, what are we to make of behaviour centred around money - like the communicative action of the stock exchange? This surely represents a form of communicative practice, or a language game, which necessarily cannot be distorted by money, since money represents its authentic basis. Is this a special case? Is there a moral hierarchy of lifeworlds?

Habermas's argument extends to the welfare state. Displaying deep

illusions, Habermas argues that the goal of the welfare state system is to set free life forms structured in an egalitarian way - for individual self-realisation and spontaneity. However, the power functional system grows beyond the lifeworld and becomes independent![23] This fails in the most absolute way to see how the welfare system is on the one hand an aspect of state regulation and structural integration, and on another, the product of concrete class struggles. It cannot be transcendentally separated from either the capitalist system or the class struggle and seen as some ideal form which somehow, in a secondary sort of way, becomes distorted by power and money. It is not the case that power and money act as a medium by which functional systems cut themselves off from lifeworld and get integrated into the system. Welfare systems do not fall from the air in a nice neutral sort of way. They are a concrete embodiment of the regulatory needs of the capitalist system and the effects of the actual struggles.

By holding the lifeworld position, Habermas generates a simplistic picture of the social as a series of worldviews:

> They function in the formation and stabilisation of identities, supplying individuals with a core of basic concepts and assumptions...[24]

This is clearly inspired by Weber's concern with the institutional embodiment of human consciousness and the rationalisation of world views.

> These worldviews establish an analogical nexus between man, nature, and society which is represented as a totality in the basic concepts of mythical powers.[25]

Worldviews support a particular order, leaders and groups, and basic norms. They interrelate with consensus and institutional systems, generating the social order.

So we can see that Habermas's intersubjective theory of society commits him to a shallow notion of hegemony and a transitive view of reality which effectively abandons what we have called hegemony1.

Instead, hegemony is confined to the lifeworld and is centred on questions of consensus, behaviour and communicative competence. Hegemony derives its element of domination from the distortion of ideal communicative action through the encroachment of the system on the lifeworld. It is not derived from the material situation or the structures that constitute it.

The lifeworld is made up of worldviews which constitute an intersubjectively shared global knowledge. A crisis is represented by the disintegration of a unified worldview and the fragmentation of knowledge and culture.

However, whilst for Habermas this occurs when the system encroaches on the lifeworld, we might argue precisely the opposite. A crisis of worldview occurs when it becomes detached from the system.

Thus hegemonic unity is in accordance with the 'system' rather than fragmented by it. This is based on the notion of hegemony1 as representative of the reproduction of the social formation as a whole. However, Habermas does not have such a notion and instead sees the material world as an obstacle to hegemony, which for him would be reduced to the consensus/domination dichotomy.

We would argue that consensus is not an automatic or transcendental process, and that it is much more than an intersubjective notion. Since social consensus is not given, it needs to be constructed in accordance with the dominant trends in the 'system'. In the course of this process, class and group interests become prominent. Thus there is no division between lifeworld and system, but rather, as Gramsci puts it, hegemony is constitutive of the relation

between structure and superstructure.

And as David Held has argued, what matters is not so much the consensus of the majority, but of the dominant groups. Yet Habermas's notion of the lifeworld does not really allow for any kind of stratification of consensus, interest or hegemony.

For Habermas consensus has a transcendentally universal basis. Conflicts are a product of a failure of rationality. But we have argued that hegemony is not universal, but rather is a particular intervention, borne out of the impossibility of the universal. Habermas reduces ideology and hegemony to distorted communication. In fact they are connected to the reproduction of the 'system', as well as its occasional transformation.

The Objectivity of hegemony

We must reject the reduction of society and social science to human action - or interaction. Such views fail to provide a sufficient objective basis for hegemony developing either a rationalistic turn to meaning, or a practical turn to usage (often linguistic).

However, Gramsci is also often accused of having an intersubjective approach. Indeed Bhaskar brackets Gramsci with Lukács and Korsch in reducing Marxism to the expression of the subject (see chapter 2).

We can accept some of this argument. Certainly, in his efforts to escape mechanical materialism Gramsci has talked of absolute humanism and universal intersubjectivity. Indeed, Bhaskar's charge of "historicised anthropomorphic monism"[26] is certainly affirmed by the statement:

> Objective always means "humanly objective" which can be held to correspond exactly to "historically subjective": in other words, objective would mean "universal subjective". Man knows objectively in

> so far as knowledge is real for the whole human race *historically* unified into a single unitary cultural system.[27]

Thus, according to this position relativism is avoided by the promotion of a single knowing subject - Bhaskar makes the point that for Lukács this is the proletariat itself whilst for Gramsci it takes the form of the Communist Party. Consequently, Marxism comes to represent the scientific truth, approached asymptotically through history and confirmed by the end-point of Communism.

Bhaskar's critique rightly argues that such a position reduces the intransitive domain to the transitive processes of knowledge. As such, this is of no use to a critical realist theory. But we have also argued that there is a radical tension between Gramsci's philosophical writings and his political analysis. By separating this out we can reject the intersubjective view of hegemony as connected to world view and the affirmation of the subject through history, and instead examine the conditions for and operation of hegemony within the political sphere. This cannot be done with Lukács. With Gramsci it can.

Indeed ~~with~~ we have previously emphasised the importance of Gramsci's formulation (archaic though it might sound) that the historical bloc represents the unity of 'structure' and 'superstructure'. This is a clear rejection of the intersubjective view that hegemony operates merely between groups and is reducible to world views, praxis and hermeneutic struggles of interpretation and articulation. Under such a formulation history cannot be reduced to the actions of groups, but sets a context for such action within structural confines. Thus:

> it is not true that the philosophy of praxis 'detaches' the structure from the superstructures when, instead, it concerns their development as

intimately bound together and necessarily interrelated and reciprocal.[28]

If we abandon traditional understandings which describe the base as economic and the superstructure as cultural and political we can see that Gramsci's statement is more meaningfully applicable to the structural base and superstructural activity.

So even from Gramsci we can develop a concept of the objectivity of hegemony based on the fact that society is layered or stratified - thus objectively presupposing the need for organisation. The stratification and interconnectedness of the social makes hegemony a necessary part of the process of social reproduction.

Hegemonic groups in turn reflect this stratification since they themselves have their basis in the material relations that hold within society. But because the social whole is an open and dynamic whole, objective location is not sufficient in itself, but rather, provides the basis which hegemony then activates. Hegemony1 is so fundamental to these social relations that it is *inscribed* into them. The attributes of hegemony2 by contrast are *ascribed*.

Analysis of hegemony which is limited to some conception of intersubjective consensus cannot explain the basis on which this occurs. Without a conception of hegemony's objectivity it is not possible to say why one group becomes more dominant and is able to lead. Even if intersubjective theories of hegemony can hint at which hegemonic projects are successful, they are unable to answer why such a project should find success. Groups cannot just become hegemonic at the political/cultural level. They must have behind them the necessary conditions.

We can refer again to the examples to be found in the work of Lenin and Trotsky. The question of hegemony in Russia is more fundamental than

simply rulership and concerns its sociality under the objective conditions of combined and uneven development. Only in this way can the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie be explained as well as the difficulties faced by the Bolsheviks in establishing their rule. Likewise, the growth of the Stalinist bureaucracy cannot be explained in terms of its hegemony over other social groups. The hegemony of the bureaucratic strata can only be explained in relation to the general social conditions and the weakness of social cohesion.

Similarly, Gramsci's notion of passive revolution is founded on the fact that a social group facilitates its hegemony through the development of economic factors. We might say that hegemony's viability is founded on its objective relationship to the dominant social structures and the most dynamic generative mechanisms.

So whilst hegemony might be said to represent a convergence of different social agents, it also marks out the sites of different spacial and temporal convergences involving different sets of relations, mechanisms, structures, practices and processes. Here we find hegemony in its most objective sense as securing the reproduction of social combinations. This then indicates the vital strategic importance of the state as an organiser of hegemony, not just in the interests of particular groups, but in order to secure the basic unity of the social formation.

This is the objective basis for the distinction made between hegemony1 which is fundamental to the unity and reproduction of society itself and hegemony2 which concerns concrete hegemonic projects but which is rooted in the materiality of hegemony1. In this way the theory of hegemony combines the political moment of agency with the structural nature of social reproduction.

It can be concluded that the status of the concept of hegemony depends largely upon how we conceive of society. An overly hermeneutic account of

society that reduces it to its conceptual aspect or an intersubjective perspective that reduces society to the activities of different groups clearly cannot provide the necessary space for a functioning concept of hegemony. If, however, society is conceived of as objectively structured with underlying causal mechanisms and dominant processes, then hegemony must also be seen in its objective basis. Because of this close connectedness between conceptions of society and conceptions of hegemony (as securing the reproduction of society) we can steal Bhaskar's description of society and apply it to hegemony in both its 1 and 2 aspects. Thus the objective basis of hegemony can be said to rest on the fact that it is both the ever-present *condition* (material cause) and the continually reproduced *outcome* of human agency.[29]

Notes

1 RR, p.80.
2 L.Wittgenstein, Tractatus, (London 1922), 5.6.
3 Ibid., 1.
4 Ibid., 1.1.
5 Ibid., 4.112.
6 Ibid., 5.632
7 Ibid., 5.62.
8 L.Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, (Oxford 1958), 38.
9 Ibid., 109.
10 Ibid., 126.
11 L.Wittgenstein, Tractatus, 7.
12 Some followers of Wittgenstein, as is their inclination, would deny this relativism. Thus language games might be seen not as exclusive, but as overlapping and inter-related. But whilst this is a partial advance, it still fails to deal with the question of objectivity in relation to what underlies this matrix of language games, on what structures and mechanisms they depend, and on what basis we can theoretically distinguish and prioritise different games.
13 J.Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, (London 1972), p.208.
14 J.Habermas, Theory and Practice, (London 1974), p.3.
15 Ibid., p.62.
16 See J.Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, (Cambridge, Mass. 1987), p.320.
17 RR, p.141.

18 J.Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, vol.1, (Cambridge 1984), p.13.

19 J.Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, vol.2, (Cambridge 1987), p.86.

20 See J.Habermas, Theory and Practice, p.13.

21 J.Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p.199.

22 Ibid., p.322.

23 Ibid., p.362.

24 J.Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, vol.1, p.64.

25 Ibid., vol.2, p.56.

26 RR, p.140.

27 SPN, p.445.

28 FSPN, p.414.

29 PON, pp.34-35.

Chapter 8
Hegemony Through Time and Space

Introduction

Our analysis of hegemony has revealed it to have an objective, materialist basis. The next step is to inquire into its dimensions and its limitations. In this chapter we shall deal with questions of hegemony's temporality and spatiality as well as further enquiring into its structure, stratification, location and function.

Hegemony operates across space and through time and like space and time it is structured and layered. These help to define its physicality. Drawing on the idea of the duality of hegemony as both material cause and reproduced outcome we shall argue that it is both restrained and *ordered* by space and time and is also an *organiser*. The material conditions within which hegemony operates impose upon hegemony a spatiality and a temporality just as we can say that the concept of hegemony is inescapably historical and geographical. Yet at the same time it is necessary for hegemony to structure the social environment within which agents operate. This is part of the process whereby hegemony orders, articulates, describes, inscribes, locates, excludes and so on.

Whilst we will argue that space and time do not exist independently of the elements and relations they contain, we will argue that hegemony both structures and is structured by space and time. Hegemony is structured by the space it inhabits insofar as it operates with a given set of material conditions - within and between different structures, practices and mechanisms. There is therefore no problem in saying that space and time are in some senses prior to

hegemony as long as this space and time is that of the dominant structures and generative mechanisms within society which it is hegemony's role to secure the reproduction of.

But whilst hegemony is limited by this context, we can say that it also orders it. Indeed, through its operation it can be said to bind together time and space.

This is of course based on the idea that there are different spaces and times operating at different levels of the social totality.[1] We shall therefore also be concerned with the methodology surrounding space, time and totality. Some of the most fruitful debates in this field have involved theorists of the Althusserian and Annales schools.

Braudel and the Annales School

In Fernand Braudel's famous analysis of the Mediterranean, history is broken down into three time scales. Broadly speaking, these correspond to geographical time, social time and individual time.

In turn there are different histories. First of people and their relation to their surroundings. This has a sociological and anthropological aspect - the study of material civilisations, traditions and mentalities. But it also requires that geographical cosmological, geological and biological factors be studied. The second level concerns the social history of groups and groupings and involves the study of conjunctures, cycles and economic structures. Thirdly we have events and individual occurrences. These form a very fast history but it is often a misleading one. Braudel disparagingly refers to this more traditional sort of history as 'surface disturbance'. Such events are only really useful to the historian as signs and indicators.

The structures within these three levels are overlayered and

overlapping. The historian should be concerned not with the surface disturbances of events, but with what lies beneath the waves - the history of structures, economic systems, societies, civilisations and states. Such histories move at a slower but more meaningful pace. Of all the structures, the ones of the first level are given primacy. For Braudel, history is brought together by the slow endurance of the longue durée.

Braudel's emphasis on the longue durée means that reproduction is given an almost natural, mechanical aspect. Yet despite this, it is possible to insert a concept of hegemony into his structural division which would correspond to the three levels - the materiality of hegemony, a particular hegemonic process, and an individual hegemonic action. This would closely reflect the distinction between hegemony1 and hegemony2.[2]

More generally, Annales history is important because it insists on the multiplicity of structures, their time and their history. It analyses their diversity, distinctions, dimensions, movements and speeds. But history, through a notion of interconnectedness is brought back to the whole. This is well expressed by Marc Bloch in his book The Historian's Craft:

> Each type of phenomenon has its own particular dimension of measurement and, so to speak, its own specific decimal. [But] when ... we consider the evolution of society as a whole ... [t]he problem is to find the dominant note ... We have come to note that within any society, whatever its nature, everything is mutually controlled and connected: the political and social structure, the economic, the beliefs.[3]

Is a Total History Possible?

A fundamental problem concerning historical analysis is whether history can be viewed as plural and distinctive (in opposition to the Hegelian notion of a mono-linear development). Whilst this is desirable, it causes problems if we

also try to maintain the concept of totality. For totality, by its very nature does imply notions of total time, total space and total history.

Althusser's major theoretical advance is the notion of a complex totality resulting from a process of overdetermination. Within this are numerous distinct practices which, rather than forming an expressive totality, are overdetermined into a differential totality marked by its non-contemporaneity. However, there is a tension in Althusser's work which tends to undermine this. His notion of relative autonomy of the different parts of the social whole has a tendency to become an absolute autonomy whereby different aspects of the social whole end up with their own time, space and history.

The Annales historian Pierre Villar notes with concern how Althusser's theory of the social totality ends up by returning to a division of history into so many different histories.[4] He claims that such an approach will end up producing ideological theories of each special history unless they are in some way related to the social whole. Whilst Althusser is correct to point out the existence of distinctive histories each with its own peculiarity, he fails to sufficiently insist on the linking of these histories and their mutual overdetermination.

As Peter Osborne notes, Althusser's position requires us to "think of the whole from the standpoint of a variety of different localised presents ... [W]hat it rules out in principle is any conception of the development of the whole as a whole, whether at the level of the social formation, mode of production or history itself".[5] This makes it difficult to think of the various structures as part of an organic system which is reproduced and transformed through history.

Althusser does invoke the notion of the structure of the whole, suggesting that we go about "constructing *the Marxist concept of historical time* on the basis of the Marxist conception of the social totality".[6] This is

exactly how to draw out the notion of overdetermination. But to make sense of the overdetermination of the social whole surely implies that as well as the specific histories of structures, it is also necessary to recognise the history and time of the totality itself.

The Annales writers call this a 'total history' - a term that poses some serious problems. It could imply some sort of total time that imposes itself upon the various structures. If so, this would clearly destroy Althusser's notion of overdetermination and return us to Hegel and the idea of an expressive totality.

Villar's argument is that total history emphasises the philosophical matter of "*what the whole depends on,* and *what depends on the whole.*"[7] To grasp the totality is not to see it simply as an aggregate of its parts, but as a dialectical relation. We can only conceive of the whole through the articulation and expression of its parts. But equally, we can only fully grasp the part by analysing the determining influence of the whole (or at least other parts) upon that part. How one part relates to another again depends upon the whole. To deny this would be to isolate the particular from its context.

A corresponding notion of 'total history' would not therefore refer to an inclusive mono-linear development by which we judge all history but to a particular combination of specific histories. 'Total time' would correspond to the overdetermination of particular times. Its history can only be understood through its components. Total history could be said to correspond to the history of a particular social totality.

Ultimately we are not studying individual 'parts' of the social whole because Marxism recognises that we cannot study things in their separateness but in their interconnections. To study the part in relation to the whole means to study the part as a relation and not as an individual thing. The nature and meaning of a part are not fixed or given but are determined in relation to the

totality.

This carries over into our analysis of space and time for we can say, following Lefebvre, that there is a 'total space' in the sense of it being a "strategic space which seeks to impose itself as reality despite the fact that it is an abstraction"[8]

Reworking this formulation, we can say that the 'total' has an abstractness about it so that it exists not so much in concrete entities themselves as in the mechanisms and structures that underlie these. Thus, forms of ideology can be seen as fetishising the concrete entities in themselves without reference to the underlying structures or generative mechanisms. In this way ideology can be seen as the part imposing itself on the whole. By contrast, historical analysis must seek to totalise its approach; hence the importance of abstraction. To examine space and time in the abstract is to address the underlying social relations and to pick out the influence of the dominant structures through their articulation and influence within the whole. As Chris Arthur has stated, the totality cannot be presented immediately, its articulation has to be exhibited.[9]

Historical Method

Villar's idea of 'total history' only exists in any meaningful sort of way as a methodological guide and aspiration - to know each thing perfectly is to know everything and every connection. It can never be obtained. As realists we recognise that *the* totality is infinite. Knowledge can never hope to grasp in fullness this infinity and hence a 'total history' of it is impossible.

Nethertheless, the aspiration to a total history drives our inquiry. We believe in 'total history' in so far as we wish to attain a truer and greater understanding. As such, all scientific enquiry must aspire to totalisation. But

we must not naively think that by developing a more total analysis, we asymptotically approach the truth. This is one of Gramsci's idealist errors. Notions like totality, social formation and mode of production can only be grasped in the abstract. Concretely, the nature of the totality is disclosed by scientific and historical analysis.

Thus, critical realism stresses the theory of ontological depth based on the idea that it is necessary to move from the knowledge of manifest phenomena to an examination of the underlying structures that generate them. It is the stratification of reality itself that imposes on science this necessary method of abstraction and totalisation.

However, because we cannot grasp the totality in its fullness, it is necessary to pick out its dominant features and its hierarchy of causal processes, structures and generative mechanisms. Therefore, rather than talk of 'total history', it is more meaningful to talk about the analysis of stratified structural combinations or ensembles. We acquire a greater and truer understanding of a particular structure by acquiring knowledge of its place and role in different structural combinations. Rather than remaining trapped within the autonomy of structures, we can thus move to the structures of structures.

We approach totality with a dialectical rather than an accumulative method. As Bhaskar says:

> totalising 'outwards' from a particular feature is never just a matter of following up further connections; it is always potentially reciprocal, re-illuminating its point of origin.[10]

This method pre-supposes the fact that in reality, the connections make up the whole, but that the whole helps make the connections as well as the elements that are connected. The structure of reality (like that of the scientific method)

is also reciprocal. There are many different times and histories, but these have little meaning for us unless we can situate them in relation to a wider history. This does not mean "relating the diversity of the different temporalities to a single ideological base time" or "a single continuous reference time"[11]. It is to recognise that Althusser's talk of the "structure of the whole" implies a more 'total' history of this whole. If particular structures have their own history and time, then so too must the larger structures of structures. These structural combinations or ensembles must act, articulate and determine through their own qualities. This presupposes that they have some sort of history that acts upon and intervenes into the parts that make them up. Two aspects are noted by Bhaskar: 1. the form of combination causally codetermines the elements; 2. elements causally codetermine each other and so causally determine the form.[12]

So we are arguing that the social totality is indeed a complex construction, made up of parts each with their own specific time and history, but that these parts are not as autonomous as Althusser claims. They interact both with each other, and with the broader combinatory. This means that particular structures and practices cannot be understood in their own 'relatively autonomous' terms, but require reference to the wider totality, the social formation, the mode of production, the social combinations. Each structure is an integral part of a wider social system. Changes in structures and changes within the system as a whole reciprocally affect each other.

If we chose not to refer particular structures to a more 'total' history, then we simply end up with the particular history of that structure itself assuming a totalising function. Separated from a more 'total' history, particular histories become autonomous, inclusive, and hence, total histories. It is also a process that becomes increasingly ideological. If we do not have a broader, more abstract picture then time and reality are broken down into

smaller and smaller parts, each claiming to be inclusive. This then becomes a destructive process since each inclusive structure contains other, smaller structures and times. Is each in turn to be granted an autonomy of its own? Such a process takes us into the realm of Foucauldian micro-structures. As Ellen Meiksins Wood writes:

> What better escape, in theory, from a confrontation with capitalism, the most totalising system the world has ever known, than a rejection of totalising knowledge?[13]

Combinatories

> Must we then say that these 'morals', 'attitudes', 'thoughts', etc. are 'advanced' or 'backward', are 'survivals', have an 'autonomous rhythm' and so on? Would it not be better to say: to what extent is this mode of production, taken to be in place, functioning, according to its own model? In what areas does it do so? Over what 'durational scale'? In which sectors is it an effective totality (*already*, if it is developing, and *still*, if it has begun to become destructured)?[14]

As Villar illustrates, the parts cannot be understood if they are regarded as autonomous fields. It is necessary to study the part according to the determination of the whole. Instead of talking of the 'relative autonomy' of structures, we should refer to the *specificity* or *particularity* of structures.

The totality is a complex combination, a product of overdetermination. It contains survivals and an unevenness of development, a backwardness and forwardness all of which is reflected in the particular nature of its parts. The structured parts are distinct from the whole, with their own time and history. But they are also determined by it.

All this allows us to move closer to a form of structuralism envisaged by the critical realists. It is a stratified totality, layered with overlapping times

and spaces.

What notion of combinations Althusser and Balibar do have is too static and passive. These combinations are simply a combination of their parts. But it is not just that the nature of the parts determines the nature of the combinatory. The nature of the combination equally affects the nature of the parts. Structures do not simply determine themselves, they are also determined by their place and function within larger structural combinations.

So if Althusser can say that; "the system of the hierarchy of concepts in their combination determines the definition of each concept, as a function of its place and function in the system",[15] then we can add that the system of the hierarchy of structures in their combination helps determine the nature of each structure and its function and place in the structural system.

To understand a particular structure, we must also know its place in these broader formations. The questions of structural emergence and interplay take on a key importance. In this way we can conceive of the structured and stratified whole which critical realism is at pains to promote.

This requires that historical method continually seeks to totalise its analysis. Its aim should be to reveal ontological depth. It looks both at the parts which make up the structures and the structures which determine the parts. It looks at what each layer presupposes. How these combinations of structures develop and determine one another is not just another structural matter. It is a historical matter. But here we come to another problem - that of synchrony and diachrony.

Synchrony and Diachrony

According to Saussure, the scientific study of the structure of language can be broken down into two aspects, the synchronic and the diachronic. Language as

a system must be studied in its static state of synchrony. This corresponds to the place and hence the determination of each of the elements within the system. Diachrony, however, is only of secondary importance, concerning the evolution of the system. Putting it in its place, Saussure argues that if linguists take the diachronic perspective, they no longer observe language, but a series of events that modify it.[16] This structuralist legacy is repeated in Althusser's comment that "[d]iachrony is then merely the false name for the *process*, or for what Marx called the *development of forms.*"[17]

Althusser and Balibar would claim that they never became structuralists. In Reading *Capital* they direct a few comments against Lévi-Strauss, and raise a few objections to the synchronic - diachronic distinction. In 'Elements of Self-Criticism' Althusser claims that he was in fact a Spinozist rather than a structuralist. But all the writings go about reinforcing the structuralist's emphasis of the primacy of the synchronic over the diachronic. Thus:

> the analysis of the relations which appertain to a determinate mode of production and constitute its structure must be thought as the constitution of a theoretical 'synchrony' ... The concept of *diachrony* will therefore be reserved for the time of the *transition* from one mode of production to another.[18]

As a result Balibar confuses himself in the notorious theoretical detour concerning the theory of historical transition. The implication is that "all theory is synchronic insofar as it expounds a systematic set of conceptual determinations".[19] This leads Balibar to claim that the synchronic analysis of the mode of production leads us to stress several concepts of time. But as Peter Osborne puts it:

> Synchrony is not con-temporality, but a-temporality: a purely analytic

> space in which the temporality immanent to the objects of inquiry is repressed.[20]

Ted Benton points out[21] that to focus solely on synchronic relations is to study structures without regard to their persistence or transformation (since this is a temporal thing). It also undermines the notion of tendency - such as the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Tendencies are what they are precisely because they are historical and so contain a degree of contingency. As far as our study is concerned, it is essential to place the process of the persistence or transformation of structures at the forefront of our analysis since this is the context in which we understand human agency, and hence the concept of hegemony.

In structuralism the idea of a combinatory of structures is lacking in this historical element. Instead it is treated as a static concept defined in synchronic terms as the forms of combination. "Marxism *is not a historicism*", writes Althusser, "since the Marxist concept of history depends on the principle of the variation of the forms of this 'combination'."[22]

This means that the combinatory can have no real determining powers. It becomes a form deprived of any real dynamics. Thus Balibar is unable to give an account of a process of transition as driven by the dynamics present in the structural combination itself. Instead he invokes the 'diachronic transition' in a mythical sense. Althusser does have an account of the dominant effect that causes the whole to intervene. It is determination in the last instance. This conceives of the dominance of a structure over the other structures and the hierarchy of effectivity so that:

> only this 'determination in the last instance' makes it possible to escape the arbitrary relativism of observable displacements by giving these displacements the necessity of a function.[23]

Unfortunately we are left with this relativism because the last instance never comes. This is a direct product of structuralism's notion of synchronic unity. In the realm of the synchronic, the last instance never comes. Althusser privileges static structures over historical processes. The notion of the 'last instance' starts to look like an essentialist left-over.

Althusser claims that his pluralism depends upon his notion of the totality. The degree of independence of each level lies within the articulation of the whole.[24] But this, to use Martin Jay's terminology [25], is a latitudinal rather than a longitudinal conception. It denies historical developments a role in the constitution of these structures and relations.

The reproduction of structures may be of a 'synchronic' nature if looked at in terms of the unconscious reproduction of social forms by träger. But when looked at in terms of Bhaskar's transformational model of social activity, we get an immediate historification of this process. For as long as social agents are involved in the reproduction of social structures, then the possibility exists of transforming these structures. And against this threat, the ruling class may seek to secure the reproduction or preservation of these structures through historical, hegemonic projects.

Beneath this is the basic material thesis itself, the origin of hegemony. Hence Gregor McLennan defends Braudel against Althusser for retaining the crucial 'nature-relation' without which historical materialism would appear in relativist guise.[26] Althusser, McLennan claims, was aware of this. Yet he still conceives of Marxism, principally, as a science of society which stands outside of history and takes a synchronic attitude.

If we are to keep the concepts - and it is far from clear why we should (except perhaps as an analytical distinction) - then we should argue for the diachronic in terms of the 'longitudinal' which means the longer term (enduring), overlapping, times of structures. A 'latitudinal' notion of the

synchronic then takes on more of a spatial aspect.

Hegemony can be described as diachronic in that it concerns the reproduction, preservation or transformation of structures as well as the political direction of human practice. It is thus a project over time. Hegemony would be synchronic in the sense of its being intrinsic to the structure of society and determined by its spatial location.

The interweaving of structure with hegemony leads us to conceive of the structuralisation and spatialisation of time as well as time the temporalisation of structures and space. Synchrony and diachrony mutually codeteremine each other. Against 'historicism' we insist that history is understood according to the synchronic logic of structures. Against rigid 'structuralism' we insist that the synchronic structure is located in its diachronic context. Conjuncture would then be understood as a synchronic moment in diachrony, a coming together of different structured elements at one moment in time. As the frame is unfrozen we can see them speeding off in different directions, at different paces, into different combinations. Only in this diachronic context can we understand the ideas of backwardness or progressiveness, of combined and uneven development, of the specific times that mark the conjuncture.

Hegemony and Space

We have started to develop an idea of the terrain on which hegemony operates. This space cannot be separated from the historical movement of time just as time is the fourth dimension of space. Social structures, mechanisms and relations in general have a shape that is both spatial and temporal. Extension takes place through time as well as through space.

A realist theory of space is well outlined by writers like John Urry and

Andrew Sayer[27]. Following them we can say that space and time are not substances in themselves. They exist by virtue of the substances that occupy space and time and the relationships between them. However, as realists, we do not reduce space and time to relations between simple objects or events, but seek to analyse the structuration of space and time and the different underlying mechanisms and strata that constitute the materiality of the social and natural worlds. Space and time form the terrain for the endurance of these structures. This dialectical relationship is recognised in Sayer's argument that:

> space makes a difference, but only in terms of the particular causal powers and liabilities constituting it. Conversely, what kind of effects are produced by causal mechanisms depends *inter alia* on the *form* of the conditions in which they are situated.[28]

As we have argued, although space and time do not exist independently of the elements and relations they contain, they are in some senses prior to hegemony in providing the terrain on which it operates, whilst also being its reproduced outcome. Hegemony is structured by the space it inhabits insofar as it operates under given set of material conditions - within and between different structures, practices and mechanisms. This space is constitutive of hegemony in the same way that structures are, given that this space is nothing more than the space of the pre-existing (but reproduced) structure of society. As Poulantzas puts it, at this fundamental level:

> transformations of the spatio-temporal matrices refer to the materiality of the social division of labour, of the structure of the state, and of the practices and techniques of capitalist economic, political and ideological power.[29]

Hegemony is limited by this context, but through its hegemony1 function it plays the fundamental role in securing the reproduction of society and hence

the reproduction of the space of society. Hegemony works alongside spatial practices in the production and reproduction of particular locations, ensuring continuity and cohesion. It also works alongside ideology in developing representations of space which are tied to the dominant material practices. Through its operation hegemony binds together time and space.

Since social reproduction and transformation are set within a spatio-temporal context, hegemony depends for its success on its integration into this matrix. But, as Lefebvre argues, the relation between space and hegemony is dialectical:

> Is not social space always, and simultaneously, both a *field of action* (offering its extension to the deployment of projects and practical intentions) and a *basis of action* (a set of places whence energies derive and whither energies are directed)? Is it not at once *actual* (given) and *potential* (locus of possibilities)?[30]

Hegemony can therefore be seen in a strategic sense as well. The idea of hegemony as command over space and territory is graphically illustrated by Gramsci's talk of wars of position and manoeuvre. It represents a process of colonisation by means of strategic interventions, confrontations and resolutions, establishing a system of fortresses and earthworks.

But if this terminology suggests that hegemony is a military style imposition this would be wrong. For hegemony is not merely imposed but is a necessity. The complex and open character of society and the nature of its dominant features means that the imposition of order and the creation and control of space are required impositions - or imposed requirements. This can be ontologically grounded using Soja's formulation that conflict and contradiction are generated by the duality of space as both outcome-embodiment-product and medium-presupposition-producer.[31]

Given that the function of hegemony is not automatically given, it is

inescapable that space should emerge as the arena for different projects and struggles concerning reproduction, conservation, reinforcement or transformation. Whilst the abstract space of dominant social relations is relatively enduring, concrete space can be radically restructured or rearranged. Indeed, in current society fast moving changes in space and time are integral to the *stability* of society - witness the changes in fashion, architecture and electronics. But these changes are not radical in the sense of fundamentally changing underlying structures. Rather, they help to reproduce hegemony1 and secrete ideologies necessary to this.

This indicates how space is saturated with ideology and vice versa. For what, asks Lefebvre "is an ideology without a space to which it refers, without a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies?".[32] In other words, space and ideology are inextricably bound. Space acts as the site of ideological articulation and symbolic interaction. Space, in short, is representational.

In this sense we can also talk of ideological space. If we take the view that ideology is secreted by real spatial relations, then ideology, as a guide or map, has a spatial character itself. Its misleading character derives from its inadequate expression of the spatial terrain of social practices. We can therefore talk of hegemony capturing both 'real' space, and also ideological space.

From these relations flows a strategic connection, driven by hegemonising processes. The relation between space and ideology is both given and potential. Out of the necessary relation come different articulations and projects. Space is both necessary to the reproduction of ideology and the terrain for its application (although of course the application of ideology is also, in varying degrees, necessary to its reproduction). As our earlier distinction between secreted and articulated ideologies indicates, the

production of ideology is used strategically. Hegemony2 projects involve the articulation of ideology in conjunction with the control over space. And when Harvey argues that those who command space have control over place[33], he is recognising the congruence of space and ideology so that place is not merely physical location but ideological location as identity.

An aspect of the way in which space and place are controlled is disciplinary power. As Foucault's studies have shown, this is organised through techniques of regulation or self-regulation whereby the individual consents to this power relation. One way of conceptualising this spatially is through the idea of surveillance as control over territory and therefore over the practices contained within it. Once subjects are aware of this surveillance they consent to the power relation through the regulation of their behaviour.

More generally there occurs through space and time a routinisation of social life into regulated practices and behavioural norms. Ideologically this can be passed off as the mundane condition of everyday life and social practices get presented as de-politicised or neutral relations. Of course this is of clear advantage to the hegemonic group interests, but it is more fundamental than this as Marx's outline of commodity fetishism shows. Under capitalism, therefore, space and time are principally determined by this commodified form.

The Location of Hegemony

Hegemony1, in a Braudelian sense, consists of old methods and routines, inheritances and successes, repeated actions and processes. It represents the very materiality of our human interaction. It is fundamental to the unity of all human societies. As Braudel puts it:

> An order becomes established that it operates down to the very depths of material life. It is inevitably self-complicating, being influenced by the propensities, the unconscious pressures, and all that is implicit in economic societies and civilisations.[34]

Such complications give rise to the functional necessity of hegemony in human societies - functional in the sense that it holds together and directs society at a material level. Hegemony1 presupposes hegemony2 in two senses. These are a) *necessity*: the emergent sense - the actual realisation of the material conditions of hegemony in particular forms. This is the more functional aspect of hegemony2 - it realises hegemony's material necessity. b) *possibility*: Hegemony1 also provides the necessary conditions for the possibility of hegemony2 and whatever this may entail. The necessity of hegemony within human societies, stemming from its basic material role, allows for the use and abuse of hegemonic projects by competing groups and classes. The hegemony1/2 distinction is therefore also a distinction between hegemony (in an abstract sense) and hegemonic projects. So we can see that Braudel's examples of material life, its traditions, methods and processes give rise to different expressions, provide the material ground for different hegemonic projects.

This relates to the concerns of other Annales writers such as Ernst Labrousse who writes on the history of resistances to change. The different levels of society are dictated by their material roots, an influence that moves upwards, from the simple to the more complex, from the lower to the upper, from material processes to intellectual articulation. He argues that there will be a certain delay in the response of these higher level brought about by the 'deadweight' pressure of the base. Such pressure means that actually constructing hegemonic projects is a problematic business, leaving room open for counter-hegemonic projects. This is also taken up by Maurice Agulhon

who is concerned to unveil popular cultures, traditions, attitudes and resistances - the forms of which depend on the various objective structures.[35]

These conflicts are not simple struggles between the material 'base' and the more sophisticated ideological levels. Struggles exist between any number of conflicting rhythms and juxtaposed social practices. A whole range of inter-subjective or 'community' feelings, attitudes and traditions may be contained or combined in institutionalised forms. But we must remember the connection that these hegemony2 struggles have with the slower moving material base and the structural pressures that it exerts. This is not to say that the material base absolutely determines the success of hegemonic projects - (inversely, hegemonic projects can influence this base). However, it is this material base (and the functional role accorded to hegemony1) which provides the terrain for such projects. Hegemonic space must start from the raw materials of nature itself, before extending into its complicated strategic sphere.

Structure, Structuratum, Strategy

The distinction between time and space as belonging to abstract sets of structured relations and time and space in a more concrete form recalls the distinction made by Andrew Collier between structure and structuratum. As agents we do not act on the totality directly, we act on its parts. Neither do we act directly on the general structures that make up the totality. We unconsciously reproduce them through the sets of relations and social practices in which we are situated. But when we take more conscious or intentional decisions, we are relating more to the entities that Andrew Collier calls structurata.

A structuratum is a concrete entity, as opposed to a structure which is a more abstract set of relations. A structuratum is that which is structured, rather

than the structure itself. A particular economic institution would be a structuratum, whilst an economic mechanism would be a structure.

We act on the structuratum to change the structure. Whilst the structuratum has a structure, it is also related to a wider set of structures. Thus we have a relation between the structurata and the wider structures within which they are set. Whilst we principally act upon structuratum, we may also be changing the broader structures of which that structuratum is a part.

As far as intentional human projects are concerned, we must pose the question of why we change structurata. Do we seek to actually transform the structures which lie behind them, or are we making changes to structurata (like the NHS or the Constitution) which are merely an amelioration of a state of affairs?

So for example, if a house is a structuratum, we may change the door of the house without changing the basic structure of the house. But if we change a wall of the house, we change both the structuratum and the structure.

Socially, we may change the structuratum to the point of either transcending or destroying it (revealing its contradictions) yet we may conceive of this as part of a broader project to transform a wider structure. Thus we transform the broader combinations by acting on its parts. For example, the structural combinations that constitute the labour movement might only be meaningfully transformed through the process of the transformation and destruction of the Labour Party (as a political and ideological deadweight).

Conscious hegemonic projects may seek to act upon or within the concrete structurata (social institutions). But they are broader than this for two reasons. They may be part of a conscious, concrete totalisation. Such a hegemonic project might seek to transform a trade union structure as part of *wider project* to transform society. The former is part of the means for doing

the latter. Second, hegemonic projects are always located within a *wider material context*. Hegemony2 projects are dependent upon the material function of hegemony1. And the concrete structurata that action directs itself towards have behind them a multitude of social structures. Because of this, hegemonic projects (hegemony2) often have broader (often unforseen) consequences. Narrow political projects may have broader, unforseen economic consequences.

The relationship between a hegemonic project and its broader, more 'total' context can be illustrated by the fight against the bureaucratic structures of eastern Europe. The social agents, lacking a totalising hegemonic project did not conceive that what they were doing had more far reaching consequences in terms of the global economy (or even their national economy). Many workers and students acted in good faith around a certain set of progressive political demands, without seeing that they were also being mobilised as part of a broader economic project of pro-capitalist elements of the bureaucracy, petit bourgeoisie and foreign capitalists.

This scenario could work the other way round. A more narrow economic project like a trade union struggle around pay and conditions may develop much wider political consequences. The more narrow consciousness may be transcended into a broader, more political conception. Therefore a hegemonic project can be measured in terms of a transformation from the unconscious reproduction of structures to a more conscious acting upon the structuratum of society, and by changing this structuratum - eg. seizing land, banks, control of state apparatuses and so on, it is possible to transform the dominant (economic/market) structure of a society.

Mentalities and Modernity

Michel Vovelle is another Annales writer influenced by Althusser. In Ideologies and Mentalities he examines what he calls the co-existence of different forms of collective representations and the overlapping of different sensibilities.

Vovelle's work also introduces us to the important concept of mentalities. This provides a link between mental aspects of societies or communities and the array of material structures or "the dialectical relationship between the objective conditions of human life and the ways in which people narrate it, and even live it".[36]

For Vovelle, mentalities exist in the longue durée as ceaselessly reworked and distorted products, images, memories and traditions of the collective imagination. They are implanted in layers of slow history, cultural inertia and tradition:

> Moving from social structures to collective attitudes and representations involves the whole problem of the complex mediators between real human life and the images, or even the fantastic representations, which people construct and which are a basic part of the approach to the history of mentalities ... [it] deals with the interlacing of historical time, to use Althusser's expression, meaning both inertia in the diffusion of key ideas and the co-existence, at various stratified levels, of models of behaviour inherited from different traditions.[37]

If we draw these ideas together, we can start to develop a very useful notion of 'mentality'. This would include Bloch's notions of collective representations, attitudes, assumptions and unconscious beliefs. The importance of the concept lies in its linking of the collective, intersubjective, or even subjective modes of thought, with the objective structures of human society. This link is not a momentary or conjunctural one, but a deep structural one linked to the very

materiality of our being. With mentalities, the cultural aspect is more prominent, starting from traditions and moving up to sensibilities. It is a more totalised attitude than any *particular* ideological viewpoint, perhaps best compared to Gramsci's notion of common sense, or to Lefebvre's 'everyday life'.

The fact that these mentalities or common senses in everyday life have a strong cultural element highlights their hegemony1 aspect. They represent an ingrained backdrop or rolling landscape as seemingly natural as the hills themselves. For common sense depends for its functioning on its ability to 'naturalise' the space and time around it. And as these mentalities make their slow movement through history, they present themselves as tradition - the eternal future. Mentality may therefore represent a synthesis of tradition and common sense located in the longue durée.

We may sense a partial breakdown of this, however, with the advent of modernity, or more particularly, the development of capitalist society. The faster pace of capitalist production, its time as production time, labour time, commodity time or consumable time and its commodification, urbanisation (suburbanisation) and globalisation of space, has broken up the ways of the past. At a cultural level this is reflected in the arrival of 'modernity', a self conscious breaking from the past and a tearing away from tradition. The result is a shift in the pattern of social hegemony from the longue durée of material life to the reproduction of hegemony1 (material conditions) through the application of hegemony2 projects in the cultural and political sphere. Hence we can see what makes hegemony such a prominent feature of modern society. The acceleration (or even negation or 'emptying out') of time and the compression of space means that the basic unity of the social formation (hegemony1) has to be secured in a more prominent way, through political projects and state interventions.

As David Harvey argues, ideological and political hegemony within society requires the ability to control the material context of social and personal experience.[38] In the feudal period, this control was an accepted part of everyday life, legitimated by the cycle of the productive system itself. But with capitalism the political relations are not so intimately bound to the system and they do not have their own self-generating legitimacy. This has to be achieved through the conscious application of political projects at the level of hegemony2.

The Explosive Tri-Unity of Space-Time

It is absolutely correct to reject the idea that there is some single objective time by which everything can be measured. But as David Harvey has written, this is more a case of recognising "the multiplicity of the objective qualities which space and time can express, and the role of human practices in their construction".[39] This implies that we examine space and time from the point of view of their relation to objective material processes and examine the social totality as a differentiated and stratified whole.

Hegemony is involved with processes of reproduction, conservation and transformation and is therefore located within this structured context. Given the complex stratified character of this material basis, hegemony must perform not just within social structures but between them. Its role is to secure a functioning unity amongst different levels, practices, structures and mechanisms. It is from this context that the spatial-temporal conditions emerge.

Hegemony encounters time and space within this material context as structured but plural and differentiated. They reflect the stratification, layering and overlapping of reality itself. However, hegemony, within structural limits,

can rework this space and develop it - firstly in accordance with the necessity of securing the unity and cohesion of the social totality or the reproduction of specific structures, secondly according to the possibility of strategic intervention according to specific social projects. Such projects represent a different level of hegemony realised through a process of emergence and reliant on the spatio-temporal possibilities of location.

Drawing on this distinction between the two levels of hegemony we can relate certain features of space and time to hegemony1. These are most closely tied to the material structure of society and the dominant generative mechanisms, in particular the material basis of production. They affect the basis of civil society itself, rather than simply hegemonic projects within it. Under capitalism time and space become 'emptied out' and technicised whilst social life becomes routinised and commodified. Social and political ideologies become abstracted and universalised. The ideology of 'modernity' launches its attack on the past and its severance from tradition - although in reality it is itself a tradition that portrays itself as starting from now-time and extending into an eternal future of progress (or in its extreme form a progress without history, or a postmodern messianic eschatology). At hegemony1 time and space are presented as globalised into a single realm, universal and dynamic. Meanwhile, counter-hegemonies are broken up and fragmented, confined to plural space and micro time.

Therefore, if a counter-hegemonic project is to be truly successful, it must transcend hegemony2 battles with other hegemonic projects (or go beyond this terrain), and fundamentally alter the hegemony1 of society. It has to challenge the relatively enduring space and time generated by the underlying social structures and to engage in a process of transformation.

Because of the relative weight that hegemony1 has over hegemony2, a transformative project is not easy and is really only achieved under conditions

of structural crisis. Then the gaps and fractures that start to open up allow counter-hegemony more of a chance to squeeze out its own space. The structured context means hegemony must make what it can out of the limited space-time resources and work as best it can within what Giddens calls capability constraints.

Lenin made the famous but often ridiculed statement that socialism equals soviets plus electrification. But we can see that this slogan is concerned with the idea of *socialisation* through social organisation *and* the development of the forces of production. The soviets represent a form of social organisation, electrification a means by which this social organisation is extended over space and time. For in the Soviet Union, in those early days, electrification meant the capturing of time - enabling night work and so on - and the compression of space - allowing communication, transport and energy to overcome the vast spatial distances and climatic conditions. Control was to be established over the very geography of the Soviet Union.

The task in Russia was both to take advantage of and then contain the uneven spatio-temporal character of capitalist development. This was a product of the internationalisation of relations spatially configurated as a centre - periphery relationship, the development of new social classes and strata like the comprador bourgeoisie and urban, industrial working class, and the development of different political and social movements based on new locations of struggle. All this creates a new terrain for hegemonic alliances, allowing for new historical blocks and counter-hegemonic alliances drawing elements from different layers and moving at different speeds. ···

In some senses the spatial terrain of capitalism has a pre-given character that is linked to the processes of production and the relations of production. But within this framework space can be won and lost on the basis of the physical construction of a hegemonic bloc which can forge together a social

unity, whilst also maintaining a clear direction. Because of the complex spatial structure of society, such direction is only really secured when hegemony is able to operate through the aegis of state power. Through the centralisation of power it is then necessary to regulate and balance the different groups and the spaces they occupy. The dominant hegemony must also be studied in its relation to other hegemonies. Just as we say that hegemony seeks to construct a power bloc out of various groups and their interests, so the dominant hegemony must try to co-ordinate the more regional hegemonies. The effectiveness of the dominant hegemony must be measured against its ability to colonise or contain these various regional hegemonies.

Even more difficult is the task of a counter-hegemony which must break down a number of spatial barriers. Whilst reproduction has a more unconscious character, transformative projects require the revolutionisation of space and time. It must act against the inertia of the society expressed in its hegemony1 form and the consciousness of agents.

Counter-hegemonic struggles express the radical nature of the concepts we have employed. Starting from a relatively limited location, they must seek to transform and transcend, utilising the capabilities of presence and overcoming or negating absences. A truly radical hegemonic project will seek to totalise its ambition. Its growth, if it is not contained, will express itself in the explosion of revolution. This in itself will not be enough to guarantee its future. But hegemonic victories encourage spatial factors to fall into place. If hegemony can truly start to alter the basis of society, then capability constraints can be transferred to opponents, whilst structural enablements nourish hegemony's roots.

Notes

1 Although Althusser is commonly associated with this position, John Urry makes the interesting point that he ignores the question of geographical space and "that there is no reason to suppose that there is any less relative autonomy spatially than temporally". He also goes on to make the point which we will stress in this chapter that "it is necessary to investigate both the temporal and spatial interdependence *between* different levels or structures, not only those relations within each". J.Urry in D.Gregory and J.Urry (eds.), Social Relations and Spatial Structures, (London 1985), p.28.

2 The three levels might also be related in a different way to Giddens's notion of three time scales - the longue durée of historical time, the durée of activity and the Dasein of individual-time. See A.Giddens, A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, vol.1, (London 1981), p.19.

3 M.Bloch, The Historian's Craft (Manchester 1992), pp.152-3 and 155.

4 P.Villar in G.Elliott ed, Althusser: A Critical Reader, (Oxford 1994), p.15.

5 P.Osborne, The Politics of Time, (London 1995), pp.24-25.

6 L.Althusser, Reading *Capital*, (London 1979), p.97.

7 P.Vilar in G.Elliott, op.cit., p.40.

8 H.Lefebvre, The Production of Space, (Oxford 1991), p.94.

9 In C.Arthur (ed.) Engels Today, (London 1996), p.194.

10 SRHE p.112.

11 L.Althusser, Reading *Capital*, pp.104-5.

12 SRHE p.109.

13 E.Meiksins Wood, Democracy Against Capitalism, (Cambridge 1995), p.2. Also C.Hay 'Narrative as Metanarrative' in Transformations, no.1, p.243, (Washington 1995), argues that Foucault rejects metanarratives only to formulate equally totalising narratives in localised contexts.

14 P.Villar in G.Elliot, op.cit., p.26.

15 L.Althuser, op.cit., p.68.

16 F. de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, (London 1959), p.90.

17 L.Althusser, op.cit., p.108.

18 E.Balibar, Reading *Capital* p.297.

19 Ibid., p.298.

20 P.Osborne, The Politics of Time, pp.27-28.

21 T.Benton, The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism, (London 1984), pp.76-77.

22 L.Althusser, Reading *Capital*, p.177.

23 Ibid., p.99.

24 Ibid., p.100.

25 M.Jay, Marxism and Totality, (Cambridge 1984), p.409.

26 G.McLennan, Marxism and the Methodologies of History, (London 1981), p.139.

27 See for example D.Gregory and J.Urry (eds.), Social Relations and Spatial Structures.

28 A.Sayer in ibid., p.52.

29 N.Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, (London 1978), p.98.

30 H.Lefebvre, The Production of Space, p.191.

31 E.Soja, in D.Gregory and J.Urry eds, Social Relations and Spatial Structures, p.99.

32 H.Lefebvre, op.cit., p.44.

33 D.Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, (Oxford 1990), p.234.

34 F.Braudel, Capitalism and Material Life, (London 1973) p.243.
35 M.Agulhon, Republic in the Village, (Cambridge 1982), pp.ix-xi.
36 M.Vovelle, Ideologies and Mentalities, (Cambridge 1990), p.12.
37 Ibid., p.18.
38 D.Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, p.227.
39 Ibid., p.203.

Chapter 9
Economy and Hegemony

Introduction

This chapter will attempt to bring together three modes of analysis which are mutually compatible and reinforcing. These are critical realist methodology, a theorisation of hegemony and the debates around accumulation and regulation. Together, these offer greater explanatory power, moving beyond traditional Marxist analysis of social and economic relations. This will be done through an outline of the current socio-economic crisis.

In doing so we will reject the model of base/superstructure determinism. One such case is Ernest Mandel's theory of 'long-waves' of capitalist development where the 'superstructural' elements fall into line with the autonomous logic of the economic.

Against this, we will argue that the conditions for economic reproduction need to be socially secured. We can still maintain that the economy is the main social driving force, but it is a driving force within a set of stratified and mutually co-determining structures.

Mandel's Late Capitalism minimalises the effects of post-war hegemonic relations. History since 1945 is attributed to a long-wave with an expansive rate of profit. This is based on a weakening of the working class by fascism and the second world war leading to a rise in the rate of profit and technological developments.[1] Mandel argues that after the Second World War there was a strong growth in material production and an expansion of the world market brought about by an increased rate of profit. Subsequently, there was an upsurge in capital accumulation.[2]

We will take a different starting point. The war facilitated new *methods*

of accumulation and a more intensive form of *state regulation*. This allowed for the post-war boom. It is true to say that this post-war boom was dependent on the mass destruction of capital caused by the second world war. But even if this laid the basis for the post-war boom, it could only have been developed by active state regulation of the type outlined below.

The difference of approach leads to a very different assessment of the current political situation. For Mandel and other 'classical Marxists', capitalist expansion floundered as a result of a slowing rate of profit and an upturn in working class struggles in the 1970s. Hence, the current social crisis is only an expression of the inherent crisis state of capitalism. The social crisis reflects the economic crisis which in turn reflects the old capital/labour antagonism. This tells us very little as to why the rate of profit slowed or why working class struggles intensified. Below we will outline how these were essentially a result of the breakdown of Fordist methods of accumulation and the crisis of state regulation. A regulation-based approach would argue that the inherent crisis-ridden nature of capitalism requires certain socio-political interventions. The current crisis is therefore not simply a product of the inherent laws of capital. It is a crisis of the *social conditions* necessary to try and overcome the inherent laws of capital.

Although the state is clearly best placed to perform the central regulatory function, there is not a necessary link between forms of state regulation and the needs of capital. The state is a complex, heterogeneous combination with its own (often varied) political dynamics. Hegemonic strategies may actually act against capital accumulation causing social crises. On the other hand, it is only really through the state and state intervention strategies that the differences between individual capitalist interests can be reconciled or at least controlled. The period of Fordism is represented by intensive accumulation and a monopoly form of regulation. This in turn presupposes the kind of political hegemony associated with the various post-

war settlements.

Gramsci, writing before the new order was fully secured, was still quick to see the emerging importance of three inter-related factors - Fordist style production, the Americanisation of international relations (both political relations and relations of production), and the opening of a new period of state intervention. Firstly, he recognises:

> that *laissez-faire* too is a form of State 'regulation', introduced and maintained by legislative and coercive means. It is a deliberate policy ... a political programme...[3]

However, this is being superseded by:

> Fordism as the ultimate stage in the process of progressive attempts by industry to overcome the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.[4]

Gramsci goes too far in equating the state with civil society, however, it seems clear that it is essential to see political hegemony in the context of state regulation strategies.

The State, Regulation and Hegemony

It is necessary to start from the structuralist emphasis on the importance of relations of production. Those theories which instead emphasise the primacy of productive forces are unable to explain the current period, except by resorting to the timeless formulas of economic crisis, productivity, surplus value, inflation, overproduction and the class struggle. These may be combined in various ways, but they tell us nothing specific, and hence carry no real explanatory power.

By emphasising productive relations instead, we can start to analyse

just how productive forces develop. Our argument is that productive forces do not develop automatically or autonomously. It is necessary for the productive process to be organised and directed. In the twentieth century, this has largely been down to state and corporate strategies.

On the basis of this, we should therefore also reject those theories which argue that economic processes are in some way automatic. Our argument is that economic processes are firmly linked to social structures and political strategies. *The conditions for economic reproduction are socially secured and politically advanced.*

We reject, therefore, arguments, such as that of Mandel, that the spheres of production and accumulation have become largely technicised and self-regulating.[5] There is a requirement to secure the conditions for production through different techniques of accumulation and associated forms of regulation. This regulation is closely associated with state strategies and hegemonic blocs and hence has a highly political character. The state's justification for its intervention to help secure the conditions for capitalist accumulation has led it to embrace and espouse a whole number of social ideologies including populism, welfarism and social democracy. These social, political and ideological structures are an integral part of the process of economic reproduction.

Therefore, against theories which attempt to uphold the autonomy of certain branches of the social system, we argue for an emphasis on the *totality* of social relations and social functions. This means that the critical realist theory of the transformational model of social activity must be a stratified and totalising theory conceiving of the connected and co-determined nature of social structures and processes: In line with this position, the state should be seen as a form determined social relation, the site of class strategies and political interventions.

It is no accident that there is no classical Marxist theory of the state.

The state must be analysed according to its specific form and nature as the outcome of several complex interactions and functions.

However, we can give two basic criteria for assessing the process by which the state form and its class nature are determined. The concrete outcome is a product of their combination.

1. The state is determined in relation to the economy in what could be called a functional sense. The state acts in a functional way to help secure and reproduce the conditions for economic production.

2. The state is also the strategic terrain for the unfolding of political hegemonic projects. In short, it is the site of political struggles, where the interests of the ruling class are inscribed, to secure cohesion between different class fractions.

We can see that this immediately reveals a dialectical equation. The capitalist state, in a functional sense, must meet the general interests of capital. However, the state also acts as a terrain of struggle between different groups which may correspond to particular capitals.

The situation is complicated further where more than one economic mode of production is present in any one social formation. Here we must study which one is dominant and which one the state promotes and defends. It may promote other modes of production, for example nationalised property forms in Russia. But this is done in the context of the needs of the dominant (i.e. capitalist) mode of production. In Russia, to secure the necessary conditions for the expansion of the capitalist mode of production, it is necessary for the state to promote aspects of other modes of production in the interests of capital.

We should be careful with the second point and not see it in isolation.

This is a principal error of Poulantzas and the Althusserian school when arguing for the autonomy of the political from the economic. As a result, their analysis of the state became more and more the analysis of the class struggle. They developed Eurocommunist positions which argued for the capture of the state through civil society. Whilst rejecting universalistic theories of the state, we can still maintain that its capitalist nature is inscribed into it from the very start. This derives, *not from the bourgeoisie*, but from the *structural function* of the state in securing the conditions for economic reproduction. To be specific, to secure the conditions for capital accumulation.

If the state does have an autonomy, this is not the structuralist notion of political autonomy where the economy is determinant in the last instance, but is expressed in the fact that the economic determines every instance. Peter Burnham makes the important point that:

> Within the capitalist system there is no other basis for the formation of the general interest than the state. In this sense, the state has an autonomy which is not political but which rests on its role of expressing the general conditions of accumulation and determining overall economic strategy.[6]

Strictly speaking, it is misleading to describe states as 'bourgeois'. This creates illusions that the state is a mere instrument of the bourgeoisie. What do we then make of a fascist state whose apparatus is in the hands of sections of the petit-bourgeoisie? And what do we make of Russia and other states whose societies contain only very weak bourgeoisies?

Of course, they are capitalist states, but they derive much of this characterisation from their structural function. The state is a capitalist state if its main function is to secure the conditions for capital accumulation.

However, this functional definition should not be used as an excuse for economic determinism or any other form of essentialism (to attribute an essence, purpose or telos). The state has no essential being. The capitalist state

persists because it is best suited to the economic system. If it was no good, it would not persist and the problem would be a different one. Just as humans do not persist because of God, the capitalist state does not persist because of some essential cause. Both continue to exist because their functioning is suitable enough, in the circumstances, to be reproduced. In a Spinozist sense the state and its relations 'hang together'. It must be remembered though that although the state has a functional role, it is itself a complex combination of different apparatuses, each perhaps with different functions or roles.

What is important then, is how the main function is carried out. The capitalist state may have the function of helping to secure the conditions for capital accumulation, but how it does this, or what form of regulation it uses, is dependent on state strategies. These state strategies are intimately connected to the operation of hegemony through the state apparatus, and to the direction of society in general. However, it would be voluntarist to say that these state strategies are simply decided by different sections of the ruling class according to the particular situation. State strategies are longer-term strategies, modes of operation which are based on previous state strategies and on international trends. Underlying this is an even deeper rooted materialist basis as an essential requirement for the reproduction of social structures. And in an economic sense state strategies cannot but reflect - in more or less adequate ways - the fundamental movements of capital. The collapse of post-war state strategies will be (and has been) a long and drawn out processes.

Incorporating strategy and regulation into a theory of the capitalist state is in keeping with critical realism's critique of actualism - the privileging of 'actual' moments, events or conjunctures without recourse to the underlying structures and generative mechanisms that produce them. It is necessary to explain these factors by analysing the underlying structural crisis, the breakdown of Fordist accumulation, the crisis of the national-welfare state mode of economic regulation, changes in the international economy and the

set of global political alliances and finally, the break-up of the postwar hegemonic blocs and alliances.

This clearly indicates the stratified nature of social reality and indeed the stratified character of the state itself. States are not entities or things and our analysis of the state form cannot be based upon 'events'. Our analysis must be based on a study of processes and generative mechanisms, bound up with the question of the social reproduction of the state form. The state is not a static concept, it is a dynamic set of social structures and relations, each carrying different functions.

The Current Political Situation

Crisis is inherent in the nature of capitalism. However, the fact of crisis tells us very little on its own. What is necessary is to assess what the economic situation means in a social and political sense. Are the effects of the current crisis any different from the past? If they are, does this mean that we are entering a new historical period? Here we will concentrate mainly on the British social formation before moving to a discussion of the so-called globalisation process and the re-shaping of world hegemony.

Economic processes are structural. They pervade all aspects of social life. In turn, the reproduction of these economic structures is a social matter. The conditions for economic development are socially secured. In this sense, the economic cannot be separated from the social. Hence it is insufficient simply to say that capitalism is in an economic crisis. We must focus on the crisis of the reproduction of the social conditions necessary for capitalist accumulation.

Capital accumulation is central to any economic analysis since it represents the expanded reproduction of the wage relation, which in turn is the basis for profit - the exploitation of labour power by capital (surplus value).

The conditions for capital accumulation are secured, primarily, through the role of the state and its intervention into the economy.

The post-war settlement has defined a whole historical period, and combined a new form of regulation with a new hegemonic bloc. Here lies the basis on which the state has legitimised its intervention into the national (and, to a lesser extent), world economies. It is only by analysing the nature of this state regulation and intervention that we can assess the associated (and dependant) political alliances and projects.

The post-war era is inseparable from the economic phenomenon of Fordism - new more regulated work practices, conditions and management, new mass production, new wage structures, and importantly, mass consumption. The term itself is derived from Gramsci's writings and is very much connected with Americanisation and automatisation. The Fordian model's higher wages and work practices stem, argues Gramsci, "from an objective necessity of modern industry when it has reached a certain stage of development".[7]

Whilst this statement probably leans too much towards a productive forces determinism, we can still connect Fordism to the fact that mass production is part of the inherent capitalist tendency towards monopoly production. Accompanying this monopoly capitalism is a further internationalisation of the productive relations and the movements of capital. Gramsci therefore rightly links the growth of Fordism to America's increasing international hegemony. However, we must bear in mind that Fordism was not imposed uniformly, and its development takes various forms according to different state strategies.

The logic of monopoly production is not limited to the sphere of private corporations. Instead, there is an increasingly strong connection between Fordist accumulation and state strategies. Fordism has created the conditions for, and vice versa, been facilitated by, state involvement and intervention.

Mass production is the basis on which Keynesian economic theories rest. Key is the state's injection of large amounts of capital into the economy. Growth is facilitated by large expenditure, and easy credit.

This in turn provides the economic conditions for a consumer society. Here lies a key factor in the maintenance of the post-war order. The consumer boom of the 1950s and '60s was, arguably, a bigger factor in the maintenance of social cohesion than mass nationalisation. But it would be wrong to separate the two, for they are part of the same thing - state intervention and regulation of the economy - be it in the public or the private sphere.

Nationalisation was a key part of this new economic order. Often it was a necessity. The nationalisation of ailing private monopolies was essential to the development of a healthily functioning economy.

However, the reconstruction project of the British bourgeoisie was short-termist, avoiding economic modernisation and continuing to rely on the legacy of Empire - concentrating on the markets of the Sterling Area rather than any specifically European orientation. London-based finance capital played a powerful role.

The accumulation-regulation model is strongly linked to a theory of hegemony for the theory we are dealing with here concerns not just the organisation of the sphere of production, but the organisation of society as a whole. Thus, the post-war economic project is inseparable from the post-war set of social alliances. To talk of an economic crisis necessitates an examination of the social and political conditions through which it is expressed. Post-war economic development can only be understood within the context of a particular social project.

In the unstable period which followed the end of the war, it was necessary for the ruling class to grant greater concessions to the working class and to build a new social cohesion. The guarantee of consumer growth is a key aspect of this order. Nationalisation plays the dual role of economic

facilitation and social construction /concession. The other key part was the construction of the welfare state. Welfarism, consumerism and full employment provided the ideological cement for this new hegemonic order.

We must insist, therefore, that 'welfarism' is in no way socialism. In fact in Britain, historically, it is much more the child of liberalism. It was Lloyd George after all who had brought in the first welfare reforms thirty years before. To a certain extent, after 1945, the Tory Party also embraced welfarism, reinventing itself around the new consensus.

In fact, the development of the welfare state and the rebuilding of social institutions after the second world war is a fine example of what Gramsci called the 'passive revolution'. This is outlined by Gramsci as:

> the legislative intervention of the State, and ... of the corporative organisation - relatively far-reaching modifications are being introduced into the country's economic structure in order to accentuate the 'plan of production' element ... socialisation and co-operation in the sphere of production are being increased, without however touching (or at least not going beyond the regulation and control of) individual and group appropriation of profit.[8]

After the war, when the trends of Fordism were generalised, the dominant classes were able to mobilise the masses around the construction of the welfare state, higher wages based on collective bargaining and full employment, thus gaining consent, but excluding the masses from having any real say in political affairs.

But it was still necessary to integrate some sections of the working class - in particular, the privileged, skilled workers of the labour aristocracy - into the capitalist order. These sections were won by limited concessions and the feeling of economic empowerment and partnership.

Finally, there is a more exclusive power bloc - a constructed ruling alliance of different class fractions. Large sections of the labour bureaucracy

are implicated in this bloc - albeit as subordinates. In return, the labour bureaucracy is expected to discipline the labour rank and file, acting as agents of pro-capitalist politics in the workers' movement. The labour bureaucracy is caught between its power base in the organisations of the working class and its place in the historical bloc, determined by the structures of capitalist society and the state institutions themselves. The clearest example of this contradictory political location occurs when a Labour government is elected. It occurs at a day to day level in the bodies of the local state

It is particularly important to understand the nature of the post-war settlement because the current political period is marked essentially by the ongoing collapse of that settlement and its historic alliances. This collapse is particularly advanced in Britain where at an economic level by the 1960s the post-war recovery had been completed and offered no more prospects for growth. The regulation-accumulation model of intensive accumulation and monopoly regulation began to break down, failing to counter the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, and to resolve the related problems of overproduction, stagnation and inflation. The 1960s marked a fall in the rate of productivity growth and a devaluation of capital. Hence a structural crisis. As various states suffered internal difficulties, they turned more to the export of capital. This in turn challenged the market supremacy of the US and helped bring down the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates. This period also saw the crisis over oil prices, inflation, unemployment and a general crisis of profitability.

In terms of forms of state intervention and organisation, the 1960s witnessed a failure to control the organic composition of capital (an inherent crisis property of Fordist organisation), increased labour unrest, the rising costs of bureaucracy and a lack of confidence in production marked by a productivity crisis. The inflationary effect of the expansion of credit meant that capital moved from production to money and finance. Forms of state

intervention shifted from the fiscal to the monetary, i.e. from large scale state investment to control of the money supply and of inflation. Fordism had facilitated the post-war recovery, however, its methods were now being exposed as inflexible and cumbersome. As internal markets became saturated, Fordism and its associated forms of state intervention proved unable to balance the departments of production and consumption.

What we are witnessing now is the unfolding of a conflict between the needs of capital accumulation and the associated hegemonic blocs of the post-war era. It can only be overcome by the reorganisation of the social conditions of production and the construction of a new historical bloc.

At a social level we can see the effects of this restructuring unfold. New forms and strategies of production are emerging. Transnational corporations are gaining more influence over the national-economic structures. Information technology has become a significant factor. Mass unemployment and cheap labour are necessary to cut costs; new work practices and management techniques are being employed; the workforce must be mobile and flexible - forced to work where they can and when they can; many unions are either being removed or forced into a no-strike partnership role; the division between skilled and unskilled workers becomes starker; segmentation of the workforce is occurring; benefits and welfare provision are being minimised.

Massive attacks on the unions have taken place. Indeed, it could be said that part of the rationale for Thatcher crashing the British economy between 1979 and 1981 was to weaken the power of the trade unions through creating mass unemployment. This both hits trade union membership, and creates a reserve army of scab labour. Changes in pay and conditions can then be forced through as permanent job insecurity reigns.

To increase this effect, and following the defeat of the miners through a carefully prepared strategy, vicious anti-union laws were forced through. These laws create all kinds of legal barriers, effectively banning 'political'

strikes, secondary action and the right to picket. It is important to stress that these laws not only strengthen the power of the bosses and the state over the workers, they also strengthen the power of the labour bureaucrats over their members. The bureaucrats now use the anti-union laws as an excuse not to fight. New management techniques have brought in performance related pay, individual contracts and no strike agreements. These all undermine the collective power of the unions.

Social democracy is in crisis. The ruling class no longer requires social democracy to play such a strong role in state power. The economic function that social democracy played can no longer be maintained. However, this does not mean that social democracy is dead. Whilst the role that social democracy plays in relation to the capitalist state is in crisis, this is not its sole definition. Social democracy is also determined from below. Historically speaking it is a class compromise. The ruling class was forced to accept social democracy as a component part of the post-war order. This was done through the bureaucratic leaders of the working class. But it does mean that social democratic legacy embodies some important gains that the working class has had to fight for. We are for the defence of these gains. Social democracy is in crisis but these gains can be defended provided the working class is mobilised. This is not a case of defending in any way, social democracy itself. It is a case of defending the hard fought gains of social democracy in the interests of the working class. Likewise, defending the welfare state should not entail support for the ideology of welfarism.

This is all going on in the context of the drive towards the construction of international trading blocks. These will be more than just economic entities. They will become the new hegemonic blocs. The Maastricht Treaty calls for political, economic and monetary union founded on the free movement of capital. It seeks a single set of political institutions, a single European market and common monetary conditions either in the form of a single or linked

currencies.

The demands for political hegemony flow naturally from the demands for economic union. The EU is different from the other two blocs in precisely this sense.

The NAFTA and Pacific blocs are under the direct hegemony of certain powers - the US and Japan. Countries such as Korea and Taiwan, whilst gaining some regional weight, are still completely subservient to Japanese capital. Japan has systematically developed these economies under its own economic hegemony. The next phase is already underway as Japan cultivates the economies of Thailand, Malaysia and others.

In Europe the process is more complex. No one country dominates. The construction of the European Union will be a balancing job. However, the dominant axis centres around Germany and France. The current project depends upon this alliance holding together.

Therefore, throughout Europe, there is a general crisis of political hegemony. Economic difficulties have compounded this problem. None of the major economies look set to meet the convergence criteria to bring the different economies into line. The need to bring into line interest rates and inflation and to limit the public sector borrowing requirement to 3 per cent is already causing social turmoil. The strike waves in France in 1995 can be linked to the attempts to implement these criteria through the Juppé plan. Such processes are causing divisions throughout Europe.

Within Britain this creates particular tensions which are immediately visible in the contradictions within the Conservative Party - largely down to whether or not to be part of this project. Traditionally the Conservative Party has been divided over Europe, one wing seeing British capitalism's interests being served best by subservience to the US and trans-national capital. The more farsighted sections of the bourgeoisie have realised the need for re-orientation and support European union.

Even then there are two competing European visions. One, which is dominant, is the cheap labour and low benefits economy being pushed by the right. The other is a more socially integrated project where the workers do have some tokenistic share of the bourgeoisie's economic profits and political power. This second option, while more conducive to the construction of a hegemonic alliance, is still threatened by economic instability. It is based on the German model where, post-unification, it is an increasingly unstable exercise in its homeland.

The Tory Party's inability to deal with the European question reveals the vulnerable nature of its historical bloc. Made up of Unionists, the military, layers of the petit bourgeoisie, finance capital, industrial capital and skilled workers, it has difficult interests to reconcile in a changing social context. Britain's unique historical bloc is founded on the empire and its aftermath. It contains strong imperialist and aristocratic influences. It is, by its nature, conservative. The British economy, and the dominance of the City, is peculiarly 'colonial'. Re-orientation of the economy towards Europe therefore requires the reconstructing of the Tory Party.

Now it is becoming clear that social projects are only realisable on a wider European scale. They are dependent on an increased exploitation of the Third World and intense competition with the trading blocs of NAFTA and the Pacific rim. This inevitably opens up domestic contradictions.

We can see, even at the most abstract level, that monetarist policy always undermines social hegemony for monetarism is by definition the subordination of social relations to capital and the control of money. Thatcherism, whilst on the one hand politically developing these trends, was still rooted in traditional Tory policies. Indeed, Thatcherism may one day be seen as the past's last stand. Capital meanwhile was already restructuring itself in line with European markets and Thatcher fell.

The expression of the national question has also undergone a shift in

emphasis. Previously, national antagonisms within the British state were contained. Consent to English hegemony was achieved through a shared vision amongst capitalists of Britain's role in the world order. Britain's imperialist role was matched by the legitimating ideology of the national-welfare state. Now this is falling apart national antagonisms are finding a new expression. Under Thatcher, the moves towards a hyper-liberalism in the economic sphere sought legitimacy in a populist appeal to traditional values - in particular, militarism, racism and national chauvinism.

Under Thatcher, Tory economic policies resulted in the virtual collapse of many of the industries which were the traditional bedrock of the Scottish and Welsh economies, bringing mass unemployment, poverty, and the effective destruction of communities. Although this occurred in parts of England, there was of course a nationalist response in Scotland and Wales. In addition, Scottish North Sea oil has been used to finance two recessions and a short-term credit boom. The Tory vote in Scotland and Wales has collapsed, resulting in a questioning of the Tories' electoral mandate there. This 'democratic deficit' is compounded in Wales by the proliferation of unelected, unaccountable and frequently corrupt quangos doing jobs formerly carried out by elected bodies.

As a result of the break-up of the domestic consensus, Scottish and Welsh nationalist movements are looking to the dynamics of the unfolding international blocs. Indeed we can say in general, that the European project encourages both macro and micro economic projects. Forms of nationalism have become tied up with economic regionalism, i.e. some sort of regional independence within the EU.

The European project means very little without economic and monetary union. A single currency is essential if Europe-wide regulation - such as public spending controls and anti- inflationary measures - is to take place. The European project necessitates a shift from national state regulation to

'harmonised' trans-national regulation. This unleashes the dynamic towards an undermining of national economic and political powers. The move towards Europe will inevitably reduce the ability of the British bourgeoisie to maintain its own domestic hegemonic control. Combine this political instability with the uncertain nature of the European project itself and we have a very interesting situation.

The Situation in the Labour Movement

As the capitalist power bloc is being reformed and oriented towards Europe, the place of the labour bureaucracy is increasingly undermined. The labour bureaucracy is also divided, between more traditional labourites, and those who want to make European integration the main focus.

The traditional labourites have been grounded in a double sense. Firstly, the established role of social democracy is being undermined. The post war hegemonic project is coming to an end, no longer possible to sustain economically. The traditional policies of Keynesianism and Fordism have lost their economic foundation.

Secondly, the traditional labourites, under the guise of 'new realism', subordinated themselves ideologically. The ideological power of Thatcherism asserted itself in two ways - through coercion, culminating in the defeat of the miners' strike, then consent. The 'new realism' of the Kinnock /Hattersley (or Laird/Jordan) leadership reflected this ideological impact of on the labour movement.

The latest ideological shift by the Labour leadership draws heavily on the notion of community. Tony Blair has attempted to break this notion from any class connotations and link it instead to the values of individualism and 'common purpose'. Any genuine antagonisms are portrayed, not as the

product of the system, but as the result of 'prejudice'. This leaves the free market to get on with its business.

As labour leaders increasingly embrace the free market, it is logical that this should extend towards Europe. Ascendency has been gained by a section that defines itself not just as pro-Europe, but as pro-European market. They reject the old social role of the Labour Party. Instead of a domestic social orientation, they say that the Labour Party should be redefined in terms of its relationship to Europe. It is little wonder that Blair is attracting the support of pro-Europe sections in the City.

Whether Blair can continue this course is uncertain. Thus far he has depended on the support of the labour bureaucrats. It is unlikely that they will let him go the whole way.

The Welfare State

As we have stated earlier, the post-war project represented a kind of passive revolution, ensuring that social unrest remained submerged, and that the state took the initiative of carrying through a reconstruction of social and economic relations in the interests of capitalist accumulation. The masses were successfully excluded from any real input into this process.

As Colin Hay argues[9], there were two bases for the post-war settlement. Firstly, there is the politico-economic settlement, effectively specifying the relationship between the state and the economy. This took the form of Keynesian demand management, corporatism, Fordist accumulation, consumption, modernisation and so on.[10] Secondly, there was the politico-normative or welfare settlement. This created a political and ideological relation between the state and civil society.

Lest anyone believes that defending welfarism is a good thing in its own right, we must continue to remind ourselves of the role welfarism was

designed to play in the capitalist system. It is wrong to identify welfarism with the 'progressiveness' of the 1945 Labour government. Welfarism was an established model within the Liberal and even Tory parties long before. Indeed, welfarism was the last prop of the old nationalist-authoritarian states - such as Bismark's.

In any case, the impetus for the welfare settlement of 1945 came *during* rather than after the war. The promise of the welfare state was necessary to mobilise and gain legitimacy for the war effort. Indeed, welfarism and imperialism have a somewhat sordid relationship.Labour's legacy on the welfare state represents a rationalisation and extension of Liberal welfare capitalism, itself founded on Britain's foreign imperialist legacy and paternalistic domestic politics.

The close inter-relation between welfarism and capitalist strategies gives welfarism an inherently contradictory character. For the welfare state must both commodify and decommodify at the same time (effectively having to both promote and undermine market forces simultaneously). Welfare administration and policy making are limited by the dynamics of economic production. Hence welfare state politics are subordinated to a strategy of capital accumulation. Administrators develop a self-interest caught between the needs of the market and the demands of the welfare system.

Yet at the same time, the welfare sector must decommodify and play a more positive, interventionist role in order to overcome the deficiencies of the market. This gives welfare state politics an inherently confused character.

Now, with a crisis of capital accumulation and state regulation, the ascendency has been gained by the laissez-faire right wing. The rolling back of the welfare state is part of a strategy of re-commodification of all areas of social life. Political and administrative power is being tendered out to market forces. The fact that this is part of a wider social recomposition and consensus is reflected in the support that the Labour leadership is giving it.

This should be enough to show that defence of the welfare state cannot be based on some notion of a return to the old way of things. For it was precisely the 'old' welfarism whose contradictory nature has led to the promotion of market forces. We need to offer a genuine socialist alternative. However, whilst it is necessary to recognise the relationship between welfarism and capitalist regulation, we must also recognise the positive content of the welfare state based on the collective pressure of the working class. These gains should be defended just as much as the ideology of welfarism should be rejected.

The Post-War Order and International Relations

There is a danger in the regulation approach, especially that of the French school, of concentrating too much on national and state structures. It is also necessary to look at the world context, specifically here, Pax-Americana, and its alternatives.

We previously defined the state in relation to its functional link with the economy and as a site of political hegemony. We must add to the first part the state's relation to international capital. We must also add a third part to define the state in relation to international politico-economic hegemony and the world capitalist system.

The development of Fordism, as Gramsci pointed out, was linked to the development of Americanisation. This refers not just to the spread of new techniques and methods of organising production and the productive forces, or to the rise of technology. It also refers to the dominance of the US at political and military level and the social hegemonic effect of US dominance.

The effect of US Marshall aid on the post-war economies was significant although it can be overestimated[11]. However, it did mark a new period of US intervention and regulation including, most importantly, the

Bretton Woods system of exchange convertibility as well as other US dominated bodies and mechanisms like the UN, IMF and World Bank, the GATT and so on. The world economy was dominated by US corporations taking advantage of trade liberalisation. The economic model for the West was based on variants of the corporate state.

Of course, these models were founded on and grew out of the super-exploitation of the Third World. In particular, the Western systems have been founded on forcing Third World states into economic dependency and huge debts. This in turn gives Western controlled institutions the power to force through austerity and 'structural adjustment' programmes. Thus through economic imperialism a degree of political and ideological hegemony could be achieved. Such pressures will now increase with the collapse of the Stalinist states.

The war had caused no damage to US industry or infrastructure whilst factories had been working full tilt on military production. This war economy led to closer ties between industry and the central apparatus. In this climate, Fordist techniques further developed. At home, US economic might, cheap raw materials and a large internal market produced a consumer boom. Abroad it financed the Marshall Aid injections into the European economies. The different conditions in the US after World War 2 meant that there was no need for the US ruling class to buy off the working class in the same way. In place of European social democracy and welfarism, America had the New Deal and the military-industrial complex.

Japan, by contrast, had only very recently emerged from a pre-capitalist state with an economy based on agriculture. Growth was facilitated by rapid developments in technology and a boom in capital goods although a major shift occurred in the 1980s with the revolutions in electronics and communications.

The post-war Japanese workforce was highly skilled but poorly

organised at a class level. Whilst there were some sharp outbreaks of militancy, the lack of an established labour movement meant it was possible to industrialise Japan through much greater oppression of the working class. This situation also has results stretching through to today in the role of the employer in the life of the worker. Trade union organisation is based on the individual companies, often encouraged by partnership and no-strike deals. Indeed Japan is at the forefront of new management techniques and new flexible production, or what Makoto Itoh calls 'Toyotism'.[12]

At the political level Japan has been dominated by conservative governments. However, forms of Japanese state intervention and regulation are not so far removed from those of Western Europe, based on social democratic style social and welfare reforms as well as Keynesian fiscal policy. And as in Europe and America these reforms are now being cut back, partly helped by the historic weakness of working class organisation.

On a world level, however, Japan has suffered from its defeat in World War Two. Article nine in the Japanese constitution has prevented Japan from being a military, and hence, world hegemonic power. Despite a large share of the world market, Japan continues to have to rely on US military hegemony.

The consequence of this US hegemony is that the crisis of US hegemony is in effect a crisis of the whole international system. In 1945, the US was the world's biggest creditor. Its balance of payments deficit became a major sponsor of international growth and global demand. Now the US is the world's biggest debtor. The fiscal crisis of the US state has led to massive budget cuts being passed. The result will be tax rises and huge cuts in social spending. A period of mass poverty and class polarisation will open up.

It was the emergence of this economic crisis, in particular US inflation, which caused the international monetary system to collapse. The breakdown of the Bretton Woods system which tied currencies to the dollar led to the growth of a credit economy based on a private money market and an increased

globalisation of capital. The US had attempted to play the role of central regulator of the world economy. This ability has been lost.

The Traditional inter-state structures associated with this American hegemony are now inadequate for the functioning of the economic system. Paradoxically, although this period has been called the trans-national stage in the development of capitalism, the trans-national corporations (TNCs) are themselves dependant on the sort of international regulatory processes associated with national states. It is not true, therefore simply to say that states are being dominated by the power of TNCs. The increasing mobility of capital is undermining not only national states and state strategies, but the TNCs too. As Gill puts it, there is a contradiction between the logic of globalising forces and the political conditions of existence for the operation of these forces.[13] Critical realists must see this central contradiction as one between structures and mechanisms. A structure will sustain, reproduce or transform more than one mechanism and vice versa. The convergence of these structures and mechanisms should be seen in terms of the contradictions of the nexus.[14]

The Collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe

The collapse of the USSR and the deformed workers' states of Eastern Europe is of massive importance to the world system. It would be crazy to try and develop a detailed analysis here. Instead two key theoretical questions will be posed. First, what is now the class character of these states? Secondly, what impact does this collapse have on world hegemony?

The answer to the first question would seem obvious enough, but some sections of the left still seem to think that these states remain workers' states of sorts. The arguments used include that large sections of the economy are still nationalised, that central planning remains, that the working class has not been defeated (or incredibly, that the working class actually led the events of

1989!), and a number of formalistic arguments that 'prove' that capitalism does not function in these states in a 'classical' way, or that the bourgeoisie is too weak.

Firstly, it is necessary to separate an analysis of the state from an analysis of the economy. It is true to say that the economies of most of these states are not fully capitalist, although there are obvious capitalist economies in Slovenia, Hungary and the Czech republic to name three. Economies such as Russia's we can call economies in transition *to capitalism*. This means that these economies are dominated by the capitalist *dynamic*. Two or more modes of production including the old planned economy exist. However, these residues remain for purely negative reasons i. that capitalism is still too weak to replace or remove them (e.g. state owned industry), ii. that they play a subservient role in facilitating the expansion of the capitalist mode of production (e.g. state owned transport and communication and branches of industry necessary to other branches).

Thus two or more modes of production may co-exist. The capitalist mode of production may be small. But it is dominant, even if not in terms of size, in terms of its dynamics and its privileged relation to the state. As to the formalistic objections, nowhere does the law of value, for example, operate in a text book fashion. This is precisely why Marx moved from 'capitalism in general' to an analysis of 'many capitals'.

The state can now be defined, not according to percentages of the economy or the strength of the bourgeoisie, but as we defined earlier, according to its functional relationship to the economy. Despite the fact that many Trotskyists refuse to characterise Russia as a capitalist state, Trotsky himself is quite clear on this matter:

> The class nature of the state is ... determined ... by the character of the forms of property and productive relations which the given state guards and defends.[15]

In Eastern Europe and the former USSR, the property relations that the state guards and defends are capitalist property relations.

As to the second part of our definition of the state - as a site for political hegemony, can we say that the bourgeoisie enjoys political hegemony?

Firstly, the *political* counter-revolution was carried through against the mass of the Soviet population as far back as 1935-36. This allowed for the bureaucracy to use the apparatus to carry through the *economic* counter-revolution we have recently witnessed:

> the new constitution seals the dictatorship of the privileged strata of soviet society over the producing masses ... and opens up for the bureaucracy ' legal' roads for the economic counter-revolution, that is, the restoration of capitalism by means of a 'cold stroke'...[16]

This 'cold stroke', therefore, did not require a strong bourgeoisie. It required a restorationist bureaucracy. As the Soviet economy became increasingly unviable, we witnessed perestroika. The last few years have seen the removal of price controls, a fall in consumption, the rise of unemployment and a removal of the state's monopoly of foreign trade leading to more widespread penetration of foreign capital.

The fact that a number of the features of the old system remain does not alter the situation. Again Trotsky wrote:

> Should a bourgeois counter-revolution succeed in the USSR, the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself upon the nationalised economy.[17]

It is true that the bourgeoisie is extremely weak and lacks social hegemony.

But we have defined the state in a functional as well as a hegemonic sense. ~~Like~~ As in many semi-colonial countries, the state is capitalist not by virtue of the

size of the bourgeoisie, but through the state's relationship to the world capitalist system. Allied as such, the bourgeoisie has a comprador character. This emphasises our third factor in the definition of the state - its relation to the world capitalist system. This brings us to the second question, what impact does this collapse have on world hegemony?

The existence of the USSR and the Eastern bloc, and the supremacy of the bureaucracy within these countries, was crucial to the construction of the post-war order. The events of 1989-91 represent a striking unravelment of this settlement.

The Soviet defeat of German imperialism led to the occupation of Eastern Europe following the war. However, it was only after the announcement of Marshall Aid (and attempts to include some Eastern states in the plan) and the onset of the Cold War, that the USSR pressed ahead in collectivising these economies. This marked the decisive turn in the international situation. Stalin's deal with imperialism ended. The Soviet bureaucracy ended its attempts to maintain the Eastern European states as capitalist. The bourgeoisie was eliminated from above. The economies were nationalised. They became part of the Cold War buffer zone. A form of structural assimilation took place.

This process has now reversed. The USSR was no longer prepared to defend these societies. As they were opened up to Western capital, a reversal of the structural assimilation took place.

However, there has been no alternative Marshall plan forthcoming. The regeneration of capitalism in Eastern Europe will be very different to the situation of Western Europe after the war. What Western aid there is, is given on strict 'conditionality' and guarantees of economic 'liberalisation' plans.

In global terms, the threat of the USSR restricted the role that US imperialism could play. This gave space, for example, to nationalist-bonapartist regimes in the Third World, to military dictatorships or client

states who could play on the strategic space between the imperialist and Stalinist blocs. Nasser's Egypt was a classic example. In the case of Cuba, this international dynamic led to the full transformation from a petit bourgeois nationalism to a deformed workers' state.

Now these states have no option. There is no longer any need for partitioning along superpower lines as occurred in Africa. They must open their borders and their markets to imperialism. Whether there is any incentive to invest or not is another matter.

With the collapse of Stalinism, imperialism looked strong but this proved to be an illusion. It is increasingly disorganised and divided. The US is unable to play a hegemonising role except by force. The political order is suffering a crisis of legitimacy. As Colin Powell said, the US no longer has the luxury of a threat.

The New World Dis-Order

The brutal imperialist attack on the Iraqi population was a calculated attempt by the US to reassert its hegemony over the world order.

The Gulf War was not a war about oil, although the US does has an interest in this. To a certain degree, the war did express US concerns over regional power and a fear of growing Iraqi supremacy. But above all, the invasion was designed to show the dependence of the other Western powers on US military hegemony, about the only hegemony which the US still holds. It was an important ideological victory that the US got Germany and Japan to pay towards the war. It was also important in highlighting the absolute dependency of the UN on the US. The UN no longer even bothers to pretend that it is in control of military affairs. Its military operations in Bosnia have been given over to NATO.

Out of the Gulf War came Bush's ideology of the New World Order.

This was a farcical attempt by the US to assert its cultural and moral leadership. There was an immediate contradiction between the idea of 'order' or world harmony, and the US's ideological offensive against the mighty powers of the South - evil dictators, crazy populations, religious fundamentalists and so on. The US had to present these factors as a threat, if only as a contrast to the West's flagging cultural hegemony. Some stunts had to be pulled to enhance the US's role as global cop. But in Somalia it all went wrong.

This period of history is best illustrated by Fukuyama's 'end of history' which enjoyed a fleeting moment of popular recognition before Tarantino hit the scene. His message is simple:

> And if we are at a point where we cannot imagine a world substantially different from our own, in which there is no apparent or obvious way in which the future will represent a fundamental improvement over our current order, then we must also take into consideration the possibility that history itself might be at an end.[18]

Unfortunately for the followers of Fukuyama, capitalism is not seen to be working anywhere anymore. Since the USSR fell apart prospects for capital investment have got worse rather than better. The West had the belief that Eastern European economies would offer new possibilities. In fact these economies are extremely weak. The US does not have anything like the money necessary to make an investment worthwhile. Indeed the re-unification of Germany highlights just what a difficult task is faced. This process has significantly weakened the German led EU project.

In line with the shifting patterns of world production, capital has sought cheaper labour markets. This process is part of the mobility of capital and the opening up of the labour market. More flexible systems of production may be centred in the metropolitan countries, but the manufacturing and assembling of components is conducted at the 'periphery'. An analysis of the developing

countries should focus on the degree of industrialisation of these countries and the expansion of the working class in some regions of the world. Strong political movements have emerged in countries like Brazil and South Korea.

Yet in contrast, struggles such as the Zapatista revolt in Chiapas, Mexico have been held up as models, almost as a new form of postmodern struggle in the new world order. Such an interpretation is very wrong. The Zapatista movement is very traditional in its peasant-based guerilla strategy.

However, Sub-commandant Marcos does talk a good postmodern game. His idea of the expansion of the democratic space is reminiscent of Derrida's talk of 'democracy to come'. Its goal is not to take power, but to operate within the system based on a democratic vision free from references to socialism.

It would be postmodern of us to blow this phenomenon up into a generalisable process. The struggle of the Zapatistas is a regional, peasant-based struggle. The dynamic of the Latin American economies, however, is one of industrialisation. State power, therefore, must be fought for through the organisation of the radicalising working classes. To adhere instead to the Zapatista model is to turn an event of some regional significance into something which has meaning at the level of the symbolic.

Globalisation?

A globalisation of production is taking place. This is in line with more flexible approaches to production based on 'peripheral' development with a main centre based in the imperialist countries. There has been a growth and strengthening of the working class in countries like Brazil South Korea and Thailand based on an opening up of the labour market. This is connected to the increased power of internationally mobile capital and an undermining of national protective barriers.

There is perhaps some kind of new inter-state consensus emerging, but this is merely of a different form and relates to the crisis of US hegemony at the political level and its leading role in international relations. This crisis was truly exposed by the rapid failure of America's 'New World Order' ideology. However, this crisis has not promoted a coherent alternative hegemonic power or bloc. In the economic sphere the process of reorganising trading blocs and inter-state cooperation is a tentative one which may not even turn out like the three blocs envisaged.

The more general economic developments are not so much representative of globalisation as of a change in the relation between nation states and the global movement of capital.[19] There remains a central contradiction between the logic of globalising forces and the socio-political conditions of existence within which these forces develop.[20]

Although it may seem like a matter of semantics, it is important to reject the connotations that the term 'globalisation' implies. It suggests that capital has entered a new 'global' epoch. Yet capital, by its very nature is global. The logic of capital is always an ever expanding one. In this sense 'globalisation' is already inscribed into the nature of capitalism from the start. Lenin and others wrote all about it and its imperialist ways. What lies behind some theories of globalisation is therefore some notion that capital has entered a new epoch separable from the epoch of imperialism.

But what we are witnessing is an increasing *internationalisation* - labour, corporations, work practices and the flow of capital - and a *regionalisation* or *sectoralisation* of the world economic and political systems. This means that potential trans-national blocs, initially formed as trading zones are emerging, but that they are doing so within the context of international rivalry. Against each other, blocs like the EU, NAFTA and Japan/Pacific will engage, not in 'globalisation' processes, but in economic and maybe political rivalry. This in turn requires a more coherent hegemonic

project for each of these blocs.

However, it is not at all certain that such trading blocs with their own trans-national hegemonies can be created. Certainly the nation state and its own particular hegemonic strategies remains (again against those who advocate the globalisation theory) the main political player. At present these are disordered rather than ordered blocs. Thus attempts to create trans-national policies will be frustrated, not just by other transnational objectives, but by particular national objectives and interests. What we are witnessing with the EU is a bloc whose members (e.g. Germany, Britain, France) and its own apparatuses (e.g. parliamentary, economic, security) have differing ambitions. Certainly the legitimacy for a European wide hegemony is a long way away.

So whilst we can say that a new period is opening up, to call this process globalisation would be a mistake. The notion is used in a confusing way. If it is meant to attribute certain characteristics to capital and its movements, then the entire history of capitalism has been a history of globalisation. The term is rendered meaningless. If, however, the term is meant to refer to a new period of international relations, then the concept of globalisation is clearly wrong. What we are now witnessing is a crisis of political hegemony both nationally and internationally. The major projects around, for example the EU, are attempts to *rebuild* and *reconstruct* hegemonic blocs and alliances in line with economic criteria. A true process of globalisation would indicate a *removal* of such blocs, or more appropriately, blocks.

'Globalisation' is clearly taking place in terms of the internationalisation of labour or the increased power of trans-national corporations or mobile capital. But the idea behind the globalisation thesis is that these features have reshaped and redrawn the relation between international capital and the various national and political structures. Hegemony has been swept away. Consequently, a political challenge to this

uncontainable processes is futile. Such a method is *objectivist.*

Capital has not rendered labour powerless since it is labour (albeit abstract labour) which is its fundamental essence. Likewise, the capital/labour relation is neither a national nor an international relation, but rather an abstract one which is secured in different ways. Underlying the state are the same sort of generative mechanisms that underlie other economic forms and relations. Rather than looking at 'new forms of capital' - in a most abstract way - we should concentrate instead on the specific form of the state and its 'internationalisation' with regard to the structuring of capital/labour relations. The contradiction is that it is the national state that responds to international developments in the interests of its own economy. It must respond to international developments precisely to promote its national economy and to make it attractive.

So to restate; globalisation is not sweeping the world scene rendering states and political blocs redundant. The national state is still the key regulator of capital and labour relations, although we can clearly see how some of these functions are being transferred to new, wider bodies such as the EU. It is the *crisis* of hegemony, not its absence, which is shaping the international situation. Like the post-Fordists, the globalisationists have turned a crisis trend into an entirely new order.

The current period will not see the collapse of the political and the onward march of capital. It will develop out of the conflicting hegemonic projects.

a. The *hegemonic* crisis of the national state, the breakdown of old regulation strategies, the crisis of historical blocs, and the attempts to create a new hegemonic order.

b. Attempts to develop macro-regional trading blocs with the ultimate aim of developing political hegemony.

The increasing mobility of capital will be facilitated and/or frustrated

by a combination of these.

Post-Fordism?

We have dealt with aspects of the post-Fordist theory in the previous chapter on postmodernism which suggests that there is really some other motive behind the advocacy of post-Fordist theories. This was certainly the case with the British *Marxism Today* current whose 'new times' and 'farewell to the working class' notions are as much a philosophical and sociological invention as an economic one. These theories derive from the idealist tendencies of the Althusserian school and from the culturalism of Gramsci. For although Gramsci did pay specific attention to aspects of Fordism, his writing as a whole overplays the cultural at the expense of the economic. Above all it is linked to the *Marxism Today* approach of anti-Marxism combined with pop-sociology.

As an economic system or mode of regulation, post-Fordism does not exist. At best such theories might indicate the deficiencies of Fordism. Instead, we should refer to the crisis of Fordism and the growth of flexibilisation or neo-Fordism.

The other aspect of crude post-Fordist theories is the supposedly empirically based 'farewell to the working class' thesis which is deficient in two major ways. First, this thesis defines the working class in the romantic mould of blue collar and cloth cap rather than the scientific description of the working class as those who are forced to sell their labour power. Post-Fordism is therefore unable to grasp either the flexibilisation process or the incorporation of unskilled and cheap labour, often women and other oppressed sections, into the labour market. Second, this thesis is Euro-centric, concentrating only on the Western model, and ignoring the massive expansion of the working class around the world based on the increased mobility of

capital.

However, there is a more serious theoretical problem which underlies the work of 'regulation school' theorists like Lipietz, Aglietta and Jessop. In many ways the regulation school develops an impressive analysis, but it is let down by its formalism.

The regulation approach begins with the idea that there are such things as *regimes of accumulation* which are based on the relation or balance between the departments that produce the means of production and consumption. It then proceeds to talk of *modes of regulation* which are responsible for ensuring the reproduction of the regimes of accumulation. They are represented by a combination of institutions and norms centred around state intervention and a complex set of social structures responsible for the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production including the monetary system, corporate structures and a form of wage determination all of which seek to establish behavioural routines. According to the regulation school, the post-war era is marked by a Fordist regime of accumulation and a monopoly form of state regulation.

Much of this has already been accepted in this analysis, but we must be wary. We can accept a model of accumulation and regulation insofar as the conditions for economic reproduction need to be socially secured. However, we cannot accept that these conditions are secured through the existence of inclusive, self-reproducing and self-regulating 'modes' or 'regimes'.

The weaknesses of the regulation school are apparent in the attempts to analyse the crisis of Fordism. For the regulation school Fordism represents an inclusive regime of accumulation linked to a corresponding Keynesian mode of regulation. Instead of seeing Fordism as a dominant form of accumulation, regulation theorists see it as *the* accumulation regime. All this produces a paradigmatic approach whereby the crisis of Fordism can only mean the replacement of one regime of accumulation with another, post-Fordist one.

The idea that capitalism simply passes from one regime of accumulation to another concedes far too much to the view that capitalism is a relatively stable, self-regulating system with social forms which neatly correspond to the needs of accumulation. If Fordism is considered to be a regime of accumulation then its crisis lies in precisely this fact. Fordist methods proved too regimented and inflexible, too committed to large scale production, consumption and investment. So what we are witnessing now is not so much a new regime but a flexibilisation process.

Even here we have to be careful. As Andrew Sayer has persuasively argued, the term flexibilisation has become a catch-all category. In fact if we study Japanese capitalism - often seen as synonymous with concepts like flexibilisation and new management techniques - we can see that it has a highly organised and regimented character. To understand the success of Japanese capitalism we need to examine what Sayer calls the broader 'environmental' characteristics that cut across labour processes - culture and education, the social and institutional form of capital and so on.[21] So we need to get away from a narrow focussing on production processes and examine the context in which these processes are reproduced, how the social totality is stratified and how its various structures and mechanisms are overdetermined.

In any case, the regulation theorist Bob Jessop has shown the way out of this problem himself, raising the necessity of state strategies and hegemonic projects. Accumulation cannot be seen as an insular regime but must depend on factors of a more external nature with contingent consequences. These sort of contradictions are built into capitalism and can only be temporarily escaped.

Werner Bonefeld's analysis of the British state during the 1980s points to one such concrete case.[22] The regulation theorists argued that the British state was integrating a new post-Fordist regime of accumulation. But as many commentators later realised, Thatcherism was more of an aberration based on

a radical approach to a traditional political agenda. And as we have argued, the social and political basis of British Conservatism is at odds with the need for capital to orient towards the European market.

Capitalism's grand contradiction lies in the fact that it requires regulation even though it ultimately cannot be regulated. We will retain the critical realist position that behind certain events are underlying mechanisms and processes. Thus we can say that there are a number of regulating mechanisms which have a functional relationship to capital accumulation in a loose sense. But these are overdetermined by other factors - for instance different forms of capital and economic factors as well as wider social and political factors like class projects. Different forms of accumulation, regulation and hegemonic strategies are a permanent requirement. But they are never allowed to become permanent features.

Hegemony and Regulation

This chapter has brought together three complementary approaches - regulation, hegemony and realism. Starting from the driving force of capital accumulation, regulation analysis attempts to show how this has to be organised and regulated based on a series of social structures, institutions and state strategies. The notion of regulation should emphasise the fact that capital accumulation is not an automatic process and that society cannot be reduced to a base/superstructure model. The conditions for capital accumulation are socially secured which in turn requires the state and politics to play a leading role.

Thus a study of forms of regulation leads us to an analysis of state strategies, institutions and structures, and international bodies. These all represent forms of intervention into economic processes. This in turn presupposes the centrality of a concept of hegemony.

We are immediately reminded, therefore, of the leading and directing role that the state must play in society. This in turn is secured by the leading or dominant role of one or more social groups or class fractions whose dominance is secured through state power. Through various state strategies, these groups must ensure both the conditions necessary for capital accumulation and the consent necessary for class rule. This relationship between class interests and the interests of capital is vital. Unfortunately, many analyses have lost this balance becoming either 'capital theoretical' or 'class theoretical'. The key to this analysis is how a hegemonic project can reconcile the needs of capital with the needs of its own class leadership.[23]

This problematic relation means that there is an inherent connection between forms of regulation and particular hegemonic orders. It means that a crisis - such as the crisis of the post-war order - must be analysed in relation to both forms of regulation and the hegemonic bloc. Recent developments have revealed a crisis of hegemony both at the state level, and at the international level centring around the role of US imperialism. We thus have conflicts between hegemonic projects, structures of regulation, and economic generative mechanisms.

Again, this analysis reinforces the necessary distinction between hegemony1 and hegemony2. Since the necessary conditions for economic reproduction are socially secured, hegemony1 plays a basic material role in securing the conditions for social cohesion. This in turn allows for the most fundamental of processes, that of capital accumulation. Therefore, in a complexly structured or overdetermined society, hegemony plays a basic role in ensuring the reproduction of economic relations.

And again, in relation to the state, hegemony1 plays a key role in the state's functional relation to the economy. The state acts in a structural-functional way to secure and reproduce the conditions for economic reproduction.

So hegemony1 operates at a very basic level securing the cohesion of the different levels of the social formation and hence promoting the accumulation of capital. But out of this basic relation come the more complex problems of the realisation of this function through particular modes of regulation and so particular hegemonic strategies. Therefore, the distinction between hegemony1 and hegemony2 is an analytical distinction between hegemony's basic material necessity and its actualisation through different social structures, and in turn, through concrete projects.

Hegemony is necessary to the basic reproduction of the social formation. This necessity is emergent through specific modes of regulation and state strategies. Hegemony1 also provides the necessary conditions for the possibility of hegemony2. This is reflected in the complex projects of different class fractions and hegemony's attempts, through the state, to unify those interests. But that hegemony2 is possible at all, and that different groups and classes can realise their own particular social projects, is due to the basic fact that the conditions for economic reproduction need to be socially secured and that this is an open-ended process.

This therefore reenforces the fact that the state is the strategic terrain for the unfolding of political hegemonic projects, where different political struggles occur, and where it is attempted to resolve them through a hegemonic project. A central point of contradiction occurs at the divide between hegemony1 and hegemony2, where hegemony's functional role in securing the conditions for capital accumulation coincides with hegemony2 strategies based on particular class interests. The compatibility of the two roles is certainly not guaranteed.

This in turn highlights the need for a critical realist method which is capable of analysing a complex and contradictory social whole and its different structures and mechanisms. The dominance of the economic within this whole, highlights the driving force of capital accumulation. But this

cannot stand apart from the whole and therefore must be mediated through a multifarious set of social relations.

Starting from a notion of social ensembles, it is possible to analyse the associated relationships between generative mechanisms, social structures, state strategies and hegemonic projects. Each of these has its own dynamics. The interests of a hegemonic group cannot therefore be reduced to the needs of capital. However, the interests of that group, if they are to be maintained through the social order, must to an extent take up the needs of capital. Therefore these different layers are dependent, to a greater or lesser extent, on each other as well as presupposing and co-determining each other.

A particular generative mechanism may support a number of structures. A particular structure may relate to a number of mechanisms. A hegemonic project may be based on some of these dynamics but not on others. These stratified relations and the conflicts between them are of central importance. Beyond this, there are also the complex relations between national and international structures and strategies.

By basing itself on a set of transcendental arguments, critical realism can establish that the world is structured in a certain way such that the economic has a certain primacy. From this the working class is shown to be the main agent of social change. But it can also be seen that the social whole is heteronomously complex and that the economic is reproduced through a multitude of different social structures and mechanisms. Given that this is the case, it is the state which becomes the most important factor for leading and directing social change.

Critical realism, basing itself on the transformational model of social activity points to the possibility of agents acting upon and changing social structures. But given the connectedness of these structures, and the difficulty faced in changing the whole set of relations, the capture of state power becomes the most important task. Rather than developing a heterogeneous

model of transformation, the logic of the critical realist position points to the centrality of the working class - as key agent, capturing state power and using this hegemonic position to lead and direct the transformation of society through its many different spheres. Given the nature of society, it is only through the leading role of the state that the transformation of society as a whole can occur.

Notes

1 E.Mandel, Late Capitalism, (London 1978), p.131.
2 E.Mandel, Long Waves of Capitalist Development, (Cambridge 1980), p.81.
3 SPN, p.160.
4 SPN, p.280.
5 E.Mandel, Late Capitalism, p.246.
6 P.Burnham, The Political Economy of Postwar Reconstruction, (London 1990), p.182.
7 SPN, p.311.
8 SPN, p.120.
9 C.Hay, 'The Structural and Ideological Contradictions of Britain's Post-War Re-construction', Capital & Class, no.54 1994, p.43.
10 Ibid., p.45.
11 The idea that the Marshall Plan was responsible for the regeneration of the European economies is countered in Peter Burnham's book The Political Economy of Postwar Reconstruction.
12 M.Itoh, 'Japan in a New World Order' in Socialist Register, 1992, p.201.
13 S.Gill, Gramsci, Historical materialism and International Relations, (Cambridge 1993), p.12.
14 See J.Lovering, 'Neither Fundamentalism nor "New Realism"' in Capital & Class, no.42, 1991, pp.44-49.
15 L.Trotsky, 'Not a Workers' and not a Bourgeois State?' in Writings of Leon Trotsky,1937-38, (New York 1976), p.61.
16 L.Trotsky, 'The Fourth International and the Soviet Union' in Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-36, (New York 1977), p.358.
17 L.Trotsky, 'Not a Workers' and not a Bourgeois State?', p.63.
18 F.Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man, (New York 1992), p.51.
19 J.Holloway, 'Global Capital and the Nation State' in Capital & Class, no.52, 1994, p.41.
20 S.Gill, Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations, p.120.
21 A.Sayer, 'Postfordism in Question' in International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, vol.13, no.4, December 1989.
22 W.Bonefeld, The Recomposition of the British State During the 1980s, (Aldershot 1993), pp. 2,9.
23 See B.Jessop, State Theory, (Cambridge 1990), p.40.

Conclusion

It is possible to write much more on each of the specific areas covered in this thesis. Hegemony is present in many fields and it is only possible to get a feel of the concept by building up a picture of it in its totality. This study has developed a theoretical perspective, employing critical realism as an underlabourer to examine and clarify and to build up a framework.

Our argument is principally directed against the various intersubjective conceptions of hegemony which present it merely in terms of the actions and inter-actions of different groups without proper reference to the social conditions within which this takes place. By employing critical realism we have attempted to outline a structural conception of hegemony, intimately linked to the reproduction, preservation and reproduction of stratified social structures.

Structure

Society is comprised of intransitive social structures and generative mechanisms which are related in a stratified and overdetermined manner. Within this structural hierarchy, economic relations have a certain privilege. This theory can be justified on the basis of the centrality of production and distribution within every society. The generation of surplus labour is fundamental to any developed society. Under capitalism this takes the form of the extraction of surplus value. However, this process is not independent of social and political factors. The conditions for capital accumulation need to be socially secured.

This factor leaves a space for the concept of hegemony. For society *as a whole* is both the ever-present condition and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency. Hegemony intersects with the process by which social structures are reproduced or transformed. In some senses this process *is* automatic. Agential production or reproduction is largely unconscious. But the world is complex and different structures coincide and conflict. This means that hegemony will always play an important role in securing the reproduction of social structures and their combinations. By virtue of the world being an open system, hegemony is necessary to secure social cohesion. Because of this role, hegemony is clearly set within a structural location which is irreducible to the actions and conceptions of social agents. Hegemonic projects offer real possibilities of transformatory activity, but these should be understood in their structured context, rather than merely as the products of social agents.

Hegemony has a functional role. But this role is not teleological or essentialist. Hegemony does not have a unique privileged status as such but exists in its conditions of possibility. If hegemony holds things together it succeeds. If it fails, a hegemonic crisis emerges which has to be resolved.

What we are analysing here is not a particular form of hegemonic project, but the conditions of its being. The possibility of *particular* hegemonic projects is based on the *necessity* of a hegemonising process. Humanistic accounts which reduce society to the mere expression of groups and individuals, likewise reduce hegemony to its expression, instead of looking at its conditions of being. Such a view is ontologically flat, reducing society to a surface level of operations, without developing the kind of depth analysis which is necessary if we are really to develop any kind of meaningful explanation.

By emphasising meaning, hermeneutics tends to reduce its study of

human behaviour to an appeal to an intersubjective rationality. This implies a transcendentally universal notion of reason, tied to a dialogical conception of human practice. Society is seen as based on rule governed consensual activity. Whilst *at one level* this is true, hermeneutics often takes this as the only level, refusing to ground such activity within a structured context. And, by lifting social activity from a structured social context, these theories deny social activity not just of its reproductive role, but also, by implication, its transformative capacity.

So a structured and stratified conception of society is necessary if we are to conceive of the possibilities of human agency. However, we must guard against a hyper-structuralism where agents are reduced to mere träger and where hegemony is reduced to a static expression of structural determination. This would undermine all the emphasis that Marxist theory places on history, social practice and social consciousness. The theory of hegemony requires that classes and social groups become conscious of their interests and powers and seek to act upon them. The hegemonic process reflects in some way, agent, group and class conceptions of the processes in which they are involved. Hegemony involves a conscious attempt to act upon a situation. This is based on the desire or need to conserve, defend or transform social interests, embodied in material social structures.

On the basis of this we have made a distinction between hegemony1 which is fundamental to the unity and reproduction of society itself and hegemony2 which concerns specific hegemonic projects. They pre-suppose one another in that hegemony combines the political moment of agency with the structural nature of social reproduction.

Hegemony1 is concerned with the cohesion of the social system. It secures the reproduction of the mode of production and other basic structural processes. It is fundamental to the unity of all human societies and the inter-

relation of the different parts of the social whole.

Hegemony2 concerns the concrete hegemonic projects which are emergent out of the hegemony1 conditions, but give these conditions a particular expression. Hegemony2 centres around different social groups and classes, the interests that they represent, and the political blocs and alliances that are constructed.

Hegemony finds its clear expression at this level, but its successful or unsuccessful application is dependent on how it realises its deeper hegemonic function. The necessity of cohering the social formation allows for the actualisation of hegemonic projects which may or may not perform this role. Agents may or may not be aware of the wider requirements of hegemonic projects, or indeed the wider consequences of hegemonic action.

So whilst hegemony represents a convergence of different social agents and political projects, it also marks the sites of different spacial and temporal convergences involving various relations, mechanisms, structures, practices and processes. Hegemony is vital to the reproduction of social combinations. It acts as the bridge between social structure and political strategy. And of all the sites of hegemonic power, it is the state which expresses this relation most clearly.

Structuratum, Stratification

The overall nature of hegemony and its class character is determined by the functions it performs in society. What gives it its particular character is how that function is reproduced. Hence a space opens up for conscious hegemonic projects.

Hegemony represents the political moment in the reproduction of the

structures of the social formation. It combines the structural aspect of reproduction with the political moment of agency. The structural-functional role played at hegemony1 emerges through the concrete, historical interactions of intentioned social agents at hegemony2. Hegemony is realised through, rather than simply created by social agents.

For hegemony2 projects to take place, objective social divisions and distinctions must already exist at a deeper level. This allows certain groups to become dominant and to construct their own hegemony out of these divisions. Indeed a hegemonic project may consciously seek to develop these divisions, or alter them. In other words, these hegemony2 projects are emergent out of the material conditions present in society and the requirement of hegemony1 to reproduce the social formation.

Hegemony operates with a given set of material conditions - within and between different structures, practices and mechanisms, across space and through time. The concept of hegemony is inescapably historical and geographical. The totality is stratified into different times and spaces. We are describing not a static structuralist scene, but a historicised, reproduced, interlocking, overlapping set of histories, structures and forms.

The necessity of hegemony and the possibility of hegemonic projects is founded on the stratified and differentiated, non-contemporaneous nature of the totality and the agents which reproduce it. Social fractions correspond to different interests, powers and relations within classes. They can only be understood in terms of their objective basis - the stratification of the world itself - the intersection and overlapping of social structures, social practices and generative mechanisms and the specific determination of social groups in terms of their objective location in these stratified relations.

Hegemony is a layered process which organises the relations between different social groups *within* a ruling bloc and between the ruling bloc and

wider layers in society. Some groups are closely implicated in the bloc, others lend a degree of support, others may require more direct coercion.

The dominant hegemonic process may itself be undercut by other hegemonic processes. These may be sub-hegemonies, or even counter-hegemonies. Some hegemonies may feed off the dominant hegemony, others may be in direct conflict.

Hegemony works alongside spatial practices in the production and reproduction of particular locations, ensuring continuity and cohesion. It also works alongside ideology in developing representations of space which are tied to the dominant material practices. Through its operation hegemony binds together time and space.

Social structures have a deep, abstract character. As agents we do not relate directly to the totality or even to the general structures within the totality. These are reproduced in a largely unconscious manner by virtue of the situatedness of social practices. Our more conscious or intentional decisions are in relation to structurata - the concrete entities which are structured. Agents transform structures through acting upon structurata.

Again we should describe this in terms of stratification. Various different structures might underlie a structuratum and a number of structurata may express a structure's functioning. Hence action may have unforseen or totalising consequences. Likewise, unforseen consequences emerge from the fact that hegemony2 projects depend upon the wider material function of hegemony1.

Hegemony may be localised or regionalised and limited to particular hegemonic projects either in a geographical area or in a political, cultural or economic sphere. But hegemony, if it is ambitious, also seeks to move beyond these boundaries in line with its functional role in bringing things together. The strength of particular hegemonies (or counter-hegemonies) can be

measured against the dominant hegemony and the degree of overlapping, co-operation or conflict between them. Just as we say that hegemony seeks to construct a power bloc out of various groups and their interests, so the dominant hegemony must try to co-ordinate the more regional hegemonies. Indeed, we must measure the dominant hegemony by its degree of success or failure in penetrating and co-opting, colonising or containing these various regional hegemonies.

Hegemony must also relate to the location of consciousness and its spatio-temporal unevenness if it is to construct anything intentional. Starting from the localised consciousness of a particular group, a hegemonic project must galvanise this consciousness (or in the event of real material developments facilitate and direct this consciousness) in order to transcend its location. This is the enormous task facing a counter hegemonic project. For whilst reproduction has a more unconscious character, transformative projects require the revolutionisation of space and time. It must act against the inertia of society expressed in its hegemony1 form and the consciousness of agents.

Strategy

Critical realism talks of a transformational model of social activity. But the problem here is that most activity can be seen as transformatory - this is the nature of any practice which starts with certain raw materials and develops them. How then do we distinguish between activity that is genuinely transformatory and activity which simply alters a certain state of affairs? Combined with the theory must be some notion of a leading and directing role which seeks to transform not just any old thing, but the most important social structures and relations. Hence the transformational model of social activity

must be linked to some kind of hegemonic project. It requires a strategic element.

As Gramsci stated, a group must have behind it the economic, political and cultural conditions which allow it to put itself forward as leading. Hegemony concerns not just the construction of a ruling bloc, but the reproduction of the underlying social structures that create the material conditions for such a bloc. But whilst it allows groups to develop projects that express their particular interests, there is not a direct correspondence between hegemony's function and its expression. The politically dominant group may not necessarily act in the best interests of capital (as the British Tories' stance over Europe shows). There is therefore no essential relation between class strategies and the process of capital accumulation which guarantees the success of the latter. Likewise, there are no homogenous classes or interests whose logic of development can simply be read from the objective situation.

But ruling hegemonies do need to be assessed in relation to the underlying hegemonic conditions and the structure of society. Thus we need to examine the extent to which they facilitate structural growth, development and reproduction, as well as how they preserve existing social forms and fend off power struggles.

The state is key to the organisation of a ruling hegemony - organising both the ruling bloc itself, and the wider society. In rejecting an instrumentalist conception of the state we have argued: a. That the state is determined in relation to the economy both nationally and internationally (or generally) and that it acts in a functional way to secure the conditions for capital accumulation and economic production; b. that the state also provides the strategic terrain for securing and developing political hegemony. As we argued earlier, these two aspects may not function in harmony. Indeed, friction between them provides the basis for a hegemonic crisis.

The state's functional relation to the economy is an important aspect of hegemony1. It helps secure and reproduce the conditions for economic reproduction and promotes the cohesion of the different levels of the social formation. Whilst this may sound like a functionalist argument, it is precisely because of the need for this function (and the fact that it is not automatically given) that hegemony2 is possible at all and that different groups and classes can realise their own particular social projects. The state's function in securing the conditions for capital accumulation and hegemony's function in securing the cohesion of the social formation are realised through the complex projects of different class fractions and the development of different forms of state strategy and regulative mechanisms.

Whilst we have argued that hegemony, like ideology, plays a basic functional role within all societies, the success of this role is not guaranteed. It cannot be stressed enough that capitalism is not a coherent system and that hegemonies are strewn with contradictions. In contrast to hyper-structuralist accounts, critical realism emphasises the open and contradictory character of society. Although it is materially pre-supposed by and dependant upon hegemony1, hegemony2, in line with our understanding of emergence, is a process with its own characteristics. Rather than simply representing the processes themselves, hegemony2 necessarily entails some form of agential conception of these processes based on various forms of group or class understandings.

Hegemony2 represents conscious political activity linked to the strategic defence or transformation of a given situation. Levels of consciousness are variable with conscious activity having differing degrees of unintended consequences. Nethertheless, hegemony as a praxis depends on certain reasons and intentions which help to cause action.

Particular groups or classes articulate their interests through a

hegemonising project or historical bloc. These interests represent a relation with the world. In contrast to post-structuralist accounts we have argued that a hegemonic project, in order to articulate certain interests, pre-supposes that these interests have an objective grounding. These interests are then developed as they are mediated by the hegemonic projects. Conservative hegemonies defend existing social relations by drawing upon the cloudy effects of popular ideology, whilst promoting the interests of a privileged group as the common interest. Progressive projects enlighten agents as to their interests and their potentials. This gives the project a transformatory character. They encourage agents to transcend their localised environment and to realise their wider interests through common participation and struggle.

So although we have not been able to go into detail about aspects of hegemony as a strategy, we have begun the crucial (theoretical, underlabouring) task of establishing the objective basis on which hegemonic strategies operate, the conditions of its possibility. The functional role that hegemony has within society guarantees hegemony as a strategy. Different strategies may succeed or fail. *But hegemonic strategy is a permanent feature of society.*

Because there is a certain flabbiness about critical realism's conception of social strategy we will end this section with a reappraisal of Bhaskar's TMSA. In general the TMSA is not sufficiently clear on how it fits strategically into critical realism's argument about the stratified nature of the world. The question of the reproduction and/or transformation of social structures is posed at a very general level, leaving the question of stratification unanswered. If some structures, practices and generative mechanisms carry more weight and influence than others, then clearly there will be different degrees of transformative action. A revolutionary strategy is required to select the key structures within society, as well as the key transformative agents in

relation to those structures. It would be easy to give a straight-forward Marxist answer and point to economic structures with working class agents. But the theory of stratification also points out the connectedness of these social structures.

This theory again raises the question of hegemony - in terms of a strategy which draws together and unites different agents and practices. But it also indicates that the question of direction and leadership is indispensable if a true transformation is to take place. And it ultimately points, not to abstract structures, but the state, as the main focus of social change. Hegemony and the state are raised to this importance because transformation, like the structures themselves, is stratified and multiple, and requires co-ordination.

The TMSA analyses unconscious reproduction and conscious transformation. To move to conscious transformation requires a knowledge of the different layers, structurata, practices, institutions and so on. Without sufficient knowledge, transformative activity could have devastating unforseen consequences (as with the democracy movements in Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR). So the link between the TMSA and hegemonic strategies is another way of expressing Marxism's traditional insistence on the relation between theory and practice.

Theory and Practice

Rather than embracing blind spontaneity, Marxism insists that socialist strategy is aware of its conditions of possibility. The uniqueness about the revolution under capitalism is its need to draw on theory in order to construct a project and practice. The socialist revolution, unlike previous revolutions, is carried through by a class which is not already a leading class within existing

society, but is instead rather disenfranchised. It is therefore crucial that its hegemonic projects have a sufficiently developed understanding of the society it is attempting to transform.

Unfortunately Marxism has often failed to adequately connect theory and practice, usually substituting one for the other. For example, forms of vulgar Marxism presuppose either that there is some essential class consciousness which will lead the workers to socialist revolution (for example, those influenced by Hegel, such as Lukács or Korsch), or that society passes through a series of pre-determined phases, culminating in the communist paradise (for example those influenced by Stalin, or by a particular reading of Engels). Views such as these ignore hegemony and leave little room for socialist practice. Such views, by failing to emphasise class leadership, edge towards reformism.

We have argued that Lenin's Marxism represents a real break from the mechanical viewpoint. It makes the subjective factor essential to the revolution. Therefore it stresses organisational questions and particularly the role of the revolutionary party as an *active, organic* unit. The question of hegemony is raised by the struggle for leadership. But in order to fulfil the practical requirements of leadership, it is necessary to theoretically assess the question, which class and what section of that class is able to lead, and to carry through that leadership?

Marxist theory sees things in their totality. The masses are seen as diverse rather than homogeneous. The world is seen as a complex set of relations into which the party must intervene. This complexity requires that the party is unified in its activity and that it seeks to unify the most politically advanced layers - the vanguard - around it. Given the complexity of the world, the key political struggle is therefore to capture state power in order to direct the necessary changes.

Consequently, Leninist practice rejects adaptation to spontaneous consciousness, stressing instead the need for direction and leadership. Lenin argues that although the party is involved in the day to day struggles of the workers, it stands above them. Revolutionary class consciousness needs organisation and leadership.

The need for the dictatorship of the proletariat is based, not on an authoritarian urge, but on a proper study of social reality and the potentialities and possibilities (and lack of potentialities and possibilities) present within it. It reflects the extension of the leadership function to the whole of society. This transitional period reflects the weakness of the proletariat's material base and the need to begin laying the necessary conditions for a future communist society.

These arguments reinforce the idea that there are two levels of hegemony. Whilst political power may be won, the weak social position of the working class, as well as the dangers of the international situation, means that a deeper hegemony (in the sense of hegemony1) still needs to be established. The possibility of a socialist revolution depends upon a crisis in society. The enormity of the task of socialism is expressed in the fact that the new hegemonic group is left with the job, not just of leading society, but of creating a new one.

In Bhaskar's terminology this can be an expression of the tri-unity of space, time and causality. Therefore, radical hegemonic change does not simply operate within a spatio-temporal framework; it transforms it. Periods of crisis, rupture and revolution witness new, emergent spatio-temporal totalities. Radical hegemonies both facilitate this emergence and respond to it. Counter-hegemonies must take advantage of the social fractures and divisions which open up and generate their own space.

The theory of hegemony argues that space is captured through the

construction of a bloc which can be strategically directed. The different groups that comprise this bloc occupy different social and political locations. Hegemony must draw these together, preferably through the aegis of state power. A hegemonic bloc therefore entails not only a relation to different social agents, but also to the wider social and historical locations which they occupy.

Another aspect of hegemony's relation to stratified social space-time is its intersection with ideology. Because hegemony is bound up with social structures and human practices, it coincides with the secreted ideologies of these practices. Hegemony and ideology correspond, at a deeper level, to the processes of unconscious reproduction. As things become more conscious, hegemony and ideology may be said to become articulated in relation to particular groups and their interests. At the point of hegemony2 projects, it is hegemony which articulates ideology around certain political positions, giving it a concrete shape and projection.

However, at whatever level, it is necessary to insist on the separation of hegemony and ideology. A materialist theory of hegemony depends upon the fact that it refers, not just to the articulation of ideological factors, but also to the material forms which generate these ideologies. Hegemony acts as an extrinsic articulator, not just of ideas, but of many practices - ideological, cultural, political and economic, and the specific institutions of the state, civil society and the economy.

The meaningfulness of the ideas that hegemony articulates pre-supposes the intransitive structures and objects to which these ideas refer. The nature of a hegemonic project is defined by the relations between social structures, human practices and group interests. These are real, material relations, not the arbitrary, discursive constructions refered to by today's postmodern ideologues.

It is of course true that things are discursively articulated. This is a basic fact of our social existence and is a central aspect of hegemony's function. But postmodernism *reduces* the intransitive structures of the world to their transitive aspect and relativises this knowledge by judging different discourses or language games to be incommensurable. The reactionary character of postmodernism is revealed by the fact that if social reality is reduced to a particular interpretation of it, then we are no longer left with any basis for criticising such an articulation. It might seem that under postmodernism, with the process of articulation becoming more important than that which is articulated, hegemony becomes all-powerful. But whilst we may have some sort of 'hegemony' we are denied the possibility of a meaningful *counter*-hegemony.

Here again is the connection between theory and practice. If we have a theory which lacks any ontological depth by denying, in various ways, structured, stratified, dialectical, intrinsic or necessary relations, then hegemony is not only rendered hollow as a concept, it is also rendered useless as a strategy.

Vice versa, the consequence of failing to develop a theory of hegemony is an ontologically flat, undifferentiated, unstratified, ahistorical, non-social or reified world with no grounds for meaningful interests, identities, ideas, practices or projects.

Those who do not understand society are doomed merely to reproduce it.

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