fragmented revolts were unlikely to lead spontaneously to a concerted anticapitalist movement; this would occur only through coordinated leadership. In Lenin's view, this required a disciplined, elite revolutionary party; other communists such as Gramsci thought differently. But as many recent writers on social movements have insisted (for an overview see Barker et al. 2001), successful insurgent struggles always involve some internal strategic leadership, and others fail for lack of this. How such strategic capacity emerges—or can be created—remains deeply problematic.

6. The Injuries of Class

Underlying the debates over the nature, limits, and indeed existence of class struggle is the question of consciousness. In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx distinguished between the emergence of a proletariat with 'a common situation, common interests...as against capital', and workers' development through collective organization and struggle into 'a class for itself'. This distinction was subsequently elaborated by many followers of Marx (and to some extent by Marx himself) into a rather mechanical formula: an objectively defined 'class in itself' will, with the addition of class consciousness, become a (revolutionary) 'class for itself'. Conversely, any failure of the proletariat to exercise its revolutionary potential must be a reflection of 'false consciousness'. Yet many Marxists have questioned this account. Gorz (1982), for example, argues that there is a fundamental contradiction between Marx's analysis of the dynamic of degradation and subordination of labor within capitalist production, and his confidence in the revolutionary creativity of the proletariat. For Gorz, this confidence was a product of Hegelian mysticism, a belief that history possesses an immanent teleology, according to which the proletariat would perform its historical mission regardless of the circumstances and aspirations of actual workers. While this critique is in important respects exaggerated (Hyman 1983), it does indeed identify a genuine problem in Marxist analysis, one which relates to the question, already discussed, of the inevitability of revolution.[11]

[11] Some of Gorz's criticisms had been anticipated by Draper (1978: 70–80) and (to his satisfaction at least) refuted. One should note that throughout his life, Marx was keenly concerned to establish the actual circumstances and reactions of real workers. Particularly interesting was the 100-item questionnaire which he drafted in French in 1880 (the *enquête ouvrière*): an ambitious sociological enterprise which achieved no known outcome.

A concept also deriving from Marx's early critical engagement with Hegel, which has entered the mainstream of the sociology of work, is that of alienation. Its meaning and significance are complex and contested: partly because the term is conventionally used in English to denote two distinct concepts in Marx's analysis (*Entäusserung* and *Entfremdung*, literally meaning externalization and estrangement); partly because it simultaneously combines references to the philosophy of religion, to law, and to political economy; and partly because it is central to debates on how much the ideas of the 'young Marx' persisted in his mature work (Mészáros 1970; Ollman 1971; Torrance 1977). Here it is unnecessary to pursue these questions. To simplify, one can identify three key applications of Marx's idea of alienation. First, the wage laborer surrendered to the employer the legal ownership of what he/she produced. Today this may seem inevitable and self-evident, but in the early phase of capitalism it could appear strange and shocking; independent artisans or peasants did own what they produced, and for early social theorists such as Locke the right of ownership was intrinsically linked to the performance of work. Second, and as a corollary, was the loss of autonomy over the labor process, discussed earlier: the capitalist acquired the right to control the worker's attendance and work performance. Third, and crucially, Marx saw this as a negation of the human condition. His theoretical premise was that self-conscious creative activity was a defining characteristic of humanity, a form of self-affirmation which set humankind apart from other animals. Capitalist wage-labor, by contrast, turned 'life-activity, productive life itself' into a mere means of physical survival; in consequence, 'as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague'.

Some modern applications of the concept of alienation have trivialized Marx's meaning. For example, a well-known study by Blauner (1964) in effect reduced alienation (or its absence) to task discretion and job satisfaction. Evidently Marx did indeed focus on the loss of autonomy in work as a key element in the capital–labor relation, and regarded dissatisfaction as an inevitable outcome. But his more fundamental concern was with the political economy which resulted in alienated labor, and its impact on workers' sense of personal identity, their relations with one another, and their role within society. Many sociologists, often but not always Marxist, have made such themes central to their analysis, whether or not they tie this explicitly to the concept of alienation.

Methodologically such studies have often involved the ethnographic construction of life narratives. For example Sennett and Cobb (1972), in

their account of urban workers in the USA, identify a frustrated effort to achieve freedom, dignity, and self-respect, if not through their own careers then through those of their children. They summarize the findings thus (1972: 75): 'the search for respect is thwarted; the individual feels personally responsible for the failure; the whole attempt accustoms him to think that to have individual respect you must have social inequality.' Gouldner (1969: 355) developed a parallel argument: capitalism 'incorporates [people] primarily as utilities useful for performing functions' and all other aspects of their capacities and identities are 'subordinated to their efficient employment'. More recently, Sennett (1998) has explored how the corrosion of identity and respect is reinforced by growing employment insecurity; a theme also developed by Beck (2000: ch. 5) with his thesis that 'the work society is becoming risk society'. In France, very similar interpretations have been offered by Dejours (1998).

Other writers have interpreted such systematic suppression of human capacities as a major source of divisions among different categories of workers, resulting for example in sexism, racism, and xenophobia. The title of the Severnside study by Nichols and Armstrong (1976), *Workers Divided*, encapsulates such analysis. Sennett and Cobb (1972: 83) write of 'male solidarity' as the medium through which oppressed working men attempt to assert personal worth and dignity: an analysis paralleled in Britain by studies such as Willis (1977) and Collinson (1992). Marxist feminists such as Cockburn (1983) and Rubery (1978) have shown how such gender-based conceptions of solidarity have informed trade union practices which exclude, marginalize, or demean women workers. Pollert (1981: 171) has indicated the contradictory reactions among women themselves: 'from their male trade-union "brothers" they received a constant stream of conflicting messages: on the one hand they were second-rate workers who should really stay at home; on the other hand, they should be better trade unionists. Caught between two stools, they blamed themselves.' Analogously, Lamont (2000) has explored (though not from a specifically Marxist perspective: she terms her approach 'cultural materialist') how the quest for dignity on the part of working-class men in France and the USA can lead to expressions of racial difference and division: though she insists that principles of class solidarity can still transcend these.

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, Marx's central focus on class led him largely to neglect the role of ethnicity or gender both within the workplace and in society more generally. Marx and Engels tended to assume that capitalism itself created, or exacerbated, divisions within the working class and that socialism would transcend these. In his 'Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State', Engels attributed women's subordination to their treatment, in effect, as a form of private property; he assumed that capitalism would increasingly absorb women within the ranks of wage labor, leading to their integration in the struggle for socialism, which when successful would result in their emancipation.

Marx himself noted, in the *Grundrisse* and later in Volume 1 of *Capital*, that the exchange value of labor power encompassed both the day-to-day maintenance of the worker (food, shelter, clothing) *and* the cost of reproducing a new generation of children to become workers in their turn. He failed, however, to explore the nature of the household as a (re)productive unit, or the ways in which gender relations within the household carry over into the sphere of capital–labor relations. Feminist approaches to the analysis of work are discussed elsewhere in this volume, but cannot be neglected in this context. Most sociologists today would agree with Wajcman (2000: 196) that

[T]he workplace and the labour market cannot be understood in isolation from the private sphere of the household and the labour of social reproduction that goes on there. . . . The very nature of jobs and the organization of the labour market are intimately tied to the nature of gender relations within the family. In other words, the employment contract presupposes the sexual contract.

Can Marxism in principle incorporate feminism, so that class and gender receive complementary attention as axes of differentiation, oppression, and struggle, or must a theoretical (and political) choice be made between the two? This issue has been debated within sociology in general for several decades, and figured prominently in the labor process debates from the 1980s onwards (for example Beechey 1982; Knights and Willmott 1986; West 1990). As yet, what Hartmann (1979) termed the 'unhappy marriage' between Marxism and feminism appears to persist.

7. Marxism and Beyond

In the decade and a half since the fall of the Berlin Wall, some have argued that Marxism itself no longer deserves attention: regime change has eclipsed its relevance. On the contrary. The collapse of the former 'communist' bloc has relieved Marxism of the anomalous burden of serving as an official ideology of state. At the same time, the system of global capitalism which has filled the void seems to outdo Marx's own dystopian

vision of a world in which 'all that is solid melts into air', with a growing subordination of production itself to the anarchy of financial markets, intensification of the fetishism of commodities, and consequential accentuation of insecurity and stress in work. In the twenty-first century, the relevance of Marxist theory is more evident than ever.

Nevertheless, the discussion throughout this chapter has emphasized that though Marxist analysis offers an indispensable contribution to the understanding of work, on its own it is insufficient. Marx was a great thinker; but only those who regard him as a saint would agree with all he wrote (which is itself problematic, given the variations in his analysis over time) or accept that he provides all the answers to the questions which preoccupy us today. Sociologists can scarcely ignore Marx; but they must choose what of Marx they apply, and what theories developed by other social analysts are used to complement his. As a corollary, in the case of many of the sociologists whose relevance has been asserted in this chapter it is not clear from their work whether or not they should be regarded, or would regard themselves, as Marxists.

Does this matter? Can we live with theoretical ambiguity and eclecticism? Almost certainly, Marx himself would have given a resounding negative. Personally, I have come to sympathize with the argument of Galtung (1990: 102): 'a good theory should never leave us with the idea that the world is made once and for all. A good theory will always have some empty spaces for the reality not yet there, for potential as opposed to empirical reality.' In important respects this sums up Marx's own dialectical imagination, but seems to indicate additionally that theory itself, however brilliant, must always require innovation.

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