INAUGURAL RADCLIFFE-BROWN LECTURE IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

THE SCEPTICAL ANTHROPOLOGIST? SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND MARXIST VIEWS ON SOCIETY

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I AM honoured by this Academy and the Association of Social Anthropologists to be invited to deliver the first Radcliffe-Brown Lecture. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Fellow of the Academy and first President of the Association of Social Anthropologists, was born in 1881 and died in 1955. Now is an appropriate time for a formal celebration of his anthropological achievement, because it is just fifty years since the publication of his seminal work *The Andaman Islanders*. This book of 500 pages, based on what its author called his field-work apprenticeship in 1906–8, but not published until 1922, is rightly subtitled 'A Study in Social Anthropology'. Its ethnography was indifferent, but its theoretical chapters on interpretation of Andamanese customs and beliefs, which he himself regarded as the most important, soon became an inspiration to all social anthropologists.

In 1955 Meyer Fortes admirably epitomized the salient features of Radcliffe-Brown's scientific conceptions. Of his collected papers issued in *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (London, 1952) Fortes said 'they embody a series of discoveries and hypotheses which changed the course of anthropological study, at any rate in Great Britain'[1]—a claim which successfully combined modesty with a proper sense of national achievement. Soon after Radcliffe-Brown died I myself gave an account of his general career in the *Proceedings* of this Academy.[2] I knew him for nearly thirty years, and remember with pleasure

[1] M. Fortes, 'Radcliffe-Brown's Contributions to the Study of Social Organization', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 6, 1955, 16–30 (repr. in *Time and Social Structure and Other Essays*, LSE Mon. on Soc. Anthr., 40, London, 1970, 260–78).

[2] *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 42, 1956, 287–302.

his aesthetic fastidiousness, his precise mode of expression and his stimulating broad grasp of anthropological theory. When I last saw him, in hospital, and asked if there were any books I could bring him he replied that all he was interested in was new theoretical ideas in social anthropology. It may have been just a brave intellectual gesture, but in this spirit I present today in his name a discussion of a theme which has some novelty in our British field.

While this lecture is *for* Radcliffe-Brown, not about Radcliffe-Brown, my colleagues will have realized that my title embodies a reference to Radcliffe-Brown's own citation, at the end of his plea for what he called a Natural Science of Society, of the Honourable Robert Boyle's work *The Sceptical Chymist.* Radcliffe-Brown noted that Boyle argued for bypassing 'practical' problems, what he called 'frugiferous' research, in favour of enlightenment of a theoretical order—'luminiferous' research —and so was able to found a real science of chemistry out of alchemy and metallurgy. Radcliffe-Brown would have liked to have been able to emulate Boyle, and create a 'purely theoretical science of human society', though he thought that demands for practical results are so insistent that such an aim will be unlikely of proper attention in our times.[1] Now this picks out a significant view, and I recall it later. But Boyle saw theory as basic to practice, not as supplanting it. Granted his concern for theoretical research, when he published his book in 1661 Boyle had joined what was called 'a new philosophical college that values no knowledge but as it has a tendency to use'. This very down-to-earth body of people afterwards became the Royal Society of London, with Boyle as a founder Fellow and member of its first Council. What strikes me also in Boyle's book is his emphasis on experiment, and his refusal to accept assertion not backed by evidence. A lusty controversialist, he rejected what he termed the 'intolerable ambiguity' his opponents allowed themselves in their expressions. If, following Radcliffe-Brown, we take Boyle as a guide we find he makes two further points. He believed in flexibility of interpretation. 'It is not necessary that all the things a Sceptick Proposes, should be consonant. . . . It is allowable for him to propose two or more several *Hypotheses* about the same thing. . . .' And in a pre-Marxist, even pre-Hegelian world he distrusted the then version of the dialectic: 'those Dialectical subtleties . . . are wont much more to declare the

[1] *A Natural Science of Society* (1948), Glencoe, Illinois, 1957, 147–8.

wit of him that uses them, then increase the knowledge or remove the doubts of sober lovers of truth.'[1]

Two of the greatest thinkers of the last century, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, specialized in the theoretics of confrontation—one might say affrontation. With brutal realism both have forced us to examine components in man's nature and society ordinarily left obscure: Freud to recognize elements of conflict in the self formerly admitted only in secret or veiled behind philosophic discussions of the unconscious; Marx to recognize elements of conflict in society rooted in our material interests. The shock effect of these ideas has diminished with time, and aspects of them have been incorporated—though often distorted—into our common thinking. But now where does Karl Marx stand in the thought of the sceptical anthropologist, trained in the discipline which Radcliffe-Brown did so much to found? Marx, like Radcliffe-Brown later, was committed to a search for general scientific principles underlying concrete phenomena—what Radcliffe-Brown and some Marxists have called nomothetic, i.e. law-giving propositions. But Marx, unlike Radcliffe-Brown, was an iconoclast rather than a sceptic, proclaimed dialectical materialism as his method, saw his nomothetic propositions as constant and inevitable, and believed passionately in their practical relevance.[2] How do these propositions, especially those concerned with pre-capitalist society, measure up to anthropological standards of evidence, including (the nearest thing to experiment) the results of field research?

For sociologists and economic historians, consideration of Marx's ideas has long been a commonplace. R. H. Tawney once said that no historian could write as if Marx had never existed. Yet some anthropologists have evaded a parallel conclusion; a recent work on social anthropology and political history has much concern with conflict but little with Marxist interpretations of it. Marx's arguments claim to go to the roots of man's economic life, yet economic anthropology has largely ignored his views. Marx propounded a revolutionary theory of

[1] Hon. Robert Boyle, *The Sceptical Chymist*, London, 1661, A2–4, 14–15; idem, Everyman edn., introd. E. A. Moelwyn-Hughes, London, 1964, viii.

[2] Marx's flexibility in the matter of theory has often been stressed, with justice. But leaving aside inconsistencies of statement which occur in his work, his flexibility seems to have applied primarily to his caution in coming to conclusions; once arrived at, his conclusions were put forward very firmly, without alternative.

social change, yet general works by anthropologists have cheerfully dispensed with all but minimal use of Marx's ideas on the dynamics of society.[1]

Here in this lecture I consider first why Marx's ideas, particularly those concerning primitive society, have been avoided by social anthropologists; then what use has been made of his theories in social anthropology; and finally what I think Marx's work can mean to a sceptical anthropologist. It is a personal view, it is highly compressed, and it deals primarily with Marx and not with his many commentators[2] and apologists.

A simple answer to the question of why such anthropological caution towards Marx's theories might be vested interest—that social anthropologists as bourgeois intellectuals have found themselves unable to face so disturbing a view of man and society as Marx has presented; that they have preferred an idealist, not a materialist interpretation of history, an integrative, not a conflict model of society. Some, again, may have been antagonized by Marx's negative attitude to religion. There may be something in this argument, but while simple it is certainly not complete. Another factor could be personal temperament. A disincentive to concur with Marxist formulations, even when they might be acceptable, could be the intensity of

[1] Some American works refer to Marx and Engels, but primarily to criticize their theory of social evolution. Paul Bohannan (*Social Anthropology*, New York, 1963, 172–6) credits Marx with original thinking on the subject of rank, but views his theory of class structure critically. Marvin Harris (*The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, New York, 1968) is the only major American anthropologist to deal fairly fully, if somewhat idiosyncratically, with the relevant range of Marx's views, though Leslie White, Stanley Diamond, Morris Opler, and Marshall Sahlins are familiar with Marx's ideas. Morton Fried has examined 'core and superstructure' in Marxist thought, in 'Ideology, Social Organization and Economic Development in China: A Living Test of Theories', *Process and Pattern in Culture: Essays in Honor of Julian H. Steward*, ed. Robert A. Manners, Chicago, 1964, 49–61.

References to Marx in British social anthropology have usually been brief. See e.g. Raymond Firth, *Primitive Polynesian Economy*, London, 1939, 361, 1965, 20; *Elements of Social Organization*, London, 1951, 168–9; *Essays on Social Organization and Values*, London, 1964, 17–26; Max Gluckman, *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa*, London, 1963, 10–11; Ronald Frankenberg, 'Economic Anthropology: One Anthropologist's View', *Themes in Economic Anthropology*, ASA Mon. 6, London, 1967, 47–89; P. C. Lloyd, *Africa in Social Change*, Harmondsworth, 1967, 164, 272, etc.; 'Conflict Theory and Yoruba Kingdoms', *History and Social Anthropology*, ASA Mon. 7, 1968, 29–33.

[2] But I wish to acknowledge the stimulus of Raymond Aron's study of Marx, and also of T. B. Bottomore's writings.

their polemic. Marx has been called an economist, a historian, a sociologist, a philosopher, a prophet; but Engels in his funeral oration said that Marx was before all else a revolutionist, his real mission was to contribute to the overthrow of capitalist society, and in this fighting was his element.[1] Marx's way of fighting was not only with analytical tenacity but also with a passionate invective inappropriate, so many people have felt, to a scientific presentation. So even where they may have agreed with Marx, social anthropologists seem often to have left this to be read between the lines.

For the early part of this century, social anthropologists might have said they ignored Marx because he was not relevant. Until recently our field has been primarily the technologically backward, economically undeveloped, politically not very complex societies, lacking wage-labour and a clearly identifiable class structure. Influence of an alien government was often remote, of a commercial market peripheral. In structure the Andamanese, the Australian aborigines, the Trobrianders, the Tikopia, the Tswana, the Tallensi, and many others could be classed only in the area of Marx's amorphous 'primitive communalism'. For classical social anthropology there was not much ethnographically or theoretically of direct concern in Marx's generally known works; and Engels on the family and Lafargue on property represented an out-dated arid evolutionary position. As Birnbaum (*v. infra*) has mildly said, the traditions of anthropology appear rather remote from the concerns of Marxism.

In recent years there has been more convergence. More light has been thrown on Marx's ideas from early draft works, in particular that on 'pre-capitalist formations' to which I refer soon. New issues have been raised as social anthropologists have been confronted with societies in conditions of radical change. Apart from war dislocation, migration of labour and cropping for a commercial market, with the stimulation of new consumer wants, have revealed the shattering effects of an economic system geared to development. The growth of centralized political control, alien or indigenous according to circumstance, has made the bases and structure of power much clearer. The emergence of new religious cults and other indigenous movements of self-expression has reinforced attention to the

[1] Frederick Engels, Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx, *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*, Moscow/London, 1968, 430.

significance of ideology. Marxist theories about base and superstructure, relations of production, economic determinism, class conflict, exploitation, have therefore tended to draw much closer to anthropological interests.

But anthropological coolness towards Marx's views has been partly due to the influence of another tradition in the interpretation of social phenomena—that of Emile Durkheim. There is a curious parallelism in Marx's and Durkheim's thought which still waits to be fully explained. It concerns the relation of the individual to society, and it emerges for instance in the theory of the sociology of knowledge. Durkheim and Mauss argued that categories of thought are fundamentally social categories, arising from the social relations of men in groups. 'The first logical categories have been social categories. . . . The centre of the first systems of nature is not the individual, it is society. . . .'[1] But chronologically, the theory that what a person conceives he knows is a reflection of his position in society was formulated in essence by Karl Marx. His notion that the material world around us is a materialization of man's *praxis*, man's productive activity in history, is not just an assertion that nature is man-made; it also implies that man's understanding of the material world is a reflection of his own social world. In opposition to Hegel's idea of the concrete as consisting in philosophical thought, Marx's idea of the concrete lay in the relations of men. The relations of men which Marx saw as cardinally relevant for concept formation were those of class, based upon their structural position in an economic framework of production. Hence for Marx ideology was the abstract conceptual form in which members of a class disguised their concrete economic, social, and political interests and position. In Marx's view this ideology took essentially a general form—what were in reality assertions of special class interest were believed to be formulations that applied to the whole of society.[2] The specific political implications of this thesis have tended to obscure its general relevance

[1] E. Durkheim and M. Mauss, 'De quelques formes primitives de classification', *L'Année sociologique*, vi, 1901–2, 67, 70–1. (Trans., introd. Rodney Needham as *Primitive Classification*, London, 1963, 82, 86.) They cite De la Grasserie only as having developed, obscurely, analogous ideas.

[2] Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', 3rd edn. 1885 in *Marx & Engels: Selected Works*, 1968, 117, 120; cf. Karl Korsch, *Karl Marx*, London, 1938, 74–6. Norman Birnbaum, 'The Sociological Study of Ideology (1940–60): A Trend Report and Bibliography', *Current Sociology*, ix, 1960, 91–117 etc., is illuminating on this theme.

for many people. But modern studies in what has come to be called cognitive anthropology could find some ancestry in Marx.

This comes out clearly in his early work. In the *German Ideology* (1846) he and Engels held that consciousness, like language, is a social product. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844) Marx argued that even what appear to be very private individual actions have a social quality. 'Even when I carry out *scientific* work—an activity which I seldom conduct in association with other men—I perform a *social*, because *human* act. It is not only the material of my activity—like the language itself which the thinker uses—which is given to me as a social product. *My own existence* is a social activity.' And in clarification he specified a further important point, with which the approach of modern social anthropologists is in conformity: 'It is above all necessary to avoid postulating "Society" as an abstraction confronting the individual. The individual is a *social being*. His life, even if it may not appear in the direct form of a communal life carried out together with others—is therefore an expression and confirmation of social life.'[1] I think that here we get a clue to Marx's whole approach to the evolution of society, coming up again in his ideas about primitive communalism—the idea that basically, even ethically, *being* should not be separated from *doing*; activity and existence are one, and it is the demerit of capitalist society that it has promoted such a separation. But note that in some contrast to Durkheim, Marx's merging of society and the individual is countered by his sharp division between different categories of individuals in the production process. Marx's stress on social factors emerges even in his treatment of religion, foreshadowing in the theses on Feuerbach the main theme of *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. In 1845 (though the *Theses* were not published till 1888) he wrote that Feuerbach resolved the religious essence into the human essence. 'But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations. . . . Feuerbach, consequently, does not see that the "religious sentiment" is itself a *social product*, and that the abstract individual whom he analyses belongs in reality to a particular form of society.'[2]

[1] *Die deutsche Ideologie*, Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe, Moscow, 1933, Abt. I, Bd. 5, 19–21; T. B. Bottomore, *Karl Marx—Early Writings*, London, 1963, 157–8; cf. Martin Milligan, *Karl Marx—Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Moscow, 1959, 104.

[2] *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*, Moscow/London, 1968, 29.

The convergence of the ideas of Durkheim and of Marx has been noted by Sorel, Kagan, Cuvillier, and Gouldner, but it is not easy to decide how far Durkheim was actually influenced by Marx's views. Durkheim knew Marx's work, and according to Mauss he intended to devote a year of his course on socialism to Marx, but instead returned to 'pure science' on undertaking *L'Année sociologique*. But one cannot help forming an impression that Durkheim, with his own brand of social programme and a set of theoretical ideas which, as he saw it, he had arrived at independently, especially through their common ancestor Saint-Simon, was reluctant to discuss those of Marx.[1] He may

[1] Robert Merton has pointed out that in the sociology of knowledge there have been parallel French and German traditions (*Social Theory and Social Structure*, Glencoe, Illinois, 1949, 226, 392). Durkheim may not have seen some of Marx's early writings—though the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* were published in Paris in 1844, in the socialist journal *Vorwärts*.

Bottomore and Rubel write that though Durkheim expressed reservations about 'economic materialism' he followed closely the publications of the Marxist sociological school. 'It was under Durkheim's direction that the early volumes of the *Année sociologique* devoted a considerable amount of space to the discussion and critical examination of the sociology of Marx, and of his disciples and interpreters' (*Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, Pelican, 1963, 47, 54). This seems to apply, however, mainly to volume i of *L'Année sociologique* (1896–7), which contained reviews by M. Lapie (270–7) of A. Labriola's essays on the materialist conception of history; by E. Durkheim of E. Grosse's study of forms of the family and economy (319–32); and by F. Simiand of R. Stammler's work on economy and law (488–97). Simiand's review was appreciative, those of Lapie and Durkheim much less so; Marx was mentioned only incidentally, and by Durkheim not at all. Later volumes of the journal had very little reference to Marx's work or that of his followers—e.g. D. Parodi on A. Loria's sociology (*AS*, v, 1900–1, 129–33); C. Bouglé in a general review of theories of division of labour (*AS*, vi, 1901–2, 93, 113). A translation, *Critique de l'économie politique*, was warmly greeted (*AS*, iii, 1898–99, 544), but *La Lutte des classes en France* and *Le XVIII brumaire de Louis Bonaparte* were noted without comment, while volumes II and III of *Le Capital* were coolly received merely as 'so necessary to the true comprehension of the doctrine, the essential work of Marx' (*AS*, iv, 1899–1900, 564; v, 1900–1, 558–9). And whereas *La Lutte des classes* and *Le XVIII brumaire* were entered under the head of 'Socialism', the two volumes of *Le Capital* appeared merely under 'Divers' in the economic sociology section. Presumably all this was a reflection of the view (*AS*, iii, 542–4) that *L'Année sociologique* restricted itself to discussing works which studied socialism scientifically.

In a new section on the sociology of knowledge in volume xi of *L'Année sociologique* (1906–9, 41) Durkheim and Bouglé claimed to have been occupied with such questions for a long time though most of the works reviewed so far had come under the head of the sociology of religion. But bearing in mind Merton's phrase (op. cit. 223) about Marxism in various respects being the

have tried to reconcile Comte and Marx. But certainly, the few pages he devoted to the class struggle in the *Division of Labour*, in which he attributed such conflict as he saw to maldistribution of natural talent and increasing aptitudes in the face of the activities assigned to them, make no mention of Marx's views.[1]

All this has had reflection in social anthropology. Insulated from Marx by the Durkheimian tradition, coming from Cambridge through Jane Harrison and Radcliffe-Brown, and (if only in reaction) from London through Malinowski, British social anthropology stressed solidarity rather than conflict as the primary field of study. Symptomatic of one side of this position was Radcliffe-Brown's own omission, from his *Natural Science of Society*, presented in seminars in Chicago as late as 1937, of any reference to Karl Marx or to any principles of radical contradiction within the social system. But the dialectic has been taking its course. Durkheim is pallid by comparison with Marx; if Marx can be crude, Durkheim can seem naïve. In the social and political upheavals of the post-war period, it is perhaps especially to French social anthropologists that Marx's propositions have often seemed more relevant than those of Durkheim.

But in some cases attention to Marx's theories, though not absent, has been muted for another reason. Many anthropologists who have not been dazzled by the Durkheimian vision of social solidarity, even some who have not been alarmed by a prospect of a radical re-structuring of Western society, have felt able to give only very qualified intellectual agreement to Marxist views, because of the unsatisfactory generalizations offered about the nature of human society.

Take Marx's conception of man.[2] In what has been called

storm centre of *Wissenssoziologie*, it is interesting that the introduction to this new section made no reference to earlier thinkers in this field.

For general discussion of Durkheim's views I am indebted to Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*, Glencoe, Ill., 1937, 301–450; Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, 2, London, 1968, 11–97; and Alvin W. Gouldner, introd. to Emile Durkheim, *Socialism and Saint-Simon* (trans. Charlotte Sattler), London, 1959. See also G. Kagan, 'Durkheim et Marx', *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, 1938, 233–44; Armand Cuvillier, 'Durkheim et Marx', *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, 4, 1948, 75–97.

[1] *De la division du travail social*, 6th edn., Paris, 1932, 367–9.

[2] See e.g. Vernon Venable, *Human Nature: The Marxian View*, London, 1946; Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, New York, 1966; Istvan Meszaros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, London, 1970. Cf. Antonio Gramsci, 'What is Man?' *The Modern Prince*, trans. Louis Marks, London, 1957, 76–81.

'Marxian anthropology' Marx's propositions about the nature of man lack that empirical comparative dimension which characterizes anthropology in general. Despite his insistence on the need for a historical dimension in the interpretation of social conditions, Marx's basic assumptions about human behaviour and its meaning seem to be essentially inferential, from postulates concerned with his views on capitalist exploitation. In Marx's view the essential defining character of man is his labour power. Labour is a process going on between man and nature whereby man not only acts on the external world and changes it but also at the same time changes his own nature. Essential to this process are instruments of labour, which are not only tools but also indicators of the social relations amid which labour was performed. As the social relations vary, especially in regard to control of labour power and of instruments of production, so does the character of men vary—it is not general human needs but economic conditions at a particular stage which determine their behaviour.[1] Now anthropologists have shared with Marx the realization that in an economy the relations between material things are really an expression of social relations between people. And they may not wish to deny the primacy of labour—though Marvin Harris (op. cit. 233) has questioned the clarity of Marx's concept of 'work'. But they may wish to set beside it other forces of primary social significance, e.g. exchange, and symbolization. Robert Redfield once asked me to open a seminar on the theme—'What can one say of a man—any man?' I could have chosen man's propensity to symbolize—in fact I chose his propensity to exchange. All comparative anthropology shows men engaging in forms of exchange, of immaterial as well as material things, of services as well as goods. One has as much right to assert that human culture was born with symbolization and with exchange—often intricately linked in actual transactions—as with labour.

But Marx belittled the primary character of exchange in human society. His explanation in different contexts is not entirely consistent, but basically he seems to have thought that it was through exchange that the possibility of exploitation arose. Marx seemed to think that primitive man shared but did not exchange, or at least engaged only in 'immediate exchange' of use-values without notion of profit. Man, who originally

[1] Karl Marx, *Capital (A Critique of Political Economy), Volume One*, trans. 4th German edn., Eden and Cedar Paul, London, 1930, 169–78.

appears as a generic being (*Gattungswesen*), tribal being (*Stammwesen*), herd animal (*Herdentier*), is individualized only through the process of history, and exchange itself is a major agent of this individualization.[1] Marx held that the value of commodities is nothing but crystallized labour, that a commodity has use-value in its bodily form, and exchange-value in its phenomenal form. But this phenomenal form never occurs when a commodity is in isolation, but only when it enters into an exchange relation with another commodity of different kind. As labour is the cause of value, so labour-time is the measure of value; the idea that value and its magnitude originate in their expression as exchange-value he labelled a delusion.[2] By associating exchange with interest in commodities as such, including the treatment of labour as a commodity, independent of their producers, Marx believed he had the key to the appropriation of surplus value from the labourer.

Marx's attitude to money was analogous to this. Money as a medium for facilitating exchange; as a means for getting goods and services; as a basis of contract; as a symbol of status—all these were recognized by Marx. But he focused on two functions of money in a capitalist economy which seemed to him to have political and indeed moral implications. One was the treatment of money as a commodity, a demand for money in itself, as treasure, as a general equivalent with special qualities which cause it to be sought and accumulated for its own sake. This hoarding or 'treasurisation' (*thésaurisation*) as Suzanne de Brunhoff has discussed it,[3] not only gives a source of power; it is linked with another feature, the quality money has of concealing basic social relationships by developing the productive forces of social labour beyond the limits of ordinary wants. Marx refers to this theme in the *Critique of Political Economy*, then opens it up near the beginning of *Capital* and returns to it again near the end: 'this money form is the very thing which veils instead of disclosing the social character of private or individual labour, and therewith hides the social relations between the individual producers.' What are these social relations? That in a wage-labour system 'the money relation hides the fact that the wage worker works part of his time for nothing' because of the

[1] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (*Rohentwurf*), 1857–1858, Moscow, 1939, 395–6, cf. 414.

[2] *Capital*, 32.

[3] *La Monnaie chez Marx*, Paris, 1967; Marx's term was *Schatzbildung* (*Zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, Erstes Heft, Berlin, 1859, 104–16).

appropriation of surplus value by the employer. Money in various contexts is the absolute commodity; the individual incarnation of social labour; a radical leveller, effacing all distinctions; a social power become a private power; mirroring the antagonism lying between economic conditions of existence at a deeper level.[1] In such vivid challenging way, with at times an almost lyrical account of the disruption of human feelings by money which transforms and inverts all qualities, Marx saw money as the master not the servant of man in capitalist society.[1]

Marx's conception of early society was linked with all this. Part of a large work written in 1857–8 in preparation for what ultimately emerged as Marx's great study of *Das Kapital* was devoted to forms of pre-capitalist production—*Formen, die der kapitalistischen Produktion vorhergehn.* Known to connoisseurs of Marx familiarly as the *Formen*, this work has become available only recently (first published in Moscow, 1939;[2] in Berlin, 1952; in London, 1964). Till then a conventional listing of Marx's evolutionary stages of society was: 'asiatic', ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production.[3] Each was defined by its economic regime, that of the 'Asiatic' mode being state control; of ancient society being slavery; of feudal society, serfdom; and of bourgeois society, wage-labour. The *Formen* not only gave a broader basis for these developments but also indicated more flexibility in the sequence. The primal material for all these early economic and social forms was purportedly the primitive communal society, which is a subject of special anthropological interest.

Marx seems to have had ambivalent attitudes towards this concept of a primitive society. Early in *Capital* he adopts a lofty tone: 'The social productive organisms of ancient days were far simpler, enormously more easy to understand, than is bourgeois society.' But they were based, he held, either upon the immaturity of the individual human being (who had not yet severed the umbilical cord which, under primitive conditions, unites all the members of the human species one with another) or upon relations of domination and subjugation. They were the outcome of a low grade of the evolution of the productive powers

[1] *Capital*, 49, 113, 117, 120, 589; see also Marx's views in Economy and Philosophical Manuscripts, trans. T. B. Bottomore, op. cit. 189–94.

[2] *Grundrisse*, Heft v, 375–413. The valuable introduction to the English edition (Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, trans. Jack Cohen, introd. Eric J. Hobsbawm, London, 1964) gives the history of the work.

[3] Preface to *Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, 1859, vi.

of labour. . . . This restrictedness in the concrete world of fact was reflected in the ideal world, of religion . . .—and so on. Later in the same work, in writing on co-operation in the labour process—and lumping together hunting tribes and Indian agricultural communities—he repeated his navel-string analogy, but linked it with communal ownership of the means of production.[1] Modern anthropology has rejected such notions of primitive immaturity, and of individual merged in group. It has also demonstrated that while the structure of production may be simple, the structure of social relationships linked with it can be quite complex and not at all 'easy to understand'. On the other hand, in the *Formen*, loosely expressed and repetitive, Marx presented a view of man in an early social state which allowed him to preserve his human dignity, before the alienations produced by capitalist exploitation—including primarily separation (estrangement) from the means of production. An individual, said Marx, has an objective mode of existence in his ownership of the earth as the original instrument of his labour, mediated by his membership of a community—'his primitive existence as part of a tribe etc.'. Marx stressed the dialectical principle—that activity of production upon the soil changed not only the material environment but also the relations of the producers, who transform and develop themselves with new powers, new conceptions, new modes of intercourse, new needs, and new speech.[2] It is clear that Marx admired such an image of primitive communalism. 'The ancient conception, in which man always appears . . . as the aim of production, seems very much more exalted than the modern world, in which production is the aim of man and wealth the aim of production. . . . Hence in one way the child-like world of the ancients appears to be superior; and this is so, in so far as we seek for closed shape, form and established limitations . . .' (op. cit. 50, 84–5). Here surely is an echo of the Romantic movement,[3] tempered by a wistful recognition that a world of closed shape cannot last but bears its own forces of change within it. Marx did not stay wistful long. To this mood succeeded an analysis to show how, through the process of history, working through the media of private property in land

[1] *Capital*, 53, 350–1. Cf. J. Suret-Canale (*infra*) who insists that 'primitive' refers only to hunters and collectors, not agriculturalists.

[2] *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, 81, 93.

[3] Cf. Ernest Seillière, *Les Mystiques du néo-romantisme*, 2 edn., Paris, 1911, 207 et seq.—a work mentioned to me by Julian Pitt-Rivers.

and exchange, man becomes individualized and parted from the fruits of his labour.

Now Marx's antithesis between communal and private is too sharp, even making allowance for his valid conception of communal ownership and private possession. He clearly failed to realize the complexity of rights over property, including property in land, characteristic of a primitive agricultural community. If Marx had consulted not the Lewis Morgan of *Ancient Society* (1877) as he did later, but the Morgan of the *League of the Iroquois* (1851) published half-a-dozen years before the *Formen* were composed, he would have found some general statements about the spirit of freedom never having felt 'the power of gain', and about 'absence of property in a comparative sense'; but he would have had nevertheless a complex system of property rights to face. Among the Iroquois, according to Morgan, material property was limited—to planting lots, orchards, houses, weapons, grain, skins, ornaments, etc. But the rights to property of both husband and wife continued distinct through the existence of their marriage, the wife, having inherited matrilineally, controlling and holding her own and in case of separation taking it with her. No individual could get absolute title to land, which was vested in the whole community, but his use of any portion was acknowledged and protected. (Morgan stated that an Iroquois could sell his improvements, which seems like a bourgeois gloss, but perhaps some form of transfer for equivalent was possible; alternatively he could bequeath them to his wife.) The wife's orchards were inherited by her children, while the husband's were not unless he specifically allocated them in the presence of a witness—when presumably his own near matrilineal kin's interests could be raised.[1]

Attention to this and other available ethnographic information would have enabled what Hobsbawm calls Marx's 'tantalisingly sketchy observations' to have been much more realistic.

But did Marx want them to be realistic? It must be understood that his 'primitive communalism' was a fiction, based, apart from India, on whose social conditions he had read widely, upon very slender ethnographic materials.

The issue comes up squarely with Marx's concept of capital. Many anthropologists have adopted a classification of capital which includes instruments of production in the possession of

[1] Lewis H. Morgan, *League of the Ho-De'-No-Sau-Nee, Iroquois*, Rochester, 1851, 139, 141, 326–7.

the producers and helping to yield income when utilized by labour. This is part of a classical economist's category. Marx of course would have none of this, since for him capital can arise only when the means of production are separated from the control of the worker. He rejected the notion of capital as formed from accumulation—saying *inter alia* that little or no accumulation is possible anyway in the simpler production conditions. His view was that the original formation of capital occurs because the historic process of dissolution of an old mode of production allowed value in the form of monetary wealth to buy the objective conditions of labour and exchange the worker's labour for money. (This is part of his elaborate argument on surplus value.) Since this was central to Marx's whole argument he was prepared to treat as capital only the alienated, the disjunctive elements in the production situation. But on any reading, in the *Formen* Marx clearly failed to realize that even in 'primitive communalism' of the structure he described there could be capital in a form analogous to his own sense—production instruments not owned or controlled by the worker who used them. For instance, a man in a 'primitive' Polynesian society could borrow a canoe (which he may not have helped to build) and use it as a necessary fishing aid, by tacit agreement to provide later repayments in fish or labour.[1] If capital be looked at simply as a factor in production, there is no logical reason to class under it only those items of productive equipment which are separated from the worker's possession.[2] Marx's basic thesis, the significance in economic, social, and political structure of capitalism as a system, needs no underlining. But there is a case for considering *conjoined* as well as *disjoined capital* in terms of relation of control over instrument of production by the user of it.

[1] Raymond Firth, *Primitive Polynesian Economy*, 1939, 62, 319. Marx held that 'primitive' instruments of labour were only property in the sense of being part of land ownership (*Formations*, 99)—but empirically this was not so; they were often separate.

[2] e.g. Robert Szereszewski (*Structural Changes in the Economy of Ghana* 1891–1911, London, 1965, 22–3) discusses man-made assets of the traditional economy: the stock of dwelling units, simple tools, canoes, etc.—some of them on the border-line of capital goods owing to high depreciation rates. The main analytically interesting feature, in his view, is that these were simple transformations of tool-aided labour, into capital assets. 'This is the simplest case of capitalisation, without the structural problems of capital-formation; the problems of conveying and integrating several flows of inputs and factor services into a final structure.'

How now is one to judge the *Formen* from an anthropological view? Opinions differ about the value of the work. Marx obviously saw it as historical, though he did say much later (in a letter to Zasulich in 1881) that primitive communities were not all cut to a single pattern but on the contrary they form a series of social groupings differing in type and age, and marking successive phases of development (op. cit. 144). But even Hobsbawm, who regards this work as 'Marx at his most brilliant and profound' holds that it is not 'history' in the strict sense. There is generally a convention that 'history' can be related to a body of independently verifiable evidence. By this standard, while much of *Das Kapital* is historical writing, those parts of the *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* which most concern anthropologists are not. What they do represent is not easy to discover. Linking with the idea of history in non-strict sense we may remember Lévi-Strauss's withdrawal of the line between history and myth, or rather between what is claimed as history and what is rejected as myth. Invoking Marx himself, in combination with Freud, Lévi-Strauss reminds us that it is vain to go to the historical consciousness for the truest meaning; both history and myth are selective, serving special interests.[1] Are the *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* then myth? Though he does not specifically discuss this work Robert Tucker, a political scientist, would evidently think so. He regards Marx as apprehending and portraying not an empirical set of processes but an inner reality; as projecting an inner drama as a social drama, representing a self-system in conflict in terms of a social system in conflict. On this view, Marx constructed a myth of the warfare between labour and capital, and his account of precapitalist society would clearly form part of the background to the myth.[2] But I think that in the definitional field the question of commitment, of belief, is relevant here, and it is uncertain how far Marx was involved by faith or by logic in this scheme.

Some scholars, including some Marxist anthropologists, have held that despite occasional insights, Marx's treatment of prefeudal society in the *Formen* is highly schematic, superficial, with a loose, sketchy typology which has led Marxists astray—presumably because they felt committed to it.[3] I see the interest of

[1] *La Pensée sauvage*, Paris, 1962, 336 et seq.

[2] Robert Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx*, Cambridge, 1961, especially 218–32.

[3] Marvin Harris, op. cit., 227; Claude Meillassoux, 'From Reproduction

these pre-capitalist economic formations from another angle—not as history, not as an empirical contribution to a typology of social forms, certainly not as Hobsbawm does, as a work of 'unbroken internal logic' of elegant form, but not just as myth. I think that in the modern idiom it may be called a model, and not without interest, though rather old-fashioned and adopted without proper ethnographic testing. It is a model which is interesting because it is articulated at every point with the much more complex and powerful construction in the study of *Capital*; moreover, as Tucker has indicated more generally it reveals almost as much about Marx as about the subject he discusses. In essence, as I see it, what Marx drafted in the *Formen* was a mirror image of what he wrote in *Capital*—to put it crudely, he wrote the dialectic backwards.[1] I think this is exemplified by Marx's treatment of co-operation in a passage in *Capital* dealing with pre-capitalist conditions. He writes of co-operation in the labour process in the dawn of civilization, but attributes it to a type of collectivity analogous to that of a hive of bees; primitive co-operation is sharply distinguished from capitalist co-operation. In Marx's view, clearly, primitive co-operation is an almost instinctive reflex of community membership, while capitalist co-operation presupposes free wage workers who sell their labour power to capital. Then contrasting capitalist co-operation with the arrangements of peasant agriculture and independent craftsmanship he makes the paradoxical statement that co-operation manifests itself as a historical form peculiar to the capitalist process of production, and specifically differentiating that process. The change to co-operation is the first change undergone by the actual labour process when subjected to the dominion of capital.[2] To anthropologists who have observed co-operation in primitive economies this appropriation of the term to capitalism seems very odd.[3] It could be argued that capitalist co-operation, though falling under the same category as primitive co-operation, is so complex as to constitute a different order, but Marx does not argue

to Production: A Marxist Approach to Economic Anthropology', *Economy and Society*, 1, 1972, 97–8.

[1] Perhaps this is what Hobsbawm meant by a passage which is still obscure to me—that the draft work attempts to discover in the analysis of social evolution the characteristics of *any* dialectical, or indeed of any satisfying, theory on any subject whatsoever! op. cit. 11.

[2] *Capital*, 351.

[3] Cf. e.g. Firth, op. cit. 115–16, 134–9, 275–6, 298.

so. For him the essential criterion of co-operation is the simultaneous occupation of numerous wage workers in the same labour process. What he really had in mind, it would seem, was co-operation in the sense of side-by-side reduplication of activity, not the fitting together of labour and skills. Because the former gave the conceptual base for his analysis of capitalism—'the starting point of capitalist production'—he minimized the latter in the primitive field, and ignored the significance of decision-making in the primitive community.[1]

This is further illustrated in some argument about exchange in economic anthropology. From a Marxist viewpoint exchange in primitive society is of essentially different quality than in an industrial society where the economy has separated the means of production from the worker. Here, it is argued, things exchanged have become simple commodities stripped of their human relevance; transactions are profit-seeking and so can operate as a means of extracting surplus value from the worker over and above the return he gets from his labour on them. In a primitive society, as Karl Polanyi and others have often held, exchange, like other economic relations, is 'embedded' in social relations. Put another way, as Maurice Godelier has stated it, kinship is dominant and serves both as infrastructure and superstructure. Correspondingly, universals in economic process are denied—capital, co-operation, exchange, scarcity can be only the product of historical conditions. So the principles of economics themselves must be different for pre-capitalist and capitalist economies—for primitive economies the formulations of what is called 'utility economics' have no meaning.[2]

Now I myself, with other anthropologists, have emphasized

[1] J. Suret-Canale ('Les sociétés traditionnelles en Afrique tropicale et le concept de mode de production asiatique', *La Pensée*, 117, 1964, 21–42) argues that ethnologists have misunderstood Marx on primitive communalism because the only definition one can give to such societies is that they do not and cannot allow of exploitation of man by man, and so of antagonistic classes, from the low level of productive forces. 'Nothing is more false than to imagine such people as deprived of individuality.' But this not only sidesteps the basic issue of mode of property-holding, in empirical terms; it also ignores Marx's own 'worker bee as part of the hive' analogy, for members of a primitive community.

[2] Ronald Frankenberg, 'Economic Anthropology: One Anthropologist's View', in Raymond Firth (ed.), *Themes in Economic Anthropology*, ASA Mon. 6, London, 1967, 51–70; Maurice Godelier, *infra*, 1970, 355; 1971, 96; Claude Meillassoux, op. cit., and introd., *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, London, 1971, 68–9.

the social character of exchange in primitive societies, and examined the limitations of contemporary formal economic analysis in such conditions. But for orthodox Marxists much of their argument, if taken literally, is self-defeating. For instance, if exchange is completely socialized in a primitive economy, then this destroys the contention that value is simply crystallized labour—symbolic elements must be included in the scheme. It is sometimes held that to speak of exchange or capital—perhaps even co-operation—as applying to a primitive economy is to import anachronistic categories more proper to capitalism. But the reverse is also true—to insist that primitive exchange is essentially different from our own, that a primitive society knows no capital relations, that true co-operation is peculiar to capitalism, is a kind of dialectical negation which denigrates the economic perceptions and judgement of non-capitalistic man.

The pre-capitalist economic formations are not an empirical outline of early types of economy and society, but an imaginative sketch, selecting out the main themes which Marx regarded as foils in his war against capitalism. The work is not literal Marx, it is Marx in figurative dress. It does call attention to critical elements in the economic fabric and raise significant questions. The idea of value as crystallized labour is a metaphysical assertion.[1] Taken literally, the question: where is value really bred, in the muscles or in the head?—is futile. But figuratively, it calls up difficult problems of relation between effort and estimation that students of economic anthropology continue to ponder over.[2]

Then take the so-called 'Asiatic' mode of production. This has presented problems to Marxists who hold to the conventional evolutionary scheme since its relation to the Western series, e.g. feudalism, is not clear. Marx's views on the 'Asiatic' mode of production seem to have been based mainly on his reading of the

[1] See the opinion of Joan Robinson, *Economic Philosophy*, London, 1962, 34–41. R. H. Tawney traced this assertion back to the Middle Ages—'The true descendant of the doctrines of Aquinas is the labour theory of value. The last of the Schoolmen was Karl Marx' (*Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, Pelican, 1938, 49, 52). Ernest Seillière (op. cit. 281–90) writes of Marx's 'divinisation' of simple labour power.

[2] e.g. for anthropological discussion of labour-time as an arbitrary measure of value in non-monetary economic conditions see C. S. Belshaw, *Changing Melanesia: Social Economics of Culture Contact*, Melbourne, 1954, 149–50; R. F. Salisbury, *From Stone to Steel*, Melbourne, 1962, 106–11, 186; Ronald Frankenberg, op. cit. 70–4.

situation in India. In 1853 he agreed with Engels that the absence of private landed property was effectively the key to all the Orient, and added as indices that all public works were controlled by the central government, and the villages were 'little worlds' of their own. Now many social anthropologists know from their own field experience that this is a caricature—the range of variation is great. But Marx's assertions about the main themes—control of public works versus private enterprise; role of central government versus local community—like his examination of communism in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*—have provoked illuminating discussion about the relation between political and economic forms. The cryptic possibilities of the 'Asiatic' mode, however, have made some modern interpreters inquire whether it may not have had universal validity at an early stage of history, or, forebodingly, when all capitalist modes of production have been socialized the result may be not the end of exploitation but the spread of the 'Asiatic' mode to all mankind.[1]

Relevant to a model or figurative interpretation of Marx's observations on pre-capitalist formations is the Marxist argument, rather loftily advanced, that Marx's theory is not an empiricism, is not concerned with patterns of events, but with theoretical conceptions of an inner structure of relations lying behind the events and explaining them. While ignoring Marx's own concern, in his truly historical studies, for correlation of theory with observed fact, this is in line with his stress on the characteristics of the system as responsible for the apparently free acts of the individuals within it.

Marx's own attitude to this whole set of problems is also relevant to the interpretation. It seems quite clear that Marx regarded his basic postulates about humanity as having a definite moral component, of absolute, not simply historical value. He was not simply analytical, he was indignant about man's treatment of man in capitalist society—though it was the system, not the individuals who bore the responsibility. It is Hobsbawm's view that Marx found himself increasingly appalled by the inhumanity of Western capitalism, after earlier welcoming it as an inhuman but progressive force compared

[1] See Ferenc Tökei, Maurice Godelier, *et al.* in *La Pensée*, 114, 1964, 3–73. An attempt to provide the 'Asiatic' mode of production with universal value at an early stage in the Marxist scheme was given by Jean Suret-Canale, op. cit., but criticized by Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (*La Pensée*, 144, 1969, 61–78), who argues for a specific African mode of production.

with the stagnant pre-capitalist economies. But as Hobsbawm pointed out, Marx's thought cannot be interpreted as merely an ethical demand for the liberation of man.[1] Yet his belief in 'the triumph of the free development of all men' has no trace of relativity about it; the inevitable was also the desirable. Likewise, the appeal of doctrines about labour and value and alienation rests largely upon their moral implications, their passionate sentiments, as Alfred Espinas said nearly a century ago; or as a recent writer has put it concerning *Capital*, it is to be seen not as a treatise upon economics but as a dramatic history designed to involve its readers in the events described.[2] There is no suggestion either that Marx regarded his values as determined by his own class position.[3]

The upshot of all this is that where they particularly concern social anthropology, I contend, Marx's own theories have no special claim to be 'scientific' or 'historical'. And, parenthetically, a successful revolution does not prove the correctness of Marx's theories any more than—as Marx himself would have argued—the success of the Christian Church proves claims to the divinity of Christ. On the other hand, as a model, a series of systematically articulated propositions subject to variation and testing, Marx's theories deserve continued scrutiny. If only as an irritant, they stimulate the collection and reinterpretation of data which may modify their conclusions. It is the literal interpretation of Marx, the 'vulgar Marxism' of intellectual as well as political committment which does not belong to our discipline. For social anthropology, literal Marxism is intellectual atrophy.

This is evident from some of the work of Marx's followers. Neither Engels's *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the*

[1] E. J. Hobsbawm, op. cit. 12, 50; cf. Robert Tucker, op. cit. 14–21.

[2] John Lewis, *The Life and Teaching of Karl Marx*, London, 1965, 187.

[3] Eugene Kamenka (*The Ethical Foundations of Marxism*, London, 1962, 28) holds that Marx's concept of freedom was largely moulded by Hegelian philosophy, reinforced by an outstanding character trait—an almost Nietzschean concern with dignity, seen as independence and mastery over things. For the problem of transcendence of class position see e.g. Norman Birnbaum, op. cit. 93; Raymond Aron, op. cit. I, 218. Cf. also Karl Marx, *Capital*, 864.

I have used transcendence in the ordinary secular sense of surmounting a particular in favour of a more general aim. Raya Dunayevskaya (*Marxism and Freedom . . . from 1776 until Today*, New York, 1958, 319) discusses transcendence more technically, in relation to alienation. Cf. Robert Tucker (op. cit. 57) on the Hegelian concept of self-realization through successive transcending of limits.

State (1884) nor Lafargue's *Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilization* (1890) is of much theoretical interest to modern social anthropologists.[1] In professional Marxist anthropology, the work of Soviet ethnographers suffered for long from a literal interpretation of Marxism. An interest in substantiating the methodology of historical materialism led to an immense accumulation of data but a cramping of theoretical exploration, in what a French Marxist, Emmanuel Terray, has described as developing in a 'closed vessel' (*vase clos*). But some modern Soviet anthropological work has been intellectually stimulating as well as ethnographically up-to-date, treating Marx and Engels more flexibly.[2]

The development of contemporary Western anthropological interest in the work of Karl Marx I put down to three main considerations. One is a broadening of theoretical interest as the ideas of other major sociological figures have been worked through. More important is the confrontation of anthropologists with radical changes in the character of their material, which the existing body of theory has not yet been able to handle adequately. Then a questioning of established institutions and values, and a deep sense of their contradictions, has led to a search for a theory to correspond. Marxist doctrine offers a coherent diagnosis and systematic explanation of the world's disorders, founded upon what claims to be a philosophical approach understanding the principles of the inner reality of social existence.

[1] Paul Lafargue (a son-in-law of Marx) credits Vico with having been the first to apprehend 'the great law of historical development' of the universal stages in human society. Engels, who seems to have been mildly paranoid about his work, said in his preface to the 4th edition (1891) that 'the chauvinistically inclined English anthropologists are still striving their utmost to kill by silence the revolution which Morgan's discoveries have effected in our conception of primitive history, while they appropriate his results without the slightest compunction'.

[2] e.g. on an Asian theme J. V. Maretin, *Bijdragen tot de taal*, etc., 1961, 168–95) has shown the Minangkabau system of Sumatra to have been changing from its matrilineal form, not due, as had been alleged, to a more consistent application of Islamic law, but rather to economic developments, including a move to production of commercial crops. More generally (I know only the translations) interesting work has appeared in *Sovietskaya Ethnografia* and in international congress and other essay papers, under the names of, for instance, O. Akhmanova, V. P. Alexeiev, I. L. Andreiev, M. S. Butinova, L. V. Danilova, V. Kroupianskaia, D. A. Olderogge, A. I. Pershits, L. P. Potapov.

The question whether or how far any individual anthropologist is a Marxist is not of much relevance. But among Western professed Marxists one may differentiate what may be colloquially called 'gut-Marxists' from 'cerebral Marxists'. 'Gut-Marxists' are those who feel deeply about the world situation, hold that it conforms broadly to Marx's theories of class conflict, base and superstructure, etc., and espouse his interpretation of historical development with moral fervour. Such an overt orientation, with elements of literal Marxism, has recently come to expression in Western social anthropology. Six months ago, in an attempt to infuse anthropological discussion with a greater sense of relevance for problems of radical change, several open sessions of the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in New York were devoted to symposia on Marxism. Critical appraisal was made of contemporary anthropology in the light of historical materialism as an explanatory method, and of the social relations of imperialism as a body of relevant but neglected fact. Discussions of problems created by Western economic and political dominance of lesser developed societies, of the significance of migratory labour for a colonial regime, of the genesis of proletarian consciousness, of class identity and struggle, of the political role of a peasantry were pointers to the desire for a re-orientation of anthropological theory towards a more explicit ideological position. Out of this somewhat confused set of empirical data and general formal propositions one sensed the concern of many anthropologists, including students, that our discipline was being used to support an exploitative system.

Linked with such intellectual positions has arisen a body of opinion calling for a much more direct involvement of anthropologists in the socio-political situations they study, primarily in terms of Marxist interpretation. Reiterating the fallacy of a claim to a disinterested social science, such views call for an awakening of anthropology to its social responsibilities and for active participation in change. As some of my colleagues will remember, such positions are not altogether new in British social anthropology.

In the present climate of the discussion I think some of the polemical issues should not be entirely avoided. It is becoming a popular cliché now to write of anthropology, particularly social anthropology, as the child—or the grandchild, or the step-child—of colonialism. British social anthropology here is an easy mark because unlike the Americans or the Russians we

have acknowledged our colonies as such; and unlike the French and the Dutch we produced between the wars a new and fruitful body of anthropological theory which has since been used as a vigorous analytical instrument. Criticism has been levelled at the whole discipline of social anthropology, and at leading figures personally, for having adapted their studies in the interests of colonial rule. Ironically in the light of what I quoted earlier from Radcliffe-Brown, he among others has been described as always desiring that anthropology be a relevant, practical science, in order to win funds and recognition by government, and for the purposes of British imperialism. In the light of the strategy of British colonialism to maintain control over their subject peoples, far-sighted anthropologists, it is said, regarded with alarm the symptoms of social change, and regarded it as their mission to provide colonial authorities with the knowledge needed to allow them to retain their political control. While such charges have been made sincerely, much of this is a travesty, argued from a point of view as partisan as that which is stigmatized.[1] While it may be true as Schumpeter has stated, that political criticism cannot be met effectively by rational argument, a brief comment is in place.

To begin with, anthropology is not the bastard of colonialism but the legitimate offspring of the Enlightenment. Interest in the practical relevance of social anthropology over the last forty years has been very uneven, but has been definitely very secondary to comparative general theoretical interest. The study of social change has long ceased to be confused with applied anthropology. In the applied context, while it has seemed to make sense to advocate that knowledge of the structure and functioning of African and other alien institutions was preferable to ignorance, this knowledge has been regarded by anthropologists primarily as means to securing more respect for people's own values, not as a means of controlling them more effectively. Some anthropologists have explicitly rejected the idea that they should be expected to serve administration

[1] For vivid controversy on these issues, see Bernard Magubane *et al.* 'A Critical Look at Indices Used in the Study of Social Change in Colonial Africa', *Current Anthropology*, 12, 1971, 419–43.

For a reasoned argument see Jack Stauder, 'The Function of Functionalism: The Adaptation of British Social Anthropology to British Colonialism in Africa', Paper presented at Meetings of the American Anthropological Association in New York, November, 1971 (my copy by courtesy of Mr. Stauder).

policy or proselytizing campaign, or refused to accept a claim of the absolute validity of Western moral standards invoked to enlist anthropological assistance.[1] Many have recorded the disruptive effects of a colonial situation upon the societies they studied, and some have specifically examined the significance of colonialism as a social type.[2] Indeed I would argue that one role of social anthropology has been to supply ammunition for the forces of contradiction within the system. Governments have supported anthropology, but anthropology is dedicated to exposure of the structures and values of the societies studied. This includes making clear the aims and interests of the people as stated by themselves and revealed in their own behaviour, in terms of their own conflicts as well as integrative ties. In the history of the subject this has been recognized by some members of the societies concerned who have come to anthropology for analytical tools to aid them in their search and struggle, or who have appreciated the record anthropologists have made of their institutions at a given point of time. In this whole historical context, it is well to remember what Karl Marx wrote of the factory inspectors, the medical reporters on public health, and other officers in Britain on whose observations he drew so heavily for his generalizations on their capitalist society. He did not accuse them of subjectivism or of supporting the system; he praised their competence, their freedom from bias and from respect of persons, and their power to search out the truth. I suggest that despite their failings, social anthropologists have on the whole been at least as competent and perceptive as factory inspectors—and perhaps have worked harder and suffered more.[3]

There is also a comparative issue. Kathleen Gough has pointed out that social anthropologists from the beginning have inhabited a triple environment, involving obligations first to the people we studied, second to our colleagues and our science, and third to the powers who employed us in universities or who funded our research. She says, justly, that in many cases we now

[1] For some of my own views see *We, The Tikopia*, London, 1936, 599; 'Colonial Societies and Their Economic Background', *The Colonial Review*, Dec. 1946, 230–2.

[2] See e.g. G. Balandier, *Sociologie actuelle de L'Afrique noire* (1955), Paris, 2nd edn. 1963, 3 et seq. Balandier gives a reasoned consideration of Marx's views in his *Anthropologie politique*, Paris, 1967.

[3] Karl Marx, *Capital*, 863–4 (preface to 1st edn.). I find that Lévi-Strauss has also appreciated this passage (*Anthropologie structurale*, Paris, 1958, 417 n.).

seem to be in danger of being torn apart by the conflicts between the first and the third set—the peoples and the governments; while the loyalties to our science, as an objective and humane endeavour, are being severely tested and jeopardized. Now much crude Marxist argument speaks as if these issues were quite clear and their identification simple. But as Ioan Lewis has pointed out in comment, the anthropologist's duty to side with the 'oppressed' rather than with the 'oppressor' may have great poignancy for those who work in the contemporary 'Third World'.[1] The interests and aspirations of local societies may be at complete odds with wider needs for economic development and viability, or unification on some broad political or religious platform. Lenin held that in conditions of colonial oppression nationalist movements should be encouraged for their revolutionary importance (though Marx, who looked on colonialism as historically inevitable, did not express very definite opinion on this point).[2] But in modern states the issue of encouragement may be highly complex. Among peoples well-known in anthropological literature the Micronesians want self-determination from the United States, who holds them in the firm grasp of a strategic Trusteeship Territory. The issue here is fairly clear. But what about the Nagas of Assam, who are fighting for independence from India, who, they say, is their oppressor; is there neo-colonialism in this situation?

It is from such points of view that to a so-called 'liberal' anthropologist of socialist interests, the successful revolutionary societies such as the U.S.S.R., the Peoples' Republic of China, or Cuba, are still part of the problem, not part of the solution. They still present the basic dilemma—of maintaining relative freedom and creativity for individuals in the course of securing centralized decision or common action on matters of public import. Problems of power and hence potentials of conflict occur in all large-scale organizations. One solution—a guiding party of the élite with a rigorous discipline, may mean the crystallization of a privileged bureaucracy, intent on keeping power but using the name of the people. Another solution—of trying to maintain a continuing revolution by the masses—can generate enthusiastic participation but can involve undiscrim-

[1] See Social Responsibilities Symposium, *Current Anthropology*, 9, 1968, 405, 418.

[2] See introd., Schlomo Avineri, *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, New York, 1969, 13–14.

inating criticism and impulsive waste of skills and resources. Marxists have their vocabulary and interpretations for all this. But for social anthropologists the underlying issue remains: anywhere where control of information has become an overt instrument of public policy, freedom of scientific opinion is at risk. This may apply especially to 'grass-roots' sciences such as ours, which explore and expose dissidence and conflict at an empirical, often local level.

In the West, 'gut-Marxists'—or 'organic intellectuals', if the term be preferred—have the function of stimulating anthropological awareness of relevant political variables in the social situations we study. But it is significant that nowhere as yet in the writings of Soviet anthropologists, nor of post-revolution Chinese anthropologists in the People's Republic, by any evidence that has reached the West, does one find the depth of critical scrutiny of the effects of revolutionary process on the structure of their local communities, in terms comparable to those in which Western anthropologists have written of the transformation of the lesser developed societies in Africa, Oceania, and elsewhere.

The work of 'cerebral' Marxists—some of it clearly revisionist—can be best exemplified from French anthropology, which has opened up problems of a highly theoretical order. Predictably, the issue has been raised of how the thought of Lévi-Strauss, claiming some ancestry in Marx, can be fitted to Marx's conception of history; can the structures of Lévi-Strauss conform to a theory of change? Alternatively, how far are Marx's theories of the origin and development of social forms consistent with modern structuralist concepts? Some Marxists have been uncompromising and rejected Lévi-Strauss's structuralism as a variant of bourgeois ideology. Others have sought a reconciliation. Godelier, for instance, has argued that while the traditional analysis of Marx's work on the dialectic is hopelessly wrong, the essence of the treatment of *Capital* is its perception of structure in terms not of visible relationships but of their hidden logic; hence Marx is clearly a forerunner of the modern structuralist movement. Moreover, Godelier buttresses this view by holding that a correct interpretation of Marx's work would show that the study of the internal functioning of a structure must precede consideration of its origins and development.[1] Basic to much of

[1] Maurice Godelier, 'System, Structure and Contradiction in *Das Kapital*' in Michael Lane (ed.), *Introduction to Structuralism*, New York, 1970, 340–58;

such argument is a clash over the meaning of history—whether it is to be understood as a demonstrably empirical continuous working out of human activities by dialectical process in specified time contexts, as in Sartre's version of the Marxist view; or whether it is to be seen in a more abstract way as a series of discontinuous choices of incidents and processes fitted by men into a logical order in terms of general modes of thought. Hence the contrasting contentions: that the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss is a-historic, or universally historic; or that what Sartre calls history is to Lévi-Strauss another form of myth.[1] It could be an interesting exercise for anthropologists to translate into such alternative terms of event and conceptualization the Marx-Engels statement that the history of all past society has consisted in the development of class antagonisms.

A related set of issues concerns Marx's well-worn proposition that the aggregate of production relations constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis on which a juridical and political superstructure is erected, to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.[2] Sophisticated Marxist interpretations reject a crude determinism in the relation of the social to the economic, and offer other formulations for the connection. Godelier argues for example that in a 'primitive' society kinship does not grow out from relations of production but actually functions as such; that there is an internal correspondence between economy and kinship until in social evolution they separate in functional differentiation. But some of the modern Marxist argument about what is popularly known as the problem of infrastructure and superstructures (Marx himself wrote *Basis* and *Ueberbau*) tends to be only a reformulation in more abstract terms of what other social anthropologists have given in analysis of relationships between such interdependent variables.[3]

Lévi-Strauss has taken another line. Starting from the idea

idem, 'Myth and History', *New Left Review*, 69, 1971, 93–112. For a general theoretical treatment see Lucien Sebag, *Marxisme et structuralisme*, Paris, 1964.

[1] See Lawrence Rosen, 'Language, History, and the Logic of Inquiry in Lévi-Strauss and Sartre', *History and Theory*, 10, 1971, 269–94; cf. Stanley Diamond, 'What History *Is*', in *Process and Pattern in Culture*, *supra*, 29–46.

[2] *Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, 1859, v.

[3] Cf. E. R. Leach, to the effect that kinship systems have no 'reality' at all except in relation to land and property (*Pul Eliya*, Cambridge, 1961, 305 *et passim*).

that myths are an expression, disguised in language, of fundamental principles of social conflict, his impressive analysis aims to interpose between base and superstructures a mediator, a synthesizing operator, in the form of a conceptual scheme of defined structures of thought, which incorporate such principles. So the development from basic activity into behaviour patterns (*praxis* into *pratiques* in his play upon words) becomes more intelligible. So he has enlarged the theory of superstructures, which as he notes, has been scarcely sketched out by Marx.[1]

More concrete concern has been given to modes of production in 'pre-capitalist' societies, and their interaction with social factors. Claude Meillassoux, for instance, has examined production, distribution, and alliances in a segmentary lineage society, the Guro of the Ivory Coast. Tracing the change from subsistence economy to commercial agriculture, he identifies the most significant determining forces in the social relations in each phase of the economic transformation, placing particular emphasis on the controlling role of the eldest male sibling in a household.[2] In a more general context Meillassoux has also pointed out the inadequacy of Marx's own generalizations about pre-capitalist societies. He advocates more systematic exploration of their economic formations, using theoretical insights from Marx's own more developed analysis in *Capital*. So, starting from Marx's notion of land as an instrument of labour in self-sustaining agricultural communities, Meillassoux develops an argument that it is not control of the means of production that is of prime significance for exercise of power, but control of the means of *re*production by wealth—over subsistence and over women. He looks to continuity and change over time, e.g. the generation succession, as essential to the socio-economic organization. He also places such economic formations in a historical frame by considering the radical transformations that take place in conditions of modern capitalist development. His treatment is sometimes doctrinaire, misconceptions about 'universalism' and other theoretical issues in the views of

[1] *La Pensée sauvage*, Paris, 1962, 173; *The Savage Mind*, Chicago, 1966, 130.

[2] Claude Meillassoux, *Anthropologie économique des Gouro de Côte d'Ivoire*, Le Monde d'outre-mer, 1 ser. xxvii, Paris, 1964. Cf. review by Emmanuel Terray, *Le Marxisme devant les sociétés 'primitives'*, Paris, 1972, pt. II, arguing *inter alia* against a concept of any unitary 'mode of production' at this pre-capitalist phase; and critical review from a more orthodox Marxist standpoint by Jean Suret-Canale, *La Pensée*, 135, 1967, 94–106.

'liberal' economic anthropologists seem apparent. But the approach is critical, of Marx as well as of others; concepts are reformulated in a lively systematic way. As with Godelier and the Baruya of New Guinea or Terray and the Dida of West Africa, so with Meillassoux and the Guro—there is association of theory with intensive field research that refreshingly puts Marx's thought in its proper light as material for scientific use.

Yet Marx's militancy is not forgotten. In his confrontation of Marxism with studies of primitive society Emmanuel Terray spiritedly sets out as a final objective the capture of social anthropology. It is the present task of Marxist researchers, he notes, to annex the reserved domain of social anthropology to the field of application of historical materialism, i.e. to prove the universal validity of concepts and methods elaborated by it. The aim is to replace social anthropology by a particular section of historical materialism consecrated to socio-economic formations where the capitalist mode of production is absent (op. cit. 173). Though it is envisaged that ethnologists will collaborate with historians on this work, nothing is said about possible demarcation problems and power structures that might be involved.

If the older Marxist combination of outworn evolutionary schemes, economic determinism, apocalyptic vision, and demand for total intellectual commitment have alienated many social anthropologists, some theoretical propositions of Marxism have had effect. Ideas about the political significance of relations of production, about class structure and class formation, about alienation, about ideology, with some aspects of the dialectical method, have seeped through the traditional walls. Some years ago I myself drew attention to the significance of Marx for 'dynamic' theory in social anthropology: the importance of seeking an economic dimension in social action; of scrutinizing power relations for contradiction and conflict as well as for adjustment; of examining moral formulations in terms of interests underlying them.[1] Others have pursued such themes more systematically or more forcefully.

In the last half-century, but especially since the war, while there has undoubtedly been much diffusion of Marxist thought in Western social anthropology, its effects are often impossible to identify in particular cases. In general terms, however, from

[1] Essays on *Social Organization and Values*, LSE Mon. on Soc. Anthr. 28, London, 1964, 19–26.

a concept of predatory lineage, or a reinterpretation of landlord–tenant relations, to the more direct relation of religious beliefs and ritual acts to power structures, there has been a sharpening of anthropological perceptions which has inclined towards rather than away from Marxist ideas.

For example, it would be hard to trace the influence of Marx's concept of ideology in social anthropology. Though certainly some stimulus came through Karl Mannheim, early students learned from Malinowski to take people's statements about values, ethical expressions, judgement on conduct as part of the instrumentality of their society, to be held up to the light like lantern slides so that they could be related to the social structure in definable ways. But while Marx's own theory of interests remained unspecified,[1] and while few anthropologists would accept a rigorous determinism, it seems probable that knowledge of the Marxist position on ideology has reinforced the anthropological view of ideas representing and disguising interests, and so giving a partial view of society. That ritual may conceal basic conflict, and that ritualization of relations may help to maintain a power structure at the same time as it may help to protect an individual by specifying his role as he acts it out—ideas which Max Gluckman has long advocated—is clearly related to the concepts of Marx as well as of Simmel.[2] In the study of millenarian movements by adopting a Marxist position Peter Worsley gave a fresh turn to the interpretation, stressing their significance as a form of political protest. Despite an over-emphasis in this direction—many of these cults or movements seem to have been as much forms of symbolic economic activity—this analysis stimulated scrutiny of them in terms of historical circumstances of alien political control.[3]

[1] Norman Birnbaum, op. cit. 94, 117.

[2] I omit complications, such as the notion of integrative conflict put forward by Gluckman, related to a distinction between conflict within a system of which the premisses are generally accepted, and conflict about the premisses themselves (M. Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, Oxford, 1955, esp. Ch. vi; *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*, Oxford, 1965, 109 et seq.). This again may differ from contradiction, not overtly perceived, between the premisses or their implications. Cf. F. G. Bailey, *Tribe, Caste and Nation*, Manchester, 1960, 7, 239. As Chandra Jayawardena has pointed out, the concept of conflict can have theoretical significance only when the system to which it refers has been clearly specified (*Conflict and Solidarity in a Guianese Plantation*, LSE Mon. on Soc. Anthr. 25, London, 1963, 132–3).

[3] Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of 'Cargo' Cults in Melanesia*, London, 1957. (In the introduction to the second edition of this work

Some overt effect of Marx's ideas has emerged in recent years in analyses of the structure and role of a peasantry as a social type in changing economic and social conditions. Much anthropological work on peasant society has not been politically oriented. But recently a problem has emerged in the context of international events, since contrary to Marx's ideas, though not to those of modern Marxists such as Gramsci, a peasantry rather than an urban proletariat has provided much modern revolutionary material. So anthropologists concerned with peasant institutions, especially in the Mediterranean area, the Caribbean, and Latin America, have focused not only on peasant traditionalism and ideology, peasant household, peasant marketing, but also on the political awareness and role of peasants, the quality of their leadership in a situation of radical change, and their relation to urban classs tructures. Even Marx's famous 'sack of potatoes' analogy, which stressed the relative autonomy of peasant households, has been invoked, with an eye to their revolutionary potential.[1] Contrasting in a general way with such peasant studies has been a series of analyses of social relationships in a plantation system (as by Mintz, Wolf, Jayawardena), where alignment of power and class according to production role are displayed in structural terms which invite reference to Marxist theory.[2] More generally, in political anthropology, there has been a shift of emphasis from traditional functional and structural studies through more dynamic inter-

Worsley has modified his commitment to a determinist Marxist orientation.) Worsley's analysis was closely followed by that of Vittorio Lanternari, *Movimenti religiosi di libertà e di salvezza*, Milan, 1960 (trans. *The Religions of the Oppressed*, New York, 1963); he adopted a dialectical interpretation of relations between prophet and cultural conditions in political terms, but without a specific Marxist theme. Much in these positions was anticipated by Jean Guiart, 'Forerunners of Melanesian Nationalism', *Oceania*, 22, 1951, 81–90.

For examination of 'Marxist' explanations of millenarian activities see Kenelm Burridge, *New Haven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities*, Oxford, 1969, 130–6.

[1] e.g. especially Eric R. Wolf, *Peasants*, New Jersey, 1966; *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*, New York, 1969 (and review by Chandra Jayawardena, *American Anthropologist*, 73, 1971, 869–71). See also Sidney W. Mintz, 'Marx's Potato Sack and the Social Origins of the Cuban Revolution', paper presented to American Anthropological Association Meeting, New York, Nov. 1971; cf. Worsley, op. cit. 229. See also Antonio Gramsci, op. cit. 30–1.

[2] e.g. S. W. Mintz and E. R. Wolf in *Plantation Systems of the New World*, Washington, D.C., 1959; C. Jayawardena, op. cit. Cf. Eric H. Larson, 'Neo-Colonialism in Oceania: Tikopia Plantation Labor and Company Manage-

actional and organizational studies to analysis of the implications of principles of contradiction in the body politic based upon implicit opposition of interest between social categories rather than explicit conflict between individuals.[1]

Some anthropological reactions to Marxism have been concerned not so much with substantive issues as with Marx's method of approach—primarily his dialectical materialism. We know that neither Marx nor Hegel invented the dialectic, which in some form of argument by examination and resolution of contradictions goes back to the Greeks. We know too that the form of the dialectic chosen can vary according to the discipline of the scholar, the use he wants to make of it, and the kind of intellectual baggage he is prepared to tolerate with it. In its basic expression, much broader than the crude thesis-antithesis-synthesis concept commonly associated with it, it embodies two main modes or emphases of primary interest for anthropologists. One is the assumption of a principle of intrinsic contradiction in the nature of phenomena, leading to inevitable change; the other is an assumption of the possibility of contradiction in the set of ideas by which the phenomena are envisaged. The first standpoint, basic to the materialism of Marx and Engels, has been epitomized in Joseph Stalin's version—the dialectic was a method of regarding nature holistically, in a state of continuous movement and change, continuous renewal and development, with internal contradiction inherent in all things, as a process of development in which changes can occur abruptly and radically.[2] Running to some extent athwart this is another Marxist view, as expressed for example by Gramsci, of conflict between thought and act, with co-existence of two conceptions of the world, one affirmed in words and the other explaining itself in effective actions.[3] For the second, Hegelian standpoint, turn to a philosopher, J. N. Findlay. In his framework the essence of the dialectic is higher-order comment on a thought-position previously achieved. One sees the possibility of contradiction in the position, what can be said about it that

ment Relations', *Radical Sociology* (ed. J. David Colfax and Jack L. Roach), New York, 1971, 322–40.

[1] e.g. Talal Asad, 'Market Model, Class Structure and Consent: A Reconsideration of Swat Political Organization', *Man*, 7, 1972, 74–94.

[2] J. Stalin, 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism', *Problems of Leninism*, Moscow, 1947, 569–95.

[3] Antonio Gramsci, op. cit. 61. Cf. Victor Zitta, *Georg Lukács' Marxism: Alienation, Dialectics, Revolution*, Hague, 1964, 72; also Rosen, op. cit. 270–4.

cannot be said in it. So it is the mode of conception that is criticized rather than the actual matter of fact that has been conceived. In this form of the dialectic, then, a series of deepening analyses is obtained going beyond ordinary common-sense terms.

It is a fair presumption that anthropologists who have made use of the dialectic have often been stimulated by Marxist ideas, upon which they have commented, or from which they have implicitly dissented. Marvin Harris, one of the most explicit on such issues, has accepted Marx's materialism in a cultural frame, but rejected Marx's use of Hegelianism. He has granted some value to the dialectical mode of thought as hypothesis about human cognitive process, but has denied its significance for world evolutionary process. For Harris, the metaphysical influence of Hegel, as he sees it, was the 'Hegelian monkey' on the backs of Marx and Engels. Another view has been to reject Marx for his materialism but to accept the dialectic, albeit in a Hegelian mode in which ideas, not material forces, are the generative elements. This Burridge has done in his examination of millenarian movements, envisaging conflict in the world of ideas with a transcendent power (*Geist*) admitted to the operations. More broadly, Robert Murphy has also embraced a non-Marxist dialectic as a fundamental postulate for the understanding of human thought and social life. For Murphy, drawing to some extent upon Findlay, the principal character of a dialectic is that it is critical and sceptical of received truth and established fact, an iconoclasm that follows from its premisses. It is not Burridge's version of Hegel, for there is no *Geist*, but neither is it the dialectic of Marx, for Murphy accepts elements of phenomenology and an explicit recognition of subjective states. Murphy sees his use of the dialectic as enabling him to identify infrastructures that are logical products of the investigator's mind, beyond the ordinary empirical structures derived from observation.[2] (In some of these analyses it is hard to distinguish the specific use of the dialectic from scientific method in general.) In Lévi-Strauss again the analysis has taken another turn. Though explicitly not calling himself a Marxist in the ordinary sense, he has emphasized that what he found in Marx when a young man

[1] *Language, Mind and Value*, London, 1963, 219–20.

[2] Burridge, op. cit., 136–40; Harris, op. cit., 230–6; Robert Murphy, *The Dialectics of Social Life*, New York, 1971.

was a model for the study of social phenomena, by which to understand consists in reducing one type of social reality to another, that which is true being never the most manifest.[1] This guiding principle, enunciated in *Tristes Tropiques* (1955, 44), reappeared in another form in *La Pensée sauvage* (1962, 336), where the combined lesson of Marx and Freud is given, somewhat dismally, as being that the meaning people attach to their acts is never the right one; superstructures are faulty acts which have been 'successful'. In his subtle treatment of these difficult issues Lévi-Strauss points out that a basic problem is to ascertain the relation between the surface presentation, the sense-experiences, and the underlying reason. In a kind of scientific model of the sacrifice syndrome he argues that we must first repudiate experience (*le vécu*) in order to attain reality—though they must be re-integrated later in an objective synthesis.[2]

Behind much of such reaction to Marx, whether positive or negative, lies a wish to go beyond what is thought to be the traditional empiricism of functional and structural social anthropology. There is dissatisfaction with so-called 'common-sense' definitions and interpretations of social phenomena, and a view that greater adequacy is to be found in principles of deductive reasoning—whether dialectical or more generally analytical in form—to reveal the 'inner reality' of social life. Criticism is directed against the empiricist lack of systematic framework of ideas—and so on. Some of this may be an intellectual's response to the frustrating inconsistencies of our ordinary social relationships. But whereas Marx always tried to marry the abstract to the concrete, some anthropologists seem bent on divorcing them. But there is sometimes confusion among the more ardent exponents of such views, between empiricism as a stress upon the importance of experience in establishing the validity of theory, and empiricism as opposed to theory. In the empiricism of British social anthropology it has long been recognized that structures are not seen but inferred;

[1] Cf. Georg Lukács, 'Kunst und objektive Wahrheit', *Deutsche Zeitschr. für Philosophie*, 2 Jahrg. 1954, 114: 'Vom lebendigen Anschauen zum abstrakten Denken *und von diesem zur Praxis*—das ist der dialektische Weg der Erkenntnis der *Wahrheit*, der Erkenntnis der objektiven Realität' (Lenin).

[2] Lévi-Strauss has stated that in addition to a Marxist hypothesis on the origin of writing, his studies of Caduveo and Bororo were 'efforts to interpret native superstructures based upon dialectical materialism' (*Anthropologie structurale*, Paris, 1958, 365).

that observation alone is useless without a theoretical framework; and that the relation between them is the cardinal problem.

I take it that all anthropologists would agree with Robert Boyle that it is one thing to be able to help Nature to produce things, and another to understand well the nature of the things produced (1661, 167–8). I much doubt if Radcliffe-Brown, often termed an empiricist, 'always saw the principle as directly distilled from the data' (Murphy, op. cit. 172) when he constructed that model of the social organization of Australian tribes on which so much later work has drawn. To rephrase what I pointed out years ago: there is structure at all levels—in the phenomena, as in the perceptions which order them and in the concepts which interpret their logical relationships; and it is presumptuous to assign to one level more 'reality' than to another. To return to Boyle and the problem of evidence—an anthropologist is not a Jonathan Swift, picking out some mode of human thinking as an abstract principle and constructing a society around it; he observes and describes, in generalized form by the use of abstraction, the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of actual people in particular societies. As amateur philosopher or analyst of language he may speak grandly of modes of thought but as anthropologist he does not escape the problem of authenticity.

This is where the relevance of Marxist theory of society lies for social anthropology. Many Marxists now recognize that much of Marx's theory in its literal form is outmoded, an essentially nineteenth-century historical product of a bourgeois intellectual able to transcend his class limitations. In many ways industrial society has not developed as Marx predicted: the working class is not in increasing misery; wages are not being forced down to a minimum; a managerial bureaucracy has often succeeded the capitalist entrepreneur; the Western working class does not unite with the masses of the lesser developed countries but connives in the widening gap between them; the revolutionary societies have their own power struggles, if anything more bitter in accusation, more brutal in treatment of the defeated than in the capitalist world. Marx was a critic and a prophet, not a planner; he gave a vision not a blueprint of the Promised Land. But some of his major issues and his conclusions, are still with us—the almost inevitable logic of technical improvement, with its concomitant drive for economic development, omnivorous consumption of resources, and irreversible destruction of forms of human society, is linked in the west with

commercial incentives of profit-seeking which threaten so many of our aesthetic and moral values. In the relations between the more and the less developed societies the same expansive tendencies, not limited to capitalism, seem paramount.[1]

What Marx's theories offer to social anthropology is a set of hypotheses about social relations and especially about social change. Marx's insights—about the basic significance of economic factors, especially production relations; their relation to structures of power; the formation of classes and the opposition of their interests; the socially relative character of ideologies; the conditioning force of a system upon individual members of it—embody propositions which must be taken for critical scrutiny into the body of our science. The theories of Marx should be put on a par with, say, those of Durkheim or Max Weber. Because they imply radical change they are more threatening. But they need not be treated as dogma, as a received scientific system;[2] nor should they be embraced as a set of symbolic forms for an inner social reality. Some of their basic postulates are assumptions of a metaphysical order and as such untestable, but they provide initial theoretical standpoints, while others can be subjected to the usual testing methods of our science. I am advocating then, not so much a dialogue between non-Marxist and Marxist anthropologists—whoever they may be—as a metaphorical translation of Marx's memorial from Highgate Cemetery to where it really belongs, the scene of his *praxis*—in the Reading Room of the British Museum. And on it I suggest we might put the motto with which Karl Marx himself ended the preface to the first edition of his volume on *Capital* just over a century ago:

SEGUI IL TUO CORSO; E LASCIA DIR LE GENTI

Follow your own bent, and let people say what they will.

[1] Norman Birnbaum, *The Crisis of Industrial Society*, London, 1969.

[2] e.g. Gramsci, op. cit. 117.