

**Political mobilisation and the question of subjectivity**

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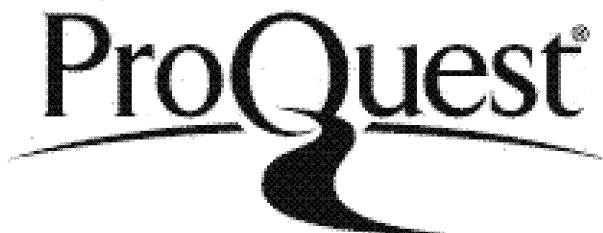


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## ABSTRACT

In its broadest aspect, this thesis constitutes a demonstration of the substantive utility of a political sociology that pays serious regard to the issues surrounding the notion of subjectivity. More specifically, it takes the form of a sustained argument concerning the relationship between political mobilisation and the various structures and dynamics associated with subjectivity. In the first part of the thesis, a theory of consciousness, subjectivity and intersubjectivity is developed. It is argued that as a result of a number of existential facts about consciousness, individuals manifest and are subject to various socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity. The most important of these are: (a) the necessity experienced by individuals to reaffirm their senses of self; (b) their desire for the symbolic mastery of the “external-world”; and (c) the compulsion experienced to negate symbolically the foreignness of *the other*. The second part of the thesis is devoted to exploring some of the political consequences and implications of the existence of these dynamics. By means of a number of case studies - specifically, analyses of political conflict, political ritual and populism - it is demonstrated that in order to understand various kinds of political mobilisation, it is necessary to understand the sense in which political action and discourse dovetail with the structures and dynamics of subjectivity. It is concluded that to the extent that this is the case, a political sociology which neglects issues of subjectivity is necessarily partial.

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## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, political analysis, certainly in the European tradition, has couched its theories and explanations at the macro-structural level.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, two general concerns have been central: (i) a concern with power relations at the level of society and social structure; and (ii) an interest in the character and functioning of the state, and its relationship to civil-society. Indeed, for many theorists, it is a concern with macro-structural questions of power and the state that defines the proper realm of enquiry for political analysis.<sup>2</sup> For example, Tom Bottomore argues that “the principal object of political sociology has been, and should be, the phenomenon of power at the level of an inclusive society (whether that society be a tribe, a nation state, an empire, or some other type); the relations between such societies; and the social movements, organizations and institutions which are directly involved in the determination of such power [Bottomore, 1979: 7].”

In part, the dominance of the macro-structural approach is a function of the history of development of political analysis.<sup>3</sup> According to W. G. Runciman, a new science of politics emerged with the awareness that the state could be distinguished from society as a whole, an idea that opened the way for the analysis of the relations between the two.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, he argues that any attempt to develop a general theory of society - one that would by implication tend to conflate these realms - is doomed to be a *waste of effort* [Runciman, 1969: 1-4].

This general concern with power and the state is underpinned by an interest in emancipatory politics. In this respect, Anthony Giddens notes that radicalism, liberalism and conservatism - the three major approaches within modern politics - are

<sup>1</sup> I am thinking here of writers such as Karl Marx; Max Weber; Robert Michels; Alexis de Tocqueville; Gaetano Mosca; and so on. See, for example, Tom Bottomore's discussion in *Political Sociology*, (Hutchinson, London: 1979), 7-12.

<sup>2</sup> For example: Crick, B., *In Defence of Politics*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1964); Bendix, R., (Ed.), *State and Society: A Reader in Comparative Political Sociology*, (Little Brown, Boston: 1968); and Bottomore, T., (Hutchinson, London: 1979).

<sup>3</sup> I am using the term "political analysis" to refer to various related disciplines: specifically political theory; political science; and political sociology.

<sup>4</sup> Runciman, W. G., *Social Science and Political Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1969), chapter 2.

all dominated, though in differing ways, by ideas of emancipation:<sup>5</sup> radicals and liberals, avowing justice, equality and participation, seek to free individuals from exploitation, inequality and oppression [Giddens, 1991: 211-212]; conservatives, in contrast, define their intervention in terms of a rejection of the emancipatory agenda and develop instead a critique of modernisation [Giddens, 1991: 210]. Clearly, issues of power and the state are central to issues of emancipation: firstly, in that these issues are integral to the conceptualisation of notions such as exploitation and oppression; and secondly, in that an understanding of them is central to the development of strategies of political intervention.

Of course, this is not to claim that one can only talk about power and the state from a macro-structural perspective. In this respect, Michel Foucault's conception of power as a positive force is particularly significant. He rejects the idea that power is necessarily repressive, arguing instead that "...What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression."<sup>6</sup> In particular, power acts on the body, which is, therefore, "directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs [Foucault, 1977: 25]."

Of course, such a conception results in an analysis which is radically different from those offered by traditional political theorists [i.e., Marx, Weber, Michels, etc.]. According to Foucault, power is not something to be possessed and utilised by an agent, whether that agent be a sovereign, a state or a social class.<sup>7</sup> Rather, power is the

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<sup>5</sup> Giddens, A., *Modernity and Self-Identity*, (Polity Press, Cambridge: 1991), 210-214.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, M., "Truth and Power", in Foucault, M., *Power/Knowledge*, (Edited: Gordon, C.), (Harvester Wheatsheaf, London: 1980), 119.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Foucault claims that power relations "are not univocal; they define innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and of an at least temporary inversion of the power relations [Foucault, 1977: 27]."

agent itself: the agent of discourse, truth and knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, there can be no question of emancipation from the effects of power, since power is constitutive of social life itself.

Of course, despite Foucault's rejection of the macro-structural approach, he is a long way from applying anything resembling an action framework to questions of power and politics. Indeed, one of the major criticisms levelled at him is that he pays insufficient regard to the role played by knowledgeable social actors in the constitution of social life.<sup>9</sup> Of course, it is not the case that Foucault's neglect of agency is theoretically naive, since it is clearly a function of the "decentring of the subject" that is characteristic of French "post-structuralist" thought.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, analyses which do not take agency (or more precisely, subjectivity) seriously are, significantly flawed. Specifically:

1. Such analyses inaccurately specify the nature of the social world; not recognising that social actors are always and everywhere knowledgeable and purposive agents and that the continuity of social practices is ensured by means of the reflexive monitoring of social action.<sup>11</sup>
2. Where such analyses reduce subjectivity to the social world, the complexity of the constitution of subjectivity is oversimplified; specifically, these analyses fail to recognise that subjectivity is constituted at the intersection of three dynamics; namely, social, existential and unconscious dynamics.
3. Such analyses fail to consider subjectivity as a significant explanatory variable in the course of social action; to this extent, the accounts they offer of phenomena that are conceived in macro-structural terms are necessarily partial.

<sup>8</sup> For brief critiques of this position, see Giddens, A., *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, (MacMillan, London and Basingstoke: 1981), 171-172; and Giddens, A., *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory*, (MacMillan, London and Basingstoke: 1982), 221-222.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Giddens, A., (MacMillan, London and Basingstoke: 1982), 222.

<sup>10</sup> Thus, Foucault characterises the "genealogical" method as "a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history [Foucault, 1980: 117]."

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Schutz, A., *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, (Northwestern University Press, Evanston: 1967b); and Giddens, A., *The Constitution of Society*, (Polity Press, Cambridge: 1984).

The important point is that these criticisms apply not just to post-structuralist theories, but to any social theory or analysis which fails to recognise the significance of subjectivity. Accordingly, it is my claim that the macro-structural orientation of much political analysis acts as a significant barrier to the understanding of political phenomena and processes.

Of course, it must not be claimed that political analysis never concerns itself with social actors. However, what is significant is that where it does so - as, for example, in the American behaviouralist tradition - it tends to treat issues of *subjectivity* in a one-dimensional fashion; that is, it tends to reduce subjectivity to the social world. To demonstrate this, I will consider briefly: (i) a number of the areas of study identified as significant in the behaviouralist tradition; and (ii) the notion of the *authoritarian personality*.

## **The Behavioural Approach**

Political behaviouralism emerged in the United States as a reaction against the dominance of historical, philosophical and descriptive-institutional approaches in political science. According to Jaros and Grant, it is “an approach which emphasizes and makes explicit the fact that all political phenomena depend on human acts [Jaros and Grant, 1974: 7].” Its primary aim is to bring some of the rigour of the natural sciences to the analysis of political forms and processes. To this end, behavioural approaches tend to employ quantitative and statistical techniques in order to derive verifiable propositions about observable political behaviour. The emphasis on observable behaviour - in part, a function of the debt that behaviouralism owes to positivism - has inclined behavioural analysis towards a concern with individuals. However, as I indicated above, this concern is not, for the most part, translated into an interest in subjectivity. To illustrate this, I will consider briefly how behavioural approaches treat: (i) political socialisation and personality; (ii) political participation; and (iii) public attitudes.

### **(i) Political socialisation and personality**

The study of political socialisation is concerned with the effect that socialisation has on the manner in which individuals structure their political worlds, both cognitively and affectively [Dowse and Hughes, 1986: 190-191]; or, to put this another way, it is concerned with examining how the beliefs, values and emotions that comprise political culture are transmitted from generation to generation [Rose, 1980]. In concrete terms, analyses of political socialisation tend to focus on the differential impact of the agencies and processes of socialisation - assessed in terms of political participation, political attitudes, voting behaviour and so on - across a number of dimensions, including: social class, family background, gender, race and educational attainment.

Despite an ostensible interest in the attitudes and behaviour of individuals, subjectivity remains a marginal concern to such analyses. Typically, political socialisation is treated as something that *happens* to individuals; their behaviour and attitudes are conceived to be the product of external influences.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, individuals are portrayed as the passive imbibers of institutionally grounded beliefs and attitudes;<sup>13</sup> or as the subjects of the process of socialisation, where the agents of socialisation model particular behaviours and attitudes.<sup>14</sup> In these schemes, the differences between the behaviours and attitudes exhibited by particular individuals are reduced to the different structural locations that these individuals occupy, and/or to them being subject to different processes of socialisation. Issues of subjectivity - that is, issues to do with individual motivation, need and meaning - are largely ignored; or, to borrow an analogy, they are consigned to a black box.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the major exceptions to this general tendency are the various *authoritarian personality* studies.

<sup>13</sup> Thus, for example, Rose argues that "...Because of the continuity of English social institutions, many values thus transmitted antedate the birth of the individual [Rose, 1980: 142]."

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Wasburn, P. C., *Political Sociology: approaches, concepts, hypotheses*, (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey: 1982), 157-160; and 185-187.

<sup>15</sup> For a systematic working of these arguments, see Rosenberg, S. W., "Sociology, Psychology, and the Study of Political Behavior: The Case of the Research on Political Socialization", *Journal of Politics*, (1985), 47, 2, 715-731.

The relative neglect of the more complex issues of subjectivity has a number of problematic consequences. Firstly, the relationship between beliefs/attitudes and behaviour is inadequately theorised, as is the relationship between beliefs/attitudes, behaviour and personality.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, as Shawn Rosenberg indicates, there can be no analysis of the *subjective*, private meaning or significance of political attitudes and behaviour. Political socialisation studies almost inevitably focus upon publicly expressed and culturally defined attitudes and behaviour [Rosenberg, 1985: 719]. And thirdly, the relationship between subjectivity (or personality) and political forms and processes can be neither adequately explored nor specified. It is significant that commentators have noted a decline in interest, in recent years, in processes of political socialisation [e.g., Dowse and Hughes, 1986: 216-218]. It is quite possible that this decline is directly related to the kinds of problems detailed here [Rosenberg, 1985: 722-728].

## **(ii) Political participation**

Political participation has been defined variously as: (a) “those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers, and directly or indirectly, in the formation of public policy”;<sup>17</sup> (b) “the involvement of the individual at various levels in the political system [Rush and Althoff, 1971: 14]”; (c) “those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or actions they take [Verba and Nie, 1972: 2]”; (d) “those activities by private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics [Milbrath and Goel, 1977: 2]”; and (e) “taking part in the processes of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies [Parry, Moyser and Day, 1992: 16]”.

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<sup>16</sup> None of these relationships are straightforward. See, for example: LaPiere, R., “Attitudes versus actions”, *Social Forces*, (1934), 13; Wicker, A. W., “Attitudes versus actions: The relationship of verbal and overt behavioural responses to attitude objects”, *Journal of Social Issues*, (1969), 25, 4, 41-78; and Aronson, E., *The Social Animal*, (W. H. Freeman and Company, New York: 1992), 150-156.

<sup>17</sup> Dowse, R. and Hughes, J. A., *Political Sociology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (John Wiley & Sons, Chichester: 1986), 266 [following McClosky, H., “Political Participation”, *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (Collier-Macmillan, New York: 1968), 252-265].

The importance of political participation is related to its significance for notions of democracy. In traditional terms, high levels of participation are a *sine qua non* of democracy. For example, Aristotle equates good democratic citizenship with civic responsibility and political participation [Aristotle, 1981]; Rousseau's ideal State is small enough so that all its citizens may actively participate in the decision-making process [Rousseau, 1973]; and Verba and Nie argue that, in some fundamental sense, "the more participation there is in decisions, the more democracy there is [Verba and Nie, 1972: 1]." However, the reality of the rates of political participation in Western democracies is in stark contrast to these kinds of ideals.

According to Lester Milbrath, about one-third of the American adult population are politically "apathetic"; "they are unaware, literally, of the political part of the world around them [Milbrath, 1965: 21]." About sixty percent are "spectators"; "they watch, they cheer, they vote, but they do not do battle [Milbrath, 1965: 21]." Only two percent are "gladiatorial", participating in a full range of political actions. Similarly, the authors of a much more recent study claim that "outside the realm of voting, the British citizenry are not highly active within the political system. They may be aware of politics and even have an interest in it, but they tend not to speak out all that much beyond the confines of a voting booth [Parry, Moyser and Day, 1992: 47]."

The fact that citizens do not participate *en masse* in political activity is clearly significant for democratic theory; for example, it has led Robert Dahl to reject theories of participatory democracy, and to advance, instead, a notion of *polyarchy*.<sup>18</sup> It also begs the question: why do some citizens participate when others do not? According to Dowse and Hughes, there is little systematic theory to answer this latter question. Instead, one finds much *ad hoc* analysis of a range of correlational data [Dowse and Hughes, 1986: 288-289]. For example, it has been found that political participation varies with education; social integration; gender; the urban/rural divide; life-cycle; and socio-economic status.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Dahl, R., *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1956).

<sup>19</sup> The major studies of political participation include: Lane, R., *Political Life*, (Free Press, New York: 1959); Lipset, S. M., *The Political Man*, (Doubleday, Garden City: 1960); Milbrath, L., *Political Participation* (Rand McNally & Company, Chicago: 1965); Verba, S. and Nie, N., *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*, (Harper and

The predominance of this kind of correlational analysis is indicative of a lack of sophistication in the treatment of political participation. In part, this lack of sophistication is a function of the neglect of the relationship between participation and subjectivity. Where aspects of subjectivity are considered in analyses of political participation, they tend to be treated in simple correlational terms,<sup>20</sup> and are rarely integrated into wider theoretical schemata. Interestingly, the one rigorous theory of political participation identified by Dowse and Hughes - namely, that advanced by Anthony Downs [1957] - is undermined precisely by an inadequate specification of subjectivity. Specifically, to the extent that Downs' theory focuses on the rational-calculative dimensions of action, it is unable to explain why individuals are willing to engage in political activities which involve them in costs, even where they are unlikely to gain much back in terms of rewards (for example, voting in a General Election, where a single vote will not affect the overall outcome).

In fact, this rational-calculative emphasis is common to much of the analysis of political participation, insofar as participation is normally conceived in voluntarist terms (i.e., in terms of choice). However, such an emphasis is artificially restrictive, in that it fails to recognise the non-conscious dimensions of participation. In this respect, one might consider, for example, Roland Barthes' and Louis Althusser's utilisation of the notion of interpellation [Althusser, 1971; Barthes, 1973]. In terms of this idea, an individual's participation in politics begins not with his conscious decision to act, but rather with his interpellation by political myths or ideologies.

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Row, New York: 1972); Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, W. and Stokes, D., *The American Voter*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1976); Milbrath, L. and Goel, M., *Political Participation*, (Rand McNally College Publishing Company, Chicago: 1977); Parry, G., Moyser, G. and Day, N., *Political Participation and Democracy in Britain*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1992).

<sup>20</sup> For example, Dahl, R., *Who Governs?*, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London: 1961); Almond G. A. and Verba, S., *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in the Five Nations* (Princeton University Press, New Jersey: 1963); Milbrath, L., *Political Participation*, (Rand McNally & Company, Chicago: 1965); Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, W. and Stokes, D., (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1976); Verba, S. and Nie, N., *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*, (Harper and Row, New York: 1972); and Milbrath, L. and Goel, M., (Rand McNally College Publishing Company, Chicago: 1977).

### (iii) Public attitudes

The analysis of survey data concerning political attitudes is also fraught with difficulties if there is no proper consideration of issues of subjectivity. The first point to note about attitudes of any sort is that they are notoriously difficult to measure accurately.<sup>21</sup> Of course, this has not prevented political analysts from making widespread use of the notion of “political attitudes”. In this respect, perhaps most familiar are the various surveys of public opinion, which purport to represent the political attitudes of whole nations. It is perhaps not surprising that these have assumed a central place in the political process of many liberal-democratic societies. It is, after all, part of the democratic myth that a political party must represent the interests and desires of its population to win and retain power; and that voters are well-informed, casting their votes at a general election for the party which most clearly represents their attitudes on the important issues.<sup>22</sup> From this perspective, attitude surveys perform an important function, keeping political parties (and others) informed about the state of public opinion. However, when one examines “public opinion” more closely, it becomes clear that the reality of “political attitudes” is very different from the image created by this myth.

According to Philip Converse, the political attitudes of mass publics are largely inconsistent and contradictory.<sup>23</sup> It is only 10-15% of a population that demonstrate a meaningful structure for their beliefs. Outside this group, the lack of a “trickle down” of political information means that individuals do not think about politics in terms of underlying “ideological” principles. Consequently, their beliefs are organised into relatively discrete clusters that demonstrate little unity or “constraint”.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the nature of the objects of belief change as one moves from the well-informed elite to the mass of the public. These “shift from the remote, generic, and abstract to the

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Oskamp, S., *Attitudes and Opinions*, (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey: 1977), 37-41.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Himmelweit, H. T., Humphreys, P. and Jaeger, M., *How Voters Decide* (Open University Press, Milton Keynes: 1985).

<sup>23</sup> Converse, P., “The nature of belief systems in mass publics”, in Apter, D., (Ed.), *Ideology and Discontent*, (The Free Press, Glencoe: 1964).

<sup>24</sup> “Constraint” refers to the functional interdependence of attitudes. See Converse, P., (The Free Press, Glencoe: 1964), 207-208. For a discussion of the lack of constraint between the attitudes held by the mass of the public, see 212-214; and 227-234.

increasingly simple, concrete, or “close to home”...”; progressing from “abstract “ideological” principles to the more obviously recognisable social groupings or charismatic leaders and finally to such objects of immediate experience as family, job, and immediate associates [Converse, 1964: 213].”<sup>25</sup>

Obviously, if one accepts these arguments, and concedes that it is only a small elite that hold internally consistent, “ideologically” grounded sets of beliefs, there are considerable implications for analyses of voting behaviour.<sup>26</sup> In particular, it is not possible to claim that a vote for a political party necessarily indicates support for that party, quite simply because the internal inconsistency of voters’ attitudes precludes any simple correspondence between attitudes and voting behaviour.<sup>27</sup> Of course, the corollary of this general point is that it is similarly not the case that a vote against a political party (i.e., for a different party) necessarily indicates antipathy towards that party and its policies.

The significant point here is that these contentions are only surprising if issues of subjectivity are neglected. For example, as I suggested above, it has long been understood by social psychologists that there is no simple correspondence between

<sup>25</sup> In fact, Converse identified five "levels of conceptualisation", each denoting a particular mode of evaluating political issues (his analysis was based upon a range of studies of U.S. national elections that were conducted by the Survey Research Center, University of Michigan; these studies utilised samples of 1000 to 1800 individuals). These levels ranged from the highest where individuals used abstract, conceptual dimensions to assess political objects (2.5% of total sample), to the lowest, where they made no reference to policies or issues at all, mentioning instead: (i) loyalty to a particular party; (ii) personal qualities of candidates; or (iii) no interest in politics (22.5% of sample). See Converse, P., “The nature of belief systems in mass publics”, in Apter, D., (Ed.), *Ideology and Discontent*, (The Free Press, Glencoe: 1964), 215-219.

<sup>26</sup> For evidence supporting Converse's claims, see, for example: McClosky, H., “Consensus and ideology in American politics”, *American Political Science Review*, (1964), **58**, 361-382; Mann, M., “The social cohesion of liberal democracy”, *American Sociological Review*, (1970), **35**, 3, 423-439; Bogart, L., *Silent Politics: Polls and the Awareness of Public Opinion*, (Wiley-Interscience, New York: 1972); Parkin, F., *Class Inequality and Political Order*, (Paladin, St. Albans: 1972); Butler, D. and Stokes, D., *Political Change in Britain: the Evolution of Electoral Choice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (MacMillan, London: 1974); Abercrombie, N., Hill, S. and Turner, B., *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*, (George Allen & Unwin, London: 1980); and Abramson, P. R., *Political Attitudes in America*, (Freeman, San Francisco: 1983). Of course, there has also been research that questions the relevance of Converse's work for understanding political attitudes: see, for example, Nie, N. H., Verba, S. and Petrocik, J. R., *The Changing American Voter*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1976).

<sup>27</sup> Converse produces correlational data to demonstrate that there is little internal consistency - firstly, between the attitudes that members of the public hold towards political issues; and secondly, between the attitudes held and party preference expressed. See Converse, P., (The Free Press, Glencoe: 1964), 228-229.

attitudes and behaviour. Also, consider, for example, the idea that voting behaviour is determined by a rational calculation based on perceived policy preferences. Not only does this make certain assumptions about rationality,<sup>28</sup> but it also leaves no room for a consideration of the affective bases of behaviour. In fact, it is by no means clear that voting behaviour is a rational activity. For example, Sears *et al*, in a study of American voting patterns, found that individuals did not vote according to perceived self-interest, but rather, they relied on affective cues for their voting decisions.<sup>29</sup> In general terms, George Marcus has noted, in a review of the work on emotions and politics, that whilst a good proportion of the literature of political theory has concerned itself with the proper development of reason, insufficient attention has been paid to *the essential strategic function of passion*.<sup>30</sup>

## The Authoritarian Personality

One area of research which has been concerned with the deeper aspects of subjectivity is that which has developed around the idea of “the authoritarian personality”. According to Adorno *et al*, there exists an authoritarian personality type, which is characterised by conventionalism; suspicion; a submissive attitude towards the leaders of the in-group; condemnation of those people who deviate from “normal” values; a preoccupation with power and “toughness”; and an intolerance of weakness [Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson and Sanford, 1950].

In order to measure this personality type, Adorno *et al* developed the “F-scale”, which comprised a synthesis of three previously developed scales (namely, the A-S scale [anti-Semitism]; the E scale [ethnocentrism]; and the PEC scale [political and economic conservatism]). On the basis of results from over 2000 questionnaires,

<sup>28</sup> This idea seems to require a Benthamite view that human action proceeds on the basis of a *felicific calculus*. However, even where action is based upon cognitive calculation, it is by no means clear that such calculation is “rational”. See, for example, Nisbett, R. and Ross, L., *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgement*, (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey: 1980); and Fiske, S. T. and Taylor, S. E., *Social Cognition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (McGraw, New York: 1991).

<sup>29</sup> Sears, D., Lau, R., Tyler, T. and Allen, H., “Self-interest vs. symbolic politics in policy attitudes and presidential voting”, *American Political Science Review*, (1980), 74, 3, 670-684.

<sup>30</sup> Marcus, G. E., “Emotions and politics: hot cognitions and the rediscovery of passion”, *Social Science Information*, (1991), 30, 2, 224.

Adorno *et al* claimed that the F-scale responses supported the contention that there existed an authoritarian personality type. Therefore, it seems that they were correct to claim, in the preface to “The Authoritarian Personality”, that “an adult’s outlook or ideology (i.e., ethnocentrism) is an aspect of her or his personality.”

Adorno *et al* turn to psychodynamic theory in order to explain the occurrence of the authoritarian personality. They argue that authoritarianism is related to early childhood experiences in families characterised by parental strictness and a general sense of coldness. In this situation, the child is forced to repress his Oedipal desires for his mother and, consequently, he feels hatred and hostility towards his father. However, this hatred cannot be allowed conscious expression, therefore, it is transformed, by means of a reaction formation, into feelings of love. Of course, there remains, nevertheless, a residue of repressed, unconscious hostility towards the father. It is this that resurfaces later, in the authoritarian personality, as displaced aggression against powerless individuals and out-groups.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, the notion of an authoritarian personality type is very significant. Particularly, it suggests how hostility and prejudice might be rooted in the structures of personality. Moreover, by identifying “implicit prefascist tendencies”, it shows how individuals might be susceptible to the discourses of fascism (and other similar discourses). The huge volume of work that the authoritarian personality study has spawned is testament

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<sup>31</sup> See David Held's discussion, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*, (Hutchinson, London: 1980), 144-146.

to its importance.<sup>32</sup> Of course, this is not to argue that it is without its fair share of problems.<sup>33</sup>

It is quite clear that in the authoritarian personality analysis, subjectivity is more than a simple reflection of social forces. Nevertheless, Adorno *et al* are committed to an artificially restrictive view of the foundations of authoritarianism. In this respect, it is particularly significant that the psychodynamic approach directs attention away from other possible avenues of enquiry. These include: a “social-learning” approach, which would stress “the learned (i.e., cognitive) conceptions of *reality* which are prevalent in certain cultures or subcultures, rather than [on] the labyrinthine process of reaction formation described in the ego-defensive typology”;<sup>34</sup> and a social-psychological approach, as, for example, might be suggested by Tajfel’s idea that individuals seek to subordinate the members of out-groups in order to achieve a positive social-identity [Tajfel, 1981: 1982].

As far as the relationship between political analysis and subjectivity is concerned, perhaps the major problem of the authoritarian personality study is that it does little to bridge the macro/micro divide; that is, the relationship between personality and wider political forms and processes remains unclear. Indeed, Smelser goes so far as to argue

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example: Christie, R. and Jahoda, A., (Eds.), *Studies in the Scope and Method of the Authoritarian Personality*, (Free Press, Glencoe: 1954); Eysenck, H., *The Psychology of Politics*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1954); Rockeach, M., *The Open and Closed Mind* (Basic Books, New York: 1960); Brown, R., *Social Psychology*, (Free Press, New York: 1965); Kirscht, J. P. and Dillehay, R. C., *Dimensions of Authoritarianism: A Review of the Research and Theory*, (University of Kentucky Press, Lexington: 1967); Lee, R. E., III and Warr, P. B., “The development and standardization of a balanced F-scale”, *Journal of General Psychology*, (1969), **81**, 109-129; Ray, J. J., “Do authoritarians hold authoritarian attitudes”, *Human Relations*, (1976), **29**, 307-325; and Altemeyer, R. A., *Right-Wing Authoritarianism*, (University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg: 1981). John Ray identifies 37 alternatives to the F-scale developed to measure authoritarianism [“Alternatives to the F scale in the measurement of authoritarianism: a catalog”, *The Journal of Social Psychology*, (1984), **122**, 105-119].

<sup>33</sup> I am not concerned here to specify systematically these problems, suffice it to say that the major difficulties are: (i) methodological - see, for example, Christie, R., Havel, J. and Seidenberg, B., “Is the F scale reversible?”, *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, (1956), **56**, 141-158; Altemeyer, R. A., (University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg: 1981); and Ray, J., *The Journal of Social Psychology*, (1984), **122**; and (ii) concern the specificity of “right-wing” authoritarianism - see, for example: Eysenck, H. J., (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1954); and Rockeach, M., (Basic Books, New York: 1960). For a sympathetic, but critical, general analysis of the idea of an authoritarian personality type, see Brown, R., (Free Press, New York: 1965).

<sup>34</sup> F. Greenstein, cited in Dowse R. and Hughes, J., *Political Sociology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (John Wiley & Sons, Chichester: 1986), 207.

that "...We do not at present have the methodological capacity to argue causally from a mixture of aggregated states of individual members of a system to a global characteristic of a system."<sup>35</sup>

In fact, in empirical terms, it is doubtful that we ever will have this capacity; mainly because, as I have already noted, there is no straightforward relationship between aspects of personality (i.e., the deeper levels of subjectivity) and the specific cognitions and behaviours that individuals adopt.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, it is precisely the relationship between subjectivity and wider political forms and processes which is, in large part, the subject-matter of this thesis.

## **Statement of Intent**

In the broadest of terms, the concern of this thesis is to demonstrate: (i) the inadequacies of political analyses that do not pay sufficient regard to issues of subjectivity; and (ii) the substantive utility of a political sociology which *does* take these issues seriously.<sup>37</sup>

In order to achieve these aims, I will employ the following broad strategy. In Chapter 1 - a brief, preparatory chapter - I will establish, by means of an explication of a number of central concepts, the beginnings of a theoretical framework, which I will utilise in the analyses of subsequent chapters. In Chapter 2, I will be concerned to analyse the structures and dynamics of subjectivity; specifically, I will consider how Man has a dual nature - both "social" and "solitary" - and I will analyse some of the implications of this fact. In Chapter 3, I will continue with the general themes of the previous chapter; expressly, I will explore, with reference to the "normative sphere", some of the mechanisms whereby individuals attain the symbolic mastery of the "external-

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<sup>35</sup> N. Smelser, cited in Dowse R. and Hughes, J., *Political Sociology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (John Wiley & Sons, Chichester: 1986), 206.

<sup>36</sup> Of course, the ability to argue from statements about aggregates of individuals to system characteristics also depends on whether social-collectivities can be said to have emergent properties.

<sup>37</sup> Since much of this thesis is devoted to exploring the nature of "subjectivity", a definition of the term is inappropriate. However, it should be noted that the term will be used in a way that implies more than the simple awareness of the conscious subject of his conscious existence (i.e., non-conscious dynamics and motivations will be taken to be aspects of subjectivity).

world". In Chapter 4, I will critically examine a number of the ideas associated with Marxist political theory - an undertaking both informing and informed by an analysis of social groups and subjectivity. In Chapter 5, utilising many of the arguments developed in the previous chapters of the thesis, I will analyse the political efficacy of ritualistic celebration. And in Chapter 6, I will attempt, by means of an analysis of *populism*, to draw the various arguments of the thesis together.

Within the framework of this strategy, a number of arguments will be advanced which, whilst important for understanding the relationship between subjectivity and political forms and processes, are also significant in their own right. It is worth briefly identifying these arguments because they will often be only implicit in the analyses to follow.

Firstly, and most significantly, an argument about the nature of consciousness, subjectivity and intersubjectivity will be advanced. I will not rehearse this argument here, suffice it to say that it draws heavily upon the phenomenological and existential philosophical traditions. However, it is worth noting that there will be virtually no reference to psychodynamic theories and concepts in this argument. This is not meant to imply a rejection of the ideas of psychoanalysis, but is rather a function of the internal logic of the argument to be advanced; in other words, it is not that psychoanalytic concepts cannot usefully be employed to analyse the relationship between subjectivity and politics; it is rather that the conceptualisation of subjectivity, as it is developed in this analysis, does not straightforwardly suggest a psychoanalytic approach.

Significantly, this point is indicative of the general theoretical status of the thesis to follow. Quite consciously, the thesis is an exercise in theoretical, political sociology. It is the deductive relationships between concepts which govern the forms and directions taken by arguments. Strictly speaking, the analysis to follow constitutes the reality that it theorises; its theoretical concepts have no objective correlates in the "real" world. The arguments and conclusions to follow, therefore, are best regarded as heuristic

tools. In this respect, they will be either more or less useful in analysing political forms and processes, the reality of which they bracket.<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, there are also present, in the text to follow, arguments about the extent of *the political*. As I indicated at the beginning of this introduction, the political, for many theorists, is defined in terms of its opposition to the non-political [e.g., Runciman, 1969]. At many points in this thesis, I will appear implicitly to concur with this view. Particularly, I will often be concerned to demonstrate not that subjectivity is *itself* an aspect of the political, but rather that it is significant for understanding political forms and processes. However, it should be noted, that I am utilising this “exclusive” conception of “the political” for purposes of analytical clarity only.

Indeed, I will also be concerned, at times, to break down the distinction between the political and the non-political. In this respect, one might note Bottomore’s claim that political sociology, in its broadest sense, concerns power in a social context [Bottomore, 1979: 7]. If such power is, as Bottomore maintains, “an element in most, if not all, social relationships...[Bottomore, 1979: 7]”, then the absolute separation of the political and the non-political is dissolved. In fact, in this sense, it is only problematic to conflate these realms if the political is *defined* in terms of its separation from the non-political. Thus, for example, Runciman is apparently required to rule out, as a matter of definition, the claim that all social relationships have a political dimension. However, this kind of definitional restriction can only be justified by an appeal to tradition; that is, it might be argued that because the science of politics has traditionally concerned the institutions of government, it is an unwarranted extension of the field of enquiry to include within its scope a multitude of other social relations

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<sup>38</sup> These ideas share some affinity with the “conventionalist” approach in the philosophy of science. According to Kolakowski, “the fundamental idea of conventionalism may be stated as follows: certain scientific propositions taken for descriptions of the world based on the recording and generalization of experiments, are in fact artificial creations, and we regard them as true not because we are compelled to do so for empirical reasons, but because they are convenient, useful, or even because they have aesthetic appeal [Kolakowski, L., cited in Keat and Urry, 1982: 60].” As Keat and Urry point out, this position can develop into “the more radical claim that, in some sense, the physical world of the scientist is created or constructed by scientific theories, and not described by them [Keat and Urry, 1982: 60].” In this respect, they note Kuhn’s remarks about Lavoisier: “Lavoisier, we said, saw oxygen where Priestley had seen dephlogisticated air and where others had seen nothing at all....At the very least, as a result of discovering oxygen, Lavoisier saw nature differently. And in the absence of some recourse to that hypothetical fixed nature that he “saw differently”, the principle of economy will urge us to say that after discovering oxygen Lavoisier worked in a different world [Kuhn, T., cited in Keat and Urry, 1982: 61].”

and processes. However, this is not, in fact, a justification, but rather an *argumentum ad antiquitam*. Moreover, it allows no theoretical space for a broader analysis of power and conflict as they are manifest in the wider realms of the social sphere.

Arguably, it is feminist theorists who have provided the most significant challenge to this kind of macro-institutional orthodoxy. According to Ann Oakley:

Whatever else feminist politics have done in the last decade, they have broadened the concept of the political. In saying “our politics begin with our feelings” - rather than with our exercise of the franchise - feminists are drawing attention to the fact that the field of what is usually considered political is a created one. Politics, in any and every sense, is about power, and it is as much about the power that men, wittingly or unwittingly, exercise over women as it is about the power that presidents and prime ministers wield over nations.<sup>39</sup>

According to Anthony Giddens, it is high modernity that has brought to the fore the wider kinds of political issues that concern feminists.<sup>40</sup> He has developed the notion of “life politics”; a politics of choice - where power is generative rather than hierarchical - which is founded on the emancipatory effect of modern institutions. Life politics focuses on the question: how should we live our lives in emancipated social circumstances [Giddens, 1991: 224]? It is the politics of reflexively organised self-identity; a politics based on the opening up of lifestyle options. Thus, he notes that: “...Feminism, at least in its contemporary form, has been more or less obliged to give priority to the question of self-identity [Giddens, 1991: 216].” The moment that women “step outside” the home, the important question becomes: “who do I want to be”?<sup>41</sup> This question is a political question, to the extent that it involves a debate about

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<sup>39</sup> Oakley, A., *Subject Women*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Impression, (Fontana Press, London: 1985), 310.

<sup>40</sup> Giddens, A., *Modernity and Self-Identity*, (Polity Press, Cambridge: 1991), 214-217.

<sup>41</sup> Friedan, B., cited in Giddens, A., (Polity Press, Cambridge: 1991), 216.

rights and obligations; and suggests a mode of decision-making which has implications for conflicts of interest and values [Giddens, 1991: 226-228].<sup>42</sup>

Clearly, the kinds of politics that Giddens is talking about are very different from the kinds referred to by traditional political theorists. The important point is that his approach does not equate politics with issues of the state, government and its associated institutions. To this extent, if it does not break down the separation between the political and the non-political, it at the very least blurs it. In the thesis to follow, it is not my intention to develop systematically what might be termed a "micro-politics" of the social world. However, I will be concerned to demonstrate that power and conflict are aspects of all social relationships; and that there are significant correspondences between "micro-political" and "macro-political" forms and processes.

In fact, this point leads on to the third of the arguments which run through this thesis. This concerns the relationship between the micro-sociological (particularly, issues of subjectivity and intersubjectivity) and the macro-sociological (particularly, the idea of social structure). In this respect, there are two significant points. Firstly, social structure is to be defined as social action which has been *identified* as regular and non-random. Therefore, social structure is denied an ontological status *in the world*; that is, it exists only as an abstract concept. Secondly, in analytical terms, it is not the aim to reduce the apparently macro-sociological to statements about social actors, subjectivity, personality dispositions and so on. Rather, it is to establish correspondences, functional and efficacious relations, symmetries, transformations and tendencies between the micro and macro-levels, so that explanatory frameworks might be developed that operate simultaneously at both levels.

To conclude this introduction, it is proper to say something about the substantive focus of this thesis. The first point to make is that it is not my intention to construct definitive analyses of any of the specific political phenomena that I consider here. Rather, as I have indicated, these will be analysed in order to demonstrate the utility of a political sociology that pays serious regard to issues of consciousness, subjectivity

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<sup>42</sup> For a detailed discussion of life politics, see Giddens, A., *Modernity and Self-Identity*, (Polity Press, Cambridge: 1991), chapter 7.

and intersubjectivity. Nevertheless, it is my intention to make a substantive *contribution* towards the understanding of certain kinds of political phenomena. Specifically, I hope to shed some light on the mechanisms and politics of social group formation, social integration and, most significantly, political mobilisation.<sup>43</sup> The rationale for focusing on these kinds of phenomena is that they require, on the part of social actors, some degree of cognitive and affective commitment to the social group, and therefore, lend themselves particularly well to analysis in terms of a framework which foregrounds issues of subjectivity. Thus, it is my hope that by demonstrating that these phenomena are a prime concern for political sociology and that to understand them it is necessary to consider issues of subjectivity, I can show that political sociology must extend its scope beyond the boundaries set by the macro-institutional orthodoxy.

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<sup>43</sup> I take “political mobilisation” to refer both to political movements (i.e., *a political mobilisation*) and to the *process* whereby individuals are incorporated within the bounds of a political intervention. In this thesis, this concept enjoys a pre-eminence over the related concepts of social group formation and social integration, since issues of group formation and social integration, when considered from the standpoint of political analysis, tend to become fused with issues of political mobilisation.

## CHAPTER ONE : THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

It is necessary to begin this thesis by briefly analysing some of the theoretical ideas which run through this work. Specifically, I wish to explicate some of the concepts which are otherwise only implicit or used routinely in the analyses to follow. To do this, I will adopt the following strategy: (i) I will briefly outline some of the major ideas to be found in the work of Alfred Schutz, particularly, as they pertain to the relationship between individuals and the social world; (ii) I will consider how these ideas can be used to construct a theory of social structure; and (iii) I will look at the related question of the character of common identity.

### Alfred Schutz

I should make it immediately clear that it is not my intention to subject the whole compass of Schutz's work to a rigorous critical examination. Indeed, in the analysis to follow, I will almost completely ignore his analyses of the social sciences; his concern with the nature of social action; and his more strictly philosophical interests. I am concerned, rather, as I have already indicated, to analyse his arguments regarding the relationship between social actors and the social world.

According to Richard Zaner, Schutz's project is an "effort to make explicit precisely what is implicit and taken for granted by the very nature of common-sense life - to make its foundational presuppositions explicit for the sake of disclosing its structures, analysing its strata, revealing its interconnected textures, and thereby to make it possible to understand what makes the social world tick, that is, what makes the social world at once "social" and "world"."<sup>1</sup> For Schutz, the starting point of this project is an analysis of the most simple and concrete of all social relations, the face-to-face or "we relation", which is characterised by an "actual simultaneity" of "two separate streams of consciousness [Schutz, 1967: 163]". The we-relation refers specifically to the direct social encounter of two individuals, who for its duration share a mutual

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<sup>1</sup> From the introduction to Schutz, A., *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, (Edited: Zaner, R.), (Yale University Press, New Haven: 1970b), xii.

orientation, “lifeworld” and temporal reality. It is in the *we*-relation that one individual grasps another as a “spontaneous and freely acting being [Schutz, 1967: 220.]”.

Although the most simple of all social relations, the *we*-relation, according to Schutz, serves as the foundation of the intersubjectivity of the social world. Specifically, it is in the *we*-relation that important core assumptions about the existence of fellow-men and the reality of the material world are confirmed. In the words of Schutz:

The community of environment and the sharing of experiences in the *We*-relation bestows upon the world within the reach of our experience its intersubjective, social character. It is not my environment nor your environment nor even the two added; it is an intersubjective world within reach of our common experience. In this common experience the intersubjective character of the world in general both originates and is continuously confirmed.<sup>2</sup>

The *we*-relation, in its *pure* form, referring to the mutual orientation of two individuals, is essentially prepredicative.<sup>3</sup> However, individuals bring to *actual*, concrete *we*-relations, “stocks” of previously constituted knowledge. Therefore, the social actor’s experience of his fellow-man in the *we*-relation “stands in a multiple context of meaning: it is experience of a human being, it is experience of a typical actor on the social scene, it is experience of this particular fellow-man, and it is experience of this particular fellow-man in this particular situation, Here and Now [Schutz, 1964: 30].”

The stocks of knowledge which individuals bring to *we*-relations comprise frameworks of typifications by means of which they can interpret their own lived experiences. They consist of material which has been synthesised in consciousness and organised under categories, and which is present at hand in the form of “what one

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<sup>2</sup> Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume II*, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1964), 31.

<sup>3</sup> See Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1964), 23-27.

knows" or "what one already knew".<sup>4</sup> "To these schemes the lived experiences are referred for interpretation as they occur [Schutz, 1967b: 84]."

The typifications which comprise stocks of knowledge vary enormously in specificity and concreteness, ranging from the most basic structures inscribed in *every* experience of the social world, to the specific, variable and actual experiences themselves, which are characteristic of every individual biography.<sup>5</sup> Included amongst these typifications are the skills, useful knowledge and recipes which make up routine knowledge. These serve as *tools at hand* for defining and mastering the situations which confront the social actor in the social world. In this respect, Schutz distinguishes between *routine* and *problematic* situations. The former are testament to the apparently structured nature of the social world and can be determined unproblematically with the aid of routine (or habitual) knowledge; they are only *limitedly in need of explication*, as a consequence of the existence of a *plan determined interest* - which limits the determination of the situation to that which is "practically necessary" - to which action is oriented.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, the latter, problematic situations, contain elements which are not immediately discernible. Therefore, these require deliberation on the part of the social actor, before they can be rendered sufficiently explicit to be mastered in terms of a *plan determined interest*.<sup>7</sup>

Although no two social actors share the same stocks of knowledge, much knowledge is, nevertheless, socially derived. As Schutz and Luckmann put it:

the specific elements of knowledge, the typical "contents" of the subjective stock of knowledge, are not for the most part acquired through processes of explication, but rather are derived socially. In other words, they are taken from the "social stock of knowledge"; that

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<sup>4</sup> I am paraphrasing from Schutz, A., *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, (Northwestern University Press, Evanston: 1967b), 84.

<sup>5</sup> See Schutz, A. and Luckmann, T., *The Structures of the Lifeworld*, (Northwestern University Press, Evanston: 1973), 99-105, for a discussion of the fundamental elements of the stock of knowledge (including the corporeal, spatial and temporal limits inscribed in every situation).

<sup>6</sup> A *plan determined interest* is the specific motivational factor which determines the guidelines for conduct in a given situation. It is based upon a hierarchy of plans of conduct which individuals carry with them at all times.

<sup>7</sup> See Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume II*, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1964), 91-105.

is, from the socially objectivated results of Others' experiences and explications. The larger part of the stock of knowledge of the normal adult is not immediately acquired, but rather "learned".<sup>8</sup>

In this process of learning, the usual agencies of socialisation are crucial. Particularly, individuals acquire the social stock of knowledge through the kinship system. But educational, religious and political institutions are also important.

## **Social Structure**

It is now possible to consider how these ideas can be used to construct a theory of social structure. However, it is first necessary to make explicit a key meta-theoretical assumption of this thesis. It is my claim, as I intimated in the Introduction, that knowledge constitutes its own reality; and more specifically, that sociological concepts constitute the reality which they analyse. It is not possible, in this thesis, to offer a proper philosophical justification for this view, suffice it to say that this kind of idealism is the inevitable consequence of ascribing, as is demanded by phenomenology, epistemological privilege to the sphere of consciousness. Of course, to maintain, as I do, that abstract entities have no objective correlates in the "external" world is to be distanced from the views of Alfred Schutz.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it is still possible to use his ideas to construct a theory of social structure, so long as it is recognised that concepts, in his terms, potentially denote a "material reality", whereas, in my terms, they can denote only other concepts.

The first step in constructing a theory of social structure is to establish a working definition of the term. As I indicated in the Introduction, I am going to use this term to refer simply to social action which has been identified as regular and non-random. Clearly, in this respect, it will be possible to identify social structures of varying degrees of specificity, ranging from those which are defined by a single common element to those which manifest an institutional character. According to this view, a

<sup>8</sup> Schutz, A. and Luckmann, T., *The Structures of the Lifeworld*, (Northwestern University Press, Evanston: 1973), 244.

<sup>9</sup> Although, I would argue, of course, that Schutz does not pursue the logic of his own phenomenological stance to its proper conclusion.

social actor can be said to be located within a social structure when he<sup>10</sup> shares in common with those other social actors who are similarly located, at least one of the characteristics which define that structure.<sup>11</sup>

However, it is important to recognise that the social actors who comprise social structures have a special character. Specifically, they are - because social structure is an abstraction - entirely *anonymous*; that is, they are defined wholly by the *average courses of action* which they pursue and which constitute the social structure, and thereby, they are deprived of the fullness of their *biographies*.<sup>12</sup> It is, therefore, possible to specify social structure in terms of the *typifications* (or *typificatory frameworks*) associated with the average courses of action pursued by anonymous social actors.

To illustrate this, let us consider, for a moment, how one might specify the role played by women in the Parsonian nuclear-family.<sup>13</sup> According to Parsons, "families are 'factories' which produce human personalities";<sup>14</sup> chiefly, by means of two mechanisms: (i) the socialisation of children; and (ii) the stabilisation of adult personalities. In this process, the role of women is primarily "expressive"; specifically, they are responsible for child-rearing and for the emotional stability of the family.<sup>15</sup> It is possible to express their role in terms of a series of normative expectations: for example, a mother will: take primary responsibility for the immediate satisfaction of

<sup>10</sup> Throughout this thesis, I will use the impersonal masculine pronoun, rather than any of the alternatives (she or he; s/he; etc.). This is for stylistic reasons only.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Weber argued that the term "class" should be used "when a large number of men have in common a specific causal factor influencing their chances in life, insofar as [(ii)] this factor has to do only with the possession of economic goods and the interests involved in earning a living [Weber, 1947: 91-92]."

<sup>12</sup> There are three points to note here: (i) the experience that an individual has of the world is uniquely his because he enjoys a unique biography (see, for example, Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume 1*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 9-10); (ii) I am using the term *anonymous* to describe the social actors who comprise social structures because these social actors have no individual characteristics; and (iii) courses of action are not average in any empirical sense, but rather, as abstractions, they are denied variability and flux; that is, they have been "frozen".

<sup>13</sup> I should point out that I am making no claims at all about the validity of Parsons' analysis.

<sup>14</sup> Parson, T., "The American Family", Parsons, T. and Bales, R. F., *Family: Socialization and Interaction Process*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1956), 16.

<sup>15</sup> I am aware that even if one accepts the existence of a traditional division of labour, it is by no means clear that the role played predominantly by women can be labelled "expressive". See, for example, Oakley, A., *Housewife*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1974), 183.

her child's physical needs; provide for her child's emotional well-being; ensure her child's safety; and begin the process of socialising and educating her child. Clearly, a social actor will only be able to fulfil these expectations if she is in possession of stocks of knowledge which are commensurate with her role. Specifically, a "mother" will need to possess frameworks of typifications which: (i) establish either the legitimacy or the inevitability of her role; (ii) specify the expectations which are associated with this role; (iii) provide a whole gamut of skills and recipes which will enable her to fulfil these expectations; and (iv) command her - day in, day out - to accomplish "motherhood".

The important point is that having imaginatively constituted the regularity of social action to be analysed in terms of the notion of "motherhood", it is possible to specify the average courses of action pursued by anonymous "mothers" entirely at the level of these kinds of typificatory frameworks. Or, to put this another way, it is possible to specify the social structure which constitutes "motherhood", in terms of the typifications associated with the average courses of action pursued by anonymous "mothers".

The rationale for using this technique for specifying social structure is as follows: (i) it satisfies the demand of radical idealism that social structure should have no material existence; social structure is conceived simply to be a conceptual device which facilitates the analysis of social action that has been identified as regular and non-random; (ii) it preserves within its conceptual framework, formally at least, the "reflexivity" of the social actor; but it recognises, at the same time, that anonymous social actors have no "freedom", since the social structures which they comprise *have no open future*,<sup>16</sup> and (iii) it is, methodologically, a powerful and flexible tool, since it makes no claims about the "existence" or "non-existence" of the social structures that it specifies.

Of course, the kinship system, and specifically, the "mother-role", certainly in the above example, are relatively well-defined social structures, and therefore, they are particularly well-suited to this kind of conceptual technique. Nevertheless, in

<sup>16</sup> See Schutz's discussion of *the world of predecessors and the problem of history*, Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume II*, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1964), 56-63.

principle, any social structure, however diffuse its action complex, can be specified in this manner. Consider, for example, the Weberian notion of social class: one might be said to have identified, in Weberian fashion, a social class, when one has determined a regularity of social action, within which an indeterminate number of social actors who share a common economic-factor, share also similar life-chances.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, in principle - if not in practice - it is quite possible for such a regularity of social action to be specified in terms of the typifications associated with the average courses of action pursued by anonymous social actors. For instance, to give two very limited examples, one might identify patterns of educational achievement, and analyse these in terms of the frameworks of typifications employed by anonymous pupils and staff; or one might examine patterns of job recruitment in terms of the typifications employed by anonymous school-leavers. In general, it is possible to specify social structures in terms of their associated typificatory frameworks because: they are abstractions; the regularity of action which defines them has *no open future*; and they comprise anonymous social actors who pursue average courses of action.<sup>18</sup>

## Common Identity

In the last part of this chapter, I wish to explore a related issue; namely, the manner in which individuals, in the course of their everyday-lives, come to develop a common identity. Or, to put this another way, I wish to analyse the way in which individuals, as they live through routine situations, come to identify with their contemporaries and

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<sup>17</sup> See footnote 11.

<sup>18</sup> An important side-issue is suggested by this analysis, to do with the possibility and nature of the experience that social actors have of social structure. In this respect, the first point to make is the obvious one that social actors cannot experience the constituted regularity of social action which comprises a social structure; that is, they cannot experience what is, after all, an abstraction. Nevertheless, social actors do experience the social world as *though* it were structured and ordered; specifically, they experience it as comprising a series of more or less routine situations - to be mastered by means of habitual knowledge - which they take as evidence of its structured reality (the work of the ethnomethodologists is significant here; see, for example, Garfinkel, H., *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford: 1984). This fact has important analytical consequences: most significantly, it means that one can talk about anonymous social actors as though they actually experience the social structures within which they are located. To understand this, it is necessary only to recognise that the routine situations experienced by these actors are precisely what constitute social structure; this is the case because the constituted regularity of social action which defines social structure can be specified as a succession of absolutely determined routine situations. The importance of these points is that when I talk, during this thesis, about social actors experiencing social structure, it will be in the sense of anonymous social actors experiencing social structure.

predecessors as members of particular social groups. Thus, it is my general aim to specify the mechanisms which lie behind the emergence of common identity. In terms of this thesis, the importance of this task lies in the fact that I wish to make, in subsequent chapters, a number of arguments about the political significance of group membership. Clearly, in this respect, the issue of common identity is crucial. Thus, to anticipate, I will argue that common identity emerges: (i) as a result of the systematic application of typifying labels; and (ii) directly from the realm of social-experience, as a consequence of the repetition of we-relations between social actors who share similar biographies.

According to Emile Durkheim, societies can be characterised according to their moral density; that is, according to the degree to which individuals are sufficiently in contact to be able to interact with one another (Durkheim, 1947: 257). It is my argument that the greater the levels of moral density, when this is understood to refer to the regular and repeated we-relations between social actors who share similar biographies, the greater the potential for the emergence of a common identity. To give a simple example, one would expect social actors who are involved in industrial action, to develop high levels of common identity, as a result of the fact that they share, through repeated we-relations, a whole realm of direct social experience.

However, the process whereby a common identity emerges from the realm of direct social experience is complicated by the fact that individuals, in the course of we-relations, tend to make typifying assumptions about one another; that is, it is complicated by the fact that individuals tend to use the typifications which comprise stocks of knowledge in order to address one another as the relatively anonymous bearers of typical characteristics. These typifying operations become significant in a we-relation either when they are made explicit or when they carry with them the expectation of certain behaviour. The important point is that the typifications attached to individuals, and the complex of expectations which are associated with these typifications, affect not only the course of we-relations, but also, over time, the way in which individuals define themselves. Quite simply, to systematically and repeatedly identify an individual as the bearer of a set of typical characteristics is to confer upon him a social identity to which he has access.

However, the mere fact that an individual has a social identity is not, in itself, sufficient to guarantee the emergence of an awareness of *common* identity. In formal terms, a common identity only emerges with the recognition that there are other individuals who share this social identity. But, of course, in practice, this recognition is achieved as a matter of routine; individuals will have been taught, through the social stock of knowledge,<sup>19</sup> that the social world is made up of recognisable and discrete social groups, and they will simply assume that to possess a social identity is to share it with other like social actors; social identities are, by definition, “social”.

Thus, it is clear that a common identity can emerge as a result of the systematic application of typifying labels. However, as I have already indicated, it can also emerge directly from the realm of social experience. The limiting condition on this possibility is that a “group” of social actors should share at least one characteristic in common.<sup>20</sup> In practice, it is also required that this characteristic be a significant element in the course of their shared we-relations. Language is perhaps the single most significant example of the ability of a single shared characteristic to bind social actors together. It is only by means of language that we inhabit a shared reality at all. As Berger and Luckmann put it: “...Everyday life is, above all, life with and by means of the language I share with my fellowmen”<sup>21</sup> The political significance of language, in this respect, has long been appreciated, as is demonstrated by the centrality accorded to the preservation of languages by political groups who wish to promote and protect traditional identities.

However, there is clearly only a limited potential for the emergence of a common identity on the basis of a single shared characteristic. In general, as one might expect, the more that social actors share in common, the more likely it is that such an identity will emerge. Therefore, as I have already stated, it is the regular and repeated we-relations between social actors who share similar biographies which is most likely to generate common identity. It is in terms of this kind of mechanism that social cohesion

<sup>19</sup> *The social stock of knowledge* is knowledge which is “handed down to me by my friends, my parents, my teachers and the teachers of my teachers [Schutz, 1967a: 13]”; that is, it is knowledge which is not immediately derived from within an individual’s personal experience.

<sup>20</sup> A “group” of social actors, as in “a number” of social actors.

<sup>21</sup> Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., *The Social Construction of Reality*, (Faber and Faber, London: 1966), 51.

is most usually conceived. In this respect, one might note, for example, both Durkheim's conception of *mechanical solidarity* and the Marxist idea that class-consciousness will emerge where "...The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalised...".<sup>22</sup>

So why is it that a series of we-relations between social actors who share similar biographies is likely to engender a common identity? It is simply that in the face-to-face situation, the reality of this similitude is constantly reaffirmed. Social actors who share similar biographies bring to we-relations similar frames of reference, in terms of which the associated situations can be defined and mastered. Because the participants in the we-relations define the social world in the same way, their affinity with one another is confirmed. In concrete terms, they have access to a whole range of verbal and non-verbal clues which will establish their likeness; similar behaviours, attitudes, emotions, hopes, fears, likes and dislikes, all function to solidify their common identity.

Finally, one might also note that the context and intensity of shared we-relations is important. Where individuals, over a period of time, share repeated we-relations with the *same* other individuals, so long as their biographies are similar, a common identity will almost inevitably emerge. This situation is found most clearly within the bounds of a variety of institutional settings, of which the kinship system represents perhaps the best example. The likelihood that a common awareness will emerge is still further increased, where these we-relations are also of high levels of intimacy and/or intensity.<sup>23</sup>

To sum up, therefore, it is my argument that common identity emerges as a consequence of: (i) the systematic utilisation, in the context of we-relations, of typifying labels; and (ii) the fact that the realm of direct social experience is occupied by individuals who share similar biographies; something which becomes apparent in face-to-face relations.

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<sup>22</sup> Marx, K., and Engels, F., *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, (Edited: Feuer, L.), (Fontana/Collins, Glasgow: 1981), 57.

<sup>23</sup> I will discuss this in more detail when I deal with *political ritual* (see below, Chapter 5).

## **Conclusion**

To summarise, I have been concerned in this first chapter to explicate and analyse a number of important theoretical ideas and issues. Specifically, I have examined those ideas and issues which, whilst significant, are otherwise only implicit or used without explication (i.e., routinely) in the analyses of subsequent chapters. In this respect, it is necessary to emphasise the general point that whilst I will rarely refer again to the arguments of this chapter, the ideas and concepts explored here are integral to the analyses that follow. For example, I will make continual use of the concepts of Alfred Schutz to specify the relationship between individuals and the social world; and, as I have already indicated, I will be concerned, throughout this work, to examine the significance of the existence of a common identity amongst social actors. In general, therefore, this chapter has been an exercise in concept preparation, with the aim being to establish the beginnings of a conceptual framework which will be used for the more substantive analyses which are to be developed in this thesis.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE SELF AND SOCIETY

The fundamental premise of the work to follow is that Man has a dual nature - that he is at once both social and solitary. It is my claim that this dual nature is a prime sociological concern, since it forms the foundations upon which subjectivity is built and is, therefore, a significant variable in the unfolding of social action. In this chapter, I intend to specify Man's dual nature, and to consider its significance for sociological analysis. Specifically, I will: (i) describe the contrasting natures of "the social self" and the "solitary self"; and (ii) consider how Man is compelled to seek constantly a "reaffirmation of the self".

### The Social Self

In many ways, the idea of the social self - that is, the idea that, in some sense, society defines the individual - is *the* pivotal sociological concept, since it contains within it the conditions of possibility for sociological enquiry itself. To understand this, it is necessary only to consider the relationship that this concept enjoys with the idea of social cohesion. In this respect, for example, Dennis Wrong points out that many social theorists, using ideas such as the "internalisation of social norms", rely implicitly on the notion of the social self to answer the Hobbesian question, "How is the social order possible?"<sup>1</sup> Of course, the consequence of the centrality of this notion to sociological enquiry is that the social self enjoys many different guises. For example, Emile Durkheim conceives of social rules that "enter directly into the constitution of actors' ends themselves"<sup>2</sup>; Alfred Schutz argues that individuals accept as unquestionable "the ready-made standardized scheme of the cultural pattern...[Schutz, 1965: 95]"; and Talcott Parsons talks about the "internalisation of value-standards", so that to act in conformity with these becomes a "need-disposition"

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<sup>1</sup> See Wrong, D., "The oversocialized conception of man in modern sociology", in Bocock, R., Hamilton, P., Thompson, K. and Watson, A., *An Introduction to Sociology* (Fontana, Glasgow: 1980), 23-51.

<sup>2</sup> See Parsons, T., *The Structure of Social Action*, (McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York: 1937), 382.

in a social actor's personality structure.<sup>3</sup> In the analysis to follow, I will examine one particular treatment of the social self, namely George H. Mead's classic social behaviourist theory, in order to demonstrate not only the significance of the societal relation in the constitution of subjectivity, but also the inadequacies of accounts that seek to *reduce* subjectivity to the social world.

Despite a fragmentary and unsystematic academic output,<sup>4</sup> Mead's work concerning the emergence of the self is considered perhaps the classic sociological treatment of this area. In accepting the explanatory significance of self-consciousness, there is an implicit recognition of the Cartesian dictum that there is a difference between the psychical and the physical. Mead argues that this difference consists in the ability of consciousness to appear as an object to itself. Thus, the self "is essentially different from other objects, and in the past it has been distinguished as conscious, a term which indicates an experience with, an experience of one's self [Mead, 1934: 200]".<sup>5</sup> However, whilst Mead accepts that the existence of self-consciousness must be admitted, he sees his task as that of articulating a behaviourist explanation of this fact.

Mead claims that the emergence of the self is based on the prior existence of a form of sociality. He argues "that mind can never find expression, and could never have come into existence at all, except in terms of a social environment; that an organised set or pattern of social relations and interactions...is necessarily presupposed by it and involved in its nature [Mead, 1934: 244]." In locating his *modus operandi* squarely in the external world of social processes and acts, Mead is able to avoid the difficulties - particularly, "the spectre of solipsism" - which he sees as inherent to approaches that move from psychical states outwards.

For Mead, consciousness emerges from a dynamic involving an organism oriented towards its encountered environment according to pre-programmed biological drives.

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<sup>3</sup> See Parsons, T., *The Social System*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1951), 36-45.

<sup>4</sup> In Maurice Natanson's words, "...Mead's work may be characterized as a continual and persistent return to the phenomena of social reality in an effort to comprehend these phenomena and to describe them truly. In this sense, his work, fragmentary, incomplete, unsystematic, and repetitious as it is, represents an attempt by a great and utterly honest mind to deal with problems of crucial importance to philosophy and the social sciences [Natanson, 1973: 4]."

<sup>5</sup> He contrasts the self with the body, pointing out that the body is unable to grasp itself whole.

Other selves necessarily exist within this environment, since it is in interaction and, particularly, as a corollary of significant communication that self consciousness arises.<sup>6</sup> Mead's contention is that the seeds of this emergence are sown with the internalisation of the objective meaning structures that exist between two organisms participating in a *conversation of gestures*. To illustrate this process, Mead turns to the events of a dog fight. The situation where two angry dogs face each other is an example of non-significant communication. A gesture of Dog A functions as a stimulus to Dog B, whose response similarly becomes a stimulus to Dog A and so on. Thus, "...We have this interplay going on with the gestures serving their functions, calling out the responses of the others, these responses becoming themselves stimuli for readjustment, until the final social act itself can be carried out [Mead, 1934: 44]."  
This process, though non-significant in the sense that the various gestures have no meaning for the participants involved, is the precursor of significant communication.

A gesture becomes significant when the response aroused in the individual to whom the gesture is addressed is also aroused in the individual who makes the original gesture. This occurs when an organism develops the ability to *take the attitude of the other*. In the words of Mead:

When, in any given social act or situation, one individual indicates by a gesture to another individual what this other individual is to do, the first individual is conscious of the meaning of his own gesture...in so far as he takes the attitude of the second individual toward that gesture, and tends to respond to it implicitly in the same way that the second individual responds to it explicitly. Gestures become significant symbols when they implicitly arouse in an individual making them the

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<sup>6</sup> In the essay "What objects must psychology presuppose?" [in Mead, G. H., *Selected Writings*, (Edited: Reck, A.), (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1964), 105-113], Mead argues, "...Other selves in a social environment logically antedate the consciousness of self which introspection analyzes [111]."  
However, if this is the case, it is hard to see how the first self-consciousness could have emerged.

same responses which they explicitly arouse, or are supposed to arouse, in other individuals, the individuals to whom they are addressed.<sup>7</sup>

The importance of the development of the ability to use significant gestures is threefold. Firstly, as a result of this ability, organisms are able to address symbols with communicative intent; specifically, at the point at which an organism becomes aware of how a symbol is likely to be interpreted, that awareness itself is incorporated into the communicative exchange, and symbols can be employed in the expectation that they will, or will not, arouse a certain response. Secondly, the ability to think, as inner conversation, is similarly based on the emergence of significant symbols. According to Mead, “only in terms of gestures as significant symbols is the existence of mind or intelligence possible; for only in terms of gestures which are significant symbols can thinking take place [Mead, 1934: 44].” And thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the emergence of the self is founded on the ability to use significant gestures, since it is only by taking the attitude of the other, something which is synonymous with this ability, that the organism can come to perceive itself as an object (i.e., as a self).

Clearly, to the extent that the ability to take the attitude of the other is fundamental to the emergence of significant gestures, Mead’s analysis rests on the plausibility of his contention that an organism without self-consciousness can come to view itself as an object. How then does he account for this ability?

According to Jurgen Habermas, one can detect in Mead two distinct modes of explanation.<sup>8</sup> The first relies on the notion of *delayed reaction*, whereby a break between a stimulus and its associated response allows the organism to step back and interpret what it is doing in terms of the response that is elicited. However, as Habermas points out, this conception appears to presuppose that type of reflection which Mead is in fact seeking to explain. Therefore, the second, Darwin inspired, line of argument is perhaps more convincing. Vocal gestures, it is argued, are ideally suited to enable an organism to take the attitude of the other, since these are audible not only to the organism to whom the address is directed but also to the speaker of the address

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<sup>7</sup> Mead, G. H., *Mind, Self and Society*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1934), 47.

<sup>8</sup> See Habermas, J., *Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 2*, (Polity Press, Cambridge: 1984), 1-42.

and, therefore, likely to elicit the same potential response in the addresser as the addressee.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Mead sees this ability to take the attitude of the other as evolutionarily inevitable because of the advantages in a competitive environment accruing to an organism who is able to interpret the meaning of its own gestures.

Up to this point, I have attempted to demonstrate how, for Mead, the self is emergent from the social process. Particularly, it is the ability to take the attitude of the other concomitant with the development of significant communication which allows the individual to view itself as an object. Thus, Mead's analysis allows no sharp separation between mind and social process; self-consciousness, whilst differing from the purely physical, is very much a social product, based on and emergent from a prior sociality.

Before I move on to consider how Mead conceives the development of the fully socialised self, it seems sensible at this juncture to point to some of the implications and possible difficulties of his position as outlined to date.

As I have already stated, Mead argues that social psychology should accept that consciousness is explanatorily significant. However, it appears that it does not follow that the introspective field is likewise significant, because Mead argues we can foresee the day when exact social sciences will:

define persons precisely and determine the laws of social change with mathematical exactness...Eugenics, education, even political and economic sciences, pass beyond the phase of description and look toward the formation of the social object. We recognize that we control the conditions which determine the individual.<sup>10</sup>

In this respect, Van Meter Ames claims that "the epochal achievement of Mead himself was to pull consciousness out into the open by stating it in understandable and observable terms of behaviour [Ames, 1956: 323]." However, the consequence of this achievement is that consciousness *as* consciousness is no longer the central concern. If

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Mead, G. H., *Selected Writings*, (Edited: Reck, A.), (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1964), 136-137.

<sup>10</sup> Mead, G. H., (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1964), 107-108.

this is the case, then Mead does not, as he claims, deal with the many difficulties of a subjectivist approach, but rather, in locating his mode of explanation clearly in the world of social process, he simply ignores such difficulties. This neglect is particularly evident when one considers Mead's summary dismissal of the problem of solipsism. In a manner reminiscent of Samuel Johnson,<sup>11</sup> Mead is able to avoid the problems of subjective idealism by simply reasserting the primacy of the physical world. However, the criticisms of the radical sceptic remain in place. The extended world does not become real simply because it is asserted to be so.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, one must admit the seeming explanatory power of an account which locates the genesis of self-consciousness in the social world. The idea that other selves logically antedate the consciousness which introspection analyses is a powerful one. As we have seen, this argument is based on the idea that significant communication and, therefore, self-reflection, arises with the ability of the organism to take the attitude of the other. However, there are a number of questions that remain unanswered as far as this is concerned. Particularly, it is necessary to examine the precise cognitive processes involved in the ability to take the attitude of the other, otherwise we are left not with an explanation of how an organism comes to be an object to itself, but merely a description of what it means to be an object to oneself. In this respect, one might consider, for example, the role played by the vocal gesture in this process. According to Mead, the vocal gesture is particularly suited to the emergence of the self, since being audible to the addresser as well as to the addressee, it is likely to arouse the same response in the former as in the latter. However, if this is the case, then it is not clear why the organism who utters the vocal gesture should have to take the attitude of the other in order to become aware of the gesture uttered. All that appears to be required is that the appropriate response has been previously learned.

Habermas points to a further difficulty concerning Mead's notion of the significant gesture. He claims that it is not clear from Mead's account how gestures with *identical*

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<sup>11</sup> Johnson refuted the idealist implications of Berkeley's philosophy by kicking a stone.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the problem of other selves in relation to Mead's body-self dichotomy, see Natanson, M., *The Social Dynamics of G. H. Mead*, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1973), 58-59.

meaning for the participants of an interaction situation will arise. Specifically, “if the same gesture arouses in both a disposition to *like* (sufficiently similar) behaviour, an observer can notice a concurrence in the way they interpret the stimulus, but this does not yet imply the formation of a meaning that is the same for the participants themselves [Habermas, 1981: 12].” For Habermas, the solution to this problem lies in the fact that an individual initiating a communicative act does so with the expectation that it will be interpreted in a certain manner. However, this is an expectation that can be disappointed and it is through the mutual expression of this disappointment that rules for the use of symbols develop.

In adopting toward themselves the critical attitude of others when the interpretation of communicative acts goes wrong, they develop *rules for the use of symbols*. They can now consider in advance whether in a given situation they are using a significant gesture in a way as to give the other no grounds for a critical response. In this manner, *meaning conventions* and symbols that can be employed with the same meaning take shape.<sup>13</sup>

To this point, I have been dealing with Mead’s contention that the development of the self depends upon the ability to take the attitude of the other. It is now necessary to turn to the more focused question of how the human child progresses to become a fully socialised human adult. Mead argues that there are two intermediary stages in this process, the play stage and the game stage. The play stage is characterised by the child playing at being someone. “A child plays at being a mother, at being a teacher, at being a policeman; that is, it is taking different roles, as we say [Mead, 1934: 150].” The role taking process serves to organise the child’s self, particularly in that the responses he makes to the role being played become increasingly systematised. “He plays that he is, for instance, offering himself something, and he buys it; he gives a letter to himself and takes it away; he addresses himself as a parent, as a teacher; he arrests himself as a policeman [Mead, 1934: 150-151].”

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<sup>13</sup> Habermas, J., *Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 2*, (Polity Press, Cambridge: 1984), 15. Habermas goes on to use Wittgenstein’s idea of a *rule*, in order to chart the emergence of the fully socialised individual.

The game stage is differentiated from the play stage by the increased rigidity of its structure. Whereas in the play stage the child passes from one role to another in arbitrary fashion, in the game stage the child “must be ready to take the attitude of everyone else involved in that game, and these different roles must have a definite relationship to each other [Mead, 1934: 151].” The game stage is normally characterised by formal systems of rules and it “represents the passage in the life of the child from taking the role of others in play to the organized part that is essential to self-consciousness in the full sense of the term [Mead, 1934: 152].”

The final crucial stage in the full development of the self comes when the individual is able to take the attitude of *the generalised other* towards himself; that is, when he is able to take the attitude of the whole social group towards himself. Mead is referring here to the ability of the individual to deduce from the attitudes of the constituent members of a social group, the generalised attitude of the group as a whole. It is the ability of the individual to take the attitude of the generalised other to the various projects being undertaken within the context of the group that guarantees the presence of a fully developed self. Moreover, it is through the functioning of the generalised other that the individual is subject to the control of the society of which he is a member. Most significantly, the generalised other constitutes the ground upon which thought can occur, since thought consists in the individual taking the attitude of the generalised other towards himself and responding accordingly. The grounding of the thought process in the generalised other guarantees that the social group will be present in consciousness as a constraining force. As Mead puts it, “...We assume the generalized attitude of the group, in the censor that stands at the door of our imagery and inner conversations, and in the affirmation of the laws and axioms of the universe of discourse [Mead, 1964: 288].” As a result, individuals will tend to act in fashions that are determined by their social groups.

However, Mead rejects the idea that the self and its actions are *entirely* the product of society. In this respect, he distinguishes between the “I” and “me” aspects of the self, where the “I” is the self in its unique individuality and the “me” in its social form. The “me” is the self from the standpoint of the generalised other and, therefore, functions as society’s representative in consciousness. It is the self as “me” which allows the

individual to pass as a member of the wider community. In contrast, the "I" is that aspect of the self which calls out and responds to the "me" as it appears in consciousness. The important point is that this response is never fully determined (by the "me") and, therefore, there is a novel and emergent quality to every act. It is this that ensures the uniqueness and creativity of each individual self.<sup>14</sup>

However, the extent to which the logic of Mead's enquiry actually allows one to conceive of a spontaneous, creative individual must be questioned. The "I" is an aspect of the self; the self has the social milieu immanent in its nature; it is hard, therefore, to see how the "I" can be posited as a transcendent entity.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, this point would seem to be borne out by experience, where that which is typically thought of as the "I" is simply the totality of an individual's past actions and experience.<sup>16</sup> If this is the case, then even if one, in line with philosophical tradition, endows the individual with creative potential, it is hard to see how this can be anything other than fundamentally mediated by the totality of experience. However, it is not the task here to explore the various issues surrounding notions of determinism, suffice it to say that Mead foresaw the day when social sciences would "define persons precisely and determine the laws of social change with mathematical exactness...".<sup>17</sup>

In terms of the interests of this chapter, it is, perhaps, the concept of the generalised other which is the most significant in Mead's account. It is the ability of the individual to adopt this attitude towards himself that defines him as a fully social self. The "me", a specifically social identity, forms the bedrock of social action in the social group, and is the primary source of social order. Of course, Mead's account is but one example of a theory of the social self, and this latter argument, that the social self is integral to social order, is a theme common to other similar conceptions. As I noted

<sup>14</sup> For fuller discussions of the various issues surrounding the "I" and the "me", see Mead, G. H., *Selected Writings*, (Edited: Reck, A.), (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1964), 142-149; and Mead, G. H., *Mind, Self and Society*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1934), 174-199.

<sup>15</sup> See Mead, G. H., (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1964), 140-141.

<sup>16</sup> Natanson points out that this is indeed one aspect of Mead's "I" [Natanson, M., *The Social Dynamics of G. H. Mead*, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1973), 16-17].

<sup>17</sup> Mead, G. H., *Selected Writings*, (Edited: Reck, A.), (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1964), 107-108.

earlier, perhaps the most frequent response to the Hobbesian question, “How is the social order possible?”, is to claim that it is possible because society constitutes individuals; that is, it is to claim, in effect, that a regularity of action is guaranteed by the presence of society in the subjectivities of social actors.<sup>18</sup>

In broad terms, then, Mead’s analysis, and accounts of the social self generally, accomplish two major things: (i) they demonstrate the sense in which subjectivity is fundamentally structured by the societal relation; and (ii) they conceptually link the levels of the social and the individual, therefore, providing the grounds for an analysis of the reproduction of social action which is perceived to be regular and non-random. However, such accounts also beg a number of important questions. Perhaps most significantly, they raise the issue as to whether the character of the self is exhausted in its social aspect; or, to put this another way, whether it is possible *to reduce* subjectivity to the “external-world”?<sup>19</sup>

As a starting point for exploring this issue, I wish to return to Mead’s analysis of the self, and to note a certain ambiguity in his account. Specifically, I wish to consider whether having been constituted as self-reflective, consciousness requires the continued presence of others for its maintenance. The logic of Mead’s account would seem to suggest that it does since it is only through the functioning of a generalised other that the fully developed self can exist. However, equally, it is not expected that a self able to perceive itself as an object could then lose this ability. Therefore, it seems quite plausible to Mead that the person in solitary confinement should still be capable of self-reflection and inner-conversation.<sup>20</sup> Whatever the solution to this ambiguity, the case of the individual in solitary confinement poses interesting questions for the social behaviourist explanation of consciousness. Particularly, it is difficult to see how an analysis concerned to *pull consciousness out into the open* is applicable to a situation

<sup>18</sup> Thus, R. S. Perinbanayagam argues that "...The individual is unknown to social science...because he is defined, created, and sustained by an interaction with the other - known to some sociologists as the primacy of the group, to some others as the importance of institutions and communities, and to some sociologists and anthropologists as the paramountcy of social structure. It is not that the individual has no creativity or voluntariness, but that even such creativity and voluntariness are social and interpersonal activities, and so, are minimally or maximally constrained [Perinbanayagam, 1975: 501]."

<sup>19</sup> When I use the term "external-world", it will always be in the sense of *perceived* external-world.

<sup>20</sup> See Pivcevic, E., *Husserl and Phenomenology*, (Hutchinson, London: 1970), 46.

where there is a bare minimum of interaction. It is, therefore, perhaps the case that the account which seeks to avoid the spectre of solipsism is inadequate in describing the state of consciousness which most concretely mirrors this condition.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, as I intimated above, Mead's account displays a general explanatory weakness when dealing with *self-consciousness as self-consciousness*. Although one cannot doubt the efficacy of the concept of the *generalised other*, particularly, in that it specifies how a social control function might enter the consciousness of an individual subject, there are aspects of reflection and awareness that cannot easily be understood by means of this conceptual framework. Particularly, there is the question of the awareness of the conscious subject of his conscious existence. I am talking here about Man's awareness that he is an unified existent entity, standing apart from the others encountered in social interaction. Self-consciousness inevitably means isolation and a separation from the world of others. It confirms not only Man's ability "to call upon himself and find himself at home"<sup>22</sup>, but also that when he gets there he will have no house guests.

Interestingly, Mead provides us with the conceptual apparatus necessary to understand how an individual might come to perceive himself as ultimately separated from those

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<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting that the various issues surrounding the notion of solipsism are inextricably linked to more general epistemological concerns. Although it is not possible to discuss these at any length, it is worth briefly considering whether Mead's account is as epistemologically unproblematic as he seems to think. Is he able, by focusing upon the realm of observable social processes, to specify the indubitable basis for the human sciences? At present, this question must be answered in the negative, since there are a number of philosophical difficulties that have not yet been adequately resolved. For example, one might consider that the natural sciences as Mead conceives them (including his own enquiry) are situated squarely in the realm of the pre-philosophic *natural attitude*. They are, in Husserlian terminology, "lost in the world [Husserl, 1970: 157]" and they have not been subjected to a "radical investigation of sense" [for an outline of the demands of the phenomenological approach, see Hindess, B., *Philosophy and Methodology in the Social Sciences*, (The Harvester Press, Sussex: 1977), 56-59]. As a consequence, upon reflection, "we fall into errors and confusions. We become entangled in patent difficulties and even self-contradictions [Husserl, 1964: 17]." Mead's analysis, therefore, remains helplessly attached to a common sense view of the sciences and thereby open to the charge of relativism. Ironically, Husserl shows us that one of the very consequences of the lack of a radical investigation of sense is the solipsism which Mead argues cannot exist [Husserl, 1964: 16]. Broadly speaking, therefore, epistemological difficulties are not avoided simply by reasserting the primacy of the material world. Mead does not silence the claims of the radical sceptic by dismissing the metaphysical question of solipsism as unworthy of analysis. This is not necessarily to accept the arguments of the sceptics. But it is to maintain that they must be dealt with.

<sup>22</sup> Mead, G. H., cited in Ames, V. M., "Mead and Husserl on the self", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, (1955), IV, 3, 325.

he encounters in social interaction. This is a consequence of the fact that the self is able to appear as an object to itself. The very fact that the individual is able to grasp himself in this manner, an object among other objects, implies an awareness of his separation from those others he encounters. It is fair to say, that without this awareness there would be no basis for meaningful interaction. However, in that Mead wishes to avoid recourse to the introspective sphere, he is unable to explore the consequences of this awareness, instead being content merely to articulate the various mechanisms involved its emergence.

Indeed, it is difficult to see how an analysis of consciousness that is concerned to objectify the introspective sphere can further the understanding of the plight of the conscious subject aware of its consciousness. In part, this is due to the fact that consciousness, for the conscious subject, is not reducible to the external-world. This can be illustrated by considering the notion of Cartesian doubt. Descartes argued that whilst one can doubt the existence of everything material one cannot doubt the fact of one's doubting and, therefore, one's existence. In his words "...While I wanted to think everything false, it must necessarily be that I who thought was something...".<sup>23</sup> The fact that the individual can conceive of consciousness in isolation, demonstrates its irreducibility, for him, to the external-world. Thus, whilst an analysis concerned to objectify consciousness is quite adequate in describing its emergence, it is wholly inadequate in teaching us what it means to be a conscious subject aware of its own consciousness.

## **The Solitary Self**

It is this aspect of subjectivity that I wish to explore in the second half of this chapter. To anticipate, I wish to argue that as a result of the isolation, estrangement and lack of definiteness which is characteristic of the self in the solitary relation, individuals experience a necessity to seek continual reaffirmation of their senses of self. In other words, it is my claim that the solitary self is in perpetual flight from its isolation, estrangement and absurdity. This is the pursuit of self-reification, the attempt to

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<sup>23</sup> Cited in Russell, B., *A History of Western Philosophy*, (Unwin, London: 1946), 547.

transcend the inexplicability of the *cogito*. However, as the individuals engaged in this project are socially defined, that is, they *think* and *act* in terms of the norms and values of their social groups, this search for reaffirmation is fundamentally mediated by the societal relation. Of particular significance is the fact that individuals will look to society to satisfy this need, which will be achieved to the extent that they are able to embrace their various social identities. The social and political significance of these issues is wide-ranging and constitutes, in large part, the wider concern of this work. In my analysis of these issues, I wish to turn first to Jean-Paul Sartre and his description of *nothingness*, to analyse what is arguably as extreme an account of the isolation of consciousness as is possible.

For Sartre, the starting point of the philosophical enquiry is the Cartesian *cogito*. Accordingly, "...There can be no other truth to take off from than this: I think, therefore, I exist. There we have the absolute truth of consciousness becoming aware of itself [Sartre, 1957: 36]." Sartre terms consciousness, "Being for-itself", and it is to a description of this and its relation to "Being in-itself" (i.e., the world of things) that his major "existential" work *Being and Nothingness* is devoted.<sup>24</sup>

The For-itself is essentially defined by its emptiness, by the lack of that which is necessary for its completion. In Sartre's words, "...Consciousness is a being, the nature of which is to be conscious of the nothingness of its being [Sartre, 1969: 47]." There are a number of different senses in which this can be understood. Sartre maintains that the inevitable corollary of the intentionality of consciousness is the existence of a gap between thought and its objects.<sup>25</sup> It is not only the case that "...All consciousness, as Husserl has shown, is consciousness of something [Sartre, 1969: xxvii]", it is also true that consciousness is, at all times, aware of the fact that it is so conscious. The gap between thought and its objects is derived from this awareness; that is, the awareness of consciousness that it is not the object to which it is directed. Further, it is in this gap that the freedom of the For-itself is manifest. It is the fact that consciousness is able to

<sup>24</sup> Sartre, J-P., *Being and Nothingness*, (Routledge, London and New York: 1969). For the analysis of *nothingness*, see particularly, 3-45.

<sup>25</sup> The term "intentional" has a technical usage in the phenomenological literature. It refers to the "directedness" of mental acts; that is, to the fact that all mental acts are directed towards an object. It was first employed in this sense by Brentano and Husserl.

adopt any number of attitudes towards the objects to which it is directed, particularly the attitude of *denial*, which confirms this freedom. This general point is worth emphasising: it is because the For-itself is separated from the given order of things that it is free; freedom is detachment, the permanent possibility that things might be other than they are. Thus, according to Warnock, “at the very centre of the For-itself, right at the beginning we discover both freedom and an emptiness [Warnock, 1965: 43].”

As a consequence, the being For-itself lacks the necessary concreteness to render itself a being In-itself.<sup>26</sup> Particularly, the conscious being lacks *the coincidence of himself with himself* required for this transformation. This is so, inevitably, because of the fact that the For-itself lacks an essence, and it lies at the heart of Sartre’s famous dictum that the For-itself is not what it is and is what it is not.<sup>27</sup> Thus, on the one hand, Man is confronted by a past that he no longer is, and on the other, by the totality of his unrealised possibilities that may or may not come to pass. Therefore, “...Human-reality is free because it *is not enough*. It is free because it is perpetually wrenched away from itself and because it has been separated by a nothingness from what it is and from what it will be [Sartre, 1969: 440].”

The fact that nothingness *lies coiled at the heart of being* is further confirmed by an analysis of negation. This concerns, most simply, the capacity of consciousness to conceive of that which is *not* the case and can be inferred from Man’s ability to ask questions. For example, to ask whether the Duke of Wellington is in a particular cafe is to recognise the possibility of a negative reply. Similarly, to receive a reply to the affirmative rules out other answers and thus carries with it its own negations (*yes, the Duke of Wellington is in the cafe, he cannot, therefore, be at home, on the bus, etc.*). However, more interesting than these, which are simple acts of judgement/thought, are those instances where negation enters directly into the *experience* of a For-itself. Sartre deals with this most famously in a passage concerning the non-appearance of a friend at the cafe where he is expected:

<sup>26</sup> The In-itself refers most simply to the *things* of the material world. These, in contrast to the For-itself, have fixed essences that define them in their entirety. Thus, the In-itself has no unfulfilled possibilities; “It is itself indefinitely and it exhausts itself in being [Sartre, 1969: xlvi].”

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Sartre, J-P., *Being and Nothingness*, (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 88.

But now Pierre is not here. This does not mean that I discover his absence in some precise spot in the establishment. In fact Pierre is absent from the *whole* cafe; his absence fixes the cafe in its evanescence; the cafe remains *ground*; it persists in offering itself as an undifferentiated totality to my only marginal attention; it slips into the background; it pursues its nihilation. Only it makes itself ground for a determined figure; it carries the figure everywhere in front of it, presents the figure everywhere to me. This figure which slips constantly between my look and the solid, real objects of the cafe is precisely a perpetual disappearance; it is Pierre raising himself as nothingness on the ground of the nihilation of the cafe.<sup>28</sup>

Although Pierre's absence is based on an original relation of expectation - that is, he is only absent by virtue of someone expecting him to be there, it is still a very real event concerning the cafe, which he now *haunts* by his non-appearance. More generally, it is Sartre's contention that non-being enters the world as a consequence of the assumptions and expectations used by Man and that once it is present it is apprehended as clearly as is being. Thus, Sartre states that "Man is the being through whom nothingness comes into the world [Sartre, 1969: 24]."

This leads us to a final question: what kind of being must Man be that through him nothingness can enter into the world? The answer that Sartre gives is that nothingness can only be produced by nothingness, since "...It would be inconceivable that a Being which is full positivity should maintain and create outside itself a Nothingness...for there would be nothing in Being by which Being could surpass itself toward Non-Being...The being by which Nothingness comes into the world must be its own Nothingness [Sartre, 1969: 23]." We are returned, therefore, to a conception of consciousness as freedom and emptiness, something that is confirmed by the ability of the For-itself to introduce *negatitès* into the world. Furthermore, consciousness carries within itself a permanent negation; that is, it constantly identifies itself by reference to those multitude of objects which are not it. These, then, are the senses in which

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<sup>28</sup> Sartre, J-P., *Being and Nothingness*, (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 10.

“consciousness is a being, the nature of which is to be conscious of the nothingness of its being [Sartre, 1969: 47].”

It can be seen that Sartre has produced an account of consciousness which apparently stresses its isolation and estrangement. The For-itself is always separated from the objects to which it is directed; in its emptiness and freedom it constantly escapes itself as a lack of completed possibilities. However, it must be noted that Sartre himself would deny that consciousness is isolated in this way. Firstly, because the For-itself is absolutely dependent for its existence upon the objects to which it is directed;<sup>29</sup> and secondly, because Man recognises that *others* are the condition of his own existence<sup>30</sup> - Man “can not be anything... unless others recognize it as such. In order to get any truth about myself, I must have contact with another person [Sartre, 1957: 37-38].” Nevertheless, one must, in fact, doubt whether these qualifications are sufficient to lift consciousness out of its isolation. It is still the case that the For-itself is conscious of both its *nothingness* and its *freedom*; it is difficult to see how something that can only exist For-itself, by virtue of its *not being* those objects towards which it is directed, can be anything other than fundamentally estranged. Indeed, it would appear to be the case that the For-itself is absolutely dependent upon its solitariness for its existence.

At this point, it seems sensible to make a number of general points concerning Sartre’s approach and its significance for sociological enquiry. Firstly, there are a whole series of difficulties concerning his insistence upon the inalienable freedom of the For-itself. Most importantly, it is the status that Sartre ascribes to the *cogito* that must be questioned. Whilst it is true that Mead did not pay sufficient respect to the problem of solipsism, it is also the case that his treatment of the emergence the self has far more explanatory merit than the transcendentalism of the phenomenologists. If one accepts the social behaviourist argument, then one is led to question Sartre’s insistence that consciousness is condemned to be free. It is quite possible to concede that the For-itself is in a sense detached from the things of the world and, therefore, required to choose, at all times, between alternative courses of action, but at the same time to maintain that this does not entail its freedom since it is itself the resultant of the social

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<sup>29</sup> Sartre, J-P., *Being and Nothingness*, (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 89.

<sup>30</sup> Sartre, J-P., (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 221-302.

milieu; that is, to maintain that the subject of the subject-object relation is socially defined (i.e., a social self).<sup>31</sup>

However, whilst we might be forced to reject Sartre's insistence on Man's ineluctable freedom there is much in his account that remains of value.<sup>32</sup> Firstly, in stressing that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something and that this something is never identical with consciousness itself, he has perhaps identified that structure of experience which functions most fundamentally to establish and maintain the identity of the self. In this respect, for example, D. W. Winnicott notes that the new-born infant displays no sense of self and argues that this is due to the lack of an external object in terms of which the self can be defined.<sup>33</sup> Of course, the consequence of the opposition of consciousness and its objects is the fundamental isolation that characterises the solitary self. Secondly, in locating Man's freedom at the centre of his philosophy, Sartre pays due regard to what is an universal aspect of experience. Whether or not Man is *in fact* freely acting, it has long been recognised that he *experiences* himself as such.<sup>34</sup> The importance of this is: (i) that the perception of freedom remains a significant aspect of an individual's subjectivity; and (ii) that to be apparently freely acting is, as Sartre recognises, to be detached from the *order of things*. Finally, it must be admitted that Sartre's description of the For-itself as *nothingness* is a striking one. Although we are ultimately led to reject this in favour of the explanatory superiority of a social behaviourist approach, in many ways Sartre's account serves us better than

<sup>31</sup> Sartre's insistence on the absolute freedom of the For-itself is generally felt to be one of the most problematic areas of his philosophy. See, for example, Warnock, M., *The Philosophy of Sartre*, (Hutchinson, London: 1965), 110-112; Chiari, J., *Twentieth Century French Thought: from Bergson to Levi-Strauss*, (Paul Elek, London: 1975), 101-104; and Ayer, A. J., *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, (Unwin Paperbacks, London: 1982), 231.

<sup>32</sup> Of course, there are other reasons, apart from the inadequacies of the Sartrean account vis-à-vis the emergence of the self, for rejecting the notion that the self is absolutely free. Unfortunately, it is not possible to examine these here, suffice it to say that I accept Timothy Sprigge's assessment that Sartre's theory is "insufficiently zoological" [see Sprigge, T. L. S., *Theories of Existence*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1984), 146-147].

<sup>33</sup> See Winnicott, D. W., *The Family and Individual Development*, (Tavistock, London: 1965), 18. Of course, Sartre would be forced to deny that the infant could be, at one and the same time, conscious and yet unaware that there existed objects outside consciousness. This serves merely to illustrate the superiority of those theories which see the *cogito* as in some sense constructed.

<sup>34</sup> The crucial issue is whether or not we are mistaken in this belief. "Libertarians" argue that determinists cannot explain why Man experiences himself as freely acting; but this could, perhaps, be achieved by combining Sartre's analysis of the structure of consciousness with a Median social behaviourism.

social behaviourism when it comes to understanding what it means to be a conscious subject aware of its own consciousness. Of particular significance is the fact that it enables us to appreciate the fragility and vulnerability of such a state. The Sartrean individual is unable to make himself real, he at all times escapes himself and he is fundamentally estranged from both himself and others. It is my contention that although the For-itself is neither *empty* nor *free*, Sartre nevertheless provides an accurate description of what it means to be a conscious being. The fact that the individual is the product of an apparently structured social reality does not enable him to transcend the confines of the *cogito*. The experience of consciousness *as* consciousness is best understood, therefore, in terms of relations of isolation and estrangement.

It is my claim, as I have already noted, that as a result of this isolation and estrangement individuals seek constantly to reaffirm their senses of self; and that they achieve this to the extent that they are able to embrace their various social identities. In order to explore this claim, I wish now to analyse critically Sartre's notions of *anguish* and *bad faith*.

Bad faith refers to those strategies employed by an individual in his attempt to deny the freedom that is indubitably his. Such strategies are made necessary by the anguish that is experienced with the reflective awareness of this freedom. In other words, the individual will adopt "patterns of bad faith", in order to deny the reflective awareness that he has continually to choose himself but that having done so he can rely on neither the permanence nor the validity of these choices. In order to clarify the notion of anguish, it is worth considering one of the examples that Sartre himself uses; namely, the experience of "vertigo".

Sartre states that "...Vertigo is *anguish* to the extent that I am afraid not of falling over the precipice, but of throwing myself over [Sartre, 1969: 29]." On a narrow path, confronted by a sheer drop, an individual will feel *fear*. He does so in that he apprehends himself as an object, who being subject to the *universal determinism* of the physical world, carries the possibility of a fall to death. In response, he will, after reflection, take the steps necessary to minimise the potential risk - for example, by

walking as far away from the drop as possible - and escapes his fear to the extent that he replaces mere objective probability with his *own possibilities*; that is, to the extent that he is actively engaged in making his own future.<sup>35</sup> However, it will be remembered that the individual is separated by a *nothingness* from both his past and his future. Therefore, the fact that he has at one moment taken the decision to pursue the course of action necessary to avoid falling over the edge, in no way guarantees that he will not, at the next, decide instead to throw himself over. Thus:

I am in anguish precisely because any conduct on my part is only *possible*, and this means that while constituting a totality of motives *for* pushing away that situation, I at the same moment apprehend these motives as not sufficiently effective. At the very moment when I apprehend my being as *horror* of the precipice, I am conscious of that horror as *not determinant* in relation to my possible conduct.<sup>36</sup>

Anguish, in this sense, is simply the recognition by an individual that he and his future are always in doubt. Therefore, in general terms, it can be characterised as a kind of monumental and perpetual uncertainty, a lack of definiteness, consequent of the emptiness that lies at the heart of being. Bad faith is the most typical response of the For-itself to this state and constitutes a striving for *fullness of being*. This is attained to the extent that the For-itself is able to represent himself to himself as thing-like; that is, to the extent that he is able to take on the definiteness of character of an In-itself, therefore, fixing his possibilities and releasing him from the uncertainty of freedom. The sociological significance of this quest for identity is obvious; the social world is the arena within which this takes place and the identity sought by an individual is more often than not a social identity.<sup>37</sup> That Sartre recognises this is confirmed by his discussion of what it means to be *a waiter*.

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<sup>35</sup> See Sartre, J-P., *Being and Nothingness*, (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 30.

<sup>36</sup> Sartre, J-P., (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 31.

<sup>37</sup> Of the four forms of *bad faith* identified by Gila Hayim, only one is not immediately explicable in sociological terms. This she terms the *Stoical solution* and it refers to that situation where the individual represents himself as pure consciousness, separated from his body which becomes purely a thing. See Hayim, G., *The Existential Sociology of Jean-Paul*

Sartre argues that the most successful waiter is the one who most completely identifies with his role. In other words, he is the waiter who takes on waiterhood as his *essence*; who becomes a waiter like an inkwell is an inkwell or a glass a glass; who turns himself into *a thing* whose being is exhausted in its social role. However, to the extent that he achieves this, he is in bad faith because, as we have seen, the For-itself can never actually coincide with the In-itself. He is always separated by a *nothingness* from that which he is and, therefore, can only be a waiter in the mode of *being what he is not*.<sup>38</sup> According to Gila Hayim, this type of bad faith is an ontological solution to the problem of freedom. She is referring here to those instances where an individual “becomes nothing else but what he is expected to be, unwaveringly loyal to fixed modes of conduct and judgement imposed from above and without. The expectations of others actually become his desires, and almost come to constitute his own nature [Hayim, 1980: 25].” There are parallels here with both Mead and Schutz: the individual constitutes himself by means of a *generalised other*; this in turn provides him with the ideal course of action types (to borrow Schutzian terminology) that make up particular social identities; and, to the extent that he embraces these, he is spared the uncertainty that haunts his being.

Of course, the attempted identification with a particular social role is by no means the only strategy available to the individual in his flight from uncertainty. He might also strive to become quite literally *a thing*; that is, to become an object whose possibilities are realised at the instance of its creation. He is able to do this to the extent that he can represent himself as controlled by forces that exist objectively and externally to himself. Such forces would include all those that Durkheim terms *social facts*; “types of conduct or thought [that] are not only external to the individual but are, moreover, endowed with an imperative and coercive power, by virtue of which they impose themselves upon him, independent of his individual will [Durkheim, 1972: 64].”<sup>39</sup> Numbered amongst these are the “established beliefs and practices” that go to make up

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*Sartre*, (University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst: 1980), 23-26; and *Sartre, J-P., Being and Nothingness*, (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 55-56.

<sup>38</sup> See *Sartre, J-P.*, (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 60.

<sup>39</sup> Hayim obviously has Durkheim in mind when she terms this type of *bad faith*, “positivistic”. Needless to say, as far as Sartre is concerned, *social facts* cannot exert a determining influence on individuals.

the normative sphere.<sup>40</sup> To the extent that these are accepted and adhered to without question, they exercise a coercive force over individuals. Unquestioning acceptance is, for Sartre, an instance of that special kind of bad faith he terms the *spirit of seriousness*.

This refers most generally to that human attitude that subordinates Man to a transcendent and immutable *natural order of things*. Sartre states that "...The serious attitude involves starting from the world and attributing more reality to the world than to oneself ...*the serious man confers reality on himself to the degree to which he belongs to the world* [Sartre, 1969: 580, my italics]." Particularly, he assigns a transcendent and objective reality to those beliefs and values that govern his behaviour; he is enshrined in a network of the rights and duties that give to him his significance. This is strikingly illustrated in Sartre's treatment of the Burgher's of Bouville:<sup>41</sup>

Jean Pacome, the son of the Pacome of the Government of National Defense...had always done his duty, all his duty, his duty as a son, a husband, a father, a leader. He had also unhesitatingly demanded his rights: as a child, the right to be well brought up, in a united family, the right to inherit a spotless name, a prosperous business; as a husband, the right to be cared for, to be surrounded with tender affection; as a father, the right to be venerated; as a leader, the right to be obeyed without demur. For a right is never anything but the other aspect of duty.<sup>42</sup>

The Burghers, therefore, find their reality outside themselves; in their positions as heads of household; in their business accomplishments; in their good deeds; in their morality; and in their knowledge that the world is perfectly explicable. It is to society they look in their attempt to escape the freedom that is inevitably theirs. They seek the

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<sup>40</sup> See Lukes, S., *Emile Durkheim*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1973), 9-10.

<sup>41</sup> See Sartre, J-P., *Nausea*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1963).

<sup>42</sup> Sartre, J-P., (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1963), 124.

*ontological security*<sup>43</sup> of an in-group and its established folkways in their flight from uncertainty; and they move to isolate and denigrate the out-group<sup>44</sup> in an attempt to hold onto this security.<sup>45</sup> The *serious man*, generally, desires the certainty that a social identity affords; he obscures the demands of freedom by binding himself to a particular framework of typifications, which consequently functions to define him. However, this hope that the freedom that is inevitably Man's can be transcended in the societal relation is, for Sartre, a vain one, destined to be swallowed up by the emptiness that lies at the heart of consciousness.

In this discussion, I have attempted to demonstrate: (i) that, for Sartre, as a consequence of the nothingness and freedom characteristic of the For-itself, there exists a particular state of being he terms anguish, which can be understood as the perpetual uncertainty that an individual experiences as a result of his recognition that both he and his future are always in doubt; (ii) that an individual seeks to avoid such anguish by adopting strategies of bad faith, whereby he is able to *operate in the guise of a powerless In-itself*<sup>46</sup> and, therefore, escape the uncertainty of freedom; in this respect, strategies of bad faith can be understood as mechanisms by which an individual seeks to reaffirm his sense of self; that is, they are mechanisms for the attainment of a certain *solidity of being*; and (iii) that an individual becomes a powerless In-itself to the extent that he is able to define himself in terms of his various social identities.

It is now necessary to point to a number of the difficulties with the Sartrean account, so that I might demonstrate the wider significance of these kinds of arguments. As I

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<sup>43</sup> An individual might be said to be "ontologically secure" to the extent that he has achieved: (i) a continuity of self-identity; and (ii) on-going confidence in reality and malleability of the external-world.

<sup>44</sup> According to Schutz, the distinction between in-group and out-group serves primarily to distinguish between the way that a particular social group is experienced by its own members, in contrast to the way that it is apprehended by the members of other distinct groups. See Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume II*, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1964), 227; and 250.

<sup>45</sup> See Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1964), 128-129. William Sumner notes that "...Each group thinks its own folkways the only right ones, and if it observes that other groups have other folkways, this excites its scorn. Opprobrious epithets are derived from these differences. "Pig-eater," "cow-eater," "uncircumcised," "jabberers," are epithets of contempt and abomination [Sumner, W., cited in Schutz, (1964): 244]."

<sup>46</sup> Hayim's definition, see Hayim, G., *The Existential Sociology of Jean-Paul Sartre*, (University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst: 1980), 15.

have stated, it is Sartre's contention that the For-itself can never attain the solidity of being that it is seeking. In the final analysis, this is a consequence of the separation of consciousness and its objects, which itself is the condition of its emptiness and freedom. However, it will be remembered that I have rejected this conception of the For-itself in favour of the explanatory superiority of a social behaviourist account. Thus, the question that I wish to address here is whether the notion of bad faith retains its usefulness, given the rejection of the premises upon which it is built. The answer, I think, is yes, if bad faith is understood not as a flight from freedom, but rather as an attempt to transcend the isolation and estrangement that the self experiences in its solitary aspect. In order to justify this assertion, I wish to turn first to consider whether bad faith is a convincing notion, when it is defined purely as the attempt to escape an inevitable freedom.

One must accept, I think, that Sartre has identified a recognisable aspect of experience in his description of anguish. Thus, for example, we can understand the uncertainty which individuals experience with the realisation, when confronted by a sheer drop, that they can at anytime choose to jump. Similarly, we are all familiar with the difficulty of accepting absolute responsibility for all our actions.<sup>47</sup> However, the familiarity of these experiences does not constitute a sufficient reason for tying bad faith so closely to the experience of freedom. Indeed, there are a number of good reasons why one cannot do so.

It will be remembered that Sartre maintains that the For-itself can never be what it is. Thus, for example, "...If I make myself sad, it is because I *am* not sad - the being of sadness escapes me by and in the very act by which I affect myself with it...the original structure of "not being what one is" renders impossible in advance all movement toward being in itself or "being what one is" [Sartre, 1969: 61-62]." What is more, the inescapable freedom of the For-itself means that it must choose every emotion that it experiences. In this respect, for example, whilst I might appear to be pathologically and unavoidably sad, "...Let a stranger suddenly appear and I will lift up my head, I will assume a lively cheerfulness. What will remain of my sadness except that I

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<sup>47</sup> This is an aspect of *anguish* that I have not discussed. See, for example, Sartre, J-P., *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, (Philosophical Library, New York: 1957), 18-29.

obligingly promise it an appointment for later after the departure of the visitor...[Sartre, 1969: 61].” Presumably, then, this also applies to anguish; that is, the For-itself, becoming reflectively aware of its freedom, is in anguish to the extent that it chooses to be so. However, a very condition of this freedom is the ineffectiveness of the motives that apparently lead to particular choices; a reflective apprehension that one is condemned to be free, therefore, cannot lead inevitably to an experience of anguish.<sup>48</sup> According to the terms of Sartre’s analysis, freedom can be tied neither logically nor causally to anguish; it is a purely contingent relation.<sup>49</sup> A similar argument can be levelled at his contention that the For-itself seeks to avoid anguish by adopting patterns of bad faith. Anguish cannot be a causal factor in the individual’s decision to adopt such patterns; having *chosen* to experience anguish the individual *chooses* bad faith as the strategy to avoid that which he has chosen to experience. This absurd conclusion is the inevitable consequence of an insistence upon the absolute freedom of the For-itself. It is impossible to tie freedom, anguish and bad faith together in an explanatory whole, since they are at all times separated from each other, both logically and causally, by the nothingness that is the For-itself.

In fact, it is very difficult to see why a For-itself that has no essence should have any difficulty at all with the apprehension of its freedom. For example, consider the notion of *responsibility*: Sartre argues that to be aware of one’s absolute responsibility for one’s own actions is to be in anguish. He illustrates this point by examining the case where a military officer has to choose whether to order an attack, where he knows that if he does so he will certainly send a number of men to their deaths.<sup>50</sup> This officer is in anguish to the extent that he is aware that he is absolutely free to choose either to attack or not to attack. However, whilst freedom (or a perceived freedom) might be a necessary condition of such anguish, it is certainly not a sufficient one. The burden of responsibility, in this instance, is tied up with a whole range of socially derived beliefs

<sup>48</sup> It is because there is a gap between the For-itself and both its motives and its acts that these motives are ineffective in determining particular actions [see Sartre, J-P., *Being and Nothingness*, (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 33-35].

<sup>49</sup> A possible line of response might be that *anguish* is not an attitude taken towards freedom, but purely and simply a reflective apprehension of freedom. However, there are two objections here: (i) it is difficult to see why a simple recognition of freedom should engender patterns of *bad faith*; and (ii) the very term *anguish* implies an emotional attitude.

<sup>50</sup> See Sartre, J-P., *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, (Philosophical Library, New York: 1957), 20-21.

and attitudes, particularly those surrounding the notion of the sanctity of life. It is very unlikely that the officer would experience such anguish were it the fate of a battalion of ants that lay in his hands. However, it is difficult to see how Sartre's account allows for the influence of such social factors, since these cannot be causally related to any attitude (e.g., anguish) adopted subsequent to their being posited as significant. Crudely, whether or not an individual accepts a particular moral code can have no bearing on his experience of anguish. If we allow that it can, we reach the absurd situation where the individual is in anguish to the extent that he accepts as binding a socially derived morality; that is, to the extent that he adopts a *spirit of seriousness* and is in bad faith.<sup>51</sup>

It is interesting that one can construct a more successful sociological explanation of this notion of anguish through responsibility. The military officer is the product of a specific and apparently structured social reality. He will, therefore, carry with him a set of beliefs and attitudes which reflect the norms and values of the social groups to which he belongs. To the extent that these have been internalised they form a very real aspect of his personality. However, at the same time, his ability to appear as an object to himself, confirms to him his status as a sovereign individual; in Sartrean terms, his being is not exhausted in its social aspect. Further, he will experience himself as an individual who is able to choose between alternative courses action; that is, as relatively freely acting. Thus, in a situation such as the one Sartre details, he can suffer very real anguish in his responsibility. On the one hand, his decision appears to him as a free one; on the other, he has internalised a set of conflicting norms and values (that is, the sanctity of life vs. duty to nation). It is at the intersection of these conflicting demands that one finds his anguish.

In this brief critical diversion, I have sought to demonstrate: (i) that the logic of Sartre's enquiry does not allow him to posit bad faith as a response to freedom; and (ii) that it is problematic to suppose that freedom should pose so many difficulties for a For-itself that has no essence. However, although, as a consequence, one is forced to reject the premises upon which Sartre builds his analysis, one must recognise that in

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<sup>51</sup> It is difficult to see why a For-itself should ever accept a set of attitudes and beliefs that might result in anguish through responsibility, since it is at all times free to reject these (even if only to accept them again later).

his descriptions of bad faith - that is, in his description of the various strategies that individuals employ in order to achieve a certain solidity of being - he has identified an easily discernible aspect of social reality. The task, therefore, is to reconstitute his analysis so that the pervasiveness of bad faith might be explained.

The first step in such an undertaking is to sort out the logical difficulties which I have identified. In fact, this is fairly easily achieved, in a manner already alluded to in my treatment of the question of responsibility. To recap, these difficulties emerge as a result of the gap that separates the For-itself from those experiences and emotions it posits as being its own. Specifically, according to the terms of Sartre's analysis, any emotion (e.g., anguish) experienced by the For-itself is both freely chosen and ineffective as a motive for any act or state that is subsequently adopted (e.g., any pattern of bad faith). It follows that it is impossible to tie freedom, anguish and bad faith together in mutual interdependence. The solution to this difficulty is to re-conceptualise the For-itself in terms of the societal relation; or, in other words, it is to specify the For-itself as the product of an established and apparently structured social reality. Significantly, consciousness, understood in this manner, possesses an essence and thus is characterised by a certain solidity of being. To this extent, it is no longer absolutely separated from its experiences and emotions, since these are necessarily mediated by whatever lies coiled at its heart. As a result, they become *sufficiently* effective to function as motives for any future conduct; the individual is bound up and defined by his experiences which, therefore, in a very real way, motivate him.

In this sense, it is perfectly acceptable to maintain that an individual is motivated to adopt strategies of bad faith by the anguish which he experiences; that is, it is perfectly acceptable to maintain that anguish and bad faith are causally related. However, in that I have rejected the argument that the For-itself is condemned to be free, it is obviously necessary to look again at what constitutes anguish. Firstly, it is worth noting that one can hold onto the idea of anguish as the reflective awareness of freedom, to the extent that the For-itself perceives itself to be free. This was the case, above, in my reconstruction of the anguish that comes with the responsibility of having apparently to choose between two or more courses of action, where this choice will inevitably involve undesirable consequences. In this instance, a strategy of bad faith would be

that which enabled the individual to represent his decision as constrained by forces external to himself. However, the crucial point, of course, is that we are no longer bound to define either anguish or bad faith in this manner.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, I wish to consider briefly a question similar to one that Sartre himself poses; namely, what is it about the structure of subjectivity that necessitates the recourse to strategies of bad faith.<sup>53</sup>

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to consider again the structures upon which subjectivity is built. In the societal relation, the individual is the product of a social environment; he exists by virtue of his location within an interaction nexus. It is worth emphasising precisely what is being claimed here: namely, that the Ego, Mead's "I", is a social product. It is for this reason that I have rejected Sartre's contention that the individual is condemned to be free and maintain instead that the For-itself retains a certain solidity of being. There is a second dimension to this societal relation which is derived from the ability of the individual to take the attitude of the *generalised other*. In this aspect, the individual looks back at himself as someone who has a social identity; or, in Sartre's words, he "confers reality on himself to the degree to which he belongs to the world [Sartre, 1969: 580]." Crucially, it is as a consequence of the interaction of these two aspects of subjectivity that the solitary self exists. In the reflective attitude, the individual, as I have said, apprehends himself as a socially defined object, as a father, a brother, a waiter, and so on. However, at one and the same time, he is aware that his being is not exhausted in these identities, indeed that these are identities for an intentional Subject (Mead's "I"). In this attitude, therefore, the individual not only develops an awareness of himself as a discrete and unique being, but also becomes aware that his being surpasses that of his social identity. However, it is fated that this aspect will escape him; as both Mead and Sartre understand, the individual can never apprehend himself, in the living present, as an

<sup>52</sup> For the simple reason that the individual's perception of an apparent freedom is not necessarily anymore significant than any other belief he might hold about himself (since it is no longer based upon an inalienable aspect of consciousness). Further, as Danto points out, an individual might well adopt a strategy of *bad faith*, without being aware that this is what he is doing; that is, although in Sartrean terms he is deceived about his nature (as freely acting), he is not *self* deceived because unless he has read the philosophy of Sartre he will not necessarily recognise that he is free. However, if this possibility is accepted, it is hard to see why a strategy of *bad faith* should necessarily be related to the desire to avoid an apprehension of freedom. See Danto, A. C., *Sartre*, (Fontana/Collins, Glasgow: 1975), 80.

“I”; he is condemned to lack a *coincidence of himself with himself*.<sup>54</sup> Thus, it is the sting in the tail of consciousness that the individual is denied the definiteness guaranteed to him by the societal relation.

Therefore, the solitary relation brings not only the isolation and estrangement guaranteed by the intentionality of consciousness, but also a lack of definiteness. According to this conception, it is the uncertainty that comes with these states which constitutes “anguish” and which leads individuals to adopt the modes of thinking and patterns of behaviour which Sartre terms bad faith. Of course, in this conception, the term “bad faith” is inappropriate, since these modes of thinking and patterns of behaviour no longer represent a simultaneous awareness and denial of freedom, but rather they constitute an attempt by individuals to reaffirm their senses of self and to attain a certain solidity of being. The importance of Sartre’s analysis is that it so accurately describes what it means for a conscious subject to be aware of its consciousness. It does not matter that the individual, as a product of society, is in a very real sense what he is, when the intentionality of consciousness is a constant reminder to him that he is also *what he is not*. Subjectivity is built on both societal and solitary relations, and it is the latter which demands that individuals look to society in order to make themselves real.

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<sup>53</sup> See Sartre, J-P., *Being and Nothingness*, (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 45.

<sup>54</sup> See Mead, G. H., *Selected Writings*, (Edited: Reck, A.), (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1964), 142; and Sartre, J-P., (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 79-95.

## CHAPTER THREE: SUBJECTIVITY AND THE SYMBOLIC MASTERY OF THE EXTERNAL-WORLD

To restate the argument with which I concluded the previous chapter, it is my claim that there exists an aspect of experience, termed the solitary relation, comprising isolation, estrangement and lack of definiteness, which compels the individual to seek, in society, a reaffirmation of his sense of self. In this chapter, I will continue to explore the general idea that the nature of Man's relation to the external-world has significant consequences for social action. Specifically, I wish to explore some of the mechanisms whereby individuals achieve a *symbolic mastery* over the external-world. To anticipate, I will argue that this is normally achieved by means of the various kinds of judgements which make up the "normative sphere"; and I will demonstrate that this has significant consequences for understanding: (i) the functioning of political discourses; and (ii) the nature and mechanisms of intersubjective conflict.

### The Normative Sphere

The first stage in examining the normative sphere is to establish a working definition of the term. This can be understood to refer to the sum total of the normative and value-orientations held by a particular social actor or by the social actors of any specific social group. The term, *normative orientation*, denotes an attitude to the social world, whereby the action of an individual is significantly mediated by the system of mutual expectations which prescribes the behaviour appropriate to particular situations. The term, *value-orientation*, refers, firstly, to attitudes of judgement or evaluation, on the basis of which, according to perceived standards of desirability, acceptability, preference, etc., an individual is able to select between alternative courses of action, to judge the actions of other individuals, and also to evaluate his own actions once completed;<sup>1</sup> and secondly, to any belief or idea about the social world which is held unreflectively, and which does not depend upon logical coherence

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<sup>1</sup> See Parsons' discussion: Parsons, T., *The Social System*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1951, 12-15. For a brief analysis of the relations between *norms* and *values*, see Cohen, P., *Modern Social Theory*, (Heinemann, London: 1968), 77-78.

or empirical verification for its efficacy.<sup>2</sup> Thus, broadly speaking, there are two aspects to the normative sphere: on the one hand, the rules and norms of social behaviour, and on the other, the beliefs, values and ideals which individuals hold and express in their actions. I dealt with the former aspect, in Chapter 1, when I discussed the relationship between typificatory frameworks and the reproduction of *average courses of action*.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, in this chapter, I wish to focus on the sphere of beliefs, values and ideals; that is, I wish to focus on the realm of value-orientations. As a starting point for the analysis of this realm, I wish to examine first, for reasons that will become clear later on, the Schutzian notion of *multiple realities*.<sup>4</sup>

## Multiple Realities

The theory of multiple realities is built on the central premise that it is possible to identify, at least in principle, an infinite number of orders of reality, each defined by its own peculiar cognitive style. Or, to put this another way, that there exist numerous modes of experiencing the world, each constituting, to the extent that it transforms the world according to its own image, a “sub-world” or a “sub-universe”.<sup>5</sup> Schutz terms such worlds, *finite provinces of meaning*,<sup>6</sup> and mentions, as examples, the realms of science, dream, theatre and religion [Schutz, 1967a: 231]. These can be specified along a number of common axes, which include: tension of consciousness; form of spontaneity; mode of experiencing oneself; form of sociality; and time-perspective.<sup>7</sup> To clarify these terms, and to shed further light on the nature of multiple realities, let

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<sup>2</sup> I feel justified in including such beliefs under the label "value-orientation" because these are held by individuals in a similar fashion as "values", "morals", etc.. I should also point out that when I refer to the realm of value-orientations of a particular social group, I am referring to the sum total of particular value-orientations of the members of that group.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 1, 30-31.

<sup>4</sup> See Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume 1*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 207-259.

<sup>5</sup> This is William James' term, see James, W., *The Principles of Psychology: Volume II*, (MacMillan & Company, London: 1901), 283-324.

<sup>6</sup> Schutz terms each particular order of reality a *finite province of meaning*, in order to emphasise that it is experience, rather than the ontological status of specific objects, which constitutes reality. See Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 229-230.

<sup>7</sup> See Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 232; and 341. I am about to detail these aspects with respect to one particular order of reality, i.e., the *paramount reality*.

us consider, for a moment, their embodiment in one particular finite province of meaning, namely, the world of working or *paramount reality*.

The world of working, according to Schutz, is the world of our everyday-lives, and:

as a whole stands out as paramount over against the many other sub-universes of reality. It is the world of physical things, including my body; it is the realm of my locomotions and bodily operations; it offers resistances that require effort to overcome; it places tasks before me, permits me to carry through my plans, and enables me to succeed or to fail in my attempt to attain my purposes. By my working acts I gear into the outer world, I change it...I share this world and its objects with Others; with Others, I have ends and means in common; I work with them in manifold social acts and relationships, checking the Others and checked by them.<sup>8</sup>

It has a cognitive style of the following basic characteristics:<sup>9</sup>

1. a specific tension of consciousness, namely, wideawakeness;<sup>10</sup>
2. a specific epoché, namely, that of the natural attitude;<sup>11</sup>
3. a prevalent form of spontaneity, namely, working;<sup>12</sup>
4. a specific form of experiencing one's self (the working-self as the total self);<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume 1*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 226-227.

<sup>9</sup> After Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 230-231.

<sup>10</sup> "By the term "wide-awareness" we want to denote a plane of consciousness of highest tension originating in an attitude of full attention to life and its requirements [Schutz, 1967a: 213]."

<sup>11</sup> The *natural attitude* is the mental stance that people take in their everyday-life. In the natural attitude, the lifeworld is taken-for-granted. The *epoché* of the natural attitude refers to a suspension of any doubt that the world might be other than it appears.

<sup>12</sup> "Working...is action in the outer world, based upon a project and characterised by the intention to bring about the projected state of affairs by bodily movements [Schutz, 1967a: 212]." According to Schutz, a pragmatic motive governs action in the sphere of everyday life (the world of working). This claim dovetails with his contention that "wide-awareness" is the characteristic tension of consciousness of this realm. See Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 208-214.

<sup>13</sup> "Living in the vivid present in its ongoing working acts, directed toward the objects and objectives to be brought about, the working self experiences itself as the originator of the

5. a specific form of sociality (the intersubjective world of social action and communication);<sup>14</sup>
6. a specific time perspective (standard time originating in the intersection of the inner-durée and objective/cosmic time).<sup>15</sup>

According to Schutz, we confer the accent of reality upon the world of working for as long as our experiences partake of its particular cognitive style [Schutz, 1967a: 231]. Each finite province of meaning is “real” whilst it is attended to, by virtue of the consistency and compatibility of experiences which define it.<sup>16</sup> In fact, above all else, it is the pervasive utility of pragmatic action which guarantees to us the reality of the paramount world. In the words of Schutz, “our practical experiences prove the unity and congruity of the world of working as valid and the hypothesis of its reality as irrefutable [Schutz, 1967a: 231].” Moreover, it is for us the natural world, our everyday world, one that we take for granted and *gear into* in the pursuit of our projects and life-plans. Consequently, it requires something akin to a *shock* for us to

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ongoing actions and, thus, as an undivided total self [Schutz, 1967a: 216].” This idea is not as complicated as it first seems. The individual who lives, non-reflectively, within his working-acts, experiences himself as an undivided “I”; however, reflectively, as a “me”, the individual necessarily apprehends himself only partially, as the taker of a role. See Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume 1*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 214-218.

<sup>14</sup> "...the world of my daily life is by no means my private world but is from the outset an intersubjective one, shared with my fellow men, experienced and interpreted by others; in brief, it is a world common to all of us [Schutz, 1967a: 312]."

<sup>15</sup> This is the most complicated of these various aspects of the paramount reality. The first point to note is the significance of bodily movements for the constitution of the time-perspective. Schutz argues that there are two aspects to our experience of these: "...inasmuch as they are movements in the outer world we look at them as events happening in space and spatial time...inasmuch as they are experienced together from within as happening changes, as manifestations of our spontaneity pertaining to our stream of consciousness, they partake of our inner time or durée [Schutz, 1967a: 215].” Outer-time, termed by Schutz “objective” or “cosmic” time, is universal and measurable; inner-time, in contrast, is where "...our actual experiences are connected with the past by recollections and retentions and with the future by protentions and anticipations [Schutz, 1967a: 215-216].” Crucially, it is through our working acts that these two aspects are unified into a *vivid present*: “The vivid present originates, therefore, in an intersection of durée and cosmic time [Schutz, 1967a: 216].” This is the central idea behind the notion of *standard time*, with one further complication - that of *intersubjectivity*. The paramount reality is a world of consociates, contemporaries, predecessors and successors. The individual shares a variety of disparate temporal relationships with all of these [see Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 218-222]. However, in the natural attitude (of the paramount reality), these manifold relations are integrated into one homogenous dimension of time, which is common to all of us [see 222]. This Schutz terms *standard time*. See generally, see Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 214-222.

<sup>16</sup> The incompatibility of an experience within a particular finite province of meaning, means either the withdrawal of the accent of reality from that particular province, or the invalidation of the experience within that realm. See Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 230.

break out of the bounds of this province and enter the realm of another. According to Schutz, however, such shocks occur frequently in the journey of our lives. He mentions, as examples, the shock of falling to sleep as the transition into the realm of dreams; the Kierkegaardian “leap” into the world of religious experience; and the transformation that occurs as the curtain rises in a theatre [Schutz, 1967a: 231.]. Thus, during the course of a day, an individual will occupy a number of different orders of reality, each of which may be considered a modification of the paramount reality of the world of working.

A province of meaning is finite by virtue of the uniqueness of its cognitive style. This uniqueness means: (i) that an individual cannot exist within two or more provinces simultaneously;<sup>17</sup> and (ii) that there is no possibility of developing a mediating mechanism to refer these provinces to one another.<sup>18</sup> However, perhaps the most significant consequence of this finiteness is that experiences treated as real from the standpoint of any one particular province will appear only as falsity from the standpoint of another.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the corollary of this point is that those experiences which would be judged as illusion or phantasy by the standards of the world of working can, nevertheless, attain an accent of reality within the bounds of a non-paramount world. To understand this let us briefly consider Schutz’s treatment of *the various worlds of phantasms*.

Included amongst these worlds are the realms of fiction, day-dreams, fairy tales and jokes. Schutz argues that each of these:

originates in a specific modification which the paramount reality of our daily life undergoes, because our mind, turning away in decreasing tensions of consciousness from the world of working and its tasks,

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<sup>17</sup> See Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume 1*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), *inter alia*, 207; 230; 232; and 340-341.

<sup>18</sup> See Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 232.

<sup>19</sup> See Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 232.

withdraws from certain of its layers the accent of reality in order to replace it by a context of supposedly quasi-real phantasms.<sup>20</sup>

A diminished tension of consciousness means a certain freedom from the constraints of the world of working:<sup>21</sup> we are no longer governed by the pragmatic motive; the objects of this world no longer offer up their resistance and demand our mastery; we are freed from our subjection to standard time; and we are no longer restricted by the limits of our reach (actual, restorable, or attainable). Of course, we intuitively understand this freedom when we talk of escaping into the world of a novel or into day-dreams. However, slightly more problematic is the sense in which experiences in such realms retain an accent of reality.

According to Schutz, they do so because they remain uncontradicted within the particular finite province of meaning to which they belong. In this he is merely echoing William James, who states that “the sense that anything we think of is unreal can only come...when that thing is contradicted by some other thing of which we think. *Any object which remains uncontradicted is ipso facto believed and posited as absolute reality* [James, 1901: 288-289].” Thus, to take the world of theatre as an example, at the point at which the curtain rises, transporting us into the realm of the play, we leave the reality of the world of working behind. However, it is only in terms of this reality that the play is phantasy, in its own terms we experience it *as real as anything*. This formula can be expanded to apply to phantasy more generally. Husserl puts it thus:

We cannot say that he who phantasies and lives in the world of phantasms (the “dreamer”), posits fictions *qua* fictions, but he has modified realities, “realities as if” ...Only he who lives in experiences and reaches from there into the world of phantasms can, provided that

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<sup>20</sup> Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume 1*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 234.

<sup>21</sup> See Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 234-235. For a discussion of the *world within reach*, see 224-226.

the phantasm contrasts with the experienced, have the concepts fiction and reality.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, for as long as we occupy each particular world of phantasm, we apprehend its experiences as real because for this time these experiences remain uncontradicted. Of course, this maxim can be extended to include finite provinces of meaning generally, since: "Each world whilst it is attended to is real after its own fashion; only the reality lapses with the attention [James, 1901: 293]."

So far, I hope that I have demonstrated the sense in which there exist a number of different orders of reality, each defined by its own peculiar cognitive style. And further, that of these the world of working is the paramount reality, and that all others may be considered its modifications. Of course, the question which now needs to be addressed is how does Schutz's theory of multiple realities relate to my interest in the normative sphere? It will be remembered, that I am concerned with a specific aspect of this sphere, namely, with the realm of value-orientations, which comprises the attitudes of judgement and evaluation - normally taking the form of morals, values, beliefs, ideals, etc. - which individuals bring to the social world. I wish to treat this realm as a finite province of meaning and to explicate it using some of the concepts explored above. The major advantage of this approach is that it focuses attention upon the internal structure of this realm, and allows me to consider this in relation to wider questions of subjectivity and politics.

## **The Realm of Value-Orientations as a Finite Province of Meaning**

In line with other non-paramount realities, the realm of value-orientations represents a turning away from the world of working, a diminished tension of consciousness. In this sphere, we are free of the demands of the pragmatic motive and are no longer compelled to pursue the plans and projects which characterise the *natural attitude*. However, in point of fact, this is a partial escape only; whereas in the world of working we seek to master the external-world by means of our working acts, in the

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<sup>22</sup> Cited in Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume 1*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 238.

realm of value-orientations we seek to master it *symbolically*. This point, which runs throughout the analyses to follow, is worth emphasising: it is my contention that the various types of judgement and evaluation which make up the realm of value-orientations, function (more or less successfully) to subordinate the external-world to the wills of those who inhabit it.

It seems sensible to introduce this idea by exploring one of the more straightforward of its manifestations in social reality. Moreover, this might most usefully be undertaken in terms of an already established theory. Consequently, I wish to analyse briefly Berger and Luckmann's notion of *symbolic universes*.<sup>23</sup> According to these theorists, Man's *original* relation to the world is one which is intrinsically problematic. His relative lack of instinctual apparatus means that he is compelled to produce order out of a relation which is potentially chaotic and fluid. In Berger and Luckmann's words, "The inherent instability of the human organism makes it imperative that Man himself provide a stable environment for his conduct [Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 70]." Obviously, this raises the question how exactly does Man produce this environment? The answer is that this arises out of the related processes of habitualisation, institutionalisation and objectivation. The details of these need not concern us here,<sup>24</sup> what we are interested in is that once this order is established it requires on-going legitimation, that is, "ways by which it can be 'explained' and justified [Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 79]."

Berger and Luckmann argue that there are four different levels of legitimation: (i) incipient/linguistic; (ii) rudimentary theoretical; (iii) explicit theoretical; and (iv) symbolic universes. The last of these, symbolic universes, are "bodies of theoretical tradition...", which "encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality ...[Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 113]."<sup>25</sup> Each of these provides an overarching meaning-system which serves to integrate the world and render it subjectively

<sup>23</sup> For this analysis, I will draw almost entirely from Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., *The Social Construction of Reality*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1966).

<sup>24</sup> See Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1966), 70-79. For a summary of these processes, see Abercrombie, N., "Knowledge, order and human autonomy", in Hunter, J. D. and Ainlay, S. C., (Eds.), *Making Sense of Modern Times*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1986), 17-19.

<sup>25</sup> For details of the first three types of legitimation, see Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1966), 112-113.

plausible. The importance of this function is obvious when one considers that *chaos*, characterising Man's original relation to the world, is always lurking near to the surface of the social world: "All social reality is precarious. All societies are constructions in the face of chaos. The constant possibility of anomic terror is actualised whenever the legitimations that obscure the precariousness are threatened or collapse [Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 121]. Religion is, perhaps, the single most important symbolic universe. Particularly, it provides Man with a framework to deal with *marginal situations* - such as, death, tragedy and natural disaster - which, by their very nature, threaten the basis of social order. In general, "...The symbolic universe shelters the individual from ultimate terror by bestowing ultimate legitimation upon the protective structures of the institutional order [Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 120]."

It is now easy to understand one of the ways in which, within the realm of value-orientations, we seek the imaginative mastery of the world. The external-world is subordinated to the wills of those individuals who comprise it, to the extent that the beliefs, values, morals and ideals which make up symbolic universes render it meaningful.<sup>26</sup> The ability of mankind to assign meaning to the world saves him from the annihilation which its contingency threatens. In the realm of value-orientations, anomic terror is held at bay and the world retains its taken-for-granted character.

## Political Discourses as Symbolic Universes

At this point, in line with my general interest in social integration and political mobilisation, and to illustrate further the sense in which the beliefs and values of the realm of value-orientations function to render the external-world meaningful, I wish to make my first references to specifically political phenomena and processes; expressly, I wish to consider whether political discourses function in a fashion similar to symbolic universes; that is, whether these discourses, as above, "encompass the institutional order in symbolic totality [Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 113]."

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<sup>26</sup> I think it needs to be emphasised that I am using the term "symbolic universe" only as shorthand for a particular organisation of beliefs, values, morals and ideals. To this extent, the individual who is oriented to the world in terms of a symbolic universe can be said to be living within the realm of value-orientations. Obviously, this applies wherever I talk about particular belief systems.

Strictly speaking, the scope of a symbolic universe is too broad to include political discourses amongst their number. Berger and Luckmann claim that at the level of a symbolic universe, “the reflective integration of discrete institutional processes reaches its ultimate fulfilment. A whole world is created. All the lesser legitimating theories are viewed as special perspectives on phenomena that are aspects of this world [Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 114].” Indeed, according to this view, one might expect political discourses themselves to make reference to higher orders of legitimization. In which case, such discourses might be better considered as instances of a lower level of legitimization, perhaps that which, according to Berger and Luckmann, “contains explicit theories by which an institutional sector is legitimated in terms of a differentiated body of knowledge [Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 112].” In this respect, one might note, for example, Miliband’s claim that the discourses of liberal-democracy - and their associated material practices (in Britain, centred on the Houses of Parliament) - serve to legitimate the political status-quo of Western capitalist societies.<sup>27</sup>

However, political discourses also contain themes which belong quite properly to the realm of symbolic universes; that is, themes which perform an integrative function in relation to *the totality* of human experience. To illustrate this, one might, for example, point to the fact that the discourses of both liberal-democracy and Marxism include theories of Man and society. In the former, *the individual* is the measure of the world, and the community, “a fictitious *body*, composed of individual persons who are considered as constituting as it were its *members*.<sup>28</sup> According to this view, the successful society is that which enables the individual to pursue, without hindrance, his rational self-interest. In Marxist discourse, Man and society are tied together: “...As society produces man as man, so it is *produced* by him.” Man is both individual and social: “...Though man is a unique individual...he is equally the whole, the ideal whole, the subjective existence of society as thought and experience.”<sup>29</sup> It is Man’s alienation

<sup>27</sup> See Miliband, R., *Capitalist Democracy in Britain*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1982).

<sup>28</sup> Jeremy Bentham, cited in Warnock, M., (Ed.), *John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism*, (Collins, Glasgow: 1962), 35.

<sup>29</sup> Marx, K, cited in Alexander, J., *The Antinomies of Classical Thought: Marx and Durkheim*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1982), 29.

from his *species-being* in capitalist society, and the potential for his liberation, which justifies the Marxist revolutionary agenda.

The point about these themes, and others like them, is that they form part of the knowledge that an individual has of his own society. Consequently, they are integral to the way that he represents this society to himself. Particularly, they function to explain, and perhaps justify, the specific form taken by an institutional order. Additionally, they also function to legitimate certain types of action. In this respect, one might note, for example, that the patterns of accumulation and consumption characteristic of modern Western societies are justified by the constellation of meanings which surround the notion of “individual rights”,<sup>30</sup> or, alternatively, that “terrorist” organisations justify their activities by means of discourses of revolution. Thus, in their broad legitimating function, political discourses, like symbolic universes, directly address the “why” of institutional arrangements; they fall into the category of additional legitimations (for the institutional order is, in part, self-legitimating), to be drawn upon by individuals to make sense of their social worlds. To sum up, then, the ideas, beliefs and values of political discourse, forming an aspect of the realm of value-orientations, constitute an important resource for the individual who seeks the symbolic mastery of the world; that is, the beliefs and values of political discourse can be used in a *strategy of mastery*.

## **The Fear of Death**

It will have been noted that throughout this discussion the contingency of Man’s relation to the world has been treated as an explanatorily significant variable. In fact, this is a theme which is to run throughout the whole of this work. To date, in addition to the uncertainty, noted above, which results from being confronted by a world that has no intrinsic meaning, it will be remembered that I have also detailed the Sartrean notion of anguish and, most significantly, explored the idea that there exists a solitary self, an aspect characterised by estrangement and isolation. The fact that Man is

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<sup>30</sup> This is particularly significant when one considers that the members of these societies are regularly confronted by images of starvation. I am thinking of the famines in places like Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Somalia, etc.

confronted by a number of such “existential dilemmas” is of central importance to the task of uncovering the various relations between subjectivity and the realm of value-orientations. Consequently, at this point, I wish to consider one further example of Man’s uncertainty in the world; namely, his anticipation of his own death.

The importance of Man’s awareness of his own mortality has been appreciated for a long time by the advocates of what might be termed “Existential” philosophy. In this respect, the Kierkegaardian concept of “dread” and Heidegger’s re-working of this theme are of particular significance.<sup>31</sup> However, perhaps the clearest recent exposition of these ideas is to be found in Ernest Becker’s *The Denial of Death*. According to him, “the idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a mainspring of human activity - designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny of man [Becker, 1973: ix].”<sup>32</sup> It is Man’s dual nature which condemns him to this flight from death. On the one hand, he is a self-conscious, symbolically mediated being - one who possesses a mind which “soars out to speculate about atoms and infinity, who can place himself imaginatively at a point in space and contemplate bemusedly his own planet. This immense expansion, this dexterity, this ethereality, this self-consciousness gives to man literally the status of a small god in nature...[Becker, 1973: 26].” Yet, on the other hand, he is just a body and, consequently, subject to the laws of decay of an unforgiving universe. Thus, “...Man is literally split in two: he has an awareness of his own splendid uniqueness in that he sticks out of nature with a towering majesty, and yet he goes back into the ground a few feet in order blindly and dumbly to rot and disappear forever [Becker, 1973: 26.].” It is not simply the fact of this ambiguity which condemns Man to suffer what might, after Kierkegaard, be termed dread. It is rather that with self-consciousness comes the awareness that the self, in its dependence on the physical body, is fated to eventual and certain destruction. In the words of Becker, “the final terror of self-consciousness is the knowledge of one’s own death, which is the peculiar sentence on man alone in the animal kingdom [Becker, 1973: 70].”

<sup>31</sup> Kierkegaard, S., *The Concept of Dread* (OUP, London: 1944); Heidegger, M., *Being and Time*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford: 1962).

<sup>32</sup> Compare with Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume 1*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 228.

The important question is: in terms of this analysis, what is the significance of this “peculiar sentence”? The answer is that it constitutes an important motive for the symbolic mastery of the world. In this respect, we have already noted the important function that symbolic universes perform in rendering the external-world meaningful. Needless to say, this function extends to the more specific task of the management of death. Thus, Berger and Luckmann argue that “...It is in the legitimization of death that the transcending potency of symbolic universes manifests itself most clearly, and the fundamental terror-assuaging character of the ultimate legitimations of the paramount reality of everyday life is revealed [Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 119].” Of course, this function is not restricted solely to those beliefs and values which are associated with specific symbolic universes.<sup>33</sup> This can be illustrated by recalling the Burghers of Sartre who, in their flight from uncertainty, assign a transcendent and objective reality to even the most mundane of the beliefs and values which govern their behaviour,<sup>34</sup> and in doing so, they escape not only the anguish that their freedom brings, but also, by means of their location within a reality perceived as timeless and objectively meaningful, one which links them with their predecessors and successors, their own mortality. In other words, they gain a semblance of immortality by virtue of their status as individual instances of a particular moral and historical tradition, even if this tradition does not have the compass of a symbolic universe.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, in general terms, it is my claim that in the realm of value-orientations there is an attempt to escape the spectre of death. Again, this can be illustrated with reference to political discourse. One might note, for example, that a political philosophy provides its devotees with a ready-made framework of meaning which might be used to accomplish such an escape. Political philosophies make explicit reference to both the past and the future, both in their analyses of society and in the celebration of their own particular traditions. Thus, for example, the individual who aligns himself with a Marxist position, finds suddenly that he lives in a meaningful world, one that connects

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<sup>33</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that all beliefs and values are probably, in the final analysis, related to one symbolic universe or another.

<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 2, 57.

<sup>35</sup> Berger and Luckmann make a similar point with respect to symbolic universes. See Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., *The Social Construction of Reality*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1966), 120-121.

him with the past through the struggles of the oppressed, and with the future through the inevitability of revolution. For him, past, present and future are united in a meaningful totality, one which functions to confer upon him a quasi-immortality.

It is possible to express this idea in terms of one of the criteria identified by Schutz in his specification of finite provinces of meaning. It will be remembered that each province has a specific time perspective associated with it. Thus, for example, the world of working is characterised by civic or standard time, and it is this time which structures the plans and projects of our everyday lives. In the realm of value-orientations, however, we are free of the constraints of standard time. We find instead that we occupy an inviolate world of timeless, permanent structures; a world which stretches to infinity and offers us shelter, as much from the *certainties* of life in the paramount reality, as from its uncertainties. The fear of death belongs to the Heraclitan chaos of the world of everyday-life; in the timeless, permanent world of value orientations it is banished.

Whilst it is undoubtedly the case that Man's anticipation of his own death constitutes a significant motive for the symbolic mastery of the world, it is important not to over-emphasise its significance to the point where other existential anxieties are forgotten. In fact, there are a number of pertinent difficulties with the claim that Man is in perpetual flight from death: (i) it is not clear how this claim can be falsified - an individual's denial that he is concerned with death can simply be taken as evidence of the efficiency of the various defence mechanisms that he employs; (ii) there is no logical or necessary reason why an awareness of death should lead to fear or dread; this is a purely contingent relation; and (iii) there are empirical difficulties with this argument; for example, the body of evidence which suggests that the terminally ill come, in time, to accept their fates.<sup>36</sup> In general, it is probably wise to be sceptical of the wilder statements of the "morbidly-minded".<sup>37</sup> Thus, for example, there are no grounds for accepting, at face value, claims such as Schutz's, that "the whole system

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<sup>36</sup> For example, Kubler-Ross, E., *On Death and Dying*, (Tavistock, London: 1970).

<sup>37</sup> Ernest Becker's term for those who stress the significance of the fear of death. See Becker, E., *The Denial of Death*, (The Free Press, New York: 1973), 15.

of relevances which governs us within the natural attitude is founded upon the basic experience of each of us: I know that I shall die and I fear to die.”<sup>38</sup>

In fact, it is quite possible that the fear of death is not the greatest of Man’s existential anxieties. This can be illustrated by comparing the fear of death with the fate of Man in the solitary relation. In this respect, the important question is: what place, respectively, do these existential anxieties occupy in an individual’s subjectivity? Are they both ever-present aspects of his biography? Certainly, as we have seen, those who advocate a “morbidly-minded” position maintain that our mental functioning is suffused with the terror of death.<sup>39</sup> However, I think that one must question the validity of this assertion. An individual’s greatest protection from the various uncertainties of life derives from his simple participation in a structured institutional order.<sup>40</sup> Whilst he pursues, through working acts, the plans and projects of daily-life, any awareness that he has of his own mortality exists only at the fringes of his experience. Therefore, the fear of death is not, in any obvious sense, a problem of everyday-life.<sup>41</sup> In fact, quite the opposite is the case: this fear emerges only when the accent of reality is withdrawn from the protective structures of the social world, such as is the case on the death of a relative or close friend. Fundamentally, the fear of death relies on the sort of attitude of contemplation which is most readily adopted only when the demands of the world of working are in abeyance. Consequently, it is fair to say that whilst engaged in the world of working the individual is relatively free of the fear of death. This can be contrasted with the situation of the solitary self, which finds Man unable to escape the isolation and estrangement which consciousness brings. As I have argued, it is the very nature of consciousness which condemns Man to this fate. In perpetual flight from

<sup>38</sup> Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume 1*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1967a), 228.

<sup>39</sup> See Becker, E., *The Denial of Death*, (The Free Press, New York: 1973), 15-20.

<sup>40</sup> Anthony Giddens makes this point in a discussion of practical consciousness (i.e., the non-conscious dimension of the knowledgeability of human-agents): “Practical consciousness is the cognitive and emotive anchor of the feelings of *ontological security* characteristic of large segments of human activity in all cultures. The notion of ontological security ties in closely to the tacit character of practical consciousness - or, in phenomenological terms, to the “bracketings” presumed by the “natural attitude” in everyday life [Giddens, 1991: 36].”

<sup>41</sup> It is still possible to retain a commitment to the view that states that the fear of death underpins subjectivity and social action, if one or both of the following propositions are true. Either: (i) that the institutional order owes its existence to Man’s desire to overcome death; and/or (ii) that the participation of social actors in this order is motivated by the same desire. However, there are, of course, any number of reasons why these propositions must be rejected, not least of which is the fact that both suggest an unsustainable reductionism.

uncertainty, he is compelled to seek the comfort of a social identity. However, ultimately this is a fruitless endeavour, because the intentionality of consciousness is a perpetual reminder to him that *he is not what he is*. The important point is that, unlike with the fear of death, Man cannot escape this fate by immersing himself in the world of working. Despite his best, and continued efforts, he cannot transcend his own nature to attain the solidity of being he so desires.<sup>42</sup>

This is an important point, and one worthy of emphasis - Man's fate as a solitary self is in a very real sense Sisyphean. He is both compelled to look to the social world in an attempt to make himself real, but fated to be thwarted in this, being able to achieve only a semblance of the identity he seeks. Crucially, the inevitability of disappointment does not free him from the chains of compulsion. For Man, the quasi-solidity of a social identity is preferable to the uncertainty of indefiniteness. Consequently, he is compelled forever to strive for this identity.

### **The Realm of Value-orientations and the Transcendence of the Solitary Relation**

In terms of the interests of this chapter, we are led, therefore, to the question: what role does the realm of value-orientations play in Man's pursuit of a social identity and the reaffirmation of his self? To answer this question, it is first necessary to recognise that every social group has a number of core beliefs and values which are central to its identity and integrity. To understand this, one need only consider: (i) that social groups exhibit, within their discourses, a reflexive awareness of the "sacred" character of such beliefs and values; and (ii) that an individual receives direct experiential confirmation of the reality of the social group to which he belongs by the fact that he shares the beliefs and values of those others with whom he participates in we-relations. The important point, in these respects, is that an individual's awareness that he belongs to a particular social group is tied up with his commitment to the core beliefs and values of this group. Upon entering the realm of value-orientations, to the extent that he embraces and articulates these beliefs and values, the individual is transported to the

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<sup>42</sup> The justification for these assertions is to be found above, in Chapter 2, 48-64.

very heart of collective-life. In the realm of value-orientations, therefore, he celebrates the identities which he shares with his fellow-men, and to this extent confirms and strengthens his social identity. This can be expressed in terms of one of the characteristics of a finite province of meaning; namely, as a specific form of sociality. The realm of value-orientations is a world of *imagined* intersubjectivity, a world that implicates one's fellow-men. To this extent, within this realm, the individual is able to transcend the bounds of the solitary relation and to attain a reaffirmation of the self.

It is worth emphasising precisely what is being claimed here: namely, that any social group will hold certain beliefs and values to be central to its identity; and that members of social groups, to the extent that they are able to embrace these beliefs and values within the realm of value-orientations, will confirm and strengthen their social identities. It is possible to illustrate these general points with reference, once again, to the themes of political discourse. In this respect, consider how the terms "democracy" and "freedom", and their associated themes and discursive practices, function in the *folkways* of modern liberal-democratic societies. The themes which surround these terms are among the most significant of all those used to express the essential character of these societies; that is, they are central to notions of national identity, "nationhood", and so on. Indeed, in their integrative function, they display almost magical properties. Thus, to live in one of the countries of the "Free World" is to be located at "the culmination of the whole "Western political tradition".<sup>43</sup> It is to be united with generations of one's ancestors at the determination of their struggles, and it is to stand in common opposition to the tyranny of the "Unfree World". It is also to be part of that tradition which most clearly embodies and represents the conception of Natural Rights. To use such themes to identify oneself with an in-group (a nation) is to accept the status of Citizen (among other citizens) and to embrace a particular type of social identity ("I am a British Citizen..."). It is an example of Sartrean *seriousness* - where reality is conferred upon the serious-man to the extent that he belongs to the world - and it functions as such.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Watkins, F., cited in Sabine, G. H. and Thorson, T. L., *A History of Political Theory*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Dryden Press, Illinois: 1973), 669.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 2, particularly, 57-58.

The efficacy of the themes surrounding “democracy” and “freedom” in generating social identity can be further understood by considering how these often operate significantly at what might, after Barthes, be termed the level of *myth* or *connotation*.<sup>45</sup> Consider the following hypothetical British newspaper headline: “Britain Chooses John Major”.<sup>46</sup> At a simple linguistic level, this statement is more or less straightforwardly denotative; that is, it has a specific meaning which is constituted by the sum of its signs. This meaning has a certain fullness, a determinate history, in this instance that of a particular General Election and, consequently, it invites - or, at least, does not preclude - further analysis, argumentation and refutation. However, such a statement also operates at a second level of signification, where it becomes a mere signifier, *form* rather than *meaning*, for a whole range of associated concepts. Thus, “Britain Chooses John Major” signifies to the individual...that he is part of an on-going and sovereign democratic process, one which sees his Nation periodically exercising its collective will in the choice of its leaders, and that he will accept the authority of the latter precisely because they rule by common consent.<sup>47</sup> Thus, at this level, the statement interpellates the individual as a Citizen of a democratic nation and, consequently, functions to bind him to his fellow citizens.<sup>48</sup>

An important aspect of the functioning of myth is that it naturalises the historically contingent. In myth, as we have seen, a statement is deprived of its full meaning - having its history wrenched away from itself, it becomes an empty gesture (*a form*) married to a particular *concept* (in our example, British democracy/citizenship). Importantly, however, the *meaning* of the statement, that is, the signifier as the final term of the first order of signification, although alienated, is not obliterated. Rather, it is held in abeyance, to be called upon to *naturalise* the signification, that is, to function

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<sup>45</sup> See Barthes, R., *Mythologies*, (Paladin, London: 1973), 117-174; and Barthes, R., *Elements of Semiology*, (Hill and Wang, New York: 1968). The analysis to follow draws heavily upon the *Mythologies* essay "Myth Today". However, it is not intended that my treatment should exactly mirror the approach of Barthes.

<sup>46</sup> This refers to the British General Election of April 9th 1992.

<sup>47</sup> Interesting in this respect is the claim of W. J. M. MacKenzie that government elections are "rituals of choice", where individuals participate as choosers in a social activity which confers legitimacy upon the authority of the person/party chosen. Cited in Dowse, R. and Hughes, J., *Political Sociology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (John Wiley & Sons, Chichester: 1986), 298.

<sup>48</sup> It should be pointed out that the content of this interpellation does not reside in the statement itself, but rather depends upon the operations of an individual, these being determined by his particular stock of knowledge.

as an *alibi*, disguising the real intention of the myth by the immediacy of its presence - *British Democracy? It is just a fact: after all, Britain did choose John Major.*<sup>49</sup> In general, therefore, myth:

abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organises a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, the myth of Democratic Citizenship, existing at the intersection of the discourse of liberal-democracy and the typificatory frameworks employed by members of these societies, functions to render meaningful and naturalise the contingencies of group membership.<sup>51</sup>

From this discussion, it should be clear that the themes of political discourse can be central to the identity and integrity of a social group; and moreover, that they function, to the extent that this is the case, to confirm and strengthen the social identities of the members of these groups. In this respect, it is also worth noting that the greater the levels of integration achieved by a social group - whether or not this is generated by political discourse - the better able is the group to deliver "ontological security" to its members. Or, to put this another way, the higher the levels of agreement within a social group about core beliefs and values, and the greater the degree of commitment to these beliefs and values, the more acute the experience of intersubjectivity within the realm of value-orientations and, therefore, the better able is the individual to reaffirm his sense of self.

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<sup>49</sup> After Barthes, R., *Mythologies*, (Paladin, London: 1973), 134. This is a complicated idea - see 126-142; particularly, 138-142.

<sup>50</sup> Barthes, R., (Paladin, London: 1973), 156.

<sup>51</sup> Jerome Bruner argues that one chooses oneself in myth: "It is not simply society that patterns itself on the idealizing myths, but unconsciously it is the individual man as well who is able to structure his internal clamor of identities in terms of prevailing myth. Life then produces myth and finally imitates it [cited in Edelman, 1971: 53]."

However, it should be noted that there is second aspect to the intersubjectivity which characterises the realm of value-orientations. It is also, like all imagined realms, a solitary world, removed from the perceived intersubjectivity of the paramount reality. It is a world which the individual occupies alone; a world where he employs beliefs and values which are peculiarly his. In addition, one must also recognise that the intentionality of consciousness necessarily separates the individual from those attitudes which he adopts in this realm, with the consequence that these attitudes become, for him, merely contingent. The importance of this second aspect is that it undermines the social identities generated in the first aspect (i.e., as imagined intersubjectivity). Thus, the realm of value-orientations promises solidity of being, but delivers only quasi-solidity.

## **Social Groups and the Realm of Value-orientations**

It will have been noted that I have made use of an analytic framework which closely ties the beliefs and values of the realm of value-orientations to the typificatory frameworks of specific social groups. It is perhaps sensible to make a number of comments concerning this relation. The first point to make is that the beliefs and values utilised by a particular individual are formally determined not at the location of the typificatory frameworks of the particular social group to which he is oriented, but rather at the intersection of those frameworks, associated with various social structures and groups, which form part of his biography; that is, those to which he either is or has been oriented. Moreover, it is important to remember that the individual occupies a social world which consists not of a series of absolutely delimited social groups, but rather of a network of interlocking and overlapping social structures. These points mean that there can be no straightforward relation between beliefs and values and the typificatory frameworks of particular social groups.

However, the notion which ties these together remains useful. Firstly, this can be specified as a purely abstract relation. A social structure is specified in terms of the typificatory frameworks associated with the *average courses of action* pursued by

*anonymous* social actors.<sup>52</sup> To the extent that such frameworks incorporate a system of beliefs and values, something which can also be specified ideal-typically,<sup>53</sup> it is possible to talk of the beliefs and values of particular social groups. Secondly, the social world comprises, for the individual, a series of in-groups and out-groups. For the time that he is oriented to the demands of a particular in-group he will subordinate the interests and relevances associated with his membership of other social groups. In practice, this means that the beliefs and values used by an individual will tend to be associated with his current group, even if, as above, these are formally determined at the intersection of the typificatory frameworks of a number of groups. It is this which makes possible, in the sense of an *average type* construction, the empirical identification of beliefs and values which are associated with particular social groups.

### **“The Political” and “the Social”**

In line with this general approach to typificatory frameworks and their relationship to social structure, it is also possible to make a number of comments concerning the relationship between “the political” and “the social” (i.e., the non-political). It will be remembered that in the introduction to this thesis, I argued that it is not possible to delineate clearly these realms. It is now possible to go some way towards clarifying their precise relationship. The first point to note is that “the political” and “the social” have no *ontological* status in the world; they exist only to the extent that they are imagined by social actors. The social world becomes ordered only by means of the constitutive function of consciousness. To this extent, “the political” and “the social” do not exist, *a priori*, as identifiable and distinct spheres. Nevertheless, it remains quite possible to treat these as constituted realms, and to specify their relationship in abstract or theoretical terms.<sup>54</sup> In this respect, it is possible to say that “the political”, as it is generally understood [see above, 11-10], is enclosed by “the social”; that is, the political sphere exists within the confines of the wider social group to which it refers,

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<sup>52</sup> See Chapter 1, 29-32.

<sup>53</sup> For an example of how this might be done, see my treatment of the requirements for the idealised performance of the Parsonian mother-role, Chapter 1, 30.

<sup>54</sup> This is the sense in which I have talked about social structure and social groups throughout the whole of this work. Social actors, be they “lay-actors” or sociologists, impose order on the world; the social world, as we understand it, has to be constituted.

and the social actors comprised therein take the cultural pattern of this group as “a baseline of orientation”.

However, this kind of response goes only part the way to determining the limits of “the political”. In this respect, it will be remembered that I am also concerned to break down the distinction between “the political” and “the social”. Specifically, I hope to demonstrate that there is a political dimension to all social relationships. To this end, I wish to turn now to examine Man’s original relationship with his fellow-man, and to show that this is built fundamentally upon conflict.

## Intersubjective Conflict

In order to demonstrate these conflictual foundations, I wish to analyse briefly Hegel’s treatment of the travails of self-consciousness.<sup>55</sup> In those sections of *The Phenomenology of the Mind* which deal with self-consciousness, Hegel is concerned to chart the dialectical progress of the individual self-consciousness towards *self-certainty*. The idea of self-certainty is a complex one - however, it seems to be most clearly expressed by the notion of “belongingness”. According to Charles Taylor, Hegel has in mind that self-consciousness aims towards:

integral expression, a consummation where the external reality which embodies us and on which we depend is fully expressive of us and contains nothing alien...It is the longing for total integrity which for Hegel underlies the striving of self-consciousness, at first after crude and unrealizable versions of the goal, then when man has been educated and elevated by conflict and contradiction, after the real thing.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Hegel, particularly in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, is notoriously difficult to comprehend. In the analysis to follow, I have relied quite heavily on the guidance of Charles Taylor in his *Hegel*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1975), and Stanley Rosen in *G. W. F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom*, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London: 1974). It should be pointed that for stylistic reasons (only), I will sometimes refer to self-consciousness (or the Sartrean For-itself) as an “it” and sometimes as a “he”.

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, C., *Hegel*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1975), 148.

In terms of the interests of this section of the chapter, this journey to self-certainty is significant because it underpins the original relationship between self-consciousness and *the other*.

According to Hegel, self-consciousness emerges when consciousness recognises the reflection of itself in the objects towards which it is directed. Thus, “consciousness of another, of an object in general, is in fact necessarily self-consciousness, reflectedness in self, consciousness of oneself in one’s other.”<sup>57</sup> However, whilst self-consciousness requires an external object to define itself, it is at the same time threatened by this object. The external object is foreign to the self; it is an otherness, in the face of which self-consciousness is unable to attain self-certainty. Thus, in a state of *desire*, self-consciousness seeks to negate the otherness of the external object by assimilating it. In the words of Hegel, “...Self-consciousness presents itself here as the process in which this opposition is removed, and oneness or identity with itself established [Hegel, 1974: 65].” However, there is a predicament in the negation of the external object because if this entails the object’s destruction then self-consciousness, dependent upon the moment of otherness, is robbed of the foundations of its own existence. Therefore, self-consciousness requires an object which can be negated, whose foreignness can be annulled, without the object itself being destroyed. According to Hegel, only another self-consciousness fulfils this requirement, since only this is able to effect its own negation, and yet remain an external object. Specifically, he claims that a self-consciousness must seek the acknowledgement and recognition of other self-conscious beings, only in this way can it attain the self-certainty it desires. These arguments are summarised by Charles Taylor as follows:

The subject depends on external reality. If he is to be fully at home this external reality must reflect back to him what he is. In the dialectic of desire, we are faced with foreign objects which we then destroy and incorporate; what is needed is a reality which will remain, and yet will annul its own foreignness, in which the subject can nevertheless find

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<sup>57</sup> Cited in Taylor, C., *Hegel*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1975), 150.

himself. And this he finds in other men in so far as they recognize him as a human being.<sup>58</sup>

With this insight, therefore, that "...Self consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness [Hegel, 1974: 70]", we are led to the dialectic of Master and Slave. Although, for Hegel, mutual recognition between self-consciousnesses will ultimately bring the self-certainty that these seek, this will not be easily won. At first, neither self-consciousness is certain of the truth of the other (as self-consciousness), and hence both are deprived of the source of their own certainty. Consequently, each will try to attain the recognition of the other without reciprocating. According to Hegel, the resulting struggle - for one-sided recognition - is necessarily to the death, because in risking their own lives, these self-consciousnesses can demonstrate to each other, and to themselves, their freedom from their particular bodily forms, and hence their status as *beings for themselves*.<sup>59</sup> However, it is clear that in this context the death of either participant would be irrelevant, since it would deprive the survivor of recognition altogether. Hence, the solution, to a struggle which must put the life of each participant in danger, is the enslavement of one and the mastery of the other. "...The one is independent, and its essential nature is to be for itself; the other is dependent, and its essence is life or existence for another. The former is the Master, or Lord, the latter the Bondsman [Hegel, 1974: 74]."

However, it is Hegel's view that the opposition between Man and his fellow-man is something which will in time be overcome. The dialectic of Master and Slave, and the conflict that this entails, is simply one of the stages that self-consciousness must pass through on its journey to self-certainty. Interestingly, it is the Slave, and not the

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<sup>58</sup> Taylor, C., *Hegel*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1975), 152.

<sup>59</sup> In this respect, the following quote from a person who has played "Russian Roulette" is quite interesting: "Now with the revolver in my pocket I thought I had stumbled on the perfect cure. I was going to escape in one way or another...The discovery that it was possible to enjoy again the visible world by risking its total loss was one I was bound to make sooner or later. I put the muzzle of the revolver to my right ear and pulled the trigger. There was a minute click, and looking down the chamber I could see that the charge had moved into the firing position. I was out by one. I remember an extraordinary sense of jubilation, as if carnival lights had been switched on in a dark drab street. My heart knocked in its cage and life contained an infinite number of possibilities." Cited in Taylor, S., *Suicide*, (Longman, London: 1989), 48-49.

Master, who takes the next steps on this journey. However, we need not be concerned here with the details of this argument. What is important is that Hegel's is an optimistic view - Man will eventually, by means of reciprocal recognition, co-exist in harmony with his fellow-man. To conclude this chapter, however, I wish to consider briefly a contrasting view, namely Sartre's, in order to demonstrate the fallacy of Hegel's approach, and to show that the relation between self-consciousness and *the other* is inevitably and necessarily conflictual.

As we have seen, Hegel's optimism rests fundamentally on the possibility of reciprocal recognition between self-consciousnesses. This recognition is reciprocal to the extent that *the other*, whose recognition will confer integrity upon the For-itself, appears to the For-itself as another self-consciousness and one who, therefore, requires similar recognition. It is this possibility that Sartre rejects when he argues that:

the *for-itself* as *for-itself* can not be known by the Other. The object which I apprehend under the name of Other appears to me in a radically *other* form. The Other is not a *for-itself* as he appears to me; I do not appear to myself as I am *for-the-Other*. I am incapable of apprehending for myself the self which I am for the Other, just as I am incapable of apprehending on the basis of the *Other-as-object* which appears to me, what the Other is for himself.<sup>60</sup>

In fact, it is this inability of the For-itself to apprehend *the other* as a subject, and also its inability to appear to itself as it appears to *the other*, which forms the conflictual foundations of the relation between self-consciousnesses.

According to Sartre, it is through the experience of being *looked at* that the For-itself first becomes aware that there exist other self-consciousnesses in the world. In Sartre's words, "my fundamental connection with the Other-as-subject must be able to be referred back to my permanent possibility of *being seen* by the Other. It is in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the Other that I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being-as-subject [Sartre, 1969: 256]." However, for me

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<sup>60</sup> Sartre, J-P., *Being and Nothingness*, (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 242.

to experience *the other* as a subject is to be drawn into his world. It is to become an object for *the other*, an object in a world which is closed to me. In this relation, my own being flows away from me, since I am, in a world which is not mine, for *the other* what I cannot be for myself (i.e., an object). To reclaim myself, therefore, as unlimited, pure possibility, I must resist this look of *the other* and strive instead to reduce him to an object. Needless to say, he in turn must resist my attempts to *transcend his transcendence*. Thus, "...While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me [Sartre, 1969: 364]." It follows, therefore, that "...Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others [Sartre, 1969: 364]."<sup>61</sup>

Clearly, if one accepts this analysis, then there are a number of general implications for political theory. If Sartre has correctly described the nature of *being-for-others*, it follows that not only is the social world characterised by conflict and struggle, it is also founded on them. Moreover, to the extent that conflict is characteristic of all social relationships, and to the extent that these, therefore, involve the exercise of power, it becomes possible to collapse the distinction between *the political* and the non-political.

Of course, the kind of existential conflict that Hegel and Sartre are talking about rarely finds straightforward and overt expression in the social world. Nevertheless, it is recognisable in the strategies of symbolic mastery that individuals employ to attain meaning and belonging in the world. These strategies are a manifestation of what might be termed *the will to symbolic negation*; that is, they are a manifestation of the necessity experienced by individuals to negate the threat posed by the foreignness of *the other* whilst, at the same time, preserving the moment of otherness. To understand what is involved in a symbolic negation, let us consider, for a moment, the functioning of the disparaging epithets associated with political discourses. To take one specific

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<sup>61</sup> The play *In Camera* is Sartre's eminently successful attempt to translate this philosophical idea into literary form [see Sartre, J-P., *Two Plays*, (Hamish Hamilton, London: 1946). In *Being and Nothingness*, having established conflict as the foundation of *being-for-another*, Sartre goes on to describe its manifestation in a number of *concrete relations with others*. These include relations of *love, masochism* and *sadism*. See Sartre, J. P., *Being and Nothingness* (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 364-412.

example, to label someone as a “loony-lefty”<sup>62</sup> achieves a symbolic negation primarily by two mechanisms. Firstly, by means of a “symbolic capture”, whereby the inexplicable - in this instance, the fact that there exist individuals who hold beliefs and values which challenge the perceived self-evident “truths” of a “transparently” consensual world-view - is rendered explicable by a cognitive act of assimilation and transformation; that is, by a cognitive act which assimilates and transforms the inexplicable by binding it to well-known and established typifications and relevances (“*Marxists? They are just lunatics*”). And secondly, by means of the exercise of “scorn”, which functions to annul the threat posed by the existence of beliefs and values which conflict with those held by the individuals who seek to achieve the symbolic negation. Importantly, neither of these mechanisms has the effect of annihilating the moment of otherness, which is preserved, in a neutralised form, to function, in its *difference*, as a source of identity and cohesion.

Of course, it is not only by means of disparaging epithets that a symbolic negation can be achieved. For example, in complete contrast, a *compliment* can be characterised as an attempt by an individual to impose his definitions, his reality, upon *the other*; that is, it can be characterised as a negation of the subjectivity of *the other*. If the compliment is accepted, then *the other* has reduced himself to an object in the eyes of the individual who pays the compliment. He acquiesces to a world defined by the compliment payer, around whom his being coalesces. To this extent, the individual who pays the compliment has perpetrated an act of aggression. By reducing *the other* to an object, he has exercised his power over him.

In general terms, any act of judgement that an individual makes of another individual has the character of a symbolic negation. To judge someone is, by definition, to turn them into an object. It is to negate their subjectivity and the threat that this poses to the integrity of *the self*. Thus, the normative sphere - or, more precisely, the realm of value-orientations - is central to the process of symbolic negation. It is in terms of the judgements which comprise this realm that symbolic negation is normally achieved. For example, a disparaging epithet, as we have seen, negates by means of a

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<sup>62</sup> The term “loony-left” or “lunatic left” is used by the “right-wing” in Britain (i.e., primarily the British Conservative party and its supporters) to characterise those who are perceived to hold “extreme” “left-wing” views.

combination of familiarity and scorn; a favourable judgement, by an affirmation; and a religious judgement (e.g., “This man is evil”), by an appeal to a higher authority. The efficacy of normative judgements in achieving symbolic negation is largely founded on their relative immunity to the threat posed by the foreignness of *the other*. This immunity is rooted in the fact that these judgements are subject to a specific epoché; namely, a suspension of doubt in their reality and validity. To understand this, it is necessary only to recall that uncontradicted experiences will appear, within a finite province of meaning, to be *as real as anything*.

An interesting point with respect to the paramountcy of the normative sphere for the task of achieving symbolic negation is that the beliefs and values which comprise this sphere, as it will be remembered, are also the mechanisms by which individuals achieve the symbolic mastery of the world. It follows, therefore, that on those occasions that a symbolic negation is attained by means of a normative judgement, a degree of symbolic mastery is also achieved. Indeed, generally speaking, the process of symbolic negation is central to the struggle for symbolic mastery, since the aim of symbolic negation is to ensure that individuals inhabit “external realities” which are *fully expressive* of them. Therefore, the process of symbolic negation, to the extent that it functions to locate individuals in the world and to deliver a certain solidity of being - and notwithstanding the fact that it is founded upon an analytically distinct existential dynamic - is central to the strategies that individuals employ to achieve a reaffirmation of the self.

It will be remembered that when I discussed the various mechanisms employed for the symbolic mastery of the world, I noted that the beliefs and values of the realm of value-orientations are closely related to the typificatory frameworks of particular social groups. Obviously, this close relationship has important consequences for understanding the process of symbolic negation. Most significantly, it means that the attitudes of judgement that individuals employ to effect a symbolic negation will tend to be derived from the typificatory frameworks of social groups which are for them sometimes in-groups. Moreover, it is normally within the bounds of in-groups that the threat posed by *the other*, in its most generic sense, is managed. Specifically, the members of any particular social group share a degree of common identity, rooted in

the similarity of their biographical situations (and all that this implies). As a result, they do not experience each other with the degree of *otherness* which characterises the relationships of those who do not share in a common identity. Therefore, the grounds exist, within an in-group, for the establishment of what might be termed an “existential compromise”, whereby any particular member of the group is able to submit to the *gazes* of the others in the group (in Sartrean terms), on the understanding, firstly, that he will be able to reclaim himself at a later date, and secondly, that the other members of the group, should the occasion arise, will submit to his gaze. In this way, within the in-group, it is possible for an individual to gain both an apprehension of his own objectivity as he submits to the *gazes* of his consociates, and to retain the integrity of his self in his expectation that they will be willing to submit to his gaze.

However, it must be stressed that such a compromise does not solve the *impasse* between the For-itself and *the other*. It merely represents a strategy for its management. An individual cannot remain a subject and, at the same time, experience *the other* as a subject. Consequently, their relationship - subject to object, freedom to unfreedom - is necessarily conflictual.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, the possibility of existential compromise is dependent upon the presence of a mutual perception on the part of individuals that they share a common identity. However, it is clear that such a perception often does not exist; and that where it does, it is frequently fragile and transient. Therefore, *the will to symbolic negation* retains its analytical significance as a concept with which to explore the dynamics of intersubjectivity. The original relationship between Man and his fellow-man is based fundamentally upon conflict; the distinction between “the political” and “the non-political” is dissolved.

## Conclusion

To sum up, in this chapter, I have continued to explore the general idea, first articulated in the previous chapter, that the nature of Man’s relation to the external-world has significant consequences for social action. Specifically, I have argued that the inexplicable and chaotic character of this relation requires that individuals seek the

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<sup>63</sup> To understand this, see Sartre’s analysis of the relation between lovers in *Being and Nothingness*, (Routledge, London and New York: 1969), 364-379.

symbolic mastery of the external-world; and I have claimed that this is achieved, most significantly, by means of the various judgements which comprise the *normative sphere*. I have also argued that the original relation between Man and his fellow-man is necessarily conflictual, and that, as a result, individuals are compelled to negate symbolically *the other*. In both these respects, I have been able to make my first references to specifically political phenomena and processes, arguing that the ideas, beliefs and values of political discourse constitute an important resource in the struggle for symbolic mastery and symbolic negation.

The significance of these kinds of arguments lies partly in the fact that they are indicative of one of the major claims of this thesis; namely, that in order to understand political phenomena and processes, it is necessary to pay attention to issues of consciousness, subjectivity and intersubjectivity. In the next chapter, I will begin to deal more explicitly with this claim. Specifically, I will use some of the ideas developed in the first part of this thesis, to consider whether the kinds of conflict which characterise the relationship between Man and his fellow-man are also present in the relationships between disparate social groups.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL GROUPS

I wish to begin this chapter by briefly taking stock of the various arguments concerning what might be termed “the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity” which have been articulated in this thesis to date. These arguments are as follows: (i) *the reaffirmation of the self* - I have claimed that the uncertainty that individuals experience in the solitary relation requires that they constantly strive to reaffirm their senses of self; (ii) *the symbolic mastery of the external-world* - it is my contention that the nature of the relationship between Man and the external-world demands that he seeks its symbolic mastery; and (iii) *the will to symbolic negation* - it is my claim that the conflictual underpinning of the relationship between *the self* and *the other* requires that individuals strive to negate the threat posed by the foreignness of *the other*.

Up to this point, whilst I have been concerned to analyse the formal character of these dynamics, I have said very little about their precise “location” in subjectivity, nor have I considered, in any detail, the character of the various “modes of experience” within which they are manifest in consciousness. It is possible to make use of a topological analogy to shed some light on these issues. At the deepest levels of subjectivity - the levels of the *nonconscious* or *nonconscious motivation* - these socio-existential dynamics exist in their purest form, functioning as *motives* for both cognitive orientation and social action; that is, at these levels, they exist simply as *dynamics* to cognition and action. At the intermediate levels of subjectivity, mediated by the totality of social-experience, these dynamics are manifest in various of the relatively diffuse emotions - including hopes, desires, fears and so on - which individuals experience (e.g., the fear of the *social other*; and the desire to belong to a social group); and also in modes of common-sense thinking (e.g., the cognitive arrangement of the world into “people like us” and “people like them” - something which I will explore in detail in this chapter). At the highest levels of subjectivity, the socio-existential dynamics are manifest in various specific actions, beliefs and attitudes; specifically, in those actions, beliefs and attitudes which articulate and express the emotions and common-sense thinking which characterise these dynamics as they are manifest at the lower levels of

subjectivity (such actions, beliefs and attitudes might include, for example, an individual's dislike of people who do not belong to his ethnic group; his love of his country; and his cognitive perception that it is *natural* that he should love his country).

The most significant point to understand about this topological analogy is that the various levels of subjectivity are relatively autonomous. Therefore, there are no determined relationships between the forms taken by the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity at the various levels of subjectivity. Consequently, it is possible that dynamics which are quite distinct analytically will nevertheless be manifest in similar kinds of emotions, common-sense thinking, actions, attitudes and beliefs; and, the corollary of this point, that a single dynamic, on different occasions or in different individuals, will be manifest in quite distinct emotions, common-sense thinking, actions and so on.

In this chapter, I wish to explore further some of the political implications of the existence of these socio-existential dynamics and, thereby, to demonstrate the inadequacies of political analyses which do not pay sufficient regard to issues of consciousness, subjectivity and intersubjectivity. In addition, I wish to consider a number of new substantive issues. Most importantly: (i) Marxist treatments of the state and the potential for the emergence of a conflict-free society; and (ii) the "bounded" nature of the social world; specifically, the idea that the social world comprises social groups which are for individuals sometimes in-groups and sometimes out-groups. In fact, it is specifically my intention to demonstrate that the emergence of a conflict-free society is impossible because there is an *interest* in conflict itself, an interest which is exacerbated in the relations of opposition which necessarily exist between divergent social groups.

*Carlo Hobsbawm*

## **Marxist Theories of the State**

It is necessary to begin this analysis of Marxist theories of the state with a caveat; namely, that it is not my intention to offer a definitive analysis of the latest theoretical

and empirical treatments of this area of study.<sup>1</sup> Rather, I will briefly outline what might be termed a “classical” Marxist theory of the state, and I will detail one of the major debates (namely, the debate between Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband) that has occurred in Marxist theory concerning the nature and functioning of the capitalist state. I will then move on to consider some of the issues surrounding the notion of a transition to socialism. The justification for this strategy is that it will serve the major purpose of this chapter, which, as I have stated, is to demonstrate the flaws in political analyses which relatively neglect issues of consciousness, subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Additionally, it will provide a theoretical context for the arguments concerning the nature of social conflict which I will make in the second half of the chapter.

According to Marx and Engels, “...The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie [Marx and Engels, 1959: 51].” It is well known that Marx did not attempt a systematic study of the state; nevertheless, it is doubtful that he ever revised his opinion that the state in capitalist society is, above all else, an instrument of the ruling-class.<sup>2</sup> This idea that the state exists in order to serve ruling-class interests is bound up with the other major element in the Marxist approach; namely, the idea that with the advent of a classless society, the state will have outlived its usefulness and will, therefore, wither away into non-existence. Engels describes this process as follows:

*The proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production into state property....But in doing this it abolishes itself as proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms, abolishes also the state as state. Society thus far, based upon class antagonisms, has had need of the state....As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection...a state is no longer necessary....the government of persons is replaced by the*

<sup>1</sup> In this respect, see Jessop, B., “Recent theories of the capitalist state”, *The Cambridge Journal of Economics*, (1977), 1, 353-373.

<sup>2</sup> See Miliband, R., *The State in Capitalist Society*, (Quartet Books, London: 1973), 7.

administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production.

The state is not “abolished”. *It dies out.*<sup>3</sup>

It is not my concern here to examine the empirical validity of the Marxist claim that the state in capitalist society serves the interests of the ruling-class (although it might be pertinent to point out that it would be difficult to understand the last thirty years of British socio-political history without an understanding of the role that the state plays in mediating the relationship between capital and labour;<sup>4</sup> and also to note that Anthony Giddens claims that “the state, as everyone else, is dependent upon the activities of capitalist employers for its revenue, and hence the state operates in a context of varying capitalistic “imperatives”...”<sup>5</sup>). Instead, I wish to explore what is perhaps the most important theoretical issue for Marxist analyses of the state: namely, the form and structural location of the capitalist state (needless to say, the way in which one deals with this issue will have a direct bearing on how one might assess the empirical validity of the Marxist position).

As I stated earlier, Marx himself did not produce a definitive account of the state. Indeed, it is only in the last 25 years or so that Marxists have, in any numbers, turned to this area of study at all.<sup>6</sup> Whilst recent theoretical expositions all share a common starting point - namely, that the state operates fundamentally in the interests of the ruling-class<sup>7</sup> - there is a considerable disagreement about the precise character of the state and the nature of the relations which define it. Obviously, I am unable to conduct a survey of the various positions held by different Marxist theorists;<sup>8</sup> however, it might

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<sup>3</sup> Engels, F. in Marx, K., and Engels, F., *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, (Edited: Feuer, L.), (Fontana/Collins, Glasgow: 1981), 146-147.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Coates, D., *Labour in Power?* (Longman, London: 1980); Gamble, A., *Britain in Decline*, (MacMillan, London: 1981); Hall, S. and Jacques, M., *The Politics of Thatcherism* (Lawrence and Wishart, London: 1983); and Miliband, R., Panitch, L. and Saville, J., *The Socialist Register*, (The Merlin Press, London: 1987).

<sup>5</sup> Giddens, A., *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, (MacMillan, London and Basingstoke: 1981), 211.

<sup>6</sup> With one of two notable exceptions, particularly, V. I. Lenin's *The State and Revolution* (Progress Publishers, Moscow: 1949); and Antonio Gramsci's *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, (Edited: Hoare, Q. and Smith, G. N.), (Lawrence and Wishart, London: 1971).

<sup>7</sup> See Miliband, R., *Marxism and Politics*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1977), 66-67.

<sup>8</sup> For such a survey, see Jessop, B., “Recent theories of the capitalist state”, *The Cambridge Journal of Economics*, (1977), 1, 353-373..

be illuminating to consider two specific theoretical approaches and to detail some of the problems inherent in each.

According to the first of these approaches, the state is an instrument of bourgeois rule by virtue of the fact that its key positions are occupied by members of this class. This position is frequently, and in some ways unfairly, associated with Ralph Miliband, who argues that:

The most important fact about advanced capitalist societies...is the continued existence in them of private and ever more concentrated economic power. As a result of that power, the men - owners and controllers - in whose hands it lies enjoy a massive preponderance in society, in the political system, and in the determination of the state's policies and actions.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, the state, in its activities, will tend to favour capital *in general*, because its key members share common ties with the bourgeoisie. However, whilst this approach, in demonstrating that this is *in fact* the case, has provided a valuable critique of the pluralist-democratic position,<sup>10</sup> it is, nevertheless, subject to a number of criticisms. The most serious of these is that it does not take account of "objective-relations". This charge is levelled most famously by Nicos Poulantzas who argues that:

The relation between the bourgeois class and the State is an *objective relation*. This means that if the function of the State in a determinate social formation and the *interests* of the dominant class in this formation *coincide*, it is by reason of the system itself: the direct participation of members of the ruling class in the State apparatus is not

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<sup>9</sup> Miliband, R., *The State in Capitalist Society*, (Quartet Books, London: 1973), 237.

<sup>10</sup> See Miliband, R., *Marxism and Politics*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1977), *passim*.

the *cause* but the *effect*, and moreover a chance and contingent one, of the objective coincidence.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, to focus exclusively upon the class origins of a state elite in order to explain state activity, results in a number of explanatory weaknesses. Particularly, it is difficult to account for: (i) those instances where the ruling class itself is not directly represented in the state apparatus (as was the case in that part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which saw the landed aristocracy in Britain ruling on behalf of the bourgeoisie); (ii) those occasions where the state pursues policies which are directly contrary to the wishes of the dominant class (e.g., Roosevelt's *New Deal*); and (iii) the more general requirement that the state should be *relatively autonomous* of the ruling class, in order that it might pursue policies against the short-term interests of capital.

In the second approach, as represented by the work of Nicos Poulantzas,<sup>12</sup> the state is conceived not in instrumental terms, but instead according to the objective function it performs "as the organisation for maintaining both the conditions of production and the conditions for the existence and functioning both of the unity of a mode of production and of a formation [Poulantzas, 1973: 50]." By defining the state in terms of objective relations (i.e., in terms of its insertion within the framework of a capitalist mode of production), Poulantzas is able to claim, as above, that "the direct participation of members of the capitalist class in the State apparatus and in the government, even where it exists, is not the important side of the matter [Poulantzas, 1969: 245]." In fact, as far as the capitalist state is concerned, this "best serves the interests of the capitalist class only when members of this class do not participate directly in the State apparatus, that is to say when the ruling class is not the politically governing class [Poulantzas, 1969: 246]."<sup>13</sup> The advantages of this "relative autonomy" are two-fold: (i) the state avoids becoming the site of inter-fractional

<sup>11</sup> Poulantzas, N., "The problem of the capitalist state", in Blackburn, R., (Ed.), *Ideology in Social Science: readings in critical social theory*, (Fontana/Collins, Glasgow: 1972), 245.

<sup>12</sup> See Poulantzas, N., *Political Power and Social Classes*, (New Left Books, London: 1973).

<sup>13</sup> It is Poulantzas' claim that the members of the state apparatus, despite diverse class origins, form a specific social category, whose objective function it is to actualise the role of the state. Thus, although they are not tied to the ruling class, they serve its interests, because the *totality of this role itself coincides with the interests of the ruling class* [see Poulantzas, N., "The problem of the capitalist state", in Blackburn, R., (Ed.), *Ideology in Social Science: Readings in critical social theory*, (Fontana/Collins, Glasgow: 1972), 246-247].

disputes between competing capitalist interests; and (ii) the state is able to pursue policies which favour the working-class in the short-term, to the long-term interests of capital in general.

Although this second approach avoids some of the difficulties which result from analysing the state in terms of the class origins and actions of its functionaries, it is itself by no means free of problems. A number of these result directly from defining the state in functional terms as *a factor of cohesion*: (i) to the extent that the *existence* of a social phenomenon is not accounted for by the function it necessarily performs, this approach does not give a sufficient explanation of the state;<sup>14</sup> (ii) the state can never be precisely specified; by definition, it includes all those institutions which function to secure this cohesion;<sup>15</sup> and (iii) the contention that the state necessarily serves the interests of the capitalist class is apparently unfalsifiable; relative autonomy allows that any action of the state apparently favourable to the working class can be explained away in terms of the requirement for system maintenance.

A more general criticism of the “structural relations” approach is that it treats social actors as simply the *bearers of objective instances*, paying no regard, therefore, to the reflexive nature of social action. In this regard, for example, Miliband criticises Poulantzas for leading us “straight towards a kind of structural determinism, or rather a super-determinism, which makes impossible a truly realistic consideration of the dialectical relationship between the State and the “system” [Miliband, 1970: 259].” Of course, for Miliband, the problem is simply one of degree; that is, how much freedom should one allow social actors considering the fact that they operate within a system of structural constraint?<sup>16</sup> However, in fact, it is not possible to reduce the issue of the relationship between social actors and institutions to questions concerning the balance between freedom and structural constraint. It is possible to demonstrate this fact, by considering how one might attempt to reconstitute the Marxist conception of the state in the theoretical terms outlined in Chapter 1.

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<sup>14</sup> This is the well known difficulty of all functionalist explanations. In this context, see Giddens, A., *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, (MacMillan, London and Basingstoke: 1981), 17-19; and 215.

<sup>15</sup> See Jessop, B., “Recent theories of the capitalist state”, *The Cambridge Journal of Economics*, (1977), 1, 355.

In this respect, it is first necessary to recall: (i) that social actors use stocks of knowledge in order to orient their actions to the demands of the situations that they face; and (ii) that a social structure can be specified in terms of the typificatory frameworks associated with the *average courses of action* followed by *anonymous* social actors. Therefore, one can pose the question: how is it possible to hold onto the view that the state has an inherent tendency to favour the long-term interests of the ruling-class, if one accepts that the state comprises no more than social actors following *average courses of action*? One possible response, which would perhaps be favoured by those who view the state as an *instrument* of the ruling-class, is to argue that the functionaries of the state, by virtue of essentially bourgeois biographical situations, possess stocks of knowledge which are commensurate with this role.<sup>17</sup> However, this response is still vulnerable to the criticism, noted earlier, that the state has operated quite adequately in the interests of capital when controlled by a non-capitalist elite.

We are returned, therefore, to the question of *objective relations*; or more specifically, to the possibility that there are situational and structural “constraints” which predispose the state to act in the interests of the capitalist class. How then might one specify these constraints? To answer this, it is necessary first to recognise that the state is an *imagined* entity; that is, it is defined by social action which has been *identified* as regular and non-random. It follows, therefore, that it is possible to specify the state in terms of the typificatory frameworks which are associated with the *average courses of action* which constitute this regular and non-random action.<sup>18</sup> For example, the juridical function of the state might be said to exist at the intersection of the typificatory frameworks which: define the roles that comprise the various juridical agencies; specify the law and define the relationship between it and the state; define the relationship between the law and “the people” (i.e., the obligatory character of the law; its legitimacy; etc.); and specify the relationship between the state and “the

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<sup>16</sup> See Miliband, R., *Marxism and Politics*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1977), 73

<sup>17</sup> See my discussion of social structure, Chapter 1, 29-32.

<sup>18</sup> See also my treatment of the requirements for an ideal performance of the Parsonian mother-role, Chapter 1, 30.

people" (i.e., the legitimacy of state power; the obligations that the state must fulfil; etc.).

In the terms of this analysis, notions of freedom and structural constraint are conceptually redundant. The state is specified in terms of the purely formal relationship between a constituted regularity of action and the typificatory frameworks which govern that action; and more generally, social structures are constituted realities which function to facilitate the analysis of action which has been identified as regular and non-random. However, these facts do not preclude the development of an *ideal-typical* model of the state, in terms of which the typificatory frameworks which define the state intersect in such a way so that it operates in the interests of the capitalist class. Obviously, it is only possible here to hint at the precise nature of such a model. In this respect, let us consider briefly Anthony Giddens' claim, already noted, that "the state, as everyone else, is dependent upon the activities of capitalist employers for its revenue; and hence the state operates in a context of various capitalistic "imperatives" [Giddens, 1981: 211]." He cites Lindblom:

Because public functions in the market system rest in the hands of businessmen, it follows that jobs, prices, production, growth, the standard of living and the economic security of everyone all rest in their hands. Consequently government officials cannot be indifferent to how well business performs its functions... A major function of government, therefore, is to see to it that businessmen perform their tasks.<sup>19</sup>

The important point is that it is possible to express these kinds of arguments in the terms specified by the theoretical framework that I have just outlined. For example, it might be argued, in these terms, that *anonymous* state functionaries follow *average courses of action* which seek to secure the conditions necessary for capitalist reproduction, to the extent that their action is oriented towards a framework of typifications which equates their *interests*, both personal and institutional, with the success of the capitalist project. Or counterfactually, that if they do not adopt *average*

<sup>19</sup> Lindblom, C. E., cited in Giddens, A., *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, (MacMillan, London and Basingstoke: 1981), 212.

*courses of action* which function to secure capitalist reproduction, then the consequences, to the extent that the state is *in fact* dependent upon national and international capitalism, will be incompatible with the framework of typifications which equates the interests of these functionaries with perceived institutional and national interests.

Of course, this kind of analysis begs many more questions than it answers. Most importantly, it is necessary to demonstrate, in similar kinds of terms, that the state is *in fact* dependent upon capitalist reproduction; and indeed, that the notion of capitalist reproduction is meaningful at all. However, these tasks are well outside the bounds of this particular study. Therefore, I wish now to move onto the second part of this analysis of Marxist political theory, to consider the issues surrounding the idea of a transition to socialism.

## **The Transition to Socialism**

It is the Marxist claim that the germs of revolution and the conditions for the transition to a classless, conflict free society are to be found in the capitalist mode of production. Crudely, the seeds of the destruction of capitalism lie in the universality of working class alienation and in the inability of capitalism to provide long-term material compensation for this alienation.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the proletariat will throw off its chains in order to transcend its alienation and exploitation. However, as it is continually pointed out, capitalist societies have proved stubbornly resistant to such revolutionary change, which consequently calls into question the validity of the Marxist position. One possible explanation for the unexpected longevity of these societies is that, contrary to the expectations of Marx, they have been able to secure real and long-term increases in the standards of living of significant numbers of the working class. In other words, it might be that Marx was quite simply incorrect in his

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<sup>20</sup> For this reading of Marx, see Balbus, I., *Marxism and Domination*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey: 1982), 48-55.

assumptions concerning the immiseration of the proletariat and that, consequently, he overestimated the fragility of capitalist system.<sup>21</sup>

However, let us suppose that immiseration had occurred, would one then expect to see, as Marx predicted, the emergence of a truly *revolutionary* and *liberatory* class-force? It will be remembered that I have argued, in Chapter 1, that a collective awareness among social actors is likely to emerge when they share similar biographical situations and a common social world.<sup>22</sup> With immiseration and the concentration of industry, according to Marx, "...The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalised...", as the modern labourer, "...sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class."<sup>23</sup> To this extent, the conditions specified above are satisfied; however, whilst one might be justified in expecting that these circumstances would engender some form of class consciousness -and quite possibly class action - far more problematic is the notion that this consciousness would be either revolutionary or liberatory.<sup>24</sup>

Social class is only one out of the many identifiable social structures which make up the social world. These are experienced by social actors with varying degrees of acuteness, according to the specificity of the particular structure. Accordingly, I argued, in Chapter 1, that institutionally defined action complexes, such as the kinship or occupational systems, are the most acutely experienced and, therefore, the most likely to engender a common identity. The significant point is that such institutional forms are not only experienced more acutely than social class, even where immiseration has occurred, but also that they compete with social class for the allegiance of social actors, with consequent repercussions for the class struggle. Most significantly, there is the possibility that certain sectors of the proletariat - for example, particular occupational groups - will pursue sectional rather than class interests. Clearly, this is related to larger questions of reformist politics; specifically, to the

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<sup>21</sup> For the idea of immiseration, see Marx, K. and Engels, F., *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, (Edited: Freuer, L.), (Fontana/Collins, Glasgow: 1959), 60-61.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 1, 32-35.

<sup>23</sup> Marx, K. and Engels, F., (Fontana/Collins, Glasgow: 1959), 57; and 61.

<sup>24</sup> Of course, this is a well documented difficulty. See, for example, Balbus, I., *Marxism and Domination*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey: 1982), 52.

possibility that such groups will seek to ameliorate their conditions within the framework of the capitalist mode of production. Of course, it will be claimed that such a scenario can be discounted on the grounds that *absolute immiseration* brings unprecedented homogeneity to the working-class. However, even if one does accept the inevitability of class struggle, one cannot rule out the possibility that a form of instrumentalism will emerge, whereby this struggle is used as a vehicle to achieve interests and goals - for example, those based on a "consumerist" orientation - which, strictly speaking, by virtue of their genesis within the typificatory frameworks of non-class formations, are neither "revolutionary" nor "liberatory".

Of course, immiseration has not occurred in the form that Marx, at least in his earlier works, expected.<sup>25</sup> As a consequence, these non-class formations become increasingly significant as alternative sites for the allegiance of social actors. In contrast to social class, which when defined in Marxist terms is only experienced very diffusely, social actors apprehend these formations as relatively permanent and concrete features of their lives. In fact, it is primarily through their membership of such groups that social actors are defined and located within the social world; it is, as I have argued, in these groups that they find their social identity. The existence of such formations hinders the development of revolutionary consciousness in a number of fairly obvious ways: (i) by the fact that they offer to individuals an alternative to a class identity; (ii) by underpinning many of the conflicts which characterise the social world; and (iii) by uniting individuals across class boundaries, as members of wider collectivities such as the Christian church, the Nation and "the West."<sup>26</sup>

It has long been recognised by Marxist theorists that it is necessary to take into account non-class formations when devising a revolutionary strategy.<sup>27</sup> However, these kinds of

<sup>25</sup> I am aware that Marx moved away from the relatively crude position that he articulated in *The Communist Manifesto*. See, for example, Balbus, I., *Marxism and Domination*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey: 1982), 52-53. Balbus also deals with the difficulties entailed by the rejection of the immiseration thesis.

<sup>26</sup> One should also note the significance of social structures which, although not institutional in form (e.g., gender and race), are integral to an individual's social identity.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Gramsci, A., *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, (Edited: Hoare, Q. and Smith, G. N.), (Lawrence and Wishart, London: 1971), 161; and *passim*. And also the work of Stuart Hall, who talks specifically of the "contradictory nature of human subjects, of social identities..."; and the need for the Left in Britain to address "the identities which the people carry in their heads - their subjectivities, their cultural life, their sexual life, their family life, their ethnic identities, their health...[Hall, S., 1987: 21]".

formations have a significance beyond merely their impact on the potential for revolution. In fact, they are necessarily pivotal in determining the form of any *post-capitalist* society. Most significantly, the continued existence of non-class formations in a post-capitalist society, necessarily precludes the possibility that this society might be conflict-free. It is inconceivable that these formations will simply disappear with the overthrow of capitalism;<sup>28</sup> to this extent, they will remain a potential source of conflict, domination and exploitation. Of course, it will be objected to these arguments that the transcendence of scarcity<sup>29</sup> will remove the foundations of conflict, and that with convergent interests, social groups will coexist harmoniously. However, this objection is based upon an assumption which is unsustainable; namely, that the benefits of conflict are necessarily derived from the ends to which it is directed. In contrast to this, I wish to claim that there is an *interest* in conflict itself; an interest rooted in the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity.

## The Social World as a “Bounded” Reality

In order to justify this claim, it is necessary to turn now to consider the “bounded” nature of the social world; that is, the idea that the social world comprises social groups which are for individuals sometimes in-groups and sometimes out-groups. To anticipate, I wish to argue that the social identities which individuals attain by means of their membership of in-groups are enhanced in the opposition of these groups to various out-groups. It is my intention, by exploring this argument, to clarify and substantiate the grounds of my critique of the Marxist position.

I have argued that the defining characteristic of a social structure is that it exhibits a complex of non-random and regular behaviour. As an abstraction, therefore, a social structure is both discrete and bounded, characterised by its own particular typificatory framework. This is seen most clearly in the case of institutional structures, where a

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<sup>28</sup> There are a number of reasons why this is the case: (i) the fact that a socialist world will remain an apparently structured world, which is the necessary condition for the emergence of such formations; (ii) because it is inconceivable that identities built on perceived differences of sex and race will simply wither away in a post-capitalist society; and (iii) similarly, because institutional frameworks cannot be eradicated.

<sup>29</sup> For a critique of the notion of *the transcendence of scarcity*, see Balbus, I., *Marxism and Domination*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey: 1982), 114-121.

high degree of specificity is guaranteed by the normative, spatial and temporal regulation of behaviour. To the extent that social structures are delimited in this fashion, they stand in relations of opposition to one another. In other words, each particular structure is related to and commands its own particular area of social life. This has important consequences for a social actor's experience of individual social structures and the social world in general.<sup>30</sup>

Turning first to the pre-reflective experience of social structures, there are a number of significant points to be noted. Firstly, a social actor receives pre-reflective experiential confirmation of the reality of the various action complexes to which he is subject by virtue of the distinctiveness of each in relation to the others. In other words, the distinctiveness of any particular complex emerges in tandem with the experience of other similarly discernible complexes. For example, a social actor's experience of his family is reinforced in its difference from the parallel experience of his workplace.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, in certain instances membership of a particular social structure necessarily precludes membership of an associated one. For instance, to be female means being subject to those forces and processes exclusive to such an identity and therefore not being subject to those exclusive to a male identity. Such a relation of opposition can only be experienced by a social actor through a change of status over time.<sup>32</sup> Finally, it is possible to specify social structures according to their exclusivity; or rather, according to their pervasiveness in terms of the relative inclusion and exclusion of social actors. On this basis, one might establish a classificatory framework, within which social relations and structures range from those which exclude all bar two social actors - for example, the primary dyadic relation between mother and child - to those defined by the almost complete inclusion of social actors - for example, the societal relation. The social actor experiences this continuum in an extremely complex fashion. As far as pre-reflective awareness is concerned, it is, as above, because social

<sup>30</sup> It is necessary to emphasise that the analysis to follow is entirely *abstract* in character. In this respect, it should be remembered that social structures are denied a material reality; and that when I talk about the way that they are experienced by social actors, I am doing so in a formal and abstract sense; that is, I am talking about the way in which they are experienced by *anonymous* social actors (see the theoretical framework which I outlined in Chapter 1).

<sup>31</sup> Needless to say, this applies significantly only when social structures reach a certain level of specificity.

<sup>32</sup> For an example of a change in gender identity, see Garfinkel, H., *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford: 1984), 116-185.

actors are subject to a whole series of such relations and structures that they become aware of the differing relations of inclusion and exclusion in each particular instance. More specifically, such awareness is enabled because social structures vary in their social contexts and in the frequency and anonymity of their associated we-relations.

It is upon the foundations established by these kinds of pre-reflective experience that a fully reflective appreciation of the various oppositions between social structures and groups is built. This appreciation emerges simultaneously with a social actor's recognition that he shares a series of common identities with his fellow-men. This can be illustrated by considering what is involved in the distinction between an in-group and an out-group. According to Schutz, this distinction serves primarily to distinguish between the way that a particular social group is experienced by its own members, in contrast to the way that it is apprehended by the members of other distinct groups. The limiting condition on the existence of an in-group is that its members should be aware that they share a common situation. This common situation is derived from a shared relative natural conception of the world. The members of an in-group are united by a common system of relevances and typifications, which functions to define and locate them within the social world. Thus, within the bounds of their in-groups, individuals "find their bearings without difficulty...guided by a set of recipes of more or less institutionalised habits, mores, folkways, etc., that help them come to terms with beings and fellow-men, belonging to the same situation [Schutz, 1964: 251]." To the extent that the situations which confront these individuals are embedded in the cultural pattern of the in-group, and to the extent that this pattern is handed down to every member of the group by way of the social stock of knowledge,<sup>33</sup> the cultural pattern forms an integral aspect of their biographies.

The crucial point is that an individual will be, at any one time, a member of a number of these social groups. Formations as diverse as families, colleges, occupations,

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<sup>33</sup> The fact that social actors use typifications and relevances derived from an established cultural pattern to master the situations which confront them serves to reproduce this pattern. Note the similarity between this idea and Anthony Giddens' notion of the production and reproduction of social structure [see Giddens, A., *New Rules of Sociological Method*, (Hutchinson, London: 1976), 93-129].

villages and closed clubs will be experienced as in-groups.<sup>34</sup> Attached to each one will be a framework of typifications and relevances which serves to “define its situation”; each will have its own peculiar *rationale* which functions to motivate the action of its members. Furthermore, these groups stand in a complicated network of relations to one another. This has a number of important dimensions:

1. It is hierarchical in the sense that each group is more or less enclosed by the larger one of which it is a part. For example, families exist within nations; and nations make up the trans-national groupings (e.g., the Western world) of the world community. Each group derives a baseline of orientation from the cultural pattern of the larger group(s) to which it refers. In other words, the typifications and relevances employed by a social group will in some way reflect those of the wider group of which it is an element.<sup>35</sup>
2. The typifications and relevances associated with particular social structures and groups will enter as elements in the situations which unfold within the bounds of other nominally unrelated groups. For example, a social actor’s gender identity is a significant element in every face-to-face relation; gender, as a social structure, therefore, cuts across the boundaries of all social groups.
3. As I noted above, membership of a particular social structure or group, in certain instances, necessarily precludes membership of other associated structures and groups. In such instances, social groups face each other, in-group to out-group, in a relation of “natural” and mutual opposition. One might consider, for example, the relation between opposing armies or rival political parties.

It is through his membership of such multiple social groupings that an individual experiences and becomes *reflectively* aware of the apparently diverse nature of the social world. As I argued in Chapter 1, such awareness derives, in part, from the social stock of knowledge; that is, the individual is simply taught that the world is

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<sup>34</sup> See Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume II*, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1964), 91; and 252-253, for an indication that he was aware that the term in-group can be employed to denote such formations.

<sup>35</sup> See Schutz, A., (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1964), 252.

made up of recognisable and discrete social formations. Further, integral to the folkways of each social group will be a self-conception, specifying the group's identity, its limits, functioning and relation to other social formations.

However, an individual's awareness that the social world is diverse also emerges directly from his daily journey through the realms of the various social formations. These are built on divergent frameworks of typifications and relevances; they command different aspects of social life, appeal to different interests in motivating action, and carry their own particular role expectations and normative demands. Quite simply, such formations are very different and the social actor participates directly in this diversity. This is the major experiential factor in the reflective apprehension that the world is made up of discrete and bounded social groups.

### **In-group and Out-groups**

Furthermore, not only does the individual, in this fashion, come to apprehend the social world as diverse, he also experiences it as comprising formations which are for him sometimes in-groups and sometimes out-groups. Specifically, he experiences the typifications and relevances of particular social groups as elements of his stock of knowledge at hand. On entering the realm of any one of these, he draws upon an appropriate schema and orients himself to the world according to its requirements. In doing so, he subordinates to the perceived demands of this current group, the interests and relevances which he associates, exclusively, with his membership of other social groups.<sup>36</sup> The current group functions as an in-group for as long as the individual feels himself bound by its typifications and relevances; that is, for as long as it alone defines his world. Significantly, while this is the case, he apprehends all other social groups as being out-groups. It is worth emphasising what is being claimed here: namely, that

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<sup>36</sup> Anthony Giddens' notion of "lifestyle sectors" is pertinent in this respect: "A lifestyle sector concerns a time-space "slice" of an individual's overall activities, within which a reasonably consistent and ordered set of practices is adopted and enacted. Lifestyle sectors are aspects of the regionalisation of activities. A lifestyle sector can include, for instance, what one does on certain evenings of the week, or at weekends, as contrasted to other parts of the week; a friendship, or a marriage, can also be a lifestyle sector in so far as it is made internally cohesive by distinctive forms of elected behaviour across time-space [Giddens, 1991: 83].

such groups become out-groups because the individual subordinates their typificatory frameworks to those of the group which he currently participates in.<sup>37</sup>

The political significance of such oppositions is obviously limited by an individual's continued membership of social groups which are for him only *temporarily* out-groups.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, that these oppositions are of some importance can be illustrated by returning briefly to the question of class and non-class interests. Earlier in this chapter, I argued that the significance of non-class formations is that they offer alternative sites for the allegiance of social actors and, therefore, undermine the potential for class consciousness. Further, I claimed that the greater the specificity of a particular formation, the more successful it would be in gaining this allegiance. Thus, for example, if an individual experiences his family more acutely than he experiences his membership of the working-class, one would expect his family, rather than his class, to lay the greatest claim upon his allegiance. If this is the case, then despite his membership of both social structures, the family functions as an in-group and the working-class as an out-group. Therefore, the typifications and relevances associated specifically with his class membership are subordinated to those associated with his family membership.

It is now easy to understand how sectional interests emerge and how an interested party might seek to cash in on these by appealing directly to the typifications and relevances which characterise particular non-class formations. Of course, it is precisely these concerns that lead Marxists to argue that any socialist strategy must be hegemonic. This necessity can be understood in Schutzian terms: the success of any revolutionary strategy depends, in part, on its capacity to address and reconstitute the

<sup>37</sup> Of course, this is a simplified reconstruction - the reality is much more complex. Firstly, as I noted earlier, social structures enclose and cross-cut one another. Therefore, they will not be experienced as being absolutely delimited and exclusive. Secondly, an individual will rarely be so immersed in the typifications and relevances of a particular social structure, that he absolutely buries the interests and relevances associated with the other social structures in which he participates. However, a simplified reconstruction serves: firstly, to emphasise that oppositions pervade the social world; and secondly, to provide the ground for an analysis of the co-existence of forms of consciousness that are apparently contradictory (e.g., a consumerist consciousness and a class consciousness).

<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that I have moved deliberately (and obviously) beyond Schutz's usage of this terminology. Further, it should be stressed that, according to the terms of this analysis, it is only a matter of time before a group which is currently an out-group becomes once more an in-group.

*private domains of relevance* of individuals, so that they come to understand that their interests as members of families, occupations, ethnic groups, and so on are ineluctably linked and subordinate to their class interests. However, the task of constructing such a consciousness is continually undermined by the experience of individuals that the world is diverse and divided. Thus, in the end, failure in this task is guaranteed by the very aspect of experience which necessitates its undertaking.

Of course, as I noted earlier, the problems which confront the Marxist account do not derive solely from the conflicts of interest which arise as a consequence of an individual's membership of multiple social-formations. A further barrier to the emergence of a genuinely liberatory consciousness exists in the other major dimension of the in-group/out-group distinction; namely, the fact that social actors *define* themselves as members of in-groups in terms of their non-membership of out-groups; or, to put this another way, the fact that social actors apprehend the world in terms of a series of "Us" and "Them" dichotomies. To understand this, one has only to consider the oppositions which exist between national, racial, religious, political, sexual and sporting groups, to name but a few. William Graham Sumner recognises the divisiveness of such oppositions, when he states that "...Each group thinks its own folkways the only right ones, and if it observes that other groups have other folkways this excites its scorn."<sup>39</sup> Further, and crucially, social groups are united in this scorn; the individuals of an in-group reaffirm their identity with their fellow members in their collective opposition to the relatively anonymous individuals of particular out-groups. In the words of Rolf von Eckartsberg, "...We live in terms of "in groups" and define ourselves in contrast to "out groups"".<sup>40</sup>

The significance of this fact can hardly be over-stated. According to R. D. Laing, the "Us" and "Them" dichotomy is a matter:

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<sup>39</sup> Cited in Schutz, A., *Collected Papers: Volume II*, (Nijhoff, The Hague: 1964), 244.

<sup>40</sup> Eckartsberg, R., von, "Schutz's promise for social psychology", in Embre, L., (Ed.), *Worldly Phenomenology: The Continuing Influence of Alfred Schutz on North American Human Science*, (Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, Washington: 1988), 43.

of life or death importance in the most urgent possible sense, since it is on the basis of such primitive social phantasies of who and what are I and you, he and she, We and Them, that the world is linked or separated, that we die, kill, devour, tear and are torn apart, descend to hell or ascend to heaven, in short, that we conduct our lives.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, Edmund Leach notes that "...The violence in the world comes about because we human beings are forever creating barriers between men who are like us and men who are not like us [Leach, 1968: 46]." With regard to the Marxist account, it is clear that in dividing the working class, such oppositions preclude the development of a genuinely liberatory consciousness. Moreover, it is possible for an interested party to articulate these oppositions in such a way that it is guaranteed that a liberatory consciousness will not emerge (at which point the oppositions become a focus of political contestation).<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, as I stated earlier, to the extent that such oppositions are carried over into post-capitalist society, they remain potential sources of conflict, domination and exploitation. Indeed, it is fair to say that for as long as social actors apprehend the social world in terms of the opposition of in-groups and out-groups the advent of a conflict free society remains out of the question.

We are thus returned to the point at which we left the first half of this chapter. The Marxist account can only be rescued from this quandary if it can be demonstrated that the *springs of co-operative wealth*, characteristic of post-capitalist society, bring unprecedented harmony to the new order; that is, if it can be shown that with the transcendence of scarcity there necessarily occurs a convergence of interests, which rules out the possibility of conflict, exploitation and domination. It will be

<sup>41</sup> Laing, R. D., *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1967), 79. The groups that form the basis of the "Us" and "Them" distinction are phantasies, for Laing, because they exist only in so far as we invent and perpetuate them [see 65-66].

<sup>42</sup> In this respect, one might consider, for example, the "authoritarian populist" account of the years of "Thatcherism" (i.e., the years of the Conservative administrations in Great Britain between 1979-1990). In this account, the Thatcherite project was hegemonic in that it sought to build a new historic bloc out of the ruins of the post-war settlement. This had a strong populist undercurrent, which rested heavily upon the rhetoric of "Us" and "Them" distinctions. For example, a central plank to the 1979 General Election campaign was the ideological juxtaposition of "The People" ("Us") and "Trade Union Barons" ("Them"). See, generally, Hall, S. and Jacques, M., *The Politics of Thatcherism*, (Lawrence and Wishart, London: 1983), 19-39; and *passim*.

remembered, that I objected to this scenario on the grounds that it assumes that the benefits of conflict are derived solely from the ends to which conflict is directed. In contrast to this view, it is my contention that there is an interest in conflict *itself*, an interest rooted in the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity. It is to this claim that I now wish to turn my attention.

## The Interest in Conflict

In Chapter 2, I argued that an individual, in the solitary relation, suffers isolation, estrangement and a lack of definiteness. As a consequence, he is compelled to turn to society to make himself real and he succeeds in becoming so to the extent that he is able to embrace his various social identities. Thus, subjectivity is built on a dynamic which requires the constant reaffirmation of the self. In concrete terms, this is routinely achieved through an individual's membership of various in-groups, which serve to define and locate him within the social world; that is, an individual gains a social identity, or a series of social identities, in his relation to the typifications and relevances of particular in-groups, and through this identity (these identities) he achieves the solidity of being that the solitary relation demands. In terms of the interests of this chapter, the crucial point is that this solidity is enhanced in the in-group's opposition to various out-groups. In a relation of opposition, a social group is more real to an individual and, consequently, he is more real to himself. As William James notes, "...All the qualities of a man acquire dignity when he knows that the service of the collectivity that owns him needs them. If proud of the collectivity, his own pride rises in proportion. No collectivity is like an army for nourishing such pride...".<sup>43</sup> And similarly, Mead argues that "...To join ourselves with others in the common assault upon the common foe we have become more than allies, we have joined a clan, have different souls, and have the exuberant feeling of being at one with this community [Mead, 1964: 357]."<sup>44</sup> Of course, it does not matter whether this foe is

<sup>43</sup> James, W., "The moral equivalent of war", *International Conciliation*, (1910), 27, 495.

<sup>44</sup> Both James and Mead are referring to the increased social cohesion which accrues to *national groupings* in relations of opposition. In line with my analysis above, I am extending this notion to include the opposition between in-groups and out-groups within national boundaries. In fact, Mead widens the scope of his analysis, in a similar fashion, in his essay "The Psychology of Punitive Justice". See Mead, G. H., *Selected Writings*, (Edited: Reck, A.), (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1964), 212-239.

real or imagined, the assault literal or metaphorical, the effect is just the same: in a relation of opposition, the individual experiences himself and his group with a greater intensity than in any relation of inclusion (i.e., in any relation without an oppositional element). It is important to emphasise what is being claimed here: namely, that the rewards associated with a social identity which accrue in the hostile relation cannot be achieved to the same degree in a relation of "neighbourliness" (to borrow Mead's term), even if this is neighbourliness directed to a common end.<sup>45</sup> And further, that by satisfying, in this fashion, the individual's desire for identity and solidity of being, opposition and conflict are rewarding and valuable in themselves.

Many aspects of social reality and forms of social behaviour can be analysed in these kinds of terms. In this respect, one might consider, for example: (i) the relations within and between opposing sets of football supporters;<sup>46</sup> (ii) Durkheim's discovery that suicide rates decline during the years of war;<sup>47</sup> and (iii) that the *Falklands-Factor* transformed the electoral fortunes of the Conservative Party in 1982-1983.<sup>48</sup> One might also recall the fictional Burghers of Sartre's *Nausea*, who "founded the Federation of Bouville Ship-owners and Merchants to unite in a powerful group all men of goodwill, to co-operate in the task of national recovery, and to hold in check the parties of disorder...".<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Of course, this is not to claim that there is no pay-off, in terms of the reaffirmation of identity, in such a relation. Clearly, an event such as "Live Aid" (an event of live popular music, organised by Bob Geldof in 1985, to raise money for people starving in Africa), which can be understood as neighbourliness to a common end, has a significant pay-off in this sense. However, it is possible to argue that such an event is constructed in opposition to poverty, "Western greed", the establishment, and so on.

<sup>46</sup> The concept of *deindividuation*, used in the analysis of crowd behaviour, seems particularly pertinent in this respect. This refers to the loss of personal identity which occurs when the individual becomes an anonymous member of a crowd. In such a state, an individual's problems of identity are solved; being defined by the crowd he attains a degree of solidity of being which approaches that attained by an In-itself. The concept of *deindividuation* was first proposed by Festinger, L., Pepitone, A. and Newcomb, T. M., "Some consequences of deindividuation in a group", *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, (1952), 47, 383-89.

<sup>47</sup> And, more generally, the concept of *egoistic* suicide, where "the individual self asserts itself to excess in the face of the social self and at its expense...[cited in Giddens, A., *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1971), 84]." See Durkheim, E., *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1970).

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Hall, S. and Jacques, M., *The Politics of Thatcherism*, (Lawrence and Wishart, London: 1983), 257-288.

<sup>49</sup> Sartre, J-P., *Nausea*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1963), 122.

The fact that there is an interest in opposition and conflict renders a conflict free society, Marxist or otherwise, inconceivable. The continued existence of social groups and structures in any post-capitalist formation guarantees that this too will be experienced as comprising in-groups and out-groups. These groups necessarily remain a potential source of opposition and conflict because in the antagonistic relation they are experienced more acutely by their members, and the consequent pay-off in terms of the reaffirmation of the self goes some way to satisfying the demand of the solitary relation for a solidity of being. In opposition Man is made real; and in conflict, real or imagined, the petty divisions and concerns of yesterday melt away, as the barrier which separates consciousness from consciousness is transcended.<sup>50</sup> There are no *moral equivalents*<sup>51</sup> to opposition and conflict and it is this which guarantees their continuing significance, and which rules out the emergence of a conflict free society.

The impossibility of the emergence of a conflict-free society is further demonstrated if one considers how these arguments dovetail with those made in the previous chapter. In this respect, perhaps the first point to note is that the conflict between in-group and out-group normally occurs entirely at the level of the normative sphere; or, more precisely, entirely at the level of competing typificatory frameworks. As I noted above, within the folkways of an in-group, the out-group is at best marginalised and at worst

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<sup>50</sup> The poet Lawrence Binyon greeted the advent of the first World War with the following words:

Now in thy splendour go before us,  
Spirit of England, ardent-eyed,  
Enkindle this dear earth that bore us,  
In the hour of peril purified.

The cares we hugged drop out of vision,  
Our hearts with deeper thoughts dilate.  
We slip from days of sour division  
Into the grandeur of our fate.

Excerpt from Binyon, L., "The Fourth of August", in Gardner, B., (Ed.), *Up The Line To Death: The War Poets*, (Methuen, London: 1986), 7.

<sup>51</sup> William James' expression, of course. I should point out that James thinks that there lies a possible moral alternative to war, in a community army, conscripted to do battle against nature. See James, W., "The moral equivalent of war" *International Conciliation*, (1910), 27, 495-498.

treated with derision and scorn. This point is easily understood if one considers, for example, the various disparaging epithets employed by national, religious, racial and sexual groups to belittle those who remain outside their bounds; and, as another example, one might note that political discourse is, by its very nature, conflictual,<sup>52</sup> and will embody a full range of normative judgements which can be employed to discredit the dissenters associated with out-groups. In general, an in-group will employ the beliefs and values of its folkways to counter the threat posed by the existence of out-groups. The normative sphere, forming part of the armoury of the in-group, is essential for the group's integrity.

In line with the analysis of the previous chapter, the threat posed to an in-group by an out-group derives, in part, from the simple existence of alternative and competing sets of typifications and relevances. The reality of the world of the in-group remains taken-for-granted and unproblematic for as long as it is uncontradicted. In this context, the out-group, with its differing norms, values, customs and habits, brings into question this taken-for-grantedness. It threatens the integrity of the in-group and undermines the protective and legitimating structures of this group's normative order.<sup>53</sup> But, at the same time, the out-group, as we have seen, is a source of identity and cohesion for the in-group. Thus, put simply, the out-group both threatens and confirms the reality of the in-group.

In this sense, the relationship between in-group and out-group is analogous to that between Hegel's Master and Slave. It is in the interests of the in-group to subordinate the out-group, since the out-group threatens the integrity of the in-group. However, the destruction of the out-group is strategically irrelevant, since it deprives the in-group of the source of its identity. In this respect, it is significant that the conflict between these groups normally takes place entirely at the level of the normative sphere, since to subordinate a social group from within this realm is to preserve the moment of *otherness*.<sup>54</sup> It is worth considering for a moment what it means to subordinate an out-

<sup>52</sup> This is so, at least to the extent that political discourse is directed towards securing or maintaining power in the face of opposition (real or imagined).

<sup>53</sup> Obviously, the degree to which an out-group poses a threat to an in-group depends, in part, on the extent of the difference between their respective folkways.

<sup>54</sup> Nietzsche's comments about the *spiritualisation of enmity* are interesting in this respect: "It consists in profoundly grasping the value of having enemies....Almost every party grasps that

group from within the normative sphere; or more specifically, from within the realm of value-orientations. Centrally, this involves subjecting and binding the out-group to the folkways of the in-group - to the world-view and definitions comprised therein - in such a way as to render the out-group explicable and non-threatening;<sup>55</sup> it is to assimilate the out-group within the *relative natural conception of the world* of the in-group. To this extent, it is a negation, not of the out-group in its exteriority, which would cancel its otherness, but of the world-view that this group suggests.

It will also be remembered that I argued in the previous chapter that in the realm of value-orientations the individual seeks the imaginative mastery of the external-world. It is clear that we can understand the attempts of the in-group to subordinate the out-group in similar terms. However, in the case of a social group, it is an entirely abstracted conception - the negation that the in-group achieves must be reconstituted as the sum of the imagined negations of its individual members. In this respect, the important point is that it is the image of the out-group, imaginatively constructed out of the social stock of knowledge, which for the individual constitutes the negation. The efficacy of a purely imaginary negation, as I have previously indicated, is based on the fact that uncontradicted experiences will appear, within a finite province of meaning, to be *as real as anything*. The beliefs and values of the realm of value-orientations, as I noted in the previous chapter, are subject to a specific epoché, namely, a suspension of doubt in their reality and validity. Consequently, the characteristics ascribed to an out-group within this realm will appear as simple empirical facts about this group. However, it should be noted that judgements of this sort are not subject to the same on-going verification as are, let us say, those of the world of working and, as a

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it is in the interest of its own self-preservation that the opposing party should not decay in strength; the same is true of grand politics. A new creation in particular, the new *Reich* for instance, has more need of enemies than friends: only in opposition does it feel itself necessary, only in opposition does it become necessary... [Nietzsche, 1990: 53-54]."

<sup>55</sup> In fact, this is more complicated than it might at first appear. The in-group will bind the out-group to its folkways so that the latter poses no threat to the "truth" of the world as defined by the in-group. However, at certain times, it may be necessary for the in-group to portray the out-group as a simple threat, in order to motivate its members (i.e., the members of the in-group) to resistance. Nevertheless, this in no sense implies that the value or "correctness" of the folkways of the in-group will be questioned. Indeed, quite the opposite is the case - it will be stressed that it is in order to protect the traditions of the in-group that the very real threat of the out-group must be countered.

consequence, being vulnerable to empirical contradiction,<sup>56</sup> require constant renewal - for example, by reference to a broader framework of meaning.

Of course, this emphasis upon the imaginary dimension of a negation is not to deny that there will be occasions when the conflict between in-group and out-group becomes overt and violent. Indeed, as I have already noted, on occasions like these there is an increased pay-off to subjectivity in terms of the reaffirmation of both individual and group identity. Once again it is possible to draw parallels with Hegel's analysis of the progress of self-consciousness towards self-certainty. The individual, risking his own life on behalf of his social group, not only confirms his status as being-for-himself, but also cements his identity with the group and reaffirms that the group is *fully expressive* of him. Similarly, in this type of conflictual relation, the identity and integrity of the in-group is enhanced, both in the risk that is posed to its existence and in that it demonstrates, by the very act of putting itself at risk, that it is the master of its own possibilities.<sup>57</sup> However, it should be noted that even in these overtly conflictual situations there is a significant aspect of the identity which accrues to the respective social groups which is purely imaginary. For the many, who do not on a daily basis participate in actual conflict, the threat to themselves and to their in-group is imaginary, and the risk to their lives, through identification with the combatants, is vicarious. Of course, this does not in any way nullify the ability of overt conflict to unite a social group. As I argued above, it does not matter whether a foe is real or imagined, an assault literal or metaphorical, the effect is just the same: in a conflictual relation, the individual experiences himself and his group with a greater intensity than in a non-conflictual relation.

In sum, therefore, it is my argument that a conflict-free society is impossible: firstly, because the threat posed by the out-group threatens the integrity of the in-group; and

<sup>56</sup> For an example of such empirical contradiction, and of the disjunction between expectation and actuality, see Modris Eksteins' treatment of the 1914 Christmas truce, where the British and German soldiers came face to face with those they had been shooting at across the trenches (Ekstein, M., *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, (Black Swan, London: 1990), 176-183; particularly, 180-182.

<sup>57</sup> In this respect, note also Randall Collins' argument that: "The group that faces death together has a special bond. It is a "community of political destiny" of a sort matched by no other. Such groups acquire a solidarity deriving from a "community of memories" deeper than ethnic, linguistic, or other cultural ties [Collins, R., 1986: 156]."

secondly, because in the conflictual relation the solidity of the in-group is enhanced, with the consequences: (i) that the threat posed by the out-group is diminished; and (ii) that there is a pay-off in terms of the ability of the in-group to deliver ontological security to its members.

Needless to say, the significance of these kinds of arguments is not restricted to analyses concerning the possibility of certain future types of society. They are also significant for understanding political forms and processes as they unfold in present day societies, and the remaining chapters will be devoted to exploring precisely these kinds of themes. Of course, it should be stated that Marxist theorists - especially those influenced by Gramsci - are quite aware that understanding the issues surrounding subjectivity is important for political analysis. However, significantly, the Marxist problematic must necessarily restrict the depth to which the analysis of subjectivity can proceed. For example, it is one thing to argue that any viable Marxist account must take note of the role that social groups play in the construction of personality, but it is quite another to maintain, as I do, that there are significant "existential facts" about consciousness which become manifest in social action. Crudely, in order to remain true to the materialist conception of history, Marxist analysis must remain firmly rooted in society, and can afford to have little truck with dynamics that issue directly from consciousness.<sup>58</sup> However, the difficulty, of course, is that there are no grounds for such restriction; subjectivity cannot be reduced to solely those aspects of the self which can be explicated in terms of the societal relation. As philosophers since Descartes have appreciated, consciousness commands its own, and irreducible, aspect of reality.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, to the extent that Marxists do not address this, their account remains necessarily partial.

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<sup>58</sup> See Balbus, I., *Marxism and Domination*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey: 1982), chapter 5, for a discussion of the problems entailed in a Freudo-Marxist synthesis (this is analogous because of the human subject/societal tension).

<sup>59</sup> I am aware that this is still a matter of controversy. For example, J. B. Watson claimed that thought processes are the product of the tiny movements of the speech apparatus; and, more significantly, Gilbert denied that the individual's life is "a double series of events taking place in two different kinds of stuff (i.e., the physical and the mental)...[Ryle, G., 1949: 160]." Nevertheless, in line with my analysis in Chapter 2, I feel justified in my claim that consciousness is not reducible to society.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have been concerned to demonstrate some of the inadequacies of political analyses which do not pay sufficient regard to issues of consciousness, subjectivity and intersubjectivity. To do this, I have critically examined Marxist treatments of the state and also the idea that capitalism will be transcended by a conflict-free society. The grounds of my critique of the Marxist approach have been broadly as follows:

1. There is, in Marxist theory, an inadequate specification of the relationship between social structure and social action, which results in the kinds of dispute that engaged Miliband and Poulantzas.
2. To the extent that the Marxist approach precludes a serious analysis of the nature of self-reflective consciousness, subjectivity is inadequately theorised. Consequently, there can be no satisfactory account of social action in either capitalist or post-capitalist society; and, it follows, no convincing theoretical specification of either society.
3. The Marxist account pays scant regard to the diverse and bounded nature of the social world. Consequently, it is unable to theorise the role that discrete social groups and formations play in the construction of subjectivity. Therefore, there can be no convincing theoretical statement of the conditions necessary for the emergence of genuinely revolutionary and liberatory consciousness.

More positively, I have attempted, in this chapter, to show how the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity are mediated by the experience of a social world which apparently comprises in-groups and out-groups; and I have argued that this has significant consequences for the character of inter-group relations. Specifically, I have claimed that conflict is an inevitable characteristic of the social world: firstly, because oppositions between in-group and out-group are a macro-transformation of the original conflictual relation between consciousness and consciousness; and secondly, because in the conflictual relation, the individual enjoys a heightened sense of the reality of the

in-group, which goes some way to meet the demand of the solitary relation for a solidity of being.

In subsequent chapters, I will continue to explore the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity and their relationship to political forms and processes. However, in contrast to the largely critical tenor of this chapter, I will shift to a more positive emphasis, in order to demonstrate how an understanding of consciousness, subjectivity and intersubjectivity can contribute substantively to a theorisation of specific political phenomena.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RITUAL AND POLITICS

It will be clear by now that one of the central claims of this thesis is that individuals achieve a certain solidity of being by means of their membership of various social groups. In this respect, I noted, in Chapter 3, the significance of the realm of value-orientations, arguing that upon entering this realm, the individual is transported to the very heart of the social groups of which he is a member. In the realm of value-orientations, I claimed, he celebrates the identities which he shares with his fellow-men, and to this extent transcends the bounds of the solitary relation. I argued that this can be expressed in terms of one of the characteristics of a finite province of meaning, namely, as a specific form of sociality. The world of value-orientations is a world of *imagined* intersubjectivity, a world which implicates one's fellow-men. In this sense, therefore, it functions to reaffirm the social identities of those individuals who occupy it.

In my discussion of political discourse in that chapter, I considered some of the implications for political analysis of this ability of individuals to find an imagined intersubjectivity within the realm of value-orientations. Essentially, it was my claim that individuals gain social identities, transcending the solitary relation, insofar as they are able to embrace the themes of particular political discourses. In doing so, they both locate themselves in the world, and signal (to themselves) the identities which they share with their fellow-men. In this chapter, I wish to look at these sorts of issues from a slightly different angle. Specifically, I wish to consider whether the intersubjectivity attained within the realm of value-orientations is purely and inevitably imaginary, or whether, instead, there is a sense in which this is "real", being grounded in processes and phenomena which are intrinsically social, and I want to consider these issues primarily through an analysis of *ritual*.

The first point to make is perhaps an obvious one, that is, that the realm of value-orientations is, like all finite provinces of meaning, a private sphere, belonging to the interiority of consciousness. There are two points worth noting in this respect: (i) it follows that this realm - and indeed, more broadly, the normative sphere - can only be *abstractly* related to a particular social group (usually in terms of an ideal-typical or

average-type construction); and (ii) one must reject any neo-Durkheimian suggestion that the normative sphere is an emergent social fact, and particularly, the idea that society, through its collective sentiments, can become conscious of itself.<sup>1</sup> However, the inwardness of the realm of value-orientations does not preclude the possibility that there might be aspects of this realm which are more than simply *imaginatively* social. Indeed, there is a sense in which this realm is inextricably bound to the social world, in that, as I suggested above, the beliefs and values which comprise it are socially derived. In this respect, one might consider that we are born into an:

inter-subjective world which existed long before our birth, experienced and interpreted by others, our predecessors, as an organized world....All interpretation of this world is based upon a stock of previous experiences of it, our own experiences and those handed down to us by our parents and teachers, which in the form of "knowledge at hand" function as a scheme of reference.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, society confronts every particular individual as an apparently external and objective reality, a reality which is then reappropriated as a stock of knowledge at hand.<sup>3</sup> It follows, therefore, that the beliefs and values used in the realm of value-orientations are a product of this reality. Hence, whilst the private nature of this realm means that the *experience* of intersubjectivity attained by embracing the beliefs and values of an in-group is purely *imaginary*, the objects of this experience, the beliefs and values themselves, are rooted squarely in the very "real" intersubjectivity of the social world.

However, in terms of the interests of this work, there is a more interesting sense in which the realm of value-orientations is grounded in intersubjectivity. It will be remembered that the paramount world of everyday-life, the world of working, is

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Durkheim, E., *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (George Allen & Unwin: London: 1976), 422.

<sup>2</sup> Schutz, A., *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*, (Edited: Wagner, H. R.), (University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London: 1970), 72.

<sup>3</sup> In this respect, see also, Berger, P., *The Social Reality of Religion*, (Faber and Faber, London: 1969), 3-4.

subject to a process of on-going verification, whereby its reality is continually affirmed by the pervasive utility of pragmatic action.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, built into the very structure of this world are the mechanisms of its own legitimisation and renewal. However, this is not the case with the realm of value-orientations. The beliefs and values of this realm are not subject to a pragmatic imperative, consequently, the issue of instrumental/material utility seldom arises in questions about validity. Moreover, these beliefs and values often deal with precisely those aspects of social reality which are not amenable to the pragmatic attitude (i.e., the “why?” questions of social life), therefore, in terms of the legitimisation of this realm, empirical validity is of little consequence. As a result, in contrast to the world of working which attains on-going legitimisation through the efficacy of pragmatic action, the realm of value-orientations must ultimately look beyond itself for verification and renewal.<sup>5</sup>

There are a number of important implications of the fact that this realm is not subject to inevitable, on-going verification. Particularly, it lends a certain fragility to the beliefs and values which are found there, since these are deprived of the ultimate legitimisation that they work (that is, they do not “work” in the same sense as the habitual knowledge of the world of working). Thus, for example, it is possible to bring these into question by the simple posing of an alternative framework of beliefs and values, since this demonstrates the contingency of the first.<sup>6</sup> Obviously, should this fragility be exposed then the ability of the realm of value-orientations to protect the individual and society from the perils of various forms of existential anxiety will be compromised. In the face of this threat, this realm retains its integrity through two related processes. Firstly, by the fact of on-going socialisation, which means that the beliefs and values associated with the folkways of a particular social group are continually reinforced through the operation of the social stock of knowledge and its associated mechanisms of transmission. Importantly, it is this which makes possible the employment of counter-measures against perceived threats to the integrity of the

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 3, 68.

<sup>5</sup> I say “ultimately”, because associated with every particular framework of beliefs and values there will be a set of defensive strategies and concepts (see Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., *The Social Construction of Reality*, (Penguin: Harmondsworth: 1966), 122-134). However, in the final analysis, the effectiveness of these strategies and concepts depends upon the integrity of the framework that they are employed to protect.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., (Penguin: Harmondsworth: 1966), 126.

realm of value-orientations.<sup>7</sup> And secondly, through the operation of *ceremonial reaffirmation*, that is, through collective and ritualistic celebration of the in-group and its folkways. It is to this form of “universe maintenance”, in order to demonstrate the second sense in which the realm of value-orientations is grounded in intersubjectivity, that I now wish to turn my attention.

## Ritual

To anticipate, I will argue that ritual functions to bind individuals to the folkways which define their in-groups. It does so, firstly, because it is an experience in intersubjectivity, and secondly, because it is oriented to a socially defined symbolic order, which it celebrates. Furthermore, I wish to argue that ritual will often have number of more specific political functions: (i) many collective political phenomena, for example, elections, party conferences, mass rallies, etc., can be understood in terms of an analysis of ritual; (ii) ritual can be used to reinforce, but also to challenge, existing political arrangements; and (iii) it can be used by a particular social group - for example, a nation, a political party or a group of striking workers - to construct a unity, to build support, to engender acquiescence, etc., in the pursuit of a particular aim.

However, before exploring these aspects of ritual, it is first necessary to establish a working definition of the term. Ritual, in the sense in which the term will be employed here, refers to celebratory, collective action, which is oriented towards objects, real or imagined, that are, in some sense, set apart from the mundane world of everyday-life.<sup>8</sup> Examples of ritual occasions include, a Sunday morning church service, the laying of wreaths at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Day, and the singing of National Anthems at major sporting occasions. It is important to distinguish between *religious* ritual and

<sup>7</sup> Berger and Luckmann, in their discussion of *conceptual machineries of [symbolic] universe maintenance*, identify two sorts of strategies; namely, *therapy* and *nihilation* [see Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., *The Social Construction of Reality*, (Penguin: Harmondsworth: 1966), 130-134].

<sup>8</sup> See Bocock, R., *Ritual in Industrial Society*, (George Allen & Unwin, London: 1974), 60. It should be noted that the term ritual is also employed to refer to those regular and repeated actions of everyday-life which by virtue of their associated meanings function as a mode of communication (e.g., a handshake, the act of dressing in a certain fashion, etc.). If I use the term in this sense, I will say so.

*civic* ritual, the former being ritual activity which is directed towards the sacred order (e.g., a church service), and the latter being that which is directed to the secular world (e.g., the singing of the National Anthem).<sup>9</sup> I am primarily interested in the second of these forms of ritual. However, I wish to begin this analysis more generally, by examining Emile Durkheim's treatment of ritual.<sup>10</sup>

Underlying many of the arguments which follow in this section is the claim that an individual is able to achieve in a collective celebration a state of consciousness which is qualitatively different from those characteristic of everyday working-life. According to Durkheim, Man is transformed by the intensity of collective experience: "...Vital energies are over-excited, passions more active, sometimes stronger; there are even some which are produced only at this moment [Durkheim, 1976: 422.]." Therefore, there is a reality to collective life, an *effervescence*, which lifts Man above his condition as a mere man.<sup>11</sup> For Durkheim, the first consequence of this transformation is that Man looks to his immediate environment to account for his changed experience. Thus, he attributes to those objects with which he is in most direct contact, qualities which lift them from the world of the profane into the world of the sacred. "In a word, above the real world where his profane life passes he has placed another...to which he attributes a higher sort of dignity than to the first [Durkheim, 1976: 422]." The important point is that the objects of the sacred realm, as a result of their association with the *mana*<sup>12</sup> produced in collective celebration, come to represent both this sacred energy and, more generally, the collectivity. Consequently, they provide an enduring

<sup>9</sup> This distinction is important in modern industrial societies. In this instance, I mean the sacred order to refer to those beliefs and practices that concern the supernatural/cosmological (e.g., in Christianity, a personal divinity). However, it should be noted that it is not possible to equate *the religious* with *the sacred*. For example, in Durkheim's work, whilst the sacred is defined in terms of its opposition to the profane, it is quite possible for the secular world to partake of the sacred. On this point, see Alexander, J. C., *The Antinomies of Classical Thought: Marx and Durkheim*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1982), 242-250.

<sup>10</sup> For my analysis of Durkheim's work on ritual, I rely heavily on Alexander J. C., (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1982), 233-250; and 259-287.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Durkheim, E., *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (George Allen & Unwin: London: 1976), 416-422.

<sup>12</sup> *Mana* is the term used by, for example, North American Indians, to describe the energy that is produced in ritualistic celebration. In this respect, the following quotation is informative: "When they are once come together, a sort of electricity is formed by their collecting which quickly transports them to an extraordinary degree of exaltation. Every sentiment expressed finds a place without resistance in all the minds, which are very open to outside impressions; each re-echoes the others, and is re-echoed by the others. The initial impulse thus proceeds, growing as it goes, as an avalanche grows in its advance [Durkheim, 1976: 215-216]."

link between the individual and the source of this energy, namely, collective life. This means that the emotions experienced in a collective celebration can be reproduced simply by association with the sacred object. Thus:

The believer who has communicated with his god is not merely a man who sees new truths of which the unbeliever is ignorant: he is a man who is “stronger”. He feels within him more force, either to endure the trials of existence, or to conquer them. It is as though he were raised above the miseries of the world, because he is raised above his condition as man.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, by communion with the sacred object, the individual is made one with his society.

In the simple societies which concern Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, the sacred object (i.e., the totem) is normally a relatively insignificant animal or plant. Therefore, it derives its efficacy as a source of social cohesion purely from the fact that it gives material expression to collective sentiments. In these societies, as a consequence of the ubiquity of religion within the sphere of *collective representations*,<sup>14</sup> this object is also always a religious object. However, this is not the case in those more advanced societies where there exist scientific, political, moral and legal frameworks which are relatively distinct from the religious sphere. As we have seen, the sacredness of an object consists in the fact that it expresses the energy of the collectivity. For Durkheim, this sacredness is manifest in the *separateness* of sacred objects, and in the system of interdictions<sup>15</sup> which, by maintaining this separateness, prevent the denial of these objects. Thus, the distinctive characteristic of sacred objects is that “the society which professes them does not permit its members to deny

<sup>13</sup> Durkheim, E., *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (George Allen & Unwin: London: 1976), 416.

<sup>14</sup> It is by means of *collective representations* that a collectivity represents to itself its own collective existence. Collective representations are often material things, as in the case of a totem; however, they can also be abstract ideas, beliefs, etc.

<sup>15</sup> Durkheim gives the name "negative cult" to the system of negative rites/taboos which maintain the separateness of the sacred realm.

them.”<sup>16</sup> It is clear that if one accepts this conception of the sacred then there are secular phenomena which share in this characteristic. In this respect, Durkheim talks of “common beliefs of every sort connected to objects that are secular in appearance, such as the flag, one’s country, some form of political organisation, certain heroes or historical events,” which are “in a certain manner, indistinguishable from beliefs that are properly religious.”<sup>17</sup> More specifically, he points to *the motherland*, the French Revolution and Joan of Arc as secular instances of sacred things.<sup>18</sup> Such phenomena, just as truly religious phenomena, are protected against contamination by the profane: “Public opinion does not willingly allow one to contest the moral superiority of democracy, the reality of progress, [or] the idea of equality, just as the Christian does not allow his fundamental dogmas to be questioned.”<sup>19</sup> In fact, this interpenetration of the sacred and the secular is an inevitable consequence of Durkheim’s wider theoretical stance. All collective beliefs, whether religious or secular, necessarily partake of the sacred, quite simply because they embody the *collective effervescence* of voluntary association, which itself is the basis of social order.

This relation between the sacred and the secular can be further illustrated by considering the functioning of ritual in secular society. We have seen that sacred objects have the power to transform the individual, to carry him right to the heart of collective experience. However, the power of these objects is not inviolable - it is subject to deterioration and extinction. According to Durkheim, the collective representations which constitute sacred objects:

attain their greatest intensity at the moment when men are assembled together and are in immediate relations with one another, when they all share the same idea and the same sentiment. But when the assembly has

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<sup>16</sup> Cited in Alexander, J. C., *The Antinomies of Classical Thought: Marx and Durkheim*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1982), 237.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Alexander, J. C., (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1982), 238.

<sup>18</sup> See Alexander, J. C., (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1982), 238.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Alexander, J. C., (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1982), 238.

broken up and each man has returned to his own peculiar life, they progressively lose their original energy.<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, it is necessary periodically to renew these representations, in order that the sacred objects to which they are attached are reinvigorated. This is achieved through *positive rites* (or rituals) which “retemper them in the very source of the religious life, that is to say, in assembled groups [Durkheim, 1976: 346].” The important point is that this applies not only to those representations which are properly religious, but also to those of secular society, for “...There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and collective ideas which make its unity and personality [Durkheim, 1976: 427].” This is the end to which various occasions of civic ritual are directed, and these, Durkheim argues, “do not differ from regular religious ceremonies, either in their object, the results which they produce, or the processes employed to attain these results [Durkheim, 1976: 427].” Thus, by means of the revivifying effect of civic ritual, the social group is able to reaffirm its collective identity and to renew the sacred character of its collective sentiments.

It is now possible to make a number of comments concerning the intersubjective grounding of the realm of value-orientations. It will be remembered that I have argued that the beliefs and values of this sphere are bound to the social world to the extent that they are derived from the typificatory frameworks associated with particular social groups. However, it is clear that from a Durkheimian perspective these beliefs and values are much more radically grounded in the social milieu than I had previously considered. According to this view, these do more than simply order and legitimise the institutional sphere. In addition, they are an expression of the general effervescence of voluntary association, that is, they *represent* collective experience.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, for

<sup>20</sup> Durkheim, E., *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (George Allen & Unwin: London: 1976), 345.

<sup>21</sup> Note that for Durkheim this applies just as much to beliefs, values, ideals, etc., as it does to material (totemic) objects: “It is, in fact, at [such] moments of collective ferment that are born the great ideals upon which civilisations rest. The periods of creation or renewal occur when men for various reasons are led into a closer relationship with each other, when reunions and assemblies are most frequent, relationships better maintained and the exchange of ideas most active....At such moments this higher form of life is lived with such intensity and exclusiveness that it monopolises all minds to the more or less complete exclusion of egoism and the commonplace. At such times the ideal tends to become one with the real, and for this

their continued efficacy, they require periodic renewal within the emotional intersubjectivity of ritualistic association. Thus, from this perspective, the beliefs and values of the realm of value-orientations are in a very real sense *collective* phenomena. However, the important question concerns the individual's *experience* of this realm; that is, whether this experience remains necessarily private. The answer to this question largely depends on how consciousness is transformed by voluntary association. It has been my claim to now that the individual is always fundamentally estranged from his fellow-man. However, for Durkheim, this is not the case - in voluntary association he transcends himself to attain real sociality. Now, if Durkheim is correct in this assertion, and, moreover, the individual is able to recapture this sociality by imaginatively orienting himself to beliefs and values which have a sacred character, then it is possible that the individual might attain an intersubjectivity within the realm of value-orientations which is more than simply imaginatively social. However, for the moment, I wish to defer judgement on this question, suffice it to say that the transformative power of ritual, deriving from high levels of moral density and emotional intensity, offers perhaps the best chance of attaining "real" intersubjectivity within a realm which is necessarily private.

To date, I have demonstrated that ritual functions to reaffirm and revivify the social group, and that it does so, firstly, because it is an experience in intersubjectivity - one which lifts Man above his condition as mere man; and secondly, because it celebrates a symbolic order which itself represents and expresses collective-life. It should also be clear that ritual plays an important role in the individual's search for a solidity of being - by binding him to the folkways of his social group, which it at the same time reinforces. Moreover, it should be noted that this role has increased significance if one concludes that the sacred character of the beliefs and values of the realm of value-orientations means that the individual might attain "real" intersubjectivity within this private sphere. In general, it is fair to say that ritual derives its overriding importance from integrative abilities which necessarily operate both at the level of society and individual consciousness. This general integrative function can be seen clearly if one

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reason men have the impression that the time is close when the ideal will in fact be realised and the Kingdom of God established on earth [Durkheim, 1953: 91-92]."

examines how ritual operates within the political sphere, and it is to this that I will now turn my attention.

## Political Ritual

According to Randall Collins, there is an organic relationship between ritual and politics, that is, politics itself is ritual.<sup>22</sup> In this section, I wish to analyse some instances where this is clearly the case. Specifically, I will: (i) consider the place that ritual occupies within the activities of a political party; (ii) examine how nation states use ritual to ensure legitimacy in the eyes of their populations; and (iii) in order to draw together some of the ideas developed under the two headings above, undertake an analysis of the functioning of ritual in one particular historical context, namely, the years of the German Third Reich (1933-1945). Having explored these areas, I will be in a position to draw some conclusions concerning the relations between politics, ritual and the realm of value-orientations.

The ubiquity of ritual in political life stems, in part, from two related sets of demands. Firstly, there are those demands associated with group formation and group identity - these centre on the requirement that a minimum degree of identity must be attained by any group which seeks to make an impact on the political stage. Secondly, there are those demands associated with the notion of legitimacy, where this denotes the extent to which the functioning of a social group within a specific sphere is accepted by those who are implicated in this functioning.<sup>23</sup> if one accepts that every group with political intentions seeks some degree of legitimacy, then this concern becomes fundamental in mediating their relation to wider society. The precise nature of this relation will be influenced by a number of factors, which include: (i) whether the spheres within which the particular group operates are ostensibly "democratic" (where the importance of legitimacy is institutionalised); (ii) whether the group is ruling, seeks to rule, or is looking merely to exert some influence over policy making; and (iii) whether the group has access to the forces of coercion.

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<sup>22</sup> See Collins, R., "The Durkheimian tradition in conflict sociology", in Alexander, J. C., (Ed.), *Durkheimian sociology: cultural studies*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1988), 107-128 (see particularly, 115-119).

The important point is that both sets of demands (i.e., for group identity and political legitimacy) will in some degree be met by the functioning of ritual. Consequently, ritual activity is integral to the conduct of political life. Collins expresses this general argument as follows:

The key points are that ritual is the mechanism by which solidarity groups are both formed and mobilized: hence that ritual creates the actors of politics; and that ritual is a weapon usable by some groups to dominate others, by manipulating emotional solidarity as well as the lines of group identification to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others. Politics may thus be described as a struggle by, with, and over "the means of emotional production".<sup>24</sup>

Thus, according to this view, ritual is the lifeblood of political activity - it is a mechanism of both struggle and renewal. In concrete terms, this can be illustrated by considering the place that it occupies in the activities of a political party.

The political party, like all abstract constructions, is an *imagined* entity.<sup>25</sup> However, the representations which constitute it are grounded in the reality of collective and ritualistic experience. In this respect, one might note the important role played, for example, by constituency party meetings and annual conferences, as arenas of collective experience within which members can renew their commitment to the party. Annual conferences, in particular, are highly ritualistic affairs, whose symbolic function is perhaps more significant than any purported decision-making role.<sup>26</sup> These

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<sup>23</sup> Functioning, in this context, refers normally, but not necessarily, to the rule of a social group.

<sup>24</sup> Collins, R., "The Durkheimian tradition in conflict sociology", in Alexander, J. C., (Ed.), *Durkheimian sociology: cultural studies*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1988), 117

<sup>25</sup> That is, the political party is imaginatively constructed out of the typifications and relevances employed by individual social actors. In that individuals act towards this imagined entity - note W. I. Thomas' dictum, "if men define situations as real they are real in their consequences" - complexes of action emerge, which, when apprehended and specified abstractly, signal the reality of the political party for both social scientists and lay social actors alike. In this respect, see also my discussion of the imaginative status of the state, Chapter 4, 102-104. It should be noted that in the following discussion, unless otherwise stated, concrete references will be to British party politics.

<sup>26</sup> This applies certainly to the annual conference of the Conservative Party, which has no formal decision-making powers (at the level of policy-making). It is not so obviously the case

are demonstrations of collective solidarity - addressed to friend and foe, member and non-member alike - which make full use of a whole range of symbolic gestures and activities, including slogans, emblems, staged applause and the singing of party "anthems".<sup>27</sup> They constitute a collective arena within which the ideals and philosophies which are central to party identity can be reaffirmed, and, consequently, they play an important role in defining and redefining the lines of political struggle. Within the collective effervescence characteristic of such occasions, the themes of political discourse assume, for party devotees, a sacred character. Whatever doubts had been ushered in by the contingency of the previous year's events, these will be banished within the heightened emotional intensity of collective celebration, and the party's ideals and philosophies, invigorated once again, take on talismanic qualities, protecting their bearers from the perils of existential anxiety.<sup>28</sup> The general point is that the reality of a political party for its rank and file members is grounded in the intersubjectivity of its collective occasions, and that such occasions perform an important integrative function in revivifying the collective representations which constitute the party.

However, the importance of ritual in the functioning of a political party is not restricted to the integrative role which it plays in occasions such as the annual conference.<sup>29</sup> Whilst such occasions are indeed essential in establishing the reality of

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for the Labour Party, where, strictly speaking, the annual conference is the sovereign decision-making body. However, in practice, the Parliamentary Labour Party retains considerable decision-making autonomy. See Miliband, R., *Capitalist Democracy in Britain*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1982), 69-71.

<sup>27</sup> With regard to American political life, note, in this respect, the 1992 pre-election Democratic and Republican conventions.

<sup>28</sup> I have deliberately exaggerated the reinvigorating and integrative powers of the party conference for the purposes of illustration.

<sup>29</sup> Other occasions include not only constituency party meetings (as mentioned above), but also party rallies. With respect to the latter, one might consider, for example, the stage-managed rally, organised by the Labour Party, that took place at Sheffield on 1st April 1992, shortly before the General Election. This was described by Jill Sherman of *The Times* [02/04/92] as follows:

Music videos, flashing lights, fireworks and streamers were added to the oratory of Neil Kinnock as the Labour party campaign went into glitzy overdrive last night at a mass meeting in Sheffield that produced a strange mixture of pop-concert and self-indulgent political rally.

The presidential style event cost £150,000 to stage and was attended by an audience of 10,000 who paid £1 a head to see their leader in person. The party faithful were

the party for rank and file members, for others - for example, those who have been elected to parliament, or those who, additionally, hold offices of state - there are alternative settings, all manifesting some degree of ritual behaviour, which perform similar functions. For these people, the reality of party politics consists, not only in those activities associated with the national and constituency parties, but also in the traditions, procedures and rituals of the various state institutions. This has a number of important political consequences. For example, Aneurin Bevan observed that the new Member of Parliament experiences a culture shock on first entering the House:

his first impression is that he is in church. The vaulted roofs and stained-glass windows, the rows of statues of great statesmen of the past, the echoing halls, the soft-footed attendants and the whispered conversations, contrast depressingly with the crowded meetings and the clang and clash of hot opinions he has just left behind in his election campaign. Here he is, a tribune of the people, coming to make his voice heard in the seats of power. Instead, it seems he is expected to worship; and the most conservative of all religions - ancestor worship.<sup>30</sup>

This observation suggests two important points:

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bussed to the Sheffield Arena for the performance while Mr Kinnock arrived by helicopter.

That scene was shown on a giant video screen mounted on one side of the stage - the medium by which the pop group Simply Red, the violinist Nigel Kennedy, the athlete Steve Cram, and other stars lent their endorsement to the party.

...[A]s the leader addressed the masses, the shadow cabinet gathered on stage to be presented as a government in-waiting before a grand firework finale to a jazzed up version of *Jerusalem*.

At the end of a day which Labour had spent celebrating its advantage in Tuesday's polls the extravaganza bore all the hallmarks of an early victory celebration.

Also interesting, with respect to party rallies, is George Younger's comment that the annual conference of the Scottish Conservative Party in May 1981 reminded him of a Nuremberg Rally [cited in Young, H., *One of Us: Final Edition*, (Pan Books, London, Sydney and Auckland: 1991), 273].

<sup>30</sup> Cited in Miliband, R., *Capitalist Democracy in Britain*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1982), 42.

1. That the traditions of established state institutions exert an inherently conservative pressure on the key actors in party politics.<sup>31</sup> In this respect, for example, Ralph Miliband argues that British parliamentarism functions to isolate left-wing M.Ps from the radicalism of constituency activists. He points particularly to the conservatism of the House of Commons, and notes Bevan's claim that "...The atmosphere of Parliament, its physical arrangements, its procedures, its semi-ecclesiastical ritual...are all profoundly intimidating for the products of a broad school system who are the bearers of a fiery message from the great industrial constituencies".<sup>32</sup>
2. That the institutions of state perform, in addition to any decision making or policy implementation role, a ritualistic and symbolic function. In this respect, one might note Murray Edelman's claim that government institutions provide an arena for the ritualisation of conflict, within which outcomes are not so much determined, as legitimised.<sup>33</sup> It follows from this position, that politics, *per se*, is largely ritualistic: thus, for example, electoral conflict can be seen as a mainly symbolic and ritualistic engagement; that is, "it engages the interest of a large segment of the population and legitimizes the electoral result and the succeeding administration...", however, it does not "offer a reliable or major means of influencing instrumental payoffs through subsequent legislative, administrative, and judicial decision-making...[Edelman, 1971: 23]."

Thus, from this perspective, the key actors of party politics, for the most part, are engaged in a series of elaborate rituals, all designed for the management of conflict. These rituals differ from those in which the rank and file members participate, and, consequently, the party - and party politics generally - has a

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<sup>31</sup> By "key actors", I simply mean those individuals who occupy positions of significance in a party's hierarchy - (e.g., MPs, Cabinet members, etc.). I do not mean to indicate that these people necessarily have special significance for political analysis.

<sup>32</sup> See Miliband, R., *Capitalist Democracy in Britain*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1982), 42. The traditions and rituals of state institutions are not only a barrier to the radicalism of the Left, but also to that of the Right.

<sup>33</sup> See Edelman, M., *Politics and Symbolic Action*, (Markham Publishing Company, Chicago: 1971), 21-24.

different reality for these two groups.<sup>34</sup> It is this, as I noted above, which lies behind the apparent radicalism of constituency parties when one compares them with their respective parliamentary parties. Nevertheless, it should be noted that ritual performs a function common to both groups, in that it attaches those who participate to particular myths and, therefore, confers upon them a social identity (or social identities).<sup>35</sup>

To date, I have looked at the significance of ritual for the political party mainly in terms of issues of party self-identity and integration. That is, I have considered how the representations which constitute a political party are grounded and reaffirmed, for party members, in the intersubjectivity of collective experience. However, in addition to these sorts of questions, there are also those associated with the notion of legitimacy. In other words, it is necessary to explore the role which ritual plays in the struggle between political parties for the allegiance of a population.<sup>36</sup> Of course, a political party can never secure the positive support of an entire population (i.e., a nation-state). In fact, in a parliamentary democracy, it is normally only at a general election that a party is required to maximise its support. At other times, it is sufficient merely that those who are implicated in a party's actions accept these as legitimate. Thus, in the case of a ruling party, whilst the support of the people might be desirable, all that is necessary is that it is recognised that the party has a right to rule.<sup>37</sup> However, one must be careful not to discount the significance of positive support: (i) a ruling group will, of course, always choose to rule by consent, on the basis of widespread

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<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, perhaps one of the functions of the party conference is to temporarily bridge this gap.

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of the relation between political myth and social identity, see Chapter 3, 82-83.

<sup>36</sup> Obviously, the notion of competing political parties applies only to multi-party systems of government. Nevertheless, in a single party system, ritual still plays a central role in securing the allegiance of the population for the ruling party.

<sup>37</sup> This can be understood by considering how a government responds when an unpopular policy provokes what it perceives to be an unfavourable reaction from the public. The pressure to change a policy is at its highest when public reaction is such that it brings into question the legitimacy of the government. For example, in recent years, public reaction has provoked policy reversals with respect to local government finance (1990-1991) and proposals for the immediate closure of 31 mines (1992). However, in other areas of policy, where it is perceived that unpopular proposals have not produced similar reactions of outrage, policies remain unchanged. In this respect, consider, for example, legislation for the abolition of the metropolitan authorities (1986); and the Health Service reforms (1990). It is normal for a government to be unpopular; much more serious are questions about the legitimacy of its rule.

support, rather than by coercion;<sup>38</sup> (ii) in a parliamentary democracy, parties must be ever mindful of the demands of electoral politics;<sup>39</sup> (iii) an opposition party's ambition to form the next government rests largely on its ability to build support during its period in opposition; and (iv) a party's ideals and philosophies will often make claims to universality, consequently, there is an in-built pressure on a party to attract advocates for its cause.<sup>40</sup> The important point is that ritual is central to a party's ability to generate either support for, or acceptance of, its functioning, a point which can be illustrated by considering the wider significance of the ritualistic occasions, settings and activities detailed above.

I have noted that the annual party conference is addressed to party members and non-members alike. Of course, only a select few directly participate in the proceedings; however, the media - television in particular - play an important role in allowing others to participate indirectly. Thus, addressing a potentially very large audience, the annual conference embodies and disseminates a number of important political messages. Firstly, as I noted above, it is a demonstration of collective solidarity, designed to present the party as a unified and vibrant force one which both commands and affords support. In this respect, those ceremonial techniques which are central to the integrative function of the conference (i.e., slogans, emblems, singing, etc.), find a resonance also in the country at large, where a television audience are addressed, for the moment, as potential supporters, by the collective effervescence which unfolds before them.<sup>41</sup> Secondly, the annual conference provides an arena for the party to advocate its ideals, philosophies and policies, to defend its record, and to point to the deficiencies of its opponents. However, it is not so much the specifics of these activities which are important, but rather how these operate at the level of *connotation*. In fact, at this

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<sup>38</sup> Thus, for example, Dowse and Hughes claim that "nowhere does a ruling group or class for any length of time allow itself to think or to be thought of as ruling by force alone [Dowse, R. E. and Hughes, J. A, 1986: 27]." And similarly, though obviously in a different context, Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, stated that "...It may be all very well to have power which rests on force of arms, but it is better and more gratifying to win the heart of the people and keep it [in Leni Riefenstahl's film, "Triumph of the Will"].

<sup>39</sup> For Parsons, it is this fact which guarantees that democratic government will broadly represent the interests of the whole of society.

<sup>40</sup> In this respect, note Margaret Thatcher's claim that she wished to free Britain of socialism.

<sup>41</sup> Note, with respect to American politics, that the 1992 Republican and Democratic party conventions were seen as important occasions for the mobilisation of pre-election support.

level, a number of related messages (myths) are transmitted; for example, that the party is strong; that it is competent; and that it offers leadership and the hope of a better future. Additionally, key themes are used to signify that the Party is fully expressive of the identities and interests of its audience. One might consider, for example, that the language of nationalism will signify the nationalist credentials of a party, and thereby tap into the national identity of a population.<sup>42</sup> Needless to say, similar techniques will be used to demonstrate that opponent parties, in contrast, do not express these identities and interests. For example, Margaret Thatcher, at the 1975 Conservative Party Conference, stated, in response to the claim that she had criticised Britain abroad, that: "It was not Britain I was criticizing, it was Socialism, and I will go on criticizing Socialism and opposing Socialism because it is bad for Britain. Britain and Socialism are not the same thing, and as long as I have health and strength they never will be [Thatcher, 1989: 19-20]."<sup>43</sup> In general, the party conference - and other similar occasions - provides an opportunity for the party to address a large audience, and consequently, it is seen as an important occasion for the generation of support. To the extent that this support is forthcoming, it is achieved by mechanisms which are largely symbolic and ritualistic.

Just as the party conference embodies and disseminates a number of myths, so also do the activities which constitute the House of Commons and associated institutions. For example, this too is an arena within which the party can address potential supporters as a vibrant and powerful force, and it also affords regular opportunities for parties to demonstrate their mastery of one another. Obviously, this latter point lies behind the importance which is attached to set piece debates, motions of no confidence, and so on, even where the outcome of these is inevitable.

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<sup>42</sup> To understand how this happens at the level of connotation, see Chapter 3, 82-83. Note that, for Stuart Hall and the advocates of *authoritarian populism*, it is often a fundamental demand of democratic politics that a party should be able to express the social identities of its potential voters. See, for example, Hall, S., "Gramsci and Us", *Marxism Today*, June 1987, 21; and *passim* (16-21).

<sup>43</sup> The important point is that this statement functions as signifier for a whole range of associated concepts; that is, it functions at a second level of signification (the level of connotation). Obviously, the important message resides in the juxtaposition of concepts "Britain" and "Socialism".

However, perhaps the most important of the myths disseminated by the House of Commons is one that I have already dealt with; namely, the myth of *democratic process*. In this respect, I noted Edelman's claim that government institutions, whilst playing no effective part in the decision-making process, nevertheless enshrine the democratic principle in their functioning as arenas of ritualised conflict. Clearly, from this perspective, the important point about Parliament is that it legitimises policy outcomes, and the perceived decision-making role of the governing party.<sup>44</sup> In other words, Parliament articulates and disseminates the myth of democratic, representative government - a myth which is essential for a party's legitimate rule. However, the importance of the democratic myth extends far beyond the legitimating function which it performs for a particular political party. It is, in fact, central to the identity of any nation which employs a system of parliamentary government, and, therefore, plays an extremely important integrative role for such nations. This points the way to the second of the general areas that I wish to explore concerning the relationship between politics and ritual; that is, it points the way to a concern with the nation state, ritual and social integration.

I have argued above that the major significance of ritual for political analysis resides in its integrative function. In this regard, I have demonstrated how political parties rely on the reinvigorating properties of a variety of ritualistic occasions for their identity and cohesion, and, moreover, that such occasions play a part in securing for parties wider support from the population as a whole. I now wish to consider the sense in which ritual functions in a similar fashion for the nation-state; that is, I wish to explore how civic ritual is used to reaffirm both the identity of a nation-state and the normative order which forms the basis of this identity. It should be pointed out that these concerns are directly related to the earlier questions I posed concerning the argument that ceremonial reaffirmation functions as a form of "universe maintenance" and, more generally, the idea that the realm of value-orientations is intersubjectively grounded.

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<sup>44</sup> In this respect, note also Miliband's argument that the importance of the House of Commons derives "from the fact that it enshrines the elective principle and thus provides the absolutely indispensable legitimisation for the government of the country; nothing for the containment and management of pressure from below, could be more important [Miliband, 1982: 2]."

It will be recalled that, according to Durkheim, every society needs to uphold and reaffirm at regular intervals the collective sentiments and ideas which make its unity and personality. Similarly, I have argued that the realm of value-orientations, deprived of ultimate legitimation, must look beyond itself for verification and renewal, without the like of which it is vulnerable to the perils of anomic collapse. The point about civic ritual, as I have already suggested, is that it functions in its collective effervescence to fulfil both these demands. I will illustrate this point by considering ritual in connection with: (i) government elections; and (ii) the British monarchy.

According to Collins:

elections...are a ritual by which loyalty to the political system itself is mobilised and demonstrated...Election campaigns [do] operate as a ritual, much like any other: they bring about an increase in the social and moral density, produce social assemblies and focus attention, and intensify common emotional needs by rapid circulation and reverberation. The results of such a mechanism, quite possibly apart from what anyone intends, is to make users, personalities, and the paraphernalia of political life itself into symbols representing group membership.<sup>45</sup>

From this perspective, a government election functions: (i) as a symbolic representation of the reality of democracy,<sup>46</sup> and (ii) more generally, as a collective reaffirmation of group-life - that is, it affords the opportunity for individuals to participate actively in and to recreate some of the myths which lie at the heart of the identity of the social group.<sup>47</sup> Following from these points are a number of important

<sup>45</sup> Collins, R., "The Durkheimian tradition in conflict sociology", in Alexander, J. C., (Ed.), *Durkheimian sociology: cultural studies*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1988), 115-116.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Miliband argues that universal suffrage, trade unions and the various democratic institutions are all necessary for the containment of pressure from below - that is, they have a symbolic function - but that parliamentarism ensures that policy-making itself is "depopularized". See Miliband, R., *Capitalist Democracy in Britain*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1982), 1-53.

<sup>47</sup> For a brief discussion of these myths, see Chapter 3, 82-83. It is also worth considering that the *devotional* aspects of government elections are even more pronounced in those countries characterised by single-party government. For example, in the old USSR, an election

political consequences, the most significant being that government elections serve to reinforce the status-quo: firstly, by the practical and symbolic negation of the case for revolutionary change; and secondly, by binding social actors to the folkways of their in-groups.<sup>48</sup>

It is possible to go further than this simple recognition that government elections embody a ritualistic dimension, to argue that this dimension is in fact the defining characteristic of such elections. In this respect, Edelman's insights are once again significant: the legislative powers brought by election victory do not represent, for the winning party, a significant opportunity to influence instrumental payoffs;<sup>49</sup> that is, elections are not about a struggle for access to unlimited legislative power (although they may be viewed this way). Rather, elections - and the ritual and symbolism associated with them - allow those groups who have sufficient bargaining resources to exercise their power in the legislative arena relatively free of interference from the public at large.<sup>50</sup> A similar sort of argument can be made from a Marxist perspective. It will be remembered that Nicos Poulantzas claims that the state operates "as the organisation for maintaining both the conditions of production and the conditions for the existence and functioning both of the unity of a mode of production and of a formation [Poulantzas, 1973: 50]." If one accepts this view, then governments, whatever their political complexion, act always to the long term benefit of a single interest, namely, capital.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, elections cannot be understood in terms of their

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functioned as a ritual, "public display of personal re-affirmation of the Soviet way of life and the party leadership...[Swearer, W., cited in Dowse, R. and Hughes, J., (1986): 298]."

<sup>48</sup> This is not necessarily to argue that there are no policy implications with respect to the outcome of a government election. But rather that government elections limit the potential for *radical* change, because they embody and perpetuate the *democratic/representational* myth.

<sup>49</sup> Dowse and Hughes pose the question: "does the fact that one party, rather than another, wins an election produce significant changes in the distribution of national resources or is it the case that elections are devices by which ruling groups seduce the masses with illusions and influence [Dowse, R. and Hughes, J., (1986): 299]?" They conclude, after a brief survey of empirical data, that "if people think that by engaging in elections they are working effectively to alter the distribution of resources between the haves and have nots, they may be mistaken". And moreover, that there is inferential evidence "that those who believe elections to be rituals rather than means through which the majority of the population can alter the distribution of resources towards themselves may be correct [301]".

<sup>50</sup> See Edelman, M., *Politics and Symbolic Action*, (Markham Publishing Company, Chicago: 1971), 23.

<sup>51</sup> The nature of international capitalism is such that even where a government seeks to represent the interests of labour, it is very much limited in the sorts of policies which it can pursue. See Coates, D., *Labour in Power?*, (Longman, London: 1980), *passim*.

contribution to representative government, but rather must be analysed with reference to the part they play in securing the conditions for the reproduction of capitalism. Of course, this leads us back to the integrative function of elections, that is, to their ability to diffuse conflict, and bind individuals to folkways which sustain the status-quo. With respect to the management of conflict, the significant point is that elections provide a ritualistic setting for the release of tensions that are endemic in society.<sup>52</sup> That is, social classes are able to engage in ritualistic struggle without threatening the ability of capital to generate surplus-value. Moreover, their very act of engagement in this sphere constitutes a reaffirmation of the “democratic” process, with the consequent pay-off in terms of an increase in social integration.

It is evident from this discussion that government elections, and their associated rituals and symbolism, play an important part in securing and reaffirming a sense of national identity. Furthermore, it is clearly possible that by doing so they contribute to the maintenance of socio-political systems that would otherwise, by virtue of fundamental inequalities, be severely undermined. Significantly, these same two points can be made about the functioning of the British monarchy. According to Edward Shils and Michael Young,<sup>53</sup> the monarchy constitutes an avenue of communication with a society’s sacred values - “it is therefore enabled to heighten the moral and civic sensibility of the society and to permeate it with symbols of those values to which the sensitivity responds [Shils and Young, 1953: 81].” In concrete terms, this communication is achieved through a number of sacred and ceremonial occasions, in which the monarchy plays a central part.<sup>54</sup> These include, for example, the Trooping of the Colour, the Cenotaph celebrations, Royal weddings, Royal birthdays and, most significantly, for Shils and Young - the Coronation celebrations.<sup>55</sup> In an explicitly

<sup>52</sup> Note Swartz’s claim that "...Reconciliation of quarrelling persons is explicitly sought through celebration of ritual...Furthermore, rituals are celebrated which often explain and revive sentiments which sustain a moral order; they induce certain moods and sentiments, they teach men to feel and teach them what they ought to feel about [cited in Dowse, R. and Hughes, J., 1986: 299]."

<sup>53</sup> See Shils, E. and Young, M., "The Meaning of the Coronation", *Sociological Review*, (1953), 1, 63-81.

<sup>54</sup> Note that David Cannadine claims that "...With the possible exception of the papacy, no head of state is surrounded by more popular ritual than Queen Elizabeth II [Cannadine, 1983: 102]."

<sup>55</sup> The undoubted significance of the Coronation as a ceremonial occasion of collective reaffirmation is both enhanced and tempered by the rarity of its occurrence.

Durkheimian vein, these authors claim that the Coronation is exactly the “kind of ceremonial in which the society reaffirms the moral values which constitute it as a society and renews its devotion to those values by an act of communion [Shils and Young, 1953: 67].” The Coronation Service itself “is a series of ritual affirmations of the moral values necessary to a well-governed and good society [Shils and Young, 1953: 67].” The Service and the procession which followed “were shared and celebrated by nearly all the people of Britain. In these events of 2<sup>nd</sup> June<sup>56</sup> the Queen and her people were, through radio, television and press and in festivities throughout the land, brought into a great nation-wide communion [Shils and Young, 1953: 70-71].”<sup>57</sup> Of course, as I have indicated, the Coronation is only one of the many ceremonials associated with the monarchy which bind the nation together in an act of communion. Thus, for example, Blumler *et al* point to the Investiture of the Prince of Wales, and argue that this appeared to bring:

to the fore a profound emotional commitment to the Monarchy, to the representatives of which the vast majority of people were prepared to extend an exceptional degree of respect. Most ordinary Englishmen were caught up in the spirit of the event to an extraordinary degree and communicated their enthusiasm to each other. The feelings about the Queen and Prince Charles which the Investiture evoked, managed to fuse personal with public concerns in a symbolic fashion that Durkheim would have understood.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Obviously, Shils and Young are talking about the 1953 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

<sup>57</sup> Shils and Young sum up their own analysis as follows: "A society is held together by its internal agreement about the sacredness of certain fundamental moral standards. In an inchoate, dimly perceived, and seldom explicit manner, the central authority of the orderly society, whether it be secular or ecclesiastical, is acknowledged to be the avenue of communication with the realm of the sacred values. Within its society, popular constitutional monarchy enjoys almost universal recognition in this capacity, and it is therefore enabled to heighten the moral and civic sensibility of the society and to permeate it with symbols of those values to which the sensitivity responds. Intermittent rituals bring society or varying sectors of it repeatedly into contact with this vessel of the sacred values. The Coronation provided at one time and for practically the entire society such an intensive contact with the sacred that we believe we are justified in interpreting it as we have done in this essay, as a great act of national communion [Shils, E. and Young, M., 1953: 80]."

<sup>58</sup> Cited in Lukes, S., “Political ritual and social integration”, *Sociology*, (1975), 9, 294.

The general point is that the monarchy, by means of the ceremonial life associated with it, functions: (i) to heighten the sentiment which society has of itself; and (ii) to reaffirm the sacred values which underpin the unity of the group.

However, the problem of these types of approach is that they do not consider the possibility that certain sectors of society might be differentially benefited by this integrative function of the monarchy; that is, these views are excessively consensual. An alternative approach, yet one which nevertheless recognises the importance of ceremonial-life, is suggested by Clifford Geertz, when he argues that the governing elites which exist in all societies, whether democratically elected or not:

justify their existence and order their actions in terms of a collection of stories, ceremonies, insignia, formalities, and appurtenances that they either inherited or, in more revolutionary situations, invented. It is these crowns and coronations, limousines and conferences, that mark the center as center and give what goes on there its aura of being not merely important but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built.<sup>59</sup>

This ties in with Stephen Lukes' charge that one:

should go beyond the somewhat simplistic idea of political ritual expressing-producing-constituting value integration...[to] take up instead the fertile idea that ritual has a cognitive dimension..."; that is, that political ritual "helps to define as authoritative certain ways of seeing society: it serves to specify what in society is of special significance, it draws people's attention to certain forms of relationships and activities - and at the same time, therefore, it deflects

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<sup>59</sup> Geertz, C., "Centers, kings, and charisma: reflections on the symbolics of power", in Wilentz, S., (Ed.), *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics since the Middle Ages*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia: 1985), 15.

their attention from other forms, since every way of seeing it [sic]<sup>60</sup> also a way of not seeing.<sup>61</sup>

From this viewpoint, the importance of the rituals surrounding the monarchy is that they reinforce a particular view of society and, consequently, address individuals as members of the society thus defined. Clearly, these processes operate largely at the level of connotation; thus, in the ceremonial-life of the monarchy, the individual recognises himself as a member of a single organic community, as a Citizen of a Nation with a determinate History (i.e., "the Empire", the two World Wars, democracy, freedom, etc.), and as the inheritor of certain core traditions and values, for example, those of the family, of religion, and of loyalty to one's country.<sup>62</sup> The consequence of *naturalising* the historically contingent in this manner is that alternative conceptions of society are denied. In this respect, for example, it is clear that the ceremonials surrounding the monarchy symbolically negate the case for republicanism. What is less obvious, although it is perhaps more significant, is that these ceremonials also function to negate those beliefs and values which stand in

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<sup>60</sup> This should, I believe, read "is". See Lukes, S., "Political ritual and social integration", *Sociology*, (1975), 9, 303.

<sup>61</sup> Lukes, S., "Political ritual and social integration", 303.

<sup>62</sup> It should be pointed out that to recognise oneself in the rituals of the monarchy as the inheritor of certain traditions and values does not necessarily mean that one will accept or act upon these traditions and values. However, this fact does not negate the integrative powers of civic ritual (I am here talking about officially sanctioned civic ritual; that is, coronations, the Trooping of the Colour, etc.). In this respect, the first point to make is that the various social structures which determine the typificatory frameworks employed by an individual will share the cultural pattern of the nation-state as a *baseline of orientation* [see Chapter 4, 110]. Consequently, there will be a measure of agreement: firstly, between the beliefs and values associated with distinct social structures; and secondly, between those beliefs and values held by the individual and those celebrated in political ritual. It follows, therefore, that political ritual retains its revivifying function. A second point to make is that despite the significance of the cultural pattern of the nation-state, individuals do not hold one consistent set of beliefs and values. Rather, these stand up against one another in relations of relative consistency/inconsistency and superordination/subordination. The importance of political ritual in this respect is two-fold: (a) where the beliefs and values celebrated therein hold a predominant place in the typificatory frameworks used by an individual, political ritual functions to maintain this predominance; (b) where this situation is reversed, and "alternative" beliefs and values predominate, political ritual, by revivifying those beliefs and values which are "officially" sanctioned, represents an important countervailing pressure; that is, it functions to hold "alternative" beliefs and values in check. The final point to make is that political ritual, as I have already noted, performs an important cognitive function; specifically, it presents certain aspects of the world as "natural" and "immutable", thus reinforcing "official" definitions of reality [see Lukes, S., "Political ritual and social integration", 303-307; Therborn, G., *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, (Verso, London: 1980), 18; and my discussion, above, of the symbolic aspects of government elections].

opposition to the “sacred values” that the monarchy represents. The central point, therefore, is that the rituals associated with the monarchy function, not only to revivify the collective sentiments of the social group, but also to articulate a certain representation of society, one which benefits those sectors of society that have an interest in maintaining existing social relationships. According to Stephen Lukes, rituals such as these, and indeed political ritual in general,<sup>63</sup> by functioning in this manner, form part of what might be termed “the mobilisation of bias”; that is, the “set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals and constitutional procedures (“rules of the game”) that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others.”<sup>64</sup>

To sum up, I have been arguing that ritual derives its political significance largely from its integrative and legitimating powers. These exist on at least two different levels: (i) in that an individual’s participation in a ritualistic occasion carries him right to the heart of his in-group; and (ii) in that ritual articulates and commands support for particular representations of the in-group. Specifically, I have shown: (a) how political parties depend upon ritualistic occasions for their self-identity and cohesion; (b) how ritual can be used to generate acceptance of and support for the activities of political parties; (c) how ritual functions to reaffirm the collective sentiments which underpin the unity of society; and (d) the sense in which ritual, by articulating representations of society which benefit certain groups at the expense of others, functions as a mechanism for “the mobilisation of bias”. I now wish to concretise some of these arguments in the context of a specific historical period by looking at the part played by ritual in the years of the German Third Reich.

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<sup>63</sup> Note that for Lukes these include “the elaborate and public forms of judicial and quasi-judicial activity [Lukes, 1975: 305].”

<sup>64</sup> Bachrach and Baratz, cited in Lukes, S., “Political ritual and social integration”, *Sociology*, (1975), 9, 307.

## Ritual in the Third Reich

According to Alan Bullock, no regime in history has paid more attention than the Nazi regime to psychological factors in politics.<sup>65</sup> Obviously, Bullock is referring here to the importance of ritual, symbolism and myth in the politics of this period. Indeed, it is claimed by George Mosse that the significance attained in the Third Reich by such things as ceremonial occasions, national monuments, uniforms and flags is indicative of a new style of politics, one which offers itself as an alternative to parliamentary democracy, and seeks to draw a whole population into direct participation in a *national mystique*. This new style of politics is a *secularised religion*, it uses techniques of ritual and liturgy to give concrete expression to the *general will* of society, and allows the masses to participate in self-worship.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, Modris Eksteins claims that the success of the Nazi Party was built, not on the substance of its message, but rather in the style and mood of its politics:

It was above all the theater, the vulgar “art”, the *grand guignol* productions of the beer halls and the street. It was the provocation, the excitement, the *frisson* which Nazism was able to provide, in the brawling, the sweating, the singing, the saluting. Nazism, whether one wore brass knuckles and carried a rubber hose or simply played along vicariously, beating up communists and Jews in one’s mind, was action. Nazism was involvement. Nazism was not a party; Nazism was an event.<sup>67</sup>

The key theme here is *unity*. Nazism is, from this perspective, an epic drama, a performance, designed to intoxicate those who participate, to carry them to the heart of

<sup>65</sup> Bullock, A., *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, Revised Edition, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1962), 379.

<sup>66</sup> See Mosse, G., *The Nationalization of the Masses*, (Howard Fertig, New York: 1975), 1-20. According to Mosse, the exaltation of the general will which characterised the Nazi regime was stimulated by two factors rooted in the nineteenth century: (i) by the emergence of mass movements and mass politics; and (ii) by the rise of nationalism. Nationalism provided the symbols and liturgy necessary to transform mass movements into a coherent political force [see 4-9].

<sup>67</sup> Eksteins, M., *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, (Black Swan, London: 1990), 414.

the collective-life of the nation, which they in their turn revivify. Thus, according to Adolph Hitler, the underlying idea of National Socialism “is to do away with egoism and to lead people into the sacred collective egoism which is the nation.”<sup>68</sup> As a consequence of thus subordinating the claims of the individual to those of the *Volk*, Nazism eradicates the distinction between the social and the political. The pervasiveness of ritual and symbolism in the Third Reich is indicative of the conflation of these two realms - it is an integral aspect of the total politics of this period.

For the purposes of analysis, it is possible to identify the existence of three broad categories of ritual and symbolism in the Third Reich: (i) the utilisation of sacred objects and symbols; (ii) the symbolic and ritualistic use of language; and (iii) various forms of ritualised action - ranging from a Nazi salute given in a we-relation to the grandeur of a Nuremberg rally.

### **(i) Sacred objects and symbols**

In the summer of 1920, the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, although committed to a radical program, had yet to attain mass support. According to William Shirer, it was at this time that Hitler first appreciated that ritual and symbolism could be used to attract supporters to the party. Most significantly, Hitler thought it necessary that the party should have a flag to symbolise its identity, and to fight its battles under. Out of this necessity was born what would in time become the new German flag, a swastika, superimposed black on red and white. “A symbol it really is!” Hitler declared. “In *red* we see the social idea of the movement, in *white* the nationalist idea, in the *swastika* the mission of the struggle for the victory of Aryan man.”<sup>69</sup> According to Shirer, “the Nazis now had a symbol which no other party could match. The hooked cross seemed to possess some mystic power of its own, to beckon to action in a new direction the insecure lower middle classes which had been floundering in the uncertainty of the first chaotic postwar years. They began to flock under its banner

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Bullock, A., *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, Revised Edition, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1962), 402.

<sup>69</sup> Cited in Shirer, W. L., *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, (Mandarin Paperbacks, London: 1960), 44. See generally Shirer’s discussion: 43-44.

[Shirer, 1960: 44]".<sup>70</sup> Indeed, as we now know, the swastika came to represent both the Nazi party and the Third Reich generally. As the focus of the collective sentiments of a nation, it in time attained a sacred status. In this respect, one might note, for example, that the thirtieth article of a program for the establishment of a "National Reich Church" stated: "On the day of its foundation, the Christian Cross must be removed from all churches, cathedrals and chapels...and it must be superseded by the only unconquerable symbol, the swastika."<sup>71</sup>

The swastika is an aggressive symbol, it connotes movement, struggle and revolution, themes which are found in much of the symbolism employed by the Nazi Party. Its leaders had long been aware that the symbolism of violence and aggression was important in securing the support of the masses.<sup>72</sup> The use of militaristic, aggressive and confrontational imagery reflected this awareness. Many of the popular and enduring images of Nazism fall under this rubric, including, for example, the uniforms, the salutes, the serried ranks, the Eagle, the brownshirts and the marching. Moreover, these mark only the beginning of the influence of Nazi propaganda on German life. In

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<sup>70</sup> Within two years the swastika appeared on the armbands of party-members, and on the Nazi standards which were used at party rallies (the latter being based on old Roman designs). See Shirer, W. L., *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, (Mandarin Paperbacks, London: 1960), 44.

<sup>71</sup> Cited in Shirer, W. L., (Mandarin Paperbacks, London: 1960), 240. In this respect, the following extract from a 1941 German publication entitled *On Festivities in the School* (Author: Hermann Klauss) is also insightful [cited in Mosse, G., *The Nazi Culture*, (Schocken Books, New York: 1981), 129]:

The law of the flag rules over our lives. It also stands above our school work.

We begin each section of the school year with a general flag-raising ceremony. We close it with a general flag lowering. The first great experience of a new student is the ceremonial flag raising. The school year ends with the flag lowering on the last day of school. On the holidays of the school and the Volk community the school hoists the flags of the Reich and its youth.

Flag raising is honor, elevation, admonition, and avowal of faith. The eternal expression - assembly, speech, song, greetings, and retreat - is an unfailing indication of the spirit which prevails in the community.

<sup>72</sup> For example, Joseph Goebbels stated that "...Marxism...became great by using terror. It has conquered the street by terror. The bourgeois circles considered it rather vulgar and unrefined to go on the street and demonstrate for their ideals, or fight for them.

But the street belongs to modern politics. Whoever is able to conquer the street will be able to conquer the masses, and whoever has conquered the masses will conquer the state. The man in the street is only truly impressed by a show of force and discipline [cited in Reimann, V., (1977): 79]."

fact, the whole of the cultural sphere became subject to the will of the Reich Ministry for Information and Propaganda.<sup>73</sup> Painters and sculptors pursued “images of muscular beauty, vigour, size, aggression, and healthy Nordic Germanism”, which might be appreciated by “the lowliest Stormtrooper”.<sup>74</sup> Musicians played the music of authentic German composers, particularly, Wagner, who was felt to express the Germanic *Weltanschauung*.<sup>75</sup> And in architecture, the preference was for classical simplicity, but with magnitude, and an awareness of the symbolic potential of open space.<sup>76</sup> The point about all this symbolism is that it formed part of, and enabled individuals to participate in a *national myth*, one which sought, by reconstructing the past, to make the world whole again, and to offer security to a population whose identity and confidence had been eroded by defeat in the First World War and by the weakness of the Weimar Republic.

## (ii) Symbolic and ritualistic language

George Mosse notes that National Socialist political thought cannot be judged in terms of traditional political theory. He argues that those theorists who condemn the vagueness and ambiguity of fascism fail to recognise its theological foundations, and, consequently, fail also to see that it is liturgy and the spoken word, rather than theory and the written word, which are central.<sup>77</sup> In a similar vein, Viktor Reimann argues that National Socialism “was never a doctrine built on scientific premises; it had a

<sup>73</sup> Established in 1932, and headed by Joseph Goebbels. It should be noted that the use of the word "propaganda", if this implies "brainwashing", is problematic within the context of the Third Reich [see Mosse, G., *The Nazi Culture*, (Schocken Books, New York: 1981), 10-11]. However, I wish to retain the use of this term to signify that the leaders of the Third Reich were aware of the political importance of ritual and symbolism.

<sup>74</sup> Facetti, G., “Art in Dictatorship”, *History of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, (BPC Publishing, Bath), (1969), 1442-1444.

<sup>75</sup> The organisation "Strength Through Joy" (Kraft durch Freude) ensured that the German population were subject to the correct cultural influences. Through this organisation, the people were able to hear the best orchestras in Germany play music by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert and Bruckner, as well as by Wagner [see Reimann, V., *The man who created Hitler: Joseph Goebbels*, (William Kimber, London: 1977), 170-181, for a discussion of music in the Third Reich].

<sup>76</sup> According to Mosse, the notion of "sacred space" assumed key importance with respect to national monuments, and cemented the relationship between monuments and national festivals [see Mosse, G., *The Nationalization of the Masses*, (Howard Fertig, New York: 1975), 63.].

<sup>77</sup> See Mosse, G., (Howard Fertig, New York: 1975), 9-10.

primitive party program that offered solutions of actual or imagined problems, such as the racial problem, but only in slogans. Unlike Marxism, National Socialism left the details of how to execute its program open. All such a movement needed were orators to feed the people with these sloganized solutions [Reimann, 1977: 82-83].” Thus, “...There can be no doubt that National Socialism became what it was because of its orators... [Reimann, 1977: 82].”

It is generally accepted that the two greatest orators in the Third Reich were Hitler and Goebbels. Alan Bullock notes “the extraordinary impression of force”, and “the immediacy of passion” of Hitler’s oratory.<sup>78</sup> And Victor Reimann talks about Goebbels’ ability to “bewitch” an audience, and to “set them on fire”.<sup>79</sup> The occasions of their speeches were exercises in collective celebration and the ceremonial reaffirmation of National Socialism. They were an integral part of the national self-representation and self-worship which characterised the Third Reich.<sup>80</sup> Hitler’s speeches, in particular, can be understood in terms of a Durkheimian model. One might consider, for example, Otto Strasser’s claim that Hitler was able “to respond to the vibration of the human heart with the delicacy of a seismograph, or perhaps a wireless receiving set, enabling him...to act as a loudspeaker proclaiming the most secret desires, the least admissible instincts, the sufferings, and personal revolts of a whole nation.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, Hitler was able to function as a sacred object, as a symbol empowered by an audience, reflecting back to the latter its essential nature. In front of the speaker’s podium, therefore, as Joachim Fest has noted, the masses celebrated themselves.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Bullock, A., *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, Revised Edition, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1962), 373.

<sup>79</sup> Reimann, V., *The man who created Hitler: Joseph Goebbels*, (William Kimber, London: 1977), 85.

<sup>80</sup> See Mosse, G., *The Nationalization of the Masses*, (Howard Fertig, New York: 1975), 201-202.

<sup>81</sup> Cited in Bullock, A., (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1962), 373-374.

<sup>82</sup> Cited in Eksteins, M., *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, (Black Swan, London: 1990), 430. It is worth noting that Eksteins adopts a position with respect to Hitler that is very reminiscent of Durkheim. For example, he claims that "...Hitler remains undeniably the creation of his time, a creature of German imagination rather than, strictly speaking, of social and economic forces. He was never regarded in the first instance as the prospective agent of social and economic recovery...but rather as a symbol of revolt and counter-affirmation by the dispossessed, the frustrated, the humiliated, the unemployed,

Of course, it is important not to over-emphasise the significance of the personal talents of particular individuals. The speeches of Goebbels and Hitler (and other Nazi leaders) took place within the contexts of wider ceremonial occasions. Consequently, they depended for their effect, in part, upon the rituals associated with these occasions. Indeed, as Mosse points out, it was Hitler's view that National Socialism should be much more than simply a "cult of personality". Therefore, it was necessary to subordinate the role played by particular individuals in ceremonial-life to the demands of the national rite.<sup>83</sup> Another point is that this emphasis on ritual meant that the specific content of speeches was relatively unimportant, the significance lying instead with the integration of the spoken word into the cultic rites of the occasion. That is, the audience "lived" the speeches, responding emotionally to their sound, rhythm and context, rather than intellectually to their content.<sup>84</sup>

Of course, the symbolic and ritualistic use of language was not confined solely to the orators. For instance, the Nazis also made use of a number of key phrases, which by popular repetition became embedded in the collective consciousness of the nation. Examples include, "Sieg Heil", "Deutschland Erwache", "Ein Volk, Ein Führer, Ein Reich, Deutschland", and the words to the Horst Wessel song. Obviously, such phrases operated significantly at the level of connotation. Their symbolism is the typical mixture of neo-classicism, rebirth and struggle, and mythic German nationalism which constituted the *national myth*. Their prevalence in German life was a central aspect of the reconstruction of personalities necessary for the integration of the masses into this myth.

### **(iii) Ritualised action**

As I mentioned above, Modris Eksteins claims that Nazism was, above all else, action and involvement. In this respect, I have already alluded to the significance of various

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the resentful, the angry. Hitler stood for protest. He was a mental construct in the midst of defeat and failure, of inflation and depression, of domestic political chaos and international humiliation [429-430]."

<sup>83</sup> See Mosse, G., *The Nationalization of the Masses*, (Howard Fertig, New York: 1975), 200.

<sup>84</sup> See Mosse, G., (Howard Fertig, New York: 1975), 200-202; and Bullock, A., *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, Revised Edition, (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1962), 372-373.

types of ritualistic activity, for example, singing, saluting and marching. Such activity is important whatever its context. Thus, for example, to give a Nazi salute is normally to signal and to reaffirm one's acceptance of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. And this applies also to a whole range of other activities, such as: singing in a Nazi choral society;<sup>85</sup> completing a *Land Jahr* in the *Bund Deutscher Maedel*;<sup>86</sup> participating in a *morning festival*;<sup>87</sup> and attending a *Thingtheater* production.<sup>88</sup>

However, it was the public ceremonies and Party mass meetings which really marked the zenith of ritualised action in the Third Reich. In an attempt to anchor their regime in the consciousness of the people, the Nazis, at a very early stage in their rule, had established an annual programme of national festivals. For example, on 30 January, the country celebrated the Nazi's "seizure of power"; on 20 April, there was a festival marking the Führer's birthday; in September, the Nazi party held its annual Nuremberg rally; and 9 November saw a remembrance of the 1923 aborted uprising. Each festival had its own distinctive liturgy and rites, and all were massively structured and sumptuously produced.

According to Eksteins, the *piece de résistance* of this festal cycle was the annual Nuremberg rally [Eksteins, 1989: 428-429]. This claim is echoed by Hamilton T. Burden, who states that "...The events at Nuremberg were the very heartbeat of the National Socialist movement; nowhere else was the true nature of party ideology shown so clearly and so spectacularly [Burden, 1967: ix]." The rallies lasted for between six and eight days,<sup>89</sup> and were masterpieces of ceremony and theatre. They were highly structured affairs, meticulously planned to elicit maximum effect. According to Alan Bullock, "...To see the films of the Nuremberg rallies even today is

<sup>85</sup> For a discussion of the role of choir societies in Nazi Germany, see Mosse, G., *The Nationalization of the Masses*, (Howard Fertig, New York: 1975), 144-147.

<sup>86</sup> The League of German Maidens: At the age of 18, many of the girls of the B.D.M. did a year's service on a farm. See Shirer, W., *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, (Mandarin Paperbacks, London: 1960), 254.

<sup>87</sup> *Morning festivals* occurred on Sunday mornings, and were a nationalist alternative to Christian worship. See Mosse, G., (Howard Fertig, New York: 1975), 81.

<sup>88</sup> *Thingtheater* was performed in an outside auditorium, and the audience participated. However, it did not prove to be very successful. See Reimann, V., *The man who created Hitler: Joseph Goebbels*, (William Kimber, London: 1977), 189; and Mosse, G., (Howard Fertig, New York: 1975), 115-118.

to be recaptured by the hypnotic effect of thousands of men marching in perfect order, the music of the massed bands, the forest of standards and flags, the vast perspectives of the stadium, the smoking torches, the dome of searchlights. The sense of power, of force and unity was irresistible, and all converged with a mounting crescendo of excitement on the supreme moment when the Führer himself made his entry [Bullock, 1962: 379].”<sup>90</sup>

It is clear from this statement, and from those of other commentators,<sup>91</sup> that the Nuremberg rallies were archetypal instances of the kinds of civic ritual which, in the words of Durkheim, “do not differ from regular religious ceremonies.”<sup>92</sup> In the collective effervescence of these, and similar occasions, the Nazi Party and the Third Reich periodically renewed themselves. Such occasions were crucial for the self-identity and cohesion of the party and nation, and also for “mobilising bias” so that the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* became both “natural” and immutable.<sup>93</sup> They represented the apex of Nazi ritual and symbolism, and the final confirmation that “...Nazism was grand spectacle, from beginning to end [Eksteins, 1991: 414].”

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<sup>89</sup> See Burden, H. T., *The Nuremberg Party Rallies: 1929-39*, (Pall Mall Press, London: 1967), 175-193, for timetables of the 1934-1939 rallies.

<sup>90</sup> Without actually attending one of these rallies, it is hard to imagine the sort of impact that Bullock is talking about. I think that one simply has to accept the testimony of those who were present. In this respect, it is worth quoting, at length, from the diary of William Shirer, who attended the 1934 rally in connection with his job as an American Correspondent in Berlin: “I’m beginning to comprehend, I think, some of the reasons for Hitler’s astounding success. Borrowing a chapter from the Roman church, he is restoring pageantry and colour and mysticism to the drab lives of twentieth-century Germans. This morning’s opening meeting in the Luitpold Hall on the outskirts of Nuremberg was more than a gorgeous show; it also had something of the mysticism and religious fervour of an Easter or Christmas Mass in a great Gothic cathedral. The hall was a sea of brightly coloured flags. Even Hitler’s arrival was made dramatic. The band stopped playing. There was a hush over the thirty thousand people packed in the hall. Then the band struck up the *Badenweiler March*...Hitler appeared in the back of the auditorium, and followed by his aides...he strode slowly down the long centre aisle while thirty thousand hands were raised in salute....In such an atmosphere no wonder, then, that every word dropped by Hitler seemed like an inspired Word from on high. Man’s -or at least the German’s - critical faculty is swept away at such moments, and every lie pronounced is accepted as high truth itself [Shirer, 1941: 24-25]”. The other important sources of insight into the Nuremberg rallies are the old newsreels and films. Most significant, in this respect, is Leni Riefenstahl’s film of the 1934 rally, *Triumph of the Will*. For a discussion of its making, see Burden, H. T., *The Nuremberg Party Rallies: 1929-39*, (Pall Mall Press, London: 1967), 94-98.

<sup>91</sup> For example, as well as the Shirer diary entry, there is Burden’s claim that the Nuremberg rallies “are a frightening example of the awesome power of modern propaganda techniques. Borrowing from pagan cults, church rituals, and Wagnerian theater, and other ways of reaching the thoughts and dreams of the masses, the absolute state perfected, in Nuremberg, its ability to dominate man’s mind [Burden, 1967: 166].”

<sup>92</sup> See above, 131.

To sum up, it should be clear that ritual performed a number of important functions in the Third Reich: (i) it was a mechanism for generating and reaffirming the self-identity of the Nazi party; (ii) it was used as an instrument to secure widespread support for the party, and for the programmes which it wished to undertake; (iii) it underpinned the construction of a Germanic *national myth*, functioning to sanctify its constituent themes and symbols; and (iv) as a mechanism for the “mobilisation of bias”, it presented the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* as legitimate, *natural* and inviolable. In general, ritual played an instrumental part in maintaining the domination of the Nazi party during their period of rule.

In addition to these broadly socio-political functions, ritual in the Third Reich also performed a number of functions at the level of the individual. Particularly, it offered to individuals, whose social identities and sense of belonging had been severely undermined by the perceived destruction of the traditional order, reconstructed social identities, which were rooted in the new *national myth*. It did so, firstly, by constructing, reaffirming and sanctifying this myth; and secondly, by carrying the individual to the heart of collective experience and the in-group (whether the latter be the Nazi party or the Nation). As a consequence, ritual - and National Socialism generally - anchored the individual in the world, and, therefore, functioned to transcend the solitary relation. This is the attraction of fascism, it offers truth, identity and a sense of belonging to individuals who are confronted by the loneliness of consciousness.

## Conclusion

To conclude, I wish to summarise briefly the significant points of this chapter. It is my claim that by means of the collective and ritualistic celebration of the beliefs and values of an in-group, individuals attain as near an experience of intersubjectivity as it is possible to get. To this extent, ritual is functional for individuals in that it binds them to their in-groups and, consequently, delivers to them a certain solidity of being. This it achieves through two related processes: firstly, by the simple participation of

<sup>93</sup> See above, 148.

individuals in intersubjectivity; and secondly, by celebrating and reaffirming the symbolic order which represents and expresses the collective-life of the in-group.

The significant points as far as political analysis is concerned are: firstly, that many political forms and processes can be analysed using a model of ritual; and secondly, and more significantly, that the functional relationship between ritual and subjectivity can be exploited for political ends. With respect to this latter point, one need only consider that the attraction of Nazism, as I have just indicated, was that it offered, largely by means of its associated rituals and ceremonial-life, identity and security to a population whose confidence and sense of belonging had been undermined by the perceived destruction of the traditional-order.

In general, the overriding political importance of ritual derives from mobilising and integrative properties which operate both at the level of society and at the level of individual subjectivity. In this respect, my analyses of political parties, government elections, the British monarchy and National Socialism demonstrate how ritual and symbolism can be used to achieve mobilisation and integration at the level of the social group and society. The crucial point is that the efficacy of ritual is based upon its ability to articulate the demands of subjectivity; the solitary relation demands that individuals seek the solidity of being offered by a social identity; ritual goes some way to satisfying this demand.

# CHAPTER SIX: POLITICS AND SUBJECTIVITY: THE CASE OF POPULISM

## PART I: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF POPULISM

### Introduction

It will be abundantly clear that one of the central premises of this thesis is that social action is more than a simple reflex of institutional patterns.<sup>1</sup> However, this has not been to accept that tradition in the social sciences - according to Alan Dawe, rooted in the Enlightenment - which talks about social action in terms "of actors defining their own situations and attempting to control them in terms of their definitions [Dawe, 1970: 212]."<sup>2</sup> Rather, it has been to argue that there are aspects of conscious existence which are irreducible to the social world, and that sociological formulations must take these into account in the analyses that they present. Specifically, I have detailed a number of socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity, and I have demonstrated their significance for political analysis, particularly, with respect to issues of political integration and mobilisation.

In this regard, perhaps the most significant idea has been that of the solitary relation. Thus, in Chapter 3, I claimed that the social world is inevitably politicised, in part, because the uncertainty which individuals experience in the solitary relation - and the more general uncertainty of their relationship to the external-world - requires that they seek the imaginative mastery of the world, something which can be achieved in terms of the themes of political (moral) discourse; in Chapter 4, I argued that Marxist theories of revolution and post-capitalist society are inevitably compromised by a failure to understand that the interest in conflict lies not only in the ends towards

<sup>1</sup> To argue that human conduct is totally shaped by the normative order is to be wedded to an "oversocialized conception of man". See Wrong, D. H., "The oversocialized conception of man in modern sociology", in Bocock, R., Hamilton, P., Thompson, K. and Waton, A., *An Introduction to Sociology* (Fontana, Glasgow: 1980), 23-51.

<sup>2</sup> To be coherent, this viewpoint must commit itself to some notion of an autonomous social actor. It will be remembered that I have rejected this idea, because it requires that individuals / *where?* retain at least some degree of freedom.

which it is directed, but also in the satisfaction of the demand of the solitary relation for a solidity of being; and in Chapter 5, I argued that by means of occasions of ritualistic celebration, individuals transcend the solitary relation, attaining as near an experience of intersubjectivity as it is possible to get, a fact which explains the efficacy of political ritual as a mechanism for the “mobilisation of bias”.

These specific arguments are indicative of a number of other more general arguments about political reality which have been articulated, both explicitly and implicitly, in this work. These can be summarised as follows:

**1.1** Macro-political phenomena and processes are “solely the resultants and modes of organisation of the particular acts of individual persons [Weber, 1947: 92]”;<sup>3</sup>

**1.2** The structure of consciousness is a significant variable in the course of social action;<sup>4</sup>

**1.3** Therefore, it is necessary that political theory concern itself with issues of subjectivity.

**2.1** Conflict and struggle characterise the original relation of consciousness (For-itself) to consciousness (*the other*);<sup>5</sup>

**2.2** Oppositions between in-group and out-group are a macro-transformation of this original relation;<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Note that "the resultants and modes of organisation of the particular acts of individual persons" only become macro-political phenomena and processes when imagined and defined as such. See Chapter 1, 29-32.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 2, *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 3, 86-93.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 4, 117-120;

**2.3** Therefore, in that the social world is built on conflictual foundations, the distinction between *the political* and *the non-political* is dissolved (to the extent that *the political* is about power and conflict).

**3.1** The conflictual relations which characterise the social world are manifest largely in the *will to symbolic negation*; that is, in the necessity which individuals and social groups experience to negate the *foreignness* of the other whilst at the same time preserving the moment of *otherness*;

**3.2** Symbolic negation routinely takes place within the bounds of the normative sphere (specifically, within the realm of value orientations); the foreignness of the other is annulled by its assimilation to the beliefs and values contained therein;

**3.3** Political discourse, to the extent that it occupies the realm of value-orientations, reflects and articulates this *will to symbolic negation*.<sup>7</sup>

**4.1** Institutional, macro-politics is centrally about the pursuit of legitimacy, and the “manipulation of emotional solidarity” to this end;<sup>8</sup>

**4.2** The raw materials of this pursuit are individual subjectivities, constituted in the dialectical relationship between the structure of consciousness and the totality of life-experience;

**4.3** The relative effectiveness of a political discourse or activity in generating legitimacy is determined by how it dovetails (i.e., expresses, articulates, represents, etc.) with these constituted subjectivities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The ideas expressed in 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 are to be found largely in chapters 3 and 4. They will also be articulated in this chapter.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 5, *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, my discussion, in Chapter 5, of the efficacy of political ritual. This idea (and idea 4.2) will also be explored in the present chapter.

It can be seen from these arguments that I am advocating a political sociology which has a scope far beyond that of a traditional macro-institutional approach. Of course, this leads to the possible criticism that analyses constructed in these terms will always lack specificity, inevitably dealing merely in generalities. However, in answer to this, I would claim that it is already clear that this is not necessarily the case: the critique of the Marxist viewpoint undertaken in Chapter 4, and the analysis of political ritual in Chapter 5, demonstrate the substantive utility of the kind of approach that I am suggesting. In order to demonstrate further this utility, I wish, in this chapter, to show how the notion of *populism* can be reconstructed, drawing on the kinds of arguments outlined above. To do this, I will divide the chapter into two parts; in the first part, I will critically analyse a number of existing theories of populism, in order to establish and specify their various characteristic weaknesses; and in the second part, I will consider how it is possible to use the notion of populism in order to understand the "Thatcherite" political intervention.<sup>10</sup>

## The Concept of Populism

The first stage in analysing populism is to establish a working definition of the term.<sup>11</sup> In this respect, I intend to use an ideal-typical, descriptive specification of populism which is based upon an abstraction of the characteristics shared by commonly recognised populisms.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, I will define as "populist", movements and ideologies which: (i) claim in some sense to represent and reflect the will of "the

<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, "Thatcherite political intervention" refers simply to the policies and ideas characteristic of the British Conservative governments between 1979-1990.

<sup>11</sup> This is made all the more necessary by the fact that it has become *de rigueur* in sociological analyses of populism to note the conceptual difficulties associated with the term. Thus, for example, Ernest Gellner and Ghita Ionescu present their *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London: 1969), as "the first organized attempt to clarify the main aspects of a concept which during the nineteenth century and even more in the twentieth century has been more fundamental to the shaping of the political mind than is generally acknowledged [5]."

<sup>12</sup> This type of approach to the problem of defining "populism" is suggested by Worsley, P., "The concept of populism", in Ionescu, G. and Gellner, E., (Eds.), *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London: 1969), 243-248 [212-250].

people", which is presented as being supreme "over every other standard, over the standards of traditional institutions and over the will of other strata";<sup>13</sup> (ii) invoke an imagery of opposition; particularly, in their juxtaposition of the rightful interests and aspirations of the people with the activities of a self-interested minority (or minorities);<sup>14</sup> and (iii) manifest a distaste for the trappings of parliamentary government, and emphasise instead the significance of a direct relationship between people and leadership (being distrustful of the Establishment, and anti-intellectual in their outlook<sup>15</sup>).<sup>16</sup>

The ideal-typical, descriptive character of this working definition is shared by many of the constructs of populism which have previously been developed by social theorists.<sup>17</sup> It follows that these constructs function primarily as methodological tools whose

<sup>13</sup> Shils, E., cited in Worsley, P., "The concept of populism", 244. Note also that Andrzej Walicki states that a belief in the "principles of the people" as opposed to those of capitalism was associated with almost all the historically registered meanings of the term "narodnichestvo" [Walicki, A., "Russia" in Ionescu, G. and Gellner, E., (Eds.), (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London: 1969), 65.]; that Torcuato di Tella defines Latin American populism as "a political movement which enjoys the support of the mass of the urban working class and/or peasantry...[Tella, T. S. di, "Populism and reform in Latin America", in Veliz, C., (Ed.), *Obstacles to Change in Latin America*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1965), 47]"; and that Martin Kilson, in his analysis of political change in Sierra Leone, argues that what defines local political pressures as populist is that they come "nearest to reflecting the political feelings of what we call the masses - the little people [Kilson, 1966: 179]".

<sup>14</sup> In this respect, consider, for example, that Stuart Hall argues that "Thatcherism" - a type of politics which he termed "authoritarian populist" - was organised, in its early stages, in opposition to collectivism and the socialist state [see Hall, S., "The great moving right show", in Hall, S. and Jacques, M., *The Politics of Thatcherism*, (Lawrence and Wishart, London: 1983), 19-39 (especially, 27-34)]; that Ernesto Laclau claims that populism in Argentina consisted "precisely in a reunification of the ensemble of interpellations that expressed opposition to the oligarchic power bloc...[Laclau, E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, (Verso, London: 1979), 188-189]"; and that the American populists pitched their struggle against the railroads and Eastern capital [see Hicks, J., *The Populist Revolt*, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis: 1931), 54-95].

<sup>15</sup> See Worsley, P., "The concept of populism", 243-247.

<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that to emphasise the significance of a direct relationship between people and leadership does not imply a commitment to a specific type of government, but rather finds expression in ways and forms as diverse as the orator's podium in Nazi Germany; in the American populists' declared intention to "restore the government of the Republic to the hands of "the plain people"... [Ignatius Donnelly, cited in Canovan, M., *Populism*, (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York and London: 1981), 37]"; and in the communitarianism of the Russian Narodniki, and their desire to establish the traditional *mir* as the foundation of the new social order.

<sup>17</sup> For example, see MacRae, D., "Populism as an ideology", in Ionescu, G. and Gellner, E., (Eds.), (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London: 1969), 163, [153-165]; Wiles, P., "A syndrome, not a doctrine: some elementary theses on populism", in Ionescu, G. and Gellner, E., (Eds.), (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London: 1969), 166-179; and Worsley, P., "The concept of populism", in Ionescu, G. and Gellner, E., (Eds.), (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London: 1969), 243-246.

purpose is to provide reference points against which actual occurring instances of populism may be compared.<sup>18</sup> However, this approach suffers from a number of inadequacies and problematic consequences. Most significantly: (i) the descriptive nature of the constructs employed tends to preclude any real explanation of the “social roots” of populism;<sup>19</sup> in other words, whilst such constructs might be useful in aiding the identification of populist movements and ideologies, they are of little use in explaining their existence; and (ii) the ideal-typical character of the constructs has the effect of creating a context of expectation which operates to delimit the legitimate field of enquiry for analyses of populism; in broad terms, this means treating populism as either a system of ideas, and/or as the product of certain of the consequences of differential modernisation (the latter approach being less common, often involving the kinds of explanatory framework which are frequently lacking in descriptive specifications of populism).

It is on the terrain of these kinds of problems that the analysis to follow is constructed. Specifically, I wish to claim that previous treatments of populism are flawed by their neglect of the realm of subjectivity; and that to specify adequately the conditions of emergence and functioning of the populist intervention it is necessary to consider how populist discourses dovetail with the structures of subjectivity. In order to substantiate these claims, it is important to consider the following issues: (i) the question of the efficacy of an appeal to the people; and the rationale for the form that such an appeal might take (i.e., in the terms of the traditions of a mythic past, and in opposition to perceived threats to this tradition); (ii) the nature of the experience of populism; particularly, the sense in which populist discourses and structures resonate with an individual’s experience of the social world; and (iii) whether there are consequences of populism that go beyond the macro-political.

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<sup>18</sup> In this respect, they have a different function to my “working definition” of populism; where the latter operates simply as a starting point for a further theoretical specification of populism.

<sup>19</sup> The term “social-roots” is suggested by Angus Stewart, “The social roots”, in Ionescu, G. and Gellner, E., (Eds.), *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London: 1969), 180-196. This essay has the merit of adopting an explanatory approach to the analysis of populism. Other works that do likewise include: Germani, G., “Politicay sociedad en una epoca de transicion”, cited by Laclau, E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, (Verso, London: 1979), 147-151; Tella, T. S. di, “Populism and reform in Latin America” in Veliz, C., (Ed.), *Obstacles to Change in Latin America*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1965), 47-74; and Laclau, E., (Verso, London: 1979), 143-198.

## Three Theories of Populism

As an entry into these issues, I wish to undertake a critical analysis of three previous theories of populism; namely: Torcuato di Tella's, "Populism and Reform in Latin America"; Angus Stewart's, "The Social Roots"; and Ernesto Laclau's, "Towards a Theory of Populism".<sup>20</sup> These theories have in common that they are not merely content to describe the shared characteristics of various populisms, but they seek in addition to explain the occurrence of populism as a form of politics. Their critical analysis will have the following benefits: it will allow the identification of the most significant social factors in the emergence of populism, whilst at the same time demonstrating the sense in which previous theories are deficient as a consequence of their neglect of the realm of subjectivity; and it will provide the basis for the reconstruction of the concept of populism that I will undertake in Part II of this chapter.

According to Torcuato di Tella, populism is a phenomenon which is associated with the underdeveloped world; however, it cannot be explained away straightforwardly as a characteristic of underdevelopment. Rather, the important point is that "the developing countries of today are not only poor in absolute terms, but they are on the periphery of richer, central areas. They suffer from what economists call the "demonstration effect" [di Tella, 1965: 48]." With respect to populism, perhaps the most significant aspect of this effect is the "revolution of rising expectations", whereby the aspirations of the populations of developing countries are raised far beyond the point where they can be satisfied. In this circumstance, argues di Tella, democracy cannot function properly:

Groups lacking sufficient economic or organizational power demand a share in both the goods and the decision-making processes of society. They no longer "know their place".... They form a disposable mass of

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<sup>20</sup> See footnote 19.

supporters, larger and more demanding than any Louis Napoleon would have dreamed of.<sup>21</sup>

It is di Tella's claim that in addition to this mass of supporters, a populist mobilisation requires the existence of an elite group committed to an anti-status quo ideology. In developing countries, this group tends to emerge as a consequence of "status incongruence"; that is, as a consequence of the chasm between aspiration and job satisfaction [di Tella, 1965: 50]. The mobilised masses and the incongruent group(s) complement each other, and the likely political outcome, with other possibilities ruled out by a number of factors,<sup>22</sup> is a populist coalition.

Di Tella argues that the populist coalition tends to be defined and solidified by a radical ideology which draws largely upon the language of Marxism and socialism. This ideology is used instrumentally as a mechanism of mobilisation and social control; that is, as a mechanism to integrate and mobilise both the masses and the various incongruent groups. To this extent, it relies for its success upon the efficacy of its emotional engagement; upon the ability of its concepts to become "sacred words, [the] objects of a belief to which one is committed [di Tella, 1965: 53]."

Thus, in general, the sources of populist strength are:

1. a mobilised mass formed as a consequence of a "revolution of rising expectations";
2. an elite committed to an anti-status quo mobilisation;
3. an ideology of widespread emotional appeal.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Tella, T. S. di, "Populism and reform in Latin America" in Veliz, C., (Ed.), *Obstacles to Change in Latin America*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1965), 48.

<sup>22</sup> Most significantly: (i) the unpopularity of the labour and liberal alternatives; (ii) the absence of an organisational framework for the emergence of a labour movement; and (iii) the lack of emotional appeal of non-populist ideologies [see Tella, T. S. di, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1965), 51-52].

<sup>23</sup> After Tella, T. S. di, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1965), 53.

Of course, di Tella's analysis is not without its problems; most significantly, it appears to be committed to too narrow a view of the sorts of social conditions which lead to the emergence of populism, and, consequently, it is artificially restrictive in the kinds of regime which it considers "populist". For example, Ernesto Laclau argues that to link populism to a transitional phase of development is to accept a number of highly questionable assumptions, and leads one to deny that populism can exist in the developed world, despite the apparently populist character of a number of the regimes and movements which have emerged there (for example, the Fascist movements).<sup>24</sup> However, notwithstanding this over-specificity, there are insights in di Tella's account which have, as it will become clear, general applicability for the understanding of populism. Of particular importance are the notions: (i) that populism is characteristically associated with situations of socio-economic marginality, whether these exist at the level of nation, social class and/or social/occupational group; and (ii) that populist ideologies perform functions which are primarily integrative.

Significantly, both these ideas are to be found in the second of the works on populism that I wish to consider; namely, Angus Stewart's *The Social Roots*. According to Stewart, populism emerges in the context of differential modernisation. In this respect, the social relationship which is most basic to populism is that between "metropolis" and "province".<sup>25</sup> There are two significant dimensions to this relationship: firstly, there is the tension between backward and more advanced countries; and secondly, there is the tension between backward and developed parts of the same country. It is Stewart's claim that populism arises as a result of these tensions.<sup>26</sup>

He argues that populist movements emerge in societies and social groups where there exists both the reality and an awareness of being peripheral to the centres of power [Stewart, 1969: 181]. In this context, the "demonstration effect" is significant. This has its greatest impact upon indigenous elites, and takes the form both of an exposure to the analyses surrounding the modernisation of the West, and an actual experience of

<sup>24</sup> See Laclau, E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, (Verso, London: 1979), 153-154.

<sup>25</sup> See Stewart, A., "The social roots", in Ionescu, G. and Gellner, E., (Eds.), *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London: 1969), 180-181; and 190-191.

<sup>26</sup> Stewart, A., (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London: 1969), 181.

the consequences for their countries of relative economic backwardness. Populism is a response to the eroded legitimacy which results from the problems of economic development; it represents an attempt:

to revitalize integration on the basis of “traditional” values. Initially it is those who compose the movement who are to be so integrated...But in the long run it is a technique of national integration. This attempt may come from those who wish to change the structure of society or from those who wish to preserve it and their position in it which they see as threatened.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, for Stewart, populist movements can be considered as responses to a variety of crises of development. Two such crises are of especial significance: firstly, where a social group, in response to the frustrations caused by the demonstration effect and/or the lack of opportunity for advancement, adopts rapid modernisation as a desirable goal, then this is frequently sufficient to engender a populist mobilisation (consider, for example, the Russian populists) [Stewart, 1969: 185]; and secondly, where modernisation is already underway in a society, populist movements can emerge as a consequence of the current or anticipated consequences of change (for example, the American populist movement) [Stewart, 1969: 186].

As a result of this character as responses to crises of development, populist movements, according to Stewart, have a peculiar “Janus quality” [Stewart, 1969: 186]; that is, they seek to control the modernisation process in terms of the traditional values of their respective societies. This is reflected in the synthesis of modernism and traditionalism which characterises their ideologies. The beliefs which constitute these ideologies have a dual function as “solutions to critical dilemmas” and “mobilizing agents”. In this respect, of particular importance “is the task of mobilizing and organizing individuals who because of their economic situation and/or novel social situation are politically marginal [Stewart, 1969: 193].”

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<sup>27</sup> Stewart, A., "The social roots", in Ionescu, G. and Gellner, E., (Eds.), *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London: 1969), 182.

It is this functioning which underlies the eclecticism of populist ideologies. Common themes include:<sup>28</sup> (i) the notion that social reconstruction should be organised around the institutions of the “people”, an idea that facilitates integration by its appeal to traditional forms; (ii) an emphasis on the “uniqueness” of the society which has produced the populist movement and the situation that it faces; (iii) the identification of “conspiratorial agents” to explain the stress situations faced by the followers of populist movements; and (iv) a rejection of the parliamentary form of politics. However, despite the eclecticism that the mobilising function engenders, the content and meaning of populist ideology is far from arbitrary. Rather, claims Stewart, “it must and will correspond to the critical situations in which the movement’s followers find themselves and will do so the more specifically where the mass *base* of the movement is genuinely homogeneous [Stewart, 1969: 193].”

It is possible to identify in this analysis two central themes. The first is the notion that the modernisation process creates a number of relations of inclusion and exclusion, which can be understood in terms of a distinction between “metropolis” and “province” (or “core” and “periphery”). In simple terms, the idea being advanced here is that modernisation has uneven effects; that it produces, both internationally and intra-nationally, differentials in wealth, power, influence and so on. Significantly, these differentials have subjective correlates in the awareness which social groups have of their relative disadvantage.

The second key theme is the argument that populism emerges in the context of differential modernisation, representing a response to real, threatened or imagined exclusion and marginality. In this respect, Stewart’s treatment of the functions of ideology is particularly insightful, since it suggests an analytic framework which has a scope that extends beyond the purely macro-political. Specifically, his utilisation of Geertz’s idea that ideology constitutes a “map of problematic social reality” and his argument that populist beliefs function as “solutions to critical dilemmas” suggest a conception which recognises not only the macro-political significance of the

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<sup>28</sup> See Stewart, A., "The social roots", in Ionescu, G. and Gellner, E., (Eds.), *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London: 1969), 192-193.

mobilising function of populist ideology, but also that this function is fundamentally dependent on the ability of populist ideology to represent, address and articulate the uncertainties and frustrations that individuals *experience* when confronted by the consequences of their exclusion from the centres of power and influence. Thus, there is, in Stewart's account, an implicit recognition that explanations of populism must concern themselves with the realm of subjectivity; particularly, with the way that social actors experience: firstly, the conditions which lead to the emergence of populist movements; and secondly, the discourses and structures of the movements themselves.

However, these sorts of issues are not explored in any detail; and consequently, Stewart's account remains incomplete. This can be illustrated by considering the relationship that exists between the "social roots" of populism and the specifically "populist" response. It is, as we have seen, Stewart's claim that certain social conditions are basic to the emergence of populism; however, he does not adequately specify the mechanisms that underlie this relation. In particular, his neglect of the realm of subjectivity and its relationship to populism, leaves him unable to deal with a whole series of questions, concerning the efficacy of the populist intervention, which are suggested by his analysis. These include, for example:

1. At the level of individual subjectivity, what are the consequences of the experience of socio-economic exclusion and marginality?
2. What is the relationship between subjectivity constituted in exclusion/marginality and the emergence of populist movements and ideologies?
3. What are the bases of the integrative and mobilising properties of populist ideology? What is the peculiar efficacy of an appeal to "the people"; a condemnation of "conspiratorial agents"; a celebration of traditional institutions; and so on?
4. How do individuals experience a discursive intervention that is based upon these kinds of ideological elements? To what extent do populist discourses resonate with the structures of subjectivity?

Without considering these sorts of questions, the relationship between the "social roots" of populism and the specifically populist response remains purely empirical. In

other words, whilst Stewart's analysis has the merit of specifying the kinds of social conditions that lead to populism, it is unable to demonstrate adequately - despite a treatment of ideology which suggests an appropriate analytic framework - *how* and *why* populist movements emerge.

Of course, it is not only Stewart's account that is undermined as a consequence of a neglect of the realm of subjectivity. For example, precisely the same problems are to be found in di Tella's analysis of populism. For instance, di Tella argues that in order for populist ideology to perform its mobilising and integrative functions, it must have widespread emotional appeal. However, he discusses neither the dynamics of this appeal, nor the nature of the experience of populism, and consequently, offers no satisfactory explanation of the apparent integrative and mobilising properties of the populist address.

A similar neglect of the realm of subjectivity characterises the third of the analyses of populism that I wish to consider; namely, Ernesto Laclau's *Towards a Theory of Populism*. However, in the case of Laclau, this neglect is not accidental; it is, rather, a function of the Althusserian problematic which informs his work. From this perspective, individuals are the mere *bearers of structures*; their subjectivity is constituted in ideology by the mechanism of interpellation ("hailing"), whereby the determinate individual is transformed so that he might live his conditions of existence as a determinant subject.<sup>29</sup>

According to Laclau, it is clear that to the extent that the basic function of ideology is to interpellate individuals as subjects, the isolated elements of an ideological system are unified by the specific interpellation which forms the organising principle of the ideology.<sup>30</sup> In this respect, he distinguishes between class interpellations and popular-democratic interpellations: the former - which constitute individuals as class subjects - are based on the objective contradiction that exists at the level of the mode of production between classes; the latter - which constitute individuals as "the people" -

<sup>29</sup> See Laclau, E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, (Verso, London: 1979), 100-101.

<sup>30</sup> See Laclau, E., (Verso, London: 1979), 101-102.

are based on the contradiction that exists at the level of a determinate social formation between “the people” and the power-bloc.<sup>31</sup>

Not surprisingly, it is Laclau’s claim that the class contradiction is pre-eminent. Consequently, popular-democratic interpellations, which have no particular class content, always present themselves articulated with class discourses. In fact, according to Laclau, “...Class struggle at the ideological level consists, to a great extent, in the attempt to articulate popular-democratic interpellations in the ideological discourses of antagonistic classes. *The popular-democratic interpellation not only has no precise class content, but is the domain of ideological class struggle par excellence* [Laclau, 1979: 108-109].”

In this struggle, it is the task of the dominant class to neutralise the potential antagonisms which are contained in “the people”/power-bloc contradiction. In part, this is achieved by articulating popular-democratic interpellations to the class project of the dominant class; or, more specifically, by:

a transformation of all antagonism into simple difference. The articulation of popular-democratic ideologies within the dominant discourse consists in an absorption of everything in it which is simple differential particularity and a repression of those elements which tend to transform particularity into a symbol of antagonism.<sup>32</sup>

For Laclau, populism emerges precisely at the point where the dominant class is no longer able to absorb the antagonistic potential of popular-democratic interpellations. Thus, “*populism consists in the presentation of popular-democratic interpellations as a synthetic-antagonistic complex with respect to the dominant ideology* [Laclau, 1979: 172-173].” There are two major contexts in which this occurs: (i) where a fraction of

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<sup>31</sup> “The “people” form an objective determination: the people are one of the poles of the dominant contradiction in a social formation, that is, a contradiction whose intelligibility depends on the ensemble of political and ideological relations of domination and not just the relations of production. If class contradiction is the dominant contradiction at the abstract level of the mode of production, the people/power bloc contradiction is dominant at the level of the social formation [Laclau, 1979: 108].”

<sup>32</sup> Laclau, E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, (Verso, London: 1979), 173.

the dominant class, seeking to impose its hegemony but unable to do so within the existing arrangement of forces, uses such interpellations in order to secure the support of the masses for a restructuring of the power-bloc (as, for example, with the case with Nazism);<sup>33</sup> and (ii) where a crisis in transformism reduces the ability of the dominant bloc to neutralise the antagonism implicit in popular-democratic interpellations, and the latter, consequently, become increasingly fused with the class discourses of the dominated sectors.<sup>34</sup> Thus, for Laclau, movements and ideologies are populist not because they share similar social bases; nor because their ideologies display the same class interests, “but because popular interpellations appear in all of them, presented in the form of antagonism and not just of difference [Laclau, 1979: 174].”

The merit of Laclau’s account is that it represents a sophisticated attempt to construct a Marxist theory of populism; one that circumvents many of the difficulties which are traditionally associated with this type of approach to politics (most significantly, class reductionism).<sup>35</sup> However, it is, nevertheless, a deeply flawed analysis, one which ultimately betrays the vacuity of the Marxist problematic which forms its foundations. In order to justify this claim, I wish to examine briefly Laclau’s analysis of the emergence of Nazism - a *sui generis* form of populism<sup>36</sup> - so that I might refer to this specific case when considering how Laclau’s theory of populism is compromised by the kind of neglect of the realm of subjectivity which is characteristic of the structural-Marxist approach.<sup>37</sup>

According to Laclau, Nazism emerged in the context of a dual crisis: firstly, a crisis of the power-bloc; and secondly, a crisis of the working-class. The crisis of the power-bloc stemmed from the inability of monopoly capital to gain political hegemony in the face of opposition from a politically powerful land-owning sector. In this situation, facing the necessity of political and economic restructuring, monopoly capital was

<sup>33</sup> See Laclau, E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, (Verso, London: 1979), 173.

<sup>34</sup> See Laclau, E., (Verso, London: 1979), 174.

<sup>35</sup> For a brief summary of the merits of Laclau’s theory, see Mouzelis, N., “Ideology and class politics: a critique of Ernesto Laclau”, in *New Left Review*, 112, (45-61), 49.

<sup>36</sup> Laclau, E., (Verso, London: 1979), 153.

<sup>37</sup> For different types of critique, see Mouzelis, N., “Ideology and class politics: a critique of Ernesto Laclau”, 45-61; and Canovan, M., *Populism*, (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York and London: 1981), 342-344.

forced to seek a radical confrontation with the existing political system on the basis of a popular mobilisation; with the caveat that this mobilisation could not be allowed to develop into a mass socialist movement. The conditions existed in 1930s Germany for such a mobilisation as a result of the post-war crisis, which, coupled with the impotence of a power-bloc paralysed by contradiction, led to a crisis of transformism and the emergence of a jacobinised petty-bourgeoisie; that is, a petty-bourgeoisie characterised by “the conviction that the struggle against the dominant-bloc can be carried out as an exclusively democratic struggle, apart from classes [Laclau, 1979: 116]”. According to Laclau, it was the specific achievement of fascism that the resultant mobilisation assumed a character which prevented an identification between popular-democratic and socialist interpellations [Laclau, 1979: 119].<sup>38</sup> Therefore, it was fascism which “provided the necessary condition for monopoly capital to make use of a mass mobilization against the traditional system of power...[Laclau, 1979: 120].”

Additionally, monopoly capital was aided in this task, claims Laclau, by the crisis of the working-class; that is, by the failure of the working-class to contest the arena of popular-democratic struggles. This occurred because socialist political discourse had been structured to exclude non-class interpellations. Both the reformist and revolutionary fractions of the working-class pursued exclusively class policies. Consequently, confronted by the crisis of transformism, “they did not even try to link the radical jacobinism of the middle classes to socialist discourse: they maintained themselves in a pure class perspective which led to their political suicide [Laclau, 1979: 128].” Thus, argues Laclau, “...Fascism, in this sense, was the result of a crisis of the working class”; a crisis rooted in “its incapability of presenting itself to the dominated classes as a whole as a hegemonic popular alternative....As a result, the popular interpellations of the middle classes were absorbed and neutralised...by fascist political discourse, which put them at the service of the new monopoly fraction [Laclau, 1979: 128].”

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<sup>38</sup> This was achieved: firstly, by the predominance of a racial interpellation, which allowed the retention of the jacobin radicalism necessary for a challenge to the power-bloc, whilst obstructing its channelling in a socialist direction [Laclau, E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, (Verso, London: 1979), 120]; and secondly, by corporativism, which permitted class interpellations but denied the reality of “class struggle”, and the possibility of an identification between “people” and “class” [120-121].

It can be seen, therefore, that Nazism is, for Laclau, characteristically a form of populism: it emerged from a crisis in the dominant bloc; and constituted a challenge to the existing political system by a new class fraction, on the basis of a *presentation of popular-democratic interpellations as a synthetic-antagonistic complex with respect to the dominant ideology* [Laclau, 1979: 172-173]. However, Laclau's analysis is inadequate both as a treatment of the emergence of Nazism, and as a specification of the character of a *sui generis* form of populism.

In broad terms, the problems of Laclau's account stem from two related sources: (i) the Althusserian problematic which informs his work; and (ii) the neglect of the realm of subjectivity; or more precisely, the view that subjectivity is constituted in ideology by the mechanism of interpellation. In order to examine these problems, I wish to analyse critically the three key propositions of Laclau's account.

**Proposition I Popular-democratic interpellations express the objective contradiction that exists, at the level of a social formation, between “the people” and the power-bloc.**

This proposition contains a whole series of questionable assumptions which would warrant further examination, if it were the sole purpose of this analysis to provide a definitive critique of Laclau's account. In particular, both the idea of ideological interpellation and the argument that a social formation is characterised by an “ensemble of political and ideological relations of domination [Laclau, 1979: 108]” are highly problematic. However, due to the enormity of the task of criticising these notions, I propose here to deal only with the problems of specification which surround the idea of popular-democratic interpellations.

The most significant point about popular-democratic interpellations is that they rely for their specification on the purely *logical* relationship they enjoy with the people/power-bloc contradiction. “To be able to speak of a popular-democratic interpellation,” writes Laclau, “the subject addressed as “the people” must be so in terms of an antagonistic relationship regarding the dominant-bloc.”<sup>39</sup> This is the case

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<sup>39</sup> Laclau, E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, (Verso, London: 1979), 107.

quite simply because the people, at the level of a social formation, constitute one pole of the contradiction between the dominated ("the people" = the oppressed = the *underdog*)<sup>40</sup> and the dominant (the power-bloc = the State). Thus, the existence and nature of popular-democratic interpellations is arrived at and guaranteed by deductive reasoning. However, this has a number of problematic consequences which have a bearing on the analysis of populism (as it will become clear when propositions II and III are considered).

To start with, the status of discourses that use "the people" as an interpellative structure but which do *not* express opposition to the power-bloc is not clear. Laclau's analysis suggests two possibilities, neither of which is satisfactory. Firstly, it is possible that such discourses exist as a consequence of the neutralisation and absorption of popular-democratic interpellations by the dominant-class.<sup>41</sup> However, this kind of conception leads to problems of falsifiability; specifically, it means that references to "the people" are, by definition, ultimately grounded in the people/power-bloc contradiction. And secondly, it is possible that such discourses are mere rhetoric, lacking a specific material basis.<sup>42</sup> However, this is neither to address nor to understand the nature of the experience of the social world, and therefore, it fails as an explanation of the efficacy of "the people" as an ideological symbol (a point to which I will return later on).

A second problem is that Laclau grounds his analysis in the theoretical specification of an objective contradiction (people/power-bloc) which contains as a possibility its own resolution. He also, as we have seen, adheres to a view which states that individuals are the mere bearers of structures. The combined effect of these propositions is to guarantee that individuals are worthy of the historico-revolutionary role assigned to them by the Marxist problematic. *By definition*, "the people" are a potentially

<sup>40</sup> Laclau uses this type of terminology to describe "the people" and the power-bloc. See, for example, Laclau, E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, (Verso, London: 1979), 105-108; and 166-167.

<sup>41</sup> See Laclau's discussion of Macpherson's analysis of liberal ideology, Laclau, E., (Verso, London: 1979), 170.

<sup>42</sup> Suggested by Laclau, E., (Verso, London: 1979), 165-167.

revolutionary force. If popular-democratic interpellations are “reactionary”,<sup>43</sup> - as they were, for example, in the case of National Socialism - it is merely a consequence of the distortions imposed by the class struggle. It does not imply that “the people” are unworthy of their destiny. In effect, therefore, Laclau engages in an arbitrary celebration of the oppressed, ascribing to them a potentially heroic character, whatever the realities of their actual historical struggles.

**Proposition II Populism consists in the articulation of popular-democratic interpellations as a synthetic-antagonistic complex with respect to the dominant ideology.**

The strategy whereby Laclau arrives at this conception of populism is illuminating. Firstly, he notes that references to “the people” occupy a central place in populist discourses [Laclau, 1979: 165]. Secondly, he argues, as we have already seen, that “the people” is related to a specific contradiction, and therefore, is not merely a rhetorical concept but an objective determination [Laclau, 1979: 165]. Thirdly, he asks whether mere reference to the people - or, in his terms, the presence of popular-democratic interpellations - is sufficient to define a discourse as populist. He concludes that it is not, since “...Numerous ideological discourses make reference to “the people” which we would not think of calling “populist” [Laclau, 1979: 172].” And finally, he concludes, therefore, that a populist discourse is one that contains a peculiar form of articulation of popular-democratic interpellations; namely, as Proposition II states, in a synthetic-antagonistic complex with respect to the dominant ideology [Laclau, 1979: 172].

The difficulties associated with this strategy and the conception which it produces are clear. For example:

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<sup>43</sup> By “reactionary”, I mean an ideology that seeks to ostracise and/or subjugate particular groups or individuals.

1. It is a purely rhetorical point that there exist numerous ideological discourses which make reference to the “people” yet which are not populist, since this is clearly a matter of definition.
2. Since popular-democratic interpellations are defined in terms of their antagonistic relationship with the power-bloc, it is not clear how these can be presented in any way other than antagonistically towards the dominant ideology (see Proposition I);<sup>44</sup>
3. Most significantly, there are a number of problems concerning the idea that populism is defined by the antagonistic presentation of popular-democratic interpellations towards the dominant ideology. Particularly, the theoretical and empirical grounds for this conception need to be more clearly specified. In this respect, it is necessary to establish whether it is always the case, as Laclau implies, that commonly identified populisms in fact present their popular-democratic interpellations in this manner; and if it is not always the case, then it is necessary to specify the theoretical grounds for excluding from the category “populism”, movements and ideologies which make their appeals to “the people” in other ways.

Also, if one accepts Laclau’s analysis, the status of movements that begin as protests against the power-bloc - thereby, satisfying the criterion for populism - but become the power-bloc’s dominant fraction is also not clear. At what point does a political movement - for example, National Socialism - cease to be populist? In the terms of Laclau’s analysis, it seems only possible to reply, rather arbitrarily, at the point at which it secures power and becomes a regime.

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<sup>44</sup> One possible response might be that popular-democratic interpellations can be present in the discourse of a dominant class in a neutralised form. However, this leads to the problems of *falsifiability* that I noted when discussing Proposition I; that is, the problem that all references to the people are related to the people/power-bloc contradiction as a matter of definition.

**Proposition III The “popular traditions” characteristic of populist discourses comprise popular-democratic interpellations, and, therefore, express the contradiction between “the people” and power-bloc.**

The major difficulty associated with this proposition is that many of the “popular traditions” which make up populist discourses - particularly, those that might be characterised as “reactionary” - do not appear, in any obvious sense, to express the contradiction between “the people” and the power-bloc. In this respect, the racism and nationalism of the National Socialist movement immediately spring to mind; but one might also mention, for example, the authoritarian strands of “Thatcherite” discourses; the occasional racism of the American populists; and the anti-Semitism which was sometimes present in the Russian *narodnichestvo*. For Laclau, there appear to be two possible responses to this criticism: he can either accept that popular-democratic interpellations sometimes take on a reactionary character, but argue that this is a function of the distortions imposed by the class struggle;<sup>45</sup> or he can maintain that popular-democratic interpellations cannot, by definition, be reactionary, and therefore, where reactionary popular traditions exist, they are merely rhetorical and incidental to the character of populism.

However, both these responses are seriously flawed. Particularly, they demonstrate the unfalsifiability of the assertion that popular-democratic interpellations are rooted in the struggle of the people against the power-bloc; that is, they demonstrate that this assertion is true *by definition* (see Proposition I). This fact has a number of important consequences. Most significantly, it provides Laclau with ready-made explanations for the existence of discourses which are both reactionary and *popular*; namely, that they are either the *outcome* of ideological class-struggle or they are merely rhetorical and lacking in the grounds for an emotional appeal. As a result, the necessity for further analysis of the foundations of reactionary discourses and the sources of their appeal is eliminated. However, the problem, of course, is simply that Laclau’s account is not very convincing. The history of “reactionary discourses” is that they are expressly used

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<sup>45</sup> Laclau makes this kind of argument about the discourses of National Socialism. Specifically, he argues that the ideological elements which constituted the dominated classes as “the People” and expressed their opposition to the power-bloc were present in these discourses, but that they were neutralised and distorted by a specifically fascist, *racial* interpellation [see Laclau, E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, (Verso, London: 1979), 119-121].

by political movements and regimes in order to generate particular emotional states, for the purposes of mass political mobilisation. But Laclau's account requires either that we dismiss their emotional appeal as merely transitory, to be annulled the moment that socialist discourses begin to contest the arena of popular-democratic struggle; or that we deny its reality altogether, arguing that it has no material foundation. Clearly, both these responses are unsatisfactory, not least because they preclude any serious analysis of the kinds relationships between discourse and subjectivity that I have been exploring in this thesis.

A number of points should be clear from this analysis of Laclau's theory of populism. Firstly, the theory is largely rationalist in character; that is, it is derived, by means of logical deduction, from the concepts used to describe a social formation. Secondly, to the extent that it is built upon the logical relationships between concepts, the theory is empirically unfalsifiable. However, this is not to say that it is plausible, since, as I have demonstrated, it suggests a number of unanswered empirical and theoretical questions. And thirdly, the Althusserian problematic which informs Laclau's work leads to a number of difficulties. These can be seen most clearly in the neglect of subjectivity, where the strategy which reduces subjectivity to social structure guarantees that individuals are worthy of their historico-revolutionary destiny. Laclau's analysis rules out, as a matter of definition, the possibility that popular, reactionary discourses might be born in and derive their efficacy from the structures of subjectivity. Clearly, this is of enormous benefit to Marxist theory, but it is bought at the expense of sociological rigour. For example, to deny the importance of psychological factors in National Socialism, to argue that the efficacy of ritual, symbolism and myth can be explained in structural terms, might be beneficial to Marxism, but it misunderstands that Nazism was a *secularised religion*, a "grand spectacle, from beginning to end".<sup>46</sup> In the final analysis, Laclau's theory is flawed in a way similar to di Tella's and Stewart's: none of these properly consider the nature of the experience of populism; and, therefore, they are not able to specify satisfactorily the bases of the integrative and mobilising properties of populist ideology.

Of course, unless it can be shown in a positive way why subjectivity is important for understanding populism, it is an empty criticism to argue that previous theories are deficient for neglecting this area. Therefore, it is necessary, at this point, to outline the beginnings of an alternative treatment of populism; one that draws upon the arguments concerning consciousness, subjectivity and intersubjectivity that I have developed throughout this work. By analysing populism in these terms, I hope, as I noted at the beginning of this chapter, to demonstrate not only that its understanding is enhanced by considering these kinds of issues, but also that there is a substantive utility in a political sociology which treats these areas of analysis seriously.

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<sup>46</sup> Eksteins, M., *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, (Black Swan, London: 1990), 414. See my discussion of National Socialism and ritual, Chapter 5, 149-157.

## PART II: POPULISM RECONSTRUCTED: THE CASE OF "THATCHERISM"

### **Introduction**

The analysis to follow is founded on one major ~~proposition~~ proposition; namely, that populist discourses - to the extent that they connote an apparently inalienable *relative natural conception of the world*, and deny complexity and otherness - represent, address and articulate the various socio-existential dynamics which lie at the heart of subjectivity.

From this proposition, follow a number of secondary claims. These include: (i) that the macro-political efficacy of a populist intervention is ultimately founded upon effects that occur at the level of individual subjectivity; (ii) that populist discourses have a peculiar effectiveness as mechanisms of social integration and political mobilisation, as a consequence of the fact that they dovetail with the various socio-existential dynamics associated with subjectivity; as a result, such discourses tend to be employed where integration and mobilisation are perceived to be the major political tasks; and (iii) that populist discourses, as a consequence of their integrative and mobilising properties, tend to be associated with certain kinds of socio-economic circumstances; particularly, those where the integrity of a social group or society is threatened by increasing social marginalisation.

From these propositions, it is possible to anticipate the kind of analysis that is to be constructed. I have argued that there exist a number of socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity; specifically, the necessity that individuals experience to reaffirm their senses of self; the desire for the symbolic mastery of the "external world"; and *the will to symbolic negation*. The significant point about populist discourses is that they represent, address and articulate these various dynamics. Populism is fundamentally about *belonging*, the sovereignty of the in-group and the sanctity of its associated folkways. Populist discourses, by celebrating the in-group and denigrating the out-group, constitute a mechanism whereby individuals achieve a certain solidity of being. It is the ability of such discourses to deliver *ontological security* to their audiences which lends to them their effectiveness as mechanisms of integration and mobilisation. For whilst such discourses might be employed for macro-political ends, they have their roots in and address the structures of individual subjectivity.

In order to consider this argument and some of its implications in more detail, I wish to undertake a brief analysis of "Thatcherism".<sup>47</sup>

## Thatcherism

The normal strategy for explaining the emergence of Thatcherism is to point first to the socio-economic conditions that necessitated a break with the post-war settlement (i.e., the Butskellist commitment to full-employment, an expanding, stable economy and a strong welfare state), and to note that with the Labour Party beset by a number of internal contradictions it was only the Conservative Party which could accomplish the kind of break that Thatcherism represented.<sup>48</sup> However, whatever the undoubted merit of this kind of strategy, it is deficient to the extent that it neglects the symbolic and psychological aspects of the Thatcherite intervention; that is, to the extent that it treats Thatcherism purely in terms of macro economic, political and social processes. Of course, this is not to say that political analysts do not make reference to symbolism and to psychological concepts and categories to understand Thatcherism.<sup>49</sup> Rather, it is to claim that such references are rarely integrated into conceptual schemata which allow one to understand Thatcherism simultaneously at the macro and micro-levels.

In order to explore the kinds of insights that are generated by an approach that operates at both these levels, and to illustrate the sense in which Thatcherite discourses, as populist discourses, articulated the various dynamics associated with subjectivity, I will adopt the following strategy for analysing Thatcherism. Firstly, I will briefly examine whether the Thatcherite intervention can be considered "populist" in the sense specified by the working definition established at the beginning of this chapter. And secondly, I will explore the relationship between Thatcherite discourses and two

<sup>47</sup> For discussions of "Thatcherism", see, for example: Hall, S. and Jacques, M., *The Politics of Thatcherism*, (Lawrence and Wishart, London: 1983); Young, H. and Sloman, A., *The Thatcher Phenomenon*, (BBC, London: 1986); Cole, J., *The Thatcher Years*, (BBC, London: 1987); Jenkins, P., *Mrs Thatcher's Revolution*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1988); and Young, H., *One of Us: Final Edition*, (Pan Books, London, Sydney and Auckland: 1991).

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Jenkins, P., (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1988).

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Hall, S., "Gramsci and Us", *Marxism Today*, June 1987, 19.

analytically separate audiences; namely, the "committed" and "non-committed" audiences.

Thatcherism was indeed a populist intervention:<sup>50</sup> its discourses were abound with references to the People, and their corollaries, ordinary men and women (housewives), the family and the Nation;<sup>51</sup> it employed rhetoric that was oppositional and combative in character, targeting, in particular, collectivism and the interventionist state, the legacy of socialism and moral turpitude;<sup>52</sup> and, in certain senses, it was anti-intellectual<sup>53</sup> and it eschewed the trappings of representative government.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Thatcherism also exhibited a number of other characteristics which are often associated with populist movements. In particular, its discourses: (i) celebrated a

<sup>50</sup> To illustrate this point, I will quote from some of the major speeches that Margaret Thatcher gave during her years as the Conservative Party leader. It should be noted that these quotes represent well documented aspects of Thatcherism. In this respect, see Young, H. and Sloman, A., *The Thatcher Phenomenon*, (BBC, London: 1986); Jenkins, P., *Mrs Thatcher's Revolution*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1988); and Young, H., *One of Us: Final Edition*, (Pan Books, London, Sydney and Auckland: 1991).

<sup>51</sup> Margaret Thatcher has declared: "Our aim is to let the people feel that they count for more and more. If we cannot trust the deepest instincts of our people, we should not be in politics at all (1980) [Thatcher, 1989: 116]"; and "...But we had - and we have - the great assurance that our beliefs are not lofty abstractions confined to philosophy lectures. They are what ordinary men and women agree on instinctively (1988) [Thatcher, 1989: 279]". See also, for example, Thatcher, M., *The Revival of Britain*, (Edited: Cooke, A. B.), (Aurum Press, London: 1989), 159; and 177.

<sup>52</sup> Margaret Thatcher has stated: "It is the Labour Government that has brought us record peace-time taxation. They have the usual Socialist disease: they have run out of other people's money...Never in the field of human credit has so much been owed (1975) [Thatcher, 1989: 20]"; "Today the conflict of interest is not so much between unions and employers as between unions and the nation...(1979) [Thatcher, 1989: 102]"; and "...What we have seen in this country is the emergence of an organized revolutionary minority who are prepared to exploit industrial disputes but whose real aim is the breakdown of law and order and the destruction of democratic parliamentary Government (1984) [Thatcher, 1989: 191]".

<sup>53</sup> The anti-intellectualism of Thatcherism is tied up with the centrality of "the People" in its discourses. For example, in 1986, Margaret Thatcher declared that "...Conservatism is not some abstract theory. It's a crusade to put power in the hands of ordinary people [Thatcher, 1989: 205]". Moreover, anti-intellectualism formed the underpinning of a number of more specific discourses, including those that concerned law-and-order, education and urban-decay [see Thatcher, M., (Aurum Press, London: 1989), 274; 226; and 228].

<sup>54</sup> This aspect of Thatcherism appeared little in its discourses (presumably out of the need to appear committed to the democratic process). However, it was evident in its activities. In this respect, Jessop, B., Bonnett, K., Bromley, S. and Ling, T., argue that "the state has been Thatcherized through civil service reorganization and politically motivated promotion to key official posts; through the enhancement of Treasury control over all areas of government...through the radical centralization of government power and the assault on local government...[Jessop, B., Bonnett, K., Bromley, S. and Ling, T., 1984: 50]." One might also consider the so-called "Westland Crisis", (1986), precipitated by the resignation of Michael Heseltine, the then Defence Secretary, who claimed that Margaret Thatcher had no regard for the procedures of Cabinet government.

mythic national past;<sup>55</sup> and (ii) employed themes of nationalism and mild xenophobia.<sup>56</sup>

The sense in which these kinds of discourses might have articulated the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity is clear. Specifically, they can be conceived as mechanisms which enable individuals to attain both the symbolic mastery of the external-world and the symbolic negation of *the other*; to this extent, they function also to deliver a certain solidity of being. Thus, for example, to celebrate “the People”, the family and the Nation is to reaffirm the sanctity of the in-group and its associated *folkways*; and to employ oppositional and combative rhetoric to denigrate and marginalise those groups and philosophies that are perceived to be a threat to the integrity of the in-group is to negate symbolically the threat posed by *the other*. In this sense, Thatcherite discourses can be seen to have functioned like any other political discourse, disseminating a number of important myths, constructing “a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident”, establishing “a blissful clarity”, where “things appear to mean something by themselves”<sup>57</sup>.

However, it is, of course, necessary to go beyond this general statement about Thatcherite discourses, to attempt to specify more fully the precise mechanisms that lay behind their functioning. The importance of this task is obvious when one considers that whilst Thatcherism was populist in character it is by no means clear that it achieved popular consent for its project.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, in order to explore more fully

<sup>55</sup> In this respect, Margaret Thatcher states that "...Britain is a great nation. The Conservative is proud of our national past. We still acclaim the scientific and technological innovations to which Britain gave birth and which ushered in the industrial and scientific age....We have given to the world the English language, which is now close to being to the modern world what Latin was to the ancient. We know that our literature is a general inspiration. We rejoice that Britain is still respected in all free countries as the "Mother of Parliaments" and the custodian of the principle of the rule of law [Thatcher, 1989: 84]."

<sup>56</sup> These discourses were utilised most significantly to make the case for immigration controls. For example, in 1978, Margaret Thatcher claimed that "the British character has done so much for democracy, for law, and done so much throughout the world, that if there is a fear that it might be swamped, people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in. So if you want good race relations, you have got to allay people's fears on numbers [cited in Young, H. and Sloman, A., 1986: 87, (footnote)]."

<sup>57</sup> Barthes, R., *Mythologies*, (Paladin, London: 1973), 156. See above, Chapter 3, 82-83; and Chapter 5, 139-141.

<sup>58</sup> The evidence seems to suggest that people's reaction to Thatcherism was decidedly ambivalent. This can be illustrated in a number of different ways: (i) in the three general

the sense in which Thatcherite discourses articulated the subjectivities of their audiences, I wish to examine, as I stated above, their relationship to the committed and non-committed audiences.

## The Committed Audience

To anticipate, I wish to argue that it is not possible to understand the successful genesis of Thatcherism without understanding the sense in which its discourses both represented and addressed the hopes, fears and common-sense of its advocates. To illustrate this point, I will focus upon the authoritarian aspects of Thatcherism, and consider their relationship to the biography and psychology of Margaret Thatcher. By doing so, I hope to demonstrate, amongst other things, that the macro-political efficacy of a political intervention is founded, at least in part, on effects which are generated at the level of individual subjectivity.

According to Stuart Hall, the authoritarianism of Thatcherism was manifest in its advocacy of tougher policies on law and order; a stringent industrial relations policy; tighter controls on immigration; and an end to moral lassitude.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Andrew Belsey argues that the authoritarian aspect of Thatcherism was characterised by a commitment to: (i) strong government; (ii) social authoritarianism; (iii) a disciplined society; (iv) hierarchy and subordination; and (v) the nation.<sup>60</sup> The similarity between

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elections that the Conservative Party fought under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, it never gained more than half of the popular vote; (ii) it is clear that many Conservative voters were not committed to the Thatcherite project; for example, with respect to the 1987 general election, Ivor Crewe points out that had voters supported the party they preferred on the issues they claimed that counted, then the Labour Party would have achieved victory [Ivor Crewe, *The Guardian*, 16/06/87]; (iii) the Conservative Party was unable to translate its dominance of national elections (i.e., 1979, 1983 and 1987) into general dominance of elections; for example, the Conservatives performed relatively badly in the shire council elections of 1985 and 1989, in the provincial and metropolitan council elections of 1986 and 1990, in the European elections of 1985 and 1989, and in numerous by-elections; (iv) it is possible to identify a number of areas of political contestation that proved particularly resistant to the Thatcherite message; for example, the Community Charge (a system of local government taxation); the National Health Service; and the issue of elected metropolitan authorities; and (v) in *The Guardian* newspaper's average of polls index, the Conservative Party, between the years of 1979-1990, at no time gained the support of more than 50% of the population [see Birch, H., McDermott, Q. and McNay, M., (Eds.), *The Thatcher Legacy*, The Guardian Collection: No. 3, (The Guardian: 1990): 61].

<sup>59</sup> See Hall, S. and Jacques, M., *The Politics of Thatcherism*, (Lawrence and Wishart, London: 1983), *passim*.

<sup>60</sup> Belsey, A., "The New Right, social order and civil liberties", in Levitas, R., (Ed.), *Ideology of the New Right*, (Polity Press, Cambridge: 1986), 169-197.

the attitudes that underpinned these themes and those that dominated Thatcher's childhood is striking. In this respect, her biographers stress the austerity and asceticism of her early years, emphasising, in particular, the formative influence of her Methodist father, Alf Roberts; it was he who taught the young Margaret the values of duty, patriotism, hard work, self-help and thrift. "We were Methodists," she later declared, "and Methodist means method...There were certain things you just didn't do, and that was that....Duty to the church, duties to your neighbour and conscientiousness were continually emphasised."<sup>61</sup> —  
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Needless to say, this simple correspondence between the attitudes and philosophies which dominated Margaret Thatcher's childhood and the broad themes that underpinned the authoritarian aspect of the Thatcherite intervention is not necessarily a causal relationship. However, it should be noted, that for some commentators it is precisely this; for example, Sir William Pile, the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Education and Science from 1970-1974, claims that "...Everything she did, and that included all her public policies and her private discussions of those policies, sprang not from her intellect, nor were they inherited from a manifesto of somebody else's intellect, but from her own character. I've known no minister whose policies were the man to the same extent. Everything she did, all her preferences, all her prejudices sprang from innate preferences and prejudices and the character of her upbringing and her genetic endowment."<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, it is probably wise to treat these claims, and the more general view that Thatcherism was born in the character of Margaret Thatcher, with caution, not least because the absence of counterfactuals means that questions concerning the causal significance of the actions and philosophies of particular individuals to the course of history are ultimately intractable, therefore, leaving us unable to rule out the possibility that "Thatcherism" might have existed without Thatcher. Moreover, there are also empirical reasons for doubting the validity of Pile's claims; for example, it is quite possible to find instances

<sup>61</sup> Cited in Young, H., *One of Us: Final Edition*, (Pan Books, London, Sydney and Auckland: 1991), 6.

<sup>62</sup> Cited in Young, H. and Sloman, A., *The Thatcher Phenomenon*, (BBC, London: 1986), 12-13.

where Thatcher made decisions on the basis of pragmatic rather than “ideological” considerations.<sup>63</sup>

Instead, I wish to ask a different question about the similarity between the world-view of Margaret Thatcher and the authoritarianism of the Thatcherite project. Specifically, I wish to examine whether there is a sense in which this similarity is *functional* for Thatcher at the level of subjectivity; that is, I wish to consider the sense in which there is a pay-off to subjectivity in a discourse which expresses and represents the attitudes and beliefs comprised therein (i.e., within subjectivity).

As a starting point to this analysis, I will make a number of comments about the nature and functioning of an authoritarian world-view.<sup>64</sup> It will be recalled that, in Chapter 2, I described a mode of being which Sartre termed *the spirit of seriousness*.<sup>65</sup> This refers to an individual’s attitude towards the world, where he assigns a transcendent and objective reality to the beliefs, values, rights and duties which seemingly govern his behaviour. In the serious attitude, the individual seeks, and apparently achieves, the assurity and solidity of being that is demanded by the solitary relation; he finds reality outside himself, in a social identity which is defined by a network of rights and duties. The important point is that the authoritarian world-view is precisely an example of *the spirit of seriousness*; it employs an absolutist morality; it emphasises the immutability of the world; it is intolerant of difference; and, as we have seen, it makes use of notions of rights and duties. Moreover, it also functions like *the spirit of seriousness*; that is, it functions to locate the individual in the world; to define him; and to confer upon him a solidity of being.

However, the authoritarian world-view is also brittle; occupying the realm of value-orientations it is deprived of the ultimate legitimisation that it works; its absolutism leaves it unable to assimilate the threat posed by alternative conceptions of the world; and it is undermined by the simple existence of those forms of behaviour that it denies.

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<sup>63</sup> Most famously, perhaps, in 1990, when she stood down from the second ballot of the Conservative Party leadership election, despite her declared intention to fight on.

<sup>64</sup> An ascetic, austere world-view, which stresses the importance of duty, hard-work and thrift; and which preaches an absolutist morality, where retribution is the normal punishment for transgression. Needless to say, such a world-view occupies the realm of value-orientations.

<sup>65</sup> See Chapter 2, 57-58.

The significance of these comments becomes clear when one considers the challenges that authoritarianism faced in the early to mid-1970s. Most significantly, there was the memory of the 1960s, a decade of enormous social upheaval - when many of the traditional structures of society had been uprooted and replaced by new ones - in the context of which authoritarianism was anachronistic and periphery, apparently seeking only to limit the potential for human self-fulfilment. Moreover, a whole series of social phenomena - for example, the perceived "explosion" in crime; "sexual promiscuity"; racial tension; the decline of Britain as a world power - provided on-going testament to both the contingency of the authoritarian world-view, and the *otherness* of the existent social order.<sup>66</sup> The consequence of these sorts of challenge is that the taken-for-grantedness of the authoritarian world-view is undermined. In turn, this diminishes its efficacy as a tool for the symbolic mastery of the world, and threatens the integrity of the social identities that individuals gain when they enter the realm of authoritarian beliefs and values.

In the light of these arguments, it is easy to see how the authoritarianism of Thatcherism functioned in relation to the world-view of Margaret Thatcher. Specifically, the authoritarian discourses of Thatcherism: (i) *expressed* a necessity to reaffirm a world-view that had apparently been left behind by the course of history; to this extent, they also articulated the deeper need for the reaffirmation of the self; (ii) *expressed* a necessity to negate symbolically *the other*, in order that the threat posed by the existence of forms of behaviour denied by authoritarianism might be managed; to this extent, they also articulated *the will to symbolic negation*; (iii) *functioned* to reaffirm the authoritarian *world-view*: - (a) by the continued reaffirmation and repetition of central themes; (b) by the symbolic negation of *the other* (see (ii), above); (c) by operating on the terrain of the breakdown in the authoritarian view, in order to reconstruct this in favour of authoritarianism;<sup>67</sup> with the consequence that this viewpoint regained the ground that it had lost in the 1960s; and (d) by returning authoritarianism to the centre political stage, where it became enshrined in various policy decisions; - and (iv) to the extent that (iii) had been achieved, *functioned* to

<sup>66</sup> Note the similarity of this argument to that made concerning the emergence of Nazism in Germany. See Chapter 5, 149-157.

<sup>67</sup> In this respect, note Hall's claim that every moment of crisis is also a moment of reconstruction. See Hall, S., "Gramsci and us", *Marxism Today*, June 1987, *passim*.

reaffirm the social identity which is achieved when occupying the realm of authoritarian beliefs and values.

Thus, it can be seen from these arguments that the authoritarian discourses of Thatcherism had a reaffirmatory function both with respect to the authoritarian world-view that was so much part of Thatcher's character, and with respect to her *self* more generally. Of course, the important point is that these sorts of arguments can be applied equally to all those others who were committed to the Thatcherite project. In fact, there are reasons for supposing that they have even more pertinence when applied to the supporters of Thatcherism than they do when applied to Thatcher herself.<sup>68</sup>

The Conservative Party, in the months preceding the election of Thatcher to its leadership, was experiencing something of a crisis. It had lost three of the four previous general elections; in its previous term in office, it had presided over four years of economic turmoil and social division; its leader, Edward Heath, was unpopular in both the country and the parliamentary party;<sup>69</sup> and it was divided on matters of policy and style.<sup>70</sup> In this sort of context, the ability of a party to bind its members to the ideals and philosophies that are central to its identity is diminished; and consequently, so is its capacity to generate a sense of belonging amongst its supporters; a sense that they are engaged in a collective endeavour - with the *frisson* that this provides - to create a society in their own image. In this respect, the discourses of Thatcherism - particularly, those that were authoritarian in character - performed a revivifying function. They constituted a mechanism by which the collective sentiments of the Conservative Party were renewed and thereby created the conditions that allowed the party faithful to experience their membership of the party with a greater intensity, with the consequence that their social identities, and the beliefs and values associated with these, were solidified.

In fact, Thatcherism, in general, performed a revivifying and integrating function for the Conservative Party (the committed audience). Thus, for example, Edward du Cann

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<sup>68</sup> The supporters of Thatcherism did not, as a rule, have the *frisson* of everyday political life to deliver to them *ontological security*, as did Margaret Thatcher.

<sup>69</sup> See Cole, J., *The Thatcher Years*, (BBC, London: 1987), 8.

greeted Thatcher's (1975) leadership election victory with the comment that "...We have a new and rather exciting leader. Mrs Thatcher will make the Tory Party distinctive"; and he claimed that her election signalled "a new start, recreating, refreshing and reinvigorating."<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Barbara Castle, in her diaries, noted that "...Margaret's election has stirred up her own side wonderfully: all her backbenchers perform like knights jousting at a tourney for a lady's favours, showing off their paces by making an unholy row at every opportunity over everything the government does."<sup>72</sup> The Durkheimian parallels here are clear: Thatcherism, at least in its early stages, was, for the committed, a moment of *collective ferment*; a moment when the Conservative Party was led into a closer relationship with itself, and its members lived their politics with an intensity that monopolised their minds to the more or less complete exclusion of egoism and the everyday.<sup>73</sup> Thus, Thatcherite discourses functioned to transport the committed audience to the heart of collective life and, consequently, reaffirmed both the beliefs and values that constituted their world-view, and their social identities more generally. The early success of Thatcherism, therefore, lay in its ability to unite a disunited party, in a manner that enabled its supporters to transcend the isolation and estrangement of the solitary relation.

### **The Non-Committed Audience**

In the preceding analysis, I have used a conceptual framework that refers both to the micro-level of social actors and the macro-level of political forms and processes for its explanations. Specifically, I have demonstrated that Thatcherite discourses addressed and articulated the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity, as they existed for the committed audience; and that there occurred, as a result, certainly in the early period of Thatcherism, a revival of the Conservative Party; a revival which fed back into the subjectivities of the committed audience, in the sense of an increase in their experience of ontological security.

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<sup>70</sup> Thus, Harold Wilson talked about a parliament "without any identifiably coherent Opposition, judged either by measures or men [cited in *The Times*, 01/02/75]."

<sup>71</sup> Cited in *The Times*, 12/02/75.

<sup>72</sup> Cited in Young, H. and Sloman, A., *The Thatcher Phenomenon*, (BBC, London: 1986), 37.

In making these claims, I am adding substance to the more general arguments that have been developed concerning the mechanisms that enable individuals to escape the spectre of existential anxiety. In this respect, I have pointed to the significance of: (i) the in-group, and I have claimed that individuals gain social identities in relation to its typifications and relevances; and that these identities are enhanced in the conflictual relation, because, in conflict, the in-group is more real to individuals, and consequently, they are more real to themselves; (ii) the realm of value-orientations, a realm of imagined intersubjectivity, upon entry of which individuals are transported to the heart of collective life, where they celebrate the identities that they share with their fellow-men; and (iii) occasions of ritualistic celebration, which afford, in their collective effervescence, the greatest chance that people have to transcend the solitary relation.<sup>74</sup>

Clearly, the Thatcherite intervention seems readily understandable in these kinds of terms. For example, one might consider that Thatcherite discourses constructed and addressed a mythic in-group that comprised “the People” or “the Nation”, and juxtaposed this group to a number of out-groups - for instance, the “loony-left”, the “law-breakers” and the “flood of immigrants” - which were portrayed as threatening its integrity; or that in its authoritarian aspect, it manifested a rigid and well-defined set of moral precepts, which ensured the transparency of the social-world; and which could be called upon to effect the symbolic negation of *the other*. However, whilst this kind of analytical framework might be pertinent for understanding the relationship between Thatcherism and the committed audience, it is less clear how it is useful for understanding the relationship between Thatcherism and *the non-committed audience*. Quite simply, it is not obvious how the Thatcherite intervention might have aided those individuals who were not explicitly committed to its agenda to escape the fears associated with existential anxiety. For example, it does not appear plausible to suggest that non-committed individuals will have gained enhanced social identities

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<sup>73</sup> After Durkheim, E., *Sociology and Philosophy*, (Cohen and West Ltd., London: 1953), 91-92.

<sup>74</sup> See Chapter 5, *passim*. Note also that these three mechanisms have corollaries in the more specific arguments that have been articulated about the reaffirmatory and integrative functions of: (i) political conflict [for example, Chapter 3, 115-116]; (ii) political discourse [for example, Chapter 3, 82-83]; and (iii) civic ritual [for example, Chapter 5, 149-157].

simply by entering the realm of Thatcherite value-orientations. However, there are, in fact, a number of possible responses to this objection.

Firstly, it is to fail to recognise that discourses address their audiences on a number of different levels of subjectivity.<sup>75</sup> In this respect, the important point is that Thatcherite discourses addressed the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity, as they existed at their deepest levels, even where individuals held particular attitudes, beliefs and values that were contrary to the Thatcherite ethos. Specifically, by employing bi-polar oppositions to connote “belonging” and “opposition”, in-group and out-group, Thatcherite discourses achieved a *resonance* at these levels, regardless of the thoughts and emotions that existed at higher levels of subjectivity, by their promise to deliver to their audiences some degree of ontological security.

Secondly, it will be remembered that I have argued that individuals do not hold one consistent set of attitudes, beliefs and values. Rather, these stand against one another in relations of relative consistency/inconsistency and superordination/subordination.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, Thatcherite discourses inevitably resonated with certain of the attitudes, beliefs and values that individuals held, even where these conflicted with other superordinate attitudes, beliefs and values. As Stuart Hall put it, when addressing a conference organised by *Marxism Today*: “make no mistake, a tiny bit of all of us is...somewhere inside the Thatcherite project. Of course, we’re all one hundred percent committed. But every now and then - Saturday mornings, perhaps, just before the demonstration - we go to Sainsbury’s and we’re just a tiny bit of a Thatcherite subject...[Hall, 1987: 19].”

Finally, there were aspects of the Thatcherite agenda which enjoyed considerable public support, even amongst those individuals who rejected the broad sway of Thatcherite policies. Specifically, there was substantial support for those discourses - founded upon a rhetoric of “Us” and “Them” distinctions - that dealt with “creeping collectivism”, left-wing extremism, welfare “scrounging”, law and order, sexual

<sup>75</sup> See Chapter 4, 95. The important point to recognise here is that the various levels of subjectivity are relatively autonomous. Therefore, each manifests its own analytically distinct relationship with the discourses of Thatcherism.

<sup>76</sup> See Chapter 5, footnote 62.

morality, immigration, defence, the relationship of Great Britain to other nations, and so on.<sup>77</sup> Or, to put this another way, Thatcherism enjoyed considerable public support for those of its discourses that denied complexity and *otherness*, and that connoted an apparently inalienable *relative natural conception of the world*.

The prevalence in the mass public of the kinds of ideas, beliefs and values that these discourses represented is a consequence of the functional relationship which they enjoy with the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity. Predicated upon relations of "inclusion" and "exclusion", belonging and opposition, they function, as we have seen, to enable individuals to reaffirm their senses of self; to attain the symbolic mastery of the external-world; and to achieve the symbolic negation of the other. Therefore, Thatcherite discourses - to the extent that they embodied these kinds of ideas, beliefs and values - reflected, addressed and articulated this functional relationship.

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<sup>77</sup> The prevalence and significance, during the years of Thatcherism, of the kinds of ideas, beliefs and values espoused in these discourses can be demonstrated both anecdotally and by a multitude of attitude survey data. For example, anecdotally, one might consider: that the 1979 general election was fought and won on the basis of a discursive intervention that juxtaposed "the People" ("Us") to the power of the leadership of the trade unions ("Them") [see Hall, S. and Gamble, A., *The Politics of Thatcherism*, (Lawrence and Wishart, London: 1983), 26-34; and Young, H., *One of Us: Final Edition*, (Pan Books, London, Sydney and Auckland: 1991), 127-131. (The difference in the emphasis between these two accounts is interesting. Whilst, for Stuart Hall, the attack on collectivism was, in 1979, the crucial ideological intervention, Hugo Young, whilst recognising the importance of this attack, stresses its initially cautious character)]; that the 1979-1983 Conservative government enjoyed its highest levels of support immediately following the war over the Falkland Islands (in this respect, Hugo Young states that "...While nobody can be certain what would have happened if the war had never taken place, there is no room for disputing [that] the victory...abruptly lifted the Tories on to a plateau of public support which, six months earlier, would have seemed quite unattainable [Young, 1991: 297]"); and that the "toughness" and "resoluteness" of Margaret Thatcher were perceived to be her major attributes; for example, in an Observer/Harris poll, based upon a sample of 1040 interviewees (19-20/04/89), voters, when asked to rate what they liked best about Mrs Thatcher, chose "determination" (32%); "courage" (16%); "leadership" (14%) and "strength" (14%) as the most significant characteristics [see "10 Years at Number 10", *The Observer*, 30/04/89]. Significantly, according to this same poll, "trade union reform" is the "best thing that Mrs Thatcher has done" [9]. And, with respect to attitude survey data, one might note, for example, that the *British Social Attitudes Survey*, throughout the 1980s, identified attitudes towards law and order, and sexual morality which were broadly in line with the authoritarianism of the Thatcherite message. See, for instance, the 1988/1989 survey [Jowell, R., Witherspoon, S. and Brook, L., (Eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 5<sup>th</sup> Report* (Gower Publishing Company, Aldershot: 1988)), 47; 230; and 253. Similar patterns of attitudes were identified by other surveys - for example, the *British Election Study*, May 1979, [cited in Sarlvik, B. and Crewe, I., *Decade of Dealignment*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1983), 170]. Both the British Attitudes Survey and the British Election Study surveys suggest that the public also held attitudes which were broadly consistent with the Thatcherite message in areas such as immigration control; EEC membership; trade union reform; and defence policy [see Sarlvik, B., and Crewe, I., (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1983), 170; 236; and 242; and Jowell, R., Witherspoon, S. and Brook, L., (Eds.), (Gower Publishing Company, Aldershot: 1988), 66; and 67].

It is important to emphasise precisely what is being claimed here; namely, that the discourses of Thatcherism, as a result of the relative pervasiveness of authoritarian and oppositional ideas, beliefs and values in the mass public - and to the extent that they articulated the functional relationship between these kinds of *idealities* and the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity - functioned to enable many of the individuals who had ostensibly rejected the politics of Thatcherism, to overcome, in part at least, the fears associated with existential anxiety. For example, such discourses could be used as mechanisms for the symbolic mastery of the external-world: (i) by confirming the reality of the ideas, beliefs and values that individuals already held; (ii) by managing the threat posed by *the other*, whether it be "law-breakers", "sexual deviants", "immigrants" or "political extremists"; and (iii) by reaffirming, as a consequence, the integrity of the in-group.

In sum, therefore, it is my claim that the Thatcherite intervention, even as it was experienced by the non-committed audience, can be understood in terms of an analytic framework that foregrounds the strategies and mechanisms that individuals employ to attain a certain degree of ontological security. In this respect, I have demonstrated that Thatcherite discourses represented, addressed and articulated the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity. In the case of the committed audience, they did so, quite simply, by the celebration of the in-group and its associated folkways, which functioned to transport the committed audience to the heart of collective life and, thereby, to reaffirm their social identities. And, in the case of the non-committed audience, they did so: (i) by the utilisation of bi-polar oppositions to connote belonging and opposition, which resonated with the dynamics associated with the deepest levels of subjectivity; (ii) as a consequence of the contradictory nature of the attitudes, beliefs and values that individuals held, which meant that Thatcherite discourses inevitably resonated with certain of these, even where they conflicted with others; and (iii) as a result of the prevalence in the mass public of the kinds of ideas, beliefs and values that Thatcherism embodied in those of its discourses that were predicated upon relations of "inclusion" and "exclusion", belonging and opposition.

## Populism - Some Conclusions

I have been arguing that Thatcherite discourses, as a result of their celebration of the in-group and condemnation of *otherness*, were peculiarly effective as mechanisms for generating social identity; for attaining a symbolic mastery of the external-world; and for achieving the symbolic negation of *the other*. It is in this sense that they represented, addressed and articulated the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity. The important point is that it is precisely this celebration of the in-group and condemnation of *otherness* which marks out the Thatcherite intervention as populist. Therefore, the key to understanding populism is to understand that populist discourses, to the extent that they connote an apparently inalienable *relative natural conception of the world* and deny complexity and *otherness*, dovetail with the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity.

It is possible to use this insight to make a number of final comments about the arguments that I considered in Part I of this chapter. It will be remembered that both di Tella and Stewart claimed that populism is characteristically associated with situations of socio-economic marginality and exclusion. It is now easy to understand why this should be the case. At the level of individual subjectivity, the consequences of exclusion and marginality are the kinds of anxiety and insecurity that were experienced, for example, by sectors of the population of Germany following defeat in the 1914-1918 war,<sup>78</sup> and by those people who were committed to an authoritarian world-view in the years preceding the advent of the 1979 Conservative administration. These feelings emerge as a result of the diminution of the self which occurs with the weakening of the typifications and relevances that define the in-group, and with the consequent decline in the ability of this group to confer upon its members the solidity of being that they seek. Of course, the important point is that in such circumstances the emergence of populist discourses, as mechanisms whereby individuals might achieve a reaffirmation of the self, is to be expected. In this respect, populism is primarily an integrative moment, its efficacy rooted in its ability to connote *belonging* and to negate *otherness*.

<sup>78</sup> See Chapter 5, 149-157.

It is clear, therefore, that explanations of populism must concern themselves with the realm of subjectivity. Of course, it is precisely a neglect of this realm which undermines the three theories of populism that I considered in the first part of this chapter. Thus, with respect to the theories of di Tella and Stewart, it will be remembered that I have argued that neither theorist is able to specify adequately the dynamics of the emotional appeal of populism and, therefore, that neither is able to offer a satisfactory explanation of the mobilising and integrative properties of populist discourses. And I have claimed that Laclau's analysis is similarly flawed, but with the *but this is the reason for the neglect!* added difficulty that in his case the neglect of subjectivity is not accidental, but rather a function of the Althusserian problematic which informs his work. With regard to Laclau's theory, perhaps the most significant problem is that by reducing subjectivity to social structure, he guarantees that individuals are worthy of their historico-revolutionary destiny. As I noted in the first part of this chapter, his analysis rules out, as a matter of definition, the possibility that reactionary, popular traditions might be born in and derive their efficacy from the structures of subjectivity.

However, it is clear that this position - quite apart from the difficulties inherent in arguing by definitional fiat - is unsustainable. The presence of reactionary themes in populist discourses is a manifestation of their effectiveness as mechanisms of political mobilisation and integration; an effectiveness which is rooted in the fact that they dovetail with the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity. As we have seen, the attraction of populism is that it promises its audiences "ontological security". Significantly, it does so not only by celebrating the in-group, but also by condemning *otherness*. Laclau fails to recognise the centrality of themes of "opposition" and "exclusion" in populist discourses. As a result, he is able to articulate the view that it is possible for "popular-democratic" interpellations to be harnessed to a future socialist project. However, this is clearly a false hope, undermined by the necessity which individuals experience to achieve the reaffirmation of the self; the symbolic mastery of the external-world; and the symbolic negation of *the other*.

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## CONCLUSION

In this conclusion, I will consider the importance and implications of the arguments developed in the preceding chapters and also specify some of their limitations. These arguments fall into four broad categories: (i) sociological/theoretical; (ii) political/theoretical (abstract); (iii) socio-existential (or socio-psychological); and (iv) political/theoretical (concrete). I will construct this conclusion around an analysis of the arguments in each category in turn.

### (i) Sociological/theoretical

Perhaps the most theoretical of the arguments which appear in this work is the idea that sociological concepts constitute their own reality. For the most part, this argument is implied rather than explicitly stated. It is seen most clearly in the claim that abstract entities have no objective correlates in the "real" world.<sup>1</sup> It is also implicit in the frequent use of "ideal-typical" methodology to analyse sociological and political phenomena.<sup>2</sup>

The notion that sociological concepts constitute their own reality is a function of the radical idealism which forms the meta-theoretical backdrop of this thesis. Obviously, it is not possible to explore here the details of this meta-theory. Nevertheless, it might be pertinent to specify its major claims. Firstly, it is held that the world beyond experience is essentially unknowable. This conclusion is inevitable once one has accepted an epistemology that privileges the knowledge claims of human consciousness. Secondly, and as a corollary of the first point, it is postulated that the objects of knowledge are mental constructs; they have no necessary equivalents in the external-world.<sup>3</sup> And thirdly, it is held that the sciences - including the social sciences

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Chapter 3, 85; and Chapter 4, 102-104.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, my discussions of: social structure [Chapter 1, 29-32]; the relationship between beliefs/values and the typificatory frameworks of particular social groups [Chapter 3, 84-85]; the ritualistic nature of party conferences [Chapter 5, 134]; and the definition of populism [Chapter 6, 162-163].

<sup>3</sup> This claim, as with the first claim, is the inevitable consequence of ascribing epistemological privilege to the sphere of consciousness. As is well known, those approaches that start with the interiority of consciousness in order to make judgements about what is "real" and about

- when they seek to understand a world which they conceive to be external to themselves, analyse precisely their attempts to understand this world.<sup>4</sup>

These claims have a number of broadly epistemological implications for the practice of the social sciences. Most significantly, the “truth” or “validity” of social scientific statements can be assessed only in terms of the conventions of the particular “finite provinces of meaning” from which they are derived.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as a consequence of the “closed” nature of such provinces of meaning, there is no possibility of developing “formulae of transformation” to enable these provinces to be referred to one another. Of course, this begs the question: how is it possible that social scientists who occupy very different provinces of meaning are apparently able to engage in meaningful dialogue?

Needless to say, a full treatment of this question is beyond the scope of this conclusion. Consequently, I will restrict myself to a few remarks only. Perhaps the most important factor determining the possibility of communication across provinces of meaning is that social scientists enjoy a more or less similar socio-technical heritage. As a result, it is likely that certain of the baseline conceptions which they hold - for example, a commitment to the principles of deductive logic - will have a common derivation, providing the ground for meaningful dialogue, even where social scientists occupy very different provinces of meaning. Of course, the greater the degree of perceived commonality, the greater is the potential for such dialogue. However, it is important to recognise that this does *not* imply that there is any contact or overlap between discrete provinces of meaning. Rather, communication proceeds along the kinds of lines suggested by the following model:

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what “exists” have great difficulty in reconstituting the external-world (e.g., Descartes, Husserl and Sartre).

<sup>4</sup> The Hegelian parallels here are clear.

<sup>5</sup> See my discussion of Alfred Schutz's notion of *multiple realities* [Chapter 3, 66-71]. Although I am talking here about “finite provinces of meaning”, I could just as easily be talking about: “paradigms” [Kuhn, T., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1970)]; “language-games” [Wittgenstein, L., *Philosophical Investigations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford: 1968)]; “problematics” [Althusser, L., *For Marx*, (The Penguin Press, London: 1969)]; “frames of meaning” [Giddens, A., *New Rules of Sociological Method* (Hutchinson, London: 1976), 130-154]; and so on.

Social scientist *X*, in order to subject the theories and concepts of social scientist *Y* to critical analysis, will reconstruct these theories and concepts as *typifications*, their form being determined, in part, by the demands of the prevailing *interest at hand*.<sup>6</sup> These typified theories and concepts will then be analysed and criticised according to the procedures that social scientist *X* perceives to be appropriate; specifically, appropriate either in terms of the criteria specified by his own finite provinces of meaning; and/or in terms of the criteria that he perceives, also by means of typification, to apply within the provinces of meaning occupied by social scientist *Y*. This communicative process is wholly internal to the provinces of meaning occupied by social scientist *X*. It is these provinces of meaning which define the reality of the theories and concepts which he analyses. Consequently, it is entirely impossible for him to apprehend these theories and concepts in the same fashion as they are apprehended by social scientist *Y*.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to these broadly epistemological concerns, the radical idealism underpinning this thesis has had a number of more concrete theoretical and methodological consequences. In this respect, I have already noted the frequent use of "ideal-typical" methodology to analyse sociological and political phenomena. Perhaps the most striking, and yet at the same time problematic, usage of this methodology has been in the conceptualisation of social structure.<sup>8</sup> To recap, I have argued that social structure is a constituted reality; it denotes behaviour that has been *identified* as regular and non-random. I have further argued that it is possible to specify social structure, as an abstraction, in terms of the typificatory frameworks associated with the *average courses of action* followed by anonymous social actors.

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<sup>6</sup> According to Alfred Schutz, "...It is our interest at hand that motivates all our thinking, projecting, acting, and therewith establishes the problems to be solved by our thoughts and the goals to be attained by our actions [Schutz, (1970a): 111]."

<sup>7</sup> The various critical analyses undertaken in this thesis take the form suggested by this model (see, for example, the discussions of Schutz in Chapter 2; the analysis of Marxist political theory in Chapter 4; the exposition of Durkheim's theory of ritual in Chapter 5; and the discussion the various theories of populism in Chapter 6). For a very different analysis of the relationship between *provinces of meaning*, see Giddens, A., *New Rules of Sociological Method*, (Hutchinson, London: 1976), 142-148 (NB. Giddens uses the term "frames of meaning").

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 1, 29-32.

Such a conception is striking because it denies any materiality to social structure; social structure is specified in terms of the purely formal relationship between social action and the typificatory frameworks which govern that action. Moreover, the insistence that social structure is a constituted reality serves to deny to it any role in the reproduction of regular, non-random behaviour. Rather, social structure is a purely conceptual device which facilitates the description and analysis of behaviour that has been identified as such.

Of course, this conception is not without its problems. For example, to the extent that social structure is specified in terms of a formal identity between social action and its associated typificatory frameworks, there is no clear theoretical space for an analysis of the incidental and unintended dimensions of regular, non-random behaviour.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, in this conception of social structure, social action is lifted out of its spatial and temporal context; that is, it is denied a “grounding” in the perceived reality of the external-world. Finally, and more generally, it might be objected that the specification of any particular social structure is based on an essentially arbitrary decision about what constitutes significant and *distinct* regular, non-random behaviour (i.e., an arbitrary decision about which patterns of behaviour warrant being specified in terms of which social structures).

Significantly, the kinds of problems represented by these examples are characteristic of the more general problems associated with ideal-typical methodology. In simple terms, these problems are normally conceived to be a function of the perceived disjunction between “ideal-types” and the reality that they represent. For example, Hindess argues “that in defining the relations between *concepts* and the *real* as an extra-theoretical relation of similarity or difference the epistemology of models or ideal types precludes rigorous conceptual investigation of any real event or situation [Hindess, 1977: 37].”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For a brief summary of the importance of the unintended consequences of action, see Giddens, A., *The Constitution of Society*, (Polity Press, Cambridge: 1984), 8-14.

<sup>10</sup> See generally, Hindess, B., *Philosophy and Methodology in the Social Sciences*, (The Harvester Press, Sussex: 1977), 34-38.

However, this kind of criticism cannot easily be levelled against the conception of social structure as it has been outlined here. Moreover, neither can it easily be brought to bear as a criticism of the more general usage of ideal-typical methodology in this work. It cannot be brought so to bear because “ideal-types”, as they have been conceived in this thesis - and in contradistinction to the manner in which they are employed in Weber’s work - constitute the reality that they specify; that is, there is, as a result of the meta-theoretical commitment to radical idealism, no gap between *concepts* and the *real*. Thus, we have been led back to the original proposition that sociological concepts constitute their own reality.

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### **(ii) Political/theoretical (abstract)**

Perhaps the broadest explicit concern of this thesis has been to demonstrate the inadequacies of political analyses that do not pay sufficient regard to issues of subjectivity; and to establish the substantive utility of a political sociology which does take these issues seriously. The theoretical justification for the insistence that political analysis must take proper notice of subjectivity was outlined in Chapter 6. To recap, it was claimed: firstly, that macro-political phenomena and processes are “solely the resultants and modes of organisation of the particular acts of individual persons [Weber, 1947: 92]”; secondly, that the structure of consciousness is a significant variable in the course of social action; and thirdly, that it is, therefore, necessary that political analysis concern itself with subjectivity.<sup>11</sup>

In this thesis, I have been concerned substantially with the politics of social group formation, political mobilisation and social integration. For example, in Chapter 4, I considered whether it is possible that a genuinely liberatory consciousness might emerge from within the working-class; in Chapter 5, I analysed the role of political ritual in the promotion of political mobilisation and social integration; and in Chapter 6, I undertook a similar kind of analysis of populism. In all these instances, subjectivity was found to be central to an understanding of the particular phenomenon under consideration. And those analyses that neglected subjectivity in their treatment

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<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 6, 160.

of these phenomena were found to be, at best, incomplete<sup>12</sup> and, at worst, wholly unfounded.<sup>13</sup>

Notwithstanding the formal requirement - as specified above - that political analysis should concern itself with subjectivity, it is perhaps not surprising that subjectivity is so important to an understanding of these kinds of phenomena. Both political mobilisation and social integration require, on the part of the social actor, some degree of affective commitment to an in-group.<sup>14</sup> In this respect, one might recall Randall Collins' claim that "...Politics may...be described as a struggle by, with, and over "the means of emotional production" [Collins, 1988: 117]."<sup>15</sup> Of course, an understanding of the relationship between emotions and politics is central to any kind of wider appreciation of the relationship between subjectivity and politics.<sup>16</sup> Thus, I have sought, throughout this thesis, to demonstrate that social actors are more than simply rational maximisers of self-interest, especially, where self-interest is defined in purely material terms. For example, in Chapter 4, I argued that the simple elimination of the material grounds of conflict (i.e., the *transcendence of scarcity*) is not sufficient to guarantee the emergence of a conflict-free society, since individuals are motivated to conflict not solely by the possibility of material benefit, but also by an interest in conflict itself; an interest rooted in the ability of conflict to satisfy the necessity that individuals experience to reaffirm their senses of self.<sup>17</sup>

However, whilst I have indeed been concerned to demonstrate that social action is motivated, in part, by non-rational factors, it has not been possible to specify the full range of these factors. Instead, I have concentrated on motivational factors that might be termed socio-existential. As a result, a number of issues and ideas remain largely unexplored. Most significantly, I have not attempted to develop a theoretical treatment of emotion and, consequently, I have considered neither the relationship between

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<sup>12</sup> For example, Angus Stewart's analysis of populism [see Chapter 6, 167-171].

<sup>13</sup> For example, the Marxist ideas concerning the genesis of a conflict free society [see Chapter 4, 112-121].

<sup>14</sup> Obviously, a large part of this thesis has been devoted to examining the nature of such a commitment.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 5, 134.

<sup>16</sup> Where emotions can be considered an aspect of subjectivity.

<sup>17</sup> See Chapter 4, 112-121.

emotions in general and the various socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity, nor the relationship between emotions in general and socio-political action. Moreover, it will have been noted that I have also made no significant reference to psychodynamic theories and concepts.

As I indicated in the Introduction to this thesis, these omissions are not meant to imply that the ideas associated with these areas of research cannot usefully be incorporated into an analysis of the relationship between subjectivity and politics. Rather, their omission has been a function of the fact that the conceptual framework adopted here has not straightforwardly suggested their inclusion. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that many of the political forms and processes considered in this thesis might have been analysed in terms of a theoretical framework that employed a more inclusive conceptualisation of subjectivity than the one used in this work.

In addition, and related, to the attempt to establish the substantive utility of a political sociology that treats issues of subjectivity seriously, has been a concern to break down the absolute distinction between *the political* and the non-political. Paradoxically, there is, of course, a sense in which this is entirely unnecessary, since both the political and the non-political exist only as constituted realms; that is, they have no material reality in the external-world. Nevertheless, as I noted in the Introduction, the political - as a constituted realm - is often defined in terms of its opposition to the non-political. It is this *constituted* opposition, often associated with a macro-institutional approach to political analysis, that I have sought, in this thesis, to collapse.<sup>18</sup> In this respect, three arguments are of particular significance:

1. In a most straightforward sense, it is possible to collapse the distinction between the political and the non-political at the level of explanation; that is, it is possible to reconstruct, either for the purposes of explanation or in the course of analysis, political forms and processes (i.e., forms and processes which are considered "political" in the macro-institutional orthodoxy) in non-political terms. In this respect, one might consider, for example, the analysis, in Chapter

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<sup>18</sup> However, as I stated I would in the Introduction, I have, at times, utilised an "exclusive" conception of the political, for the purposes of analytical clarity.

6, of Thatcherism's "committed audience".<sup>19</sup> To recap, I used a socio-existential model of subjectivity and a Durkheimian notion of ritual, to conceptualise the behaviour which constituted the "renewal" of the Conservative Party that occurred in the early years of the Thatcher leadership. The significant point is that there is nothing to mark out this behaviour, so specified, as political rather than non-political.

2. It is possible to widen the definition of "the political" so that all social relationships have a political dimension. To this effect, I have argued that "the political" is defined by the presence of relations of power and conflict; and that the original relationship between Man and his fellow-Man is one based upon conflict. Clearly, to the extent that conflict is, therefore, a characteristic of all social relationships, the distinction between the political and the non-political is collapsed.<sup>20</sup>
3. I have argued that the significance of this argument, that all social relationships are characterised by conflict, lies in the fact that conflict finds expression largely in *the will to symbolic negation*; that is, in the necessity experienced by individuals to negate *the foreignness* of the other, whilst preserving the moment of *otherness*. In terms of the relationship between the political and the non-political, the important point is that *the will to symbolic negation*, whilst belonging properly to the realms of subjectivity and micro-political intersubjectivity, is found also at the level of the macro-political. For example, I noted, in Chapter 5, that the ceremonials surrounding the monarchy function to negate symbolically the case for republicanism and, more generally, the beliefs and values that stand in opposition to the "sacred values" of the monarchy;<sup>21</sup> and in Chapter 6, I argued that the discourses of Thatcherism expressed a necessity experienced by the "committed" Thatcherite audience to negate those discourses that brought into question the taken-for-grantedness of their world-views.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in simple terms, these patterns of negation, and the more general

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 6, 186-191.

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 3, 86-93.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 5, 146-148.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 6, 186-191.

patterns of negation characteristic of the relationship between in-group and out-group, can be understood as a macro-transformation of the original conflictual relation between Man and his fellow-Man.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, it is possible to object to these arguments that, for the most part, the whole debate concerning the extent of “the political” is one about labels and definitions. And, needless to say, to the extent that the political is a constituted realm, there is a sense in which this is the case. Nevertheless, the major point stands; namely, that the *constituted* opposition between the political and the non-political is a purely analytical convenience; and that there exists an interpenetration between the macro-political, *as it is constituted in the macro-institutional orthodoxy*, and those “micro-political” phenomena of subjectivity and intersubjectivity that I have specified in this thesis.

### **(iii) Socio-existential (or socio-psychological)**

I will only briefly summarise the various socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity that have been specified in this thesis, since these have been previously summarised in an earlier chapter.<sup>24</sup>

In simple terms, I have argued that as a result of a number of existential facts about consciousness, individuals manifest and are subject to various socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity. The most important of these are: (a) the necessity experienced by individuals to reaffirm their senses of self; (b) the desire for the symbolic mastery of the “external-world”; and (c) *the will to symbolic negation*. I will consider each of these in turn.

#### **(a) The reaffirmation of the self**

I have claimed that as a result of the experience of isolation, estrangement and lack of definiteness - a product of the intentionality of consciousness - the individual is fated

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<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 4, 118-120.

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 6, 159-161.

to suffer a perpetual uncertainty and the lack of a solidity of being. As a consequence, he is compelled to seek continual reaffirmation of his sense of self.

This reaffirmation is primarily achieved in two ways. Firstly, by simple participation in the collective effervescence of social life, which functions to bind individuals to their social groups. The clearest example of this kind of reaffirmation of the self is that which is attained during occasions of ritualistic celebration.<sup>25</sup> And secondly, it can be achieved by means of the symbolic mastery of the external-world, crucial to which process is the ability of the individual to identify cognitively and affectively with his in-groups, both with respect to the roles that he plays within these groups and, more generally, with respect to the typifications and relevances which define these groups.<sup>26</sup>

**(b) The symbolic mastery of the “external-world”**

The desire to attain the symbolic mastery of the external-world is more than a simple function of the necessity which individuals experience to achieve a reaffirmation of the self. In fact, rooted in the inexplicable and chaotic character of the relationship between Man and the external-world, it represents a distinct socio-existential dynamic of subjectivity. In this respect, for example, I noted Berger and Luckmann’s argument that “...*All* social reality is precarious. *All* societies are constructions in the face of chaos [Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 121]”; and that symbolic universes - *bodies of theoretical tradition* which *encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality* [Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 113] - function to assuage the *ultimate terror* which flows from Man’s chaotic and precarious relationship to the world, “by bestowing ultimate legitimization upon the protective structures of the institutional order [Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 120].”<sup>27</sup>

In general terms, it has been my claim that individuals routinely achieve the symbolic mastery of the external-world by means of the various judgements which comprise the normative sphere; or, to put this another way, that they are able to subordinate the

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<sup>25</sup> See Chapter 4, *passim*.

<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 2, 48-64; Chapter 4, 115; Chapter 5, *passim*; and Chapter 6, 183-195.

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 3, 71-73.

external-world to their wills, to the extent that it is rendered transparent and explicable by the beliefs and values of this sphere.<sup>28</sup>

### (c) The will to symbolic negation

According to Hegel, the self-conscious being, in the presence of *otherness*, is unable to achieve self-certainty; similarly, Sartre argues that the For-itself, under the gaze of the other, is reduced to an object and, consequently, is enslaved. It is these arguments that have led me to claim that the original relationship between Man and his fellow-Man is one based upon conflict.<sup>29</sup> Of course, as I noted in Chapter 3, this kind of existential conflict rarely finds straightforward and overt expression in the social world. Thus, I have avoided, for example, the temptation to reduce “material” conflict to existential conflict. Nevertheless, as I have already noted in this conclusion, it is my claim that existential conflict finds expression in *the will to symbolic negation*.

It will be recalled that *the will to symbolic negation* refers to the necessity experienced by individuals to negate the threat posed by the foreignness of the other, whilst preserving the moment of otherness. I have argued that symbolic negation is normally achieved from within the realm of the normative sphere. Specifically, it is ordinarily achieved by the employment of normative judgements which function to assimilate *the other* to a world-view defined by the in-groups of the individual employing the judgements. Of course, the important point about such judgements is that they are mechanisms of familiarity and explication and, consequently, function to annul the threat posed by the *foreignness* of the other. Significantly, to this extent, they are also mechanisms to be employed for the symbolic mastery of the external-world. Indeed, the whole process of symbolic negation is central to the struggle for symbolic mastery, in that its aim is to ensure that the external reality upon which the individual depends is fully expressive of him. This process, therefore, is central also to the attempts of the individual to reaffirm his sense of self.

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<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 3, 71-84; and *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 3, 86-93.

Obviously, it has been my aim to examine the significance of these socio-existential dynamics for political analysis. In this respect, it is possible to employ a threefold typology to summarise the purely analytical significance of these dynamics, as this has been conceived, both explicitly and implicitly, in this thesis. Firstly, the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity have a *causal* significance with respect to political phenomena and processes; specifically, they enter as motivational factors in the emergence and development of political action, movements and discourses.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, these dynamics impart a *functional* significance to collective political action and political discourse, in that both of these constitute *resources* to be appropriated by individuals for the purposes of reaffirming *the self* and achieving both the symbolic mastery of the external-world and the symbolic negation of *the other*. And finally, these dynamics have a *strategic* political significance, in that they can be addressed and articulated by political actors and groups, primarily through the mechanisms of collective political action and political discourse.<sup>31</sup>

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#### **(iv) Political/theoretical (concrete)**

Needless to say, I have been concerned to examine not only the *formal* analytical significance of the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity, but also their importance for the understanding of a number of definite political phenomena and processes. In this respect, a number of the analyses that I have undertaken have particular importance; most significantly: (i) the critical analysis, in Chapter 4, of the Marxist idea that a genuinely liberatory consciousness might emerge from within the working-class; (ii) the analysis, in Chapter 5, of political ritual, and its role in the promotion of political mobilisation and social integration; and (iii) in Chapter 6, the critical analysis and reworking of the concept of populism.

However, I am not going to conclude by simply restating the arguments that were developed in each of these analyses, since this has already been done at the conclusion of individual chapters and at various other points in this work. Instead, in order to summarise the political/theoretical (concrete) aspect of this thesis, I will briefly

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, my discussion of Thatcherism, Chapter 6, 183-195.

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 6, 183-195; and Chapter 5, *passim*.

consider how some of the less abstract arguments that have been developed fit into the threefold typology of the analytical significance of the dynamics of subjectivity.

### **(i) Causal significance**

I have alluded to the causal significance of the dynamics of subjectivity in all of the less abstract analyses of political phenomena and processes that I have undertaken. Specifically, for example, in Chapter 4, I suggested that individuals are motivated to conflict by the promise of a reaffirmation of their senses of self; something which can be achieved in the conflictual relation, where people experience themselves and their in-groups with greater levels of intensity. In Chapter 6, I argued that populist movements emerge in circumstances of exclusion and marginality because they offer to their followers, through their discourses and political action, new social identities; where these identities had previously been undermined by the uncertainty and lack of definiteness which is the consequence of exclusion and marginality. And in a very similar fashion, I suggested, in Chapter 5, that National Socialism was, in part, a response to the perceived destruction of the traditional order; expressly, I claimed that this destruction had severely undermined the social identities of many German people, and that the attraction of National Socialism was that it offered to these people, particularly through its ritual and celebration, reconstructed social identities that were rooted in a new national myth.<sup>32</sup>

It is important to be absolutely clear about what is being claimed in all these instances; namely, that the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity - specifically, in these examples, the necessity that individuals experience to reaffirm their senses of self - are significant motivational factors in the kinds of political action and beliefs that individuals manifest. However, it would not be correct to say that these actions and beliefs are *caused* by the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity. To make such a claim would be to engage in the kind of oversimplifying reductionism that I have rejected at various points throughout this work.<sup>33</sup> In this respect, it is important to

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<sup>32</sup> Of course, the suggestion in both this example, and in the previous example, is that individuals are *motivated* to commit themselves to specific political beliefs and actions because of the promise of new social identities.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, pages, 9; 24; 121; and 180.

remember that all of the more concrete analyses in this thesis are *ideal-typical* in form. Specifically, these analyses have been constructed to exemplify the importance of issues of subjectivity for political analysis; to this extent, they do not claim to offer full explanations of the phenomena and processes they analyse. 

## (ii) Functional relationships

The idea that the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity have a causal significance with respect to the emergence and development of political phenomena and processes is inextricably bound to the notion that collective political action and political discourse are resources to be appropriated by individuals for the purposes of reaffirming *the self* and achieving the symbolic negation of *the other*. In this respect, it has been my claim, as above, that individuals are motivated to participate in a specific political collective action and/or to adopt particular political attitudes by the anticipation that in doing so they will satisfy some of the demands associated with the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity. To the extent that these demands are satisfied, the particular political collective action and/or political attitudes can be said to be functional for individuals at the level of subjectivity.

I have been concerned, in this thesis, to explore the nature of this functional relationship between collective political action and political discourse, on the one hand, and the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity, on the other. Thus, for example, I argued, in Chapter 3, that political discourses, in their status as symbolic universes, function to render the external-world meaningful. Specifically, I claimed that their “ideas, beliefs and values...forming part of the realm of value-orientations, constitute an important resource for the individual who seeks the imaginative mastery of the world; that is, that political discourse can be utilised in a *strategy of mastery*”.<sup>34</sup> In Chapter 5, I argued that ritual in general, and political ritual specifically, is functional at the level of subjectivity, in that it binds individuals to their in-groups and, therefore, functions to reaffirm their senses of self. It achieves such reaffirmation through two related processes: firstly, by the simple participation of individuals in intersubjectivity; and secondly, by celebrating and reaffirming a symbolic order which

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<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 3, 75.

represents and expresses the collective-life of the in-group.<sup>35</sup> And in Chapter 6, I noted that certain kinds of political discourses have a peculiar effectiveness as mechanisms of political integration and mobilisation; namely, those discourses that celebrate the in-group and its traditions, and denigrate the out-group. I went on to argue that this effectiveness is rooted in the fact that such discourses, by employing a rhetoric of *belonging* and *opposition*, function to achieve for their audiences both the reaffirmation of their senses of self and the symbolic negation of *the other*.<sup>36</sup>

### (iii) Strategic significance

Of course, the functional relationship between collective political action/political discourse and the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity has a strategic political significance. Specifically, it is possible for political actors and movements to use this relationship for their own political ends. Thus, for example, I showed, in Chapter 5, how political ritual can be utilised as a mechanism for the “mobilisation of bias”. To illustrate this point, I examined the ritualistic and celebratory politics of the Third Reich, and concluded that ritual performed a number of crucial functions for the National Socialist regime. Perhaps most importantly, by the mechanism of ritualistic celebration, the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* was presented as legitimate, *natural* and inviolable.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in Chapter 6, I demonstrated that populist discourses can be utilised to the same general effect. More precisely, I showed that such discourses are likely to be invoked in socio-political conditions of exclusion and marginality because their ability to articulate the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity lends to them a peculiar efficacy as mechanisms of social integration and mobilisation, where both integration and mobilisation are central to the success of a political regime or movement. In this respect, as a concrete example, I demonstrated that the discourses of Thatcherism - a populist intervention - constituted the mechanism by which the collective sentiments of the Conservative Party were renewed; and I argued that the early success of Thatcherism lay in its ability to unite a disunited and

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<sup>35</sup> See Chapter 5, *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> See Chapter 6, 183-195; and *passim*.

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 5, 149-157.

demoralised party in a manner that enabled its supporters to transcend the isolation and estrangement of the solitary relation.<sup>38</sup>

It is important to emphasise exactly what is being claimed here; namely, that political actors and movements will utilise collective political action and/or political discourse - especially those discourses that employ a rhetoric of *belonging* and *opposition* - in order to achieve politically expedient, social integration and political mobilisation. However, this does not imply a necessary awareness, on the part of political actors, of the precise mechanisms underlying the emergence of social integration and political mobilisation (these mechanisms involving the functional relationship between collective political action/political discourse and the socio-existential dynamics of subjectivity). Quite simply, political actors do not need to know *how* integration and mobilisation are generated, in order to know, and to utilise, the kinds of collective political action and political discourse which do generate this integration and mobilisation.

To sum up, then, the most general aim of this thesis has been to explore the relationship between subjectivity and various political processes and phenomena, with a view both to demonstrate the inadequacies of political analyses that do not pay sufficient regard to the issues surrounding the notion of *subjectivity*, and to show the substantive utility of a political sociology which *does* take these issues seriously. To this end, I have developed an argument about the nature of consciousness, subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which I have employed: (i) to criticise various existing political analyses; and (ii) to develop new theories of the mechanisms and politics of social group formation, social integration and political mobilisation. Above all else, I hope that I have demonstrated that political sociology must extend its reach beyond the boundaries set by the macro-institutional orthodoxy, to concern itself variously with: social actors and their beliefs, values, hopes and fears; the political dimensions of intersubjective relationships, where politics is defined by the presence of power and conflict; the nature of social actors' experience of the social world and the way in which this both affects and is affected by their cognitions and emotions; and the

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<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 6, 186-191; and *passim*.

relationship between this experience, the cognitions and emotions of social actors, and political phenomena and processes (where the political is defined in terms of its opposition to the non-political).

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