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THEORIES OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION:
KEY CONCEPTS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

by

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This paper examines some of the developments in recent years of key notions in stratification theory. We begin by briefly reviewing the initial development of these concepts in the work of Marx and Weber, and go on to discuss their development under the impact of such notions as the alleged divorce of 'ownership' from 'control' in modern industry, and the postulated emergence of a new, 'affluent' working class. Our discussion of these latter aspects will revolve, in the first instance, around the work of Ralph Dahrendorf, and in the second instance, around the work of Goldthorpe and Lockwood.

Although, as many commentators have pointed out, the whole of Marx's corpus can be seen as an extended examination, in one aspect or another of the notion of 'class', there is a certain irony in the fact that Marx died just as he had embarked upon his first systematic exposition of the concept, in the 52nd chapter of the third volume of Capital. Dahrendorf's resolution^{*} is to reconstruct that chapter with excerpts taken from all phases of Marx's work. As a postulated reconstruction of the last chapter of Capital, one's response to that exercise must perhaps be determined by one's position in the 'one Marx' debate. A final chapter of Capital containing quotations from The German Ideology may perhaps prove less than satisfactory to those who speak in terms of 'epistemological ruptures' in Marx's work, and who lay great stress on the importance and 'scientific' nature of the work of the 'mature' Marx.

None the less, in the absence of a systematic account, we have to examine Marx's work for an immanent theory of class. Although (as Ossowski has demonstrated) Marx uses the notion of class in different ways, the usual interpretation of Marx's concept is that classes are created by and defined with respect to the relationships of groups to the mode of production in society - an 'economic' conception of class.

The lead is usually taken from the famous passage in Marx's 1859 Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy:

"In the social production which men carry on, they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society - the real foundation upon which legal and political superstructures arise and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life."

As Rex points out, however, ** position in relationship to the means of production is for Marx a necessary but not a sufficient condition for class formation. True classes only emerge in the process of political struggle,

* R. Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in an Industrial Society, Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1959, pp. 9 - 18.

** John Rex, Key Problems in Sociological Theory, Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1961, p. 140.

through which a class acquires political consciousness, thereby ceasing to be a 'class-in-itself' and becoming a 'class-for-itself'. Marx explains the distinction in The Poverty of Philosophy:

"Economic conditions had in the first place transformed the mass of the people into workers. The domination of capital created the common situation and common interests of this class. Thus, this mass is already a class in relation to capital, but not yet a class for itself. The interests which it defends become class interests. But the struggle between classes is a political struggle." *

We shall not, in this paper, further pursue the complex and difficult question of the relationship of 'class' and 'class consciousness', in the work both of Marx and of subsequent Marxists.

What should be noted, perhaps, are some of the criticisms which have been made of the Marxist theory of class. These are considered to be particularly acute in any attempt to apply a relatively simple model of Marx's concepts to present-day society. Whilst it is generally agreed that Marx's descriptive analysis holds good for nineteenth-century capitalist society, it is argued that the dynamic (some would say, prophetic) aspects of his analysis have failed to account for concrete historical developments in class structure, and are conceptually inadequate in relation to present-day class structure. These objections have been noted most cogently by Birnbaum. They are: -

1. The failure of the 'pauperisation' thesis;
2. The emergence of new median strata in Western societies - different from those observed by Marx;
3. The problems raised by the concentration of property, and the divergence between 'ownership' and 'control' in modern industry;
4. The problems raised by stratification in the 'State Capitalist' societies;
5. The problems raised by the existence of the 'global proletariat' of the Third World; the relationship of imperialism and the compradores; the relationship of the 'national bourgeoisie' and the proletariat in national liberation struggles. **

Weber's notion of class, formulated in response to the Marxist concept is more accessible to us. Weber tells us that we may speak of a 'class' when:

1. a number of people have in common specific components of their life-chances in so far as
2. this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income and
3. is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labour markets." ***

* T. Bottomore & M. Ruber, Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy, Pelican, 1956, 1961, 1963, p. 195.

** Norman Birnbaum "The Crisis in Marxist Sociology", Social Research, Vol. 35, No.2, 1968

*** H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber, Routledge, Kegan & Paul, paperback, p. 181.

Like Marx's concept, therefore, Weber's concept of class is an economic one. Rex suggests (op.cit. p. 138) that Weber's definition can be differentiated from Marx's in three ways: -

1. that he includes situations other than those arising from the differential relationship to the means of production (e.g. ownership of domestic buildings).
2. that in the case of the latter he recognises a greater variety of relationships to the means of production (e.g. he says that they may be differentiated according to the kinds of services offered, and later distinguishes between small and large landownership. For Marx, landowners and wage-earners constitute single groups); and
3. that people's class situations differ according to the meaning that they can and do give to the utilization of their property".

In The Blackcoated Worker, David Lockwood has crystallised some of these distinctions by pointing out that a division can be made within Weber's notion of 'class' between 'the market situation' and 'the work situation':

What Lockwood means by this (which Runciman fails to make clear in his section on the theory in Social Science and Political Theory), is that the term 'market situation' includes a number of criteria, such as bargaining power, job security, and relative social mobility - over and above the initial simple relationship of the individual to the means of production in terms of ownership of capital or the supply of labour.

Similarly, the term 'work situation' refers to the physical location and environment of the place of work. Thus, Lockwood's explanation of the enduring nature of 'false consciousness' amongst clerical workers is made in terms of an empirical analysis of the differences, both within the 'market situation' and the 'work situation' of clerical workers vis-a-vis the manual worker. The explanation is not, as Runciman seems to imply, derived only from differences in the 'work situation' with both groups enjoying similar opportunities in the 'market situation'. That is to say that although some of the explanation is to be sought in the physical environment of clerical workers: that they are more fragmented and work in smaller groups than shop-floor workers, that their work brings them into closer contact with management, and so on - there are also differences in 'market situation' between clerical and manual workers: as Lockwood puts it: -

"...although he shares the propertyless status of the manual worker, the clerk has never been strictly 'proletarian' in terms of income, job security and occupational nobility".
(1958, p. 204)

To return, however, to Weber's original formulations. After delineating his concept of 'class', Weber goes on to distinguish: -

"...in contrast to the purely economically determined 'class situation'" an added dimension which he calls a 'status situation', and which he defines as:

"every typical component of the life fate of men that is determined by a specific positive or negative social estimation of prestige". (Gerth & Mills, p. 187)

Weber clarifies this distinction by suggesting that classes are stratified in terms of production and the acquisition of goods, and status groups in terms of consumption. As Runciman puts it: -

"The members of your class are those who share your location in the processes of production, distribution and exchange; the members of your status group are those who share your style of life and your relative position in terms of social estimation and prestige." (Social Science & Political Theory, p. 139)

It can readily be seen that this definition of 'status' provides us with problems of 'subjective evaluation'. In fact, we might say in summary of this section that both Marx's and Weber's formulations present us with difficulties in our attempts to use them as tools in the exploration of modern social structure. Where Marx's formulation (at least, that formulation in popular usage) is frequently unambiguous but unrevealing, Weber's more complex tools are richer in their attempt to do justice to the complexities of systems of social stratification, but frequently prove ambiguous in concrete usage.

Before we finally leave this section on Weber, we wish to correct a misunderstanding which has arisen through a mistranslation of Weber's terminology. The title of Bendix and Lipset's anthology Class, Status and Power has caused people to credit Weber with those three concepts, as three dimensions of his system of stratification. Strictly speaking, Weber did not distinguish three dimensions of stratification at all. He distinguished three dimensions of 'power': namely, those of the economic, status and 'legal' (for which read 'political') orders. These dimensions are inhabited by three entities, viz.: classes, status-groups and parties, respectively. The problem has arisen because the term 'party' has to be interpreted in a much broader meaning than is accorded in everyday usage. The get-out has been to translate the third term as 'power', thereby obscuring the fact that the whole of Weber's theory refers to differential allocation of different dimensions of power.

We have already seen how, in the work of Lockwood, a refinement of Weberian analysis has been used to tackle what is distinctively a Marxist problematic - the nature of false consciousness. This interaction between Marxist and Weberian analysis can be seen as plainly, if less productively, in the work of Dahrendorf. *

Dahrendorf begins his essay, as we mentioned above, with an attempt to reconstruct Marx's notion of 'class'. This concept is important to Dahrendorf, not because of any slavish desire to perpetuate Marx's theory of class in its entirety (rather, he is intent on tearing the heart out of it, as we shall see). On the contrary, Dahrendorf is concerned with Marx's theory only in so far as he believes that certain aspects have a heuristic value. As he himself puts it: -

"To use the misleading terms of modern sociology, the heuristic purpose of the concept of class was for Marx not 'static', but 'dynamic', not 'descriptive', but 'analytical'." (p. 19)

* Ralph Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society, 1957, Routledge, Kegan and Paul 1959.

What Dahrendorf is asserting here is that the heuristic value of the Marxist theory of class lies in the fact that it is focussed upon the processes of change in society. Being 'analytic' rather than 'descriptive', it avoids the subordination of the category of 'function' to that of 'structure':

"Marx never fell into the trap of abandoning the problem of change out of fascination with the beauty of his structural model. His subject was social change, and the category of social structure was no more than a tool with which to tackle this elusive and intricate problem". (p. 124)

Similarly with the distinction between a 'static' and a 'dynamic' mode of analysis. Whilst recognising that Parsons is himself aware of the necessity of dealing with change, Dahrendorf denies that Parsons' notion of 'dynamic analysis' actually allows him to do this adequately. According to Dahrendorf, structural-functionalism accounts for change within the social system primarily by reference to the system's adaptation to exogenous, environmental conditions - thereby ignoring the fact that the social system itself contains items which are far from being of an integrative nature and which by their disruptive activity can, and do, lead to the supercedence of the old system. *

Dahrendorf believes that this inadequacy of structural-functional theory derives from what he describes as its "more or less deliberate identification of organic and social structures or systems". As he says: -

"Structural-functional analysis as it stands today, fails to explain problems of change because it does not account for the peculiar social as opposed to organic structures. It does not look for the dynamic variables that, though operating within given structures, are in principle independent of their (constructed) functional integration." (p. 123)

Marx's importance does not lie merely in his focus upon change, however. For Dahrendorf, equally important is, firstly, Marx's focus upon conflict groups as the forces that make for that change - and, secondly - Marx's 'two-class' model of conflict. As we have seen already, Dahrendorf lays stress on Marx's theory of class as an 'analytic' rather than a 'descriptive' model, and it is in this sense that he defends the dichotomous model. As he himself puts it: -

"...any theory of conflict has to operate with something like a two-class model. There are but two contending parties - this is implied in the very notion of conflict. There may be coalitions, of course, as there may be conflicts internal to either of the contenders, and there may be groups that are not drawn into a given dispute; but from the point of view of a given clash of interests, there are never more than two positions that struggle for domination." (p. 126)

So far, therefore, Dahrendorf has followed Marx in postulating the need for a theory of class which functions as a tool of 'dynamic analysis', rather than as a static, descriptive analysis of social strata per se; an analysis

* For Parsons, see bibliography.

that is, which focuses upon the dynamics of change in society; an analysis, furthermore, which postulates inter-group conflict as being the essential agent of change; and finally, an analytical model of conflict based upon a notion of a simple dichotomy of interest groups.

At that point, Dahrendorf leaves Marx for good. Most notably he departs from Marx in his definition of a 'class'. Where, for Marx, the determinant of class position lay in the relationships to private property in the means of production, such an analysis does not, for Dahrendorf, retain its analytical value once the historical fact has been accepted that in modern industrial society, 'ownership' of the means of production has become divorced from 'control'.

Dahrendorf defines 'capitalism' and 'capitalist' society strictly in terms of "the union of private ownership and factual control of the instruments of production" (p. 40), and thereby subsumes 'capitalist society' under a more general category of 'industrial society' which is characterised simply by "mechanised commodity production in factories and enterprises." (loc. cit.)

On the basis of this familiar revisionist argument - that capitalism is not only not what it once was, but is not even capitalism anymore - Dahrendorf naturally decides that since Marx's definition of class was based upon the economic relationships which existed only in 'capitalist society', that definition itself is due for revision.

Dahrendorf's solution is drastic: he defines class as being independent of property, economic relationships, and social stratification. He achieves this by defining class in terms of "the exercise of, or exclusion from authority.":

"The authority structure of entire societies as well as particular institutional orders within societies (such as industry) is, in terms of the theory here advanced, the structural determinant of class formation and class conflict." (p. 136)

On this basis, of course, Dahrendorf is turning Marx on his head. Where, for Marx, authority was only a special case of property, for Dahrendorf the reverse becomes true:

"Control over the means of production is but a special case of authority, and the connection of control with legal property an incidental phenomenon of the industrialising societies of Europe and the United States." (p. 137)

In other words, Dahrendorf has shifted the focus of analysis to the type of social relationships inherent in the notion of authority. Thus, even where he allows that 'economic classes' might exist as a special case of the phenomenon of class, they do so by virtue of the authority relationships that exist in economic organisations - not by virtue of the property relationships per se. Thus, Dahrendorf is able to claim that for him: "Classes are neither primarily, nor at all economic groupings."

Dahrendorf goes further to maintain that an analytic distinction must be made between classes as authority groups and the system of social stratification. Social strata, it is maintained, are categories of persons hierarchically differentiated in terms of access to social rewards - chiefly income and prestige. Now Dahrendorf is perfectly prepared to admit that, empirically, there is "a significant indirect connection", "a partial parallelism" even, between classes as he has defined them, and the divisions of social stratification. But this partial parallelism arises, of course, because of the confusing tendency of the possession of authority to be accompanied by high income and high prestige.

"Thus", he says, "there is in most societies a tendential, if not unequivocal, correlation between the distribution of authority and the system of social rewards that underlies stratification. In this sense, but only in this sense, the partial parallelism between the lines of class division and those of social stratification may be an empirical fact. One might go further and regard this parallelism as probable, as it could be argued that a certain correspondence between people's share in authority and in social rewards in general is a functional imperative of relatively stable societies, "But", he adds, backing away quickly, "no parallelism between between structures of class and stratification can be postulated. Classes can be identical with strata, they can unite several strata within them, and their structure can cut right through the hierarchy of stratification." (p.140)

Having defined 'class' in terms of authority, therefore, Dahrendorf goes on to explain what he means by 'class conflict' in terms of industrial society.

He first of all proposes that two (meta-) theories of society can be distinguished in modern sociological thought. The first of these is 'the integration theory of society', exemplified chiefly in the work of Talcott Parsons. In Dahrendorf's formulation, this theory is based upon the following four assumptions: -

1. Every society is a relatively persistent, stable structure of elements,
2. Every society is a well-integrated structure of elements,
3. Every element in society has a function, i.e. renders a contribution to its maintenance as a system,
4. Every functioning social structure is based on a consensus of values amongst its members." (p. 161)

In contra-distinction to this, Dahrendorf postulates the 'coercion theory of society', which maintains that: -

1. Every society is at every point subject to processes of change; social change is ubiquitous
2. Every society displays at every point dissensus and conflict; social conflict is ubiquitous
3. Every element in a society renders a contribution to its disintegration and change
4. Every society is based upon the coercion of some of its members by others." (p. 162)

Although Dahrendorf himself operates within the 'coercion theory of society', it is important to point out that he explicitly denies any attempt to do away with 'the integration theory of society'. Although mutually exclusive in their assumptions, he claims, both theories are valid but partial

models of social reality. The sociologist needs to choose between them only for the explanation of specific problems. Society, ofr Dahrendorf, is Janus-headed.

Dahrendorf's present concern, however, is the explanation of structural changes in terms of group conflict, and in pursuit of this aim he further sharpens his analytical tools.

Thus, 'Authority' is defined in terms of Max Weber's definition as "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons"; and Dahrendorf also takes over Weber's concept of an 'imperatively coordinated association', which exists in so far as its members are, by virtue of a prevailing order, subject to authority relations.

Dahrendorf also talks in terms of 'quasi-groups' whose members share identical latent interests (which are unrecognised role-expectations) and contrasts these quasi-groups with 'interest groups' which are defined in terms of collectivities of individuals sharing 'manifest' (i.e. recognised) interests.

Building upon this, Dahrendorf gives us a working model of 'social class' defined as being "such organised or unorganised collectivities of individuals as share manifest or latent interests arising from and related to the authority structure of imperatively coordinated associations. It follows from the definitions of latent and manifest interests that social classes are always conflict groups". (p. 238)

Thus, what Dahrendorf has salvaged from Marx is a focus upon conflict as the universal agent of social change, and an insistence that in any conflict situation there are only two sides of the question. By defining 'class' in terms of 'authority', however, and by rooting his notion of authority in discrete social associations, he is in effect forced into the position of saying that two classes exist, in conflict, in every single authority situation in society. In other words, every society contains just twice as many social classes as it contains 'imperatively coordinated associations'. The reductio ad absurdum of this approach, of course, is that it leads one to claim that different members of the same family can belong to different social classes, and even that, in so far as any given individual belongs, in different relationships to authority, to different 'imperatively coordinated associations', so he belongs to different social classes.

Having examined, through Dahrendorf's work, one major aspect of the controversies which have arisen in relation to post-Marxist theories of 'class' - namely that arising from changes in the patterns of ownership and control of industry - we shall now turn to the controversy which has surrounded the notion of the so-called 'new working class' - the post-war 'affluent worker'; and we shall begin by examining the competing notions of 'embourgeoisement' and 'convergence'.

In a paper published in 1963 *, Goldthorpe and Lockwood argued that the then current notions of 'embourgeoisement' ** implied three assumptions about

* J.H. Goldthorpe & D. Lockwood, "Affluence and the British Class Structure", Sociological Review; 11, 1, July 1963.

** Goldthorpe & Lockwood argue that the term 'embourgeoisement' is inappropriate, failing, as it does, to maintain the distinction between the bourgeoisie and the middle class.

what was happening to some sections of the working class. These were, firstly, that the standard of living for some members of the working class was rising sufficiently "to place them on a level with at least the lower strata of the middle class". Secondly, that these workers were also "acquiring new social perspectives and new norms of behaviour which are more characteristic of middle class than working class groups." And thirdly, "that these same workers were becoming assimilated into middle class groups on terms of social equality in both formal and informal social relations." (p. 136).

Goldthorpe and Lockwood characterise these three assumptions as referring respectively to the 'economic', 'normative' and 'relational' aspects of class.

They go on to suggest, in effect, that proponents of the 'embourgeoisement' thesis rest their arguments on observations about changes in the economic aspects of class stratification, from which they assume corresponding changes in the normative aspects of class. Thus, they quote Zweig as advancing the claim that large sections of the working class population are finding themselves "on the move towards new middle-class values and middle-class existence" *, whilst failing to draw the conclusion from his own research that these same workers exhibit few signs of having adopted middle-class relational attributes, such as mutual visiting and the like." (p. 142)

Speaking in purely economic terms, Goldthorpe and Lockwood accept that so far as income levels and ownership of consumer durables are concerned, "many manual workers have achieved economic parity, at least, with many members of the lower strata within the middle class" Speaking in the broader Weberian terms of 'life-chances' however, they point out that considerable differences still exist between manual and non-manual employment in terms of job security and such occupational fringe benefits as pensions schemes. More importantly, they point out that not only do manual workers have less opportunity for enjoying upward occupational mobility, but that since the shift towards 'achieved' occupational role allocation on the basis of educational attainment has taken place, the opportunity for manual workers to achieve promotion beyond 'supervisory' level is clearly declining in modern industry. One might add that if a sufficient number of university graduates take the advice of their appointments officers to "lower their sights" in the current slack labour market, and take jobs at a supervisory level in industry, this trend is likely not only to harden but actually to be institutionalised, as personnel recruitment officers begin to expect foremen's jobs to be filled with people with graduate qualifications.

With respect to the 'relational' aspects of class, Goldthorpe and Lockwood quote a number of contemporary studies suggesting that a marked degree of segregation exists between manual and non-manual workers in terms of housing, informal neighbourhood groups, local clubs and societies, and so on. Runciman takes up the point that even if material acquisition by the working class is to be regarded as 'status-seeking' - a desire to be regarded as being middle class - rather than a purely instrumental desire to obtain useful consumer durables, this by no means indicates that members of the 'objectively-defined' middle class will actually confirm the definition. Indeed, citing Willmott and Young's study in Woodford, Runciman remarks that "it is just such things as these which make the middle class more anxious to preserve the status difference between manual and non-manual workers". **

* F. Zweig, The Worker in an Affluent Society, 1961, p. ix. See also pp. 116-119.

** W.G. Runciman, "'Embourgeoisement', Self-Rated Class and Party Preference", Sociological Review; 12, 2, 1964. pp. 138 ff.

It is, however, on changes in the attitudinal and normative aspects of class, that Goldthorpe and Lockwood see the 'embourgeoisement' thesis mainly to be founded. Briefly to summarise their argument, they criticise the evidence that has been brought forward for these changes on two grounds. Firstly, that field studies on the 'new working class' have generally been carried out either in 'progressive' firms in expanding and prosperous industries, or alternatively, in new housing developments in new estates or satellite towns. They first of all question the 'generalisability' of these studies, and secondly, they question whether or not the findings indicate not so much an aspiration to changing circumstances of pre-existing, 'traditional' modes of working class life.

The second form of evidence for normative changes amongst the working class is that which has arisen from opinion polls and attitude surveys. Goldthorpe and Lockwood regard these findings as being grossly suspect on methodological grounds. They point out, for instance, that 'self-ratings' on class continua vary enormously according to how open-ended the questionnaire may be; whether, and which sets of class categorisations are offered may elicit entirely different responses. Furthermore, they argue, the 'subjective' meaning of class categorisation is generally ignored by pollsters. Any given number of people who rate themselves as 'middle class' may have between them a veritable plethora of subjective understandings of what they mean by the middle class - meanings which are not taken into account by the pollster in the subsequent evaluation of his material.

Bearing all these facts in mind, Goldthorpe and Lockwood offer us a formalisation of the process which they feel should be investigated in any attempt to prove the 'embourgeoisement' thesis. "It is an error", they point out, "to take up a naive economic determinism, as some writers appear to have done, and to regard working class prosperity as providing in itself a sufficient basis for embourgeoisement." (p. 149). Rather, they see the process as being a "specific form of a general process by which individuals are attached to and detached from social groups." Taking their lead from Mertonian reference group theory, (without in any way linking reference group analysis to 'Mertonian' functionalist theory), they argue that the process of embourgeoisement must proceed through three distinct phases:

- a. When working class persons are in some way motivated to reject working class norms and are exposed to, and come to identify with the norms of middle class groups;
- b. when they are able, furthermore, to resist the pressure to conformity within their working class membership groups, either by withdrawing from them or as a result of these groups for some reason or other losing their cohesiveness and thus their control over individuals;
- c. when there are genuine opportunities for them of gaining acceptance into the middle class groups to which they aspire to belong." (p. 150)

For Goldthorpe and Lockwood, therefore, the process of embourgeoisement involves, firstly, the 'traditional worker' shifting from an integrated position in his occupational membership group to a position as a 'privatised worker', isolated from his membership group, but still retaining his normative identification with the working class. The second shift is one in which the privatised worker shifts his normative identification to that of a middle class reference group. In so far as he has yet to integrate himself with his normative refer-

ence group, however, he remains 'isolated' and is characterised as being 'socially aspiring'. The consummation of ennoblement takes place when the aspirant worker actually manages to integrate himself with the group from which he takes his normative identification. Goldthorpe and Lockwood characterise this individual as the 'assimilated worker'. *

Given this formalisation of the ennoblement thesis, Goldthorpe and Lockwood argue that the model reveals certain defects and crudities in the assumptions which the thesis contains. In the first place, the notion of 'assimilation' implies that the 'new working class' is moving into a middle class life-style and set of norms which is homogenous and static. However, they argue, it is clear that stratification amongst the middle classes is highly developed. Rather than postulate that some sections of the working class are adopting 'middle class' notions of 'individualism' tout court, the authors argue that the process should be viewed as one of 'convergence' between certain manual working class groups, and certain 'white collar' groups, the individualism of the latter being as attenuated (through the development of activist white-collar unions) as the 'collectivism' of the former.

The 'convergence' thesis, then, postulates a shift on the part of the 'new working class' from 'solidaristic collectivism' (collectivism seen as an end in itself) to 'instrumental collectivism' (collectivism seen as a means to largely private ends). The corresponding shift amongst the white-collar middle class is from the 'radical individualism' of the middle class, towards the same 'instrumental collectivism'. The working class shift is seen as being the result of twenty years of full employment, increased leisure opportunities, and so on; whilst the 'white collar' shift is seen as a result of threatened standards of living due to inflation, and reduced chances of upward occupational mobility.

Goldthorpe and Lockwood do not, however, regard a theory of 'convergence' as necessarily implying 'identity': -

"It is reasonable to suppose that instrumental collectivism and family-centredness are present in both strata, but it is also reasonable to expect that the relative emphasis given to the two elements will differ from one stratum to the other. This is because for the 'new' working class convergence largely means an adaptation of ends, while for the 'new' middle class an adaptation of means. In the former case, convergence implies primarily an attenuation of collectivism of the solidaristic kind, of which an incipient family-centredness is a by-product. In the latter case, the by-product is instrumentalism, resulting from an attenuation of radical individualism. Thus, both the new 'individualism' of the working class and the new 'collectivism' of the middle class, though bringing the two groups into closer approximation, are still likely to remain distinct, in more or less subtle ways, from the attenuated individualism of the middle class and the attenuated collectivism of the working class." (p. 154)

* See Appendix I.

The relevance of this debate in terms of political consequences is obvious. Unlike the United States, where investigations of voting behaviour have generally concentrated on correlations with such variables as ethnicity, religion, urban v. rural voters, (and post-Lazarsfeld et. al.'s The People's Choice, with primary reference groups and opinion leaders) studies of British electoral behaviour have, until recently, concerned themselves almost overwhelmingly with correlations between voting behaviour and social class.

Profound postulated changes in British class structure, therefore, might well be taken as being indicative of equally profound changes in resultant voting behaviour. * Much of the origins of the debate on embourgeoisement lies in the period following the Labour defeat of 1959 - their third successive defeat at the polls since the Second World War. The question was whether or not, in terms of voting behaviour, traditional working class attitudes had been "eroded by the steady growth of prosperity". **

The assumption behind such an argument of course, is that of the 'naive economic determinism' of the embourgeoisement thesis writ large: that a simple rise in the material standard of living of the working class, leads it automatically to embrace the norms and life-styles - including voting behaviour - of the middle classes. The 'convergence' thesis leads to rather different conclusions, however; the shift from 'solidaristic collectivism' to 'instrumental collectivism' by no means implies that the working class has become fully divorced from the economic and political institutions that it traditionally regards as being 'its own'. Rather, that its attitude towards them has changed, as we have seen, from being one of "an end in itself" to one of being "a means to an end". ***

By and large, these were the conclusions at which Goldthorpe et. al. arrived in their later, extended study of the employees of three major industrial concerns in Luton. ****

* But it cannot be stressed too strongly that the assumption that 'changes' are/have been taking place, is very insecurely founded. To argue that workers are becoming 'embourgeoisied' or 'privatised' or whatever, is to assume that we know what they were before. And to a large extent, the comparative historical data are missing. Thus, Runciman points out that:

"There may be no way of demonstrating that this frequency of 'privatisation', if that is what it is, is any greater than it may have been long enough before the embourgeoisement thesis became fashionable".

(Runciman, op. cit., p. 146) And he carefully restricts the terms of reference of his own contribution to the debate to attempting to show: "...how far a state of embourgeoisement can be plausibly attributed to the working class of 1962." (Ibid. p. 143)

** D. Butler and R. Rose, The British General Election of 1959; p. 2. cited Runciman, op. cit., p. 139

*** For sources of a fuller treatment of the political consequences of changes in the class structure, see the Bibliography.

**** Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer & Platt, The Affluent Worker (3 vols.), C.V.P. 1968, 1968 and 1969.

15

Their subjects were deliberately chosen as well-paid workers in affluent industries, well-distinguished from those industries - such as, mining, docking, fishing, and ship-building - which, by concentrating workers together in solidary communities, can best be calculated to produce the sort of 'solidaristic collectivism' associated with the 'traditional worker'. * By contrast, the Luton sample was composed of workers whose social relationships had moved away from 'communal solidarity' to a more 'privatised', family-centred, social existence.

None the less, the authors found that a high proportion of the men in their sample were regular Labour voters. Although the 'instrumentalism' of their political attitudes was not as clear-cut as the authors had found in relation to their sample's attitude towards employment and Trade Union membership, they found, as expected, that support for Labour was strongly based upon expected pay-offs in terms of higher standards of living and better social services. In so far as there was a strong correlation between Trade Union membership and Labour voting, the authors saw little reason to expect that the secular trend was against Labour, since the earlier parts of the study had suggested that the new instrumentalism of the 'affluent' working class manifested itself in a strong tendency towards Trade Union membership. On the other hand, this must be set against the finding that where Labour support was low in the Luton sample, the authors discerned extensive white-collar affiliations amongst the individuals concerned; and in so far as the secular trend is towards an increasing proportion of the labour market being defined in terms of 'white-collar' rather than 'blue-collar' jobs, the authors suggest that the key to possible developments in the direction of 'embourgeoisement' (and presumably to the political consequences of such a development) are to be sought in the changing occupational structure rather than in the simple fact of affluence itself.

None the less, it should be remembered that the Luton data is based upon fieldwork undertaken within terms of reference which Goldthorpe and Lockwood had in fact criticised in their earlier paper. That is to say that it was undertaken with workers in expanding and prosperous industries - the workers living in relatively newly-developed communities. **

As Eldridge points out:

"One ought perhaps to recognise, as far as manual workers are concerned, that so far as one can discern a movement from 'solidaristic collectivism' to 'individualistic collectivism', the tendency might not be irreversible. Thus, Luton

* See Appendix II

** Although, to be fair to the authors, this was for reasons akin to those of Durkheim, when he chose to test his belief that human behaviour could be explained at the level of the purely social by a study of suicide - the most individualistic of human acts.

is a town that has experienced a high level of inward migration of labour, mainly because of job opportunities in the car industry. It remains possible a greater degree of residential stability will lead to a greater degree of social stability. Hence, the privatised worker of today may be the traditional worker of tomorrow." *

In summary, therefore, we may say that Goldthorpe and Lockwood found little support in their study for the full-blooded embourgeoisement thesis. Life-styles amongst the workers they studied tended to be privatised and family-centred, but where little white-collar social affiliation already existed, the authors found little change in terms of upward social integration. Economic aspirations did not appear to be accompanied by status aspirations. In interpreting these results, the authors make a claim for the relative autonomy of the class structure:

"... as we understand it, social stratification is ultimately a matter of sanctioned social relationships; and while major changes in the respects above mentioned (rising affluence, changes in the technical organisation in industry, and changes in patterns of urban residence: A.M.) will obviously exert an influence on such relationships, this is not necessarily one which transforms class and status structures or the positions of individuals and groups within these structures. A factory worker can double his living standards and still remain a man who sells his labour to an employer in return for wages; he can work at a control panel rather than on an assembly line without changing his subordinate position in the organisation of production: he can live in his own house in a 'middle-class' estate or suburb and still remain little involved in white-collar social worlds. In short, class and status relationships do not change entirely pari passu with changes in the economic, technological and sociological infrastructure of social life: they have rather an important degree of autonomy, and can thus accommodate considerable change in this infrastructure without themselves changing in any fundamental way." (vol. 3., p. 162/163).

The replacement of solidaristic collectivism by instrumental attitudes to Trade Union and labour organisations suggest to the authors that either of two interpretations and projections can be placed upon their findings. The first of these is the notion that we have already discussed - that of the long-term decline of working class collectivism. The other possible interpretation is cast in terms of the notion of 'alienation'.

Lockwood and Goldthorpe draw a distinction between a 'latent' theory of alienation, as expressed by Marcuse and Gorz, and the 'manifest' theory of alienation to be found in the work of Mallet.

The first of these concentrates on the way in which alienation is sublimated by compulsive and escapist consumption; by the gratification of 'false needs'. Mallet, on the other hand, argues that long-term changes in capitalism are taking place which give rise to an awareness of alienation, and will thereby lead to the development of a new radical class consciousness.

* J.E.T. Eldridge, Sociology and Industrial Life, Michael Joseph, 1971, p.66

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With regard to the first of these theories, that of 'latent' alienation, Goldthorpe and Lockwood suggest that, superficially, the theory goes a long way towards articulating their findings. Support for a model of latent alienation is given by their respondents' concern over domestic standards of consumption, by their 'money model' of the social order (as opposed to a 'class' or 'status' model), and by the way in which the work experience corresponds so well to Marx's description of alienated labour:

"... work is external to the worker...it is not part of his nature...; consequently, he does not fulfil himself in his work, but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker, therefore, feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary, but imposed, forced labour. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs." *

In contradiction to this model, however, Goldthorpe and Lockwood challenge one of the domain assumptions of the theory of alienation, namely that alienation in the workplace is reflected in external behaviour and attitudes.

The authors claim that in matters of empirical concern, little "direct and uniform association" had been exhibited in their study between immediate shop-floor work and behaviour of a wider reference. This is so, the authors claim, because "the effects of technologically determined conditions of work are always mediated through the meanings that men give to their work and through their own definitions of their work situation, and because these meanings and definitions in turn vary with the particular sets of wants and expectations that men bring to their employment." (p. 181)

Because of the consistent instrumentalism of these respondents' attitudes, therefore, and because of the very high percentage of their sample who had moved into highly alienated forms of work from other, apparently less alienated forms of labour, the authors suggest that, for some proportion of their sample, exactly the reverse of the alienation argument would seem to apply:

* Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844", quoted Lockwood and Goldthorpe, vol. 3, p. 180.

"Rather than an overriding concern with consumption standards reflecting alienation in work, it could be claimed that precisely such a concern constituted the motivation for these men to take, and to retain, work of a particularly unrewarding and stressful kind which offered high pay in compensation for its inherent deprivations."

Although the authors go on to qualify this conclusion:

"It might indeed still be held that to devalue work rewards in this way for the sake of increasing consumer power is itself symptomatic of alienation - perhaps even of alienation in an extreme form. But in this case, of course, the idea of work being invariably the prime source of alienation has to be abandoned and its origins must be sought elsewhere; specifically, in whatever social-structural or cultural conditions generate 'consumption-mindedness' of the degree in question."

(p. 182/3)

The 'manifest' notion of alienation, as expressed by Mallet, places stress on the postulated social changes wrought by technological advance. Mallet argues that capital-intensive plants, in which production is of a highly integrated nature, are likely to lead to a revival of a syndicalist form of Trade Unionism and a revival of radical class consciousness. *

Contrary to this, Goldthorpe and Lockwood argue that there is no evidence that highly integrated technical production systems lead to a high degree of social integration amongst workers. Rather, they suggest, there is no reason why workers in the new industries, exhibiting, as they do, a lack of concern with national labour organisations, and restricting their Trade Union consciousness to immediate, plant-level concerns, should not provide the basis for a form of 'corporatism':

"... if it is accepted, as Mallet apparently does accept, that the typical goals and aspirations of the new working class are for secure and rising incomes and higher living standards, then it is difficult to see why such a stance vis-a-vis employers, (i.e. of 'teamwork' and 'accomodation': A.M.) is not a largely rational one. At all events, the point can scarcely be evaded that even in enterprises where a concern with increasing worker participation and control develops, this need not be orientated towards class, as opposed to sectional objectives not need it entail any commitment to radical change in the wider economic or social order. Rather than representing alienation made manifest, syndicalisme gestionnaire could simply be an advanced form of instrumental collectivism." (pp. 186/&)

* A relevant study here is R. Blauner, Alienation and Freedom, Chicago, 1964.

APPENDIX I

The Tyranny of Property-Spaces

It should be noted that the three moves described on page 10, do not correspond to the three moves quoted above on pages 9 and 10, in which Goldthorpe and Lockwood originally cast their argument. The authors provide us, for instance, with this property-space:

Source: Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1963), p. 150

REFERENCE GROUP

(a)

'Working Class'
Normative
Identification

(b)

'Middle Class'
Normative
Identification

(d)

'Isolated'
Relationship

(B)

PRIVATISED
WORKER

(C)

SOCIALLY ASPIRING
WORKER

MEMBERSHIP
GROUP

(c)

'Integrated'
Relationship

(A)

TRADITIONAL
WORKER

(D)

ASSIMILATED
WORKER

Very neat; and it is the relationships expressed in this property-space that we have taken to be Goldthorpe and Lockwood's formalisation of the em-bourgeoisement thesis. We also take it that the authors intend their typology of the various positions which an individual may actually occupy: (A), (B), (C), & (D), to be defined by the relationships that are expressed in this property-space. But note particularly that the 'privatised worker' in position (B) above, still maintains a normative identification with the working class. Compare this with stage a. (quoted on page 9): "When working class persons are in some way motivated to reject working class norms and are exposed to, and come to identify with the norms of middle class groups." Endless confusion is generated if that paragraph is taken to define in some way the movement from the 'traditional worker' position to the 'privatised worker' position.

APPENDIX II

Occupational Communities

This notion (see page 13) is an extension of David Lockwood's original refinement of the Weberian notion of class. (See page 3).

The distinction between the type of industry which produces what Lockwood describes * as 'occupational communities' - a community isolated and endogamous, composed predominantly of a one-class population with low geographic and social mobility - and those industries, notably the service industries, which do not locate individuals in a total occupational community, may be seen as an extension of the notion of the 'work situation' made at a level which includes not only work relationships, but social relationships external to the workplace as well.

'Occupational communities' tend to produce the 'traditional worker' oriented towards 'solidaristic collectivism'. Industries in which work relationships tend to be divorced from social and communal relationships tend to produce the 'new worker' whose collectivism is 'instrumental' - a means to 'privatised', family-centred ends.

* D. Lockwood, "Sources of Variation in Working Class Images of Society", Sociological Review XIV, 1966.

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