

if we are not to fall into a one-sided, narrow, and inaccurate understanding of the full dynamics of social life.\*

#### Four Basic Spheres of Social Involvement

People have material needs and productive capacities. In all societies they will always and inevitably engage these and this requires entry into economic relationships. This much we know even before investigation. To know, however, the form these relationships will take—for example whether they will be feudal, capitalist or socialist—requires specific examination. People must also reproduce the species, procreating, nurturing, and socializing. With diverse sexual needs and capacities, people must enter social relationships to fulfill these ends—kinship relationships—but

\*Although the approach we are formulating is quite different from the hallmark of most orthodox Marxism with its priority for a class and mode of production focus, it is interestingly in tune with the logic of a particular criticism Marx applied to Proudhon in the *Poverty of Philosophy*, in the *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, International Publishers, pp. 166-7:

“M. Proudhon considers economic relations as so many social phases, engendering one another, resulting one from another like the antithesis from the thesis, and realizing in their logical sequence the impersonal reason of humanity. The only drawback to this method is that when he comes to examine a single one of these phases, M. Proudhon cannot explain it without having recourse to all the other relations of society; which relations, however, he has not yet contrived to engender by means of his dialectical movement. When, after that, M. Proudhon, by means of pure reason, proceeds to give birth to these other phases, he treats them as if they were new born babes. He forgets that they are the same age as the first. . . . The different limbs of society are converted into so many separate societies, following one upon the other. How, indeed, could the single logical formula of movement, of sequence, of time, explain the structure of society, in which all relations co-exist simultaneously and support one another?”

For this is the critique we have made of economism and other reductionist approaches and which we have attempted to transcend by an approach we call “totalist.”

whether these will be matriarchal or patriarchal, nuclear or communal, is again a matter for concrete investigation. As social beings who can and will empathize, who require self-respect and a social identity, people necessarily enter into communities with shared customs, languages, and cultural solutions to problems of situating themselves in history. Whether the lines of demarcation between communities will be ethnic or racial, religious or national, and what the character of the communication across these lines will be is again a matter for investigation in each society and each epoch. Finally, all societies have some form of political decision-making institutions necessitated by the conscious and social nature of human beings. But again, the exact form these will take—dictatorial, democratic, bureaucratic, or participatory—must be discovered through direct investigation.

Every society has economic, kinship, political, and community spheres of social involvement. But why do we divide human activity and society along these particular lines? The critical thing about economic, kinship, political, and community activity is that *each* calls forth complex forms of involvement leading in turn to the development of elaborate institutional networks having profound implications for how we think, what we feel, and what we are capable of doing in any given society. Moreover these particular spheres of social life have generated time and time again important “we/they” distinctions between people (class, sex/age, race/national/ethnic/religious, and authority divisions) which are in turn very critical to social reproduction and social change. Thus, the argument for focusing on the above four spheres is that these foci will be most useful in helping us understand how and why people act as they do in particular societies, and how and why there might be qualitative changes.

To avoid mechanical pitfalls, it is critical to realize that each of the four institutional networks is, when fully extended, made up of the same pieces. As in the example of family and factory above, *all* of society’s institutions ultimately appear in each network. Yet each network also has its own central and defining “key” institution(s), the production/consumption, kinship, state, and community units—each of which is in turn more or less replicated in the more peripheral institutions throughout its sphere. Thus, viewed as a part of the economic network, in its economic functions the family in

part replicates the factory, viewed as a community institution the state replicates many cultural norms and interfaces, viewed as a kinship institution the factory embodies familial characteristics, and so on. In essence, as we look at society from the perspective of a particular moment of activity, we can see all its institutions as a network. Depending on our perspective, each time they are clustered around a different key institution. From the feminist's viewpoint all society's institutions cluster around the family and are extensions of kinship requirements. From the orthodox Marxist orientation the factory and class relation are the hub. For the anarchist the state is featured, and for the nationalist, the community. But in fact since major institutional networks are coextensive these separate analytic approaches can yield important but *only* incomplete truths about society. They will fail to discern, among other things, important limits upon what kinds of social relations are historically possible, an idea we must now investigate.

#### Society's Center and Boundary

At the risk of overwhelming the reader with spatial metaphors, we will also make use of the terms "center" and "boundary" to describe and understand social relationships. By the human center we mean the people who live within the society including their needs, powers, personalities, skills and consciousness. By the institutional boundary we mean a society's framework of interconnected social roles serving to organize social activity and also the natural and human-made material objects which exist within the society.

The line we draw between these two aspects is imposed by our act of conceptualization and not intrinsically present in reality. Nonetheless, the demarcation can prove useful in analyzing key aspects of social life. It is important to note, however, that given our definition, a society's human center depends on *both* innate human characteristics—our species nature—and also on the historical processes of social development of people's personalities, consciousness, skills and derived needs. The center in the United States for example, consists of our innate attributes but also of social products—individualism, sexism, etc.—we embody in our personalities and needs. Similarly, the institutional boundary depends

upon the natural laws of interaction of material entities as well as on the social laws deriving from the historical formation of these social institutions. The economic system in the United States is partially dependent on technical material relationships affecting production possibilities, etc., and also on social outcomes and relations governing the development and operation of specific institutions like our market system. Furthermore, the market boundary and worker/consumer center both define and affect each other. In general then, we expect both center and boundary to play a subject (active/initiating) and also an object (passive/affected) role in historical development.

Institutions are defined by conglomerations of social roles which delimit the available options for behavior if one is to benefit from social intercourse. For example, to benefit from the existence of a market one must fill the legitimate social role of a "buyer" or a "seller." It should be clear from what we have said about the relation between activity and human development that the particular role offerings in a given society—first by defining available activity options, and then second, by thus defining consciousness and personality possibilities—largely determine how people can live their lives, what they can achieve, and what limits they must endure, at least for as long as the role structures remain in force. Examination of such role offerings via examination of boundary relations in economic, kinship, community, and political institutions is therefore a straightforward route to an understanding of the human implications of any particular social formation.

#### Societal Stability

What defines a social formation is its continuity or the "enduringness" of its main features. When such continuity exists it is a product of a complex mesh between boundary institutional offerings and center human expectations and also between the respective institutional/consciousness "pairs" arising in different spheres, for example those arising in the economic, kinship, community and political activities of daily life.

For a society to be stable people must generally expect and accept (not necessarily happily) what they get and have to do. On balance, we must choose activities that are compatible with society's

role offerings: there must be a "fit" between the human center and the institutional boundary. Imagine the contrary: society's roles require advanced formal knowledge but its citizens are all illiterate; social roles presume equality among all citizens but the citizens themselves believe some sectors of the population superior and others inferior; production requires obedience without question yet people's personalities are highly rebellious. It is easy to see how any of these situations would be unstable. A change would necessarily occur either in people's characters or in the characteristics of their environment.

But why would people choose behavior that generates alienated personality traits and detrimental consciousnesses? Even if this is required for the human center to "mesh" with an inherited oppressive institutional boundary, we certainly can't be suggesting that people intentionally "sacrifice themselves" in the interests of social stability.

No, instead there are incentives. Some are blatantly coercive, as is the case with many laws, but the most important are intrinsic to the very high cost of refusing to participate in society's institutions. The idea is simple. Refusal to behave in accord with society's accepted roles excludes the individual miscreant from social interaction and from whatever benefits it may afford. Born into an institutional setting inherited from our predecessors, if we are to enjoy the fruits of society (however objectively meager they may be) we must fulfill society's role expectations. But by behaving in this way we produce character structures that yield a human center that conforms to society's boundary, even should those institutions be oppressive. Families, schools, places of work, markets, churches and social clubs all involve roles we must step into if we are to belong, and in adopting these we create ourselves as "conformists." This is the fundamental dynamic that "reproduces" societal stability as a historical outcome.

### Core Characteristics

To further investigate this dynamic and the issue of the interrelations between the four institutional networks we mentioned earlier, it is useful to employ still another analytic concept, "core characteristic." A core characteristic is a societal attribute, set of

attributes, relation, or set of relations which has a defining impact upon the lives large numbers of people are able to lead. It is a feature or set of features which *is basic* to the determination of people's interpersonal relations, life options, and their demarcation into social groups. For example, in a particular society if certain social features were intrinsic to all relations between men and women and determined a basic inequality between them then these would likely define a core characteristic. They would determine much of what people are and can be, what needs they perceive and can fulfill, what limits are placed on their development by social relations and by their own consciousness. Core features of this sort would come to penetrate both a society's center and its boundary.

Determining the core characteristics of a society is an empirical process. They cannot be known a priori. However, we do know in advance that there will be core characteristics and that they will be present in both center and boundary.\* And we can further deduce that to maintain a condition of relative stability, any two core characteristics in a given society must be at least mutually compatible. For example, suppose women were subordinate to men in the family relations of a particular society but the hierarchy in economic units placed women above men in income and power. Obviously the society would be simultaneously pushing people in opposite directions. Moreover, having both a kinship and an economic moment, every institution would be a seat of this contradiction. The limits and possibilities imposed by one core characteristic would be contrary to those of the other. There would be instability and a change such that some kind of conformity would finally result. Obviously roles and people's expectations and also institutions of different kinds in a given society may be frequently out of synchronization with one another. The dynamic we describe is more powerful as the disjuncture is greater in magnitude.

\*This theoretical insight, like the one that there is a center and boundary in any society, is not really a priori in the Kantian sense; it is simply pre-investigative of any *particular* society. The results derive instead from our knowledge of the human condition and the general requisites of social life and social interaction. Here we shall occasionally use the word "a priori" in just this way, meaning, in essence, known prior to any concrete investigation of the society in question. We do this not to confuse the issue, but because this distinction between what is socially known "a priori" and what instead requires specific inquiry is often confused.

### Accommodation and Co-Reproduction

Now we can usefully address the question of the relations between the institutions and consciousness associated with the four spheres of life activity. In most historical settings economic relations beget class divisions, kinship relations beget gender divisions, and community relations beget race, ethnic, national and religious divisions. There is no intention to suggest that class is acultural, community devoid of sexual content, etc. We are talking at an abstract level about the primary seats of certain demarcations, not about their complete genesis or determination. In any case, when people are divided along these lines, diverse historical forms of classism, racism, sexism, and authoritarianism generally become core characteristics of the society, and the involved groups become potential collective agents of historical change.

In a stable social formation, economic requirements can't severely contradict those deriving from political, community, or kinship forms, and similarly for all other permutations. "Can't contradict" is of course too strong to be precise. Rather, minor contradictions continually resolvable by an on-going flux of the social relations are always present, but stability should be understood flexibly to include this low-level of continual evolutionary alteration. More important, there can also be significant objective contradictions between or within spheres which don't immediately impact on people's lives and consciousness in ways prompting resolutions. When they do, however, the dynamic factors described in these paragraphs come into play, and this rather powerful result applies to the institutional arrangements in each sphere and also to the consciousness people develop from acting within the roles dictated by those institutions. You can't have one world view resulting from your economic activity, and another generated by your kinship activity, where the two pull in seriously conflicting directions. Rather, there must at least be minimal accommodation. Without such accommodation the institutions and consciousness—of one sphere or the other—or both—must change. But there is no apriori reason to argue that the accommodation in such changes will always proceed in one direction. For example, there is no reason to assume that the economic sphere is the fundamental "driving force" such that everything accommodates to the economic moment which therefore can be presumed to dominate in all conflicts.

But it is quite possible that the different moments are more interactive than simple accommodation. We have already seen that each of the four moments is a potential aspect of all activity. In this general case each type of institutional network is involved in accomplishing functions central to the other networks in addition to its own. So the factory also socializes when its technology and role definitions deskill workers and compel competitive and instrumental relations among them and the state also produces when it creates highways, missiles, schools, etc. Another way of viewing society that sensitizes us to situations where features of the four networks are co-defining and co-reproductive is to see one single institutional network with four different moments and, in a sense, four different foci. Depending on the situation we will feel free to employ either the one network with four moments conceptualization or the four networks each with a principal moment as well as three secondary moments conceptualization. This complementarity of approach is designed to insure the most complete and all-sided analysis as well as tools suited to different needs.\*

But what is the difference between "simple accommodation" and "co-reproduction?" With accommodation, as we have discussed, it is "merely" necessary that the social hierarchies which evolve in community activity, for instance, are not contradicted by economic relations, and vice versa. If community life places whites above blacks institutionally and in consciousness, then economic relations must honor this asymmetry. But it is possible that beyond "honoring" this hierarchy, economic relations help reproduce or aggravate the asymmetry. In this case, the very definition of

\*Couching a theory in more than one formalism has a variety of uses. One formulation may spur innovation more effectively, or have more useful psychological or philosophical content than another, even as the two are logically indistinguishable in their predictive and explanatory content. It may be easier to find error criticizing one formulation than another—the error may be isolated as one "axiom" in one formalism, and embedded in many in another; or, on the contrary, one may be easier to use and therefore reveal new capacities of the theory. This multi-expressability of theory actually pervades our analysis and is quite common to many other disciplines as well.

Hilbert's Formalism must be rejected

Theory of Mathematics

economic roles and the content of their requisites would be a function of the racial core characteristic as well as the class core characteristic. And in this situation we speak of co-reproduction and co-definition. Or imagine a society where economic roles embody kinship divisions—workers fulfil roles mediated not only by class criteria, but also by family ones—for example, in the hospital where women “pick up” and “support” as well as type and clean up. Here it is not simply kin-blind class requisites that are defining the division of labor but also patriarchal ones.<sup>39</sup>

Such a tight fit among the different hierarchies is not inevitable in all societies but is a real possibility and is one reason we should be very careful about neatly classifying institutions into four spheres. For this demarcation can blind us to the more complex determination wherein a set of core characteristics merge to a single social totality, this totality then being at the root of the definition of all institutional and consciousness relations, rather than only the various parts of this totality being at root in the different institutions in turn. Thus, as a hedge against this oversight, we should try as much as possible to employ the twofold approach to looking at society outlined above.

One of the implications of our understanding emerges in the following logical sequence, which in turn provides the context in which the coming theoretical analyses should be interpreted. 1) The nuclear family, bourgeois state, private firm, and nation are each key institutions in the social network as we view it in turn in terms of the social relations of kinship, politics, economics, and community. 2) In any actual society, as these institutions and their associated activities interpenetrate, they must also at least accommodate and may even co-define and co-reproduce. So 3) none of the four can be *fully* understood in isolation from the rest, or in abstraction from a particular social formation with its own history. Thus, 4) there can be no *comprehensive* general theory of abstracted economic, kinship, political, or community relations, nor even of the central institutions of these types of social involvement. So 5) it follows, at least in our view, that at most what we can abstractly develop are theoretical insights generally relevant to an activity or institution in the abstract, and also a set of conceptual tools to help in more specific analyses aimed to generate theory of actual historical social relationships. This will therefore be one of our main aims as we proceed in later chapters.

We understand that, in trying to develop terms that allow us to describe a reality that is more complex than most orthodox analysts admit, we have come up with concepts and metaphors that are certainly unfamiliar and probably unwieldy. These metaphors do have a certain internal logic though, and by way of summary it is useful to describe how they fit together.

Imagine four spheres—four transparent globes if you will—representing a society's arrangements for dealing with the economic, political, kinship, and cultural moments of activity. The surface of each globe is a map of all the institutions the society has evolved. On each of these globes one institution becomes the focus from which others are seen to emanate as one might see the ocean dominating a globe of the earth. The surface maps, however, are not the whole story of the spheres—merely the boundaries. Inside each globe are complex webs connecting the surface institutional arrangements to the center, which in our scheme represent the human beings. These webs hold the sphere together; without them, each must alter or explode; without a proper fit between human center and institutional boundary a society must change.

But no one of these globes defines the society; actually all four are necessary, and the points on one map are located—with different names and arrangements—on each of the others. They must be combined, superimposed in an entwining fashion, to give a true picture of the whole society. And here again if the society is stable, there will be a fit; in a sense, the oceans on the kinship map will overlap in size and shape the oceans on the political map though water temperatures will be different and mix. What historical process created this relative conformity, only further study of the spheres will reveal.

Finally, we must have features to use in summarizing the nature of the spheres, and in comparing them to see whether they fit together both at the boundary and at the human center. These are the core characteristics, analogous in a way to core samples of the earth's crust, only drilled in our globes not a few miles “down,” but all the way through.

### Social History: Evolution and Revolution

Human activity is free—it is an outgrowth of the conscious application of human power to meet human needs. And it is also

not free—it is constrained by the historically bequeathed institutional boundary and human center we cannot individually will away. Hence human beings are both the subject and object of historical processes. We apply our powers and mold ourselves and our environments as subjects, and are in turn molded by them as objects. When this ongoing process is sufficiently constrained by the contours of the status-quo to reproduce the defining features of those contours over and over, we have evolution. Details of life alter while core characteristics are reproduced essentially unchanged. But when the interplay between people and their social environments yields a change in at least one core characteristic, we call this social revolution. The society is no longer essentially the same. A new social formation exists, and life's options are different. Thus, the Russian revolution, Chinese revolution, American revolution and Cuban revolution were all revolutions in these terms too. But so were the industrial revolution, the American Civil War, and the transition from Victorian to post-Victorian (patriarchal) kinship relations.

Societal reproduction rests on the tendency for people to behave in accord with the roles defined by society's institutions to receive the benefits of social interaction and from the rationalizing forces of human consciousness formation. Against this background there are also, of course, conscious and sometimes coercive efforts by groups of people who are the relative beneficiaries of existing social structures to preserve those existing relationships. Revolutionary social change rests on the fact that humans are not infinitely "malleable" and that the conformity between center and boundary in all societies to date has been to some degree oppressive. All previous societies have rested on the denial of some subset of human needs and capabilities while partially fulfilling others. The "mesh" between center and boundary has never been without friction: society has always placed a round peg in a square hole, so to speak, but the peg never entirely loses its resiliency. There is always at least unconscious individual rebellion, even among those who accept their place. And against this background there can also develop conscious efforts by groups of people who are most aware of their deprivation by existing institutions to transform them in revolutionary ways. In sum there are both relatively automatic unconscious forces and also conscious human efforts at play in pursuit of both social stability and social change.

To translate these general tendencies into concrete analyses of actual historical experiences is an empirical task. But there are some further things we can conclude about revolution that are applicable to most social formations. A revolution occurs 1) when there is a contradiction which either cannot be or appears unable to be overcome without alteration of at least one of society's core characteristics, and 2) when this contradiction is overcome by human agents who succeed in effecting just such a transformation. In other words, there are two issues: there must be a deep contradiction and it must be translated into effective human activity. The type of contradiction which can generate such an outcome is not completely specifiable in advance, but we know it must involve society's core characteristics as well as social groups capable of being historical agents.

There is no particular need to discuss here the different kinds of contradictions as well as the different forms they might take in different societies since we will continually address the issue in later chapters. But who can we expect to be the agents of social revolution who will transform social institutions and norms? Since core characteristics determine life possibilities, and since contradictions focused around core characteristics are central to social change, we expect precisely those groups defined by core characteristics to be critical actors in social change. Thus a crucial task is to identify people according to the different places they occupy with respect to society's core characteristics. Contradictions which cause arousal of needs society can't meet, awakening expectations inconsistent with role offerings, delegitimation of institutional structures, or other similar disjunctures can cause these social groups to undertake rebellious activity which can in turn fuel the awakening historical process. Thus, for example, with respect to the economy the definition of classes should be undertaken in light of this kind of process and of the need to delimit the actors who could become crucial to it—and similarly for locating critical groups defined by political, kinship, and community activity. The purpose in mind, that is, when we develop concepts which demarcate certain groups within society, is that of locating and understanding potential agents of historical struggle and change.

The main distinction between our approach and that of more orthodox Marxists about revolutionary agents should be fairly clear.

In the orthodoxy, economic relations are most basic, economic contradictions most critical to social struggle and change, and therefore economic classes are the most important collective agents of revolution. In our view, beyond economics, kinship, community, and politics are also central to social change. So not only class but also kin, race, national, religious, ethnic, and political divisions can yield groups with critical revolutionary roles. For example, the division of people into party and non-party members, men and women, or blacks and whites could all become critical just as the division of economic actors into capitalists and workers can.

However, beyond broadening the focus with respect to identifying important collective actors, we also differ from the orthodoxy in our understanding of class relations themselves. And though this will be elaborated in much greater detail later, an introductory discussion must appear here as a basis for certain assertions to be made in chapter three.

Where orthodox Marxists focus their attention on ownership in determining class relations, we address all differences in economic situations sufficient to generate differences in world views, values, motivations, and skills as well as incomes which pit groups against one another in ways relevant to potentials for social change and possible economic transformation. This leads us to address differences in the quality and type of work, as well as in the character and quantity of remuneration. In particular we identify a "new class" of "coordinators": individuals who have considerable control over their work and often the work of others, who have substantially greater incomes than workers and also substantially more status due to greater specialized and general social knowledge, and whose work is largely conceptual rather than executionary. Members of this new coordinator class include managers, engineers, and social planners, philosophers, ministers, and "intellectuals" of diverse types. Under capitalism this class is between and in certain ways opposed to both capital and labor and, as we shall see, in societies which call themselves socialist, this class often attains a dominant economic position.

### The Problem of Social Transformation

For one reason or another a society that was previously stable enters a period of instability and revolutionary upheaval. Before

there was a social formation with considerable conformity between boundary and the center, and between the relationships in different primary spheres of social activity. During the period of transformation this meshing of society's core aspects unravels and contradictions become paramount. Struggle between diverse agents ensues—some groups seek to reenact the stability that had previously reigned, others seek to overturn prior norms and establish new core characteristics in context of new social relationships in one or more major institutional networks. But what if there is more than one new direction to travel? What if the period of flux can have more than one outcome, can lead to changes ushering in more than one new organization for society? Then, the period of struggle can become quite complex. Rather than a simple dichotomy between forces of reaction and forces of change, there can be forces seeking *different types* of change. In this case, confusion may arise. People desiring one type of alteration may act in ways conducive to another. In our second volume we will investigate socialist possibilities for advanced capitalist societies. But we will also address the heritage of social transformations in some countries which underwent anti-capitalist revolutions while having relatively underdeveloped, non-industrialized economies: the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba. In each of these countries the initial conditions were different. And for all of them there were considerable differences from the kinds of conditions we may anticipate in a country like the United States when we embark upon the construction of a new social formation. In the "first world" as compared to the "third world" there are very different levels of industrialization, different political heritages and political institutions, and different kinship and community forms. It is quite possible that while certain options are foreclosed by under-industrialization or a generalized lack of literacy and technical skills among the populace of one society, they are present for another, different one, *and vice versa*. \* In these volumes we will try to develop an understanding of the processes in the three countries mentioned above, of the movements' successes and

\*In particular, it is interesting to notice one possible advantage that may hold for the non-industrialized countries as compared to, for example, the United States, should each "decide" to embark on a path toward a true socialism. For if such a society will be characterized by self-management, social solidarity, and diversity of cultural and social forms—and therefore,

failures, of the forces favoring socialist outcomes and of those favoring something else entirely and of their respective accomplishments. But while we will specifically address the situations of these three countries in their own right, we will also seek lessons that bear upon the likely future situation of industrialized societies to help develop a reasonable model of socialism as it may be enacted in our own future.

### A Totalist Approach to Social Theory

In the totalist perspective there are four principle spheres of human activity and institutional relations—the political, economic, community, and kinship spheres. In a given society these all exist together in a single social formation and are therefore intricately interrelated. Furthermore, the four spheres have the same elementary components and roots: individual people with their particular diverse needs and potentials and also institutions and their social role structures. This sharing of elements and the same social space and time means that the characteristic features of each sphere must minimally accommodate to one another's dictates and may reproduce one another's basic features. They are actually manifestations of the same totality of entwined phenomena.

This fourfold character of social divisions may be understood as a product of the fourfold character of human needs we all share due to our species nature. We have economic needs related to the provision of sustenance and means of survival, kin needs associated with reproduction and sexual/emotional requirements; community needs arising from desires to understand our situations and evolve social identities; and political needs deriving from our social and

by an architecture, technology, and distribution of resources suited to equity, human scale, dispersal of control, etc.—it is possible that the transformation from agricultural “underdevelopment” to this new organization will not only prove relatively simpler than industrialization on a Western or Soviet model, it may even, as Mao Tsetung was perhaps intimating, prove simpler than would the transformation from industrialized/massified forms to a real socialist alternative. The Marxist catch-22 however, may be that the creation and production of the new socialist technologies will require the industrial know-how and capacities of the industrial infrastructures even if this creation may be their last act.

praxis natures and their implications for establishing regularity and clarity of norms of activity. But, in fact, as the expression of any one of these needs is always entwined with the presence and expression of the others, so too the four different types of activity are also always carried out in context of one another.

But doesn't the fact that each type of activity is entwined with, co-defining of, and sharing aspects of all other types mean that we could analyze society from the angle of any one type and yet arrive at an understanding of all four? Imagine someone beginning with the community orientation. Society is seen as a compendium of communities each defined by the interrelations of its own group with various other groups, and by the role structures of the community institutions it has evolved. The definition of community would be enlarged to include the collective elaboration of solutions to *all* kinds of interpersonal and collective social problems so divisions between men and women, minorities, classes, and political elements could all be discerned as different manifestations of community relations. But would the analyst recognize *all sides* of the less cultural and more economic, sexual, or political moments of society's different activities? Likewise, the anarchist using only power divisions, or the orthodox Marxist focusing on only class divisions, or the feminist emphasizing only kinship divisions must answer the same question.

It is possible that there is a *timeless* ontological reason why a fourfold approach to understanding society cannot be dispensed with even by someone who is especially adept at a rich single sphere approach. Whether this is true or not, however, we believe there are definitely strong ontological and epistemological reasons to prevent any singlefold approach from being penetrating enough to perceive all sides of all social relations. Basically, the fact that we all grow up and learn to think in societies that are multiply fragmented in ways affecting not only our material, social, and psychological interests, but also our very ways of looking at, understanding, and framing theoretical questions and concepts means that we each embody diverse biases in our thinking, and these biases will only be aggravated should we employ a theory which runs the risk of being similarly myopic. This is one critical reason why we have argued the need to elaborate a theory with a fourfold orientation. There is also an intimate relation between the structure of our concepts and the

ultimate intellectual framework they compose on the one hand, and our activities, movement structures, and dispositions toward one another on the other. Single focus theories employed by citizens of societies that have fourfold frameworks of core characteristics won't yield solidarity nor preserve mutual autonomy for diverse groups. Yet these complementary aims must be accomplished within the same revolutionary process if we are to attain socialism. The kind of totalist theory we have argued for is, however, consistent with this sort of strategic project.

### Ecology and Method: A Case Study

To see some of the benefits of the approach we are proposing consider different possibilities for developing an ecological analysis and program relevant to modern society. Among leftists, the orthodox Marxist will approach the problem from the orientation of class division and capitalist motivation. The culprit is twofold—on the one hand the capitalist's drive to employ all means possible for enlarging profit and on the other the capitalist's relative obtuseness to all but the most crass economic calculations. For the former compulsion pressures the capitalist to consider strip mining, dumping wastes, and risky and polluting ventures, and the latter ensures that no inhibitions about human well-being will stem the tide of such destructive profit-seeking. What will be absent from the analysis, however, is attention to issues of the qualitative side of ecological balance and, as a result, upon attaining power the orthodox Marxist is likely to pursue "expansion of the forces of production" in equally ecologically devastating ways. A feminist approaching matters of ecology will likely develop an analysis stressing the "male mentality" which sees nature as something to be "mastered" with no attention to the consequences. Similarly, community analyses might focus attention on the way nature is treated as only a "thing," thereby alienating it of its importance in the biological and cultural scheme of life. Finally, an anarchist is likely to stress the authoritarian moment of ecological destruction and its relation to hierarchical forms and mindsets.

Each approach has insights and power lacking in that of the others. But due to narrowness, each approach alone is susceptible not only to errors of omission but even to the commission of faults on a par with those being challenged—witness the results of

orthodox Marxist hegemony in the Eastern countries. Perhaps most important, in seeking to develop strategies for ecological movements, each orientation alone will prove insufficient. The problem is that programs worked out with a particular viewpoint will be insensitive to other non-focused roots of ecological crimes and also to the multiplicity of factors essential to keeping a powerful movement effective in a fourfold core characterized society. The alternative we suggest is the totalist approach which would ask how do class, political, kinship, and community relationships help to determine ecological contours and how must movements for ecological change encompass the lessons of analysis from all four angles simultaneously? Obviously this is not the place to do such an analysis. But it should be evident to people who have been active in ecological struggles that failures to adequately understand simultaneously class, political, sexual, and community factors relating to ecological destruction and to the formation of social movements have frequently been even more of an impediment to success than the admittedly substantial defensive efforts of major polluters and the state.

What are the implications of this totalist approach for further theoretical work and for major questions facing socialists? Without previewing the lessons of each chapter to come, perhaps a few points should be made here concerning overall implications that will emerge fully only in context of the whole study we are undertaking. First, the idea of categorizing societies economically (or along any other single axis) will be seriously undermined. It will become clear that one cannot say a society has this or that kind of economic network and claim to thereby have understood and classified it. Instead, we will see that every society has four intertwined networks of institutions and spheres of social life which must each be described. Likewise, though these spheres will affect one another's historical alterations, they need not always change simultaneously. While basic alterations of any given sphere will usually lead to basic change in other spheres or be reversed by the lack of alteration of other spheres, in other instances major alterations in one set of dynamics may cause only minor changes elsewhere. In either case, a simple stage theory of history is rendered obsolete. More important, the idea of laws of motion of a particular sphere, while certainly valid and important, cannot be mistaken for the idea of laws of motion for a whole society. In addition, due to social connectivity,

laws of motion for an abstracted sphere, for example, capitalist economic relations, will have to be given less weight. Logical analyses of economic tendencies abstracting from politics, community, or kinship can yield important insights, to be sure. But they will also yield results which may need to be reevaluated when other relations are taken into account and likewise fail to reveal relations that are important only due to the interface of economics with these other social spheres.

### Program of Analysis and Evaluation

The main aim of *Marxism and Socialist Theory* is to elaborate a theory suitable for analyzing the societies that call themselves socialist but are not, and for formulating a desirable socialist vision for implementation in the United States. In this chapter we have presented the main outlines of such a theory.

With regard to analysis this theory presents a clear injunction. In any society we should begin by investigating the features of center and boundary in each of the four primary spheres of life activity: economics, politics, kinship, and community. We should try to understand the nature of the four interrelated institutional networks, their role offerings, and the associated personalities, consciousness, skills, and perceived needs people have. We should identify the core characteristics and determine their effects upon quality of life. We should determine the kind of connections between the four spheres: simple accomodation, co-reproduction, or some variant of these possibilities. Last, we should address the society's historical characteristics. What has been its evolution? What are the stabilizing forces, what are the contradictions, what are the social groups that are potential agents of change or reaction? What is the balance between unconscious and conscious forces in stabilizing and destabilizing the society, and what is the overall balance of strength between reproductive and revolutionary tendencies?

But while we have given some arguments for this program, we have said relatively little to motivate its choice in place of more familiar approaches. Furthermore, we have only elaborated the most general contours of the theory. What does this abstract framework tell us about specific economic institutions or about real families?

Before we can usefully employ it to understand the historical experience of anti-capitalist revolutions or to guide us in elaborating a vision of how a socialist United States might be structured, it will have to be substantially filled out.

In the following four chapters by contrasting our framework with that of other leftists we simultaneously make a case that our approach can yield original insights the other theories obscure, and also fill out the totalist approach so that a more exacting analytic process can begin. But when we finally address the Soviet, Chinese, and Cuban experiences in Volume Two, and elaborate our own models of socialist institutions and relations, analysis alone will not be sufficient. We will need to be evaluative as well.

What do we feel about "existing socialism" and alternative models? The problem of evaluation must be taken up first from the perspective of human fulfillment. Most simply, a society is more desirable the more it promotes fulfillment of human needs and enrichment of human capabilities. However, many needs and capabilities are social products. We must therefore look not only at whether a society allows people to meet expressed needs, but at the conditions which govern what needs will "speak out." We need to assess not only whether people's aroused potentials are elaborated into positive social outcomes, but also whether the best potentials are being expressed. In short, a good society must not only allow and help its citizens meet their aroused needs, it must also allow the continual development of needs and of human capacities that are most beneficial to its citizenry. But it is not enough that there be a momentary process suited to meeting needs and fulfilling potentials. Rather, carrying this process through over and over must reproduce the desirable conditions or even enhance them.

Evaluation requires, therefore, that we address the conditions which give rise to needs and capabilities in a society, the conditions which determine whether needs are met and capabilities developed and enlarged, and the dynamics which govern whether the situation continually reproduces in ways which increase the desirability of outcomes or, if, on the contrary, short-run positive accomplishments betoken longer-run oppressive setbacks.

In our view once we lay a set of concrete "goods" on top of this set of general insights into welfare relations, we are in a position to make evaluative judgements. The goods we seek to assess—do they

emerge, are they enacted, can they prevail—are collective self-management, variety of social outcomes, and human solidarity. It seems to us, and we have argued this elsewhere,<sup>40</sup> that these three aims encompass most others which socialists find worthy. They arise from our understanding of human beings as innately social, historical, and beings of praxis.

Thus it is our contention that at a minimum, humans must live in a situation of collective self-management, diverse life options and outcomes, and communal solidarity if they are to meet their innate needs and elaborate their individual and collective potentials to the fullest. There is no existent proof for such an assertion, though it should certainly not be foreign for most socialists, and will be shown, as we proceed, to conform nicely with our analytic insights and political aims. That the simultaneous fulfillment of these three criteria is possible in a single social formation is a main premise of this study and will be argued throughout. That existing societies which have deemed themselves socialist have institutional forms which don't allow fulfillment of these three criteria, and which in fact militate against their fulfillment, will be another primary focus of our attention.

### THREE: POLITICS AND HISTORY

“Incapacity of the masses.” What a tool for all exploiters and dominators, past, present, and future, and especially for the modern aspiring enslavers, whatever their insignia. ... This is a point on which reactionaries of all colors are in perfect agreement with the ‘communists.’ And this agreement is exceedingly significant.

Voline

What do we mean by “political activity”? What are the origins and functions of the state? What is the role of political activity in the reproduction and/or transformation of social relations in other social spheres, and vice versa? Was Rousseau right when he said: “The moment a people allows itself to be represented it is no longer free: it no longer exists”? When Marxists debate the “instrumental” versus the “structural” theory of the state, is either protagonist correct? Does the political sphere play a more critical role than the economy in determining the character of everyday life in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe? Is the bureaucracy a new ruling class, or elite?<sup>1</sup>

These are questions we must answer in context of a broad analysis of political activity and political institutions. We will begin at the most abstract level with a discussion of political activity itself. This done, we address various orthodox Marxist theories of the state showing the differences between these views and our own. We attempt to resolve confusion concerning relations between the economic and political spheres, and briefly elaborate our own theory of the capitalist state and of its relations to the other prominent institutions of capitalist life. We analyse the social relations of democratic centralism and bureaucracy, and the relationship between the coordinator mode of production and the bureaucratic state in advanced non-capitalist societies. Finally, we will suggest a program for evaluating the Soviet, Chinese, and Cuban political experiences and for envisioning socialist political forms suitable for the United States.