

Society as a human creation: the view from Western Marxism

Defining Western Marxism

I think it's fair to say that there isn't an agreed definition of "Western Marxism". In the same way that the phrase "New Left" can be used to refer to radically different political developments, often depending largely on the speaker's own point of view and whether they treat the phrase as a compliment or an insult, the phrase "Western Marxism" can be used to refer to very different sets of theories according to one's preferences and purposes.

For my purposes, I'm going to define Western Marxism negatively in terms of approaches which differ significantly from the major forms of Marxism that became institutionalised in the Leninist and social democratic parties of the pre-war period and positively in terms of reworkings of the Marxist tradition which emphasise the activist, humanist and emancipatory elements in his thought. This means locating Western Marxism in terms of agency rather than structure (in terms of the conventional distinction) or in terms of "critique" rather than "science" (in Alvin Gouldner's terminology).

In terms of this course, we can treat structuralism and Western Marxism as the opposing developments of different emphases within classic modernism. One element of this can be seen in terms of the concept of determinism. Both Marx and Weber emphasise the extent to which people's action is determined by their social situation; Marx's famous phrase for this is "Human beings make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing". Structuralism develops the emphasis on the primary role of social relations to argue that the idea of agency is an illusion. This can be described as a strong determinism, or perhaps more clearly as a variant of fatalism. A weak determinism would see determination as "setting limits and exerting pressures"; in the Western Marxist tradition this setting of limits and exerting of pressure on human action is above all the result of the action of other human beings or of ourselves in the past. In other words, if we take the idea of the determination of human action by social structure as characteristic of classic modernism, we could say that structuralism collapses human action back into social structure, while Western Marxism tends to collapse social structure back into human action.

In this lecture I'll be talking about three authors: Georg Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci and Alain Touraine, mainly because I think there is a relatively similar logic in their theories. This isn't an obligatory definition: Martin Jay, for example, includes Althusser in his discussion of Western Marxism (*Marxism and Totality*); Roger Gottlieb's anthology includes socialist feminist authors. Both of these are admittedly slightly unusual choices, but virtually any definition of Western Marxism would also include the authors of the "Frankfurt School" or "critical theory" (Adorno, Horkheimer, Fromm, Marcuse, etc.); I've avoided them in these lectures, but they have of course made a substantial contribution in terms of theorising modernity and rationality in particular. I will be talking about Jürgen Habermas, one of the "second generation" of the Frankfurt School. You're welcome to read up on the other Critical Theorists if you want to write about them; apart from their own writings and books devoted to them, both Jay and Gottlieb include them.

It's worth spending a couple of minutes on the context that these authors are writing in. The relevant writings of Lukacs and Gramsci date from the inter-War period, so they predate structuralism by a few decades. Lukacs was a Hungarian communist; his most important book for our purposes, *History and Class Consciousness*, was written after his involvement in

the Hungarian revolution of 1919. Gramsci was involved in the workers' council movement during the Turin strikes of the same period. His theoretical reputation largely derives from his prison notebooks, written in a deliberately elliptical fashion because of censorship and smuggled out of jail. In other words, both of them share an experience of practical politics at a level which can be described in terms of the social totality, as well as an experience which leads them both to emphasise that social knowledge and social action are not separate forms of life. Touraine's life is a bit more prosaic; he is a French sociologist, but one whose research programme has led him into involvement with a broad range of social movements - from investigating the experience of car workers at Renault in the 1950s through involvement with the student movement in 1968 to research on Allende's Chile and the anti-nuclear movement in France. Thus there is a common thread of involvement with social movements and a refusal to separate theory from practice.

The concept of totality

Western Marxism and structuralism

Western Marxism shares with structuralism a common emphasis on holism or the concept of totality. This is formulated by Lukacs as "the all-pervasive supremacy of the whole over the parts". Thus both of the major developments of critical modernism reject methodological individualism in favour of a view of the social whole as essentially relational, although as we shall see the content of these relations differs dramatically. In each case, it is this relational approach that enables us to think of a social whole. An example from the Western Marxist tradition would be the concept of class: this is seen as representing, not an individual fact (so that A is a shopkeeper and B is a peasant) but a relation (so that C stands in a relation of exploitation and domination of D).

As well as this strong relationalism, there is a radical extension of the category of "the social". Like structuralism, or at least like Althusser's structuralism, but unlike the classical modernism of Marx and Weber, Western Marxism tends to treat "the social" (in its own definition) as the primary or even the only reality. This is clear in terms of the concept of human nature: the idea of a biologically fixed, universally present human nature is rejected as firmly by Gramsci as by Althusser (we have seen that Levi-Strauss does not take this approach). Here again, the substance of Western Marxism's alternative - social agency - is radically different from that of structuralism. More broadly, the idea of nature as separate from and essentially different to society is rejected. For Lukacs, it is effectively unknowable; for Gramsci, nature is something that is effectively completely subordinated to society in the process of production. Similarly, both reject the idea of the unconscious as having an independent and pre-social nature. This is not just a rejection of the idea of the non-social; it is also bound up with a rejection of positivist and scientific approaches to social reality and the insistence that we cannot claim to stand "outside of history", to be an external observer of a fixed and given reality.

Reification and alienation

For Western Marxist authors, society is a human creation; more exactly, humanity is social humanity. "Human beings make their own history", but not as isolated individuals. Human beings only appear as human beings in interaction with one another, that is, in social relations. These social relations, however, are not fixed and given, so that we could discuss

them in terms of structures which define what appear to be individuals; rather, they are the results of collective creation and social conflict.

Thus whatever appears as natural, given, or fixed in society is the result of human action, but we do not recognise it as such. Lukacs introduces the term "reification" to describe this process where the result of our actions appear to us as a quasi-natural "thing" (res), because we do not recognise its social origins or the process of creation that goes into its formation. This concept of reification links in to some of Marx's discussion of what is translated into English as "alienation", but it does not give economic production, interaction with external nature, the same central role it has in much of Marx's writing. In Western Marxism, then, what appear as structures are simply the products of human action, or, even more simply, a form of human action which has taken on a life of its own and now appears quasi-natural.

Expressive totality

A term which is sometimes used to characterise this view of society is that of "expressive totality". The social whole, the totality, is seen simply as the self-expression of the social subject, a self-expression and self-creation which we only partially recognise as such. Within a Marxist framework, the force of the word "expressive" comes from the implication that Lukacs, in particular, does not recognise the importance of material needs and interaction with nature in this process, so that the self-creation of society is "instrumental" rather than "expressive". This point could, however, equally be directed at Gramsci, whose complete subordination of the natural world to the social leads to the implication that needs are not just socially defined but in fact socially created; at Althusser, who of course throws the notion of human needs out of court; or even, in some slightly convoluted arguments, at Marx the arch-materialist. This is not just a problem within Marxism; given that pure biological needs are never manifested directly in humans, but are always articulated in a social context and given a socially meaningful form, the argument that we can disentangle pure biological needs from the social form they always take is a problematic one, albeit a necessary one.

Consciousness and action

Human agency, class agency and class conflict

Like Marx, Western Marxism recognises that an abstract description of the subject of this process of the expressive creation of society as being simply "humanity" would be both ahistorical (in the sense of not recognising the changing nature of this process over time) and metaphysical, because identifying the social creator with all of social humanity, even at a single point in time, makes it difficult if not impossible to point to the specific social locations of this creation. While all members of society are seen as involved in this creation - because they are involved with each other, they do not do so equally, or consensually, except perhaps in a future communist society.

Therefore, Western Marxists argue that the social actor, the creative subject, is not social humanity as a whole but its parts, in particular social classes. Social classes, then, are placed at the centre of the Western Marxist theory of society; social structure arises out of social conflict. This is as true for the creation of institutions for the purpose of exploitation and domination (industrial organisation, the state) as it is for the creation of institutions by which the dominated and exploited aim to overcome both domination and exploitation and create a new social order. This may explain why Western Marxism has traditionally generated both

analyses of the mechanisms of state domination, cultural manipulation and so on and analyses of the emancipatory power of action to resist and transcend them.

Class consciousness, class organisation (hegemony)

I want to make two points here. (1) The first is to remind you of Marx's distinction between "class in itself", in other words class situation as created by economic situations, and "class for itself", in other words a class's self-creation of itself as a class through political organisation and the development of class consciousness. In Western Marxism, it is the latter which receives most attention, because it is here that the creative and relational aspects of class can be seen most clearly: class organisation and class culture are clearly creative, and equally clearly, at least in the case of the workers' movement, they are not self-sufficient but are formed in conflict with the capitalist class. Touraine, indeed, argues that there is no class without class consciousness, in other words that the concept of class is meaningless unless it relates to social action.

(2) Gramsci develops these issues in his well-known discussion of "hegemony". The essential point he makes is that the power of a ruling class does not reside simply in its control of physical force: power does not simply "come out of the barrel of a gun". One of the central locations of conflict, beside the workplace conflict and the conflict over control of the state, is therefore a cultural one: capitalist domination also rests on a particular form of "common sense", a particular form of everyday culture, as well as what academics are the more obvious issues of the production of cultural commodities. The workers' movement, he argues, needs to work not just towards seizing power in the state and control of the workplace, but also towards the creation of a new cultural hegemony. This means transforming the way in which we think about the world, recreating culture in a new form with a new content. One example of what is meant by this can be seen in the Italian context: Gramsci argues that the peasants, in particular of the South, accept the present order of things not so much out of economic interest or because of repression but because their everyday mode of social organisation places them in a position of dependence on local notables and because their religious culture equally subordinates them to the dominant social groups. The task of the workers' movement, he argues, is to build a new alliance with the peasantry involving the transformation of their everyday modes of cultural and social organisation. For this reason he placed a particular stress on the development of what he called "organic" rather than "traditional" intellectuals - the growth of a new working-class intelligentsia which would be able to speak to the working class not just in terms of economic interest or political strategy but also to draw on working-class culture and language.

Knowledge and action

Thus Western Marxism takes the consciousness of ordinary people - their class identity, culture, language and so on - as seriously as it does their activity; indeed, it tends to argue that the two cannot be separated. There is no class without class consciousness for Touraine; for Gramsci, the discussion of "culture" is at the same time a discussion of modes of social and political organisation. Consistently, Western Marxism does not believe in theorising as a pure activity: abstract philosophising, free of all social relations, is neither desirable nor possible. In both cases, then, knowledge and action are seen as ultimately the same thing. We do not act without thinking, but our thought is itself related to practical activity. Gramsci expresses this point of view in a number of famous aphorisms; perhaps the most creative part of his thinking on the subject is his redefinition of intellectual activity as including both

theoretical and organising activity. This, of course, relates not just to Communist Party activists but also to "traditional" intellectuals - local notables such as the village doctor, the priest, or the schoolteacher - and the organising and theoretical activity of civil servants or managers.

Reflexivity / rationality

Self-creation, self-knowledge and modernity ("historicity")

So Western Marxism can be described both cognitively and normatively as a philosophy of "praxis", or the unity of thought and action. It is asserted (a) that this is what happens in everyday life and (b) we should realise this and take it into account, for example while we are theorising. However, there is obviously more to the issue than that, or it would not make sense to claim that the results of our thought and action appear to us as things, external, structures.

Thus Gramsci, for example, argues that while "everyone is an intellectual" (in other words, theorises and organises on an everyday level), "not everybody has the social function of an intellectual" (in other words, not everyone devotes themselves to this thinking and organising). In other words, the division of mental and manual labour, diagnosed by Marx and carried to its extremes in the Taylorist model of production, means that this initial unity is at the very least severely distorted. On a more general level, the reality of class conflict and class culture means that the social actors, the conflicting class movements of the rulers and the ruled, cannot fully grasp the social totality, but are restricted to a partial knowledge of it. Thus the reason we do not grasp the expressive totality of society as such is that the agent is not the whole of social humanity but is, in fact, the conflicting parts of that humanity.

It then comes as no surprise to find that many Western Marxists expand Marx's own indications in this direction with a much stronger emphasis on the universal nature of the working class, in other words the claim that the thinkers and organisers of the working-class movement can speak, at least to an extent, from the position of the future unalienated humanity. I mentioned in earlier lectures the point that this means that valid knowledge of the social whole is only available in modern (i.e. capitalist) society, in other words that sociology is, from this perspective at least, only possible from modernity; and that this implies a double emphasis on reflexivity here - the reflexivity available to a class movement, and the reflexivity implied by the theorist's need to become involved in that movement. (For Touraine, incidentally, this involvement has a rather different form, which is developed extensively in the second part of *The Voice and the Eye*).

I want to mention briefly the idiosyncratic direction in which Touraine develops this line of reasoning. Touraine does not, in fact, share Lukacs's and Gramsci's conviction that industrial capitalism is the last stage of social conflict. Instead, he draws a distinction between "industrial" and "post-industrial" society which is not identical with the usual technological determinism, although it does tend to subordinate capitalism to modernity rather than treating modernity as essentially capitalist, as more orthodox Marxists do (and I believe Touraine does not claim to be a "Marxist" in the traditional sense).

What he argues is that societies can be defined in terms of their "historicity", that is, their capacity to act on themselves. In other words, the extent of self-creation and self-knowledge is not fixed but variable. Structuring or institutionalised agency, in the limited sense of the

repetitive reproduction of a single method of self-creation, can thus have a greater weight than original and creative agency. Industrial society already distinguishes itself from earlier societies in terms of its greater historicity - its greater capacity for self-knowledge and self-creation as opposed to self-reproduction – postindustrial or "programmed" society, towards which we are moving, is radically self-knowing and self-creating. This consists of economic accumulation and the capacity it bestows to create work; the forms of knowledge which produce the social; and the cultural model which represents the way in which a society thinks of itself. Again by contrast with Gramsci and Lukacs, Touraine distinguishes between this cultural model - the overall self-knowledge of society - and ideology, which he restricts to the articulation of group interests as defined in this cultural model. Thus if group interests are defined as economic by a cultural model which sees society as primarily an economic reality, ideologies will articulate particular economic interests, but the definition of reality as economic is itself a cultural one. This global cultural model, though, is not imposed on the actors from outside; instead, it consists in and only in the issues and forms of the conflict between the opposing social movements. Thus if the cultural model of industrial society sees society as an economic reality, this is because of the economism of the ruling class and of the working class, and not vice versa.

Thus Touraine is to an extent following both earlier Western Marxists and the founders of critical modernism in arguing that modernity ("post-industrial" or "programmed" society) is characterised by its greater reflexivity. (It should be noted in passing that Touraine argues that the key conflict in programmed society is not between owners and workers but between the dominated and the dominating, between the victims and the operators of the power structure.)

"Absolute historicism"

The last point I want to make is to draw your attention to what all of this means for the grounding of truth claims. All three authors are radical in their refusal of "transcendence", in other words of philosophies which claim to be able to locate truth somewhere other than in human society as it develops historically. This means rejecting cognitive and normative claims based not just on a transcendental God but also those claims based on a supposedly universal human nature or on claims about external nature. It is argued alternatively that these do not exist (particularly the first two) or that we cannot know them except in historical and social reality (particularly the latter). I have suggested that the argument about nature is not completely watertight, and we will return to this issue, both in terms of what might be argued to be universal biological needs and in terms of the possibility of thinking of human nature as having a universal social component, particularly a communicative one.

If we accept the Western Marxist argument, however - and the arguments in its favour are at least as good as the arguments in favour of, for example, structuralism or post-structuralism - we have to take a position of what Gramsci calls "absolute historicism". In other words, claims about truth or "the good" can only be evaluated in terms of knowable historical and social reality. More than this, what is true and what is good are historical and social rather than philosophical questions. This does not imply a total relativism or a pure "anything goes" approach, for two reasons. Firstly, within any given society it can be argued (as Touraine does) that these claims need to be referred to the highest level of meanings available in that society, in other words to its overall cultural model, rather than to the ideologies of any particular group within that society. Secondly, however, what might be more in keeping with Lukacs and Gramsci's thinking (although as far as I know they do not pursue this line of

(thought) would be to argue that, just as genuine self-knowledge is only available from the second-last social formation, from the point of view of that proletariat which will become the universal subject of the new society, so it is a mistake to think of pre-capitalist societies, or even capitalist society, as a fixed and static form. All historical societies, in other words, are in change and transition; all contain social conflicts which point to new forms of society. This would open up the possibility of an evaluation of claims about truth and value in terms, not of overall cultural models, but in terms of those ideologies which are presaging and leading towards later social forms. Clearly, though, any such evaluation could only be provisional, and in particular could only be related to the provisional ideologies of our own time. It might plausibly be argued that this is what in fact happens.

The feminist challenge

Feminism poses key challenge to critical modernism; in terms of "intellectual politics" the question is whether the two are compatible or opposed. This points to lecture 7 on encounter between feminism and post-modernism. This lecture assumes very basic knowledge of feminist ideas.

Social movements

Analogy between Marxism and feminism:

- interaction between "movement" intellectuals and academic intellectuals;
- recomposition within the academy;
- characteristics from social movements ~ concern for agency / ideology, experience/ reflexivity.

Historical moment of emergence of "second wave" feminism & interaction with 1968 - early 1970s hard left important for understanding development.

Feminist writers devote little time to the movement as such & the feminist theory of social movements is limited, most interest is on recovering history of "first-wave" feminism rather than understanding the contemporary women's movement in sociological terms.

- This disinterest is shared with other "identity politics" movements and contrasts with Marxist emphasis on analysis of present movement;
- Stronger focus on "enemy" agency ("backlash", ideology, patriarchy, etc.)
- Rel. to political / rhetorical strategy of arguing for necessary link between structure (patriarchy) - interests (women's) - demands (feminism) - action (movement) & reluctance to examine conditions of this;
- Related also to interests of 1970s Marxism in ideology and structure but not agency.

Empirical question of the compatibility / identity of movements (vs. class, ethnic, sexual orientation etc. movements) is raised, as is the question of the nature of (women's, men's) identity).

Reflexivity / rationality

- "Lived experience" a la Thompson / Williams;
- Concern to take women's knowledge seriously
- Relation to theoretical / organisation skills developed within women's movement.
- Critique of Leninist model of deduced and imposed knowledge.
- Especially critique of "speaking for" women.
- Oral history, life-story, biographical methodology.
- Concern to broaden area of "relevant knowledge", refusal of cognitive splits (analytic / normative, rational / emotional, etc.)
- Legitimation of eg sexuality, housework as "serious subjects".
- Cognitive splits seen as legitimating exclusion of women's experience and concerns.

- Male Left (= critical modernism) seen as colluding in this domination by political economy and instrumental rationality
- Political shift from "instrumentally rational" hierarchical logics to organisation as aim in itself - issue of organisation of "academic mode of production" (Stanley).
- Doubt re "speaking for": if knowledge was universal, could be articulated, and could be deduced from general principles, anyone could speak for anyone else. But it doesn't work in practice.

Holism etc.

Marxism / feminism debate, derived from early interaction in second- wave feminism.

Liberal feminism not discussed here as clearly affirmative modernist in approach (modernisation as progress; absence of reflexivity; uncritical reliance on state agency, etc)

Idea of patriarchy in radical and Marxist / socialist feminism -> Patriarchy / capitalism debate.

Patriarchy as systematic domination and exploitation of women by men.

Limits of patriarchy concept when used to exclude critical modernist discourse (as in radical feminism):

- difficulty in thinking about nature of paid work rather than distribution of positions within it;
- difficulty in explaining conflicts within patriarchal state / politics;
- difficulty in explaining change within unchanged patriarchy;
- difficulty in agreeing on nature of problem (biological? psychological?)

Attempts at integration:

- Dual-systems theory (Walby): interaction / interarticulation of capitalism and patriarchy (hence shift private -> public patriarchy);
- Capitalism typically seen as patriarchal but as changing the nature of patriarchal mechanisms of domination and exploitation;
- Very fruitful as empirical hypothesis.

Periodisation

Patriarchy seen as antecedent to and more general than capitalism, yet capitalism clearly modifies patriarchy (changing gender divisions of labour, private / public issue, family changes, etc.)

issue:

Suggest: this is false problem. "Patriarchy" is at higher level than "capitalism" and corresponds in fact to "class society" in Marx:

- both dominate known history;
- both can be seen (a la Raymond Williams!) as continuously interrelated;

- can be thought of in "loose" terms as domination and exploitation without turning what are historically specific modes of gender and class formation into an eternal structure.

We can then look at (a) capitalist patriarchy and (b) interaction of shifts within capitalism and patriarchy (private -> public shift).

NB need also to consider idea that changes in patriarchal modes of domination / exploitation lead to shifts in capitalism as well; points to need for more dynamic and agency-oriented theories of patriarchy?

This area generates fruitful empirical hypotheses for historical/ sociological analysis of institutions (Abbott and Wallace, Walby), runs risk of too much contingency / description and inability to grasp contemporary capitalist patriarchy as coherent structure or as "agency system" a la Touraine. Walby especially often reads like collection of descriptions of 90s Britain. What is often missing is a theoretical account of what generates and renews patriarchal relations in their most general sense.

Unified systems accounts:

General agreement by now of inadequacy of "Marxist feminism" (patriarchy as subset of capitalism): especially historical difficulties (patriarchy comes first) and limited range of issues for which this helps. Most important idea: domestic labour as "reproduction of real life" (Engels) and hence thinkable as constituent element of capitalism.

Difficulties:

- This doesn't account for other patriarchies;
- Difference between needs of capital for reproduction of labour power (functionalist account) and needs of individual capitalists for cheap female labour.

Empirical value especially in pointing to impact of housework, childcare, emotional support and especially childbearing / childcare nexus (simultaneously a possible answer to "why women"? question, implying transferral of "natural" childbearing to "natural" childcare functions, and something with a directly demonstrable impact on women's life-chances in contemporary society.)

NB however collusion of male workers in imposing "private patriarchy" even against capitalist interests; "family wage"; threat to working class wages and organisation levels. Suggests contradiction between women's and (male) workers' interests & hence between movements.

Unified socialist feminist theories (as against "Marxist feminism") don't subordinate patriarchy to capitalism but reconceptualise both.

Early version: Firestone (normally presented as radical feminist but here seen as expanding idea of production and reproduction of real life). Firestone draws on Engels' *Origin of the Family* ... Generally reckoned to be failure because of her biological determinism, but brave & pioneering attempt at reconceptualising *everything*.

Later: Young and Jaggar (expansions of "division of labour" and "alienation", discussion in Tong).

Especially alienation account broadens idea of exploitation / domination and resolves sociological issues around agency / structure in a very helpful way: it avoids reification of limited aspects and moments of capitalism as constitutive of all "class society".

Claim / aim of unified theory: to integrate analysis of "production and reproduction of real life", domination and exploitation; typically, also integration of analysis of meaning and psychoanalysis, literary theory, politics, etc. Key question: is it tenable?

Finally:

Some of difficulties of agreement in 1970s feminism (and some of promise of unified socialist feminism) relates to academic specialisation / reification: political economy, biological determinism, literary criticism, psychoanalysis etc. The specialisation of these fields and generation of narrow concepts tends to lose hold on the totality of lived experience.

Cue cultural studies a la Williams, Thompson, Foucault; Angela McRobbie's defence of "looseness".

Towards cultural studies

History of social thought as a differentiation:

- philosophy / history split (Greeks)
- birth of modern political science (Machiavelli)
- economics / anthropology in modern senses (Enlightenment)

Each simultaneously addresses itself to specialised category of human experience and attempts to project this as account of the whole.

Series of attempts to reverse this process: Marx & Weber are classic examples. Both link politics, economy and culture (as class consciousness / ideology in Marx; status / religion in Weber). In (later) critical versions the emphasis has generally been on political economy as the central link; culture gets reduced to ideology / status symbols, etc. (In structural functionalism the reverse happens and things are abstracted to the point where "values" appear as an explanation of everything.) Critical political economy is then itself specialised to accounts of the institutions of the formal economy and of the state.

"Cultural studies" joins feminism in the attempt to (1) broaden the categories used, (2) include culture without reductionism; (3) thus generate a more adequate holism.

This lecture looks at 2 influential sources for cultural studies:

EP Thompson / Raymond Williams - socialist humanism

Foucault - radical post-structuralism.

Very different accounts, but surprising similarities...

Marginal status:

- perspectives more than theories
- haven't founded coherent schools
- but have taught people to think and work in new ways.

Thompson / Williams

Derived from W. Marxist tradition but informed by (lower middle-class / working class) background and grassroots political activism post-CP.

Refusal of base / superstructure model.

Arg.:

- separated "levels" cannot be isolated like this
- politics & economics are also cultural (EPT), culture is material (RW)
- central importance of "whole way of life" / "whole way of struggle".

Culture [i.e. social movements]

EPT:

- class culture (development of "class consciousness" idea)
- close attention to "anthropology" of popular culture (language and ritual, needs and expectations, formation of resistant popular agency)
- experience as junction concept between domination / exploitation and formation of political / cultural resistance (class as relation or as experience).

RW:

- culture in lived experience: place, community, kinship, etc.
- close analysis of formation of cultural production as material institutions and not simply disembodied "authors"
- recovery of class experience within language.

Theorizing [i.e. holism]

EPT:

- distrust of overly sophisticated abstractions as "exercise in intellectual closure"
- attention to dialectic between experience and thought
- *Poverty of Theory*: capitalist relations as "kernel" of society.

RW:

- distrust of "specialisation", aim for looser but more encompassing concepts (loose but coherent)
- *Towards 2000*: from mode of production to way of life.

Rationality / reflexivity:

EPT:

- artisan model of "determination" by material (data) of theory etc; interaction, "working with" the material;
- sharp refusal of inductive analytic reasoning in abstraction from lived experience of subjects;
- (implicit) identification with subjects & relevance to present-day struggles;
- (loosely) dialectic rationality - not aiming at or claiming neutrality but interacting with "material" and using it in present-day context.

Strategy of "circularity" between material and concepts in *Poverty of Theory*. Question of whether this is a search for 'truth' or (more likely) a search for (present-day) 'meaning' in history.

RW:

- Frankfurt School-influenced critique of "dominative mode": attitude to world, others, self as "raw material".
- Need to connect with "lived experience" of emotion etc. Refusal of "specialised" rationality
- (Implicit) reliance on "fully human" nature of writer
- Synthetic rationality / reflexivity in refusal of separation between private emotion and public analysis, private feeling / culture and public economy / politics.

"Humanism" of both": radical use of language of "fully-developed human being" and of human needs / meaning versus systems of domination and exploitation. Human commonality and (class) difference. Analysis implicitly grounded in shared humanity and shared (class) struggle.

Michel Foucault

Developed from structuralist tradition (contrast to EPT / RW), but unusual among poststructuralists in retention of analysis of power, institutions etc. as against purely literary or philosophical approach. Multiplicity of theories rather than single coherent Theory. Both Jay and Habermas treat dialogue between Foucault and critical modernism as a central one. Shares with RW / EPT dissolution of isolation of separate "levels" of society; for MF this is via an analysis of power.

Traditional model of power (incl. liberal and Marxist theories), for MF:

1. power is possessed by someone;
2. power is derived from a central source;
3. power is primarily repressive.

Foucault:

1. "Power is exercised": it is a relation. This derived from structuralist relationalism vs. subject-orientation of Western Marxism.
2. "Power is analysed as coming from the bottom up": post-structuralist refusal of single unified totality ex state, ideology, economy, etc. Instead multiplicity of power relations & no distinction between "levels".
NB (holism):
 - o No escape from power relations (challenge to Habermas' "ideal speech situation"): human relations are always involved with coercive power. Hence this is not a liberal pluralism (with private retreats) but an all-encompassing multiplicity.

(social movements:)

- o Power includes possibility of resistance and struggle; it's never totally one-dimensional.
- 3. Power as constitutive of subjectivity etc. through power / knowledge. NB contrast to RW's use of Frankfurt School model of dominative / exploitative approach

(instrumental rationality) which assumes original human nature a la Marx's philosophical anthropology.

- a. Shifting types of power. *Discipline and punish*: from dramatic spectacle (public mutilation / execution) to micro-level but all-present intervention (prison: surveillance / interventions to reform prisoner).
- b. Link power / knowledge: power in prison system relates to ability to view / hear prisoners and to "know" them as individuals constituted for example, via a psychological history - case sheet held by psychologist who makes recommendations as to treatment -> psychology, criminology, etc.
- c. Spread outwards via e.g. examination -> pedagogical knowledge; surveys -> social sciences. Hence human sciences bound up with spread of surveillance as discipline / disciplines.

This suggests a characterisation of modernity as "disciplinary society" but MF refuses this kind of total analysis: the reasons for its spread are seen as contingent.

Ditto sexuality: Victorian era e.g. not one of repression of sexuality so much as of its creation via spread of (psychological, social-scientific, pedagogical, criminological etc.) "knowledge" about sex.

Issue of homosexuality (MF activist): people's self-identification with their sexuality as central element of personality relates to this form of knowledge.

Hence MF offers radical critique of rationality as mode of domination. He offers not so much an alternative as a greater awareness of the ambiguous nature of rationality. It is not really possible to stand outside it, reflexivity consists in distancing ourselves from it and criticising it, being aware of its dangers. As against the model of 'global intellectuality' ex some meta-Theory MF offers situated / specific intellectual and political interventions.

Common points MF / RW / EPT:

- Refusal of "separate levels" (political, economic, cultural) of analysis, culture not residual or reduced to economics / pol. ideology but key and omnipresent mediating term.
NB need to distinguish analysis of political, economic, cultural institutions from pol., econ., cult. relations; most social relations and institutions involve a mix of power, value and meaning (pol. econ., cult.)
- Rejection of inductive Concepts ex (structuralist-type) Theory for ground-up thinking; looser categories.
- Skepsis re rationality as mode of domination, but no alternative.

Radicalisation of this position -> postmodernism

The postmodernist challenge

Introduction: the "postmodernist" phenomenon

- * Postmodernism as recent (mid-1980s) buzz-word but then extended backwards to cover developments in literature and literary criticism, philosophy, visual art, architecture etc. since 1950s + especially from 1970s on.
- * Orig. ex French post-structuralist philosophy + its encounter with Anglo-American lit. crit. + cultural studies; now governing set of ideas in at least some contexts.
- * Not coherent body of thought but series of ideas, combined or separated in differing ways by different authors.
- * Three central ideas:
 - (a) "Culture" as produced and received is postmodern in form & content (postmodernist vs. modernist aesthetics);
 - (b) "Society" (esp. political economy) can now be seen as having moved into a "postmodern" condition (postmodernity vs. modernity);
 - (c) For a variety of reasons, the "metanarratives" which legitimate the knowledge of modern intellectuals can no longer be sustained (postmodernism vs. "the Enlightenment project").

Postmodernist aesthetics

- * Largely irrelevant for our purposes: related to argument about "modernist aesthetics".
- * Dominant version is related to a traditionalist view of "culture" as "cultural" artefacts (esp. literature, but also extended eg to film, television, advertisements, etc.); sometimes (but by no means always) taken one step further into discussion of *reception* of these by audience. More commonly involves projection of analysis of "text" onto assumptions about audience as "constituted" by text, rather than as using text for their own purposes (Weber: "elective affinity").
- * Against this, Angela McRobbie (*Postmodernism and popular culture*) defends a more sociologically-informed analysis which broadens out notion of cultural production and reception as practices & attempts to recover the everyday meanings e.g. of clothes shopping.
- * Arguments about production of "postmodern" culture, however, lead into discussion of "postmodernity" as historical condition; arguments about reception of "postmodern" culture - or the modes of perception revealed or created by it - lead into discussion of "postmodernism" as an attack on "modern" forms of knowledge and their assumptions & legitimations.

Postmodernity as a historical condition

- * This is effectively one construction placed on a series of observations about contemporary trends which have also been deployed in relation to now-discounted theories about post-industrialism, as well as in relation to arguments about disorganised capitalism (Lash & Urry), radicalised modernity (Giddens), etc.
- * The argument can be presented as a series of contrasts:
 - (a) Against "Fordist" production methods (based on economies of scale) there is a shift to "post-Fordist" organisation of production (with increased "flexibility", subcontracting, small-batch production, etc.) with an increasingly important role for knowledge (managerial skill, scientific expertise, information technology, etc.);
 - (b) Against an economy based on material production for arguably real needs there is a shift

- to the production of symbols, cultural artefacts, etc.;
- (c) Against the post-WWII welfare state compromise there is a shift to a neo-conservatism based on the decline of collective bargaining and the weakening of the nation-state;
 - (d) Against "old social movements" of modernity (esp. class movements) there is the formation of "new social movements" which undermine the holistic claims of the workers' movement;
 - (e) Against the high culture / low culture division of modernist culture there is a general shift to a fragmented and pluralist "postmodern" cultural configuration;
 - (f) There is a shift from socialisation + determination by social relations to individualisation & interaction above all with the "spectacle";
 - (g) There is a shift in the social construction of time and space or in their meanings (history, place / community / identity);

- etcetera, etcetera ad nauseam. This is just one possible list, but it identifies the kind of things that are being pointed to.

* This list also points to the wider claims being made by arguments about the "postmodern condition":

- (a) They can be taken to pull the carpet away from the Marxist analysis of capitalism as a mode of economic organisation; from a strategy oriented around the working class as the central agent of social transformation; and from a hope for greater "substantive rationality" through education, socialisation, science, increased rational control of the environment, etc. What is generally missed in this kind of argument is that it is a very limited kind of Marxism (very often one belonging to "postmodernist" authors themselves, in an earlier incarnation) which is being taken to stand for the whole of Marxism. In particular, a 1970s mix of Lenin, Trotsky and Althusser is being taken to represent the totality of the meanings and practices both of Marxist authors and of the workers' movement.
- (b) They can be taken as relating to a further development within capitalism itself, in which case the challenge is to reformulate a form of historical materialism which is not contradicted by these developments & dispenses with the "local" analyses of Marx, Lenin, etc. for the sake of retaining the more general elements of historical materialism. This is the line taken by two of the central responses to the "postmodern challenge":

Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*; David Harvey, *The condition of postmodernity*.

Both of these authors take the line that the "postmodernists" are pointing to something of relevance (and Jameson in particular finds the concept of "postmodernism" a useful one in *cultural analysis*), but do not accept that these points need to mean a retreat from Marxism;

- (c) This approach, along with the "Giddens / Habermas" argument which sees contemporary society in terms e.g. of "radicalised modernity", has strong empirical support within this kind of argument. For example, "the working class" is not a homogenous whole, but something which has periodically been disintegrated by shifts within capitalism (since the 18th century) and which has periodically reconstituted itself; similarly, the "welfare state" / "neo-corporatist" compromise can be seen simply as a moment within the longer development of capitalism. Even the apparent shift in emphasis from the production of "material goods" to the production of "knowledge" has to be severely qualified. Most of the relevant arguments

were made 20 years ago in Krishan Kumar's polemic against theories of "post-industrialism". To make a couple of obvious points:

- (1) Industrialism as a technique has been organised around the appropriation of knowledge from the workers and its redeployment at least since Ford and Taylor in the 1920s; this is not restricted to what we think of as "industry", but has been exported to become the dominant mode of organisation both of agricultural activity and of "services";
- (2) It has to be remembered that there was an agricultural / merchant modernity and an agricultural / merchant capitalism prior to the development of industrial production in the secondary sector.

In other words, the claim that "postmodernity" is a specific historical condition which displaces modernity has generally been met, in particular within sociology, by pointing out that what is singled out as "modernity" is in fact a very limited and specific part of modernity, so that what is now happening is better understood as another stage in the longer history of modernity. I'll be going into this response more closely in the next couple of lectures. For the moment, it's enough to point out that most sociologists do not accept the claim that modernity is over, while many would accept the proposition that "postmodernism" does represent a new *cultural* configuration linked to a new phase in the development of modernity as a social configuration. This is most commonly presented in a Marxist form, but a Weberian version of the argument is certainly possible, and has been made both by Giddens and by Bryan Turner.

The central challenge to critical modernism, then, is neither the argument about a postmodern aesthetics (which many modernists are happy to accept) nor the argument about postmodernity as a historical condition (which is taken to be a misunderstanding of developments that can be adequately accounted for within the terms of critical modernism). It relates to the ontological claims of postmodernist philosophy.

Postmodernism as ontology / epistemology

In some ways, the claims of postmodernists to identify a specific historical condition which could be described as postmodern are incoherent in that they contradict some of the most important claims of postmodernism as a philosophy. The identification of postmodernity as a historical condition implies, firstly, a notion of a general and underlying social reality, and secondly the claim that this reality can be described in holistic terms, in other words as forming a whole bounded in time and probably in space. Postmodernist philosophy, in fact, forms a kind of anti-ontology or anti-social theory, in which both the idea of a holistic theory and the idea that this could have a rational relationship to some social totality are rejected.

In some authors this contradiction is resolved, more or less convincingly: Lyotard's account of *The postmodern condition*, for example, explicitly uses the idea of a shift towards information technology as a useful hypothesis whose ultimate truth-status is, apparently, irrelevant. His key argument is that these apparent shifts in social reality undermine the possibility of belief in the modernist view of the world and push us into post-modernism. The difficulty here is that if this is in fact what is happening, it does not enable us to distinguish which of these two views of the world is in fact more valid; and while Lyotard himself might claim not to find this problematic, there is quite a strong implication in postmodernist philosophy that its anti-theory is more valid than the previous, modernist theory it critiques. If this is true, however, not only does it not need legitimisation by a historical account of how we have arrived at this new and more valid perspective, but that perspective itself would prevent

us from offering such an account. In other words, it may well be that postmodernism is necessarily faced with a choice between treating postmodern philosophy as simply an effect of postmodernity as a historical condition and effectively ditching the historical account in favour of the philosophy; and this latter approach seems rather more promising.

* Postmodern philosophy is effectively an extension and "radicalisation" of poststructuralist thought, sharing a number of features, notably:

- The rejection of holistic theories and the idea of totality in favour of theories of multiplicity;
- The rejection of the idea of the unitary subject in favour of theories of heterogeneity, of intersecting "language games" (Lyotard), etc.

* An idea which is not unchallenged in post-structuralism but becomes an orthodoxy in postmodernism is the primacy of the "text" (however defined) over "the social". We saw last week that Foucault retains an interest in institutional analysis and the organisation of social relations; in post-modernist writing (with some exceptions, like Angela McRobbie), "texts" (which can include things like television advertisements or everyday conversations) are taken to be the sole constituent of reality, so that the assumption of a deep social reality underlying these everyday surfaces is rejected. These surfaces, in one version of things, are reality; and the idea that there is anything behind them is akin to the belief in God. This is of course only really sustainable on the basis of a rejection of determination and causality, so that the "texts" of the everyday conversations carried out at the stock exchange or of administrative regulations are treated as having no greater influence over events than the "texts" of conversations in the pub or of the latest movie.

This is in effect a version of the poststructuralist emphasis on the "signifier" as opposed to the "signified", or in other words of language rather than the subject-objects of language which are human beings talking about their relations with one another. In the Foucauldian approach, the separation between signifier and signified is effectively denied, so that administrative regulations, for example, are seen as being at one and the same time statements about reality and statements which constitute a particular reality. This approach has some strong methodological support, although it restricts us to an examination of only some aspects of social reality and is likely eventually to prevent us from making necessary distinctions such as the distinction between ideology (what is said) and practice (what is done) or from identifying patterns of determination. Other poststructuralists, along with postmodernists, tend to deny the existence of the "signified" at all; and this is the meaning of the emphasis on surface appearances and the denial of any deep realities.

These surfaces themselves are then interrogated within a particular set of assumptions - notably, their status as "texts" - which derive at a greater or lesser remove from literary criticism and literary philosophy. This dramatically "logocentric" approach, which has no place for meanings or practices other than those embodied in language, points to one of the central origins of poststructuralist and postmodernist thinking, which is, I think, to be found within a particular intellectual history. For much of the twentieth century - in particular, under the influence of Marxism, but more generally under the impact of historical and sociological thought, the knowledge of literary intellectuals has been devalued in practice. At the same time, literature has retained a high degree of status (in Max Weber's terminology); in part precisely because of its luxury status: the legitimation of "Art" as non-instrumental activity and of a literary education as the hallmark of those who could afford not only "an

education", but also an education which was not immediately professional or vocational in nature.

This situation has of course been challenged by dissident literary intellectuals, such as Raymond Williams, but it has nevertheless remained dominant. Thus literary intellectuals have had a high degree of status but a declining amount of power in society as a whole - and a declining intellectual credibility in intellectual circles. In effect, their knowledge has been dramatically devalued over the past half-century by comparison with historical and sociological knowledge: much of the subtext of the arguments, not just around post-structuralism and post-modernism, but also around, for example, cultural studies or feminist writing, is about literary intellectuals attempting to revalorise their knowledge as a substitute for sociological knowledge, and sociologists attempting to keep them out. In other words, it is about what counts as valid knowledge. If the social world only consists of "texts", literary knowledge has priority. If the social world has a reality of its own, it does not.

* The most characteristic element of post-modernism, however, is what has become known as the scepticism towards "metanarratives" or "grand narratives", in other words, the accounts of reality which are claimed to underpin modernist thinking, whether it is affirmative or critical. This is often formulated as a direct or indirect polemic against Habermas' arguments about the "Enlightenment project" as something which remains to be completed, against the *irrationality* of the dominant structures of society, and the "two discourses of modernity", an idea he uses to contrast the dominant version of affirmative modernity with the "counter-discourse" of critical modernity.

Lyotard phrases the argument in this way: Modernist thought depends on one of two myths or meta-narratives. The "myth of truth" represents the dominant, technical-scientific approach, or, in the terms of this course, affirmative modernism. It has to do with the assumption of an unproblematic objective and external truth which can be discovered by the scientist and whose progressive discovery will enable a greater and greater control of the world and hence an improvement of living standards, etc. The "myth of liberation" is clearly related to critical modernism, or to Habermas's "counter-discourse of the Enlightenment": it has to do with the ideas of emancipation from our social condition, with the development of critical and reflexive thought, and with social movements as the agency of our self-emancipation. Both, of course, relate to some idea of the social whole; in both, this relationship is rational in form.

The attack on these "meta-narratives" then makes use of the different points I have mentioned earlier: a rejection of holism, a rejection of the subject in whose search for truth or emancipation these narratives are grounded (in terms of reflexivity and in terms of their legitimisation), a rejection of the idea of hidden depths to be understood. What we are then presented with is a mixture of anti-realism, anti-rationalism, and Nietzschean relativism. I want to explain each one of these points very briefly.

Firstly, anti-realism: realism is a technical term, implying the assumption of the existence of a deeper reality than the surface reality we are immediately presented with. As we have seen, postmodernism rejects the idea, for example, of capitalism as an underlying reality which we can know either eventually or indirectly, and replaces this by an ontology of surfaces, in which what you see is what you get. Clearly, if this is accepted, sociology (if it survives at all) has to give up any claims at analysis or discovery in favour either of simple description or of formalist games.

Secondly, anti-rationalism: the attack on rationalism mixes elements of Foucault's charge that humanist ideals of reason are in fact the governing ideologies of a disciplinary society with the Frankfurt School's scepticism towards "instrumental reason" of all kinds, as well as with more general philosophical statements about the failure of reason. In effect, what is said is that logic is (a) internally inconsistent in mathematical terms and (b) cannot legitimate itself. (b) is probably true by definition: if internal legitimations are taken as circular, and external legitimations are only accepted if they are fully consistent with the system of thought under discussion, we are effectively looking for an external justification which is also an internal one, and we will get nowhere. (a) is perhaps more serious, but it is important to stress that it only applies *if* - and this is a very big *if* - we treat reason or rationality as identical with a particular set of logical and mathematical operations, in other words if we assume that rationality exists in the abstract, separate from any social grounding.

Thirdly, however, these charges are brought together in a return to Nietzsche's relativism. To make a crass over-simplification, Nietzsche was already arguing, at the end of the nineteenth century, that the idea of an absolute truth was a myth, and that intellectual conflict was in effect a power struggle to determine which way of viewing the world should prevail. This is relativist insofar as it rejects the idea of any priority of one way of thinking over another; it treats rationality as just one imperfect way of thinking about things among others; and it rejects the idea of an external reality to which we can appeal. Something like this is suggested in at least some postmodernist writing, and there has been something of a "return to Nietzsche" in philosophy. What is perhaps missed in the rush to use Nietzsche against critical modernism is that Weber's critical modernism was already built on this kind of scepticism about rationality. Just as post-modernism tends to squash "Marxism" (or "modernity") into boxes which leave out a lot of their real complexity, so some of the complexity of other critical modernisms gets ignored.

Feminism and postmodernism as a test case

The last thing I want to mention is the encounter between feminism and poststructuralism / postmodernism, which is by any standards one of the key encounters in contemporary intellectual politics: the issue being whether the two form part of a common assault on the tenets of both critical and affirmative modernism, or whether it transpires that the two are incompatible and that feminism is effectively a renewal and transformation of critical modernism. There is by now a large literature on this subject; books such as Barrett and Phillips' *Destabilising theory* or Linda Nicholson's *Feminism / postmodernism* are obvious places to start, but the issue is a central one in much if not most contemporary feminist theory and cultural studies.

Initially, a large number of feminists were attracted by the project of poststructuralism / postmodernism, for a number of reasons:

- (a) It legitimated the idea of a multiplicity of relations of power rather than of a single, dominant totality;
- (b) This meant that issues of gender, class and ethnicity could be taken separately, rather than requiring, for example, a subordination of the women's movement to the struggle against capitalism or a subordination of black women's struggles to a single struggle against patriarchy, etc.; [Category of "difference"]
- (c) The "anti-essentialist" argument that the category "women" was a cultural construct rather than an ontological reality related to earlier arguments about the social nature of gender;

- (d) The delegitimation of "reason" was simultaneously a delegitimation of a particular kind of knowledge within which women had been either excluded or subsumed into a single "universal" account;
- (e) For essentially contingent reasons, women were rather more likely to possess literary-critical knowledge than sociological knowledge, although the field of literary criticism as a whole is dominated by men.

However, there has been an increasingly sharp reaction by other feminists against this development, for a number of reasons:

- (a) The deconstruction of the subject and of the "essentialist" category "women" makes any feminist account, let alone one geared towards social movements, extremely difficult to sustain;
- (b) Similarly, postmodernism's relativistic attitude to truth and ethics makes it difficult either to maintain that the issues raised by feminist research were more significant sociologically than other possible subjects, or that they had any greater moral legitimacy;
- (c) The focus on "texts" enables certain kinds of women's experiences to come through, but excludes others, effectively placing a premium on articulacy;
- (d) Most obviously, on any account the concept of "patriarchy" is a meta-narrative which underpins much if not most feminist intellectual activity, whether academic or political; postmodernism's rejection of "meta-narratives" in effect undermines not just the "Enlightenment project", but also the feminist project.

These issues are still highly debated ones, on both sides. The outcome is crucial for the survival of critical modernism as an intellectual and political project: what is at stake, of course, is the question of whether the feminist critique points towards the need for a restructuring and rethinking, or whether it points towards the need to scrap the paradigm in favour of a very murky post-modern future.

In the next two lectures I'll be looking at how authors working within a critical modernist perspective have come to terms with the challenge offered by post-structuralism and post-modernism on the one hand and feminism on the other. The argument which is offered is generally an acceptance both that there have been changes in social organisation and that sociology needs to consider new (feminist, methodological, philosophical) issues; however, it is claimed, all of this can be done without abandoning the critical modernist paradigm. So the key intellectual questions are not whether patriarchal relations have to form a central part of social theory, but whether this can be done within a critical modernist approach; not one of whether economic organisation has moved beyond Fordism, but of whether this means that we have moved out of modernity; not one of whether technological rationality is problematic, but one of whether modernist perspectives reduce down to that.

A new totality?

Introduction

Response from critical modernism to issues raised by feminists, post- structuralists and post-modernists:

- *feminist* issues have made greater headway in the *political* practice of critical modernists than in their intellectual practice, where they tend to be marginalised. This is related above all to the problems that feminism raises (1) for a *holistic* paradigm such as critical modernism which seeks to identify a coherent social whole and (2) for a paradigm which aims at a description of society in terms of opposing *social movements*. Feminist arguments thus appear as either disintegrative of holism or cross-cutting the lines of conflict traced between movements. In other variants of critical modernism, a synthesis between critical modernism and feminism has been assumed rather than worked for. In general, then, what synthesis there has been is largely the work of socialist feminists rather than feminist socialists.
- *post-structuralist and post-modernist critiques*, on the other hand, have been responded to rather more directly, but on the whole also more negatively. The compatibility of feminism and critical modernism is assumed, in a fairly complacent way, the same is generally not true for post-structuralism and post- modernism in particular. There are two separate responses to these challenges. The first is a response in terms of empirical sociology which offers in particular a rereading of some of the empirical issues raised by in particular the post- modernist critique. This lecture will be mostly related to this encounter. The second is primarily a theoretical response, directed more at the post- structuralist critique, which is felt to be the more firmly grounded of the two and the one which is closer to critical modernism's own intellectual traditions. I will be dealing with this response in the ninth lecture.
- In some variants of *cultural studies*, it has proved possible to integrate both feminist concerns and a number of the issues raised by post-structuralists and post-modernists in terms of a very loose coherence; I will return to this issue in the final lecture.

Empirical responses to the post-modernists

The empirical edge of the post-modernist attack on critical modernism consists effectively of identifying critical modernism with a series of empirical statements about the nature of contemporary society, showing that these statements are no longer tenable, and arguing that this demonstrates the need for a theoretical move from critical modernism to post-modernism. The critical modernist response accepts that empirical changes have happened, but argues that these do not form a fatal challenge to critical modernist theory. Instead, it is argued, these changes can best be understood in the terms of general critical modernist theory, it is pointed out that the same theory can be used to support two different descriptions of two different empirical situations.

Thus, to take an obvious example, Marx's assumptions that the working class would inevitably develop a revolutionary consciousness was related to his assumption that it would get larger and larger and at the same time poorer and poorer, be forced together in factories and towns of ever-larger size and pushed into ever more bitter conflicts with the owners. Thus, he assumed, rising levels of class struggle and increased interaction within the class would lead to the formation of a stronger and more radical class consciousness. This

argument makes a good deal of sense, if the assumptions about empirical trends that it is based on are in fact correct. However, in practice the industrial working class has generally failed to become a majority of the population; over time its living standards have risen; neither the workplace nor population has behaved in quite the way he predicted. One critical modernist response to these points would be to point out that Marx's assumption that the working class would be overwhelmingly industrial and manual are not a necessary result of the central parts of his theory of capitalism, for example, and to argue that a "service proletariat" is perfectly compatible with Marx's overall account. What is then needed is either a reformulation of that theory or a periodisation which accounts for the different situations prevailing in different periods. This is, I think, generally a legitimate strategy; but its implications are not always thought through. In particular, many critical modernists still argue in terms of a necessary (structurally determined) logic of development. This often amounts simply to hindsight, where previously unexpected developments are subsequently explained away as part of a single, historically inevitable development; more seriously, as this example makes clear, the kind of *contingency* that enters into class formation under conditions of disaggregation and dispersal rather than ever-increasing concentration then need to be taken seriously.

Nevertheless, the strategy is not in itself illegitimate. What I want to outline today is what I think may be a coherent empirical account of a new totality, emerging out of the writings of a number of authors within the critical modernist tradition. This account brings a number of issues together:

- In terms of *totality*, it identifies historical and geographical specificities within its overall account of modernity;
- In terms of *social movements*, it offers a link between 'old' and "new" movements, rather than seeing them as in opposition.

Totality

I have already mentioned the idea of a *periodisation* within modernity. One of the more promising accounts in this direction comes from the German sociologist Claus Offe and, following his account, the British / American team of Lash and Urry. In Lash and Urry, this is specified (fairly loosely) as a move from an early "liberal capitalism" to an "organised capitalism" within which capitalist monopolies, state involvement in economic activity and pressure from the working class combined to produce what we might describe as a national welfare capitalism. This is not, Lash and Urry argue, the epitome of modernity and modernism that it has often been taken to be: rather, it is simply a stage within modernity, and one whose own internal dynamic moves towards a period where capital is concentrated but production is dispersed both geographically and between subcontracting and subsidiary firms; where its increasingly international articulation bursts the bounds of control or direction by the nation state; and where precisely those conditions which Marx identified as necessary for working-class organisation - a strong and cohesive workplace and community base - are eroded. This argument, obviously, parallels the opposition between "Fordist" and "post-Fordist" accounts of political economy, which I mentioned last week.

The potential advantages of Lash and Urry's view are that it offers greater scope for social agency - which I will return to later - and a rather better account of the geographical organisation of "late modernity": as capital becomes increasingly international, Lash and Urry argue, it not only bursts the bounds of the nation state but also disaggregates and

dislocates its workers: there is a move from the kind of regional and urban specialisation in given sectors (particularly of heavy industry) which formed the backbone of the traditional workers' movement to a situation where there are greater differences within regions than between them and where the older, urban manual working class are dumped in management strategies which aim at a fresh start in terms of "plant" on greenfield sites and at relocating in areas where the workforce is neither so militant nor so easily organised as in the old industrial cities.

It is at this point, I think, that Lash and Urry's account intersects - or can be made to do so - with Wallerstein's account of the "capitalist world-economy". You will remember that dependency theory challenges the conventional account of modernisation as a rising tide which lifts all boats (sooner or later) in terms of an account which sees the "core" countries of the North as exploiting and dominating the "peripheral" countries of the South in such a way as to produce a "disaggregation" of their economies, where economic activity becomes oriented more towards (separate) developments in the core than towards other forms of economic activity within the peripheral countries. The spatial metaphor here is quite useful: it sees, for example, the activities of a multinational corporation in a peripheral country as exploiting and disaggregating that country's economy for the sake of an accumulation of profit in the core.

The world-systems account radicalises this, and does so precisely in terms of holism. Firstly, there is no *a priori* reason to assume that "a society" has the same boundaries as "a nation" or "a state". If we follow the language of political economy used by Wallerstein, an alternative to *assuming* the national economy as a unit and then arguing that it is "disaggregated" - in other words, that its elements are primarily related to "external" rather than to 'internal' developments - it makes more sense to question this drawing of boundaries. The unit would then not be the national economy, but the "world-economy", in which what is primarily of interest are the economic relations which actually exist (between two or more nation-states), and not those which we might expect to exist (within the boundaries of a single nation-state). In other words, capital is increasingly becoming concentrated at a world level and is thus becoming independent of purely national constraints. The "international division of labour" is not one between whole, national units but - if anything - one between large-scale corporate and financial operations which link activities of production and distribution on a global scale.

Lash and Urry's observation that differences between regions (in the North) are declining and differences within them are increasing then makes rather more sense. In a country such as Ireland, which orthodox dependency theory is likely to classify as "semi-peripheral" (effectively an admission of inability to explain its situation), we can then see on the one hand a managerial and political elite, closely integrated with an Anglo-American - cum - European elite of the same kind, and on the other hand local populations, such as the Dublin working class or the farmers of the West, whose labour is no longer needed and who are therefore dumped. The Midlands and the urban middle classes are then used as producers and consumers of a capitalist culture which is "international" not so much in terms of its content as in terms of the social relations that it involves - our consumption of Australian soap opera, the global consumption of Irish music.

-> Lash and Urry as describing "disorganisation" experienced at national level; this relates to the "(re)organisation" at a world level described by Wallerstein, albeit with different time frames: for L/U this process is happening now; for Wallerstein things have been like this since the 17th century or so.

The implications of this are that we need to describe this "capitalist world-system", in Wallerstein's terminology, as a *society*: in other words as an interconnection of economic, political and cultural activity. Accounts which focus simply on the changing nature of *Western* society are then insufficient, and we need a theory of society which can manage, not just to make the connection between poverty, exploitation and war in the "Third World" and privilege in the "First", but which can also identify the close interconnections between Third World elites and the ex-colonial powers, for example, and for which the "Third World within the First", in the ghettos of North America, for example, is not a marginal issue. What we can now identify as a precursor of this idea was developed by Gramsci, in his attempts to think about the creation of a unitary Italian state, a national culture and in particular about the economic relations between North and South. It may also be worth pointing out that this approach has the great advantage of not marginalising warfare, and international relations more generally, as "external relations" between two separate societies: nation-states, and modern warfare, are then events within a single society.

Social movements

Argument re internal dynamics of capitalism:
working class pressure -> welfare state
Taylorisation of capitalism -> "managerial revolution"

Both involve increased organisation; growth of "new middle class" of individuals selling labour power & knowledge; push for credentialisation of all this (Lash / Urry argument re "making of service class").

This can then be thought of in terms of the development of a "service class" (emph.: *not* "people in services") or in terms of the increasing power of intellectuals. Both state and capital increasingly organised by directive / theoretical intellectuals with educational credentials. Can be thought of in terms of Foucauldian analysis of power / knowledge. Konrad and Szelenyi: *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* -> very similar analysis for Eastern Europe in development of (state) managerial class & (party) intelligentsia.

This becomes disorganising in many ways. Notable effects:

- capital becomes internationalised, with at least relative autonomy of managerial class;
- increasing role of education / credentialised knowledge in social stratification and power relations;
- increasing fragmentation of culture ("postmodernist" cultural production), - generation of "new social movements" (NSMs)?

All of these relate to increasing significance of "intellectuals" in Gramsci's sense of theorising and organising activities.

Lash / Urry account doesn't really theorise division between "capital" and "state" service classes, and simply treat NSMs as effect of rise of "service class". This runs into difficulty that their major enemy is typically managers & bureaucrats, so that simple a/c of NSMs as social movement of service class gets us nowhere. (Raschke: NSM social base is "human services intelligentsia" - this is better in that it includes e.g. professionals such as journalists, therapists etc., but doesn't explain why e.g. doctors are massively under-represented. More importantly, it isn't clear *why* human services intelligentsia should form NSM base.)

Advantages of this a/c:

- greater role for human agency
- emphasis of unintended consequences of e.g. managerialism, welfare state
- role of state and cultural capital / knowledge becomes central element of discussion

Rationality / reflexivity:

Not really theorised within this account. Points to lecture 9 and response by Giddens and Habermas on this score.

Evaluating this account:

- continued difficulty over contingency / necessity and the *difference* or otherwise made by human agency: tendency for accounts to fossilise into discussion of objectively necessary developments in which human agency is merely a conveyor belt.
- feminism only appears in guise of "NSM", and hence effectively subsumed under ecology / peace movements. Clearly there is a relationship both with other "NSMs" and with e.g. development of welfare state (rise of female intelligentsia); but a/c is not adequate; and has nothing to say about patriarchal organisation of society.

Radicalised modernity

Last week: response to challenge to modernism on empirical grounds (esp. ex postmodernists)

This week: response to challenge on theoretical grounds

Giddens effectively neo-Weberian; Habermas "neo-Marxist" (second gen. Frankfurt School)
Similar interests in some ways: response to postmodernists / poststructuralists is informed by earlier interest in e.g. philosophy of language, hermeneutics, etc., which also underlie some PM / PS.

Defence of "modernity" both as historical analysis of a totality and as modernist intellectual perspective.

Giddens

Institutional analysis of modernity (*Consequences of Modernity*) is a Weberian-style "multidimensional" or "pluralist" account; becomes of interest in terms of its link to structuration theory. (Systematic attempt at embodying notion of reflexivity within macro-social theory; move from epistemology 1 methodology to ontology.) This latter could be presented as follows:

Reflexivity:

1. Duality of social structure: technical solution to agency / structure dichotomy. Argument that "rules" are simultaneously a product of action and a precondition for action.
2. This means that regularities in social organisation are not "given" but result from a skilled performance which can equally involve the transformation of rules.
3. This is related to a rejection of philosophical anthropology etc. in favour of general statements about human beings' capacity to produce their own society; the institutions and structures generated by actors are not necessarily organised in particular ways (contra Marx).

The account of *modernity* has shifted from the more empiricist and "inevitable" mode in *Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (which resembles some of works discussed in lecture 8) to a looser and more contingent account of modernity which need not raise immediate claims about nature of social world in general.

Totality

Modernity for Giddens is then characterised by:

1. dialectic of globalisation and dispersal which is similar to Lash and Urry's "disorganisation" of experience and "organisation" of the world-economy;
2. reflexive nature of social thought in modernity (social thought becomes constituent element of social reality) - particularly important given central role of skill and knowledge in "production of society";
3. a consequently reflexive reordering of social relations;
4. most importantly for our purposes, "disembedding mechanisms."

Disembedding mechanisms (tokens such as money, expert knowledge such as natural science) enable interrelation across distances of time and space, they rest upon a shared trust in their validity; they form abstract steering systems; they are increasingly out of control. Hence *radicalised* modernity: society's capacity for action on itself has grown dramatically, but the ability to control this is less and less.

Social movements

In this context, *social movements* appear as reaction to the processes of modernity:

capitalism - workers' movement
industrialisation - ecology movement
surveillance - free speech and democratic movement
military power - peace movement.

Note inability to theorise women's movement.

Social movements aim either at freedom or at self-realisation and in this way play a valuable role.

Habermas

Habermas starts from very different assumptions about the nature of society, but ends up at quite a similar description of modernity. As with Giddens, move away from methodology / epistemology towards ontological presuppositions. (*Theory of Communicative Action* account:)

Rationality:

1. Human beings are neither isolated subjects nor simply processors of nature; they are communicatively socialised. Intersubjective concept vs. both affirmative "philosophy of the subject" and post-structuralist "death of the subject". Key question then becomes constitution of intersubjective reality via understanding between subjects.
2. The concept of rationality is then found to lie in this process of mutual understanding: all acts, verbal or physical, implicitly raise claims as to their validity: any statement, for example, raises the claim that it is comprehensible, that it is true, that it is sincere, and that it is normatively right. If queried, all of these claims except the first can be defended in rational terms. In other words, rationality is a potential inherent in all intersubjective social reality; and communicative activity has the character of a dialogue oriented to *mutual* understanding. This consensus is then a goal for all speakers.
3. Elements of this rationality then differentiate themselves out from this intersubjective reality. In particular, "the economy" and "the state" come to act as rationalised subsystems of society. Each of these has a particular referent: the natural world on the one hand, the human world on the other. Each operates in terms of goal-rationality in relation to this referent. Lastly, each is enabled to do this by means of a non-linguistic token: money or power.
4. These systems are then counterposed to the "life-world" out of which they developed, a life-world which is characterised by the non-instrumental rationality of

communicative action. Increasingly, they come to "colonise" it, as economic and administrative imperatives react back on everyday life.

Social movements

5. *Social movements* can then be seen as a reaction against this colonisation by the instrumental reason of subsystems which follow their own independent logic and in defence of an ideal of communicative reason.

NB:

Totality:

- Similarity of this to Giddens' pluralist account of institutions of modernity and of disembedding mechanisms; differences re concept of life-world (not accepted by G, who then has to present movements as effectively *ungrounded* reactions to modernity).
- Major achievement of Habermas' concept of totality is its ability to combine a "structural" analysis of the logic of "systems" of the economy and the state with a "micro-social" analysis of the "life-world". This is related to the argument of Raymond Williams / EP Thompson re everyday culture of working class, etc. It can also be argued that his argument re decentred subjectivity / communicative action avoids the false alternative between individual intentional subjectivity and impersonal systems; it is then similar in effect, although not in content, to Giddens' "double structure".

Rationality

In relation to post-structuralist etc. critique, the key argument here is over the meaning of *rationality*. For PS, as for earlier critical theorists, there is only one rationality, to be accepted or rejected en bloc. Habermas however argues that the Enlightenment discourse of modernity has always carried a "counter-discourse" with it, which he is now making more explicit. He argues, for example, that "the Young Hegelians", who include Marx and Feuerbach, saw reason not as an absolute but as situated reason in relation to:

- history
- external nature
- "decentred subjectivity of internal nature"
- society as the alienated "powers" of human beings.

Other differences include:

Discourse of modernity

Subject-centred reason

Subject-object rationality

(goal-rationality)

Necessarily good autonomy of econ / state subsystems

Counter-discourse of modernity

Intersubjective model

Communicative rationality

(substantive rationality)

Unbalanced; increasing autonomy of ditto

In Habermas' own language, "The paradigm of the knowledge of subjects has to be replaced by the paradigm of mutual understanding between subjects capable of speech and action" (*Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*).

Giddens argues that Habermas makes use of three types of rationality:

- Local criteria of rationality (in communicative action) giving rise to the possibility of universally valid judgements as to the rationality or otherwise of speech and action.
- The concept of the rationality (comprehensibility) of human action
- The social expansion of rationality in the modern period.

Clearly, however, these are intimately linked: the first two directly so, the third as a follow-on in particular circumstances. Effectively, Habermas argues that this third element, the process of rationalisation, has followed a very selective path in modern times, under the impact of capitalism.

NB also in terms of programmatic aims: while Habermas follows Marx / Lukacs in seeing (instrumentally rational) subsystems as a reified form of human activity, he no longer holds out hope for overcoming this reification and their relative autonomy from other human action but rather hopes for a reconquest of the life-world by communicative reason. In sociological language, he does not believe that the instrumentally rational subsystems can be reduced to the communicative action of the lifeworld either practically or theoretically. This, like the move away from the "philosophy of the subject" -> "decentred holism".

The aim of achieving an "ideal speech situation", where inequalities of power and resources (for example) are no longer standing in the way of full understanding between equals, remains valid, however.
-> Habermas as liberal, concerned for defence of private realm and uncoercive communication?

Taking stock

- The four key concepts as "problematics" of modernity
- Modernity as paradigm
- Modernity and feminism
- Outlook

Four key concepts

Totality

At its simplest, the concept of "society" as a "whole".

This can mean:

- "Societies" as "units", usually (implicitly) nation-states; Wallerstein / Lash-Urry critique of this: in contemporary context there is only one, global, society (Wallerstein: "capitalist world-economy"). This version of totality implies the need to set *temporal* or *conceptual* boundaries to the unit; hence (in one version) the concept of "modernity".
- "Modern society" as whole. Suggests double periodisation: (a) capitalist patriarchy as distinct from non-capitalist societies and from other patriarchies, (b) class society / gendered society (patriarchy) as "meta-period" (in effect, all historical societies).
- Both versions imply holistic concepts of society as such (not just modernity): the kind of philosophical anthropology developed by the young Marx, by Habermas, and by some socialist feminists (see chapter in Tong).

At this highest level, even "non-theories" become descriptions of society as a whole. Especially the "anti-ontological" thrust of post-structuralism implies an ultimate source in an apparently infinitely flexible and purely social nature of humanity. (NB: the difficulties normally raised around the notion of "human nature" decline greatly if we take the primary element of human "species-being" to be our social nature.)

The argument over "modernity" is then one over the extent to which we can describe society as dominated by e.g. class and gender (or by "capitalist patriarchy").

NB that a rejection of determinism and of ontological reality at this point makes the kind of relativist historicism which treats different (spatially or temporally separated societies) as *irreducibly* different and unknowable difficult or impossible to sustain.

Foucault avoids this problem at the cost of a radical denial of the permanence of his theories and an ad-hoc approach to theory construction, necessarily so, because any formal coherence between his different approaches would imply statements about the nature of the social world and hence theories of (general) totality.

Social movements

There are three "axes of variance" here:

1. Emph. on consciousness / culture versus goal-rational organisation: different conceptualisations of nature of "movement";
2. "Old" (class) vs. "new" (peace, ecology, women's) movements: different conceptual frameworks;
3. Movements from below versus movements from above: need to rethink agency.

Suggest a coherent approach on the lines of Touraine / Habermas:

- a move from worker-employer conflict (incl. class culture / consciousness) to new social movements versus state and economy as the central *structure of society* (shifts within modernity!).
- Implies bracketing question of the nature of the transformation (Lash-Urry: unintended effects of old conflict lead to management & welfare state, in other words a new intelligentsia which gives rise to movements from both sides).
- Agency debate: versus "structuralist" and "voluntarist" positions, emphasising networks and intersubjectivity (Thompson on class, Habermas on intersubj.)

Reflexivity

Deeply contested area:

1. Historicity: at level of social totality, there is increasing scope for society to act on itself. investment, political transformation, cultural codes (Melucci)
2. Intersubjective networks: growth in autonomy and reflexivity in sense of (a) distance and (b) conscious acting on networks (cf. Peter Wagner on earlier modernity's "naturalisation" of this & hence denial of it)
3. Processes of rationalisation: goal-rationality & communicative rationality (Habermas).

These all relate to modernity. Reflexivity in *general* is either:

1. the need to theorise the effect of reflexivity on action (Giddens) or
2. the need to theorise its effects in research contexts (Lentin etc.)

Rationality

Goal-rational action (Weber) is counterposed to

- the communicative rationality of the life-world (Habermas)
- value-rational action (Weber)
- the non-rational (post-structuralism)

Always seen as closely linked to modernity:

In *affirmative modernism*, rationality is good (rational science, politics, economics), reflexivity simply upsets this.

This argument works because of the identification between rationality and goal-rationality (hence the difficulties with reflexivity, which is in fact positive from the point of view e.g. of communicative rationality).

In *critical modernism*, there is a distinction between formal and substantive rationality (Weber on bureaucratisation; Marx on capital) or between communicative and value-rationality.

Reflexivity is useful here, because it enables us to stand one step back from formal or goal-rationality and ask about (a) the substantive rationality of the goal; (b) the actual effects of the process of trying to achieve that goal.

(Critical) modernity as a paradigm:

1. Distinct social *totality* (in particular, the formation of capital and the modern state).
2. These follow a logic of *rationalisation* and may be caused by it. Differing normative implications, but some at least of the effects of this are positive.
3. Modern society isn't simply increasingly rational but also increasingly *reflexive*: hence the critique of instrumental reason (inflated into a "critique of reason" in general) and the increasing "feedback effect" (the loss of the appearance of simplicity).
4. *Social movements* from below and above appear as agents constituted by and constituting (Giddens) these processes (rationalisation; the modern totality), movements act to rationalise e.g. production (management), politics (citizenship movements), social provision (welfare state) but are constituted themselves (e.g. in their goal-rational elements) by this environment. Because of their role society is increasingly reflexive: both management and new social movements up the reflexivity stakes.

Postmodernism / poststructuralism represent misunderstandings of modernity:

- The claim that (1) totality doesn't exist is negated by the denial of (4) social agency as ineffective or unreal (if structure doesn't exist and agency is impossible, how come anything happens?)
- (3) Reflexivity is misunderstood as problematic for modernism because
- (2) Rationality is only understood as goal-rational.

In other words, modernity is identified with affirmative modernism, or critical modernists are read as if they were affirmative modernists.

Against this it has to be argued that escape from communicative rationality isn't possible; the fully irrational can only be pointed to (Buddhism), not communicated (by definition). What is treated as "irrational" are locally (communicatively) rational situations of communicative closure (the far-right "world-pictures" are rational within these limited terms and in these contexts; in other words, they make sense in communication between members of far right groups).

Reflexivity is constituent not only of modernity but also of (substantive rather than formal) rationality: formal rationality can be identified with e.g. parliamentary politics; the substantive rationality of social movements critiques and challenges this by emphasising not

the formality of electoral and parliamentary procedure but the substance of political participation.

Modernity and feminism

The great unresolved theoretical issue.

Starting point: the concept of patriarchy is on the same level, not as "capitalism", but as "class society". This implies that we need a theorisation of capitalist patriarchy as a specific type of patriarchy, as well as a specific type, of class society: suggest that its specificity has to do with the formal rationalities of capital and state involved.

NB the ambiguous position of the women's movement: as goal-rational economic or political challenge it is likely to wind up with a gender equivalent of the welfare-state compromise.

Need to expand the (still unsatisfactory) definition of rationality and use feminist research methods to open further issues of reflexivity (which are, after all, potentially infinitely recursive).

Key new issues of second-wave feminism question the "self" (reflexivity) and the meaning of rationality.

Beyond this, there is a need to rethink the non - "production" relations pointed to ("reproduction" in the Marxist sense, emotion / sexuality, intersubjective constitution of e.g. self or rationality) and their ontological "reality" or otherwise.

This leads to a continuing interest in Marxist theory re "human nature" / philosophical anthropology; also re (new?) need to consider "social ecology" (Bookchin, Williams).

Suggest:

1. Even post-structuralist ontology is still a negative ontology of sorts;
2. Humanity is effectively seen as protean or social;
3. The difficulty with this "anti-ontology" is that we need concepts (including gender, ethnicity, place, time) to be able to say anything;
4. The difficulty with crass realism is that we can take none of these at face value.

Hence the issue of the social constitution of gender is the main interest, the ontological "reality" of gender (the essentialism / anti-essentialism debate) or otherwise are metaphysical questions (de Lauretis article "Upping the Anti").

Outlook:

1. There is a drastic need for a reformulation of Marxism / critical modernism to include esp. feminist analysis and post-structuralist de-ontology;
2. Need for clarification of ontological presuppositions (effectively a philosophical anthropology) and
3. A need to reformulate totalities as "looser": capitalism e.g. is neither simply industrial capitalism, organised capitalism or First World capitalism, and never has been.