Socialism and Democracy: Beyond State *and* Civil Society

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Introduction

This article started life as a review of John Keane's Public Life and Late Capitalism - Towards a Socialist Theory of Democracy (Cambridge University Press, 1984), and it begins with a brief account of this important book. In the sections which follow I have tried to trace the source of what I take to be the unhelpful political implications of Keane's book, and of the critical theory of Habermas on which it largely builds. Taking a cue from Keane's own discussion (at the end of his final chapter) of the problems with the concept of democracy bequeathed to the modern world by Rousseau, I look briefly at the attempt Hegel made to harmonise the tensions which lay within political philosophy at the close of the classical period of contractarian thought.

Marx's demonstration that Hegel's synthesis could not be sustained, I then argue, has led socialists to 'retreat' to a position much like Rousseau's. This is so even though it was not Hegel's advances on Rousseau and Kant in the formulation of ethical and social objectives for political philosophy that Marx rejected, but Hegel's attempt to show how their achievements within the state could be compatible with bourgeois property relations, sustained and exercised within civil society. Marx saw private property in the sphere of social wealth as a logical, not merely a contingent obstacle to the achievement, within the state, of Hegel's interdependent and complementary objectives of ethical universality in collective social life and ethical autonomy in the life of the individual squared with individual satisfaction and cooperative order in the realm of needs. This was because of the incoherence of Hegel's theory of the political relation of representation between state and civil society, and because of the exclusion of the propertyless from one half of the state/civil society couple.

The force of such a critique, however, rests on the appropriateness of those Hegelian objectives the achievement of which is necessarily frustrated by the institution of private property in the sphere of social wealth. If we accept Marx's critique of the institution of private property, therefore, we accept those objectives, and with them Hegel's demonstration that individual ethical autonomy and ethical universality in collective life are logically interdependent, not achievable independently of one another, and not, as Rousseau left them, two polarities in irreconcilable tension (the tension between unanimous direct democracy and Spartan discipline) and in a different universe from freedom to satisfy needs in a state of nature.

Hegel gave the appropriately ironic title the 'beautiful soul' to the tendency to fly to that extreme of this tension which neglects ethical universality and allows total precedence to the ethical autonomy of the individual. The logic of this position, I argue, underlies an 'elective affinity' between varieties of romantic individualism, hostility to bureaucracy and to instrumental activity per se rather than to any malign interests such activity might serve, and a political view of democracy which locates this notion exclusively in individual autonomy and self expression ('discursive will-formation' in Habermas's phrase) irrespective of the substantive content of the 'democratic decision'. This, I argue, leads quite naturally to the suggestion with which Keane concludes his book, namely to defend what he terms a 'socialist civil society'.

In contrast, I suggest that socialists need to theorise the notion of a 'democratic cause' which requires the political discipline of solidarity, and in which the form of decision making is not an ethical carte blanche for the content of the decision, yet which neither substitutes mere spontaneity for organisation nor puts the decisions of the central committee in the place of the conscience of the individual. To steer a course, in other words, between pluralist notions of democracy, on the one hand, and, on the other, the neo-Rousseauian tension of the left between spontaneous mass mobilisation and (Spartan) party discipline.

Keane — Public Life and Late Capitalism

John Keane's book is largely concerned with the theorisation of problems that bureaucracy poses for late capitalist society. Keane begins by identifying a number of features of the present crisis of welfare state capitalism. The widely trumpeted 'failure of Keynesianism' he sees as combining with accelerating difficulties in the administration of the mechanisms of social control embodied in welfare state capitalism. This has produced a situation in which states cannot square the opposed imperatives of legitimation by the administration of social tranquillity, through state welfare, and of stimulation of the necessary levels of investment to generate revenue to fund that welfare provision (which, it had been previously assumed, could occur without any radical redistribution of wealth).

This, Keane argues, has provided the opportunity for the 'new liberalism' to attack state bureaucracies in the name of the freedom of the (economic) individual. Parallel with, although ostensibly opposed to this tendency, he identifies a neo-corporatist trend which argues not for less but for greater and more efficient state direction of resources. (Both, it may be noted, can be found in the

rhetoric and actions of the present government, subjecting welfare provision simultaneously to the inroads of privatisation and of draconian central control.) Keane accordingly identifies, as the problematic of his book, the delineation of spheres of autonomy in public life oppositional to both these tendencies.

His introduction, however, sets the scene for an extended account of the evolution of theories of bureaucracy, since he sees the justification of autonomous spheres of public life as primarily to be accomplished by counterposing them to the bureaucratic control of society. Beginning with an excellent essay on Weber's contribution to the theory of bureaucracy, Keane, looking for an alternative to Weber's pessimism, gives equally good accounts of the subsequent attempts by Adorno, Offe and, principally, Habermas to theorise these matters. Despite his originality and philosophical sophistication, Adorno appears to Keane to be no less pessimistic than Weber, while adding far greater weight to the spectre of a 'totally administered society' under late capitalism. Habermas is taken to task for his nostalgia for an anachronistic and probably inaccurate conception of the freedom of early bourgeois public life. Finally examined is the proposal of Habermas and Offe, that there exist self-defeating, crisis-provoking tendencies within modern bureaucracies.

Keane then turns his attention to Habermas's philosophical doctrines, beginning with a critical exposition of the theses associated principally with Knowledge and Human Interests, regarding the illegitimate universalisation of technical/instrumental rationality to those realms which are properly the province of the communicative and critical knowledge-constitutive interests of reason. He goes on to examine the basis of Habermas's later exploration of a theory of communicative competence, and concludes his discussion of Habermas by raising some problems for the latter's account of natural science. There are, first of all, the difficulties which arise as a consequence of those accounts of natural science - e.g. Kuhn - which contest the hegemony of positivism over science, effectively conceded by Habermas. Lastly, Keane raises the provocative question of the 'oppositional' character of the natural science of ecology. All in all, his discussions of Habermas - of his various and numerous influences and antecedents, his critiques of his predecessors, and of the thrust of his grand theory - are penetrating and exceedingly well informed.

In the final chapter Keane complements his preceding themes by situating the problems they raise within the historical framework bequeathed by the intellectual failure of contractarian liberalism, and its practical supersessions by the bureaucratic state. He concludes that a retrieval is necessary of the valuation of the realms of privacy and autonomy, unsuccessfully defended by contractarian liberalism, in the face of the universal bureaucratising tendencies of modern states and corporations. Rather than the abolition of the distinction between the state and civil society for which Marx argued, Keane sees the need to deepen this divide, as a bulwark against state and corporate bureaucracies.

Without wishing to raise any doubt as to the merits of Keane's book, it strikes me that the difficulties with modern Critical Theory, many of which Keane himself sharply identifies, add up ultimately to decisive objections, rather than mere 'anomalies' in its development as a viable paradigm for political practice. In what follows I will try to set out a few of my reservations.

Some 'Elective Affinities' and the 'Opium of the Intelligentsia'

It is absolutely clear from Keane's analysis just how much subsequent theories of bureaucracy, including that of Habermas himself, owe to Weber. Weber's general account of the puritan secularisation of asceticism and its elective affinity with capitalist economic rationality yields the notion of the modern 'calling' - with its devotion to the performance of tasks for their own sake - shorn of all its original religious or moral dignity, and ready to be bent to the formal-rational imperatives of bureaucracy. To that 'formal rationality' Weber contrasts the notion of 'substantive rationality' - based upon immediate and personal judgements of value, which, because they are individual, turn out to be pluralistic, contingent and based on irreconcilable standards, when seen from a social perspective. Habermas takes over this bifurcation of rationality, strengthening and deepening it in turn, by locating it in the ontology of human action.

There is, however, another relation of 'elective affinity' that we should not fail to notice. It is between this account of 'substantive rationality' in which the individual's own authentic value judgements are in play (as opposed to 'formal rationality' whose objectives are externally imposed) and the continuity of the moral stance of romantic individualism, intensifying from Rousseau, through Kant to Nietzsche, and culminating in Sartrean existentialism. This counterposes the absolute authority of conscience to all that is outside the self. Keane traces to Nietzsche, through Weber, and on to the Frankfurt School (note 58 to the final chapter) the idea that the acceptance of a discipline extraneous to the self is antithetical to true moral autonomy, and that it is in becoming a means to some other end rather than an end in one's self that the moral failure lies. The iniquity of instrumentality and of the domination of the individual by a realm of (apparent) causality - governed by technical instrumentality - resting ultimately on the promptings of inclination rather than duty, underlines the Kantian provenance of the notion of autonomy at work here. It only remains to add Nietzsche's vision of the utterly trackless moral landscape of the modern world in which we (science) have 'killed God'.

This, in sociological terms, becomes the relativity, contingency, and pluralism of Weber's 'substantive rationality'. It is the ultimate meaninglessness of such moral freedom that Sartre so acutely diagnosed, and from which he himself finally recoiled. Nor is it stretching interpretation too much to identify this with the fate Hegel identified for the 'beautiful soul' - the consciousness for which individual ethical autonomy is de-coupled from substantive ethical universality, and for which all turns on purity of intention. I worry that the popularity of theories critical of bureaucracy, from Weber onwards, rest, at the end of the day, on bureaucracy's moral repugnance to bourgeois intellectuals that stems from their moral disapproval of bad faith - lack of authenticity.

In Keane's book, perhaps as forcefully as anywhere, are catalogued, summarised and articulated all those reasons intellectuals have found to loathe and despise contemporary bureaucracy, and yet, by abjuring all its works, to do absolutely nothing about it. The style of Critical Theory, and the milieu in which it flourishes seem to me to add to the ideological strength of existing bureaucracies, much in the way that the aristocratic disdain for 'trade' helped leave the way clear for the commercial classes to prosper. The intellectual's distaste for the 'bureaucrat' is a sort of Chekhovian folly. While the very word has become the epitome of the modern insult on their lips, many intellectuals on the left seek to present their own fractious ineptitude as a sign of their moral distinction: - 'we never compromised!'

If, however, anything is ever to be done, it will demand

uncomfortable compromises of conscience, domestic routine, presentation of self to others, and of other aspects of one's pure and autonomous privacy so jealously guarded by intellectuals. The morally fastidious disinclination ever to make those compromises is, in effect, the refusal of all moral discipline. But then ... it is so much better always to have been in the right - even when you changed your mind - than actually to have bruised your own authenticity and autonomy by sometimes deciding that you ought to agree with other people, rather than always to insist that they agree with you.

The philosophical and ideological bankruptcy of the tradition of explicating moral autonomy as unconditioned 'authentic' self-determination of moral decisions, however, does nothing to diminish its contemporary appeal to a certain fraction of the intelligentsia (including Habermas, as Keane notes). Ideal-typically they are those who nurture a romantic nostalgia for that mythic time when the emancipation of the individual was the heroic ideal of those intellectuals who, we read in our (hi)story books, bestrode the world - or at least the coffee houses and salons - like colossi. This was the age when an intellectual did what an intellectual had to do - flee the king's displeasure, get his head chopped off, starve in a garret, go mad, leave his children at the foundlings' home, or something equally striking. (There cannot have been so many of these 'men for all seasons' either, because the really nice thing about the (hi)stories was that they all seemed to know one another, just like the Knights of the Round Table, and the gunfighters of the Old West!) We should need no Cervantes or Peckinpah to debunk this particular myth - yet another high-minded gloss for class rapacity - the equivalent in our age of the chivalry of Quixote.

Today the better parallel is with disillusioned westerns - 'Guns in the Afternoon', 'The Wild Bunch', etc. The railroad and the Maxim Gun arrived long ago in the 'Wild West of Ideas'. This essay, this magazine, John Keane's book, the Cambridge University Press, our jobs, ... are all part of the commodification and professionalisation of intellectual production; and as for the Maxim Gun - 'commodification' alone has 18 entries in the index of Keanes's book, and his Chapter 2 boasts no less than 170 bibliographical notes. I do not deplore this - indeed I applaud it - Keanes's sheer competence in exegesis, synthesis and scholarship is daunting, to me at least. My point is this: competence of this ilk is a virtue of 'formal', not of 'substantive' rationality - in the 'calling' of the academic no less than in that of the 'bureaucrat' - so perhaps 'formal' rationality need not be all bad!

I think, however, that the myth of the 'Chivalry' or the 'Wild West' of ideas is all bad, along with the preposterous notion of moral autonomy peddled in its wake. According to this myth, there can be no accommodation between authenticity and moral discipline. Discipline is for bureaucrats, party hacks, apparatchiks, union time-servers. It can always be made out to have its extraneous and demeaning instrumentality - 'Buggin's turn', if nothing else. It is here that we find the intellectual source for the self-indulgent sectarian rot of the left - the preference for being able to say 'I told you so' over the risk of only partial success, the impulse symbolically to break oneself on the wheel of the state over Bank Holidays, but not to get involved in any organisational responsibility because of one's detestation of administrative competence as the mark of the 'bureaucrat', and so forth. In short, the 'opium of the intelligentsia' - an ideology for the self-marginalisation of the disaffected romantic bourgeois intellectual.

The 'refusal of all moral discipline' is at the root of this. The 'moral discipline' I have in mind is solidarity - not the 'solidarity' of sentimental gesture, but a disciplined and binding life-time commitment not depending on individual vagaries, which is antithetical to the conventional rhetoric of 'conscience'. For today it is almost always against the solidarity of collective action that the degenerate ideology of 'conscience' is directed - to make heroes out of scabs, while those devoted to a just cause are implicitly disparaged as a 'mob' in the grip of nothing more than 'bad faith'. The farrago of 'conscience' needs to be disentangled from the overall fabric of 'bourgeois rights and liberties' - most of which retain their genuine value.

The emptiness of 'conscience', by contrast, derives from taking nothing more than a trivially necessary condition of any moral action - namely that an individual has to choose to perform it in order to be the responsible agent - to be a self-sufficient virtue of moral action in its own right. So your joining with others is seen somehow to detract from the virtue of your action. While this once harmlessly overemphasised the virtue of pioneers of individualism, it now serves to allow reactionary hacks to 'discover uncommon virtue' in mere perversity, as though there were something praiseworthy about bucking the view of a majority and standing alone, like Luther, irrespective of what it was on which you actually took your stand! (This, by the way, is no attack upon Amnesty International's defence of 'prisoners of conscience': the grounds for not coercing people who threaten no one are valid irrespective of the virtue or silliness of their opinions, but such opinions do not become more virtuous the fewer the people who share them!)

This thread of 'elective affinity' is by no means broken when we come to the views of Habermas. In his attempt to formulate and ground a notion of rational autonomy he does try to move decisively beyond the dead end of contingency and arbitrariness. By shifting the arena of autonomous reason from unconstrained individual moral decision to the rule-governed public realm of communication, Habermas is able transcendentally to derive a non-arbitrary order for autonomous reason from the necessary presuppositions of the act of communication. It is, however, only order at the level of discourse - not a substantive order - and Keane, in Chapter 5, notes a number of difficulties: - with the resulting contrast between 'distorted' and 'undistorted' communication, in relation to the Marxian notion of ideology; with the abstractness of the 'communicating subject'; and with the activity of proclaiming what ought to be without paying heed to how it can be.

There is the further difficulty, noted by Lukes (in his contribution to Habermas: Critical Debates (ed. J. B. Thompson and D. Held) that, in effect this approach, like Rawls's 'original position', and Kant before them, gives the form but not the content of autonomous reason. For the abstraction from the 'ideal speech situation',

envisaged by Habermas, of all those motives participants bring from their social lives, so that 'all motives except that of the cooperative search for truth are excluded' (Legitimation Crisis, p. 108) abolishes the very subject matter - the resolution of conflicts in social life - to the truth concerning which we seek to apply autonomous reason.

Habermas rebuts the accusation of abstractness and unreality (in his 'Reply' in HCD) by arguing that, empirically, participants could not suppose they were taking part in an argument were they not sufficiently to presuppose themselves to be aiming cooperatively for the truth. That may be granted. However, it is not enough to make each right about the others. Moreover, even if participants did enter an argument in 'good faith' - setting aside all motives of theirs they acknowledged as being in conflict, in favour of the aim of cooperatively arriving at truth, this would not guarantee their setting aside, or even discerning, those motives other than cooperatively arriving at truth, which they shared. (Look in academic journals, where this illusion of the cooperative search for truth is most prevalent, and remember the injunction 'Publish or perish'!)

It is not, however, in the empirical unrealisability of the 'ideal speech situation' that its fundamental weakness lies, but in its sharing that variety of contractarian illusion involved in supposing that it is subjects who constitute the social contract, rather than the other way about. It is in this respect, too, that the thread of 'elective affinity' with romantic individualisms is maintained.

Hegel's Attempt to Transcend the Dilemmas of Contractarianism

Keane's survey of the vicissitudes and decay of contractarian liberalism, though excellent, is concerned principally with liberalism's practical demise, rather than with its intellectual weakness. In the latter regard, however, the problems we face, in Keane's view, are those bequeathed by Rousseau, for it was he, as Keane notes, who was the first radical critic of that variety of contractarianism which, I will argue, is still to be found in Habermas. (Even though, in other parts of his work, he was the originator of romantic individualism - as opposed to the 'possessive' variety - according to which the individual's 'realm of freedom' lay in the sphere of conscience rather than of property).

The infamous (to liberals) remark that the recalcitrant should be 'forced to be free', which Keane quotes, is indicative of a different ordering of logical priorities in relation to the social contract from those customarily labelled 'contractarian'. (And, while Rousseau himself may have equivocated somewhat on this reordering, his heirs amongst functionalist sociologists do not.) The notions of 'discursive will-formation' (Habermas) or of 'publicly negotiated consent and obligation', which Keane attributes to the contractarians, presuppose that moral subjects pre-exist, or at least may be transcendentally constituted independently of any such process. By contrast, if we do not regard him through Kantian spectacles, Rousseau, in the Social Contract, is seen to propose that the realm of consent and obligation is logically prior to and constitutive of human beings as moral subjects. The moral freedom that the recalcitrant (i.e. every child) may need to be forced to accept is thus antithetical to the state of nature of both Hobbes and Rousseau, characterised by that freedom from obligation which Kant identified with the heteronomy of inclination. Rousseau, however, unlike Kant, sees the moral subject emerging from this state of nature socially, not as being transcendentally constituted.

Hegel concurred with Rousseau, rather than Kant, on this last point. Otherwise, in seeking to harmonise moral freedom and freedom from obligation respectively in the state as the realm of ethical universality and civil society as the realm of private liberty, Hegel adopts the Kantian attribution of autonomy to the former and heteronomy to the latter. (The heteronomy may either be that of the subject's own inclinations, or of those of another making the subject a means to some end.) What is surprising about Keane's closing plea for the deepening rather than 'the abolition of the (contractarian) distinction between civil society and the state, as Marx would have it' is that the total reversal of these attributions has taken place. Civil society has come to be seen as the realm of autonomous public (not private) life, while the state (though public) has become the realm of heteronomy, principally through its bureaucratisation and consequent subservience to instrumentality. (It is worth noting, too, that for Hegel, the non-contractarian character of the state/civil society distinction was crucial in the ascent, through the State, to ethical universality above the level of agreements struck between individuals in civil society.)

Marx's Critique of Hegel's Synthesis

For Marx, Hegel's synthesis failed not because it sought the wrong ethical objectives, but because it could not accomplish them. The state, as the realm of ethical universality, can only be so in so far as it embodies the political life of the citizenry who comprise it. The 'citizenry', however, are identical with the individuals who comprise civil society, and Marx saw insuperable contradictions inherent in the 'representation' of the latter in and by the former:

> The object of representation is not the particular interest of man and his citizenship of the state, the universal interest. On the other hand, the particular interest is the material of representation, and the spirit of this interest is the spirit of the representation (Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State, Penguin edition, p. 197).

This contradiction is side-stepped in the Philosophy of Right (paras. 309, 310) by a move in which Marx finds 'Hegel's mindless illogicality and "managerial" sense are really nauseating' (CHDS, p. 195). 'Confidence' in political representation is the guarantee for those represented that their 'interests are made good in the assembly whose business is the general interest' and 'that their deputy will further and secure this general interest' (PR, addition to para. 309). However, Hegel maintains (PR, para. 310) that, through experience of 'the actual transaction of business in managerial and official positions' the deputy 'also acquires and develops a managerial and political sense, tested by his experience, and this is a further guarantee of his suitability as a deputy'. As Marx notes, 'Imperceptibly this guarantee required by the electors has been transformed into a guarantee against the electors' (CHDS, p. 195).

But it is precisely the bogus character in fact of the purported ethical universality of the state that is tacitly acknowledged by Hegel's sleight of hand in citing the expertise of the deputy as a guarantee of suitability (as Marx put it, against the electorate). (Marx makes overmuch of the Prussian character of this cast of thought.

It is ironic that the same idea emerges in Brecht's tart comment, at the East German communist party's expression of 'disappointment in the people', that it should perhaps dissolve them and elect another.) Hegel's 'managerialism' is a consequence of the entailment, by the central contradiction Marx identified in the notion of representation, of the drift of the apparatus Hegel called 'the state' into a condition of heteronomy 'divorced from civil society' for which, Hegel falsely claims, it represents ethical universality. The alternative to this, as Marx saw it, was that civil society should turn out to be 'the real political society' (CHDS, p. 189).

Marx's 'Retreat' to a Position Much Like Rousseau's

It is important, in discussing the conclusions Marx draws, to distinguish 'the state' qua political society from 'the state' qua administrative apparatus. It is the distinction between the former notion and that of civil society which, Marx argues, is incoherent at the point of the relation of representation which is supposed to mediate between these two spheres, so that the actuality of the state is that of an administrative machine separate from society. This actual machinery is an instrument for the domination of society, which is ideologically legitimated at two levels - the more superficial being that of bogus claims to ethical universality, while the more sophisticated (Hegel's 'managerialism') is that of bogus claims to neutral technical administrative competence. This actual instrument of domination by the ruling class is the state which must be 'smashed'. On the other hand, were the state the true realm of ethical universality, Marx argues, then it could no more be distinct from civil society than the individuals who were members of civil society could be distinct from themselves as citizens of the state. It is the state in this latter sense which will 'wither away' once established - there being neither the need nor the basis for its continued separation from civil society. (Cf. On the Jewish Question, Penguin edition, p. 234 - see especially the quotation from Rousseau. See also Colletti's introduction to this edition.)

On the political theory that emerged in CHDS and was still being applied in CWF, those forms of 'representation' which fall into contradiction in respect of general and particular interests will never suffice for true ethical universality to emerge from civil society, no matter how widely the vote is distributed. They must be replaced by the direct involvement of the people or of their mandated delegates in the management of affairs. This requires there to be a true 'universal class' to wield a power that overcomes that wielded by the bogus 'universal class' - the servants of the bogus state.

On this theory, of course, the only candidate to wield such power will be the proletariat - which is genuinely a potential universal class not because of its commitment to the bogus ethical universality of the actual state but because of its unmitigated 'all sided' (Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction, p. 256) opposition to it. This is because the proletariat, as the propertyless class, has no place in the civil society of property owners, and so is excluded from the purportedly general, but actually sectional, interest represented in the bourgeois state. It is only by the abolition of particularised private property that the potentially universal class can enter the arena of interests from which it had been excluded, and, at the same time, abolish the basis for antagonistic class relations, so as to become the universal class that it had potentially been. This must entail the abolition of civil society - the realm of private property - no less than that of the state delineated in contradistinction to it.

However, while that bogus but actual state - the mere pretender to ethical universality which is no more than the machinery for capital's suppression of labour - has to be 'smashed', a true state, in the sense that it is the true bearer of the ethically universal, must be established to supplant it. This latter, true state will only 'wither away' in the sense that there is neither the need nor the basis for its continued separation from civil society, not in the sense that there will be no need for organisation, democracy or ethical universality.

Thus Marx writes approvingly of the Paris Commune:

> The unity of the nation was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, to be organised by the Communal constitution and to become a reality by the destruction of the state power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence. While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions [my emphasis] were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society (CWF, p. 210).

As Colletti has argued, and Marx himself makes clear (OJQ, p. 234), this political theory takes us back to Rousseau, except that Marx has a particular identity in mind for the agent to take on the task set the 'legislator' by Rousseau:

> Whoever dares to undertake the founding of a people's institutions must feel himself capable of changing so to speak, human nature, of transforming each individual, who in himself is a complete and solitary whole, into a part of a greater whole from which he somehow receives his life and being, of substituting a partial and moral existence for physical and independent existence. He must take man's own powers away from him and substitute for them alien ones which he can only use with the assistance of others (OJQ, p. 234, quoted from SC, Book II, Chapter VII, 3rd para.).

It is not to be a mythical legislator separated from society, but the proletariat, which will do this, not by separating humanity's moral and physical existence, but by restoring their unity, and so unify society too, at both the material and moral levels. I want to argue that Marx's retreat to this position, which is far more akin to that of Rousseau than that of Hegel, has bequeathed to the Left ever since a number of deep-rooted problems regarding democracy, leadership and mobilisation. In order to do so we need to return our attention to Hegel once more, in order to see in what sense Marx's theory was a 'retreat'.

Finding Our Way About in the Wreckage of Hegel's Synthesis

Hegel, aiming to harmonise public duty and private interest in his theory of the state, had also sought to reconcile two supplementary lines of tension within contractarianism which threatened it with incoherence. The first, to which I have already alluded, lies between the notion of pre-existing moral subjects constituting a social contract and the notion of their being constituted as moral subjects by a pre-existing social order. (Hegel erroneously saw Rousseau as having concerned himself exclusively with the former - see PR, remark to para. 258.) The second line of tension involves the determinants of rational moral autonomy: on the one hand, the

individual's autonomy would seem necessarily to have to be a state which was both unconditioned and self-sufficient (what Hegel calls 'conscience'); yet, on the other hand, it seems that 'conscience' must either accept heteronomy or complete emptiness and abdication (what Hegel calls the 'beautiful soul') unless it accepts its participation in and being conditioned by the collective ethical life (PR, para. 139). (Hegel's characterisation of the 'beautiful soul' reveals that there is after all a rational connection between the moral prediaments of the varieties of romantic individualism, not a merely contingent 'elective affinity'.) The reconciliation of both these tensions in Hegel's theory are inextricably linked to the apotheosis of the collective ethical life in the state. If this reconciliation fails, then a great deal comes adrift. It seems to me that Marx does succeed in showing that this reconcilation fails on two counts - in respect of the incoherence of Hegel's conception of representation, and in respect of the exclusion of the propertyless both from the freedom from obligation exercised within civil society with respect to one's property and from the moral freedom to follow obligation exercised within the state with respect to one's citizenship.

If this fundamental harmonisation of freedoms founders on the inadequacy of the institutions of representation and of private property, then so, too, do the attempts to reconcile the two supplementary tensions mentioned above. The first consequence must be that it is no longer coherent to suppose that the 'state' and 'civil society' are two distinct realms of operation for these two freedoms which exhaustively divide society.

Hegel specifically conceived of the distinctiveness of the state as the political arena as that which marked it off from civil society. The 'political' for Hegel, however, was the pursuit of the universal interest (what today is colloquially called 'statesmanship' as distinct from 'politics'). The sort of contention of particular, sectional, antagonistic interests which constitutes contemporary pluralistic 'politics' would properly belong to what Hegel would have termed 'civil society'. Yet that latter sphere itself has swallowed all the 'politics' that actually exists because none of it measures up to the standard of ethical universality Hegel set. So the ethically universal (with which the particularistic as a distinct realm in actuality needs to be contrasted in order to pick out 'civil society' as Hegel understood it) is not to be found in the state as it actually is, or anywhere else for that matter, for the reasons set out above. The best that Marx could accomplish was the identification of a potential fulfiller of the ethically universal in that class which is unconditionally opposed to, because wholly excluded from, the bourgeois civil society and state. (With the advent of universal suffrage, in which Marx initially placed great hopes - see end of CHDS - the total exclusion of the proletariat from citizenship was breached. But the actual state does not come to embody the true ethical universal just because everybody is a citizen. Because of the relation between state and civil society, such 'citizenship' is purely formal - comprising actual duties but only notional rights - as a consequence of the exclusion of such citizens from property ownership and, hence, from membership of the actual civil society - see (d) below.)

If we tried to be clear, then we might say that:
(a) Hegel's rational 'state' does not exist in actuality;
(b) the actual state is no longer distinct from Hegel's rational 'civil society';

so that

(c) Hegel's rational 'civil society' does not exist in actuality;

and

(d) the actual civil society does not contain, as individuals enjoying freedom in their property, all those people whom the self-styled state subjects to the obligations contained in its laws;

with the further consequence that

(3) actual society is not exhaustively divided between the actual state and the actual civil society - there is a third sphere of yet-to-be-actualised rights which would flow from true ethical universality, but are not granted by actual states, nor fulfillable in actual civil societies. (In general, these are not exercisable by individuals with respect to private property within civil society as Hegel envisaged it, but may only be exercised collectively, in concert with others. This is the sphere within which what I want to identify as 'democratic causes' belong - see below.)

The collapse of Hegel's synthesis directly or indirectly set in train a number of developments in the self-understanding of modern societies, in addition to those for which Marx was responsible. Those who control states will, to this day, pretend that the state as an institution constitutes the ethical universality which demands an absolute duty from individuals to belong and an absolute right over them in consequence. But they would, wouldn't they? This is transparently ideological, and seldom believed even by those who do not understand the term 'ideology'.

While the purported ethical universality of the state is actually as changeable as the chameleon skins of politicians, two other aspects of the state as Hegel envisaged it are far more concrete, and recognisably tally with features of social life with which we are familiar. These, however, have come adrift from the failed synthesis by which Hegel had bound them up with the ethical universality of the state. One of these, of course, is the disinterested administration of the state. The other is the function of the state in the constituting of the individual as a moral subject (see PR, remark to para. 258: 'Since the state is mind objectified, it is only as one of its members that the individual himself has objectivity, genuine individuality, and an ethical life.'). Cut off from any bona fide ethical universality, the forming and sustaining of the individual by the integration of collective social life come to appear as a given, alienated set of social relations, independent of any will, general or individual. (Indeed, the idea that it has any ethical content at all has been progressively drained out of the notion of the integration of the social system in both 'right' and 'left' forms of functionalism.)

Equally, Hegel's account of the disinterested administration of the state originally rested on the commitment of the 'universal class' of civil servants to the universal interest, and was only secondarily supplemented by the idea of neutral expertise and technical administrative competence. If, however, the former basis for this notion is without substance, as we have seen it is, then this supplementary prop for the idea becomes definitive of an ethically neutral descriptive concept of the state - this is what Hegel effectively concedes at the point where Marx upbraids him for 'managerialism'.

The appearance of instrumental neutrality of the administrative apparatus of the actual state, however, is rightly criticised as an ideological appearance masking a contradictory reality. Instrumental decisions are never innocent of normative content. Indeed, it is just the objection to bureaucracies, characterised in terms of their instrumentalism, that it is the pretence of 'mere' neutral instrumentality which serves to justify the removal of their tacit normative commitments - their political intent - from the arena of democracy where it ought to belong. The 'contradictory reality' masked by this ideological representation of neutral instrumentality is de-politicised politics - the administration of the state in the absence of anything corresponding to its 'General Will', its ethical basis of legitimacy (hence the entirely correct concern with processes of 'legitimation', which stands to 'legitimacy' in the same relation that 'rationalisation' stands to 'rationality'). This ideology is nicely

complemented, too, by the decoupling from the sphere of ethics of the notion of the integration of the social system. For the latter is then simply reified and comes to appear to be 'how social systems work' - the given framework of social regularities with respect to which the neutral technical expertise of administration is deployed.

Just because the purported neutral instrumentality of the bureaucracies which comprise the state as it is picked out by this descriptive content is an ideological self-representation, the view that ethical autonomy and democracy are in some sense 'counterbureaucratic' and antithetical to administration is equally ideological. It is that ideology for the self-marginalisation of the disaffected romantic bourgeois intellectual which exactly complements the ideology of technocratic neutrality by which the actual state conceals the exercise of its far from disinterested power. It is a consistent development of this ideological position to propose the erection of a notion of 'civil society', as a sphere defined in contradistinction to, and to be defended against the bureaucratic state, within the security of which can take place the practice of autonomy and democracy. The only 'democracy' of a civil society whose underlying principles are privacy and individual autonomy is 'consumer sovereignty'. Setting up a notion of civil society in this way, however, explains how the ethical natures respectively of the state and of civil society as Keane conceives them are the reverse of what Hegel took them to be.

Ideological Appearances in Ethical 'Topsy Turvy Land'

The point of freedom as Keane imagines it might be defended in what he terms 'civil society' is the opposite of what the freedom from obligation allowed by the privacy of individual property was for, in Hegel's conception of civil society. The two senses of the term 'autonomy' or freedom become fatally confused, so that, while Lockean 'human rights' (to do as you wish with what is inalienably your own) originally operated within the realm of instrumental private freedom from obligation - heteronomy - in respect of property, modern 'human rights' are concerned with the exact opposite - the individual's right to a moral conscience, to affirm autonomous moral obligations. The two principles of freedom here - respectively the freedom from obligation, and the freedom to have obligations - are diametrically opposed to each other.

Ironically, in the modern world, it is your conscience, not your property, which seems to be inalienably yours. The contradictory reality here (the counterpart, at the individual level, of de-politicised politics at the collective level) is conscience de-coupled from ethical universality and hence from reason - what Hegel termed the 'beautiful soul', masked by the ideology of 'conscience-as-private-property'. Your conscience, to be sure, is inalienably yours, but, like your true private property, you can do with it what you will, so it can 'tell' you whatever you like, and ceases to be distinguishable from its supposed exact opposite - an inclination in Kant's sense. Moreover, it appears that any imposition upon it from outside in the form of discipline - be this rational or coercive - must be a threat to dispossess you of your conscience. Your conscience appears to be wholly and authentically yours - 'you are your own man' - just in so far as no other influence but you yourself has determined the content of your conscience. (If it made sense, such a notion of 'conscience', since it is no better than an inclination, would properly belong in the sphere of civil society. But it is a nonsense: you are no more self-sufficient in determining the content of your conscience than you are in the exercise of your rights over your property.)

The components of the principal and of the supplementary tensions Hegel had sought to reconcile have come adrift from one another. The state is no longer the locus of ethical universality, and that aspect of it which was constituted by pre-existing moral subjects - its willed aspect - has become an administrative machine divorced from ethical considerations, while that aspect of it which pre-existed as social order and constituted moral subjects has become the 'integration of the social system' - the given set of social relations, independent of any will, within which administrative expertise is exercised.

Equally, the very idea that human beings possessed an ethical autonomy distinct from the freedom from obligation enjoyed in respect of private property depended on the participation of the former in the rational discipline of ethical universality. While that distinction breaks down with the individual's conscience apparently becoming inalienable private property, the assertion of proprietary autonomy over the conscience (even more than over real property) involves denying and blinding oneself to the obvious truth that social order provides its content, and thereby exempting that content from critique or willed alteration. ('How can I change what I believe by an act of will?' is the rhetorical question asked in defence of this position - the answer is, of course, that you can do this by giving a moment's thought to how silly your beliefs are!)

Ironically, it seems to us that we are administered by and have to obey a social power over which we have no control, while that obedience (to Weber's 'formal rationality') is contrasted to obeying our own consciences ('substantive rationality') as though the latter were somehow superior and more authentic because it was less a social product than the former. E.g. Jehovah's Witnesses have to decide between obeying their own consciences which tell them not to allow their children to have blood transfusions, or obeying the state which tells them they must (yet weirdly, asks them to sign a form giving the permission they cannot refuse). Talk of 'autonomy' and 'control' here seems to have lost its point: who controls what, and to what end, and are any of these ends any better than any other? This question is just not answered by asserting the value of freedom of conscience and self-determination, independently of the content and direction of social decisions.

It is interesting to see how these issues emerge in Habermas's engagement with Luhmann (Legitimation Crisis, Part III, Ch. 5), whom he quotes (p. 131), speaking of public decisions:

> To demand an intensive engaged particulation of all in them would be to make a principle of frustration. Anyone who understands democracy in this way has, in fact, come to the conclusion that it is incompatible with rationality.

In relation to administration and social integration, the ancestral notions of the social contract and the General Will have become progressively denatured in respect of their ethical content. These notions retain (what Marx sees as their fictitious) ethical universality in Hegel's notion of the state, but, though still ethical in character, lose their claim to rational universality through relativisation to a given social system in Durkheim and Parsons. With Luhmann, however, as Habermas remarks:

The LIBERTY of the SUBJECT.

> Complex societies are no longer held together and integrated through normative structures. ... System integration, treated from the steering perspective, becomes independent of social integration accessible from life-world perspectives (LC, p. 131).

So Weber's characterisations of 'formal' and 'substantive' rationality accurately describe the subjective reality of the world of moral confusion in which we find ourselves: a world in which heteronomous interests dominate the purported sphere of ethical universality; and the ethically autonomous is driven into (and only appears defensible within) the realm of what is purportedly inalienably particular, namely individual conscience. I hope that I have indicated how neither 'state' nor 'civil society' any longer remotely resemble what Hegel purported to mean by them. Indeed, the incoherence of both of these notions, which Marx identified, has now come home to roost in the flight of moral autonomy from the 'state' that Hegel envisaged to 'civil society' as Keane envisages it. Moral autonomy has been expelled from Hegel's 'state' by its bureaucratisation - its invasion by the heteronomy of 'civil society' as Hegel envisaged it. At the same time the heteronomy of the 'state as it has become' has taken on the state's collective character, while the moral autonomy that has fled into 'civil society as it has become' has lost its universality. This is just what Weber's descriptive categories reflect. 'Deepening' the division between state and civil society, as Keane recommends, thus seems to me emphatically not to be the appropriate response, even if it were clear which notion of the state/civil society division it was that was thought to represent what it was proper to 'deepen'.

Some Problems Socialists have with Democracy

Opposition to a state which no longer represents the ethically universal, but a sectional interest, in the name of 'autonomy' and 'democratic control', must involve opposing that sectional interest not by another sectional interest, but by the universal interest. In contrast to Habermas and Keane, I would contend that the proper direction for a critique of the 'bureaucratic state' lies in the attempt to theorise a notion of 'collective substantive rationality' - collective rational autonomy. To seek, in other words, to locate the notion of autonomy concretely in the realities of collective social life, rather than abstractly in the conscience or discursive conduct of the individual; and to restore to it the dimension of universality, without which it must remain subjective and decoupled from reason.

Autonomy, however, is not like gold, which lies passively waiting to be stumbled upon. Rather, it has to be constructed. A theorisation which aims to locate a notion of autonomy concretely in social life does not tell us where to find it, but must be an account of the method of political practice by which collective rational autonomy is produced. If we just look for it, then we should not expect to find it to be very common if I am correct in claiming that Weber's account of 'formal' and 'substantive' rationality is apposite to the modern world. They describe the topsy-turvy moral world in which a heteronomous collectivity is complemented by autonomy divorced from universality (and, hence, from reason); but it is important to stress that mere description will not do here. It is as though the objective features of situations of apathy or of confusion were to be described in ways which omitted to mention that commitment or clarity ought to have been found there, but was not.

The problem for Marxism has been the weakness of its attempts at such a theorisation of 'collective rational autonomy', which remain at the quasi-Rousseauian point from which Marx initially criticised Hegel's doctrine of the state. The problem is - what to do with the notion of the proletariat as the potential universal class. If Marxists have at all got beyond 'the proletariat self-consciously making history', they have simply and disastrously surrended the torch of collective rational autonomy to the trusteeship of the 'vanguard party'. These ideas are central to what Marxism can mean by 'democracy', and the poverty of its theorisations has led, respectively, to the idea that democracy is no more than 'mass mobilisation', or to the idea that democracy is realised in the decisions of the Party's central committee.

These positions merely parallel the dilemma inherited from Rousseau, the two horns distinguished by whether the problems are seen in terms of moral subjects pre-existing and constituting the social contract, or whether they are seen in relation to a realm of consent and obligation that is logically prior to and constitutive of moral subjects. In relation to the role marked out for the proletariat, the former implies that the potential universal class puts democracy into effect when, on the universal realisation throughout its ranks that it is the potential universal class, it puts an end to capitalist social relations by its own concerted and unanimous self-activity. By contrast, the latter horn of the dilemma leads to the view that the consciousness of the proletariat will never spontaneously rise to the point where it will act as a totality to grasp its inheritance - it must rather be led by those whose scientific grasp of the democratic objective of the class obviates the need to arrive at it by any overtly democratic procedure. This is because individuals are seen not only to be constituted as moral subjects by their incorporation within a pre-given sphere of consent and obligation, and so dependent upon it for the very possibility of their own rational autonomy as moral subjects, but also to be bound into it by relations of interdependence which, far from having been decided upon by some process of 'discursive will formation', have to be accepted as a social given - 'definite relations which are independent of their will'.

Although this is Marx's phrase, the dilemma this poses for Marxist perspectives is particularly acute. For class relations are seen both as the prospective motor of emancipatory social change and as the principle of stasis of the social system. One response, reflecting the dominance of the former aspect, is to relegate the spheres of ideology and the actual practice of politics to the position of a sort of epiphenomenon of systemic processes. The other is to seek grounds for optimism in pointers towards tendencies of the system to self-destruct, allowing a 'window of opportunity' for autonomous moral subjects to throw off their social shackles and to gain control of the runaway train that the system has become.

The notion of democracy itself loses its substance within both positions sketched above. For those who see actual political practice as a mere epiphenomenon of the interplay of components of the system, the manner in which a decision was reached by any given organisation is irrelevant to the outcome of the clash of class forces in which it is engaged. For those waiting for the 'window of opportunity', democracy in a real sense will only flower once that window opens on the new dawn of mass mobilisation. The possibility of discovering 'actually existing democracy' is not helped when our contractarian heritage persuades us to look for a solution in the wrong direction - towards formal, universalistic principles of democracy (of 'discursive will formation'), applicable irrespective of the content of the democratic decision. (As though a policy of 'racial purity', for instance, could be democratically decided upon, when, I would contend, the content in this case is antithetical to democracy as such.) So we ask, in the abstract, how the pursuit of any (unspecified) goal could be collective, yet preserve the pre-given autonomy of the individuals who pursue it. We are then led inexorably back to the absurdity of unanimous direct democracy as the only model which could fully respect the autonomy of the individual. (This sounds like radical anarchism but, given the unlikelihood of unanimity

on any particular issue, it leads easily to unanimity on one general issue - to maximise the freedom of each individual to pursue his/her own goals, i.e., market liberalism.)

This is a profound problem for democratic theory. Without a substantive notion of collective rational autonomy it is impossible to account for the moral as opposed to the procedural force of a majority decision. Democratic centralists construe its force as absolute, like that of the General Will, while romantic individualists render it null and void - you answer only to your conscience. Both empty all content from the notion of a voluntary association with a political cause, requiring moral discipline from its adherents. Democratic centralists believe they are morally entitled not to allow 'dissidents' a view which differs from the analogue of the General Will. For romantic individualists, on the other hand nothing extraneous to the individual, be it a person or a majority, is morally entitled to any command over that individual's conscience. In other words, either the Party is your conscience, or the Party is no more than the contingent alignment of individual sentiments, and not itself the focus for any obligation individuals did not already have. The analogy is of the loyalty of a soldier contrasted to support for a charity.

Liberal pluralist considerations regarding democracy, concerned with 'society as whole', from which you cannot opt out, do nothing to solve this problem. They do not apply to voluntary associations with political purposes because they trade on the involuntary character of your 'membership' of society. Moreover the backing democracy gets from Utilitarianism or from Rawls's 'original position' rests on prudential and not on moral grounds. You cannot opt out, so you insure against the possibility of at some time being in a minority and/or at a disadvantage by agreeing on global principles to acknowledge but limit the rights of the majority and/or the fortunate. So Mill's principle of liberty can be seen as such an insurance, in everyone's long-term interest, to preserve as much as possible of one's freedom on finding oneself in a minority over some issue. Prudence in Rawls, on the other hand, is universalised by the expedient of hypothetical ignorance of your lot - so all will agree to there being no 'dirty end of the stick' in society, for fear of getting it themselves. Such accounts of democracy are thus unable to explain its moral force in voluntary associations such as political parties.

'Democratic Causes' — a Preliminary Characterisation

I would contend that the moral force of democracy within an organisation derives not from abstract principle but from the moral rightness of concrete political objectives which are, in their very nature, necessarily collective in character i.e. components of a substantive ethical universal. So the objective to which you are committed is, in your judgement, morally right: it is an objective which can only be achieved collectively: it has as its aim a right which can only be exercised collectively, and the organisation engaged in pursuing that objective, to which you belong, is the only organisation to which anyone hoping to work for that objective could feasibly commit their efforts. Your commitment to the objective of the organisation would therefore keep you in it even if majority decisions within it went against you, for there is nowhere else to go to pursue these objectives.

These are democratic causes - the 'democracy' which characterises them is neither the mere procedural protection of the individual's autonomy, nor the wholesale alienation of the individual's powers of normative decision to the superior ethic of the party line. Working for associations such as political parties, trade unions, etc. is voluntary but not optional - they are not charities, and involvement in them is not an 'ultra-obligation'. Members of a voluntary association pursuing a 'democratic cause' are in this position: as a party to a collective decision, where you fail to win the vote, you have a duty not to betray the cause, but to give the same loyalty you would have demanded of the minority had you been on the winning side. This is not an absolute duty, however, as democratic centralists suppose, for the decision could be so wrong that you must resign, or even actively denounce it; and you are certainly not morally debarred from continuing, within the organisation, to seek to win it over to your view. By the same token, you, and its other members, do not merely belong to such an organisation just for so long as you are in complete agreement with all that it does - following no other duty than to your own conscience. Equally, however, you and its other members are not bound to stick with that organisation no matter what it does, in contrast to the sentiment 'My country, right or wrong!' which a soldier might be encouraged to believe.

This moral framework derives from two interlinked features of a 'democratic cause': the first is that, in pursuing such a cause, instrumental and moral considerations are logically inseparable because they are mutually necessary; and the second, connected reason is that the goals of such a cause are not goals to which an individual can subscribe in inter-personal moral action - they are not just shared individual goals, they are goals which only a collectivity can have, and on which it must agree. Within such organisation some at least of the components of Hegel's synthesis are put back together. 'Discursive will formation' is not an abstract be all and end all, but is directed towards and conditioned by the objective of changing the other moment of social agreement, namely the integration of the social system which forms us as moral subjects. At the same time, the autonomy of the individual is neither wholly unconditioned and de-coupled from both ethical universality and reason, nor is it wholly subservient to the dictates of a self-styled (but, for that reason, certainly bogus) actualisation of ethical universality - rather the aim of the individual's agreeing to work together is to work towards actualising some part of the ethically universal.

This implies that such goals are to be achieved only when society, to some measure, changes its social relations (ultimately of production). It moreover implies that the nature of the objectives of democratic causes - socialist political parties, trade unions, feminist, anti-racist, environmental, etc. movements cohere (or ought to cohere), to the extent that the means by which, instrumentally, they are pursued, are logically of a piece with the collective moral outcomes they seek to establish. This is 'the method of political practice by which collective rational autonomy is produced' (above) - i.e. how collective rational goals are autonomously pursued. Means and ends must interpenetrate here, in order that particular wills can be re-coupled with universality, and hence with reason, in the pursuit of collective objectives. Human moral freedom is vitiated if there are no rational ends to choose, while rational ends can only be the ends of rational action if they are chosen, not compelled.

There may well be a minority who may have to be forced to comply with such changes in social relations, but the collective objective of a democratic cause can only be realised when the majority freely agree with it, and autonomously participate in its implementation. The way in which a society does this is part of what it is - it is not just procedural propriety, nor merely 'distributive justice', though they are part of it, because it concerns personal relations as much as the conduct of formal organisations and the distribution of consumables.

All this, you may say, is trite. But it is not false, and my overall point is that, in order to go beyond these truisms towards more adequately theorised notions of 'socialist democracy', 'the alliance of progressive forces', of the left even, requires more than the recommendation of a 'retrieval' of what are undoubtedly 'bourgeois' values

through the strengthening of civil society against the state. I have already suggested that, whatever the state/civil society distinction means today, it does not exhaustively divide society into two spheres. Marx saw the proletariat as debarred from both state and civil society. Separated from both as the sole actor in the sphere of the potential bringing into being of ethical universality, it was given no name. It is their belonging within this sphere which unites progressive movements - democratic causes - into a coherent totality (one, however, which is bound to contain differentiated parts and is not going to be exhausted by a single organisation - though it is not pluralistic in the sense established in the 'democratic pluralism' of Mill and Rawls). Membership of this sphere is not going to be determined in some essentialist fashion - the form of political practice is no less important than the avowed (maybe only ostensible) objectives.

The concrete contents of this sphere are not, of course, simply proletarian people - class members - but the specific causes which, by collectively contending against both state and civil society, advance the actualisation of ethical universality in human social life. (Not all may do both, but it is as important to fight against private medicine in civil society as it is to oppose state nuclear bureaucracies.) This may be a 'broad church', but it is not pluralist. The boundaries between what is and what is not a 'progressive cause' have become blurred in recent years. Some old-style socialists have identified the scope of what is progressive with interests limited to some 'actual proletariat' (defined in terms of cloth cap wearing, surplus value extraction or the like) neglecting the political role Marx allocated to that class, namely to actualise ethical universality. This has led some to absurd refusals to recognise progressive organisations staring them in the face; but it has also led others into pluralist alliances of all the groups old Stalinists and/or rightwing Labourites do not like, under the illusion that incurring the hostility of political dinosaurs suffices for a group to be 'progressive'.

The adversary of the alliance of democratic causes - all the groups within the sphere of yet to be actualised ethical universality - is the totality of the social relations of production of capitalism - civil society and the state - within which ethical universality cannot be actualised. What we need is a dialectical perspective in which the two moments are the democratisation of organisations within the state and the organisation of democracy within civil society. This is not to disparage those 'bourgeois values' on which our civil liberties rest - especially not at a time when these are seriously threatened. Rather, it is to recognise that, in modern societies, the critical areas of normative decision require collective action, not merely the opportunity to voice dissent. The 'dissident', who proclaims what we ought to do without addressing the problem of how we can - how we organise to bring it about - is all too quickly shuted down that path of moral exasperation which leads to contempt for the mass of humanity and the nihilism either of apathy or of terror.

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