MARXISM AS SCIENCE: HISTORICAL CHALLENGES AND THEORETICAL GROWTH*

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This paper examines Marxism's claim to be a science. The first part considers possible models of science and argues that the most coherent is Imre Lakatos's methodology of scientific research programs. In his conception scientific knowledge grows on the basis of a hard core of postulates which are protected from refutation by the development of a series of auxiliary theories. Such a research program is progressive rather than degenerating if successive theories are consistent with the core, explain anomalies and make predictions, some of which are realized. In the second part I argue that with some qualifications the history of Marxism —from Marx and Engels, to German Marxism, to Russian Marxism, and finally to Western Marxism—conforms to the model of a progressive research program. In the third part I claim that deviations from the model, such as Soviet Marxism, are due to the breakdown of the reciprocal interaction between Marxism's heuristics and historical challenges.

Classical sociology consistently belittled Marxism's claim to science (Hughes 1958, Chapter 3). Weber, Durkheim, Pareto, and more recently, Parsons assailed Marxism for substituting moral passion and Hegelian metaphysics for scientific reason, for not treating evidence seriously, and for failing to adopt the techniques of modern social science. Marxists themselves have battled fiercely over Marxism's scientific status, so much so that they are conventionally divided into two opposed camps — *scientific* Marxists who attempt to establish laws of economic development in analogy to the laws of the natural sciences, and *critical* Marxists who deny the existence of any fixed determinism and concentrate on the irrationality of capitalism, the gap between what is and what could be. Determinism versus voluntarism, science versus revolution, materialism versus idealism, the old versus the young Marx, have been enduring antinomies within Marxism (Gouldner 1980, Chapter 2). However, whether from the perspective of sociology or within Marxism itself, the critiques of Marxist science have rarely been carefully explicated, let alone subjected to empirical examination. That is the task of this essay. This task requires, however, that we first turn to philosophy to clarify the possible meanings of science.

WHAT SHOULD WE MEAN BY SCIENCE?

"History of science without philosophy of science is blind" (Lakatos 1978, p. 102). In order to make sense of the history of any purported science and to evaluate its scientific status it is necessary to work with a clear conception of science. But which conception of science? Philosophy of science provides us with several models. The first part of this essay seeks to demonstrate that Lakatos's methodology of scientific research programs is the most coherent from a philosophical and logical standpoint. Furthermore, his methodology has the advantage of providing, indeed demanding, the evaluation of a historical *sequence* of theories, not just a single theory. All too often the entirety of Marxism is condemned for the supposed sins of one of its theories — whether of Lenin, Stalin, Marx, Engels or whomever — instead of considering each as a part of an evolving tradition.

Philosophy may provide the models but their relevance must be established: "Philosophy of science without history of science is empty" (Lakatos 1978, p. 102). Philosophers too often appeal to isolated illustrations of scientific progress to support their particular conception of

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scientific rationality without even attempting serious historical analysis. As we shall see, they frequently practice precisely the opposite of what they preach — expounding how science should be conducted without examining first how it actually *is* conducted. This is particularly clear in philosophers' commentaries on Marxism where they assert its nonscientific or pseudoscientific status without studying the relationship between their models of science and the historical growth of Marxism. Therefore, in the second part of this essay I examine the history of Marxism in relation to Lakatos's model of scientific rationality.

This forms the basis for the third and final part where I argue that Marxism loses it scientific character when it denies its own historicity, that is when Marxism renounces the dialogue between its own historically emergent rationality and the external historical challenges it confronts. In other words, Marxism is most successful as a science when there is balanced reciprocity between its internal and external histories. I try to apply this to the challenge to Marxism posed by the demise of "communism" in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. But first, I must consider competing conceptions of science.

From Induction to Falsificationism

Contemporary philosophy of science has moved from normative conceptions that search for *the* method of science, to historically rooted characterizations that seek to establish the logical conditions for the growth of knowledge. The early inductive models of science associated with Hume, Mill and the school of logical positivism (Nagel and Hempel) insisted that scientific laws be derived from empirical examinations of the facts. From this point of view, Marxism, rather than responding to the facts, is said to impose itself on the facts. It is ideology, metaphysics, religion or moral passion, but not science (Kolakowski 1978, pp.525-6). Durkheim put it bluntly, "The truth is that the facts and observations assembled by [Marxist] theoreticians anxious to document their affirmations are hardly there except to give form to the arguments. The research studies they made were undertaken to establish a doctrine that they had previously conceived, rather than the doctrine being the result of research" ([1896] 1958, p. 8).

Popper's conclusions about Marxism were similar, but were based on a very different conception of science. In his view, science is not an induction machine which derives laws from facts. Theories necessarily precede facts because they determine which facts are relevant. Facts exist neither to generate nor even to confirm but to falsify theories. Science proceeds, therefore, not through a process of securing the best fit or "explaining the greatest variance" but through the refutation of bold conjectures. In Popper's view the best theories are the ones that are unlikely to be true yet "hold up" under sustained attempts at refutation.

According to Popper, Marx's original theory of the collapse of capitalism was just such a bold conjecture and thus scientific, but it was proven false and should therefore be rejected. "Yet instead of accepting the refutations the followers of Marx reinterpreted both the theory and the evidence in order to make them agree. In this way they rescued the theory from refutation; but they did so at the price of adopting a device which made them irrefutable. They thus gave a 'conventionalist twist' to the theory; and by this stratagem they destroyed its much advertised claim to scientific status" (Popper 1963, p. 37; see also Popper 1945, Chapters 15-21). According to Popper, Marxists pursued *confirmations* of their theories rather than establishing criteria for their *falsification.* Marxism, like psychoanalysis, could not be proven wrong and therefore could not be a true science.

Personal Knowledge

As an account of the history of science, Popper's "falsificationism" was as flawed as the "verificationism" it was supposed to replace. Great breakthroughs have often come when scientists have refused to accept refutations, when they have turned an apparent falsification into a brilliant corroboration of the original theory. From his examination of science, Polanyi (1958, Chapter 1) concluded that "data" were never so crucial in great scientific advances as "verificationism" or "falsificationism" claimed. In his view, data have often been wrong, ignored, or deceptive, and so science cannot be reduced to an "objective" process linking theory to data, to a "logic" or "algorithm" such as "induction" or "falsification." For all its empirical controls, science still has an irreducible "subjective" core based on personal rather than impersonal knowledge. Science involves tacit skills which cannot be articulated but have to be learned through apprenticeship (Chapter 4). It calls for passions to select what is vital, to make leaps of imagination and to persuade others to see the world in a new way (pp. 132-

74). Polanyi argued that sustaining these skills, passions, and commitments is a delicate process. It requires a self-regulating community of scientists which is independent of politics (Chapter 7).

For Polanyi, Marxism was the enemy of true science (pp. 227-45). Marxism preached the subordination of science to society, destroying the community which nourished the skills, passions, and commitments of personal knowledge. Basing his view on Soviet Marxism as the prototype of all Marxism, Polanyi claimed that Marxism was immorality parading in the guise of science. Marxism's universalistic claims to science established a following among scientists and at the same time concealed its true intentions — to establish a totalitarian society that would destroy science. Marxism was the most interesting case of the "moral force of immorality" (p. 227).

Normal and Revolutionary Science

Like Polanyi, Kuhn (1962) tied the growth of knowledge to the community of scientists. He claimed that there is no one "scientific method." The "scientific method" — whether induction or falsification — is a label for the way we reconstruct the history of science to give the impression that our present knowledge is the natural culmination of an objective, rational process emerging independently of the historical and social context.

Real science develops very differently. Here Kuhn went beyond Polanyi's theory of personal knowledge to establish a more sociological conception of scientific development. Where Polanyi focused on the great advances in science, what we might call exceptional moments of scientific breakthrough, Kuhn distinguished such *revolutionary* science from what he called *normal* science. Scientists "normally" work within paradigms that are taken for granted — that establish shared assumptions, questions, and anomalies as well as exemplars or models for solving them. What is most characteristic of science is puzzle solving, absorbing or "normalizing" counterinstances to a paradigm's theories. In Kuhn's conception of science, the accumulation of unsolved puzzles, and pressure from emergent competing paradigms leads to a period of crisis in which scientists begin to lose confidence in the paradigm. The paradigm breaks down and a period of revolutionary science begins in which competing paradigms vie for the support of scientists. A period of normalcy is restored when a new consensual paradigm is established.

For Kuhn, paradigms represented different world views and as such were incommensurable and incompatible. Different paradigms were based on different assumptions, posed different questions and therefore presented scientists with different puzzles. The same data could be interpreted in different ways, so that facts themselves are relative to the paradigm. Outside the judgment of the scientific community itself — its personal knowledge or tacit skills — there could be no single set of criteria for progress that would establish the superiority of one paradigm over another. The choice between paradigms is a social, or even psychological, rather than a logical process.

Kuhn's work was not motivated by Polanyi's anticommunist zeal and was not concerned directly with the scientific status of Marxism. However, he took the existence of a plurality of competing frameworks within the social sciences as evidence that they are not true sciences, that they are in a pre-paradigmatic stage. In the social sciences there is no consensual commitment to a single paradigm that would permit the normal science of puzzle solving to flower (1962, pp. viii, 20-1, 160). Kuhn agreed with Popper that Marxism is not a science, not because it could not be falsified, but because its practitioners were not primarily concerned with normalizing its anomalies (Kuhn 1970, pp. 7-8).

Methodology of Scientific Research Programs

Kuhn systematized and expanded on Polanyi's ideas but failed to clarify either the internal dynamics of paradigms, the so-called normal science, or the logic of transition from one paradigm to another. Lakatos (1978) attempted to supply such a theory of the dynamics of paradigms, or what he called *scientific research programs*, and of the transition from one program to another.

Lakatos's point of departure was Popper's theory of scientific growth through falsificationism, but he took it to its logical conclusion. According to Lakatos science grows not through the refutation of conjectures but through the refutation of refutations of core theories. While agreeing with Popper on the defects of induction, he showed that if theories were rejected every time they were confronted with a counter-instance, then science would never get off the ground. It would drown in an ocean of anomalies. So Lakatos proposed that scientists, instead of regarding anomalies as grounds for rejecting their theories, refute anomalies in order to defend their theories.

Refuting counter-instances is what Kuhn had

earlier called puzzle solving. But Lakatos gave this process more precision. He saw each research program as having a core theory that scientists protect against refutation by constructing auxiliary hypotheses. It was not simply a matter of getting rid of anomalies, but of doing so in a way that would increase the empirical content of the research program. That is, the task was not so much to reduce the number of anomalies, as it was for Kuhn, but to exploit specific ones in order to increase the explanatory power of the program. Scientists should not be frightened by anomalies, but should seek them out, because it is anomalies that drive a research program forward.

According to Lakatos, each research program is governed by its own principles of development, or what he called its *heuristics*. According to the *negative heuristic* of the program the hard core should be defended at all costs. The hard core encompasses not only theories but also the assumptions and questions that define the program. The *positive heuristic*, on the other hand, indicates the tools with which the hard core should be defended. These are the exemplars and models that are drawn upon to build auxiliary theories and turn an apparent refutation into a corroboration of the core theory. The positive heuristic also guides the scientist toward those anomalies that are the most important to solve.

A research program develops, therefore, through the construction of an expanding belt of theories to deal in succession with counter-examples to the core theory. Here Lakatos distinguished between progressive and degenerating research programs. In a *progressive* program the new belts of theory expand the empirical content of the program, not only by absorbing anomalies but by making predictions, some of which are corroborated. In a *degenerating* program successive belts are only backward looking, patching up anomalies in *ad hoc* fashion, by reducing the scope of the theory, or by simply barring counterexamples. In a degenerating program new theories do not anticipate new facts, and thus knowledge does not grow.

Lakatos claimed that scientists do and should abandon degenerating programs for progressive ones. He tried to endow Kuhn's transition from one paradigm to the next with a "supraprogram" logic. Although he failed to provide clear criteria for assessing the relative progressiveness of different research programs, nevertheless he did supply a better guide to the rationality of scientific revolutions than Kuhn, who simply referred to the accumulation of unsolved problems and the sense of crisis within the scientific community.[1]

Lakatos himself regarded Marxism as the prototype of the degenerating research program. While Marxists sought to absorb anomalies, they did so only by reducing the program's empirical content.

> Has, for instance, Marxism ever predicted a stunning novel fact successfully? Never! It has some famous unsuccessful predictions. It predicted the absolute impoverishment of the working class. It predicted that the first socialist revolution would take place in the industrially most developed society. It predicted that socialist society would be free of revolutions. It predicted that there will be no conflict of interests between socialist countries. Thus the early predictions of Marxism were bold and stunning but they failed. Marxists explained all their failures: they explained the rising living standards of the working class by devising a theory of imperialism; they even explained why the first socialist revolution occurred in industrially backward Russia. They 'explained' Berlin 1953, Budapest, 1956, Prague 1968. They 'explained' the Russian-Chinese conflict. But their auxiliary hypotheses were all cooked up after the event to protect Marxian theory from the facts. The Newtonian program led to novel facts; the Marxian lagged behind the facts and has been running fast to catch up with them (Lakatos 1978, pp. 5-6; see also Worrall 1978, pp. 55-7).

I argue that this is an inaccurate portrait of Marxism, which has actually had dramatic predictive successes as well as failures.[2]

MARXISM: A PROGRESSIVE OR DEGENERATING RESEARCH PROGRAM?

In applying the methodology of scientific research programs to Marxism it is necessary to amplify certain of its elements that remain undeveloped in the writings of Lakatos and his students. Here I simply present them without discussion. Their

[1] Lakatos has been roundly criticized for the vagueness of his supraprogram norms and for insisting that apparently degenerate programs can always make a comeback with the result that they can be evaluated only in hindsight. See Hacking (1981; 1983, Chapter 8); Newton-Smith (1981, Chapter 4); Feyerabend (1975, Chapter 16; 1981, Chapter 10); Laudan (1977, Chapters 3 and 5).

[2] Recently others have also appealed to the idea of a research program in the social sciences but their conceptions are much more loose than mine. Alexander (1982), for example, used the idea to rebuild Parson-

importance will become apparent in subsequent sections.

1) As Lakatos himself acknowledges, but does not discuss, the hard core "does not actually emerge fully armed like Athene from the head of Zeus. It develops slowly, by a long, preliminary process of trial and error" (Lakatos 1978, p. 48, footnote 4). The same can be said of the models and exemplars of the positive heuristic.

2) The hard core of a research program not only develops over time but is often best understood as a *family* of overlapping and often competing cores which give rise to different *branches within a single research program.* Each branch reconstructs the core in a different way. In this view, successive theories develop as *belts within branches.* Lakatos's portrait, on the other hand, was based on an unambiguous hard core and therefore did not consider the coexistence of divergent but still interconnected branches.

3) While it may be difficult to compare one research program to another, within a single research program we may be able to identify degenerating and progressive branches. We can also ask why some branches prove to be more progressive than others.

4) In evaluating new branches or subtraditions within a single research program it may be necessary to recognize the contribution of "new ideas" or "new frameworks" that reorient research without clear pay-offs in terms of prediction.

5) Within social science anomalies are generated externally as often as internally. Historical changes provide an expanding fund of new anomalies which mandate the construction of new belts of theory within branches and occasionally even new branches of the research program.

6) Inasmuch as Marxism is concerned with changing the world it studies and not simply passively reflecting it, it must be particularly concerned with solving anomalies and making predictions.

sian "neo-functionalism," and Evans and Stephens (1989) used it to reconstruct the trajectory of development theory. Neither take the details of Lakatos's scheme seriously, the idea of a positive and negative heuristic, the importance of prediction and the criteria of "progressiveness" and "degeneracy." Howard Bernstein (1981) suggests how the idea might be developed for Marxist historiography, but he doesn't carry it very far.

The Negative Heuristic

What then lies in the core of Marxism? What is it that Marxists cling to at all costs and abandon when they become ex-Marxists? What is it that attracts erstwhile non-Marxists to adopt the Marxist research program? This has been a hotly debated question and consensus has never been reached. Marxism can be distinguished from other bodies of thought by its focus on economic factors, its concern with human emancipation, the centrality of its analysis of class, or its theory of the collapse of capitalism; but the possibilities are limited. I believe we can capture that limitation by beginning with how Marx himself defined the core of his work.

In the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Tucker 1978, pp. 4-5) Marx described his theory of historical materialism as "the general result at which I arrived and which, once won, served as a guiding thread for my studies." He delineated seven major postulates, presented here in Table 1. Individually, Marx elaborated them in other writings but this is the only place he brought them together into a coherent and pithy summary. Even so, these postulates do not define an unambiguous hard core of Marxism. There is no single consistent interpretation which supplants all others as Cohen (1978) tried to maintain. Rather these postulates have supplied the terms and terrain for competing and evolving interpretations of that core. Different Marxisms have elaborated, reinterpreted and combined different postulates in accordance with the challenges (anomalies) generated by history.

The Positive Heuristic

The positive heuristic contains models and exemplars, indicating distinctive ways of developing new theories in a research program. I regard Marx's economic writings, particularly the three volumes of *Capital* ([1867, 1885, 1894] 1967) and political writings, particularly *The Eighteenth Brumaire* ([1852] 1963) and *The Class Struggles in France* ([1850] 1964), as major exemplars of Marxist theorizing. It is the elaboration of the core theory, laid out in Table 1, as it applies to capitalism. I only describe the rudiments of these theories here in order to establish how they lay the foundations for subsequent development of the research program.[3]

[3] As must be apparent, I depart from classical Marxism and French structuralism which reduce the truth in Marx to his mature, scientific writings as well

Table 1. Marx's Seven Postulates of Historical Materialism

P1	For there to be history, men and women must transform nature into means of their survival, that is they must *produce* the means of their existence. "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of the development of the productive forces"(p. 4).
P2	The "economic base" or mode of production defines the limits of variation of the superstructure. "The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general"(p. 4).
P3	A mode of production develops through the interaction between the forces of production (how we produce the means of existence) and the relations of production (how the product of labor is appropriated and distributed). "At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production.... From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution" (pp. 4-5).
P4	Class struggle is the motor of transition from one mode of production to another. "With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic — in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out" (p. 5).
P5	A successful transition can only take place when the material conditions are present. "No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself" (p. 5).
P6	History is progressive insofar as it follows the expansion of the forces of production. "In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society" (p. 5).
P7	Communism spells the end of social antagonisms and the beginning of the emancipation of individuals. We no longer make history behind our backs but consciously and collectively. "The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production — antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from the social conditions of life of the individuals; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formations brings, therefore, the prehistory of human society to a close" (p. 5).

Source: Karl Marx, [1859] 1978, Preface to "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," pp. 4-5 in *The Marx-Engels Readery*, edited by Robert Tucker, New York: Norton.

While insights into the character of communism, of class struggle, of primitive accumulation, and of ideology abound, the major contribution of Marx's *Capital* was his theory of the dynamics of capitalism, culminating with the inevitability of its demise. It exemplified P3 (Table 1): the way in which relations of production would first promote and then fetter the forces of production. If relations of production refer to the relations through which surplus is appropriated, capitalist relations of production refer to the appropriation of more labor value from workers than they receive in the form of wages. This surplus value is the origin of profit, whereas wages correspond to the costs of goods and services necessary to reproduce labor power, that is, the capacity to work.

This was a static picture of the isolated capitalist. Marx made it dynamic by introducing competition among capitalists. Capitalists survive as such only insofar as they make a profit. In a situation of perfect competition an individual capitalist can increase profits by reducing wages, by deskilling, by extending the length of the working day, by intensifying work, but there are definite limits (biological and also legal) to each of these methods. Technology, however, can advance within these limits and is therefore the most distinctive mode of increasing profit. However, once one capitalist introduces new technology to

as from critical theory which finds the real Marx in his youthful, Hegelian manuscripts. In my view, the later works relate to the earlier ones as positive heuristic to negative heuristic. The early critical theory represents the core of the research program which is assumed in the later specific analyses of capitalism.

reduce the cost of production, all the others must also introduce that technology or risk being driven out of business. This leads to a dual crisis: On the one hand the rate of profit falls as the source of profit — surplus value — becomes a steadily diminishing proportion of the capital deployed; and on the other hand, crises of overproduction result as more goods are produced than can find consumers because wages are so low. These two crisis tendencies intensify each other as overproduction leads small capitalists to go out of business, further concentrating capital and bringing down the rate of profit as well as displacing workers into the reserve army of the unemployed. The intensification of crises of overproduction and the corresponding concentration of capital leads on the one hand to the destruction of capital, and on the other hand to the formation of cartels, trusts and monopolies that stifle further economic development.

If this is how Marx understood the way capitalist relations of production were transformed from forms of development of the productive forces into their fetters, how did he understand the epoch of social revolution? We have seen how competitive capitalism compels each individual capitalist to pursue profit and how this has the aggregate effect of bringing about the economic demise of capitalism. The same process of accumulation polarizes the class structure between capital and labor, creating a working class that is homogenized, degraded, and deskilled. The working class becomes a "class for itself," first through skirmishes at the level of the factory, then by combination into trade unions, and finally by forming a working class party that seizes state power. This, at any rate, is the picture Marx and Engels draw in *The Communist Manifesto* ([1848] 1978) which grew out of the English experience in the first half of the nineteenth century. Following P4 (Table 1), they regarded the forms of class struggle in the transition from one mode of production to another as contingent on political and ideological forms. Whereas in England the process was relatively simple by virtue of the more advanced polarization of the class structure, in France it was much more complicated.

In *The Class Struggles in France* ([1850] 1964) and *The Eighteenth Brumaire* ([1852] 1963) Marx examined the dynamics of the political regime, not the dynamics of the economy. In France economic classes gained representation in the political arena through parties that played out a system of alliances given by the logic of the form of state. Universal suffrage, Marx argued, unchains class struggle by throwing classes into the political arena where they are compelled to parade their true interests. He viewed the rapid movement of regimes between the Social Republic inaugurated in February 1848 and the rise of Bonapartism in 1851 as the crystallization of class struggle between capital and labor. A dictatorship, subordinating all classes to itself but ruling on behalf of the bourgeoisie, was to be the final political solution before capitalism's denouement. Marx thought it would not last because it couldn't extend material concessions to the subordinate classes, because it would puncture the illusions of the supporting class of peasantry, and because the state daily recreated a political threat to its own existence in the form of the bourgeoisie. Writing twenty years later when the Paris Commune arose on the heels of the collapse of Bonapartism, Marx still contended that it was "the only possible state form in which the appropriating class can continue to sway it over the producing class," but at the same time it is "the most prostitute and ultimate form of state power"([1871] 1968, p. 56).

Reform versus Revolution

By the time of Marx's death in 1883, history was already casting doubt on his predictions. The concentration and centralization of capital, the emergence of joint stock companies, cartels and trusts did not spell the end of capitalism but only of *competitive* capitalism. Nor was the working class demonstrating the revolutionary fervor Marx expected. In England, the most advanced capitalist country, the working class largely surrendered its radical goals after 1850. In France the early upsurge of the working class in 1848 was a forerunner of the Paris Commune of 1871, but with its collapse the center of the working class movement shifted to Germany. There the Social Democratic Party was moving from strength to strength in the electoral arena (Schorske 1955) and it was in Germany that Marxism added a new belt of theory around the implications of capitalist democracy for socialist strategy.

Engels had hardly been buried when Eduard Bernstein, his disciple and the executor of his will, began to *revise* the hard core of Marxism to suit the new historical circumstances ([1899] 1961; see also Gay, 1952, Tudor and Tudor, 1988). In violation of P3 and P4, Bernstein argued that the expansion of the forces of production was *not* being fettered by capitalist relations of production. On the contrary trusts, credit, and

the persistence of small scale entrepreneurs were reducing the severity of crises and allowing capitalism to slowly evolve into socialism. Far from liberating human beings through the collective direction of society, his vision of socialism violated P7 by going no further than a modified capitalism based on collective bargaining, labor legislation and the redistribution of wealth. He viewed socialism as the fulfillment of the ideals of the bourgeois revolution. In proposing a law of increasing democratization that would spread of its own accord from political to economic realms, Bernstein was also contradicting P2.

Revisionism, by definition, is revision of the core to absorb anomalies. It follows Popper's principle of rejecting a theory when it is falsified. Lakatos, however, would advocate building a new belt of theory which would turn an anomaly into a corroboration of the core. From a methodological standpoint he would have to endorse Luxemburg's reassertion that socialism requires the suppression of capitalism (P7), that capitalist relations of production sow the seeds of their own destruction by fettering the forces of production (P3), and that class struggle will determine whether capitalism is followed by socialism or barbarism (P4).

In *Reform or Revolution* (Waters [1899] 1970, pp.33-91) Luxemburg refuted Bernstein's refutation of the Marxist theory of the collapse of capitalism. Bernstein's mechanisms of economic adaptation were in fact modes of adaptation of individual capitalists. Credit, trusts, and small-size entrepreneurs reflected in different ways increased security for the individual capitalist but are lubricants of the expansion of capital*ism* and thereby accelerated its demise. In taking the standpoint of the individual capitalist, Bernstein's theory paid no attention to the systemic features of capitalism. Later in *The Accumulation of Capital* ([1913] 1951) Luxemburg developed a theory of the extension of crises of overproduction to the world level. Searching for outlets for their commodities capitalists would seek out new markets through forcible incorporation (colonialism) of countries into an international capitalist order. When the whole world is divided up, capitalist countries would be forced into wars to redivide it, thereby intensifying class struggle. Luxemburg was the first to recognize the close link between the expansion of capitalism and militarism.

Luxemburg accused Bernstein of utopian thinking insofar as he thought that the effects of capitalism could be suppressed without suppressing capitalism itself. Equalization of wealth and the introduction of cooperatives could not come about through the reform of capitalism. She regarded Bernstein as equally utopian in postulating a law of increasing democracy since she considered even bourgeois democracy to be a very fragile form of state, continually threatened by the bourgeoisie and defended by the working class as a condition of its emancipation. In returning to this question, *The Junius Pamphlet* (Waters [1915] 1970, pp. 257-331) addressed the crisis of German social democracy brought on by its support for the war and anticipated the rise of fascism. Equally prophetic was her analysis of the Russian Revolution in 1918 (Waters 1970, pp. 365-95) which applauded the Bolshevik seizure of power in the most difficult of circumstances, but warned that a necessity should not be turned into a virtue. Premature seizures of power were necessary at times, but they should not be turned into models for all revolutionary transitions. She anticipated the trajectory of the Russian Revolution: Without parliamentary assemblies, without freedom of press and association, "life [would die] out in every public institution," including the Soviets, and dictatorship of the proletariat would become dictatorship of the bureaucracy (Waters [1918] 1970, p. 391). Socialist democracy must combine parliamentary representation and basic civic rights with popular participation in extraparliamentary forums.

While Luxemburg was able to refute Bernstein's theory of the evolution of capitalism into socialism, she still was faced with the "anomalous" reformist tendencies of the German working class. She saw the expansion of social democracy's participation in electoral politics as a two edged sword: "But capitalism furnishes besides the *obstacles* also the only *possibilities* of realizing the socialist program. The same can be said about democracy" (Waters 1970, p. 74). But the realization of democracy's potential lay in working class organization outside the trade union and parliamentary terrains. Basing her analysis on the events of the Russian Revolution of 1905 Luxemburg idealized the mass strike as the universal weapon of revolutionary class struggle. The intermingling of political and economic strikes would take the place of street fighting. While recognizing the peculiar conditions in Russia, Luxemburg argued against those in the Social Democratic Party who regarded the mass strike as a weapon specific to the working class in absolutist and economically backward regimes

(Schorske 1955, Chapter 2). She never managed to reconcile herself or her theory to the reformist tendencies within the working class.

Whereas Bernstein's radical departure from the Marxist core originated a new research program,[4] Luxemburg's defense of the hard core led to the development of a new and progressive belt of theory — progressive in that it anticipated new phenomena, some of which actually occurred. The contributions of both should be contrasted with Kautsky's defense of Marxism which *reduced* its empirical content by denying anomalies. Kautsky ([1891] 1971; 1909) preferred to look for confirmations of Marxism than to tackle its anomalies. He held onto orthodoxy by appealing to P5, arguing that there was still room for the expansion of the forces of production within capitalism and that its working class was correspondingly immature. Therefore, revolution was premature. He dealt with the divergence between theory and reality by projecting their convergence into an unspecified future. He neither reconstructed the core nor created new theory. As the situation in Germany polarized during and after WWI, Kautsky disappeared into the widening gulf separating social democratic revisionism and the politically weaker revolutionary Marxism.

Combined and Uneven Development of Capitalism

While German Marxism was struggling in theory and in practice with anomalies brought about by the extension of democracy and the continued expansion of the forces of production, the opposite situation confronted Russian Marxism. There absolutism based on a semifeudal economy was fettering the growth of capitalism and at the same time creating a powerful and radical working class. As we have seen, Luxemburg saw the 1905 revolution as the forerunner of a new series of proletarian revolutions in the West. "The most backward country of all, just because it has been so unpardonably late with its bourgeois revolution, shows ways and methods of further class struggle to the proletariat of Germany and the most advanced capitalist countries" (Waters 1970, p.203). Developments in Russia appeared to refute the Marxian idea that revolution would first break out in the most advanced rather than the most backward capitalist countries. While Luxemburg intuited the solution to this anomaly, it was Trotsky who, as early as 1906 in *Results and Prospects* ([1906], 1969), developed his theories of the combined and uneven development of capitalism and of permanent revolution to explain and anticipate the October Revolution and its aftermath. The prophetic power of *Results and Prospects* is supported by the fact that Trotsky's celebrated *History of the Russian Revolution* written in 1930 (1977) was based on the same theory.

Orthodox Marxism, represented in Russia by the towering figure of Plekhanov, argued that Russia had to undergo a bourgeois revolution before it could advance to socialism. It was therefore at a loss to exploit the growing militancy and radicalism of the working class. By contrast, Trotsky argued that the only class that could carry out a bourgeois revolution in Russia was the working class, and by virtue of that fact the bourgeois revolution had to proceed uninterruptedly to a socialist revolution which could only be successful if it also triggered a revolution in the West. This was Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

But why was the working class the only possible agent of a bourgeois revolution? Capitalism in Russia developed very late under the sponsorship of the state and of foreign (particularly French) investment. Being weak and dependent, the Russian bourgeoisie was continually plundered by a Czarist regime that was threatened militarily by states built on much more advanced (capitalist) economic foundations. At the same time that absolutism stifled the growth of the forces of production, the establishment of the most (technically) advanced capitalism in the major Russian cities created a new and militant working class. The majority of Russian workers had been recently uprooted from their land. It did not embrace the conservative traditions of Western proletariats which had evolved with capitalism. So, when brought together in huge factories the Russian working class displayed all the features of a revolutionary class.

The novelty of Trotsky's theory of combined and uneven development lay in its treatment of the international character of capitalist development and its political implications. According to Trotsky, capitalism did not develop unilinearly

[4] This new research program can be identified with the work of Sidney Hook, Daniel Bell, and Seymour Martin Lipset who all regarded themselves as socialist because they defended the progressive democratic trends of capitalism. We can also see Eduard Bernstein's theory at work in T. H. Marshall's account of the British welfare state, Walter Korpi's analysis of Swedish social democracy and Bowles and Gintis's proposals for democratization of American society.

in parallel fashion within each country as Marx had assumed, but rather jumped from one country to another. Uneven development led to the combination of the most advanced and the most backward forms of production, creating in countries of the "second rank" a weak bourgeoisie and an explosive working class. While the peasantry was crucial in destabilizing absolutism, it could not lead a revolution. That role would have to be adopted by the working class, which would not be able to stop at the overthrow of absolutism. Precisely because it was a working class and its interests were therefore at odds with capitalism, it would have to move forward to socialism. By spreading back from East to West the revolution would be permanent in the international arena after it had been made permanent within Russia.

While creating a new belt of theory, Trotsky was also true to the Marxist core. He defended P2 when he wrote about the limits of absolutism posed by its economic foundations, P3 when he wrote about the fettering of forces of production by absolutism, P4 when he said this would lead to revolution, whose struggles could not be read off from economic relations but would be shaped by political and ideological factors. In anticipating a socialist revolution in Russia, Trotsky was not expectating stages of development to be skipped (which would violate P5 and P6) since such a revolution would take place in the context of an international capitalism that had exhausted its potential for development in the core countries.

That he was wrong in his diagnosis of the situation in the West does not detract from the fecundity of his theory of combined and uneven development of capitalism. Indeed, Lenin and Gramsci in different ways would develop that theory to explain the pacification of the Western working class just as others have used it to explain the radical character of the working class in Third World industrializing countries today, such as Brazil and South Africa (Seidman 1990).

Even Trotsky did not preclude the possibility of the defeat of the working class in the West. In *Results and Prospects* (1969) he wrote that failing a revolution in the West the Russian revolution would be aborted and would turn inward on itself. He anticipated the broad outlines of what actually happened after 1917. The tragedy of Trotsky's life was that he was destined to be the agent and the victim of his own accurate predictions — the involution of a Russian Revolution that was not followed by revolution in the West, the process he analyzed with great acuity in *Revolution Betrayed* ([1936] 1972).

State and Revolution

When Lenin stepped off the sealed train at Petrograd on April 3, 1917 he surprised all his Bolshevik followers by announcing that the time was now ripe to seize power and move forward to socialism. He was in effect declaring his support for Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Furthermore, like Trotsky, he assumed that a Russian revolution would be certain of support from the socialist revolutions it would ignite in the advanced West. But there was no theory of the transition to socialism. German Marxism had studied the collapse of capitalism more intensively than the transition to socialism. *State and Revolution* ([1917] 1967, Volume Two, pp. 283-376), written by Lenin two months before the October Revolution, while he was in hiding, set Marxism on an entirely new footing by making the state central to the process of transition. We should not be deceived by Lenin's ability to sound as though he was merely parroting what Marx and Engels had said. Working with the positive heuristic they had established in their political writings he constructed an entirely new belt of theory. Indeed, it is difficult to appreciate the state of Marxist theory before Lenin because inevitably we read it, whether positively or negatively, through the prism of Lenin's theories (Polan 1984, Chapter one).

The question Lenin posed in *State and Revolution* is: What must take place if there is to be a transition from capitalism to communism? His answer was a *revolutionary* transformation from capitalism to a transitional stage called "socialism," which would then *evolve* into communism. He assumed that the objective conditions would be present (P3) and so reduced the problem of transition to a question of state power (P4). The capitalist state had to be destroyed, and a new state — the dictatorship of the proletariat — had to be set up in its place. This dictatorship would wither away, leaving communism behind. For all the references to events of his time, this was an abstract model of "objective possibility." It did not consider the concrete circumstances which might thwart or foster any particular transition.

Lenin argued against two other models: orthodox Marxism, represented by Kautsky, and anarchism. Both models reduced the transition to communism to a single stage. Kautsky saw the

transition in terms of the reform of the capitalist state by a working class party voted into office. Lenin countered Kautsky by arguing that capitalist democracy was capitalist in content and democratic in form. While parliament provided the political resources (freedom of speech and organization, a public platform, etc.) to forge a solidary working class, it also protected the interests of the capitalist class by obscuring the real mechanisms of power. Parliaments gave the people an illusion of power, while the real business went on behind the scenes through the thousands of threads that connected the bourgeoisie to the military and the bureaucracy. Were a socialist party to prevail in parliament it would not be able to break those ties.

The anarchists, on the other hand, demanded the destruction of the capitalist state but considered this sufficient to move straight into communism. Lenin defended the necessity of a transitional state — the dictatorship of the proletariat —that would lay the economic and the political foundations for communism. Its *economic task* was to eliminate capitalism by centralizing ownership and control of the means of production but at the same time assuring the continued cooperation of all by rewarding people according to their labor. Lenin wrote that the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie would have to defend bourgeois rights and formal equality and it would in that sense be a bourgeois state. This was a necessary feature of the transitional stage. At the same time the *political task* of the dictatorship of the proletariat would be to establish a radical democracy which would guarantee the withering away of this democratic form of state. This required first, that state officials be elected, be subjected to instant recall and be paid an average worker's wage, replacing the bureaucracy; second, that the military, understood by Lenin as the standing army, be abolished and armed workers set in its place; third, that parliament be transformed from a "talking shop" into real working bodies, that is into Soviets.

We have here an instance of fruitful dialogue between rival traditions in which Marxism incorporates the challenge of anarchism. While regarding the anarchists as utopians for thinking it was possible to skip the stage of socialism, Lenin took their fear of the emergence of a new form of state very seriously. It was not enough to eliminate one class — the bourgeoisie — we must guarantee that a new class would not emerge, in particular a class of officials and experts. Lenin thought that advances in technology would permit the reduction of state functions to "accounting and control," thereby limiting the possibility of the rise of a new class based on its monopoly of knowledge. The very radicalism of his proposed democracy testifies to his recognition of the dangers of bureaucratization and officialdom.

From the standpoint of this model of the transition to communism it is obvious why all socialist revolutions hitherto have failed to realize their goals of justice and efficiency: Instead of the institutionalization of radical democracy and the guarantee of bourgeois rights, there arose a new class of state bureaucrats who monopolized control over the means of production, undermining both the principle of reward according to labor and the possibility of effective planning. Why did events turn out this way? The Russian revolution took place in a semi-feudal agrarian country, already exhausted and defeated in war. Far from aiding the Russian Revolution, Western states blockaded the Soviet Union and promoted a civil war against the fledgling state. These were not the best conditions for establishing a radical democracy.

Still it may be the case that this transition to socialism is inherently infeasible. Is it ever possible to sustain some sort of dual power: dictatorship over one class (the bourgeoisie) and democracy for another (the working class)? One might argue that these two antithetical parts of the dictatorship of the proletariat can never be implemented simultaneously, but only in succession beginning with a dictatorship over the bourgeoisie and the creation of the economic conditions of communism, what we might call *state socialism.* Only much later can radical democracy be introduced. State socialism would have to be examined in the light of the way it first promoted and then fettered the development of the forces of production at the same time that it engendered classes which might demand, and in the end fight for, democratization.

From Imperialism to Dependency

What led Lenin to change his mind and propose the overthrow of the Provisional Government when he arrived in Russia in April 1917? It was not simply opportunism. Like so much of Lenin's political strategy, his decision was rooted in a theoretical understanding of the decline of capitalism on a world scale, as worked out in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* ([1916] 1967, Volume One, pp. 667-768; see also Harding 1983, Volume Two, Chapters 2 and 3).

Whereas Trotsky analyzed the political consequences of the expansion of capitalism into backward countries, Lenin projected Marx's economic theory of capitalism onto the world level. He attempted to digest what was both an anomaly and a profound setback to the socialist movement: the support given by socialist parties for national war in violation of international working class solidarity. Lenin tried to turn this anomaly into a corroboration of Marxist theory by showing how wars were a sign of the fettering of the forces of production (P3) and would necessarily lead to revolution (P4).

Influenced by Hilferding's classic, *Finance Capital* ([1910] 1981), Lenin argued that the concentration of capital took place not only in industry but also in finance. He postulated a new stage of capitalism, monopoly capitalism, defined by the rise of a financial oligarchy which bound together international finance and industrial cartels. Whereas the earlier stage of capitalism was characterized by the overproduction of consumer goods, this new stage saw the overproduction of capital, which sought "superprofits" through export to backward countries. When the whole world had been divided up among cartels and there was no further outlet for excess capital, then only through imperialist wars could territories be redistributed among capitalist nations. The instability brought about by the uneven development of capitalism on a world scale would lead inevitably to imperialist wars among the most powerful capitalist countries. National wars would precipitate civil wars between classes as the working class realized the costs of supporting their own bourgeoisie.

Luxemburg had formulated an earlier version of this argument, but Lenin's was the most comprehensive reconstruction of the original Marxian theory of the dynamics of capitalism. It addressed a number of anomalies and made a number of predictions, some of which indeed came to pass. Thus, Lenin, never one to ignore the importance of nationalism, anticipated that a major challenge to capitalism would come from wars of national liberation in the colonized Third World. In the core countries, on the other hand, Lenin argued that the spoils of imperialism would trickle down to the working class to create an aristocracy of labor. Therefore, certain sections of the working class had a definite material interest in imperialism, and this was the material basis of the "reformism" of social democratic parties and of their support for national wars. Lenin also saw how the expansion of capitalism into backward countries would uproot the population and provide a pool of cheap labor, further balkanizing the labor movement in advanced capitalist countries. In characterizing the world system in terms of core, colonized and semi-independent nations Lenin had already anticipated contemporary world systems analysis.

Perhaps the most contentious part of Lenin's argument was the inevitability of imperial wars. This was a direct challenge to Kautsky who argued that imperialism was a policy preferred by finance capital rather than an inevitable outgrowth of capitalism. The weak link in Lenin's argument was the one tying the division of the world among cartels to the division of the world among nations. He assumed that nation states are the instruments of cartels. But if the latter become truly international they have no national affiliation and states would be less and less compelled to enter wars on their behalf.

Indeed, one can reconstruct Lenin's argument as follows. The more international capital becomes (i.e., the more it does not recognize national boundaries), the more states will compete with each other for capital. The autonomy of states refers to their "freedom" to induce capital to invest within particular national boundaries. The changing status of the state in relation to capital is akin to the transition from serf to wage laborer, from bondage to formally free labor. In short, increasing formal autonomy, far from indicating an increasing strength of the state, reflects a transformation in the character of its subordination to capital. This transformation of world capitalism is reflected in recent theorizing about the autonomy of the state. Such a vision of the world economy sheds light on current interest in "dependent development" and "bringing the state back in" (Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol 1985). But if my analysis is correct, to recognize the formal autonomy of the state is also to recognize its actual weakness in the present configuration of world capitalism.

What, then, is the significance of imperialism? Imperialism is the vehicle though which capitalism becomes truly international, whereby it plants itself in economically underdeveloped countries and from there repatriates profits to core countries. But once capitalism has established itself at a world level, direct political control of less developed countries is no longer necessary and colonialism loses its *raison d'etre*. The external constraints of capitalism become internalized within countries in the form of class alliances and class formation (Cardoso and Faletto 1979). As

Warren (1980), has put it, imperialism is the pioneer of capitalism, or turning Lenin on his head, capitalism is the highest stage of imperialism.

From Reification to Critical Theory

The Russian Revolution revolutionized Marxist theory. It created official Soviet Marxism as well as its anti-Christ — Western Marxism. Inspired by the Russian Revolution and the Hungarian Revolution of 1919, George Lukacs's *History and Class Consciousness* ([1922] 1971) is one of the foundation texts of Western Marxism. It established the core and positive heuristic of a new branch of Marxism, critical theory, by resurrecting the Hegelian moment of Marx's early works. Lukacs's essays attacked the "mechanical" Marxism of the Second International for their slavish adherence to laws of development that repressed the human volition upon which they rested. Both the successful and failed revolutions highlighted the importance of class consciousness in the revolutionary process. Class consciousness, according to Lukacs, is the perspective the working class would have if it could see the totality. It is a consciousness imputed to the working class — not a necessary but an objectively possible consciousness.

However, Lukacs's lasting contribution was his analysis of why the working class might not achieve a view of the whole and thus become a revolutionary subject. His theory of reification elaborated P1, that men and women enter relations which are "indispensable and independent of their will," by drawing on the analysis of fetishism of commodities in *Capital* volume I. Reification referred to the way in which products become objects, divorced from their production. It affects not only commodities but also facts and relations. It leads to a fragmented, atomized, and isolated consciousness rather than a revolutionary, totalizing class consciousness. In *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* ([1844] 1975), which were not available to Lukacs, Marx described this process as alienation: As the subjective authorship of production is lost, the product becomes a power over its producer who then is alienated from the production process, from fellow producers and from the essence of the human species. It is an eloquent testimony to the coherence and power of the Marxist research program that Lukacs felt compelled to fill out the core of Marx's intellectual project by reinventing and elaborating then unknown writings of Marx.

In his analysis of *de*reification, however, Lukacs showed the lingering presence of orthodox Marxism. He regarded the deepening of crises as lending a consciousness of the inevitable demise of capitalism, that struggles would demystify the totality. He added another component, namely that manual workers may be reified in their physical activity, but in their mental lives they were left untouched to reflect upon the extreme commodification. Between 1919 and 1922 Lukacs's ideas changed — from regarding the proletariat as able to emancipate itself to viewing prefigurative institutions such as worker councils as necessary, and finally to embracing the Party as a totalistic institution that would keep reification at bay and bring true consciousness to the working class. Compared to his brilliant analysis of reification, Lukacs's treatment of dereification is too *ad hoc* and superficial to count as a progressive development of theory.

Critical theory would all but discount these orthodox residues in Lukacs's writing. Thus, the response of the Frankfurt School to the rise of fascism, coming on the heels of a failed workers' revolution, was to retain and develop Lukacs's analysis of reification but often at the expense of historical materialism (Arato and Breines, 1979; Jay 1984). Pollock ([1941] 1978) developed theories of organized and state capitalism which demonstrated capitalism's durability. The turn to philosophy traced how reason had become "unreason," how as the potential for emancipation became greater, prospects for its realization receded; and how remnants of resistance to capitalism were being destroyed as the family, and thus the human psyche itself, was invaded by agencies of mass socialization (Horkheimer [1936]1972, pp. 47-128; Horkheimer and Adorno [1944]1972). Turning orthodox Marxism on its head, the Frankfurt School saw no emancipatory aspects to the domination of nature. Unless humans could develop a more balanced relationship to nature the expansion of the forces of production could only intensify human subjugation. Amidst despair, there were flashes of utopianism such as Marcuse's (1955, 1964, 1969) great refusal, or his glimpses of emancipation in art and philosophy. Certainly, critical theory would lose any confidence in the revolutionary agency of the working class which was irrevocably tainted by capitalism. Lukacs's totality had become totalitarian, trapping everyone in a one-dimensional society that had lost sight of any vision or project for a different world. The Frankfurt School abandoned the substantive postulates of Marx's preface to embrace only his

most general critique of domination, an elaboration of P1. In their hands adherence to P7 became less a commitment to the inevitability of communism and more a critique of the irrationality of all hitherto existing history.

Jürgen Habermas (1984, 1987) has undertaken the heroic task of saving critical theory from degenerating into nihilism by reuniting it with sociology and historical materialism. On the one hand he extended the Marxian analysis of reification from the economic system to the political system, while on the other hand he drew on Durkheim and Mead to constitute potentially autonomous realms of communicative action, that is self-determining public and private institutions where domination is limited. The struggle between system and lifeworld rather than the struggle between classes supplies the dynamic of modern society. However, Habermas's rescue of critical theory comes at the expense of the emancipatory vision of P7: The best we can hope for is to control the system-world and to prevent it from colonizing the lifeworld.

However illuminating and fecund critical theory was, its systematic critique of "positivism" restricted the development of sufficiently specific theories that would stand up to Lakatos's criteria of scientific growth. Habermas's brilliant synthesis remains, like that of Talcott Parsons, at the level of meta-theory, of an orienting framework, rather than scientific theory. Only Gramsci was able to both reconstruct the Marxist framework and also deliver the rudiments of a scientific theory of superstructures.

Gramsci's Turn to the Superstructures

The failure of revolution and the rise of fascism in the West led critical theory away from Marxism, but it had the opposite effect on the Italian socialist Antonio Gramsci. It turned his youthful voluntarism in a Marxist direction. Thus, in 1918 Gramsci referred to the Russian Revolution as a "revolution against *Capital*," against iron laws which state that the most advanced forms of capitalism undergo socialist revolution first. In his prison writings Gramsci tried to come to terms with the collapse of the Turin factory council movement (1919-1920) and the subsequent rise of fascism by fusing his voluntarism with the deterministic strands of historical materialism. In this later analysis, the subjective moment in history became the vehicle for consolidating capitalism as well as the only means for mounting a revolutionary challenge.

Gramsci drew on Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* ([1845] 1978, pp.143-5) to make explicit the indeterminism in the seven postulates of historical materialism. Gramsci agrees that human beings enter social relations which are indispensable and independent of their will (P1), but these relations are not entirely external, since knowledge of them can change them (1971, pp. 244, 352-3). Thus, Gramsci saw the superstructure as arising out of the economic base (P2), but it was possible for the superstructure ("human will") to react back on the base ("economic structure") (1971, pp. 366, 403).

The hallmark of Gramsci's writings lies in the degree of independence he gives to the realm of "superstructures." But what did he say about the economy? Here too he retained a commitment to historical materialism. While he maintained that the relations of production would fetter the forces of production and thus generate economic crises (P3), he did not believe that by themselves these economic crises would lead to the breakdown of capitalism (1971, p.178). Without a theory of automatic collapse, politics and ideology assumed much greater importance. Gramsci, therefore, made much of the distinction of P4 between the relation of social forces ("closely linked to the structure, objective, independent of human will and which can be measured with the systems of the exact or physical sciences") and the realm of subjective will formation — the political and ideological forms in which men become conscious of the conflict between forces and relations of production and fight it out (1971, pp. 138, 162, 180-1, 365, 371-2).

Gramsci's originality developed within the confines of Marxist orthodoxy. He always insisted on P5 — an order cannot perish until its potential has been exhausted and the seeds of a new society have been created (1971, p. 177), and he took for granted that the expansion of the forces of production would lead to the progressive development of history (P6). He saw communism as a society in which the economy is turned from a structure of domination into an instrument of emancipation (p. 367). Not only is the relationship between base and superstructure reversed, but within the superstructure the state is absorbed into civil society (1971, pp. 253, 263). This was Gramsci's interpretation of the end of prehistory (P7).

On the basis of this reconstituted core, Gramsci expanded the positive heuristic of Marxism giving greater autonomy to the realm of the superstructures. Rather than periodizing the history of capitalism on the basis of its economy — competitive versus monopoly, national versus

imperial, anarchic versus organized, etc. — Gramsci periodized it on the basis of its political institutions, specifically the rise of civil society. The complex of private but national organizations such as mass political parties, trade unions, and mass media, integrated subordinate classes into capitalist society. Whereas his predecessors saw 1871 as marking the beginning of the demise of capitalism, for Gramsci it signalled the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie over both the old classes and the working class.

Gramsci made corresponding innovations in the theory of the state. He saw the state as the means through which the capitalist class "not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules" (1971, p. 244). The state is not simply negative and repressive but also positive and "educative" — not simply the military and the police but parliament, law, and education. The state unites with the "trenches of civil society" to organize and structure interests in accordance with the preservation of capitalism.

Such a revised theory of politics and ideology called for a change in revolutionary strategy from one that emphasized seizure of state power to one that called for the conquest of civil society, for the transformation of schools, trade unions, churches, and political parties as well as the creation of new arenas of opposition to capitalism. A war of movement (assault on the state) could only be successful *after* a war of position has rebuilt civil society. Lenin's model, in which war of position follows war of movement, applied to Russia because there ". . . 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" (1971, p. 238). Thus, Gramsci criticized Luxemburg and Trotsky for applying to advanced capitalism theories of revolution — the mass strike, the permanent revolution — which are only appropriate to early or backward forms of capitalism.

But Gramsci was still a Marxist: He insisted that the economic base set parameters on the operation and on the effects of the superstructures. As in Marx's political works the economy constituted political actors as classes. Working from the theory of class formation in *The Communist Manifesto*, and characterizations of class struggle in *The Class Struggles in France* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Gramsci argued that class organization moves through three stages: first, a combination into sectoral associations (trade associations in the case of capitalists or trade unions in the case of workers); second, an "economic-corporate" phase when the class is organized around its common economic interests; and third, a political or hegemonic phase in which a class presents its interests as the interests of all. At this point the dominant or leading class makes economic sacrifices in order to elicit the consent of the led, but these "concessions" don't touch the essential interest of that class. Concessions elicit the consent of workers without threatening the profits of capital (Przeworski 1985, particularly Chapter 4). Democracy becomes the institutional mechanism through which concessions are extracted from capital and redistributed to other classes. Its stability rests on economic growth and a capitalist class prepared to make economic sacrifices.

Gramsci substituted the possibility of class compromise for Lenin's "irreconcilability of class antagonisms." In so doing he underlined the strength of capitalist hegemony which could only be broken by the modern prince (the party). The party is to the working class what the state is to the capitalist class, but it does not have access to coercion, nor can it dispense material concessions to allied classes, such as the peasantry. Instead, it has to build an alternative hegemony by substituting itself for civil society, creating prefigurative institutions of socialism already within the framework of capitalism. Ideology — as "a concrete phantasy that would act on the dispersed and shattered will to arouse and organize its collective will" (1971, p. 126) — becomes supremely important in countering bourgeois hegemony and in building class alliances. Organic intellectuals close to, and with faith in, subordinate groups must assume a critical role in any such war of position.

In his *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci rewrote Marxist theory on the basis of the core postulates of historical materialism, and extended the exemplars in Marx's and Engels's political writings. He supplied immensely rich theories of education, the party, the state, ideology, democracy, and social movements. His theories have provided an important terrain for political and ideological struggle. Above all his rewriting of Marxist theory proved prophetic. Bourgeois hegemony, constructed in civil society through class compromise and by ideological apparatuses of the state, continues to hold sway while socialist strategy, at least in the West, has given increasing attention to the war of position.

FAREWELL TO MARXISM?

In coming to terms with the absence of revolution in the West, Gramsci may have successfully reconstructed Marxism but how are we now to grapple with the headlong retreat of socialism in the East? Just as capitalism generates utopian visions of socialism so state socialism has generated equally utopian visions of capitalism as the radiant future. Surely, this latest triumph of capitalism spells the death of Marxism? Not at all. This is not the first time that history has threatened to dissolve Marxism. Indeed, our historical analysis has shown that the growth of Marxism has depended upon such devastating set backs, turning them into challenges that spurred theoretical growth. German Marxism was a response to reformism in the German Social Democratic Party, Russian Marxism to the radicalism of the Russian working class, Third World Marxism to underdevelopment engendered by international capitalism, while Western Marxism was a response to the failure of revolution and to the rise of fascism. (See also Lichteim 1961; Anderson 1976; Jacoby 1981.)

The expansion of Marxism's progressive branches depended on maintaining the integrity of Marxism's distinctive heuristics while being responsive to the world it sought to change. The degenerating character of Soviet Marxism, on the other hand, can be explained precisely in the denial of autonomy to the Marxist research program. The emergence of a new belt of theory or more likely a new branch of Marxism to meet the challenge of the East — the break-up of "communism" — must rest on continuing the reciprocal balance between internal and external history. In this concluding section I briefly deal with two contemporary tendencies that threaten this balance — analytical Marxism and post-Marxism — before trying to restore the connection between historical challenge and theoretical growth.

As Western Marxism turned from a dialogue with the working class to a dialogue with bourgeois theories of philosophy, sociology, and economics, it has become more concerned with academic respectability than the challenges of history. Typical in this respect is analytical Marxism, which seeks to bring Marxism into the last quarter of the twentieth century by assimilating neoclassical economics, analytical philosophy, game theory, and stratification theory (Cohen 1978; Elster 1985; Roemer 1986, 1988; Wright 1985, Przeworski 1985). The goal is to establish a true Marxist science by marrying the techniques of modern social science to all that is valid and useful in Marxism. But in attempting to consummate the truth of all previous Marxisms, analytical Marxism takes Marxism out of history, eclipsing the historical challenges that have been the "motor" of its theoretical growth. Insulating itself from its own historicity while making fetishes of clarity and rigor, analytical Marxism atrophies as science.

In the face of contemporary proliferation of anomalies, analytical Marxism retreats from history, whereas an equally important modern trend is to become absorbed by history. From this perspective, the weakness of working-class movements and a dwindling commitment to socialism leads Marxists beyond Marxism to indiscriminately embrace new social movements which have a nonclass or multiclass character, such as feminism, civil rights, environmental and peace movements (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Boggs, 1986). Such "post-Marxism" replaces the primacy of economic exploitation with multifarious forms of domination, and instead of a classless socialism, its goal is radical democracy (Bowles and Gintis 1986). Post-Marxism gets lost in the web of history where everything is important and explanation is therefore impossible. It possesses neither a negative heuristic which protects hard-core assumptions nor a positive heuristic with its exemplars and problem-solving machinery. Indeed it makes a fetish of opposition to all heuristics, and therefore has neither a means of selecting anomalies from history nor a mechanism for absorbing them. Without heuristics post-Marxism is rudderless. It has no internal history and therefore fails to grow as a science.

Internal history and external history are mutually constitutive — the collapse of the one leads to the collapse of the other. While analytical Marxism insulates itself from historical challenges, post-Marxism abandons Marxism's distinctive theoretical autonomy. The result is the same in both cases — a limited capacity to first recognize and then digest anomalies. Neither have had much to say about the most profound challenge to Marxism, namely the collapse of state socialism. The momentous events of 1989 and 1990 call for a new branch of Marxism that upholds the mutual interdependence of historical challenge and theoretical growth, one that reflects back on earlier branches as well as on the Marxist core.

We could do worse than return to those "dissident" traditions within Marxism that have focused on the unstable and dynamic aspects of the

Soviet Union. Trotsky and his followers, for example, regarded the Soviet Union as a transitional form between capitalism and socialism and therefore inherently unstable. Concluding his analysis of the degeneration of Soviet society Trotsky wrote: "The fall of the present bureaucratic dictatorship, if it were not replaced by a new socialist power, would thus mean a return to capitalist relations with a catastrophic decline of industry and culture" (Trotsky [1936]1972, p. 251).

Others have insisted on the *sui generis* character of the Soviet Union and tried to work out its dynamics. Konrad and Szelenyi (1979) theorized state socialism as a society based on the central appropriation and redistribution of surplus. The dominant class of "teleological redistributors" legitimated their appropriation in the name of a collective interest. The definition of such a collective interest is an inherently intellectual activity and, therefore, they argued that intellectuals were on the road to class power.

Anticipating the contemporary crisis of what he calls "actually existing in socialism," the dissident Marxist Rudolf Bahro showed how central ownership of the means of production fettered the forces of production and at the same time generated "surplus consciousness" with revolutionary potential (P2 and P3). Technological advance calls for higher levels of education among all classes, which in turn creates its own opposition.

> The longer the present state of affairs continues, the more the apparatus brings the thinking elements of society to despair, the more consistently it obstructs them from understanding for themselves the possible changes, then the more do all the energies focus simply on destroying this apparatus, and the greater accordingly must be the initial chaos of conceptions, the greater the danger of mere disorganization (1978, p. 308).

In the transition from "actually" existing socialism to capitalism, reaction to the political and ideological terrain of the past has been crucial in shaping patterns of class struggle (P4). In all East European countries, with the possible exception of Bulgaria, ideological discourse has been dominated by anticommunism, democracy and free enterprise. The working class has had neither the ideological space nor the political capacity to defend its own interests.

If P1, P2, P3 and P4 work better when applied to state socialism than to advanced capitalism, it would seem that the greater challenge is to P6 and P7. On the face of it the transition from state socialism to capitalism is a reversal of the progressive movement from feudalism to capitalism to communism (P6). But P5 argues that successful transition beyond capitalism can only take place when the material conditions are present. That socialism could never emerge in backward Russia without revolution in the West was a central tenet of all Marxism from Marx to Kautsky and Luxemburg, from Plekhanov to Trotsky and Lenin. Only Stalin believed in the possibility of socialism in the Soviet Union.

More interesting and more profound is the challenge to P7: As the last antagonistic mode of production, capitalism brings the prehistory of human society to a close. As we have seen, competing interpretations of this postulate have traditionally revolved around the *possibility* of arriving at communism, which divides into two issues: first, the likelihood of the demise of capitalism, and second, given the demise of capitalism the likelihood of the rise of communism. German Marxism believed in the inevitable demise of capitalism and the possible emergence of communism, Russian Marxism was less sure of the collapse of capitalism and more sure of the path to communism if it did collapse, while critical theory's belief in the durability of capitalism turned communism into a utopian vision.

Today, belief in the possibility of a communist future is under more intense assault. Not only is the path to communism blocked but the very viability of such a society is called into question. The open attack on Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union, its burial in Eastern Europe, and the movement toward a world wide hegemony of capitalism on the other are all presented as evidence against the feasibility of socialism. Although we have a great deal to learn from the experience of state socialism, it would be fallacious to conclude from the failure of but one of its forms that socialism in general is impossible. At least such a claim would have to (1) explain state socialism's successes (under the most adverse circumstances) and not just its failures, and (2) demonstrate that the combination of public ownership with democratization and markets is either infeasible or would not solve the economic problems of socialism. This has been the lost opportunity of Eastern Europe — lost because state socialism so effectively discredited its own ideology and because it equally effectively demobilized its working class.

Disillusioned by events not turning out as they had hoped, each generation of Marxists writes its own *The God That Failed* (Crossman 1949).

Marxism, however, lives on because new generations are continually drawn to its compelling heuristics, both its hard core and its belts of theory (see, for example, Gouldner 1985, Part III). In the short run, the demise of state socialism may threaten the viability of the Marxist project, but in the long run I believe Marxism's vitality is assured. First, the demise of state socialism will liberate Marxism from the corrosive effects of Soviet Marxism, its most degenerate branch. In particular, the debate over the possible meaning of socialism as well as the shortcomings of state socialism will no longer be bound by Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy and its disdain for alternative blue-prints. Second, since capitalism shows no signs of finding solutions to its own irrationalities, there will be a continual stimulus to search for socialist solutions. Third, Marxism still provides a fecund understanding of capitalism's inherent contradictions and dynamics. With the ascendancy of capitalism on a world scale, Marxism will therefore, once more, come into its own. In these ways, the longevity of capitalism guarantees the longevity of Marxism. They are like siamese twins — the demise of the one depends on the demise of the other.

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[Footnotes]

[2] **Studying Development since the Sixties: The Emergence of a New Comparative Political Economy**
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Stable URL:
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