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Power, Property and Class

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Introduction

Among Marxists and non-Marxists alike, the term "class" appears often within their analyses of society. By itself or with adjectives such as "working," "ruling," "under-," or "capitalist," the term is clearly central to most Marxist and not a few non-Marxist arguments about social structure and social change. Yet, reviewing those arguments yields a curious problem. The meanings assigned to the term are definitely not the same. Moreover, debates over many topics others than class per se can be seen to stem largely from disagreements - infrequently acknowledged as such - over what class is.

We share with most Marxists a central focus upon class as an indispensable concept for analysing society. Thus the multiplicity of concepts of class inside and outside the Marxist tradition poses problems. Are there some concepts of class that prevail over others within Marxist literature? Did Marx and Engels favor one against other such concepts? Are there criteria for preferring theoretically one against another of such concepts? We think that these questions demand answers. Otherwise, Marxist literature will continue to display discussions and debates characterized by inconsistent and often confused usages of one of their most central terms.[1]

We intend to show that there are some basically quite different concepts of class at play in Marxist writings. We believe that a writer's choice,

whether conscious or not, of one such concept rather than another will lead him/her to correspondingly different theoretical and political conclusions. In other words, it matters which concept of class is used to make sense of social structures and strategies for social change. Examples will be cited where particular and largely unexamined commitments to particular concepts of class have played major roles in shaping key theoretical and political struggles waged by and also within the Marxist tradition. We intend an intervention in that tradition which will clarify its usages of class and also reestablish the importance of one particular conception: the surplus labor theory of class.

An analyst can group persons within a community or society according to any one of a literally infinite number of possible characteristics. A group, or "class" in this abstract sense, could be conceptualized as all persons sharing a common muscular build, bone structure, vocal tone, athletic prowess, skill at various functions, degree of religious or secular education, level of prestige or wealth or any other possible characteristic. Grouping people in such ways has been a hallmark of most sorts of social analysis including those called "class" analyses. Often other terms for similar kinds of grouping - strata, elites, fractions, sections - are woven into analyses also utilizing class.

However, class in particular has long been a term narrowed by actual usage to designate a few specific kinds of groupings.[2] Since at least the eighteenth century, there have been three rather different groupings meant by the term class. Class is sometimes used to designate groups of persons in society according to the property they own or do not own. Varying qualities and/or

quantities of property are used to categorize persons into classes. A second and different usage holds class to mean a group of persons who share the fact that they either do or do not wield power or authority in society.[3] Different kinds and amounts of social authority are here understood to define class boundaries. Thirdly, there is a notion of class as concerning the production, appropriation and distribution of surplus labor (defined and discussed below). Classes are then defined as groups of persons who share the common social position of performing surplus labor or of appropriating it from the performers or of obtaining distributed shares of surplus from the appropriators.[4]

There are also composite conceptualizations of class. These involve defining class in terms of power and property or surplus labor production and property or all three together. For example, a composite approach might conceive of a capitalist class structure as "a system rooted in a dichotomy between possessing masters and subject dispossessed."[5] Writings in the Marxist tradition often signal composite conceptualizations by defining classes as persons who share common positions in or connections to the "relations of production" or "mode of production." Upon inspection, classes defined in terms of relations of production usually turn out to be composites whose authors variously emphasize the power, property or surplus labor components of such relations of production (classes).

In singular or composite definitions, these three different concepts of class - qua property, power and/or surplus labor - prevail both within and without the Marxian tradition. However, they are irreducibly different and not to be conflated. Persons with property may or may not also wield power and vice-versa. To own property in a particular society need not empower the

owner to employ another human being or to participate in state decisions; that would depend, for example, on ideological and political persuasions in that society. To be propertyless need not require a person to sell labor power; that would depend, for example, on whether propertyless persons had socially recognized access to income from other sources. To wield state powers of all sorts need not require ownership of property; that would depend on the social rules whereby power is granted to individuals. In sum, the ownership of property (whether in means of production or more generally) is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the wielding of power and vice versa.

Class analyses using one definition will yield different results from analyses using another. No little political importance attaches to this conundrum. Moreover, as we shall show, class designations according to surplus labor production/distribution will not necessarily correspond to the class designations drawn according to either the property or the power concepts. Usages of class which do not recognize and address these differences invite all manner of misunderstandings.

In our view, the distributions of property and power were social conditions used to define class long before Marx arrived. Radicals and conservatives dating back at least to the ancient Greeks propounded social analyses in which they classified persons according to the property they owned and attributed great significance to such classes. We will present a number of examples below to illustrate the repeated conceptualization of class - as an especially significant social category - in terms of property ownership. Similarly, concepts of class as defined by the qualities and quantities of power wielded are endemic through the literature for centuries. Such class analyses in terms of the

ruling vs the ruled will be illustrated as well. However, the concept of class as surplus labor has a special relation to Marx.

In our reading of Marx's work, we find a new concept of class different from the previously prevalent notions focused on property and/or power. We credit Marx with conceiving of class in a unique manner as the production and distribution of surplus labor. Of course, Marx was aware of and deeply impressed with the earlier class analytical literature. His work is filled with allusions to classes in terms of property and power. However, he was also sharply critical of his predecessor class analysts' concepts on the grounds that they had missed something crucial to the success of their - and his - goals for a more just and free society. They had missed the economic process of surplus labor production and distribution. By missed, Marx meant that their analyses of contemporary society overlooked the structural position of the surplus labor process. Thus, in his view, their projections of strategies for social change inadequately addressed the changes in the surplus labor process needed to sustain the anticipated socialist or communist society.

Marx made a special contribution to the mass of people he joined in struggling for a better world. He discovered the economic process of surplus labor production and distribution which he found to be a constituent part of all social structures. He devoted much of his life's work to the detailed analysis of the surplus labor process and its complex interactions with all the other processes of social life including the processes of property and power. His goal was never to deny or displace the importance of property and power in the structure of contemporary society or in the plans for the sort of socialist society he longed for. Rather, he sought to add something to the understanding of his fellow revolutionists and radicals, namely a worked-through grasp of the

surplus labor process and the ways in which it both supported and depended upon the processes of property and power (among the other social processes that concerned him).

Marx's emphasis on surplus labor does not warrant some epistemologically unsustainable and arrogant claim that it is somehow "more important" a social force than other forces. In our reading, Marx recognized that he could aid the revolutionary cause by remedying his comrades' lack of understanding of the existence and social effectivity of surplus labor production/distribution. His stylistic strategy to accomplish his goal, to enrich his fellow radicals' theoretical arsenals, was to define a new concept of class which grouped persons according to whether they were performers, appropriators, and/or recipients of distributed shares of surplus labor. Marx's new concept of class, distinct from but complexly linked to processes of property and power, was a contribution of immense significance and potential to the movements for basic social change agitating in his time.

We understand that our reading of Marx's work has not been shared by most Marxists and non-Marxists since Marx. Instead, many have read him so as to re-assimilate Marx's original concept of class back to the older power and property concepts. They have thereby often lost sight of what Marx added to the agendas and theoretical frameworks of social revolutionaries. Some virtually ignore the surplus labor process altogether. Others do recognize the surplus labor process but pointedly reduce it to a status at once secondary and derivative from other social processes (typically property or power) deemed "more important." In our judgment, both the definition of class as power or property and the reductionist tendency to make class the effect of some deeper, more powerful social force are readings of Marx's works with very undesirable

social consequences. Such readings have tended to displace class analysis as we understand it and thereby weakened the forces of social revolution toward which Marxism is oriented.

A few examples cited here and developed further below illustrate this point. Consider the debates over the class structure of the Soviet Union. On one side the argument is advanced that it represents a classless society because private property was abolished there. Defenders of this view operate with a property concept of class. Opponents often do likewise with the more subtle argument that what was abolished was merely de jure private property while de facto it - and hence classes - still persists in the USSR. Similarly, social democrats around the world frequently equate socialism or the transition from capitalism to socialism with the socialization of property in the means of production; again concepts of class qua patterns of property ownership figure significantly.

More prevalent recently in the debates over the Soviet Union's class structure has been argumentation deploying power rather than property concepts of class. Such formulations often attack the property theorists of class by passionate declamations that notwithstanding the socialization of private property a ruling class still exists in the USSR. This is then demonstrated by reference to patterns of power and authority there which warrant ascriptions of the term class to groupings found to possess and wield more and less quanta of power regardless of who owns or is separated from property.

The debates over the USSR's class structure teach that not only are different concepts of class at play (with an array of variations, of course) but also that they are often at play within the same argument as it slides from one

concept to another. In our view, the debates' focus on property and power lead those on all sides to downplay or ignore what we understand as class: the processes of producing, appropriating and distributing surplus labor in the USSR. Our interest here is not to deny the importance of property and power to any assessment of the USSR, but rather to correct a defect typical of most assessments, namely their neglect of the surplus labor type of class analytics. Which alternative conceptualization of class is used affects an individual's political practices in regard to the USSR: a potent political issue since 1917.

As a second example, consider the attraction of Marxists to the social analysis of what are usually called the "middle classes" in capitalist societies. Do they really exist between the two main classes? Are they friends or foes of the working class or might they go either way depending upon circumstances? How do we properly allocate those who do not fall neatly into either main class into the various possible categorizations of middle class? To answer such questions, Marxists and others have deployed class analytics which again demonstrate their prevalent commitment to discussions limited to matters of property and power.

In general, most Marxist treatments start from a dissatisfaction with the typical dichotomous class model ascribed to Marxism. They decry efforts to collapse a complex class structure into a bi-polar confrontation. Often taking a cue from Marx's distinction between bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie, notably a quantitative distinction, they seek to show how gradations beyond a mere two can admit of middle classes. Does the notion of a petite bourgeoisie refer to the smallness of the quantity of means of production owned? Are middle

classes then persons situated somewhere between propertylessness and some large quantum of means of production whose owner is considered to be bourgeois? Much debate based on such conceptions of middle classes has drawn sharply opposed conclusions regarding whether and how working classes can approach such middle classes in terms of class struggle alliances.

On the other hand, class-as-power theorists frequently oppose the property theorists; they rather favor investigating the power/authority nexus. Can we locate persons who are neither pure order givers nor pure order takers, neither ruling nor ruled classes? Are there such middle classes who take as well as give orders, and if so, who exactly are they and how do they figure into class struggles? From these theoretical roots have sprouted an ingenious sequence of analyses of complex, non-dichtomous class structures. Not a few theorists combine, sometimes explicitly, both property and power to generate matrices of multiple and complex classes. Again, different proposals for political actions and alliances flow from power than from property analyses of middle classes.

While we share the concern to move beyond the sterility of simple two-class models of social structure, we regret that they have rarely moved beyond the old concepts of class as property and/or power. Our goal is to elaborate Marx's beginnings in constructing class groupings in terms of how persons perform, appropriate or receive distributed shares of surplus labor. Thus, if performers and appropriators of surplus labor comprise two classes of society, then another sort of class is defined in terms of the recipients of distributed shares of the appropriated surplus labor. "Middle" is then certainly not an appropriate adjective since it precisely suggests a class location in the space between two others, a location which our approach does

not see. We will need no term like middle - still stamped by its reference to and thus dependence upon the dichotomy from which it springs - to move to the complex multiple class analysis (understood in terms of surplus labor) initiated by Marx in CAPITAL, volume 3.

A third example illustrates our argument in yet another way. Gareth Stedman Jones' researches into English working class history suggest the importance of the power concept of class actually held and used by many labor activists.[6] His re-examination of the Chartist movement leads him to attribute the defeat and decline of Chartism in part to the Chartists' pointedly political concept of class and their reduction of social development to the effects of power. They explained property ownership patterns and the processes of producing and distributing surplus labor (partially understood) as direct effects of a deeper, more important social force: the social distribution of power over the English state.

When that political distribution was changed eventually in the direction of more mass participation, the decline and public defeat at Chartism followed quickly. Simply put, the political change in power relations did not change much in terms of property ownership or the appropriation and distribution of surplus labor. That defeat, in turn, helped to generate an "inward looking" English working class. It emphasized consciousness of itself as a culturally distinct group while it withdrew from the struggle for social hegemony and class revolution. That consciousness continues to this day, in Jones' estimation, to condemn the Labor Party and working class politics generally to disasterous social impotence. Jones' work documents certain profound and stultifying consequences which were partly attributable to the largely unchallenged political and reductionist concepts of class which prevailed within and after Chartism in England.[7]

The problem of reductionism

The discussion of class is beset not only by different and often clashing definitions of class. There is also a major problem of how to theorize the relationship between class and non-class aspects of society. The clearly prevalent approach to thinking about this relationship is reductionist. That is, some authors reduce class to an effect of other, more fundamental aspects of society. Human nature, for example, is often designated as such a fundamental cause to which class is reduced as merely its effect. Other authors, equally reductionist, reverse the argument and make their particular definition of class into the key cause while the rest of society is reduced to its effect. Much of the Marxist tradition has been understood to argue reductively that class structure ("the base") determines social structure ("the superstructure") and class struggle determines historical change. Indeed, many debates in and over the Marxist tradition have turned precisely over whether the economy determines the society (economic determinism or reductionism) or whether the economy is itself determined by/reduced to the effect of other social aspects (e.g., the political, the cultural, the natural, etc.).

We find this reductionism to be problematic. It strikes us as unacceptably simplistic and one-sided in its a priori presumption that some causes must outweigh others in determining an effect. Reductionism has, in our view, contributed to disasterous theoretical and political consequences as changes in one social factor - the presumed "most effective cause" - have been expected to usher in all manner of necessary effects which never materialized.

In any case, whether reductionism is acceptable or not, it is certainly not the only way to theorize the relationship between class and non-class aspects

of society. It can be replaced analytically by a non-reductionist perspective. Class, however defined, can be understood as the effect of many different social aspects with none of them playing the role of "most fundamental" determinant. Similarly, class can also be understood as itself a cause affecting all the other aspects of society. The stress here is upon class as one among many causes of social structure and history; it need not be seen reductively as THE cause. Social aspects, then, may all be approached as necessarily both causes and effects at the same time.[8]

Our point here is to emphasize that discussions of class can and do vary in two major ways. They display different definitions of class. They also differ on whether to link class and non-class aspects of society reductively or not, in a relation of determinism or overdetermination. Our critique of the prevalent Marxist and non-Marxist treatments of class takes them to task on both counts. First, we reject them for their definitions of class as either power or property concepts. Secondly, we reject them for their reductionism. Our alternative below reflects these rejections.

A non- or anti-reductionist approach to class eschews in principle the analytical search for last, final or ultimate causes or determinants. Hence it can never find class or any other social aspect to be such a cause. Instead, the goal is to explore the complex ways in which a chosen set of social aspects interrelate as simultaenous causes and effects. Marxists can then choose, for divers reasons, to explore sets which include class without this implying any reductionist conception of class either as THE determinant cause or as the effect of something else designated as such a determinant cause.

The problem of reductionism is its nearly unquestioned prevalence in both Marxist and non-Marxist discussions of class as well as many other social issues.

Notwithstanding pronouncements in favor of complex conceptions of causality, reductionist celebrations of "key explanatory variables" dominate discussions of class. Proponents of power, property and surplus labor definitions of class are usually on common ground in asserting the causative primacy of class. Indeed, the intensity of debate among them has much to do with their common reductionism. Thus, a property theorist of class will likely make power and surplus labor mere effects of property distributions. A power theorist will reply that property distributions and the structure of surplus labor production/appropriation are necessary consequences of particular power relations. Finally, the class-as-surplus-labor theorist can insist that allocations of power and property follow rather from individuals' different relationships to the production and appropriation of surplus labor production. These three groups are thus locked into a debate over whether class, as each defines it, is key cause or mere effect.

There are also more subtle kinds of reductionism found particularly in Marxist discussions of class. They occur in conceptualizations of class as a composite entity composed of economic, political and cultural constitutents. Indeed, such composite conceptualizations often emerge as critical reactions against uni-dimensional concepts of class as either power, property or surplus labor groupings. The reductionism surfaces in arguments among proponents of such composite theories over which aspect of class is "the most fundamental" in determining that a class exists (rather than merely a group of persons).

One example of this is the influential formulation of the distinction between class "in itself" and class "for itself." The former is thought to be structurally defined in terms of power, property, surplus labor, etc. The latter is defined as the former plus an element of consciousness: class

for itself as an ideological (cultural) as well as economic and political entity. Classes, in effect, are defined to exist at two levels, one more complete than the other. Proponents of such formulations have often been reductionist in then striving to make consciousness the key determinant of class in the second and fuller sense.[9] For example, Edward Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class opens with a Preface insisting that class only finally "happens" when persons in certain "productive relations" acquire a certain consciousness.[10] Here Thompson reduces his composite concept of class to one determinant aspect: consciousness. G.A. Cohen directly rebuts Thompson: class exists whether or not consciousness of class does, it is only a matter of a person's position within the production relations.[11] Cohen then defines these relations in terms of "effective power over persons and productive forces"[12] This is a typical composite definition of class - as power-plus-property. But Cohen not only objects to Thompson's reduction of class to consciousness, he also excludes the consciousness aspect altogether from his definition. Cohen does not, however, reject reductionist reasoning per se. His book endorses what he sees as Marx's valid reduction of the history of relations of production (which define class) to an effect of the development of the forces of production (technology).

Another example of composite notions of class that display reductionism is the formulation of class as a matter of an individual's (or a group's) "life chances" to achieve power, property, prestige, etc.[13] Here, the affirmation that many divers social forces influence the nature of such life chances - and thus one's class position - is followed by debates over which force is "most influential." In short, life chances are theorized reductively as the effects of some key cause(s) such as power, property, etc.

Marx on Class

A treatment of Marx's own theory of class might well begin with the puzzling last chapter of CAPITAL, volume 3. After a brief page and a half, Engels ends the volume with the remark: "At this point the manuscript breaks off." One type of interpretation of this chapter concludes that Marx never produced a theory of class and classes. Other interpretations infer the need to look instead at Marx's writings other than CAPITAL. Pamphlets such as The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, The Civil Wars in France, and The Communist Manifesto may then provide the elements to be constructed into a Marxist theory of class.

Our approach builds upon but also departs from all such interpretations. We agree that Marx never wrote an analysis of class per se along the lines suggested in Chapter 52 of CAPITAL, volume 3. But we reject the view that CAPITAL contains no general theory of class. On the contrary, we find a general theory of class to permeate both the broad logic as well as the detailed discussions across all the volumes of CAPITAL. In our view, Marx's Chapter 52 aimed to make explicit what was elaborately implicit throughout CAPITAL. Such explicit expression is then what we intend as well here. Our approach also agrees with those who look into Marx's political pamphlets for valuable clues to his theory of class. However, we do so not because CAPITAL is silent on class, but because we find there useful additional contributions beyond the basic analysis offered in CAPITAL.

Across the writings of Marx and Engels, different usages of the term class can readily be identified. We do not contend that some single consistent definition is framed and then consistently applied and elaborated in their

work. On the contrary, concepts of class as property, power, surplus labor or even composites of these can be found scattered across CAPITAL and Marx's and Engels' other writings. After all, the major influences on their thinking about class were themselves largely committed to reductionist property and power conceptualizations.[14] Given the interest of Marx and Engels in critically confronting those influences, it is hardly surprising to find those conceptualizations in their work. However, we see their studies moving critically away from power and property theories of class toward what we call here the surplus labor formulation. It is in this context that we interpret Marx's remarks on his concept of class:

> No credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me, bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic activity of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: 1. that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production... - Marx to J. Weydemeyer, March 5, 1852; italics in original.

Marx sought here to underscore his shift of analytical focus to the conception of class as the production of surplus labor. We understand similarly Engels' later critique of a property concept of class for its unwanted political implications:

> To describe every interference of the state in free competition - protective tariffs, guilds, tobacco monopoly, nationalization of branches of industry, [state banking], the royal porcelain factory - as "socialism" is a sheer falsification by the Manchester bourgeoisie in their own interests. - Engels to E. Bernstein, March 12, 1881.

Marx and Engels were, we believe, moving to distinguish their concept of class from the power and property formulations that both preceeded them and swirled around them even among their comrades in the International. As another

example, consider Marx's famous critique of social democracy in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte: "democratic-republican insitutions are demanded not as a means of doing away with both the extremes, capital and wage-labor, but of weakening their antagonism and transforming it into harmony." For Marx, then, the amelioration of property and power inequalities did not address the issue of the production and distribution of surplus labor which his class revolutionary perspective emphasized.

In any case, the different and incompatible conceptions of class present within the works of Marx and Engels impose on every reader the problem of interpreting their coexistence. One can, of course, continue to produce texts interweaving incompatible concepts of class - as much Marxist literature has done. Or we can recognize the significant differences among alternative concepts of class and choose among them. Our interpretation, as we shall show, finds a transition in Marx from property and power theories toward a systematic surplus labor production/distribution concept of class. This interpretation will in turn require that we confront the problems posed by opting for systematic theorizing in which one particular concept of class displaces the others. Nor does this exhaust the tough theoretical choices required by confrontation with Marx's work. Will the logic of class analysis link class and non-class aspects of societies in reductionist ways or via overdetermination? Our interpretation will take the latter route.

The Prevalent Forms of Class Analysis

Our survey of the most prevalent forms of class analysis requires several preliminary observations. First, as we noted in Marx's case, writers and texts are rarely pure exponents of one conception of class. They typically exhibit more than one. Thus, when we cite an author as an exemplification of one conception, we do not mean to imply that he/she never formulated another view of class. Secondly, ours is not a complete or exhaustive literature review; we range across the literature to cull clear examples of the most prevalent formulations. Finally, we propose to organize our survey by subdividing these formulations into three types: conceptions of class as property, as power, and as a complex composite entity of several different elements. We begin with illustrations of the property approach.

In a recent history of "socialist" economic thought, its Marxist authors open their book with this remarkable sentence: "The problem of the private ownership of the means of production moved only slowly into the centre of economic studies, only in Marx's own work becoming for the first time the centre of analysis."[15] One of the most well-known and influential studies of the links between Marxist and feminist analyses asserts that "a Marxist definition of class rests on relationship to ownership of the means of production."[16] The Marxist labor historian Jurgen Kuczynski defines the "modern working class" as different from other classes in the following most basic sense: "It is a question of property."[17]

Indeed, innumerable Marxist texts for a hundred years contain virtual identifications of class structure with property distribution. In a famous article Paul Sweezy posed the following basic question: "What is it that

determines how many classes there are and where the dividing lines are drawn?" He responded directly and precisely: "Generally speaking, the answer is obvious (and is borne out by all empirical investigations): the property system plays this key role."[18] Later, in 1967, Sweezy focused his deepening critique of the Soviet Union around his analysis of a "stratum" enjoying a growing "material inequality" which "hardens into a class after several generations."[19] Oskar Lange's is also a classic treatment:

> In order to understand the system of social relations which emerge in the process of production, one must first of all pick out from among them certain fundamental relations which determine the character of the entire complicated network. The basic relation arises from the ownership of the means of production.[20]

Non-Marxist scholars also frequently interpret Marxism as a property theory of class which reduces social structure to an effect of class so conceived. Thus, for Ralf Dahrendorf, "Marx believed that authority and power are factors which can be traced back to a man's share in effective private property [ownership]."[21] Dahrendorf read Marx to be affirming a property theory of class which approached power relations as simply a consequence of property distributions (class). Anthony Giddens and C. Wright Mills also understood property to be the distinctively Marxian basis of class.[22] Dahrendorf chose to reject the property theory of class he found in Marxism in favor of a theory of classes defined according to social power wielded. By contrast, Giddens accepted a property basis for class, but broadened the definition of property to include intangible (ideas, knowledges, etc.) as well as tangible forms of property. Robert Lekachman's interpretation of Marx was stark and simple: "Marx conceived of classes as conforming to economic categories. The distinction between classes, then, was a matter of ownership only."[23]

The Soviet legal theorist E.B. Pashukanis understood the transition from capitalism to socialism as a consequence of the demise of that property form which, for him, literally defined the capitalist class. Thus, the passage from private property in the means of production to the fully developed joint stock corporation undermined the capitalist and capitalism in favor of the socialized means of production and hence socialism.[24] The Austro-Marxist Karl Renner also theorized class in terms of property ownership, but found this theory wanting when it came to analyzing the class position of certain performers of services. He called for a new theory better suited to the new classes of modern society.[25] The definition of class in property terms has also characterized much Soviet literature. For example, Stalin's famous 1936 report to the Seventh Congress of Soviets on the draft constitution affirmed that the USSR's had "no longer any exploiting classes" because it had eradicated private ownership in means of production.[26]

One of the most thorough and theoretically self-conscious explorations of a property concept of class occurs in the recent work of Paul Hirst and Barry Hindess. In three successive books, they develop, correct and elaborate "concepts of possession and separation from the means of production...central to the analysis of economic classes."[27] Hindess and Hirst elaborated their property theory of class to produce one of the most extensive comparisons of non-capitalist class structures produced in the Marxist tradition. Class structures were differentiated in terms of their different patterns of ownership of vs separation from means of production. Their approach has also been systematically and strictly anti-reductionist, as well as innovative in several respects. A unifying theme in their work is the view (which they ascribe also

to Marx) that "the private possession of the means of production" implies "the consequent division of society into classes."[28]

Slight variations of the property theory shift the definition of class away from ownership or separation from the means of production to more general differentiations either between wealth and poverty ("rich" and "poor" classes) or between high and low incomes (non-wage vs wage earners). In particular, the latter criterion of class - as a matter of one's position in the hierarchy of income levels - is very widely used in both Marxist and non-Marxist discussions. Expressions such as "the class of poor people" or "middle class" or "the rich" denote a theory allocating individuals to classes according to either their current incomes or assets or combinations of both. Thus, for example, one of the most widely circulated writings of the early USSR defined its proletarian dictatorship as follows: "The Soviet Power openly proclaims its class character. It makes no attempt to conceal that it is a class power... the dictatorship of the poor."[29] Samir Amin analyses the capitalist mode of production at the center of the world economy as polarized into two basic classes, bourgeoisie and proletariat, with the latter defined as "made up of wage-earning employees of capitalist enterprises."[30] One's class position is here determined by the kind of income flow one gets, not what kind of social power one wields nor whether one produces, appropriates or receives distributed shares of surplus labor. When treated at all, such latter considerations are generally made derivative from one's income position.

Whether "property" referred to means of production, wealth in stocks of commodities or levels of income flows, many interpreters attributed such property theories of class to Marx. He was also understood to conceive such

classes as prone to struggles aimed at redistributions of property and/or income. Often historical change was reduced to the effect of these struggles. However, the property concept of class has always confronted, interacted and often coexisted in the same discourse with other, different concepts of class which remain to be surveyed briefly.

Class can be defined not as based upon property but rather as a matter of wielding power over persons, controlling other people's behavior. Groups of persons are then treated as classes to the extent that they share a common status as either wielders of power or subject to the power of others. The social distribution of authority defines class positions. The adjectives which usually signal the presence of power theories of class are "ruling" vs "ruled" or "dominant" vs "dominated." Class struggles then become struggles over power, especially although not exclusively state power. The powerless classes struggle to acquire power while the powerful struggle to remain or perhaps to gain more power.

Non-Marxists have long been particularly interested in affirming pointedly political concepts of class which they often distance sharply from property concepts which they ascribe to Marx and Marxists. A canon of such interpretation is, for example, Gaetano Mosca's view of class analysis as a specifically political science focused on the issue of who rules whom.[31] C. Wright Mills influenced many Marxists and non-Marxists in arguing for the need to move away from property theories of class (attributed to Marx) and toward class analytics reformulated as theories of power wielding elites.[32] Ralf Dahrendorf offers a particularly clear formulation which directly confronts alternative notions of class:

> But Marx believed that authority and power are factors which can be traced back to a man's share in effective private property [ownership]. In reality, the opposite is the case. Power and authority are irreducible factors from which the social relations associated with legal private property as well as those associated with communal property can be derived.[33]

Here Dahrendorf moves from a rejection of the property notion of class to a general theory of classes as constituted in and through power struggles per se. Whenever people associate into groups to contend against other groups over any particular objective(s), these groups are classes. "If, in a given society, there are fifty associations, we should expect to find a hundred classes, or conflict groups in the sense of the present study."[34] Dahrendorf is equally direct in affirming a reverse reductionism to that which he finds in Marx. Dahrendorf reduces property distribution to an effect of power and authority relations.

Many Marxist theorists have recently moved toward a kind of political conception of class not far removed from Dahrendorf's approach. One stimulus has been a feeling that in western capitalist nations particularly, a broadly comfortable "middle income class" has made issues of income and wealth less urgent and less central than issues of power. Such theorists perceive that more equitable wealth and income distributions have evolved alongside (and often masking) more inequitable power distributions. Thus activist and analytical focus has shifted from struggles over property to struggles over power and its social distribution. Property seems to have given way to power - in the home, at the workplace, in the state - as the cutting edge of social struggles animating socialists and thus Marxist theorists.

Another motivation toward a power theory of class among Marxists has come from their conclusion that classlessness and its rewards have not appeared

in societies which nationalized or socialized ownership in the means of production. Intolerable power distributions - if not property distributions - remain in such societies. This interpretation has links to the view that what was objectionable about capitalist society was not only its property allocation but even more its unjust distributions of power and authority. Marx's writings are then interpreted as analyses of classes as groups which either possess or are separated from power over the social behavior of others (or Marx is faulted, as in Dahrendorf, for insufficient attention to power). In any case, analytical focus shifts toward comprehending social dynamics increasingly in terms of power centers, more or less understood as ruling classes, counterposed to relatively powerless and dominated classes.

Groups of distinctly powerless persons move to the center of Marxist analyses. They may do so as "classes," the proper object of Marxist theory. Or they may displace class analysis when class is viewed as mere property or some other equally out-of-date left-over from an earlier Marxism unaware of the centrality of power relations. General concepts such as oppression, which function in terms of powerful/powerless dichotomies, or more specific concepts such as patriarchy, which builds upon a gender distribution of social power, then prevail in Marxist discussions. We are here interested in those, chiefly Marxists, who incorporate the analytic focus on power by defining classes as groups of persons differentiated according to the quanta of power they wield in the actual conflicts that characterize social life.

Ernesto Laclau endorses "the Marxist conception of classes according to which they constitute themselves through the act of struggle itself."[35] Struggle between social groups implies dispute over objectives; one group contests with

another to attain their different objectives in some specific social context. Struggle is first of all a matter of power. Which struggling group of persons wins its objectives depends on their relative power positions in that society at that time. To define classes in terms of actual social struggles amounts to a form of the power conception of class. Bob Jessop and Adam Przeworski work with such formulations: "class struggle is first of all a struggle about the formation of class forces before it is a struggle between class forces."[36] Jessop clearly reached such a formulation by explicitly distancing himself from what he saw as the unacceptable Marxist tendency to reduce complex social power struggles to mere effects of class understood in property or surplus labor terms. Marxists, he reasons, need to overcome their denigration of power. Thus he oscillates between formulations such as that above which seem to make class into a power concept and formulations which separate "class" from power while insisting on the centrality of power to Marxist analysis.

Nicos Poulantzas has made major contributions to Marxian class analytics, summarized in the rich and condensed "Introduction" to his Classes in Contemporary Capitalism.[37] Poulantzas there advances arguments involving several definitions of class. His is certainly a composite conceptualization. He gives a special place and emphasis to ownership of the means of production. He also writes of "the decisive role of the division between manual labour and mental labour in the determination of social classes." And he devotes much attention to relations of "domination/subordination" in constituting classes as well. Poulantzas, like Marx, presents us with complex formulations which require an interpretation as to whether some particular definition of class prevails over others, and if so which one.

A famous table contained in this summary and figuring prominently in other writings by Poulantzas and some of the other Marxists influenced by him (e.g., Erik Olin Wright) provides support for the following interpretation. Poulantzas' work represents a move away from property and narrowly economic concepts of class toward power concepts. In his distinction between class places (given by the social structure) and class positions (given by conjunctural struggles in a society), what is most striking is the centrality of the concept of domination/subordination to both places and position. Classes in his sense of class places exist at three social levels: the economic, political and ideological. At each level, Poulantzas juxtaposes a dominant and a dominated group, i.e., classes. At the economic level, the dominant are exploiters while the dominated are exploited; this is his acknowledgement of the economic (surplus labor) aspect of class. However, at the other level he cites domination and subordination - not further designated - as the contrasts defining class places. Actual classes then would appear to be defined by reference necessarily to all three levels. What all levels have in common is precisely not property dimensions nor dimensions in terms of the production or distribution of surplus labor. They all share the dichotomy of domination/subordination. Poulantzas' prevalent notion of class places thus centers on powerful/powerless differentiations. In this sense, his is a power theory of class. When he turns to an analysis of class positions - the actual sides taken in what he calls "conjunctural struggles" he emphasizes that persons in one class place can and do often take positions in social struggles which do not "correspond to its interests." The key point here is Poulantzas' evident determination to call the sides taken in social conflicts - power struggles - class positions, i.e., classes. Thus Poulantzas argues for a modern and more subtle Marxist analysis which must operate with

both distinct concepts of class - as places and as positions. And both of his concepts raise issues of power above those of property or surplus labor as most central and basic to class analysis.[38]

Two recent texts indicate the status of the debate within Marxism over conceptualizations of class in terms of power relations. Alex Callinicos criticizes the theoretical move toward a focus on power as a departure from Marxism which he sees as focused elsewhere, chiefly on property (the social distribution of means of production) and also on surplus labor appropriation.[39] Callinicos sees positive benefits for Marxism from its confrontation with French structuralism, but he also sees great damage in its shift of theoretical focus to power and away from property. In his view, the events of May, 1968, in France, placed power relations and knowledge (students, state, universities, culture) at the center of theoretical concern with the critique of capitalism. His reaction against class analyses conducted in terms of power (domination/subordination) propels him to reaffirm a concept of class as primarily property and secondarily surplus labor production.[40] At the other pole in Marxist debates lie formulations which take the power focus to a logical next step. They define class as the outcome of the existence of any social groups whose different "needs" impel them to struggle over environmental, sexual, work-related and many other issues. Stanley Aronowitz argues that the "conjuncture of struggles constituting themselves on the basis of these needs may form a class..."[41] The proximity of this power concept of class to that of Dahrendorf is striking.

Beside the theorizations of class which define the term quite straighforwardly in terms either of property or power, there are what might best be

described as complex, multi-dimensional conceptions of class. These conceptions insist that class can not be defined simply as either a property, a power or even a surplus labor matter. Rather, class is celebrated as a specific but complex social phenomenon with several component elements: class becomes a composite term to denote part or even all of "the social relations of production." Composite conceptions of class are sometimes attributed to Marx and sometimes offered instead as improvements on a narrow, uni-dimensional concept attributed to him. Many who prefer composite concepts of class not only criticize the narrow conceptions as inadequate, they also debate among themselves about which of the component elements of class are the most important. These debates, as our discussion can illustrate, usually involve contesting positions on the question of which component element of class determines the other elements.

One Marxist approach to class as a complexity is typified by E.P. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class. This work inspires and serves as a model for many Marxists precisely because of his success in presenting the interplay among economic, political and cultural processes which combined to create (or "overdetermine") the English working class. However, as noted above, Thompson's work involves his strong desire to escape the simple, economistic definitions of class which, in his view, mar the Marxist tradition. Thus, his emphasis shifts rather to the consciousness component of his complex notion of class: "Class is defined by men as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition."[42] The shift of emphasis in Thompson's composite view of class becomes a reductionism: class is only finally historically real and effective when its key constituent element, class consciousness, has been fashioned. Of all the components of class, consciousness is the most important, at least from the standpoint of concrete historical class relations.

Guglielmo Carchedi's composite conceptualization of class takes into account and combines most of the notions present in the Marxist tradition. He defines a person's class position in terms of the following list of elements: does the person own or not own means of production; does he/she exploit or suffer exploitation; does he/she oppress or suffer oppression; and does he/she "perform the functions of global capital or of the collective laborer."[43] Such listings serve simultaneously as definitions of "social relations of production" and of the class structures implied or generated by those relations. Carchedi is careful to insist upon the inclusion of non-economic as well as economic elements in the definition of social classes. Like Thompson, he makes consciousness a component of class. Like Thompson, he also reverts to reductionism, feeling that otherwise "we would leave the realm of Marxism to fall into the structuralist morass."[44] But Carchedi's reductionism differs from Thompson's in his preference for the economic over the consciousness elements as most determinant of class: "Classes are defined always in economic, in political and in ideological terms. The economic definition of classes (in terms of production relations) is always the fundamental one..."[45]

Another composite conceputalization of class is carefully crafted to include property, power and surplus labor appropriation and yet also to reduce the composite to its political component: power. "Class relations are forms of domination involving the expropriation of surplus labor time through the operation of property relations in the means of production."[46] In this statement, the essential social force has become interpersonal relations of domination; these are understood to shape social structure and change. A critique of economic determination propels its proponents to a political (power or

domination relations) determinism instead. Such essentialized domination relations take on different forms depending on the different areas of social life in which they are expressed. Thus class is the economic form of domination (as distinguished from political and cultural forms). Class involves property and surplus labor also, but these are just the economic forms, the economic expression of the underlying and determinant power relations. A composite of class is reduced to its power component as the dominant element in the composite.

In briefer formulations of this composite sort, class is often reduced to a matter of ownership and control - the two words placed together and one or the other emphasized according to the concrete issues at hand. Or one word is reduced to the effect of the other. Among non-Marxists, problems in conceiving of capitalists (or "entrepreneurs," etc.) in terms of power and/or property were provoked by the famous study of modern corporations by A.A. Berle, Jr. and Gardiner Means in the early 1930s.[47] Their conclusions held that the locus of business power, of capital, had shifted from owners (of the capital value, i.e., shareholders) to wielders of power over basic business decisions (corporate executives who need not own shares). In their view and that of other non-Marxists who developed their arguments, a new capitalist class - perhaps best called a "managerial class" - arose with the growth of large, multi-unit corporations and fundamentally altered the economic and social structure of modern capitalist societies.[48] Power had displaced property as the distinctive definition of the capitalist class.

The contention that this shift marked an epoch-making transformation of capitalism also provoked Marxist responses. For Marxists, the Berle and Means

study posed the question of whether and how to adjust the concept of the capitalist class (and hence class generally) to Berle and Means' conclusions. Need Marxists change their definition of class based on property to one based on power? Are corporate executives perhaps a different class from owners of corporate stocks, and which then are the capitalists? Or would such a change undercut important, distinctive aspects of Marxian theory generally. One example of a widely adopted reaction to Berle and Means' findings is presented by Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy in their Monopoly Capital.[49] Baran and Sweezy make class a matter of property and power together: "Far from being a separate class, they [corporate managers] constitute in reality the leading echelon of the property-owning class."[50] This resolution of the problem exemplifies a composite conceptualization of class in which property is the key and dominant determinant. The capitalist class is defined chiefly by ownership of means of production; secondarily it is defined (and divided into echelons) by power wielded over and through corporations.

One kind of composite conceptualization of class which has drawn increasing attention recently focuses upon the divison of labor between mental and manual exertion. Such theorizations typically see in modern science and technology a major component of class definitions and distinctions. The French upheavals of 1968 spawned a host of reformulations of class in terms that combined older criteria (property, power, etc.) with a special emphasis upon science and technology in shaping what were understood as class divisions between manual and mental labor.[51] Interestingly, dissident theorists in Eastern Europe seem also to attach importance and even an ultimately determinant role to mental/manual labor divisions in defining classes. In Rudolf Bahro's view,

> If the classes bound up with private property are destroyed or rendered impotent, the earlier element of the division of mental and manual labour emerges once again as an autonomous factor of class formation.[52]

Marxists have not been alone in pursuing composite concepts of class which include divers elements. Max Weber has served many non-Marxists (and likely many Marxists too) as a source of composite usages of class. He wove together property, market buying power, consciousness and prestige into an eclectic combination in which both classes and "strata" were important but not always easily distinguished.[53] One modern student of Weber illustrates his influence by arguing that class "can be defined as the interaction patterns connecting a set of people," and that it is "distinguished by its members sharing a common culture...differentiated according to authority and wealth, hence also according to influence and power (whether in market, government or elsewhere)."[54]

As noted, among the theories of class as a composite entity many include reference to surplus labor production. Some even make the extraction of surplus labor the most important and determining of the several elements that define class. An exemplary formulation is the following:

> Marx's emphasis on consciousness and community clearly suggests, therefore, a complex rather than uni-dimensional theory of class. Class is never a single homogeneous structure, but rather a cluster of groups... Thus the ruling class is never a simple homogeneous whole, but consists of contradictory elements - the representatives of heavy industry and light industry, finance capitalists - although the whole, the unity of the various competing elements, is held together by one overriding interest, the exploitation of labor power.[55]

What is striking about the vast majority of theorizations of class as a composite entity is their tendencies to determine a most important or

ultimately determinant element within class. Class is many things of which one is the dominant element. It is usually property or power, which is not surprising given the widespread conceptualizations of class as uni-dimensionally property and power. The prevalent theories of class are those which either define class narrowly as a matter of property or power distribution or more broadly as a composite of several elements within which power or property are the ultimate ultimate determinants. There are relatively few exceptions to this prevalence in both Marxist and non-Marxist literature (although, as noted, many Marxists include and some emphasize surplus labor appropriation in their conceptualizations of class.) In this sense, our reading of Marx's definition of class differs sharply from the prevalent theories.

We may distinguish our sense of Marx's theory of class along two indicative dimensions. We understand class to be defined narrowly in terms of the specific processes of producing and distributing surplus labor. We also understand the relations between class and all the other, non-class aspects of society (e.g., power, property, and culture) in a strictly non-reductionist way. Class is neither reduced to an effect of any of them, nor are any of them reducible to the mere effects of class defined in surplus labor terms.

Class as the Production, Appropriation and Distribution of Surplus Labor

Since our reading of Marx and the specific concept of class we find there has been presented exhaustively elsewhere, only a brief summary is appropriate here.[56] We think that Marx used the word class to mean a very particular economic process: the production of surplus labor. In all human

societies, some people directly produce goods and services. Part of what they produce they also consume: we follow Marx in labeling this consumed portion the fruit of the necessary labor of the direct producers. However, these direct producers also perform labor beyond this necessary amount: the surplus labor. The process of performing or producing this surplus labor is what we think Marx meant by class: the class process. Much of his CAPITAL, volume 1, is devoted to a careful specification and elaboration of this class process.

What is necessary labor in any society at any particular time depends on the entirety of that society's history to that time. It is a quantity complexly determined and in no way reducible to any physical or subsistence minimum. Moreover, the existence of a surplus labor production process raises immediately the questions of who obtains its fruits and how they are further distributed throughout the society. We understand Marx's answers to these questions as follows: surplus labor produced is appropriated. The production and appropriation of surplus labor are two sides of the class process. A human being can function on one or the other or both sides; he/she may produce or appropriate surplus labor or do both. The class process defines, thus, two different class positions: performer and appropriator of surplus labor.

However, Marx elaborated his class theory well beyond this "fundamental" (as he puts it) concept of class developed in CAPITAL, volume 1. Especially in CAPITAL, volume 3, he addresses the question of the initial distribution of surplus labor's fruits from its appropriators to other persons. This is itself a distinct social process: the distribution of already appropriated surplus labor (or its fruits). It is different from the production/appropriation

of surplus labor. However, like the latter process, the distribution of appropriated surplus labor also defines two different class positions: distributors and recipients.

To summarize this conceptualization of class, we may say that there are two kinds of class processes. The first or fundamental class process is the production/appropriation of surplus labor. It defines two fundamental classes: producers and appropriators. The second, which we call the subsumed class process, refers to the distribution of surplus labor from its appropriators to others. It defines two subsumed classes: distributors and recipients of surplus labor. Any individual may occupy all, none or any combination of these class positions. Class analysis is precisely the effort to think about society by focusing upon which people occupy which class positions and with what social effects.

Marx sought repeatedly to work through the relationships between the fundamental and subsumed class processes, between fundamental and subsumed classes. We may summarize his detailed arguments as follows: the appropriators distribute the surplus labor (or its fruits) to persons who perform other (non-class) social processes without which the production/appropriation of surplus labor would be jeopardized or not occur at all. That is, for direct producers to perform surplus labor, a great many other processes must be in place. Cultural, political, natural and economic processes of all sorts literally create the conditions for, i.e., bringing into existence, the fundamental class process. However, for many of these conditions to occur requires human labor, and this human labor needs to be sustained. It is sustained precisely by means of distributions to it of surplus labor appropriated from the direct producers.

Subsumed classes are those people who do not produce or appropriate surplus labor, but rather live by providing the conditions of existence for the production/appropriation of surplus labor. Marx's shorthand differentiation between laborers performing surplus labor in the capitalist fundamental class process (producing surplus value) and laborers providing conditions of existence for the fundamental class process is the "productive/unproductive" distinction. The former laborers are productive (of surplus value), while the latter are unproductive in strictly and only this sense.[57]

Fundamental and subsumed class processes thus require each other if each is to continue to exist, if the social class structure which they comprise is to be reproduced. However, they are distinct social processes with different relations to the society within which they occur. Thus a person occupying a subsumed class position is dependent upon different social forces and individuals as compared to someone occupying a fundamental class position. A major purpose of Marxist theory is to understand precisely what difference it makes whether and how a person participates in different class processes. This is the contribution offered by Marxist theory to social revolutionary movements. The Marxist insight is that surplus labor production and distribution exist and that they affect people in specific, different ways which must be understood and integrated into revolutionary strategies if they are to succeed in constructing a just society.

Such a conception of classes implies that Marxists who use it approach social analysis with an emphasis upon finding and examining the various forms in which surplus labor gets produced, appropriated and distributed. The theoretical goal is to show how class processes both determine and are determined by non-class processes in social change. The analysis does not reduce all the

myriad non-class aspects of social life to mere effects of some ultimately determinant set of class processes. The logic used in linking class and non-class aspects of social life is not determinist or reductionist; rather it is overdeterminist.

As we understand Marxist theory, it requires no assertion that class is the central moving force of social history. We are not arguing that the surplus labor definition of class is somehow right while alternative definitions are wrong. Our preference for the surplus labor definition follows from our understanding of Marx's signal achievement. His contribution was to discover and begin analysis of a distinctive social process - class qua surplus labor production and distribution - which his fellow social revolutionaries had either missed, dimly understood, or relegated to minor, derivative status. To recognize Marx's achievement and incorporate it into our analysis obliges us to see the different processes of property and power as both causes and effects of class. We extend the same perspective to cultural processes of consciousness in terms of their mutual cause and effect relation to class, power, property, and so on.

The term denoting this complex general approach to causation as a seamless webb of cause and effect tying together all aspects of any social totality was the "dialectics" so much discussed and debated in the pre-World War Two Marxist tradition. That tradition has since been enriched by the particular contributions of Georg Lukacs and Louis Althusser who adapted Sigmund Freud's term, "overdetermination," to characterize a strictly non-reductionist (or anti-essentialist) notion of social causality.[58]

Overdetermination becomes then their newly constructed meaning for the Marxist, not the Hegelian, dialectic. In turn, the application of overdetermination

in our work has also changed and added further to the term.

Thus, in our reading, Marx examines the distinctively capitalist fundamental classes as those who perform surplus labor - the productive laborers - and those who appropriate it in the form of surplus value - the industrial capitalists. This capitalist fundamental class process and the two class positions which it defines occupy Marx's attention in CAPITAL, volume 1. However, in volume 3 Marx turns his attention to a sequence of subsumed classes. Merchants, moneylenders, joint-stock company managers, and landlords are analyzed in terms of their receipt of distributions of surplus labor from the industrial capitalists who appropriated it. Each of these subsumed classes is shown to obtain its distribution (which is precisely what makes it a subsumed class) so as to secure some particular condition of existence of the capitalist fundamental class process.

Merchants get a discount in buying the commodity outputs of industrial capitalists because their purchases facilitate a more rapid turnover of the latter's capital than would be possible without merchants. Industrial capitalists' competitive survival depends on the surplus value they can appropriate which in turn depends on the turnover rate of their capital (how quickly their invested capital returns to be reinvested by them). Selling capitalist commodities to merchants as fast as they come out of production speeds turnover and thereby secures a condition of the industrial capitalist's existence. The discount which the merchant gets when buying industrial capitalists' commodity outputs is then the form in which those capitalists distribute a portion of the surplus value appropriated from their workers to the merchants. It is important to note that the specific economic process performed by merchants -

the process of buying/selling or commodity exchange - is not a class process; it is a non-class process providing conditions of existence for the class process.

Moneylenders get their distribution, interest payment from industrial capitalists, because they provide another condition of existence of the capitalist fundamental class process. They perform yet another non-class process: extending credit. Access to credit is a condition of existence for the industrial capitalist. To secure that condition, a subsumed class distribution of a portion of appropriated surplus value (interest) is paid to the moneylender. Parallel logic leads Marx to identify stock dividends similarly as subsumed class payments to owners of wealth. The latter receive dividends because they make their wealth available to industrial capitalists who use it to appropriate surplus value from productive laborers. Access to such wealth has become a condition of existence of the industrial capitalists, once joint-stock enterprises replaced the owner/operator capitalists.

Managers of joint-stock companies, Marx's term for what we now call corporations, provide still other conditions of existence for the capitalist fundamental class process. They perfrom certain political, economic and cultural processes without which industrial capitalists' appropriation of surplus value would be jeopardized. They impose, for example, work discipline upon productive laborers. They perform a political process - controlling the social behavior of those laborers - without which their surplus labor would be less or nil. For wielding power in this way such managers obtain distributed shares of the appropriated surplus and hence are a subsumed class.

Other corporate managers participate in cultural processes, for example, generating written materials and media presentations offering particular interpretations of the goals and nature of the corporation. They aim to secure certain cultural conditions of existence of the capitalist fundamental class process, namely popular attitudes affirming the legitimacy of the corporation. For so doing, they also obtain distributed shares of appropriated surplus value. Managers also engage in economic processes, for example, purchasing raw materials, labor power and equipment. Without such inputs, the production of commodities and hence the appropriation of surplus value would not be possible. They therefore likewise receive distributed portions of appropriated surplus value for carrying out such purchases. All corporate managers obtain their subsumed class distributions as salaries plus funds incidentally needed to perform their assigned duties.

Lastly, landlords must grant industrial capitalists access to privately owned land. To appropriate surplus value, a portion of the planet's surface must be made available. Access to land is then a condition of existence of the capitalist fundamental class process. If land is privately owned, the industrial capitalist must distribute a share of his/her appropriated surplus value to the landlord - in the form of a rent payment - in order to secure the requisite access. Hence landlords count among Marx's subsumed classes.

Marx's particular kind of analysis, then, specifically links the fundamental and subsumed class processes to a host of non-class processes. The linkage between political, cultural and economic (including class) processes is one of overdetermination: each distinct process exists as the combined effect of all the others. No reductionism is possible here, no ranking of

the relative effectivity of one vs another process. Marxism's point is to affirm and integrate class processes into the conception of the social totality to be changed; it is not to deny, denigrate or subordinate the social effectivity of non-class processes. To collapse class into processes of power or property or consciousness would then precisely lose the specific difference, the unique contribution of Marxist theory.

Implications of Different Class Theories

If we can gain agreement that the processes of power, property, surplus labor production and distribution, consciousness and so on are different, then certain conclusions may reasonably be drawn. Calling them all "class" conflates and confuses what would better be kept clearly distinct. More important, a change in any one of these processes leaves open the question of just how that change will impact upon the other processes. For example, a change in power processes, say toward more democratic control over the state, may or may not alter the fundamental and subsumed class processes from a capitalist to a communist form. A change in laborer's consciousness can affect processes of property in different ways depending on all the other processes comprising the full social context of the change in consciousness. A transition from private to socialized property in the means of production - a change in the process of property - may or may not change the class processes from capitalist to communist; that depends on all the other processes in the society at the time of such transition.

The crucial point here is that no invariant relation exists between class and non-class processes. All such relations between two distinct

social processes - class and consciousness or property and power or power and class - vary according to the ever-changing configurations of all the other social processes that mediate such relations. Our Marxist approach, by rejecting reductionism while emphasizing the distinctness of social processes, permits no deduction of change in one social process as some invariantly necessary consequence of a change in another.

Returning to the example of the Soviet Union can serve to underscore the significance of both the specificity of our definition of class and its anti-reductionism. A social struggle over the distribution of property in the means of production may succeed in drastically altering property ownership after 1917 in the USSR. An electoral victory for Francois Mitterand can alter France's distribution of ownership of banks and large corporate enterprises in the 1980s. In each case, a key question for Marxist analysis is to inquire as to the impact of the change in property upon class, i.e., the production, appropriation and distribution of surplus labor. How was the capitalist form of the class processes changed? Was it abolished? Given the changes in class that did result from the change in property, how secure is the change in property itself? These questions flow directly from the kind of class analysis we find in Marx.

These questions would much less likely arise for theorists who think that a change in property distribution IS a change in class, who conflate class and property. Such theorists might well believe that the USSR had abolished classes by socializing the means of production. Further examination, then, of the USSR's class structure to determine the impact of property change upon the production and distribution of surplus labor would be discouraged as

unnecessary or absurd and perhaps revealing an anti-Marxist, subversive intent. Theorizing in similar fashion, social democrats in France might judge the transition to socialism in France to be definitively launched by the nationalization of banks and large industrial groups there. In both cases, and notwithstanding the hostility between many social democrats and the staunch defenders of Soviet socialism, the analyses make changes in property more or less tantamount to socialist class transformation.

In our approach, the changes in "property relations" will impact class differently depending on the configuration of other economic, political and cultural processes in the society. This impels the question: under what conditions will the nationalization or socialization of means of production lead toward rather than away from a strengthened capitalist class structure? Such a question is as urgent for us as it is remote for property theorists of class.

By the same token, changes in power relations, say toward democratic control of state policies, pose the question of the impact these changes may have upon class processes. We can entertain no presumption that any simple cause and effect relation leads from a particular political change to a particular class change. We must ask how the social context of the political change mediates its effects upon class to understand what the class changes are or might be. Such a question is urgent for us, while it makes little sense to power theorists of class. For them, the democratization of power (the demise of the ruler's authority) is or leads necessarily to the end of the ruling/ruled "class structure."

We may clarify the argument further by approaching the link between class and non-class social processes, from another vantage point. Is the change in class processes, from capitalist to communist, possible or securable without certain changes in the configuration of non-class processes within a society? Marxist theory, as we understand it, must answer this question with a resounding "no." Classes processes are the overdetermined effect of all the other, non-class processes in the society (the conditions of existence of the class processes). Thus, in any particular social context, the Marxist objective must be to identify which particular changes in non-class processes might be conducive to change or secure particular class processes.

To take one example, it may be that specific changes in social processes concerned with gender relationships would provide conditions for a change in the class processes of Western capitalist societies today. A change in popular consciousness about what "male" and "female" means (i.e., a change in certain cultural processes) alongside a change in the authority distribution process within families (a change in political or power processes) might combine with a change as women sell more of their labor power as a commodity (a change in the economic process of exchange) to jeopardize capitalist class processes. With other changes in still other social processes - which Marxist analysis seeks to identify - such altered gender relationships might provide the conditions of existence for a revolutionary change to a new social system including a different class structure.

Marxist practical work facilitates and supports those particular changes in social processes which Marxist theory connects, as conditions of existence, to the desired revolutionary social change. In turn, the practical work

encounters social relationships which change Marxist theory in terms of how it understands the complex linkages between class and non-class social processes. Marxist theoretical and practical work depend upon and shape one another, subject to the mediations exercised upon both by all the other processes comprising the social context of Marxism.

The implications of Marxist theory as here understood are particularly important for practical politics by the current movements for basic change to a more just society. As in Marx's time, Marxist theory aims to add basic ideas to the thinking of those movements. Of these ideas, two are key: (a) class is a distinct process of surplus labor production/distribution which is different from the important processes of power, property, consciousness, etc., and (b) the analytical method for linking distinct processes together into a social totality is overdetermination rather than reductionism. We believe that these ideas form a specifically Marxist basis for unity within current movements and thereby enhance the chances for success.

From the standpoint of this Marxist theory, practical unity could well be enhanced by theoretical agreement on these two key ideas. Such unity would not preclude significant differences among Marxists over which particular social processes occupy their analytical and practical energies. The differences would then concern what we have called "entry points." Some Marxists would continue to enter into their social analyses by a focus upon class, upon the forms and interactions of the fundamental and subsumed class processes within a society. They would presumably be animated by the feeling that these were the urgent insights than needed to be contributed to revolutionary movements. Other Marxists, would analyze the society via different

entry points, different foci. Processes of power or property or consciousness, etc., would be their concern; insights about those processes would be their contribution. However, the unity of all would consist in the common recognition of the existence of fundamental and subsumed class processes and the common commitment to non-reductionist ways of thinking.

Of course, the differences will occasion debate and disagreements. Different theoretical entry points will influence social analyses and generate different conclusions. These will pose thorny problems in terms of strategic and tactical decisions about practical work. However, these are useful as well as unavoidable disagreements. They involve disputes over how to see and affect the non-reductionist linkages between class and non-class processes. They are all disputes over these particular issues. They are all conditioned by commitments to basic social changes, although the changes sought will also reflect the different entry points.

The unity underpinning the differences and debates will take several forms. First, different Marxists will finally place behind them the sterile disputations over which aspects of society (power, property, class, etc.) are "the most important" or involve "the most fundamental contradiction." Which social struggle is "ultimately determinant" on historical change will cease to engage debate. Our committments to different entry points will be understood as results of our unique overdeterminations as individuals and not as signs that we do or do not grasp the essential determinants of history. We will all be aiming to understand the complex linkages among class and non-class processes in the societies we want to change. Secondly, whatever the term "class" comes to mean, we will be unified by having learned

Marx's lesson: that among the myriad processes comprising the social totality, the production, appropriation and distribution of surplus labor is one and one which movements for basic social change must understand and include in their strategies. Thirdly, unifying commitments to class as surplus labor and to overdetermination would sharply and clearly differentiate Marxist from bourgeois theories which rarely share either of those commitments and never share both.

FOOTNOTES

1. Our concern to confront the different and often conflicting meanings of class parallels the concern over the different meanings of "capitalism" that agitated Marxist historians some years ago and provoked the famous debates on the transition from feudalism to capitalism. See Rodney Hilton, ed., The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism; London: New Left Books, 1976, for abundant evidences of concern over conflicting meanings of capitalism (summarized tersely in Hilton's own essay, "Capitalism - What's in a Name?" pp. 145-158).

2. Cf. Stanislaw Ossowski, Class Struggle in the Social Consciousness, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963, pp. 121ff.

3. Strictly speaking, property is itself a particular kind of power, namely the power to exclude others from access to an object (or, as in slavery, to another person). However since the tradition has separated property from other kinds of power, we will continue that practice. Hence, our references to power refer here to all kinds other than those involved in property, e.g., the power to design and enforce all sorts of interpersonal bahavior rules within families, the power to design and enforce laws and regulations governing all sort of interpersonal behavior within communities and nations, etc. The powers to control another person's political, legal, sexual, recreational, and travel activities are among the sorts of power other than property.

4. See Resnick and Wolff, "Classes in Marxian Theory," Review of Radical Political Economics, 13:4 (Winter 1982), pp. 1-18.

5. Maurice Dobb, Political Economy and Capitalism, New York: International, n.d., p. 58. In a later formulation, Dobb wrote of capitalism as a system comprising "an employing master class and a subject wage-earning class" in Studies in the Development of Capitalism, New York: International, 1947, p. 253. In both works Dobb also added the appropriation of surplus to power and property in his composite conceptualization of what constituted a capitalist class. Indeed, he also once wrote of "the common interest which constitutes a certain social grouping a class," Ibid., p. 14.

6. See his Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, especially chapters 3 and 4.

7. See the parallel diagnosis of the English working class' self-consciousness in Tom Nairn's review of Jones' book: The Guardian, February 16, 1984, p. 12.

8. Such anti-reductionist notions of causality inform the passage from determinism to "over-determinism" in the work of Louis Althusser and in our own different development of the notion of overdetermination: see Althusser's "Overdetermination and Contradiction," in his For Marx, (Trans. by Ben Brewster), New York: Vintage Books,1970, pp. 87-128) and our "Marxist Epistemology: The Critique of Economic Determinism," Social Text, 6 (1982), pp. 31-72.

9. Georg Lukacs emphasized (and embellished) this distinction which Marx had alluded to but without such emphasis: see Lukacs' "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in his History and Class Consciousness, (Trans. by Rodney Livingstone), London: Merlin Press, 1971, pp. 83-222. For Lukacs, the proletariat's acquisition of consciousness for itself was the only means to supersede its position as an object of history and become finally its revolutionary subject.

10. New York: Vintage Books, 1963, p. 9. Nicos Poulantzas and Erik Olin Wright share this notion: see Wright's discussion of their views in his Class, Crisis and the State, London: New Left Books, 1979, pp. 33ff.

11. G.A. Cohen, Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence, Princeton: University Press, 1978, pp. 73-77.

12. Ibid., p. 63.

13. An exemplary formulation of this position is by the non-Marxist Anthony Giddens, The Class Structure of Advanced Societies, New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

14. Aristotle's property theory of class was known to Marx: see G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World, London: Duckworth, 1981, pp. 68-80. Rousseau's more composite property and power concept of class likewise influenced Marx: see Albert Field and Ronald Sanders, eds., Socialist Thought: A Documentary History, Garden City: Doubleday, 1964, pp. 31-42; and Galvano della Volpe, Rousseau and Marx, (Trans. by John Fraser), London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978. Finally, Gracchus Babeuf, Proudhon, Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen and Blanqui all propounded similar theories of class which Marx and Engels struggled with explicitly: see Fried and Sanders, op.cit., pp. 43-229.

15. Gerd Hardach, Dieter Karras and Ben Fine, A Short History of Socialist Economic Thought, Trans. by James Wickham, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979, p. 2.

16. Michele Barrett, Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis, London: New Left Books, 1980, p. 131.

17. The Rise of the Working Class, Trans. by C.T.A. Ray. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967, p. 10.

18. See "The American Ruling Class" in his The Present as History, New York: Monthly Review, 1953, p. 124.

19. "Lessons of the Soviet Experience," in Sweezy and Charles Bettelheim, On the Transition to Socialism, New York: Monthly Review, 1971, pp. 87-88.

20. See his Political Economy, Vol. 1, Trans. by A.H. Walker, New York: Macmillan, 1963, p. 16. Recently another economist, John Roemer, likewise identifies Marxism with the view that private ownership of the means of production defines class and exploitation; he affirms this view against the alternative definition focused on surplus labor: see his "New Directions in the Marxian Theory of Exploitation and Class," Politics and Society, 11:3 (1982), pp. 253-287 but especially pp. 254 and 287.

21. Class and Class Conflict in an Industrial Society, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959, p. 137.

22. See Giddens, op.cit., pp. 107ff, and Mills, The Marxists, New York: Dell Publishing, 1962, pp. 106ff. We are indebted to William Olson for his detailed studies of Dahrendorf and Giddens.

23. A History of Economic Ideas, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959, p. 224. Lekachman judged this property theory of class to be "oversimple" (p. 226).

24. See his General Theory of Law and Marxism, London: Ink Links, 1978, pp. 176ff.

25. See his "The Service Class" in Bottomore and Goode, op.cit., pp. 249-252.

26. Josef Stalin, Leninism, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1940, pp. 561-567. For another example, see the manual produced in the early 1960s by a group of "scholars, Party officials and publicists:" Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, Trans. by Clemens Dutt, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d., pp. 14 and 187ff.

27. Anthony Cutler, Barry Hindess, Paul Hirst and Athar Hussain, Marx's Capital and Capitalism Today: Volume 1, London and Boston; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, p. 243. The two key earlier works are Hindess and Hirst, Mode of Production and Social Formation, London: Macmillan, 1977 and their Pre-capitalist Modes of Production, London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.

28. Paul Hirst, On Law and Ideology, London: Macmillan, 1979, p. 96.

29. Nicolai Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, The ABC of Communism, Edited by E.H. Carr, Baltimore: Penguin, 1969, p. 220.

30. Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism, Trans. by Brian Pearce, New York and London: Monthly Review, 1976, p. 293.

31. See his The Ruling Class, Trans. by Hannah D. Kahn, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939, especially pp. 50ff.

32. Mills, The Marxists, New York: Dell, 1962, pp. 106ff and his The Power Elite, New York: Oxford, 1956.

33. Ralf Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in an Industrial Society, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959, p. 137.

34. Ibid., p. 213.

35. See his Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory, London: New Left Books, 1977, p. 106.

36. The quotation is from Jessop, "The Poltical Indeterminacy of Democracy," in Alan Hunt, ed., Marxism and Democracy, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980, p. 63; see also Przeworski's "Proletariat into a Class," Politics and Society, 7:4 (1977), pp. 343-401.

37. Trans. by David Fernbach, London: New Left Books, 1978, pp. 13-35 and especially pp. 14-24.

38. Poulantzas' last book presents his most explicit formulation of a power concept of class: State, Power, Socialism, London: New Left Books, 1978, pp. 43ff. However, there is also evidence that Poulantzas insisted that class be defined in terms of surplus labor production: a point he made in his repeated arguments in favor of a narrow conception of the working class as just productive and not also unproductive laborers. See his paper, "The New Petty Bourgeoisie" in Alan Hunt, ed., Class and Class Structure, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977, pp. 113-124. While Poulantzas evidently operated with a complex and composite conceptualization of class, power prevails over his other definitions of class.

39. Is There a Future for Marxism?, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1982, pp. 98-111 and 148-163.

40. Ibid., pp. 149-152. See also Frank Parkin, Marxism and Class Theory, London: Tavistock, 1979, pp. 27ff.

41. The Crisis of Historical Materialism, New York: Praeger, 1981, p. 109.

42. Op.cit., p. 11.

43. On the Economic Identification of Social Classes, London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, pp. 162-167 and passim. For another composite concept of class presented as a parallel listing of elements, see Manuel Castells, The Economic Crisis and American Society, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 141-142.

44. On the Economic Identification..., p. 145.

45. Ibid., p. 145.

46. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, "On the Class-Exploitation-Domination Reduction," Politics and Society, 11:3 (1982), p. 23. That domination/subordination relations are the "primary" or ultimately determinant aspects of social life is reaffirmed throughout the article.

47. The Modern Corporation and Private Property, New York: Commerce Clearing House, 1932.

48. The quoted phrase is offered by the most prominent developer of Berle and Means' argument: Alfred D. Chandler, The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1977, pp. 5ff.

49. New York: Monthly Review, 1966, Chapter 2 and especially pp. 19-35. Indeed, their book is presented as an up-dating of Marx's insights to take account of the new social prevalence of the large, multi-unit corporations which Berle and Means had likewise foregrounded. Cf. the futher discussion in our forthcoming book, Marxist Theory: Epistemology, Class, Enterprise and State, chapter 4.

50. Ibid., p. 35.

51. For example, Serge Mallet, La nouvelle classe ouvriere, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969.

52. See The Alternative in Eastern Europe, Trans. by David Fernbach, London: New Left Books (Verso), 1978, p. 77. On page 140 he also writes:"The law of the division of labour lies therefore at the root of class divisions."

53. See the bewildering variety of formulations scattered through his Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, 3 volumes; see also the useful discussion of Weber's theorizations of class in G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, Op.cit., pp. 87ff.

54. Charles E. Lindblom, Politics and Markets: The World's Political-Economic Systems, New York: Basic Books, 1977, p. 223.

55. Alan Swingewood, Marx and Modern Sociology, London: Macmillan, 1975, p. 118. A rather similar formulation opens Roman Rosdolsky's The Making of Marx's Capital, Trans. by Pete Burgess, London: Pluto Press, 1977, pp. 31-35.

56. See our paper, "Classes in Marxist Theory," Review of Radical Political Economics, 13:4 (Winter 1982), pp. 1-18, and Chapter 3 of our forthcoming book, Marxist Theory: Epistemology, Class, Enterprise and State. These references list and discuss those of Marx's texts which occasioned and support our interpretation.

57. See the extended discussion in our "Classes in Marxian Theory," Op.cit., pp. 6-10. Marx's point was to underscore their different places in the class structure; it was not a judgement of their relative importance in securing the reproduction of the class structure. Both productive and unproductive workers, Marx insisted, were crucial to that reproduction.

58. This argument is exhaustively presented and referenced in our article, "Marxist Epistemology: the Critique of Economic Determinism," Op.cit., and in Chapters 1 and 2 of our forthcoming book, Marxist Theory: Epistemology, Class, Enterprise and State.