"Reflections on Marxism, Class and Politics"
Erik Olin Wright responses to interview questions posed by Chronis Polychroniou

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Q1. Professor E O Wright, for many years now you have been exploring the social dynamics of class formation and class consciousness in developed capitalist societies. This is a lifelong project of yours going all the way back to the early 1970s, in the course of which you have produced, as is widely acknowledged, some of the most sophisticated and revealing works on and of the relevance of class. Why this commitment to the problematic of class and to the "interrogation of inequality?

There are two main groundings for my on-going commitment to a "problematic of class". First, and ultimately the most important, is a moral commitment to a radical egalitarian vision of the just and good society. Radical egalitarianism is a broad and multidimensional ideal. It includes egalitarian gender relations in which the gender division of labor is attenuated, where men and women share equally in the mundane tasks of childcare and housework, where knowing a person's sex predicts nothing about their likely positions of responsibility, status or authority within the various spheres of social life. Radical egalitarianism means deep democracy, for it implies an egalitarian vision of the distribution of political power and thus requires the elaboration of institutional means for direct political participation rather than simply arms-length representative forms of democracy. And, radical egalitarianism means a commitment to the end of socially-structured forms of economic inequality, economic inequalities rooted in the social positions people occupy within the social division of labor. To give precision to this idea is complicated, but in broad strokes a radically egalitarian society means two things about economic inequality: 1) there is a very deep form of "equality of opportunity for material well-being" in which a person's social location and natural talents have no effects on their access to the resources and processes for acquiring the material means of life; 2) everyone, regardless of the choices they make, is assured a decent standard of living. Radical egalitarianism thus means a commitment to the ideal of a class*less* society and to the practical politics of reducing the class*ness* of society.

Such radical egalitarian moral and political commitments would not, by itself, be sufficient to ground a commitment to the "problematic of class". After all, there are many inequalities in society that constitute a moral affront to the ideals of radical egalitarianism: gender inequality, racial inequality, global inequalities between rich and poor zones of the world, and so on. The commitment to class analysis, therefore, is also grounded in a scientific belief: the belief that class inequality constitutes the most important socially structured axis of inequality that a radical egalitarian project confronts. This is a very tricky claim, as are all social scientific claims that something is the "most important" (or even, simply, more important than something else). "Most important" here does <u>not</u> mean "most important for every question one might ask". What it means is that class inequality and the institutions which reproduce that inequality are deeply implicated in all other forms of inequality and that, as a result, whatever else one must do as part of a radical egalitarian political project, one must understand how class works. This has been the central objective of my sociological work.

Q2. Is the preoccupation with "class" necessarily a Marxist thing?

When I was a graduate student in Sociology at the University of California, one of my professors, Arthur Stinchcombe, once quipped, "Sociology really only has one independent variable, class." He was, of course, making a deliberately exaggerated statement, but it did capture something important: the problem of deeply structured inequality is central to sociology in general, not just Marxism, and "class" is one of the ways of talking about this. So, to study class and treat it as a central issue in social research is not exclusively a "Marxist thing". That being said, the *preoccupation* with class is usually a pretty good indicator of scholarship that is rooted in the Marxist tradition. In other currents of social theory, notably the Weberian tradition, class is one of a menu of relations and processes around which social analysis is organized. In Marxism, in contrast, it is the pivotal relation. It is thus probably fair to say, in general, that being preoccupied with class tends to suggest a Marxist agenda.

Q3. You were a senior at Harvard in 1968, and at Berkeley as graduate student in the early 1970s, so obviously the ideas of Marxism and radicalism were all around you, but not many Marxists stayed around till the end--in fact most of them defected after the collapse of "actually existing socialism." Why are you still around as a Marxist social scientist?

First, a comment on historical timing: The accelerating "defection" of 1960s radicals from Marxism in the United States and Western Europe really dates from before the collapse of the state socialist regimes. Many former Marxists had declared themselves post-Marxist by the mid-1980s, criticizing Marxism for a variety of sins – reductionism, economism, essentialism, and so on. Perhaps most notably, French Marxism, one of the most vibrant centers of Marxist renewal in the 1960 and early 70s, had virtually disappeared by the late 1980s. The demise of the Soviet Union, therefore, intersected a process that was already well in place.

Now, this still leaves unanswered the question about why I personally continue to call myself a "Marxist social scientist." At one level the answer is pretty simple: I believe that the Marxist theoretical tradition continues to offer indispensable theoretical tools for understanding the conditions for the advance of the radical egalitarian project. Marx is famous for saying in the eleventh thesis on Feurbach that philosophers have only tried to understand the world, but that the real point is to change it. It is equally true, however, that without effectively understanding the world we cannot know how to change it in the ways we desire. My continued commitment to the Marxist tradition is the belief that at its core it provides us with many of the central theoretical tools we need for this purpose..

It is worth pointing out a couple of equivocations in that last sentence. First, I refer to "the Marxist *tradition*" rather than Marx*ism* as such. I do this deliberately. "Marxism," like other "isms", suggests a doctrine, a closed system of thought rather than an open theoretical framework of scientific inquiry. It is for this reason, for example, that "Creationists" (religious opponents to the theory of biological evolution) refer to evolutionary theory as "Darwinism". They want to

juxtapose Creationism and Darwinism as alternative doctrines, each grounded in different "articles of faith". It has been a significant liability of the Marxist tradition that it has been named after a particular historical person and generally referred to as an ism. This reinforces a tendency for the theoretical practice of Marxists to often look more like ideology (or even theology when Marxism becomes Marxology and Marxalatry) than social science. It is for this reason that I prefer the looser expression "the Marxist tradition" to "Marxism" as a way of designating the theoretical enterprise. I feel that the broad Marxist tradition of social thought remains a vital setting for advancing our understanding of the contradictions in existing societies and the possibilities for egalitarian social change, but I do not believe it provides us with a comprehensive doctrine that automatically gives us the right answers to every question.

The second equivocation is that I state that this tradition provides us with "us with many of the central theoretical tools we need", but not that the Marxist tradition alone provides us with every theoretical principle and concept needed for a radical egalitarian project. Above all, in these terms, I believe that Marxist class analysis provides absolutely central concepts for understanding the nature of capitalism as a social system and the problem of its transformation, but I also believe that this Marxist core needs to be supplemented with a wide range of theoretical ideas from other radical traditions, notably feminism, and even ideas from mainstream social science.

Now, I said that this was the "simple answer" to the question "why do I still identify as a Marxist social scientist?" I do not think that these purely theoretical commitments by themselves are sufficient to explain this kind of publicly articulated intellectual identity. After all, there are other ways I could identify my work: I could say that I am "using" ideas from the Marxist tradition, or that I am a critical social scientist drawing from a wide range of theoretical sources. To retain the public identification with the Marxist tradition, then, also has a symbolic component. It is a way of announcing explicitly that one is anti-capitalist, not merely pro-egalitarian. Particularly in an era in which anti-capitalist ideas are very much out of fashion even on the left, I feel that this commitment needs to be reaffirmed.

Q4. What influence did the work of the late Nicos Poulantzas had on you?

I read Poulantzas's *Pouvoir Politique et Classes Sociales*, along with the principal texts of Althusser and Balibar early in my graduate program in Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. This was the first work which I had read which was not mainly trying to explicate "what Marx really meant", but clearly trying to reconstruct certain central concepts and theories within Marxism. I also found much of this work immensely frustrating both because the idiom was still preoccupied with quoting from Marx and affirming the correctness of specific interpretations of those texts, and because the French style of theoretical work was often (for me anyway) quite obscure. Nevertheless, it was clear to me that especially Poulantzas was embarked on a different enterprise from standard explications of Marx: the project of reconstructing Marxism, of pushing it forward by clarifying in conceptual foundations, elaborating its theoretical arguments and filling gaps. I eagerly read these works and discussed them with a circle of friends involved in the journal *Kapitalistate*, published in Berkeley at that time.

The systematic engagement with Poulantzas's writings deeply stamped my early theoretical work. The first paper I ever published on Marxism, written jointly with a fellow graduate student Luca Perrone, was a comparison of Poulantzas's theory of the state with the theory of the American functionalist Sociologist, Talcott Parsons ("Lo Stato Nella Teoria Funzionalista e Marxista-Strutturalista," *Studi di Sociologia*, Vol. XI, 1973, pp. 365-424). Even more importantly, my first paper in class theory, "Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalist Society," (*New Left Review*, #98, July-August 1976) was a detailed, extended exposition and critique of Poulantzas's conceptualization of class structure and the elaboration of an alternative.

There is therefore no question but that my early work was influenced by Poulantzas. But it was also true from the start that I was quite critical of certain important methodological aspects of Poulantzas's work and of the Althusserian tradition more broadly. In particular, I objected to the vagueness of many of the philosophical formulations, the tendency to invoke grandiose principles like "overdetermination" without making them crisply clear, and the continued reliance of the texts of Marx, Lenin and other "authorities" as the principle idiom for elaborating and defending theoretical positions.

Q5. Poulantza's own work went through several phases of transition, though not all may agree with this evaluation, from a rigid Althusserian and even slightly Maoist mode of political thought and analysis to the left of Eurocommunism. I believe something similar can also be detected in the evolution of your own thought and analysis: namely, from Marxist structural determination to your engagement with analytical Marxism. How much of this transition is merely intellectual in nature and scope and how much of it is related to shifts due to political developments. I hope this question makes sense.

I think the dynamics of the development of my own ideas are likely to be quite different from those of Poulantzas. Although not, perhaps, to the extent that was true for Althusser, Poulantzas was deeply connected to various currents in European Communist Parties. The development of his ideas, therefore, had more to do with the nature of the political debates and developments in which he was engaged than with strictly theoretical or intellectual developments. For better or worse, I was never involved in the communist movement, or even a member of a Marxist-inspired political party of any sort. I participated actively in the student movement in various ways and have seen my work as relevant to debates and dilemmas faced by leftwing political parties, but my work itself has been produced within the parameters of academic institutions rather than political parties. This means that the specific trajectory of my thinking has been driven more by the ideas and insights generated within academic circles. In the 1970s, for example, I defended the Labor Theory of Value and tried to elaborate what might be termed a sociological rationale for its continued relevance. Subsequent debates over this specific body of theory convinced me that the labor theory of value does not have defendable scientific foundations, and thus I no longer use it in my work. This is not because of any political development, but because of the cogency of the arguments raised against it.

Now, I do not mean to suggest by this that my ideas have developed in a hermetically sealed Ivory Tower. Of course not. Political, social, cultural and economic developments in the

world impact on my ideas as it does on everyone who thinks about social issues. But the link is not a direct, organizational one as in the work of Poulnatzas, but more one of broader context.

Q6. In this context, is it possible for someone to do Marxism without being a Marxist? I remember the first time I saw such a statement being made was by Skocpol in her book States and Revolutions and after so many years I still can't untangle the apparent contradiction that I see behind this statement.

Whether or not one can "do" Marxism without "being" a Marxist depends, of course, on precisely what one means by doing, being, and Marxism. One way of interpreting this contrast is that "doing" Marxism means to deploy Marxist concepts to study some specific problem. One "does" Marxism when one analyzes state policies in terms of the ways in which class structure shapes the feasible options of the state, class struggles affect the kinds of policies that occur within the set of feasible options, and class power shapes the likely outcomes of class struggles. That is "doing" Marxism: a class analysis of the state. "Being" Marxist, on the other hand, can imply a broader commitment to the full agenda of Marxist theory as well as a commitment to its political objectives. In principle one could do a class analysis of the state with an eye to figuring out how best to marginalize working class influence on state policies.

Q7. This brings me to analytical Marxism. How Marxist is rational choice Marxism? This question seems to go on forever.

There is an implication in the framing of this question that "analytical Marxism" is equivalent to "rational choice Marxism". I think rational choice theory is one of the ways of elaborating certain important micro-foundations within Marxist theory, but that the use of such models is not at all equivalent to the much broader framework of Analytical Marxism. One might say that Analytical Marxism gives one permission to explore the possibilities and limits of rational choice theory as a way of developing good micro-foundations for problems of class analysis, but it does not stipulate that rational choice is the only way to do this or even the best way to do this.

There are two questions, therefore, being posed here: first, how Marxist is the attempt to use rational choice for these purposes? and, second how Marxist is Analytical Marxism in general.

Marxism and rational choice theory. I would prefer a different designation here: instead of Rational Choice Theory, rational choice *models* of micro-foundations. Why do I shift the terminology here from "theory" to "model"? The use of the term theory may suggest to some people the claim that rationality and intentional choice could be sufficient bases for explaining all social action, and by extension, all social outcomes. This strikes me as a preposterous idea and one that few people – even those who work within the rational choice tradition – really subscribe to. Individuals are often irrational, and they often act without making conscious choices. Furthermore, social outcomes are the result of the social structural contexts within which individuals make their choices (rational or not) as well as the choices individuals make. It is better, therefore, to see rational choice as a way of building certain kinds of explanatory models of the

micro-level of social interaction which may, or may not, provide deep insights into many of the problems Marxists care about.

So, how Marxist are rational choice models? There are two parts to the answer to this question: 1) there is *nothing* specifically Marxist about rational choice models, and 2) rational choice models can be completely compatible with Marxist ideas about class struggle, class formation and social change.

Rational choice models are models of human action and interaction in which the actors are assumed to consciously make choices in which they systematically take into account the alternative pay-offs (the "costs and benefits") of different choices, and make their choices on this basis. In the more complex formulations, actors are seen as acting in a world of inter-acting choice-makers all making the same sorts of calculations. Such more complex models of strategic interaction (where the expected choices of others are taken into account) is called "game theory." Nothing in these models depends upon concepts of class relations, modes of production, or any of the other ingredients of Marxism. There is therefore nothing specifically Marxist in these models.

This does not imply, however, that rational choice models are inappropriate for Marxist questions. As long as one believes that in some circumstances human agents make choices consciously and that they at least sometimes attempt to rationally evaluate the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action, the rational choice models are potentially useful. (Indeed, even if one did not believe these things, rational choice models could still be useful insofar as they would help to give greater precision to the nature of irrationalities and nonconscious behavior). Furthermore, even within classical Marxism there were many problems in which Marxists effectively deployed rational choice models, although without the formal apparatus of such models. One of Marx's most celebrated theoretical arguments – the theory of the falling tendency of the rate of profit – is based on a standard game theory model of the prisoner's dilemma:

> each individual capitalist, in order to maximize profits in the face of competition makes technical innovations in the forces of production which increase the organic composition of capital (roughly capital intensity). This is rational for each individual capitalist. But the aggregate effect of this is to undermine the conditions for the on-going production of profits. If capitalists could cooperate and quell competition and prevent the rising organic composition of capital, this tendency could be halted, but the laws of motion of capitalism – i.e. the drive for accumulation under conditions of capitalist competition – make this impossible.

That is a standard prisoner's dilemma. A similar point can be made about theories of class formation and class struggle. As Jon Elster argues very effectively in his book *Making Sense of Marx*, Marx's theory of the transformation of the working class from a class-in-itself to a class-for-itself can be viewed as a process by which an individual prisoner's dilemmas in the process of collective action is transformed into an assurance game.

The basic point here, then, is this: rational choice models and game theory are perfectly usable within Marxist analysis and have, at least implicitly, been present from the beginning of the Marxist tradition. It is another question whether or not the more formal, mathematically elaborated form of these models is helpful in pushing Marxist theories forward, in solving

problems internal to Marxism, in revealing gaps in the theory, in proposing new ways of reconstructing the theory. Here, I think, the evidence is pretty strong that some of the significant advances in the Marxist tradition in recent years have been aided by the use of these tools. I would point people to the various important work of John Roemer on exploitation, Adam Przeworski's work on the class basis of social democracy, Sam Bowles and Herb Gintis's work on contested exchange, and my work on class compromise.

Analytical Marxism. As I have argued in various places, The term "analytical" in Analytical Marxism refers to four basic principles:

1. A commitment to conventional scientific norms in the elaboration of theory and the conduct of research. Analytical Marxism thus rejects claims by some Marxists that Marxism should be grounded in an esoteric methodology or metatheory and is not subject to the same standards and criteria of other "paradigms" of social science.

2. An emphasis on the importance of systematic conceptualization, particularly of concepts that are at the core of Marxist theory. This involves both careful attention to definitions of concepts and to the logical coherence of repertoires of interconnected concepts.

3. A concern with a relatively fine-grained specification of the steps in the theoretical arguments linking concepts, whether the arguments be about causal processes in the construction of explanatory theories or about logical connections in the construction of normative theories. This commitment to elaborating the details of arguments is reflected in one of the hallmarks of Analytical Marxism: the use of explicit, systematic models of the processes being studied. The nature of these models may vary quite a bit, from formal mathematical models to less formal causal models. But in each case there is a belief that the possibility of theoretical advance is enhanced when we are able to generate systematic explicit models of the processes under study.

4. The importance accorded to the intentional action of individuals within both explanatory and normative theories. This does not mean that the "theory of action" in Analytical Marxism reduces social action to rational action, but it does mean that the problem of intentionality is given special emphasis.

These principles are not themselves especially Marxist in character. What justifies the Marxism in Analytical Marxism, then, are the problems that are studied, the concepts that are used in formulating questions, and the substantive theoretical arguments that are developed in the answers. Analytical Marxism is concerned with such problem as the nature of exploitation in different kinds of class relations, the dynamics of capitalism, the role of ideology in the reproduction of class relations, and the relationship of class struggle to the state. These are distinctively Marxist questions formulated in terms of Marxist concepts. And that is what makes this current of Marxism "Marxist."

Q8. OK--let's move on to specifically to your analyses. How do you define the term class and the characterization class exploitation?

That is a huge question – I have written a number of books worrying about this problem. I think the best way for me to answer this question in a compact matter is to quote (in somewhat modified form) from an as yet unpublished paper I have written with Michael Burawoy called "Sociological Marxism". Here is how I defined class in that paper:

In order to properly define "class" seven conceptual issues need to be clarified: 1. the concept of social relations *of* production; 2. the complementary concept of social relations *in* production; 3. the idea of class as a specific form of relations of production; 4. the problem of the forms of variation of class relations; 5. Exploitation as the central mechanism within class relations; 6. Domination as the secondary mechanism of class relations; 7. the conceptual shift from an abstract analysis class *relations* to a concrete analysis of class *structure.*

Relations of production

Any system of production requires the deployment of a range of assets or resources or factors of production: tools, machines, land, raw materials, labor power, skills, information, and so forth. This deployment can be described in technical terms as a production function -- so many inputs of different kinds are combined in a specific process to produce an output of a specific kind. The deployment can also be described in social relational terms: the individual actors that participate in production have different kinds of rights and powers over the use of the inputs and over the results of their use. Rights and powers over resources, of course, are attributes of social relations, not descriptions of the relationship of people to things as such: to have rights and powers with respect to land defines one's social relationship to other people with respect to the use of the land and the appropriation of the fruits of using the land productively. The sum total of these rights and powers constitute the "social relations of production".

Relations in Production

The social relations of production – the relations within which rights and powers over productive assets are distributed – do not exhaust the social relations that take place within systems of production. There are also social relations of cooperation, coordination and control among actors within the labor process. Whenever there is a division of labor, different actors need to cooperate with each other and their activities need to be coordinated in order to get things done. The social relations within which such cooperative/coordinating interactions take place can be called social relations *in* production.

The social relations in production are not autonomous from the relations of production. In particular, the relations of production directly shape one particularly salient aspect of the social relations in production: workplace *domination* – the relations within which one set of actors controls the activities of another set of actors. When a manager tells a worker what to do this action both involves exercising delegated rights and powers over resources derived from the relations of production (the manger can fire the worker for noncompliance) and providing coordinating information so that cooperation within a division of labor can take place. Domination

can be organized in various ways: in strict, authoritarian hierarchies where workers activity is closely monitored and noncompliance swiftly sanctioned; in more relaxed systems of control where considerable individual autonomy is allowed; through the creation of collectively supervised teams with high levels of internal mutual monitoring; in governance structures where workers have a variety of rights as "industrial citizens". In all these cases, the relations in production constitute specific ways in which the social relations of production are translated into concrete power relations within organization of work.

Class relations as a form of relations of production

When the rights and powers of people over productive resources are unequally distributed – when some people have greater rights/powers with respect to specific kinds of productive resources than do others – these relations can be described as class relations. The classic contrast in capitalist societies is between owners of means of production and owners of labor power, since "owning" is a description of rights and powers with respect to a resource deployed in production.

Let us be quite precise here: The rights and powers in question are not defined with respect to the ownership or control of things in general, but only of resources or assets insofar as they are deployed in production. A capitalist is not someone who owns machines, but someone who owns machines, deploys those machines in a production process, hires owners of labor power to use them and appropriates the profits from the use of those machines. A collector of machines is not, by virtue owning those machines, a capitalist. To count as a class relation it is therefore not sufficient that there be unequal rights and powers over the sheer physical use of a resource. There must also be unequal rights and powers over the appropriation of the results of that use. In general this implies appropriating income generated by the deployment of the resource in question.

Variations in class relations

Different kinds of class relations are defined by the kinds of rights and powers that are embodied in the relations of production. For example, in some systems of production people are allowed to own the labor power of other people. When the rights accompanying such ownership are absolute, the class relation is called "slavery". When the rights and powers over labor power are jointly owned by the laborer and someone else, the class relation is called "feudalism" (i.e. the lord and the serf are co-owners of the labor power of the serf). In capitalist societies, in contrast, such absolute or shared ownership of other people is prohibited, but means of production can be exclusively owned by particular people.

The central mechanism of Class relations: Exploitation

What makes class analysis distinctively Marxist is the account of specific mechanisms embedded in class relations. Here the pivotal concept is *exploitation*

Exploitation is a complex and challenging concept. It is meant to designate a particular form of interdependence of the material interests of people, namely a situation that satisfies three criteria:

(1) *The inverse interdependent welfare principle*: the material welfare of exploiters causally depends upon the material deprivations of the exploited.

(2) *The exclusion principle*: this inverse interdependence of welfare of exploiters and exploited depends upon the exclusion of the exploited from access to certain productive resources.

(3) *The appropriation principle*: Exclusion generates material advantage to exploiters because it enables them to appropriate the labor effort of the exploited.

Exploitation is thus a diagnosis of the process through which the inequalities in incomes are generated by inequalities in rights and powers over productive resources: the inequalities occur, in part at least, through the ways in which exploiters, by virtue of their exclusionary rights and powers over resources, are able to appropriate surplus generated by the effort of the exploited. If the first two of these principles are present, but not the third, economic oppression may exist, but not exploitation. The crucial difference is that in nonexploitative economic oppression, the privileged social category does not itself need the excluded category. While their welfare does depend upon the exclusion, there is no on-going interdependence of their activities. In the case of exploitation, the exploiters actively need the exploited: exploiters depend upon the effort of the exploited for their own welfare.

This deep interdependence makes exploitation a particularly explosive form of social relation for two reasons: First, exploitation constitutes a social relation which simultaneously pits the interests of one group against another and which requires their ongoing interactions; and second, it confers upon the disadvantaged group a real form of power with which to challenge the interests of exploiters. This is an important point. Exploitation depends upon the appropriation of labor effort. Because human beings are conscious agents, not robots, they always retain significant levels of real control over their expenditure of effort. The extraction of effort within exploitative relations is thus always to a greater or lesser extent problematic and precarious, requiring active institutional devices for its reproduction. Such devices can become quite costly to exploiters in the form of the costs supervision, surveillance, sanctions, etc. The ability to impose such costs constitutes a form of power among the exploited.

The secondary mechanism of class relations: Domination

Class relations are not simply constituted by exploitation. Because exploitation depends upon the on-going interaction of people in which exploiters appropriate the labor effort of the exploited, exploiters also, typically, need to control the activities of the exploited. This is where domination comes in.

Domination identifies one dimension of the interdependence of the activities within production itself – what we have called the relations in production – rather than simply the interdependence of material interests generated by those activities. Here the issue is that, by virtue of the relations into which people enter as a result of their rights and powers they have over productive resources, some people are in a position to control the activities of others, to direct them, to boss them, to monitor their activities, to hire and fire them. Since the powers embodied in domination are directly derived from the social relations of production, domination can also be understood as an aspect of class relations. Class relations therefore imply not simply that some people have the fruits of their laboring effort appropriated by others, but that significant portions of their lives are controlled by others, directed by people outside of their own control. In traditional Marxist terms this latter condition is called *alienation*.

*From abstract class relations to concrete class structure*s

The concept of class relations as so far discussed is defined at a very high level of abstraction. The relations are perfectly polarized between exploiters and exploited, dominators and dominated. Actual class structures within which people live and work are much more complex than this in all sorts of ways:

- Varieties of different forms of exploitation coexist: actual class structures can combine aspects of capitalist relations, feudal relations, and even various forms of postcapitalist relations of production.
- Exploitation and domination do not perfectly correspond to each other: managers, for example, may dominate workers and yet themselves be exploited by capitalists.
- The rights and powers associated with the relations of production are not perfectly polarized: all sorts of state regulations may deprive capitalists of having unfettered rights and powers over the use of their means of production; institutional arrangements like works committees or worker co-determination may give workers certain kinds of rights and powers over the organization of production.
- Individuals can have multiple, possible inconsistent, relations to the system of production: ordinary workers in capitalist production can also own stocks, either in their own firms (e.g. ESOPs) or more broadly; families may contain people occupying different locations within the relations of production, thus indirectly linking each person to the class structure in multiple ways.

Q9. What is the most useful means of defining property relations?

I think that I mostly answered this question above. Let just stress a couple of specific issues:

1. Property relations concern the full array of rights and powers that people have with respect to all assets that are relevant to production.
2. the distribution of these rights and powers can be quite complex. The stylized idea of "private ownership" meaning that private individuals have complete rights and powers over the means of production to the exclusion of everyone else certainly does not describe the characteristic form of property relations in contemporary capitalism. When workers have rights to jobs in the form of the rights against arbitrary dismissal this is a partial redistribution of rights and powers over the means of production from capital to labor.
3. the complexity of class structures in contemporary capitalism comes in part from this "disarticulation" of the various rights and powers that constitute property relations (or the relations of production). This does not mean the dissolution of capitalism or the "end of class", but it does mean that class structures are more complex than a simple polarized model of capital and labor suggests.

Q10. You have developed a four-class model in your analyses of advanced capitalist societies. Tell me of the significance of this model and whether class positions are good in

explaining differences in income as, say, occupation and education.

Some initial clarification is needed before answering this question. I do not really proper a "four class model". The conceptualization I prefer is "locations within class relations" rather than "classes". Now, the core of my class analysis model is that the locations within the class structure of capitalism can be broadly differentiated into what I have called "basic class locations" and "contradictory locations within class relations". Basic class locations are locations defined by a polarized configuration of the basic dimensions of the relations of production, contradictory locations are defined by various kinds of noncorrespondence of the different dimensions of relations of production.

Now, within this framework one can generate a series of nested "class models" at different levels of abstraction depending upon how fine-grained an account of the variations in the dimensions of class relations one wishes to investigate. I have therefore sometimes worked with a four-location model: capitalists, petty bourgeoisie, employee contradictory class locations, and workers. But I have also worked with a six category model: capitalists, small employers, petty bourgeoisie, expert managers, nonmanagerial experts, nonexpert managers, and workers. And, in some analysis I pushed this further into a 12-location model. But a 12-*class location* model is *not* a 12-class model.

The main significance of this way of "mapping" the class structure is that it tries to recognize the complexity of the concrete locations within class structures occupied by concrete persons while retaining the theoretical coherence of the underlying, more abstract polarized model of capitalist class exploitation. My goal has been to develop a conceptual framework for class analysis that makes it easy to move coherently from abstract to concrete levels of analysis and from macro- to micro-units of analysis. I believe that the class structure/class location framework makes it possible to accomplish both of these goals.

As for the nuts-and-bolts explanatory capacity of this class model relative to other variables – such as education and occupation – this is a very knotty empirical problem. The problem is this: in comparing two distinct kinds of explanatory variables, it is very difficult to distinguish between those differences in explanatory power (in the crude sense of how much variance is "explained" by some variable) that are due to the underlying causal mechanisms represented by those variables and those differences that are due to different degrees of success in operationalizing those mechanisms. Consider education. The underlying concept economists believe accounts for the effect of education on earnings is "human capital", the embodied skills and knowledge that result from education. Education, measured as years of schooling, is a very crude measure of this underlying concept. If class turns out to explain more variance than education and economist can simply respond that this is because of the difficulties of really measuring human capital.

Because of this measurement problem, I have put a great deal of energy into developing fairly refined measures of class as conceptualized above. The result has been to demonstrate that class location has systematic and robust effects on a wide range of individual outcomes, from subjective identity to earnings to political beliefs. These effects are large and are of the same order

of magnitude as the effects of education and occupation on these same processes.

Q11. It is generally accepted, I think, that Marx did not predict the decline of the traditional working-class, but does this in any way reduce the validity of the Marxist analysis of class. I mean, does the existence of the middle class pose special problems for the Marxist analysis of class?

Since the Marxist concept of class in capitalism at the most abstract level is a polarized concept of class relations in which there are only two locations – capitalists and workers – the existence of a "middle class" does pose a conceptual problem. In most of his writings Marx thought this problem would largely disappear with capitalist development, although there are places where he acknowledges that the elaboration of capitalist institutions would bring in its wake a growing "unproductive" middle class.

The middle class does pose special problems, but these are not by any means insurmountable. Once one recognizes that class structures can be analyzed at different levels of abstraction, and once one introduces the idea of locations-within-relations, then it is possible to produce a coherent concept of the middle class – contradictory locations within class relations – without abandoning the underlying principles of Marxist class analysis.

Q12. You have done a massive comparative study in class analysis to disclose the inequalities that are present in advanced capitalist societies. What common ingredients did you discover through this comparative analysis?

Let me summarize very briefly three of the principle empirical findings that seem to hold in all of the countries I studied in my project (principally the US, Canada, UK, Norway, Sweden, Japan and Australia):

1. In all of these developed capitalist countries, the working class (defined as *nonowners* of the means of production, *without managerial responsibilities* in production and occupying jobs which *do not require* higher level credentials) is the largest class location in the class structure, typically between about 40% and 55% of the labor force. Contradictory locations among employees, however, are also very important, constituting around 30-40% of the labor force. These societies may be ideologically dominated by the middle class, and most people may understand themselves as being in the broad middle of the system of income inequality, the working class defined in relational terms remains a large component of the class structure.

2. The indications are that the working class (again: defined as a particular kind of location-within-class-relations) has been declining in all of these countries as a proportion of the labor force. In the United States where I was able to carry out a quite refined analysis of this process, this decline has occurred within all sectors of the economy; so it is not simply a question of the decline of heavy industry. While there is no indication that the working class is

on the way to extinction, this does suggest that increasingly any egalitarian social project will have to be based on class coalitions between workers and contradictory class locations.

3. In all these countries, the *class boundary* defined by ownership of the means of production is less permeable to intergenerational class mobility (i.e. it constitutes a greater barrier to mobility) than is the class boundary defined by authority or by skills/credentials.

4. In all of these countries, the class structure is ideologically polarized between workers and employers, and the ideological position of contradictory locations varies quite systematically on the basis of precisely where the contradictory location is situated between capital and labor.

Q13. Yet there are significant differences in class relations and class consciousnesses as well among those capitalist societies.

There are, of course, variations on all of the four points mentioned above:

- The size distribution of class locations varies across countries: the working class is significantly larger in Sweden than in the United States, for example
- The class structure is changing more rapidly in some countries than in others: contradictory locations, especially managerial class locations, have been increasing in the US more than in most other countries.
- The extent to which specific class boundaries generate obstacles to intergenerational mobility varies across countries: the property boundary, for example, is more rigid in the US than in European countries
- The degree of ideological polarization and the patterns of what can be termed ideological-class coalitions varies across countries: Sweden is much more ideologically polarized than the US, and the US more polarized than Japan.

Most broadly what we can say is this: while all of these countries have capitalist class structures, and this imposes certain limits-of-variation on things like mobility patterns and ideological polarization, the specific historical context of different countries shapes the ways in which these common processes work themselves out.

Q14. How do sexism and racism fit into the framework of class analysis? This has been allegedly the weak point in Marxist social analysis.

There was a time when people thought that Marxism should try to be a Theory of Everything. The goal was to have a distinctively Marxist theory of gender oppression, of racial oppression, of national oppression, and so on. This theoretical ambition was part of the larger theoretical project of Marxism to constitute a General Theory of History, or what was called historical materialism.

The central device by which this explanatory ambition was played out was through a complex set of *functional explanations* in which the forms of race and gender oppression (and many other things) were explained by the ways in which they contributed to the reproduction of class relations (or some almost equivalent formulation like: the ways they contributed to capital accumulation or to the interests of the bourgeoisie). Why does racial oppression exist? The answer was (with various twists and elaborations) that racial oppression takes the form that it does because this form contributes to the reproduction of capitalism, for example by dividing the working class and by allowing for forms of super-exploitation of black workers. Why does gender oppression exist? Because the oppression of women helps domesticate the working class and increases the rate of exploitation through the provision of unpaid labor services in the home. These are all functionalist explanations: gender or race or other oppressions are explained by the functions they fulfill for capitalism.

These kinds of functionalist explanations have been sharply criticized, both by critics of Marxism and by Marxists themselves. The issue is not that these explanations are never relevant. There are certainly mainly cases where indeed it is the case that, for example, racial antagonism has been used by ruling classes to divide the working class and weaken challenges to their class power. The issue is that such explanations provide a shakey foundation for a *general* theory of nonclass relations since they fail to recognize the various ways in which these relations have autonomous mechanisms of their own reproduction and transformation.

The fundamental task for a sophistciated Marxist class analysis of race and gender is to figure out how to combine an account of the *functional* pressures generated by the class structure and its transformations, with an account of the *autonomous* mechanisms that underpin racial and gender inequality and oppression. Marxism is most powerful and most coherent as a form of class analysis, as a theory of the contradictory reproduction of capitalism rooted in the analysis of class. The contradictory reproduction of capitalism poses all sorts of problems and requires many different sorts of institutional solutions, some of which work well, some of which work badly. In this context, racial and gender divisions *are available to be used for capitalist purposes*, but how effective this is will be a contingent matter. Most crucially, the reproduction of racism and sexism is grounded in mechanisms other than simply their possible functions for capitalism. A Marxist class analysis of race and gender explores the interactions of these distinctive mechanisms with the dynamics of class relations.

How then, in terms of Marxist class analysis, would I incorporate a concern with race and gender? I would make the following basic points:

1. It is crucial to recognize from the start that racial and gender relations/oppression have very different dynamics rooted in very different kinds of causal mechanisms and therefore have very different relationships to class. It is essential to theorize the nature of these mechanisms in order to understand the articulation between race and class and between gender and class (and, of course: between race and gender). Sometimes radical theorists string together a list of oppressions – race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity – as if these were all of a piece. Each of these, however, is rooted in different kinds of causal processes, and grasping their specificity is a necessary step in understanding their interactions.

2. Racial oppression is much more deeply and intimately linked to class than is gender. Certainly in the American historical experience, the earliest forms of racial domination were directly generated by the distinctive class oppression to which Africans-descendants were subjected: slavery. Subsequent transformations of forms of racial domination in America closely track transformations of the way race was linked to the class structure: the segregationist era in the US South, for example, corresponded to the period of racialized sharecropping in Southern agriculture; the destruction of sharecropping greatly facilitated the destruction of segregation. While forms and variations of gender inequality are also affected by changes in class relations, the effects are much more indirect and mediated. This, I think, is because gender relations and gender inequality is rooted in issues of family structure, biological reproduction and sexuality, all of which are grounded in mechanisms quite distinct from the relations of production.

3. In terms of an empirical agenda for the study of the articulation of race/class and gender/class, I think there are four principal kinds of articulation that would need to be examined:

    a. *The ways in which the mechanisms of racial division and of gender division contribute to sorting persons into class locations.* The social processes by which individuals end up in locations is a central issue in class analysis. Race and gender play a significant role in this.

    b. *The ways in which transformations of class relations either directly or indirectly impact on forms of racial and gender oppression*. This does not imply (to repeat the main points above), that the transformation of racial division or, especially, gender division can be viewed simply as a functional response to changes in class relations. Nevertheless, changes in class structures create systematic pressures on the reproduction of other kinds of social relations and the task of class analysis is to understand how these pressures contribute to the transformation of those relations.

    c. *The ways in which gender and racial oppression impact on the process of class formation* (i.e. the formation of collective actors within class struggles).

    d. *The ways in which gender and race, jointly with class, interact to shape individual subjectivities and practices*. Here the issue not the effects of class on race or gender, but the joint effects of gender, race and class (and, of course, many other relevant factors) on various individual and social processes. In its simplest forms such analyses can the form of "additive models" in which each of these causal processes is treated as generating separable effects which, cumulatively affect the outcome in question. Much more interesting – and more relevant for class analysis – is the idea of deeply interactive, nonlinear models, explanations in which, for example, the effects of class on voting vary by gender.

Q15. What you just said about the relationship between class and race, is it just as valid for the United States?

Racial division in the United States has always had an intimate relationship to class. Slavery, after all, was a form of class domination that directly and systematically was based on racial oppression. So, while it is true in the United States as everywhere that racial domination and oppression is not reducible to its functions-for-class, nevertheless these functional interdependencies have been from the start a significant feature of racial relations. At this point in intellectual development there is greater risk in people forgetting the centrality of the race-class nexus than there is a danger of functionalist class reductionism.

Q16. What is the status of the political in the concept of class structure as you have defined it?

This depends upon what precisely one means by "the political". If by political we mean anything to do with the exercise of *power*, then the very concept of relations of production is a political concept, since it is built around the problem of the distribution of rights and powers over productive resources. In this sense the fact that "owning" something gives you powers with respect to other people – powers to exclude them from access or to employ them to use the things you own – means that owning is political.

This being said, I think it is better to think of class structure – i.e. the social structure of class relations – as basically an economic concept. It is a concept that is about the problem of the social relations through which a range of economic practices are organized. To point out that every social relation has a political *dimension* is, of course, correct, but it is misleading if this is taken to mean that the distinction between the economic and the political dissolves.

Q17. So class cannot be determined in purely economic terms?

The word "determined" is a slippery one. Sometimes it means basically "defined", but in other instances it means something closer to "explained" or "caused". If we are talking about explanation and causation here, then of course class cannot be *explained* in purely economic terms since nothing can be explained in purely economic terms. The state, ideology, and indeed race and gender and many other factors, all bear on the question: how do we *explain* why class relations are the way they are. If we are talking about *definitions*, then we are back to the previous question: implicit in the definition of any economic practice or relation is a political dimension, since economic practices always involve the exercise of powers of various sorts. The implication, then, is a purely economic definition brings with it a political dimension .

Q18. How does class shape politics?

Before really answering this question it is necessary to unpack the key terms in the simple expression "class shapes politics":

First, *Class*. The unmodified noun "class" covers an array of interconnected, but distinct concepts. Of particular importance for the study of politics would be the following:

- *Class location*: This is the *micro*-level structural analysis of the locations filled be individuals. The issue here is the way a person's location within class relations shapes that person's political practices – their attitudes, their organizational membership, their voting behavior, and so on. Class location certainly shapes individual political behavior by virtue of the way it shapes the material interests and capacities to realize those interests of individuals.
- *Class structure*: This is the *macro*-level structural analysis of the ensemble of class relations that characterize some macro unit of analysis (e.g. a country). The issue here is, above all, the way the class structure within which a state is located shapes the nature and practices of the state. Class structures shape politics above all in the sense of imposing constraints on the range of possibilities of state action.
- *Class formation*: This refers to the various forms of collective organization of class interests, especially unions and political parties, but also more loosely structured formations such as social networks and social movements. Politics is likely to look very different in situations where there are well organized class collectivities with coherent programs than where class formations are fragmented and people experience class mainly as atomized, separated individuals.
- *Class struggle*: This refers to the actual practices of class formations in pursuit of class interests. Politics is ultimately affected not simply by the organization and structural *contexts* within which it takes place, but by the actual strategies and interactions of both individuals and collectivities engaged in the activity of politics.

Second, *Politics*. The word politics covers a very wide range of phenomenon. It is used to describe the power relations within micro-organizational settings – as, for example in discussions of the politics of production within workplaces, or "the personal as political" within families – as well as the power relations embodied in the state. Politics sometimes is used to describe a set of practices – one engages in politics or does politics -- or a set of state policies. When we ask "how does class shape politics?", therefore, we need to distinguish between these various possible meanings.

A full exploration of the problem of how class shapes politics would thus explore both the micro- and macro-levels of analysis as well as the specific effects of variations in class structure, class formation and class practices/strategies. At it would examine these effects on politics occurring in different sites where power is exercised. This is far beyond what I can do here. Instead I will focus the discussion more narrowly on the problem of the State and ask how class structure, class formation and class struggle can be seen as affecting the state. (This discussion draws on part of an essay I wrote on "Class and Politics" that appears in my book *Interrogating Inequality*)

To do this it will be helpful distinguish what might be called different "levels" of power and politics (this typology was introduced by Robert Alford and Roger Friedland in, *The Powers of Theory*):

1. *Situational* power refers to power relations of direct command and obedience between actors, as in Weber's celebrated definition of power as the ability of one actor to get another to do something even in the face of resistance.
2. *Institutional* power refers to the characteristics of different institutional settings which shape the decisionmaking agenda in ways which serve the interests of particular groups. This is also referred to as "negative power" -- power which excludes certain alternatives from a decisionmaking agenda, but not, as in situational power, which actually commands a specific behavior.
3. *Systemic* power is perhaps the most difficult (and contentious) conceptually. It refers to the power to realize one's interests by virtue of the overall structure of a social system, rather than by virtue of commanding the behavior of others or of controlling the agendas of specific organizations.

A loose game-theory metaphor may clarify these categories: systemic power is power embedded in the fundamental nature of the game itself; institutional power is power embodied the specific rules of the game; and situational power is power deployed in specific moves within a given set of rules. When actors use specific resources strategically to accomplish their goals, they are exercising situational power. The procedural rules which govern how they use those resources reflects institutional power. And the nature of the social system which determines the range of possible rules and achievable goals reflects systemic power. Roughly speaking (using American political terminology) liberal vs conservative politics constitute conflicts restricted to the situational level; reformist vs reactionary politics are political conflicts at the institutional level of power; and revolutionary vs counterrevolutionary politics are located at the systemtic level of power.

The question “how does class shape politics?” can be answered at each of these levels of power.

1. *Class and Situational Power*

Class structures, among other things, distribute resources which are useful in political struggles. In particular, in capitalist societies capitalists have two crucial resources available to them to be deployed politically: enormous financial resources and personal connections to people in positions of governmental authority. Through a wide variety of concrete mechanisms -- financing politicians, political parties and policy think tanks; financially controlling the main organs of the mass media; offering lucrative jobs to high level political officials after they leave state employment; extensive lobbying -- capitalists are in a position to use their wealth to directly shape the direction of state policies

Few theorists deny the empirical facts of the use of politically important resources in this way by members of the capitalist class in pursuit of their interests. What is often questioned is the general efficacy and coherence of such actions in sustaining the class interests of the bourgeoisie. Since individual capitalists are frequently preoccupied by their immediate, particularistic interests (eg. in specific markets, technologies or regulations), when they deploy their class-derived resources politically some scholars argue that they are unlikely to do so in ways which place the

class interests of the bourgeosiie as a whole above their own particularistic interests. Thus, even if capitalists try to manipulate politics in various ways, such manipulations often work against each other and do not generate a consistent set of policy outcomes.

The fact that capitalists have considerable power resources by virtue of their control over capital thus does not ensure a capacity to translate those resources into a coherent class direction of politics. What is more, in terms of situational power, capitalists are not the only actors with effective political resources. In particular, state managers -- the top level politicians and officials within state apparatuses -- have direct control of considerable resources to pursue political objectives. While in many instances the interests and objectives of state managers may be congruent with the interests of the capitalist class, this is not universally the case, and when overt conflicts between state managers and the bourgeoisie occur there is no inherent reason why capitalists will always prevail. Even more to the point, in many situations, because of the disorganization, myopia and apathy of the capitalist class, state managers will have considerable room to initiate state policies independently of pressures from the capitalist class.

These kinds of arguments do not discredit the claim that class structures do shape both the interests of actors and the political resources they can deploy in struggles over situational power. What is called into question is the blanket claim that class-derived interests and power resources are always the most salient.

2. *Class and Institutional Power*

It was at least in part because of a recognition that at the level of situational power capitalists are not always present as the predominant active political actors that much class analysis of politics has centered around the problem of the institutional dimensions of power. The argument is basically this, to use a turn of phrase introduced by Nicos Poulantzas: the state should be viewed not simply as a *state in capitalist society*, but rather as a *capitalist state*. This implies that there are certain institutional properties of the very form of the state that can be treated as having a specific class character to them. The idea here is not simply that there are certain *policies* of the state which embody the interests of a specific class; but rather that the very *structure of the apparatuses* through which those policies are made embodies those class interests.

Claims about the class character of the institutional level of power involve what is sometimes called nondecisionmaking power or negative power. These ideas were brilliantly clarified by Claus Offe and Goran Therborn in their writings on these issues in the 1970s discussions of the theory of the state. The basic argument is that the class character of the state was inscribed in a series of negative filter mechanisms that imparted a systematic class bias to state actions. "Class bias", in this context, means that the property in question tends to filter out state actions which would be inimical to the interests of the dominant class. The form of the state, in effect, systematically determines what does *not* happen rather than simply what does.

An example would be the institutional rules by which the capitalist state acquires financial resources -- through taxation and borrowing from the privately produced surplus rather than through the state's direct appropriation of the surplus generated by its own productive activity. By restricting the state's access to funds in this way the state is rendered dependent upon capitalist

production, and this in turn acts as a mechanism which filters out state policies which would seriously undermine the profitability of private accumulation. Or, to take another example, given considerable emphasis by Poulantzas, the electoral rules of capitalist representative democracies (in which people cast votes as individual citizens within territorial units of representation rather than as members of functioning groups) has the effect of transforming people from members of a class into atomized individuals (the "juridical citizen"). This atomization, in turn, serves to filter out state policies that would only be viable if people were systematically organized into durable collectivities or associations. To the extent that this filter can be viewed as stabilizing capitalism and thus serving the basic interests of the capitalist class, then exclusive reliance on purely territorial, individualized voting can be viewed as having a class character.

3. *Class and Systemic Power*

To say that capitalists have situational power is to say that they command a range of resources that they can deploy to get their way. To say that they have institutional power is to argue that various institutions are designed in such a way as to selectively exclude alternatives that are antithetical to their interests from the political agenda. To say that they have systemic power is to say that the *logic of the social system itself affirms their interests* quite apart from their conscious strategies and the internal organization of political apparatuses. The idea here is that so long as capitalism remains intact and viable as a social system of production, no group can satisfy their material interests unless capitalists can make a profit and capital accumulation continues in a robust manner. This is not an illusion; it is an essential property of the system. As Adam Przeworski (in his book *Capitalism and Social Democracy*) puts it, “Current realization of material interests of capitalists is a necessary condition for the future realization of material interests of any group under capitalism” and this means that unless a group has the capacity to overthrow the system completely, then at least in terms of material interests even groups opposed to capitalism have an interest in sustaining capital accumulation and profitability. This is how systemic power shapes politics.

Class structure thus shapes state politics through three mechanisms: the class-based access to resources which can be strategically deployed for political purposes; the institutionalization of certain class-biases into the design of state apparatuses; and the way in which the operation the system as a whole universalizes certain class interests. Frequently, in the more theoretical discussions of these mechanisms, the class character of these mechanisms is treated as largely invariant within a given kind of class society, but if we are to use these ideas as the basis for political strategies of social change, it is equally important to understand the ways in which class effects concretely vary across cases. What is especially important here is to understand the ways in which such variation at the situational, institutional and systemic levels of power can introduce contradictory elements into politics, elements that potentially can advance egalitarian goals.

At the situational level of political analysis one of the central themes of much Marxist historical research is the shifting "balance of class forces" between workers and capitalists (and sometimes other classes) in various kinds of social and political conflicts. The task of an analysis of variability in the class character of situational power is thus to explain the social determinants

of these varying capacities. Generally this involves invoking mechanisms at the institutional and systemic levels of analysis. Thus, for example, the enduring weakness of the American working class within electoral politics has been explained by such institutional factors as the existence of a winner-take-all electoral system which undermines the viability of small parties, the lack public financing of elections which enhances the political influence of financial contributors and voter registration laws which make voter mobilization difficult, as well as such systemic factors as the location of the American capitalism in the world capitalist system. Each of these of these factors undermines the potential situational power of the working class within electoral politics. This enduring situational weakness, in turn, blocks the capacity of the popular forces to alter the institutional properties of the state in ways which would enhance their power. While in all capitalist societies it may be the case that capitalists have disproportionate situational power, capitalist societies can vary considerably in power of different subordinate groups relative to the bourgeoisie.

The same kind of variation is possible in terms of power embodied in the institutional properties of the state. In various ways, noncapitalist elements can be embodied in the institutional structure of capitalist states. Consider the example of workplace safety regulations. A variety of institutional forms can be established for implementing safety regulations. The conventional device in most capitalist states is to have a command-and-control hierarchical bureaucratic agency responsible for such regulations with actual enforcement organized through official inspections, licensing requirements and various other aspects of bureaucratic due process. An alternative structure would be to establish workplace occupational safety committees within factories controlled by employees with powers to monitor compliance and enforce regulations. Such administration procedures built around principles of "associational democracy" violates the class logic of the capitalist state by encouraging the collective organization rather than atomization of the affected people. To the extent that such noncapitalist elements can be incorporated into the institutional structure of the capitalist state, then the class character of those apparatuses can vary even within capitalism.

Finally, some theoretical work entertains the possibilities of variation in the class character of systemic power with capitalist societies. The essential issue here is whether the overall relationship between state and economy within capitalism can significantly modify the dynamics of the system itself. Do all instances of capitalism have fundamentally the same system-logic simply by virtue of the private ownership of the means of production, or can this logic be significantly modified in various ways? Most Marxists have insisted that there is relatively little variation in such system logic across capitalisms, at least as it relates to the basic class character of system-level power. The transition from competitive to "monopoly capitalism", for example, may greatly affect the situational power of different classes and fractions of classes, and it might even be reflected in changes in the class character of the institutional form of the state (for example, petty bourgeois elements in state apparatuses might disappear as capitalism advances). But the basic system-level class logic, Marxists have traditionally argued, remains organized around the interests of capital in both cases.

There has been some challenge to this view by scholars generally sympathetic to Marxian perspectives. Some have argued (eg. Gosta Esping-Anderson) that differences in the forms of the welfare state can have a basic effect on the system-logic of capitalism, creating different

developmental tendencies and different matrices of interests for various classes. I have argued, extending the work of Adam Przeworski and Joel Rogers, that what might be termed "positive class compromises" based on high levels of working class collective power can significantly affect the system-dynamics of capitalism. To be sure, capital accumulation remains a necessary condition for the realization of everyone's interests, but the implications of the system-requirement for state action is transformed, and thus the constraining process is quite different.

Q19. Is there such a thing as an international capitalist class and how should we understand the term "the internationalization of the state?"

There is certainly an international capitalist class in the simple sense of capitalists whose investment activities routinely cross international borders and who are thus in a class relation with workers all over the world. This, however, simply defines the *locational* property of the class: there are capitalists who occupy a location that puts them in a social relation with workers in many different countries. This does not mean that there is an international capitalist *class formation*, that is, that the capitalists who occupy such internationalized locations have effectively coalesced into a coherent internationally organized collectivity. Japanese capitalists in multinational corporations are in internationalized class locations as are their American and German counterparts, but I do not believe that they have yet forged a cohesive collective or class formation with American and German capitalists. At most there is a kind of loose social network based class formation internationally, but this provides a relatively weak basis for systematic and sustained international collective action.

As for "Internationalization of the state", there is certainly emerging a number of supra-national apparatuses which have some state-like powers, most notably the WTO and the IMF. These organizations have the ability to impose sanctions on countries – thus they have real power – and they are not merely appendages of a single powerful state, such as the United States. Thus, I would say, there is an emergent form of the state that has an internationalized character. I say "emergent" here because the powers involved are quite limited and these apparatuses remain relatively dependent on a few powerful countries. They lack the kind of institutional autonomy that would be needed for them to claim to be a truly internationalized state apparatus.

Q20. How does globalization impact on the state? Is the state in decline?

I believe two things here: (1) Globalization poses new problems to the national state, and in some specific arenas this has reduced the capacity of national states to engage in certain kinds of policy interventions. (2) This does not mean, however, that there is an overall decline in state powers or an incipient disintegration of the national state. Globalization also opens up new forms of state intervention. For example, because of pressures of international competition, states may be pressured to intervene more extensively to solve various problems in skill formation than they were in a less globally competitive environment. Skill formation is a constant problem in capitalist economies because markets do a lousy job in generating the optimal mix of skills. Under conditions of relatively insulated labor markets and national economies, this problem could be left

to private actors even if it produced sub-optimal aggregate effects. Under conditions of globalization capitalists, not just workers, realize that more coherent and systematic interventions for skill formation are needed.

Globalization is often used as an excuse for the retreat of the state from certain arenas of social policy. It is certainly the case that the *belief* in Globalization-induced state *in*capacity contributes to actually reduced state capacity as various kinds of programs and institutions are dismantled. Above all, in this regard, is the belief that Globalization imposes a fiscal constaint on the state: that it is impossible to raise taxes because of global competition. This, I believe is nonsense. The sustainable rate of taxation in a country is a question of the level of social solidarity and collective commitment on the part of citizens. Most taxation in most countries is on earnings and consumption, not really on capital. If people believe that there are collective purposes for which collective savings in the form of taxation should be devoted, then taxes can be raised without interfering with international competitiveness or provoking capital flight. The real issue in the decline of the fiscal capacity of the state, I believe, is the decline in social solidarity, which is at least in part a consequence of the increasing marketization and commodification of social life in the developed economies. The culprit here is not mainly globalization, but the general deregulation and marketization of these economies, which rewards individual selfishness, generates greater inequalities and erodes collective commitments. And that undercuts the willingness of people to accept higher taxes unless they see a direct benefit from those taxes for themselves.

Q21. Let's return somewhat to Marxism. Clearly, Marxism has undergone a major crisis since the collapse of "actually existing socialism." How do you see the future of Marxism after "communism?"

The radical egalitarian and democratic vision of a just society remains a strong moral current in contemporary capitalism. People may believe it is pie-in-the-sky, that it is a utopian fantasy rather than a realistic possibility, but nevertheless the moral ideal itself continues to resonate with many people’s feelings. As long as such aspirations remain salient, then there will be a place for a radical critique of capitalism centering on the problem of class and exploitation, and this means that there is a role for a reconstructed Marxism. I doubt if there will come a time when Marxism qua Marxism will ever hold the hegemonic theoretical role on the left that it held in many places for much of the 20th century. But I do believe that it can retain a vital role as one of the intellectual currents that generates important theoretical ideas and empirical research for the rejuvenation of the radical egalitarian political project.