

because they are an effect of struggles. Indeed, the bourgeoisie is successful in the struggles about class when social cleavages appear at the phenomenal level in forms that do not correspond to positions within the relations of production. Thus, in each concrete conjuncture struggles to organize, disorganize, or reorganize classes are not limited to struggles between or among classes.

Does this view imply that Marx's statements concerning class struggle as the universal feature and the motor of history are tautological, since any struggle that might have led to class formation is a class struggle? To put it differently: can there be a historical period in which means of production are privately owned, yet in which no class struggles occur, or is it true by definition that there are always class struggles, whether or not the participants are classes? It seems to me that if class struggle is understood as one between or among classes, then these statements are empirical and false: there have been periods within different modes of production in which conflicts between classes did not occur. If class struggle is understood as any struggle that has the effect of class organization or disorganization, then these statements are tautological. This is how I think they *should* be interpreted. What they assert is that all conflicts that occur at any moment of history can be understood in historical terms if and only if they are viewed as effects of and in turn having an effect upon class formation. These statements play the role of a methodological postulate.

This postulate directs us to analyze the connections between conflicts at concrete moments of time and development over long periods of time. Here lies the uniqueness of marxist theory in general and of the marxist concept of class in particular. As Marx himself realized, the unique status of this theory rests neither upon the observation that societies are divided into classes, nor upon the assertion that societies undergo lawful transformations in the course of their histories; it rests instead upon the postulate according to which class struggle is the motor of history, that is, the concrete conflicts and the long-term developments *systematically* affect each other. Moreover, they do so in a particular manner: conditions inherited from the past determine the realm of possible transformations of these conditions at a particular moment. Under the conditions that are objective in the sense that they are inherited and are thus given at any moment, concrete actors enter into conflicts to preserve or to transform in a particular manner these conditions.

But why should the analysis of this connection between conflicts at a moment and development over time be a *class* analysis, why should it be formulated in terms of the relation between concrete collective actors and places within a system of production and exchange? Why should we ask questions concerning the composition of the concrete collectivities-in-struggle in terms of

the locations of their members within the system of production? Why should we ask questions concerning the relations between the historical projects of such collectivities-in-struggle and the interests of people identified again by their location within the system of production? Conversely, why should we analyze outcomes of concrete struggles in terms of their consequences for the preservation or transformation of the relations of production?

It is obvious that concrete struggles can be analyzed in terms other than those of class: they can be analyzed as struggles among groups with different levels of income or different degrees of authority, as struggles between sexes, races, religious groups, regions, ethnic groups, and so on. Should then a conflict over local control of schools, the rift between Catholics and Protestants, or the division between Anglophones and Francophones be analyzed in class terms, and if so, why? Should the feminist movement? Should the black one?

I can only suggest an answer, incomplete and rudimentary. In analyzing any struggle, the questions to be considered are these: What brings the particular conflict about? What led the participants to be organized in the particular form? What are the potential outcomes? What are the consequences of these outcomes for future development? All of these questions concern objective conditions; the conditions that made the emergence of a particular conflict possible, the conditions that made the particular organization, ideology, relations and forces possible, the conditions that make particular outcomes plausible or implausible; and finally, but importantly, the conditions that may be created as the result of a particular conflict. The feminist movement could have become a mass movement only when economic conditions permitted a new division of labor: racial problems in the United States cannot be resolved without a major economic transformation, and so on. This is not to argue that economic, political, or ideological conditions uniquely determine the dynamics of such movements and that the analysis of struggles can therefore be reduced to an analysis of objective conditions. Objective conditions determine realms of possibility, but only of possibility: their analysis is thus necessary but not sufficient for the understanding of concrete struggles.

The theoretical function of class analysis is thus to identify the objective conditions and the objective consequences of concrete struggles. "Class" then is a name of a relation, not of a collection of individuals. Individuals occupy places within the system of production; collective actors appear in struggles at concrete moments of history. Neither of these – occupants of places or participants in collective actions – are classes. Class is the relation between them, and in this sense class struggles concern the social organization of such relations.

Surplus Labor and the "Middle Class"

None of these conclusions should be treated as anything but possible directions into which marxist class analysis might move or perhaps is moving. Several arguments certainly require clarification; several hypotheses call for a historical validation. Nevertheless, it might be useful to examine the implications of this perspective for the specific problem that served as the leitmotif throughout this chapter, namely, the class character of the "middle class."

It has been suggested recently that the theory of the growing polarization between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was not the only theory developed by Marx, or at least not the only theory consistent with the main core of his economic thought. Nicolaus, in particular, has argued that the polarization thesis dates back to the *Communist Manifesto*, a text written "before Marx had more than the vaguest notions of the political economy of capitalism." But as Marx freed himself from the "Hegelian choreography," he developed a theory that fully anticipated the necessity of the growth of new intermediate classes in the course of capitalist development. The textual evidence cited by the proponents of this thesis consists principally of one quote from the *Theories of Surplus Value*, in which Marx criticizes Ricardo, who "forgot to emphasize . . . the constant increase of the middle classes, who stand in the middle between the workers on the one side and the capitalists and landed proprietors on the other side, who are for the most part supported directly by revenue, who rest as a burden on the laboring foundation, and who increase the social security and the power of the upper ten thousand." (Nicolaus, 1967: 45; Urry, 1973: 176; Gough, 1972: 70)

But the issue does not concern the text. The problem is whether "the law of the surplus class," as Nicolaus terms this thesis, follows from Marx's economic theory or at least is logically consistent with it. Nicolaus, in particular, argues that the emergence of middle classes is a necessary logical consequence of Marx's theory. His argument rests completely on an underconsumptionist reading of Marx. Since workers consume less than they produce, Nicolaus argues, someone must consume more than they produce, ergo, there must emerge a "surplus class." A few quotes from Marx concerning Malthus are then adduced in support of this interpretation.

It is true that production of surplus beyond workers' subsistence is in any society a necessary condition for physical survival of persons who are not directly engaged in the production of those commodities satisfying basic material needs. If there is no surplus, no one but workers can survive. But the converse of this argument — that surplus is a *sufficient* condition for the emergence of the middle class — is both unpersuasive and incomplete.³¹

³¹ The concept of the "middle class" carries distributional connotations. It has indeed happened in most

The problem of places other than capitalists and workers appears in Marx not because there is surplus product that cannot find consumers but because there is surplus *labor power* that cannot find productive employment. Rejecting the regulatory character of Malthusian population dynamic, Marx argued that, regardless of the dynamic of population, capitalism will in the course of its development reduce the relative number of people who are necessary to produce, thereby generating the "relative surplus population." This is indeed a fundamental law of capitalist accumulation: the production of "relative surplus population" that, as Marx said, "exists in every possible form. Every labourer belongs to it during the time when he is only partially employed or wholly unemployed." (1967, I: 640–4)

The starting point of the analysis of the middle class must be the dynamic of capitalist accumulation. This accumulation has one structural effect of basic importance from our point of view, namely, that it generates surplus labor as a long-term tendency as it generates surplus product repeatedly in single cycles of production. Marx's model, faithfully followed by Kautsky, is the following. Accumulation of capital is a necessary condition of capitalist production. As capital becomes accumulated, capitalist relations of production expand to all areas of economic activity. Subjected to capitalist competition, small producers of all kinds are pushed out of the process of production. They become available for purchase as sellers of labor power, the only commodity they can sell if they are to survive. Yet at the same time, under the pressure of competition, capitalists are compelled constantly to develop and introduce labor-saving innovations, to revolutionize methods of production by increasing the mass and the value of capital in its objectified form and thereby by making production independent of living labor. The result is a growing hiatus between the quantity of available labor power and labor necessary for capitalist production. In a rational society, labor would be distributed in such a way as to provide some free time for everyone.³² But under capitalism some people are simply excluded from productive exercise of their labor power.

developed capitalist societies that some salaried employees and petits bourgeois obtain incomes larger than most workers and smaller than most capitalists. These patterns of income distribution are important for they construct the immediate experience of social relations and thus serve to validate competing ideologies. But they do not explain, they must be explained. That some people obtain incomes larger than some yet smaller than others does not account for their role as a historical subject in the process of transformation or preservation of social relations. The question is precisely why did class struggles result in the situation in which particular categories of places in the capitalist system obtain particular shares of surplus as revenue. To treat the distributionally defined "middle class" as an actor in the struggles by which shares of surplus product become allocated to particular categories would be clearly tautological, for it would assume exactly that which must be explained. The question is why certain sectors of the petite bourgeoisie and of salaried employees are located in the middle of income distribution; the answer cannot be that it is because they are the "middle class."

³² There is nothing utopian about fishing in the afternoons.

Surplus labor power is thus generated when capitalist development simultaneously destroys other forms of organization of production and reduces the relative need for labor within the capitalist system of production. The rates of the process by which surplus labor power is generated depend upon (1) the marginal rate of growth of labor productivity with regard to the growth of capital (measurement problems are obvious), (2) the marginal rate at which noncapitalist places of production are destroyed when the productivity of capitalist labor expands, (3) the rate of growth of capital with regard to time, and (4) the rate of growth of population. These indications are probably sufficient to abandon the façade we have maintained above: that this is a simple process, proceeding smoothly and steadily. Clearly, one is directed right back to a theory of capitalist development, and it is at least uncertain whether any such theory can today answer the questions posed by this formulation.

Nevertheless, whatever the exact dynamic of this process, in order to develop a theory of class structure in capitalist formations it is necessary to understand the forms of class organization assumed by this surplus labor power. The problem for Nicolaus is to explain how the "surplus class" assumes the particular form of a "middle class" (Urry, 1973). It is conceivable that all surplus product would accrue to capitalists and surplus labor would starve; it is conceivable that it would be consumed by a "welfare class," composed of those permanently excluded from economic activities; that it would be distributed over the lifespans of different individuals, and so on. In none of these cases would there be a middle class standing "between" workers and capitalists.

Faced with this problem, both Nicolaus and Urry argue that capitalist development makes it technically necessary that a middle class would emerge. "The rise in productivity," Nicolaus asserts, "requires such a class of unproductive workers to fulfill the functions of distributing, marketing, researching, financing, managing, keeping track of and glorifying the swelling surplus product. This class of unproductive workers, service workers, or servants for short, is the middle class." (1967: 46)

It is within this context that we must view the role played by the concept of "productive labor" within the recent controversies about class (Gough, 1972; Poulantzas 1974b; Terray, 1972; Vaisov, 1971). If we accept Mandel's succinct summary, productive labor is "all labor which creates, modifies, or conserves use-values or which is *technically indispensable* for realizing them. . . ." (1971: 191-2) Productive labor becomes a category relevant in the course of discussions of class because it is this labor that is necessary to produce all that is produced, because this is the labor that is exploited, and because this is the labor that is capable of taking over and organizing the process of production without capitalists. It is productive labor that Marx expected to diminish in terms relative

to the total supply of labor power, hence producing a "surplus population" that can "exist in every possible form."

The question thus becomes what labor is necessary for capitalist accumulation. Given capitalism at a particular stage of its development, what are the requirements for reproduction of capitalist social relations? The problem is not a definitional one; nor does it have anything to do with any interests, as O'Connor seems to believe (1976). Marx's hair-splitting over workers in storage houses constituted an attempt to answer precisely this question: are all warehouse workers necessary for capitalist accumulation or only those who store products that are perishable (Gough, 1972)?

We do not know what kinds of labor are necessary for the production of capitalist relations. We are today less inclined to believe, as Marx did, that capitalist relations, not only of production but also legal and ideological relations, reproduce themselves "of themselves," by mere repetition of cycles of production (1967, III: 694). We tend to suspect, therefore, that all those people employed in the "apparatuses" are actually necessary for continuing capitalist accumulation. But we have few, if any, specific answers. Actually, the tendency has been to jump into the abyss of functionalism; whatever happens seems to be a "function" that has the effect of reproducing capitalist relations, and all that happens is necessary to reproduce capitalism.

It does not matter that for Nicolaus unproductive workers are *required* to fulfill the functions, but what is important is that certainly not all of the relative surplus population becomes so functionally employed. While Marx and Engels often emphasized the technical role of capitalists and their delegates as organizers of the process of production and while Marx explicitly mentioned engineers and others as part of the "global laborer," all those people who command, catalogue, manage, mediate, and serve are frequently treated as superfluous artifacts of *political* class relations of capitalism and not as a necessary outcome of capitalist accumulation (Engels: 107).³³ Moreover, Marx's "servants" were certainly not Nicolaus' "middle class." They are people who cannot find any productive employment, who are left to their own fate to "eke out a miserable existence." If they are to succeed in surviving, they can indeed do so only as "servants," and thus they include all those not "usefully" employed: domestic servants as well as policemen, lawyers and criminals, valets and politicians. These are the people

³³ Still in his "choreographic" stage, Marx referred to "an unemployed surplus population for which there is no place either on the land or in the towns, and which accordingly reaches out for state offices as a sort of respectable alms, and provokes the creation of state posts." (1934: 112). Also Gramsci: "The democratic-bureaucratic system has given rise to a great mass of functions which are not all justified by the social necessities of production, though they are justified by the political necessities of the dominant fundamental group." (1971: 13) In the 1970 postscript to "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Luis Althusser took a surprisingly intentionalist position with regard to this issue, arguing that: "The reproduction of the

whom Kautsky described as "parasites" and about whom Marx had only to say that "from whore to pope, there is a lot of such rubble."

Is the middle class technically indispensable for capitalist accumulation? "The economic machinery of the modern system of production," Kautsky wrote, "constitutes a more and more delicate and complicated mechanism: its uninterrupted operation depends constantly more upon whether each of its wheels fits in with the others and does the work expected of it. Never yet did any system of production stand in such a need of careful direction as does the present one." We would thus expect the author to continue by saying, exactly as Nicolaus and Urry do, that capitalism creates numerous places the function of which is to coordinate, direct, plan, manage, and administer this complicated system. But this is not Kautsky's conclusion. Instead, Kautsky continues, "the institution of private property makes it impossible to introduce plan and order into this system." (1971: 52)

Perhaps one has to go back to *Capital* and particularly to the more popular *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* to appreciate more fully this emphasis on the anarchy of capitalist production, on the incompatibility of plan and order with the institutions of private property. Living in the post-Keynesian era, we may forget that Marx's theory was written during a time when even a census, not to speak of any encroachment by the state upon the capitalist's sovereignty within a factory, was treated by the bourgeoisie as synonymous with the end of all freedoms and with the advent of the dictatorship.³⁴ We must not forget the persistent emphasis on the anarchy of capitalist production characteristic of socialist thought of the late nineteenth century. "The contradiction between socialized production and capitalist appropriation," Engels wrote, "now presents itself as an *antagonism* between the organization of production in the individual workshop and the anarchy of production in society generally." (1959: 97-8) While production within each plant is purposeful and organized according to plan, capitalism as a system of production is incapable of overcoming its spontaneous, chaotic nature. Its anarchy leads to periodic crises, crises that accelerate the development of contradictions. And although capitalists respond to the contradictions by forming trusts and monopolies and although eventually

the state must undertake the direction of production, the anarchy inherent in capitalist production can only be overcome by the abolition of private ownership of the means of production.³⁵

In sum, the recent attempts at reinterpretation of Marx's theory of the middle class point to a new direction for the development of marxist theory. Yet thus far they do not advance much beyond Kautsky's analysis. Everyone agrees that, with varying speed, capitalist development leads to the separation of small producers from their means of production and that this process is accompanied by the growth of "surplus labor." Yet two crucial questions remain unresolved: who besides the immediate producers and the organizers of the process of labor is technically necessary for continued capitalist accumulation, and what is the class status of those who are not necessary?

Without imputing it to Marx, let us accept the assertion that some places that are neither those of immediate producers nor of organizers of labor are indeed indispensable for the process of capitalist accumulation to continue. For lack of a better term, let us think of these places as constituting a "reproductive" category – a category composed of such places in the social division of labor that do not involve direct participation in the work of transformation of nature into useful products but that are nevertheless technically indispensable if capitalist production is to continue at the social scale. Engineers as well as teachers of engineers will certainly be located among such places, and perhaps even television broadcasters, if the "ideological apparatuses" are indeed technically needed for the reproduction of capitalist relations of production.

But even if some places other than those of immediate producers and organizers of production are indeed necessary, there exists in each capitalist society a large quantity of labor power that is not used in the processes either of material production or of reproduction of social relations. This is the equivalent of Marx's "surplus labor," corrected for whatever might be the deficiencies of his analysis. The presence of such surplus labor power is manifest, and it becomes reflected in the difficulties that we encounter attempting to analyze the class structure of any developed capitalist society. It is characteristic that, for example, Wright's analysis (1976) of the class structure of American society is limited to the "economically active population," that is, it does not include housewives, students, retirees, institutionalized population, those more or less permanently on welfare, and so on. In other words, it includes only about one-half of the adult population of the United States.

The capitalist system of production separates in the course of its development a certain quantity of labor power from participation in the process of production,

relations of production, the ultimate aim of the ruling class, cannot therefore be a merely technical operation training and distributing individuals for the different posts in the 'technical division' of labour. In fact there is no 'technical division' of labour except in the ideology of the ruling class: every 'technical' division, every 'technical' organization of labour is the form and mask of a *social* (= class) division and organization of labour. The reproduction of the relations of production can therefore only be a class undertaking. It is realized through a class struggle which counterposes the ruling class and exploited class." (1971: 183-4)

³⁴ According to Toynbee a census proposed in England in 1753 was "rejected as subversive of the last remains of English liberty." (1956: 7) In an article in the *New York Daily Tribune* of July 22, 1853, Marx cited *The Times* to the effect that "if the parliament prohibited the capitalist to keep workers at work for 12, 16, or some other number of hours, 'England,' says *The Times*, 'would no longer be a country of free people.'"

³⁵ One should also not forget Lenin's statement (in *State and Revolution*) that any cook can be taught to run a socialist society.

even most broadly defined. This separation is, as a tendency, a lawful effect of capitalist development, which implies that any analysis of surplus labor must again constitute a class analysis in the sense described above: it must link the place of surplus labor in concrete historical struggles with the development of the capitalist system of production.

The process of the generation of surplus labor power is a *tendency* in the following sense. While the logic of the capitalist system imposes upon the individual capitalist a rationale that calls for a constant search for increasing productivity, the actions of capitalists as individual rational entrepreneurs are mitigated by the effects of struggles, particularly those that lead to interventions by the state in the system of production. Given the complex model of causality drawn above, the role of struggles with regard to the processes of class formation is twofold. First, class struggles taking place within each conjuncture have effects upon economic, political, and ideological relations and hence indirectly upon subsequent processes of class formation. Secondly, given the particular structure of economic, ideological, and political relations, class struggles affect directly the class organization of persons located differentially in the system of production. The indirect effects of class struggles have consequences for the entire class structure, since they modify the system of production out of which classes are formed. Thus the very process of the generation of surplus labor is affected by class struggles. Interventions by the state into the system of production have a general effect upon the structure of the economic system, and in several capitalist societies the state has a deliberate policy of class formation. Credit policy, for example, has a direct effect upon the survival of the petite bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the struggle of the unions against automation as well as the demands for full employment may have the effect of retarding the growth of productivity and slowing down the generation of surplus labor.

The central point of this argument is, however, the following: the capitalist system of production does not structure the forms of surplus labor; it generates surplus labor but does not distribute this surplus labor into places-to-be-occupied. It leaves surplus labor as "servants" in Marx's sense. The determination of places is limited to the broadly conceived relations of production, namely, all those relations that are necessary for the continued capitalist accumulation to take place. Beyond the broadly conceived relations of production – distribution, circulation, education, legitimation, and whatever – there are no "places," no positions structured prior to class struggles, no positions to be filled. Surplus labor may assume the form of employment in the state administration; it may assume the form of early retirement, of large standing armies, of ten million college students. It may assume the form of

impediments to productive employment of women, it may assume the form of three-day weekends, and so on. The form of organization of surplus labor is not determined by the relations of production. It is directly an effect of class struggles.

What then are the forms that surplus labor may assume? The first is *underemployment*, particularly by the state. By this is meant the situation in which the surplus labor power is purchased for a wage but is not expended for any labor that is necessary either for material production or for reproduction of social relations. Secondly, the surplus labor power may assume the form of a *reserve army* in Marx's sense, that is, the regulator of wage levels. Thirdly, surplus labor may assume the form of a permanent exclusion from employment during the entire lifetime of an individual. Fourthly, it may assume forms *distributed over the life span* of particular individuals, mainly education and retirement. Finally, it may be distributed over the *work span* of an individual in terms of shorter work hours, long weekends, and so on.

Clearly, this list is to some extent arbitrary and its justification would require an extensive discussion. Let me just make a few comments that relate to Marx's own view. Although Marx argued that surplus labor may "exist in any form," including the time when the laborer is not expending his or her labor power, he tended to emphasize the regulatory impact of surplus labor with regard to wages. Marx viewed surplus labor as an undifferentiated quantity of labor power having the function of maintaining wages at the level of subsistence, albeit culturally determined. This model is no longer accurate, if it ever was, since as a result of class struggles a number of institutional barriers has been erected that regulate the access of persons to the system of production. Compulsory education and compulsory retirement are the most important mechanisms of this nature. The quantity of surplus labor that can enter the labor market and hence perform the wage-regulating function has been significantly reduced by such institutional mechanisms. This is not to say that such barriers are irrevocable: the recent attempt to extend the age of retirement in the United States demonstrates that they are not. Nevertheless, surplus labor does not appear in an undifferentiated form. Indeed, the regulatory function of surplus labor has been significantly reduced. Only the first two of the above five categories play this role, and we know empirically that the second category is to a great extent sectorally limited to services and commerce and to women. A varying quantity of surplus labor is in different capitalist societies more or less permanently separated from the system of production, particularly in the United States where it coincides to a great extent with racial lines. Some of the surplus labor is distributed over the life-span, as we have shown above. Finally, some is rationally distributed over the work time of particular individuals. Indeed, there

have been recent attempts in various countries to "distribute work" along these lines.

The mere existence of surplus labor implies that class analysis of contemporary capitalist societies must not be limited to those places that are structured by the system of production. The argument may bear restatement. I argued that (1) the capitalist system of production structures the places of immediate producers, of the organizers of the process of labor, and perhaps of those who are neither immediate producers nor organizers but who are nevertheless necessary for capitalist reproduction; (2) this system of production in the course of development and under the indirect impact of class struggles generates a certain quantity of surplus labor, but it does not structure the forms of social organization of this surplus labor; and, (3) surplus labor assumes forms that are a direct effect of struggles.

Conclusion

Thus finally we must abandon even the title. It is not the proletariat that is being formed into a class: it is a variety of persons some of whom are separated from the system of production. Processes of forming workers into a class do not take place in a vacuum; rather, they are inextricably tied to the totality of processes through which collectivities appear in struggle at particular moments of history. And the outcomes of these processes, while not arbitrary, are not determined uniquely by the structure of social relations. More than one outcome lies within the limits set by those relations.

The immediate experience of social relations, the experience based on income, the character of the work, the place in the market, the prestige of occupations, and so on, does not of itself become transformed into collective identification since this experience is mediated by the ideological and political practices of the movements engaged in the process of class formation. But as Gough (1972) points out, neither does the distribution of carriers into categories of places in the capitalist relations. Even the relations of exploitation do not of themselves determine a unique pattern of class formation. In an indirect sense, the proletariat is exploited by all other categories with the exception of the petite bourgeoisie. Workers and the petite bourgeoisie are the only producers of all that is consumed. The surplus produced by workers is directly and indirectly (through the state) transferred as revenue to all other categories. In this sense even the poorest of the lumpenproletariat lives off the workers: given capitalist relations of production there are objective bases to the antagonism of workers to the "welfare class." Moreover, it is indeed in the interest of the workers, given again capitalist organization of social relations, that the largest possible share of

surplus be retained by capitalists and allocated to accumulation, since in this way future total product is increased. Hence, there exist objective bases for a political alliance between the narrowly defined industrial proletariat and the modern, expansionist fraction of the bourgeoisie. This was true most likely for the 1924–8 alliance between the S.P.D. and the dynamic sector of German industry, not improbably for the Roosevelt "New Deal" coalition, and perhaps for the current alliance between the Communist Party and the Christian Democrats in Italy. This would also have been the nature of the often rumored agreements between the Communist Party and the Christian Democrats in Chile. Note that these are all principally political alliances in which the working class is defined narrowly.

Yet at the same time all categories other than the capitalists and the petite bourgeoisie are separated from the ownership of the means of production and forced to sell their labor power for a wage, unless they can subsist on so-called welfare. Moreover, in Marx's analysis the labor of commercial employees, while not creating surplus value, enables the merchant capitalist to appropriate surplus value without paying the employees the full equivalent of their labor (1967, III: 17). In this sense, both the reproductive and the service categories, while living off the surplus produced by workers, are separated from the means of production, forced to sell their labor power, and in a particular sense exploited by the capitalist. This produces a commonality of interests defined in terms of a number of secondary characteristics, particularly of a distributional nature, and leads to the notion of the working people, the modern equivalent of *les classes laborieuses*. Thus defined, the working class is sufficiently broad to constitute the "working-class majority."

Finally, the strategy can be extended to the formation of the working class defined as "the masses" or "the people," all those exploited and oppressed, poor and miserable. This strategy focuses on prices, taxes, and employment rather than on wages and conditions of work; and it incorporates under the umbrella of "the people" the petite bourgeoisie and the unemployed.

Each of these strategies of class formation, as well as other strategies that would emerge from a more systematic analysis, has consequences not only for the form of class structuring of surplus labor but also directly upon the manner of formation of the working class. The consequences were discussed above. In particular, strategies based on broad definitions of the working class decrease the salience of class and bring forth other cleavages as bases for collective identification and organization.

The limits of these strategies are constituted by the internal conflicts characteristic of each block, what Mao has called the "contradictions among the people." Recent histories of Chile and Italy are veritable laboratories of such

practical experiments. Their feasibility can be examined only through political practice and only in terms of a concrete conjuncture. None of the above should be treated as an evaluation of such strategies. I have merely attempted to demonstrate that the multiplicity of strategies has objective bases in the conditions under which the processes of class formation develop under advanced capitalism. At the same time, I attempted to demonstrate the perpetual and discontinuous nature of the processes of class formation. Concrete analysis is incompatible with the view of classes as economically determined, spontaneously emerging subjects that simply march on to transform history. Classes are formed as effects of struggles; as classes struggle, they transform the conditions under which classes are formed.

Postscript: Methodological Individualism and the Concept of Class

The relation between social relations and individual behavior is the Achilles heel of marxism. I will not try to reconstruct Marx's own approach(es) nor try to find the moment when a particular view of this relation dominated marxism. Let me just note that Marx himself, particularly before 1857, and Engels in his nonexpository writings (see particularly the letter to Bloch of September, 1890) treated the society as a contingent product of strategically behaving individuals. As Marx put it in the *Poverty of Philosophy*, "What is society, whatever its form may be? The product of men's reciprocal action." (n.d.: 180) Yet at some time, I suspect under the influence of Engels' naturalism, which took over the marxism of the Second International, marxists began to think about history as if individuals didn't exist. This led to a preoccupation with a number of pseudoproblems, from Plekhanov's *The Role of the Individual in History* to Althusser's "Ideological Apparatuses."

Let me pose the problem analytically. Marxism is a theory that takes as the point of departure for understanding history "objective" social relations, that is, relations that are, in Marx's words, indispensable and independent of anyone's will. Indispensability I take to mean that people located at a particular stage of development of their productive capacities can survive as a species only if they establish a particular form of cooperation. Independence from individual will I interpret to mean that social relations are invariant relations among places-to-be-occupied-by-individuals rather than among specific individuals: the substitution of one individual for another does not alter these relations.³⁶ Even if Mr

³⁶ Needless to say this is the feature that distinguishes the marxist (or, generally, essentialist) approach to social structure from theoretical approaches in which structure is an attribute of recurrent interactions. In the latter conception, social structure may change as one individual leaves a particular place and is replaced by another, since the structure of interactions is thought to depend upon the particular traits of these

Ford rotated places with Mr Black, the worker with lowest seniority in his factories, after each cycle of production, capitalist relations would remain capitalist.

Given that the theory parts from social relations, the problem becomes to explain how and why does it happen that these social relations are lived by individuals, expressed in their conduct. Mr Black does something presumably *because* he occupies a specific place in the structure of a particular society. Any theory that takes as its point of departure the level of collective organization must account for the mechanisms by which social organization becomes manifested in individual behavior. We have two ways to proceed. One approach I will call "sociological," and the other I will call "economic," but these labels are only for a shorthand reference.

In the sociological approach something becomes "internalized." The society becomes internal to individuals who manifest this internalized society in their actions. Internalization is the key term, typically with mentalistic connotations, although sometimes the psychology is hidden in the black box of behaviorist agnosticism or Althusser's mysterious mechanism of *appellation*.

In the mentalistic conceptions, in which internalization represents a process by which individuals acquire certain states of mind or behavioral predispositions, the individual act is thought to consist of two steps. In the first step, typically associated with the process of "socialization," individuals acquire attitudes that they then carry within themselves throughout a variety of social conditions. In the second step, they act out these internalized patterns of behavior. Associated with a particular kind of an empiricist epistemology, this theory maintains that the internalized patterns can be indirectly observed as such, in their predispositional form, as "attitudes."

In this two-step vision of behavior, deviance appears as the opposite to socialization. Behaviors that deviate from the norm are explained by imperfections of socialization. Any variation of behavior of people exposed to the same norms and socializing agents is interpreted as deviance. To put it differently, from the perspective of internalization, all individuals exposed to the same social norms by the same socializing agents are expected to behave in the same way.

Most importantly, what is characteristic of all the versions of this approach (and there are versions, my description is a caricature) is that they treat all behavior as an *act of execution*.³⁷ Patterns of behavior are internalized and acted

individuals. Hence sociology seeks inductive generalizations, while marxism shares with structuralism the methodological distinction between essence and appearance. Note, however, that Parsons' sociology is dualistic in its treatment of structure.

³⁷ For a critique of this approach see Bourdieu (1976). My entire discussion owes a debt to Bourdieu.

out. Behavior is the acting out (note that this is also true of Althusser's "theatre") of the internalized society.

Let me immediately point out the consequences of this approach for the concept of class, as it is normally understood with marxism. One is classified as a member of a class by virtue of the position one occupies within social relations. The tautology is deliberate: one is a member of a class because one happens to be a member of this class. Class membership is *the point of departure* for the analysis of individual behavior. We encounter a Mrs Jones. She works as a salesperson in a department store, is an owner of a piece of land that she inherited from her farmer father, is married to a machinist, is the mother of a son studying to be an accountant, and is white and Catholic. We hesitate for a moment on how to classify her but resolve the problem by deciding she is a worker (or a "new petite bourgeoisie," depending on whether one follows Wright or Poulantzas).³⁸ Mrs Jones is a worker, now we are ready to talk about Mrs Jones. She should behave like all other workers: vote Left, join a union, maybe even struggle for socialism.³⁹ To classify is to homogenize the determinants. As a worker she shares conditions and motivations with workers and thus shares behaviors with workers. The mode of explanation is: (1) Mrs Jones sells her labor power for a wage (observation). (2) Therefore, she is expected to act as a worker (prediction). One may complicate matters by introducing intermediate steps, the specific working-class culture, and say that (2a) the working-class culture is . . . and (3) Mrs Jones calls herself a "Mrs" rather than "Ms" because such is the working-class culture.

But note that there is one behavior of Mrs Jones that has escaped the explanatory power of this paradigm: Mrs Jones sells her labor power for a wage. Presumably, she does so not because she has internalized the norms of being a worker but because that is what she does. The question of why Mrs Jones sells her labor power cannot be answered in this way. And this question is fundamental for the understanding of the relation between social structure and individual behavior. To make it less marxist-complex, imagine that an ad appears in the local paper that says, "The means of production cannot be put into motion unless someone (anyone; we assume homogeneous labor) will sell his labor power for a wage. Please apply to Mr Smith who already occupies a contradictory location in our company. Telephone number, and so forth." And there is Mrs Jones — a lady who owns some land, is married to a machinist, is a mother of a prospective accountant, and is white and Catholic. Mrs Jones

³⁸ Although my general points use workers as examples, they can be applied more generally as well.

³⁹ By evidence we may also decide that since Mrs Jones is a Catholic female worker she should be expected to join a union, vote Right, and adhere to the repressive minority, which she would call the "moral majority." The intellectual procedure would remain the same. We will only explain more variance of the observed behavior.

answers the ad and, in a Wonder Woman whirl, she enters into the social relations of production as a personification.

We could accept this kind of a theoretical posture: all the (relevant) behaviors of Mrs Jones are to be explained by the internalization of norms with the exception of her phone call to Mr Smith, which is to be explained differently. This is, I believe, what marxists have been doing as sociologists. The awkwardly dualistic aspect of this posture apart, we would still need to explain why Mrs Jones is a worker. One answer may be, and sometimes is, that the question is trivial since Mrs Jones has no choice. Dispossessed of the means of production and equipped with an instinct of self-preservation ("the first human need" of *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels, 1964), although there, I think, it functions as a methodological postulate, not as a metaphysical assumption), Mrs Jones cannot survive but by offering her only endowment for sale.

But Mrs Jones does have a choice. After all, she owns some land, which she can perhaps sell; she is married to a machinist, who can perhaps work overtime; and she has, or will have, an accountant son, who might help her set up a resale shop. Many American workers eventually do succeed in owning their own business. Why could not Mrs Jones? If Mrs Jones becomes a worker, it is not because she was directed to do so by an internalized norm, nor because she has no choice; she becomes a worker because she *chooses* to become a worker.

Since I do not cherish being an object of ridicule, let me explain what I mean. Clearly, I do not mean that people decide to be workers at their pleasure, offended by a life sparkled by diamonds and rocked only by yacht decks. What I mean is the following. Mrs Jones has some goals;⁴⁰ for example, she seeks, with the assistance of her family, to maximize the current value of her consumption stream when she becomes a widow, which as a wife of a worker she is likely to become. She also has resources: her labor power, the unused labor power of her husband and son, some social connections (she may already know Mrs Smith; see Granevetter), and some credit (although she is probably a net debtor; see Kaldor, 1972). She now sits around a table with her family and friends and thinks how to realize her objective given the constraints of family resources. She enrolls in an optimization course and upon graduation she decides that the best thing for her to do is to become a worker. She has objectives and resources: she chooses to become a worker. Her objectives and her resources do not classify her as a worker; she decides to become a worker given her objectives and resources.

In what sense did Mrs Jones choose? Given her objectives and constraints and

⁴⁰ The fundamental weakness of the economic approach, and of economics, lies right here. Marx was the last thinker who simultaneously viewed behavior as a rational, strategic conduct and sought to explain how people acquire their historically specific rationality, including preferences. The effect of the marginalist revolution was to abandon this question and to introduce the separation between economics and sociology that I am reproducing here.

that she has the know-how acquired in the course, she will choose what is best for her. That is predictable. In that sense, perhaps, she did not have a choice. But she did go through a process of choosing – of perceiving, evaluating, and deciding. If choice is seen as simply an aspect of the *conditions* she faces in life, she has no choice. If choice is an aspect of *behavior*, she did choose. Indeed, it is possible to study choice behavior scientifically because outcomes can be predicted given conditions and objectives.

Let me now indicate some consequences of this approach. First, note that in this view social relations are treated as structures of choices available to actors, not as sources of norms to be internalized and acted. Social relations are the structures within which actors, individual and collective, deliberate upon goals, perceive and evaluate alternatives, and select courses of action. As a corollary, let me repeat what was said in the body of the text, namely, that social relations must themselves be viewed as a historically contingent outcome of, to use Marx's phrase again, "men's reciprocal actions." That is, while social relations constitute a structure of choices within which actors choose, their choice may be to alter social relations. Social relations are not independent of human actions. It is not in this sense that they are "objective." They are objective, indispensable, and independent of individual will only in the sense that they constitute the conditions under which people struggle over whether to transform their conditions.

Second, classes are no longer a given either. They too are historically contingent products of reciprocal actions. Existing conditions may hurl women into the labor (power) market; other conditions may prevent them from becoming workers. Conditions may swell the ranks of the petite bourgeoisie; other conditions may destroy it. And these conditions are themselves a product: of a land reform, of a welfare system, of old-age insurance, of distributional conflicts. Class structure can no longer be read from the relations of property alone, since the structure of choices that results in class formation is an outcome of conflicts also in the realm of politics. It was the French revolution after all, not the steam engine, that produced the French peasantry.

Finally, the central problem. We have had enormous difficulties in understanding politics in terms of class conflict. These difficulties are due to a number of assumptions, too complex and too numerous to be recounted. Until Olson, we thought that similarity breeds solidarity, and even in the face of his criticism one might find reasons why this would be true of workers (but not of capitalists).⁴¹ But, I think, the problem remains, and its origins are still in Marx's

⁴¹ Here are some reasons why the free-rider paradox might not be true of workers. Workers have no choice but to join ranks. See Roemer (1978). Since workers encounter the same situation recurrently, they may adopt long-term cooperative strategies even if these are inferior in the short run. See Edel (1979). The general approach is developed in Taylor (1976). Workers may modify each other's preferences through a process of "dialogue." See Offe and Wiesenath (1980).

formulation of the transformation of the class-in-itself into the class-for-itself. Specifically, having been educated by Roemer (1982), I now think that the whole difficulty stems from taking class positions as a given from which to begin the analysis. Individuals face choices, and one choice might be to become a worker and another choice might be to cooperate with other workers. But they do have choices, and we must analyze the entire structure of choice as given to individuals, not to workers. For it may be that there exist conditions under which their choice is to become workers and cooperate with capitalists against other workers and the optimality of this strategy may be incomprehensible if we truncate the choice set by viewing individuals as ready-made workers. It may be that blacks and whites do not cooperate as workers because it is rational for capitalists to divide and rule (Roemer, 1979) but it still remains that they do not cooperate because they are black and white, not only workers. Segmented labor markets imply different structures of choice for people with different individual endowments, and segmented labor markets breed disunity among those who become workers. Let me thus join in the pleas for a methodological individualism.