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Reframing Socialism from the Fifties to the Fin-de-Siècle:  
The Intellectual Odyssey of André Gorz

Andrea Terry Levy

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at  
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## ABSTRACT

### Reframing Socialism from the Fifties to the Fin-de-Siècle: The Intellectual Odyssey of André Gorz.

Andrea Terry Levy, Ph.D.  
Concordia University, 1998

This study traces the intellectual trajectory of French social thinker André Gorz from the post-war period to the present. It canvasses the evolution of Gorz's philosophical and political concerns, from his participation in the development of existential Marxism in the 1950s and his elaboration of a strategy of revolutionary reformism in the 1960s, through his role in the genesis of French political ecology in the 1970s, and his advocacy, in the 1980s and 90s, of a civilization of free time.

The dissertation seeks to situate Gorz's ideas in the changing social and intellectual conjuncture in which they germinated and matured, paying particular attention to his response to the twin crises of ecological degradation and structural unemployment which became a focus of political attention in the mid-1970s in France and throughout western Europe. It traces some of the key intellectual influences upon Gorz's thinking in the successive periods under study, including the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, the tradition of radical trade unionism in Italy, and the ideas of Ivan Illich. It looks in turn at the impact of Gorz's own ideas on elements of the left in France and abroad. Forming a leitmotif of the study is Gorz's changing conception of the agency of social transformation — from his confidence in the revolutionary potential of the “new working class” to his hopes for the “non-class of non-workers” as a prefiguration of a new movement of social change subversive of the work-based society.

Gorz emerges in this investigation as a progenitor of New Left social theory and as the living legacy of that body of ideas at a time when many European, North American and, above all, French intellectuals abandoned interest in radical social and political thought. An attempt is made to analyze the numerous contradictions and reversals in Gorz's lifetime of thinking on the left, and to engage critically with many of the questionable presuppositions and lacunae apparent in his work. At the same time, Gorz's *oeuvre* is presented as a pioneering and valuable endeavour to forge a revitalized left response to the changing social and economic conditions of the advanced capitalist countries in the last half century.

To my father, my first teacher, who imparted a passion for ideas  
and enlightened me about man's inhumanity to man.  
And in memory of Sasha the cat, who helped me to see  
that man is not the measure of all things.

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My intellectual debt is not so much wide as it is deep. A few talented and inspiring individuals in a variety of fields have provided me a measure of intellectual sustenance beyond what I might have hoped in the singular enterprise of thesis production.

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Productivist industrial society can only continue by offering more and worse — more destruction, more waste, more repairs to destruction, more programming of the most intimate facets of individual life. "Progress" has arrived at a threshold beyond which plus turns into minus. The future is heavy with menace and devoid of promise. The forward march of productivism now brings the advance of barbarism and oppression.

André Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class*

*Arbeit macht frei*

Nazi slogan posted at the gates of  
Auschwitz and Theresienstadt

## Introduction

We must learn to detect the unrealized possibilities that lie dormant in the recesses of the present. We must seize these possibilities, and take control of that which is in the process of changing. We must dare to break with this society which is moribund and will never be reborn.

André Gorz  
*Misères du présent, richesses du possible* (1997)

The most arresting drama of French political and intellectual development since the 1950s revolves around the liquidation of the revolutionary spirit and ferment of the 1960s and the ascension in the 1980s, with the definitive demise of the *trente glorieuses*, of a fairly hegemonic liberalism, akin to but distinct from the neo-liberalism of the Anglo-American world. In this account, the tremors of May '68 and its aftermath figure as the last gasp of a revolutionary tradition. This tale is not untrue so much as incomplete: with all that has been written about the defection of the French intelligentsia from its historic affiliation with the left, the admittedly sparse efforts to build on the insights of the French New Left and to revitalize and adapt the New Left project to the changing realities of France and the advanced capitalist world more generally have been relegated to relative obscurity. Nevertheless, the creative ideas of the French New Left of the 1960s did have offshoots in the ensuing decades which are arguably of considerable significance for the reframing of socialism in our time. And André Gorz is one of the most important actors in the cast of this unrenowned but not unremarkable storyline of French intellectual history.

Formally trained as a chemical engineer and earning his living as a journalist, Gorz made his first marks on the world of ideas in France as an associate of Jean-Paul Sartre and the author of an autobiographical essay entitled *The Traitor*. A Frenchman by election not birth, Gorz was born Gerhart Horst in Austria in 1924. A half-Jew, he was sheltered from the Nazi onslaught by being sent to study in Switzerland, where, undertaking to Gallicize himself, he became immersed in French literature, as well as in the early existential philosophy of his philosophic mentor. He moved to Paris after the war, seeking and earning a place for himself by the 1960s in the existential Marxist circle of *Les Temps Modernes*, the esteemed journal founded by Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir which spearheaded the quest to elaborate an independent left worldview in post-war France.

In France as elsewhere in Europe (England, Italy...) the post-war period gave birth to a number of New Lefts,<sup>1</sup> one crystallizing in the crisis of '56 and the protest against the war in Algeria, another emerging in the years preceding May '68, and still others arising from the ashes of the defeat of May and the twin crises, economic and ecological, of the 1970s. While these successive politico-intellectual currents were all rather heterogeneous, they did share some defining perspectives — the critique of the alienating character of work and consumerism foremost among them. Gorz's own life and *oeuvre* spans these successive New Lefts and beyond. In the fifties and sixties, he contributed immeasurably to developing and sounding many of the principal themes of the French New Left, winning a reputation as a leading independent left theorist throughout the advanced capitalist world. In the 1970s, with the rise of the ecology movement in France and throughout the West, Gorz went on to integrate and articulate the implications of the "limits to growth" thesis for a New Left social theory, exercising an indelible influence on the eclectic body of ideas associated with the French political ecology movement and its counterparts in other European countries.

In a 1977 book devoted to a critique of the political economy of the New Left, Assar Lindbeck, a Swedish economist, singled out Gorz, along with Ernest Mandel, as one of the leading inspirers of the economic ideas of the New Left in Europe, giving the two theorists top billing next to Louis Althusser, Perry Anderson and Henri Lefebvre.<sup>2</sup> In a comprehensive New Left documentary history, Massimo Theodori included Gorz among a very select list of thinkers (Herbert Marcuse, C. Wright Mills, and several others) who supplied intellectual sustenance for the New Left in the U.S. In his superb study of the development of existential Marxism and other post-war left theoretical innovations, intellectual historian Mark Poster described Gorz's 1964 book *Strategy for Labor* as the best articulation of the meaning of advanced capitalism for the working class.<sup>3</sup> And Herb Gintis went so far as to declare Gorz, "[t]he greatest of modern French social thinkers who dares to venture where no one really has before."<sup>4</sup> Gorz's post-60s contributions in the area of ecologically-oriented social theory in the 1970s and post-industrial, post-Marxist radical theory in the 1980s and 1990s have, in their turn, exercised considerable influence among ecology and libertarian left movements, again not only in France but throughout western Europe. Many of the

principal studies of political ecology in France and throughout the West regard Gorz's writings in the 1970s and 80s as a seminal contribution to political ecology and eco-socialist theory.<sup>5</sup>

In an intellectual climate not altogether propitious to the development of left social thought that has typified the French intellectual scene in the last quarter century, Gorz continued to define and defend an avowedly socialist project. Thus while New Left thought in France and internationally tended to be supplanted in the 1970s, at least in elite intellectual circles, by the philosophical current of post-structuralism, which in turn ceded pride of intellectual place to the Tocqueville revival in the 80s, the thought of André Gorz represents a less typical trajectory and another possible terminus of the radical probings of the 60s and the critical analysis of neo-capitalism. While his evolving post-industrial socialism intersects with post-structuralist themes on a number of counts, it retains the emancipatory project, utopian spirit, and totalizing analyses characteristic of the New Left.

It is the singularity of Gorz's intellectual endeavours, particularly in the France of the 1980s, that stands out for no less a luminary of the intellectual left than Perry Anderson, who reserved rare high praise for Gorz's work in his mostly pessimistic meditation on the fate of western Marxism in our era. For Anderson, writing in his 1983 *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, Gorz's is "the one body of current work on the contours of an alternative socialism" that strikes a fruitful balance between institutional and utopian approaches to social change "combining philosophical reflection and practical proposal in a distinctive synthesis."<sup>6</sup>

Oddly, although Gorz's contributions to left social theory from the 60s to the 90s have elicited such acclaim — as well as a barrage of far less laudatory appraisals particularly following the publication in 1980 of his best known and most controversial book, *Adieux au prolétariat* — not a single book-length monograph in French or English had been dedicated to exploring and assessing the totality of his by now considerable corpus until just last year, with the publication of *André Gorz: A Critical Introduction* by Conrad Lodziak and Jeremy Tatman. In a special issue of the journal *Le Débat* consecrated to reviewing 30 years of French intellectual history an entry on Gorz appears in a section entitled "*Illustres inconnus et inconnus illustres*" reserved in part for individuals "who have made history without occupying its centre stage," whether by virtue of circumstance or their own volition.<sup>7</sup> Although various aspects of Gorz's work have been the object

of some probing commentary, the only scholar to have examined seriously the evolution of his thought in historical context has been Arthur Hirsh, in his superb history of the French New Left. Written in 1981 and representing only a small part of a much larger work, the section devoted to Gorz is both incomplete, insufficiently critical, and now out of date.

There are signs however, this dissertation among them, that after years of neglect Gorz's work is beginning to receive the attention it is due, at least in the Anglo-American world: a (rather selective) effort to clarify and defend aspects of Gorz's contributions in the last two decades in light of the unfriendly and misleading British reception of his more recent work was the subject of an essay by Finn Bowring, "*Misreading Gorz*," published in the May/June 1996 issue of the *New Left Review*, and the 1997 publication in Pluto Press's Modern European Thinkers series of the book by Lodziak and Tatman offers a wide-ranging exegesis and defense of Gorzian ideas from a sociological perspective. The timing of this renewed interest and attention is not surprising: a persistent crisis of employment throughout Europe makes Gorz an obvious candidate for study, given that he has devoted the last fifteen years or so to elaborating creative solutions to the intractable problem of the disappearance of work and the concomitant dualization of the societies of advanced capitalism — solutions that eschew the ecologically unsustainable path of perpetual growth. Indeed, Gorz is one of the few intellectuals associated with the left whose mature work is germane to one of the most critical contemporary developments of western societies: the ongoing polarization between a "privileged" core of skilled manual and mental workers occupying secure and stable jobs and an expanding periphery of low-wage, temporary, underemployed and unemployed workers.

As will be evident, this dissertation grows out of both properly historical and more presentist concerns. Essentially an intellectual biography of Gorz, it is historical in its aims insofar as it treats Gorz first of all as a founding figure of the New Left — conceived broadly as the radical response in theory and practice to the rise of affluent capitalism which departed from both the orthodox Communist and the social-democratic politico-intellectual traditions — an historical phenomenon that is clearly past. At the same time, because Gorz has never ceased since the 60s to update his work and analyses in response to observable historical shifts as well as new fissures in the system of advanced capitalism, his more recent work has considerable contemporary relevance.

There may be several reasons for the relative inattention to Gorz heretofore in the burgeoning scholarly literature that has been produced in the last two decades on the ideas and history of the New Left of the 1960s and the new social movements of the 1970s and 80s. Gorz was (and remains) a public intellectual. His most recent public intervention apart from his latest book was as a signatory to an appeal drafted by a group of 35 French intellectuals calling on Europeans to support measures to combat the adverse effects on social life of neo-liberal policies.<sup>8</sup> Unlike so many who rose to prominence internationally during the 60s, Gorz began his career outside the academy, and remained uncloistered even during a period in which, in France as elsewhere, serious intellectual work has grown increasingly difficult to carry on outside the institutional framework of the university.

Comparable in this respect to the unjustifiably overlooked Polish-born English scholar of Russian history Isaac Deutscher, also an intellectual touchstone for many in the international New Left, Gorz succeeded in earning a living from political journalism and writing, culminating in his accession to the post of assistant editor-in-chief of the trend-setting left-leaning news and culture weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur*, a position he occupied from 1978 to 1983. He deployed his trade as a journalist to promote the political ideas he developed in his more theoretical writings. But apart from his early work he wrote in a deliberately accessible manner, assuming little formal philosophical training on the part of his readers. Consequently Gorz was far less hermetic to a lay audience than other New Left mentors, such as his friends and colleagues Jean-Paul Sartre and Herbert Marcuse, with whom he nevertheless shared much common ground. In his journalism and other writings he addressed himself for the most part to an educated lay public, and was particularly concerned to reach trade union audiences, favouring public speaking engagements with union activists in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Mexico and elsewhere. As two French journalists well acquainted with Gorz once aptly described him, "A philosopher above all, he did not apply himself to philosophical problems as these are defined in the university tradition but to concrete reality, to contemporary social and political problems. This is why he never entered the University system and remains a solitary thinker."<sup>9</sup> A generalist eschewing the formalities of academic specialization, Gorz has sufficiently wide-ranging credentials to have been labelled alternately an economist, a philosopher, and a sociologist.



An intellectual loner and outsider to the academic world, Gorz also remained aloof, incidentally, from the arena of party politics. Harshly sceptical of the utility of parliamentary politics, he never joined the small and divided Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU) as many early French New Leftists did, nor did he affiliate with *Les verts* or other ecologically-oriented political groups active in the electoral arena in the 1980s. Gorz knew most of the leaders of the PSU on an individual basis and found discussions with them intellectually stimulating, but he saw the party as having “too many brains for too few militants,” and he found the inevitable internal power struggles, of which the PSU had more than its fair share, unproductive.<sup>10</sup> Although he never opposed the idea of a political party in principle and even tried to develop a new conception of the revolutionary party in the wake of May '68, he claimed to be “allergic to political parties.”<sup>11</sup>

But it is perhaps his distance from the academic world, and on occasion unrestrained antagonism towards the form and content of existing institutionalized education (as when he penned the rather immoderate “Détruire l’université” which precipitated two resignations from the editorial board of *Les Temps Modernes*) that partially accounts for his work being slighted as a topic of scholarly meditation. Further, insofar as Gorz wrote for non-specialists, the history of his ideas belongs to the study of what might be designated middle-range theory — what George Ross characterizes as “less exalted types of intellectuality”<sup>12</sup> in contradistinction with the high theory of the *grands intellos*. Given the eminence of French high theory, particularly in the Anglo-American left academy, philosophical writing such as Gorz’s, directed towards an educated lay public, was less likely to attract attention from scholarly quarters than, say, the arcane hermeneutics of post-structuralist philosophers. The pointedly irreverent study of the lights and rites of the French intellectual world by Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman alludes to the antagonism of the academic world toward those “intermediary” intellectuals who have succeeded in gaining a foothold in the publishing world or the print or electronic media; the authors describe these outsiders as “envied and disparaged, even despised, inasmuch as they exercise an authority that carries weight in the academic world but is acquired outside it.”<sup>13</sup>

Another possible explanation for the scant scholarly attention to Gorz’s opus as a whole may be the flexuous character of his thought over time, including some conspicuous contradictions and tergiversations. From one decade to the next Gorz moved, for instance, from hailing

developments in the productive forces as heralding a new breed of highly-skilled polyvalent workers to embracing the most extreme form of the de-skilling thesis in the labour process debate; from espousing the “new working class” as the promising vanguard of social change by virtue of its new subversive needs for control and creativity at work to condemning the majority of technical workers as ineluctably bound up with the maintenance of capitalist hierarchy and the division of labour; from formulating a strategy for labour which posited struggles at the point of production as the key to social transformation to bidding farewell to the working class as a viable revolutionary agent and repudiating the goal of self-managed socialism itself; from advocating the liberation of workers within work to embracing emancipation *from* work as the only realistic goal of a post-Marxist socialism; from exposing technology as the biased embodiment of the social relations which inhere in it to a sometimes unreflective optimism about the possibilities of the information revolution. Ambiguities and inconsistencies abound in Gorz's *oeuvre*. The frequent transitions and breaks make his political thought a moving target; his thinking can only be grasped in the unfolding of a number of distinct and often incongruous phases — a compelling reason, moreover, for the chronological treatment of Gorz's ideas adopted in this dissertation.

It is perhaps because of the significant shifts in Gorz's perspective over five decades that an assessment of his contribution as a whole in its historical context has proven elusive. References to Gorz tend to associate him with one stage or fragment of his work — for example, the strategy of structural reform and workers' control, the theory of the new working class, the Green utopia, the rejection of proletarian agency, the basic income debate — rather than with a sustained if transmutative body of work.

Thus part of my aim is to rectify a regrettable lacuna in the historical record, all the more salient in light of the extensive analysis of the development of New Left social theory undertaken by scholars since the 1960s. As Stefan Collini has observed, “It is not only the poor and inarticulate who may stand in need of being rescued from the enormous condescension of posterity.”<sup>14</sup> I will proceed by canvassing Gorz's intellectual development from the 1950s to the present, paying special attention to the ways in which Gorz partook of that heterogeneous-without-being-incoherent movement of people and ideas that was the New Left, and of its progeny in the political ecology movement, and by situating his ideas in the context of a number of seminal New Left and Green

debates of the times. In exploring and elucidating Gorz's evolution as a thinker, the thesis will focus on a number of ideas expounded by him that are at once distinguishing characteristics and concerns of the New Left both during and after the formative decade of the 1960s: the resurrection of the utopian dimension of left social thought; the idea of revolution as process rather than event; the reconceptualization of the notion of the revolutionary subject, a concern with the social and environmental consequences of unreflective and unfettered technological progress; the concomitant abandonment of the productivist ethos of classical socialism and an emphasis on quality of life issues (overcoming alienation through self-management) over quantitative issues (a fixation on growth and consumption) including the rethinking of the nature and purpose of work.

I will trace Gorz's own successive sources of intellectual inspiration — a task which Gorz himself made easier in having generously acknowledged his intellectual debts at every phase of his career, ascribing paternity rights to others even where his own pedigree is equally compelling. As well, I will examine his contributions to the shape and substance of the worldview and discourse of the New Left and ecology movements, documenting and analyzing the continuities, ruptures and contradictions in his thought, as well as highlighting the evolution of his own special brand of post-Marxist socialism in the last two decades.

Beyond this largely expository and exegetical dimension, I intend to locate Gorz's many metamorphoses over four decades in the context of momentous changes in the fortunes and policies of the advanced capitalist countries including, most importantly, France, and in the inescapable impact of these shifts on the evolution of left intellectual perspectives. There is no doubt that the major shifts in Gorz's thinking over time are broadly related to changes in the character of what was too optimistically referred to in the 1960s as "late capitalism." One of the great divides here is that separating the affluent capitalism of *les trente glorieuses*, which forms the backdrop of Gorz's early work, from the recurrence of crisis, which became evident in the mid 1970s with the oil crisis and the proliferation of alarming revelations and projections of ecological degradation. Gorz can be seen to respond to this sea change, and more particularly to ongoing shifts in the labour movement and the labour market.

Gorz's particular sensitivity to the ebb and tide of militancy within the labour movement, which is by no means simply correlated with the great historical divide between post-war boom and

ensuing crisis, translated into a perennial engagement with the question of agency. The appeal to rethink the traditional socialist conception of the historic agency of structural change was put perhaps most famously by C. Wright Mills in his seminal “Letter to the New Left” first published in 1960 by the *New Left Review*. Mills himself characterized the prevailing socialist view of the working class as the preordained and privileged agency of change as a “labour metaphysic” inherited from Victorian Marxism, and singled it out as a stumbling block in the development of a New Left theory and practice.<sup>15</sup> Rejecting the emphasis on the proletarian subject as a legacy abrogated by history, Mills himself looked hopefully towards the young intelligentsia as the force for socialist renewal on the horizon. The problem of agency was one that exercised the New Left and its heirs throughout the advanced capitalist world, and Gorz’s work exemplifies the often tortured and tortuous process of reflection on the ineluctable problem of a working class, as Gorz first framed the issue in his 1959 *La morale de l’histoire*, whose quest to satisfy its most vital interests no longer coincides with the revolutionary negation of capitalism. His attempt to come to grips with this dilemma will constitute one of the leitmotifs of this thesis. The quest for forces of socialist change apposite to the conditions of advanced capitalism took Gorz in a variety of directions, including the theorization of a new working class, before he ultimately arrived, in the 90s, at a more plural conception of the agency of social change, which in turn grew more or less naturally from his prior rejection of the traditional Marxist conception of the revolutionary subject as the class destined by history to take up the vocation of capitalism’s grave-digger. One of the intriguing propositions Gorz developed along the way was the rather paradoxical figure, at least from the vantage point of the socialist tradition, of the “non-class of non-workers,” which has been the object of considerable misunderstanding and controversy, and will be considered in some detail. For now we may simply note that the context for this theoretical departure was the destabilization of work in western capitalist society. Among the most salient features of the French economy in the last 30 years has been the unrelenting rise in unemployment, mounting steadily from one million in 1974 to triple that figure and counting in 1992 — and these are the official statistics which often underestimate the scale of the problem by failing to count certain categories, such as those who have given up the search for work, not to mention seasonal and temporary workers.<sup>16</sup> The number of people “deprived of employment” in France in 1997 has been estimated by some to be in excess

of five million.<sup>17</sup> The number of part-time workers, many of them involuntary, also skyrocketed in France as elsewhere in the industrialized West in the last quarter century. From nine per cent of the labour force in 1982, it rose to 14.7 per cent in 1994 and to 16.7 per cent — in excess of three and a half million part-time workers — in 1997.<sup>18</sup> In the last few years fully 75 per cent of all jobs created in France were temporary or part-time.<sup>19</sup> (In Europe as a whole, fully 70 per cent of the jobs created between 1983 and 1987 were low skill, low-wage, part-time jobs.<sup>20</sup>) At the same time, as a result of the strategy of early retirement, France had one of the lowest rates of employment in the industrialized world for people over 55 years of age.<sup>21</sup> Yet in the two decades from 1970-1990 the volume of production in France neither diminished nor stagnated; on the contrary it actually doubled in roughly the same period, while the quantity of human labour measured in time diminished by one-third.<sup>22</sup> This unfolding and still unresolved crisis stimulated a reconsideration of the central questions of work and leisure which has intensified in the 1990s, with economists and social theorists divided particularly on the question of whether the contemporary social plague is conjunctural or structural. Gorz's meditations on the disaffection from work and the strategy of deliberate work reduction is thus inseparable from this ostensibly intractable crisis of work afflicting western Europe.

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, the thesis is divided into five chapters, each dealing with a specific phase and particular themes and problems in Gorz's intellectual development.<sup>\*</sup> Since much of the critical commentary on Gorz to date pertains to his work in the 80s and 90s, and consists largely of reviews of *Farewell to the Working Class*, I have devoted part of chapter four dealing with that period in Gorz's work to the requisite review of the literature.

The first chapter opens with an examination and analysis of Gorz's autobiographical essay *The Traitor*, the work with which Gorz made his public debut on the French intellectual scene in 1958. Since I have chosen not to deal with Gorz's contributions to the vast body of Sartre commentary, which I regard as peripheral to the main themes, it is hoped that this chapter will attest

<sup>\*</sup> I have quoted from the English translations of Gorz's work where these were available (and much of Gorz's work, including many essays not anthologized, has been translated into English). Where I have been unsatisfied with the quality of the translation I have occasionally made my own translations from the original French language editions, as indicated in the endnotes. In the case of those articles and the three books, *La morale de l'histoire*, *Fondements pour une morale*, and the just published *Misères du présent, richesse du possible*, which have not (yet) been translated into English, all the direct quotations are my own translations.

to the deep imprint, particularly on Gorz's early work, of Jean-Paul Sartre's brand of existentialism. Before turning to Gorz's first work of properly political ideas, *La morale de l'histoire*, an effort is made to situate Gorz in the context of the intellectual left in France in the late 50s and early 60s. This period saw the genesis of a first New Left in France, when momentous events such as the Soviet invasion of Hungary and the revelations of the Twentieth Party Congress catalyzed a reconsideration and renewal of Marxist political theory outside and against the major institutions of the French left and taking shape, rather, in journals such as *Les Temps Modernes*, *Arguments*, and *Socialisme ou Barbarie*.

This chapter also establishes Gorz's concern from the beginning to probe the issue of revolutionary agency. In this period, Gorz does not quite question the pivotal role to be played by the working class even within advanced capitalism. In his early writings, he reaffirms the proletariat as the revolutionary subject, although he devotes an extensive portion of *La morale de l'histoire* to combatting mechanistic interpretations of the proletariat as agent and to theorizing the transcendence of capitalism as a moral imperative as opposed to the inexorable outcome of the workings of historical necessity.

The chapter goes on to examine and evaluate Gorz's efforts to formulate a strategy for the working class movement, as well as his espousal of the goals of self-management. In this endeavour Gorz was heavily indebted to the innovative ideas of segments of the Italian Communist and non-Communist left (far more so, I contend, than to the recondite theoretical edifice constructed by Sartre in this period) and thus the chapter seeks to trace and demonstrate the centrality of the work of such luminaries of the Italian left as Vittorio Foa, Lelio Basso, and Bruno Trentin to Gorz's systematization and popularization of a strategy of revolutionary reformism.

Revolving particularly around the contents of the book that catapulted Gorz to a high profile as a New Left thinker, *Stratégie ouvrière et néo-capitalisme (Strategy for Labor)*, this chapter addresses Gorz's analysis of advanced capitalism, paying particular attention to his efforts to update Marxist theory to accommodate the specificities of the role of the neo-capitalist State and the consumer society, and his views concerning the integration of the working class. In this context I draw some comparisons with the work of Herbert Marcuse; Gorz's *Strategy for Labor* appeared in 1964 shortly after the publication of *One-Dimensional Man* and the two books sound many of the

same themes. However, Gorz expressed a more optimistic view of the prospects for social transformation and strove to articulate a somewhat more pragmatic approach to effecting change than that represented by Marcuse's Great Refusal. He did not see revolution as a cataclysmic rupture with the existing order, but rather as an evolutionary process. At the same time, he took pains to distinguish his conception of socialist strategy from the social democratic conception of the road to socialism as an accretion of partial reforms. How viable this distinction proved is also discussed. To demonstrate Gorz's impact on New Left thought internationally during this period, the chapter concludes by looking at the appropriation of Gorz's work by some student New Leftists, such as Mark Kravetz in France and Carl Davidson in the United States.

Through the lens of the renowned New Left debate on the new working class, the second chapter highlights Gorz's role in the displacement of emphasis in radical social theory from exploitation to alienation, a displacement which anticipated and resonated with the spirit of May '68 in France and with the New Left's concern with the issue of qualitative as opposed to solely quantitative change. It also deals with Gorz's stance in relation to the Sino-Soviet dispute, a controversy which, once again, put the question of revolutionary agency at the centre of New Left reflection. In this instance, Gorz adopted a position at odds to some extent with a considerable part of the French New Left which tended, under the sway of Chinese communism, to look to the Third World as the mainspring of revolutionary change in the West. Gorz was never a *tiers-mondiste*, though attentive to the deprivations and deformations wrought by western imperialism, he kept his sights and hopes fixed on the prospects for social change in the heartland of the capitalist world system — a propensity that may have immunized him from the widespread disillusionment and cynicism attendant upon the revelations in the 1970s of the bloody and authoritarian character of some of the "model" revolutionary people's regimes, a bombshell that fell particularly heavily upon the intellectuals grouped together under the label "Les nouveaux philosophes" who achieved celebrity status in the late 1970s.

In chronological terms, this second chapter encompasses the crucible of May '68 in France, and although I do not discuss the May events per se, I do consider Gorz's reading of this pivotal moment in contemporary French history, the meaning and implications of which are still vigorously contested. In particular, this section highlights Gorz's response to what he saw as the excessive

spontaneity of the actors in the May events. Having borne witness to the fate of the Leninist vanguard party, the New Left initially rejected this orthodox model in favour of self-directed activity and participatory democracy; this gave rise to serious organizational problems during and after May '68; while some activists resorted to complete spontaneous action, others regrouped in new highly structured and doctrinaire sects. In his attempt to sketch the contours of a new type of revolutionary party, Gorz attempted to steer a course between the two extremes. However, perhaps partly as a result of a paucity of practical political experience of any kind, let alone familiarity with the inner workings of party politics, his alternative was irremediably flawed by an excessive degree of abstraction and generality.

During the same period in the late 1960s, he became increasingly preoccupied with the issue of the division of labour, which led to his contentious critique of the university as an entirely unreformable institution undergirding and serving to reproduce the capitalist social hierarchy. Gorz's conclusion that nothing short of a deliberate and sustained attack on the division of labour itself would provide the legitimate foundation of socialist society induced a significant shift in Gorz's view of the problem of the revolutionary subject, prompting an all but total recantation of the idea of the new working class as potential revolutionary agent. Gorz's views in this matter were accentuated by the failure of the new working class to fulfill its putative revolutionary appointment in the immediate post-1968 period (the post '68 labour militancy in France and elsewhere in Europe was by and large spearheaded by blue collar workers) which also prompted his extended reflection on the nature of technical knowledge and technology in capitalist society and his rejection of the traditional Marxist view of the neutrality of the productive forces. A pivotal essay in this context is his "Technology, Technicians and the Class Struggle," first published in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1971, which is discussed at length in this chapter.

The title of the third chapter, "Less but Better," encapsulates Gorz's philosophical outlook in the mid-1970s. As I argue in this chapter, his ecologically-oriented social theory is, above all, an extension and amplification of his critique of the capitalist consumer society, into which he assimilated the implications of the evidence of resource depletion and environmental degradation, which were compelling a reconsideration in some left circles of the nature and premises of what had been taken for granted as development and progress. Finding in the ecological crisis further



confirmation of his own long-standing analysis of the generally adverse effects of a social system in which consumption is driven by the demands of production and profit, rather than by production oriented to needs, Gorz, writing extensively under the pseudonym Michel Bosquet, pursued and expanded his critique of a fetishism of growth blind to the deleterious consequences for the human habitat. In so doing he found a small but significant audience in the budding ecology movements in France and elsewhere.

Locating Gorz's ecological turn in the context of the rise of the political ecology movement in France and its heritage from May '68, the chapter goes on to examine Gorz's brand of eco-socialism as developed particularly in *Écologie et politique (Ecology as Politics)*. It draws attention to the pervasive influence evident in that book of the work of Ivan Illich, elucidates Gorz's views on the relationship of man and nature and on the crisis of growth and productivism, and sketches his emerging dualist utopia. A contrast is drawn between the early ecology movement's utopian spirit — which marked Gorz's work as well — and the distinctly anti-utopian temperament reigning among France's *grands intellos* as a result of the belated assimilation of the revelations of totalitarian character of the regimes of actually existing socialism (to adopt Rudolf Bahro's phrase).

In this chapter I also consider Gorz's increasing preoccupation with the issue of work in light of the growing problem of unemployment, identified by the French public as early as the mid-1970s as the chief national affliction — not altogether surprising in a nation where the right to work has been a mainstay of left discourse since 1848 and is inscribed in the constitution. (The Constitution of the Fifth Republic includes the declaration: "*Chacun a le devoir de travailler et le droit d'obtenir un emploi*": each person is obliged to work and has the right to obtain a job.) What became Gorz's principal theme in the ensuing decades — the end of work as we know it and the self-management of time — began to take shape in this period when serious consideration began to be paid to the possibility of work reduction as both a partial remedy for unemployment — a notion which has today achieved virtual consensus in France — *and* a path toward a qualitatively better existence

The constellation of ideas for which Gorz earned his greatest renown and notoriety is the subject of the fourth chapter. These ideas found their most systematic formulation in his *Adieux au prolétariat (Farewell to the Working Class)*, where Gorz reached conclusions reminiscent of the pessimistic reckoning of Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*, particularly in his affirmation

that the working class had become the replica of capital itself, as well as in his subdued hopes for what he designated the “non-class of non-workers,” those disaffected and excluded from the world of waged work. This chapter will present the main themes of the famed book, beginning with a brief examination of Gorz’s philosophical and sociological critique of the Marxian conception of a revolutionary subject and of the vocation of the working class elaborated in light of the trends he detected in contemporary capitalism — such as the South-Africanization of society (the previously noted polarization of the work force into a minority of skilled and relatively secure workers on the one hand and a growing mass of insecure often poorly paid and low-skill workers on the other) and the general deskilling and homogenization of work he now saw occurring with the advance of automation.

This chapter discusses Gorz’s retreat from the goal of self-management, a revision Gorz introduced on the grounds that any attempt to abolish the division of labour can only be achieved at the expense of social complexity and that any such effort harbours risks of totalitarian forms of social organization. Another central theme of *Farewell*, Gorz’s defense of the State as the indispensable realm upon which a revived civil society may flourish, is also pertinent in this regard. This novel turn in Gorz’s thought, which was nevertheless adumbrated in his more explicitly ecological phase, is based on his critique of the Marxian utopia on the grounds that it demands the total rationalization of human existence; it represents a denial of the early Marxian idea that individual self-activity can coincide with social labour (which continued to inform left thinking despite Marx’s own ultimate conclusion to the contrary). By 1980 Gorz concluded and would continue to maintain, as he put it in a 1991 essay:

There is no longer any convergence, nor can there be, between individual being and social being, because the individual does not and cannot belong wholly — in his work, his lifestyle, his ethics, his social milieu — to the social-community, as did the corporations and the working class with its culture, its bonds of solidarity, its associations and its counter-society.<sup>23</sup>

Since among all Gorz’s writings *Farewell to the Working Class* is the volume that generated the greatest body of critical commentary, this chapter also does service, as noted above, as a review of the literature, providing an occasion to examine the numerous objections raised by left academics and labour activists in and outside France to Gorz’s jettisoning of the working class as the agent of

structural transformation in favour of the non-class of non-workers, and to his dualist utopia. In addition, it looks at some of the more sustained and less dismissive critiques of Gorz advanced by ecologically-oriented theorists.

The fifth chapter offers an examination of Gorz's most mature and in many ways most fertile writings, and especially of his efforts to delineate a concrete utopia for our time grounded in the ongoing reduction of socially necessary labour time. It sets this project in the context of the French crisis of work and the failure of the newly elected Socialist government to stem the tide of rising joblessness. Drawing heavily on Gorz's later work, especially *Paths to Paradise*, the *Critique of Economic Reason*, and *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, this chapter examines Gorz's interventions in the left debate surrounding proposals for a guaranteed minimum income or citizens' income, and considers his recent espousal of an unconditional basic income in light of his longstanding opposition to such proposals.

Contributing to the ongoing dualization of society in France and throughout western Europe has been an expansion in the last decades in low-wage, often precarious, service sector work, compounded by job creation measures introduced by governments of all stripes which frequently amount to little more than temporary relief from the dole — *petits boulots* in French, McJobs in English. In face of this phenomenon, Gorz endeavoured to refine his typology of work, emphasizing what he saw as the fundamental difference between economically productive work and servants' work. His analysis of the advent of a new servant class is another central theme of this fifth chapter. It goes on to consider Gorz's reframing of the socialist project both pro-and retroactively as the progressive limitation of the tyranny of economic rationality, and his insistence that while socialism as a system is dead, the concept, as he now redefines it, remains more germane than ever. The chapter concludes by returning to one of the unifying themes of the dissertation: Gorz's ever changing views on the agency of social transformation. Here I detect a note of pessimism with respect to Gorz's earlier hopes for various categories and movements of people likely to effect social change in the direction which Gorz continues to conceive as the proper end of humanity: the original Marxist goal of the free development of the individual.

Rather than rehearsing here the substance of my assessment of Gorz's value and contributions as a thinker, which constitutes the main subject of my conclusion, it is perhaps more

worthwhile to situate myself in relation to Gorz's project, especially insofar as my interest is evidently neither that of a neutral observer nor of an unfriendly detractor. As I have already suggested, my interest in Gorz stems as much from contemporary as historical concerns; in fact I see his work as forming a bridge between those two sets of concerns. In contemplating the legacy of the New Left it became ever more apparent to me that, apart from political ecology, the main intellectual successors of New Left thought offered little that might contribute to pushing forward reflection in any remotely practical terms on the social and economic problems of the age or to redefining a new identifiably left vision and discerning the possibilities and strategies for achieving greater social justice. It is in this sense that Gorz's later work came to occupy a place of distinction in my mind: I find in it a much more promising response from the left to the defeat of the revolutionary aspirations of May and the changing context of capitalism than the epistemological relativism of the post-structuralist left, essentially defeatist and quietistic in its implications, or than the politics of identity or than any reaffirmation of the historically outmoded formulae of orthodox social democracy.

This is obviously not the place to enter into my own numerous reservations in relation to post-structuralism and the politics of identity. I have pronounced myself on this subject elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> Suffice it to say here that neither of those currents are of much value in understanding or responding to what are arguably two of the most pressing problems of the age: an ecological crisis that may be attaining catastrophic proportions and an unemployment problem that is resulting in greater inequality. Gorz's work, by contrast, speaks in considered ways to these concerns. Gorz was prescient in his attempts to address the issue that has become for the advanced capitalist world the social problem of crisis proportions — the end of jobs (there are currently 36 million people officially unemployed in the OECD countries). And he did so in a manner that takes into account the vital imperative to stem the tide of ecological degradation. In my estimation, his emphasis on the unworkability, not to mention undesirability, of Keynesian solutions and the consequent need to manage the imminent abolition of work as we know it are exceptionally germane to the development of a coherent left response to the current crisis of capitalist societies. There is no doubt that Gorz's ideas are an expression of the utopian spirit at a time generally unpropitious and

unreceptive to manifestations of utopian thinking. But this too, I believe, constitutes a sorely needed antidote to the pervasive resignation in face of the prevailing social order.

This having been said, this is a study in intellectual history not hagiography. The aim of this dissertation is to engage critically with Gorz's ideas; and given that his opus is riddled throughout with puzzling *voltes-face*, silences, and ambivalences it cannot but invite circumspection. Despite my affinities with Gorz's vision, I have sought to probe the considerable internal contradictions and inconsistencies that mark his development as a thinker and which remain not only unresolved but often unacknowledged in his work — his ambiguous attitude towards technology, for example, his shifting view of the revolutionary potential of the new working class, and then the old working class, his oscillations with respect to the question of the compatibility of ecology and capitalism...

At the prescriptive level too Gorz's dualist utopia is open to serious criticism, above all in connection with his silence on the political means of hastening the achievement of a society of free time. Moreover, Gorz's dualist utopia rests on a heteronomy/autonomy dualism which is problematic at least. And having posited a concept of separate and irreconcilable spheres, Gorz is subject to the charge that he essentially leaves the sphere of material production under the control of the market, which is inconsistent, among other things, with the ecological aims he endorses.<sup>25</sup> Further, there are obvious weaknesses in Gorz's claims in his later work for the 'revolutionary' potential of the non-class of non-workers, not least of which is the continuing absence of any organizational structures through which this growing marginalized stratum might exert pressure on the system. Hence, throughout the dissertation I remain cautious with respect to the laudatory claim for Gorz made by historian Arthur Hirsh in his assessment of the heritage of the French New Left, that "[m]ore than anyone else Gorz has drawn together the various threads of new Left social theory with the new social movements it has spawned in the 1970s into a *coherent theoretical framework*."<sup>26</sup>

Ultimately, I hope that by compassing the scope, evolution, strengths and weaknesses of Gorz's thought over the span of five decades this dissertation will contribute to stimulating further and more advanced historical and theoretical discussion of his contribution, and above all to ensuring that Gorz is accorded his just due as one of the most innovative and inspiring social theorists associated with the New Left who kept faith with many of its discoveries and strivings.

## Notes

1. The term *nouvelle gauche* first gained currency in France in connection with an initiative of Gilles Martinet and Claude Bourdet, leading journalists with the magazine *France-Observateur*, who spawned a heterogeneous political movement in the 1950s that became the political party, Mouvement uni de la nouvelle gauche in 1955. The activists and members of this organization — never numbering more than 2000 individuals — sought to forge an anti-capitalist alternative to both the PCF and the PS-SFIO. Roland Biard, *Dictionnaire de l'extrême-gauche de 1945 à nos jours* (Paris: Belfond, 1978), pp. 242-244.
2. Assar Lindbeck, *The Political Economy of the New Left: An Outsider's View*, second edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 1-2.
3. Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 362.
4. Cited on the back cover of the English translation of Gorz's *Adieux au prolétariat* published by Pluto Press as *Farewell to the Working Class: an Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism* (London, 1982).
5. For example, Dominique Simonnet, *L'Écologisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1979); Guillaume Sainteny, *Les Verts* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1991); Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Andrew Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, second edition (London: Routledge, 1995).
6. Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 104-105.
7. *Le Débat* 50, special edition, May-August 1988 (my translation).
8. "Appel Européen pour une Citoyenneté et une Économie Plurielles," June 1996, available [online]: <<http://www.globenet.org/aecep/appel.html>. October 23, 1997. A version appeared in translation as "European Call for a Pluralistic Citizenship and Economy" in *Dissent* (Summer 1997), pp. 26-27.
9. Foreword to "André Gorz," interview by Michel Contat and François Georges (October 12, 1980) in *Entretiens avec Le Monde*, 6 vols. (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1985), vol. 6: *La Société*, p. 202 (my translation).
10. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author by correspondence, January 7, 1998.
11. He said this in an interview in 1980 with Mitchell Cohen cited in Cohen's review of Gorz's *Farewell to the Working Class*, *New Political Science* 12 (Summer 1983), p. 115 n.10.
12. George Ross, "Intellectuals Against the Left: the Case of France," *Socialist Register* (1990), p. 202.
13. Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Les intellocrates* (Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 1981), p. 37 (my translation).

14. Stefan Collini, "What is Intellectual History?" in *What is History Today...?* ed. Juliet Gardner (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1988), p. 107.
15. C. Wright Mills, "The New Left," in *Power, Politics and People*, edited and with an introduction by Irving Louis Horowitz (New York: Ballantine Books, 1963), pp. 254-257.
16. On the problem of calculating unemployment figures and the need to develop new criteria, see Jean-Michel Bezat, "L'emploi reste malade malgré les politiques d'aide," *Le Monde*, April 15, 1998. France appears to be less guilty, however, of underreporting the unemployment problem than many other industrialized nations. Bernard Cassen calculates that if the criteria used to identify the scale of unemployment and underemployment in the industrialized countries were standardized, France's unemployment figures would be much more accurate than, say, those of the United States or Japan, which, using current methods, are consistently comparatively low. "Imperative transition vers une société du temps libéré," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1994, p. 24.
17. René Passet, "Ces promesses des technologies de l'immatériel..." *Le Monde Diplomatique* (July 1997), p. 27. He includes in this category people seeking work, people in training, youth in the Travaux d'utilité collective (TUC), a vast youth training program, and people who retired early.
18. These figures are cited in Mireille Elbaum, "La réduction du temps de travail: un avenir à quelles conditions?" in *Le travail, quel avenir?* by Pierre Boisard, et. al. (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), pp. 188-189. The author also counters the myth that part-time work in the current context is a chosen way of life for many people, and attempts to show the proportion of involuntary part-time workers. The 1997 figure is from René Passet, "Relever les minima sociaux, une exigence économique," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (February 1998), p. 24.
19. Jacques Robin, "Repenser les activités humaines à l'échelle de la vie," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (March 1997), p. 4.
20. Passet, "Ces promesses des technologies de l'immatériel..." p. 27.
21. Jean-Louis Laville "La crise de la condition salariale: emploi, activité et nouvelle question sociale," in *Le travail, quel avenir?* by Pierre Boisard, et. al. (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 51.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
23. André Gorz, "Droite/Gauche: Essai de redéfinition," *La revue du Mauss* 14 (1991), p. 25 (my translation).
24. Andrea Levy, "Progeny and Progress? Reflections on the Legacy of the New Left," *Our Generation* 24 (1993-1994), pp. 1-38.
25. This argument is put most carefully and convincingly by Michael Power in an extended analysis of Gorz's *Critique of Economic Reason* although Power is far from alone in advancing this criticism; "After Calculation? Reflections on *Critique of Economic Reason* by André Gorz," *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 5 (1992), p. 484 and 489.
26. Arthur Hirsh, *The French Left: A History and Overview* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982), pp. 221-222 (my emphasis).

## Chapter I      Beginnings

Among other things I have learned that I shall  
never be through beginning again...

André Gorz  
*The Traitor* (1959)

Although Jean-Paul Sartre himself did not consider André Gorz a disciple,<sup>1</sup> the figure of Sartre loomed large in Gorz's early intellectual life, as his initial philosophical, literary and political forays of the 1950s testify. Indeed, in his novel *cum* autobiographical/philosophical essay *The Traitor*, Gorz paints a portrait of himself as almost slavishly under the sway of a certain Morel — an undisguised Sartre — and completely absorbed by the elaborate philosophical edifice of *Being and Nothingness*.

His reaction was not an isolated one. In a study of *Les Temps Modernes*, Anna Boschetti documents the enthusiasm *Being and Nothingness* aroused among the young writers, journalists and essayists whom she designates as Sartre's epigones.<sup>2</sup> Still, it tests the understanding to imagine that Gorz, a half-Jew who had gone into exile from his native Austria in the wake of the Anschluss, did not harbour some doubts about that total and infinite freedom posited by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (a concept of unconditional freedom that Sartre himself later repudiated as scandalous<sup>3</sup>). The only limits of this freedom are those it imposes on itself; it is a freedom that makes the Jew a victim of anti-semitism in some sense of his own choosing.

It is only by my recognizing the *freedom* of anti-Semites (whatever use they may make of it) and by my assuming this *being-a-Jew* that I am a Jew for them: it is only thus that being-a-Jew will appear as the external objective limit of the situation. If, on the contrary, it pleases me to consider the anti-Semites as pure *objects*, then my being-a-Jew disappears immediately to give place to the simple consciousness (of) being a free, unqualifiable transcendence.<sup>4</sup>

In apparent contradiction of this statement, Sartre goes on to say that one cannot *but* choose to be what one is for the Other; however, one can choose to do so in a variety of mental postures! There may have been myriad ways for Gorz to have assumed his being-for-others-as-a-Jew in pre-war



Austria, but none — Sartre's convictions notwithstanding — that would have circumvented the dangers for any Jew of being-around-Nazis.

Nevertheless, as Gorz related it in *The Traitor*, he experienced *Being and Nothingness* as an epiphany. He immersed himself in it, “adopting its terminology, raising it to the dignity of an encyclopedia which, since it treated everything, must have an answer to everything, and at last living in a universe having *Being and Nothingness* for its frontiers.”<sup>5</sup> Recalling, years later, what had first appealed to him about Sartre, Gorz pointed to his relentless questioning, his contestation of received wisdom, his rejection of easy solutions. “At a time when everyone was offering some kind of salvation, you were the writer who kept saying there isn't any salvation.”<sup>6</sup>

And indeed, the radical freedom posited in *Being and Nothingness* allows the individual no appeal to the court of diminished responsibility that is determinism. Against mechanical explanations of individual development, Sartre countered that freedom was not a state to be attained; it was inscribed in the structure of human beings. The insistence in Sartre's early work — subsequently qualified but never wholly retracted — that man, through the choices that he makes, is responsible for what he is, indicated that the individual was not a prisoner of circumstance. “[I]f the individual is governed from outside or from behind by external and unconscious determinisms,” Sartre wrote, “he does not belong to himself and there is no sense in asking him to account for his actions, to answer for the world to the degree to which he makes it, or to humanize it.”<sup>7</sup>

Setting aside other highly problematic aspects of his theory, such as the inattention to the concrete limits of freedom in society and a theory of antagonistic social relations that seems to make of the individual's freedom a form of slavery, Sartre's emphasis on freedom did redeem the possibility of the individual shaping his own destiny.<sup>8</sup> This in turn constituted a possible bridge to a humanist Marxism in which people shape their world through praxis.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, as Gorz remarked in his later commentary on Sartre and Marx, the pessimistic account in *Being and Nothingness* of the ubiquity of bad faith — the refusal to recognize our freedom to make ourselves — had the merit of explaining within the framework of the reflexive cogito how alienation is possible, how people who are free can fail to recognize their freedom and can take themselves for objects.<sup>10</sup> This, as we shall see, was one of the main themes of *The Traitor*.

In addition to the substantive content, Gorz singled out another feature of the book that appealed to him at a more immediately personal level: feeling himself to be the ultimate outsider, bereft of any sense of appurtenance, without ties to any nation, culture, class, Gorz was attracted by what he considered to be its accessibility, in the sense that comprehension did not depend upon membership in any particular cultural group or possession of any specific intellectual background. Gorz did not feel excluded.<sup>11</sup> (Actually, considering that he appears to have received no professional training in philosophy, Gorz acceded independently to an astonishing mastery of abstruse philosophical problems and language that would have excluded the vast majority of the uninitiated.)

Gorz first met Sartre at a party in Lausanne on June 1, 1946, when Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir were in Switzerland for a lecture tour, and then again in Geneva during the same trip. According to his account in *The Traitor*, he had been living in Switzerland since 1939, when after a family vacation Gorz's mother arranged for him to attend school there, initially retaining his German passport. He studied chemical engineering at the École Polytechnique of the Université de Lausanne because it was the only diploma recognized abroad. Disgusted by the hypocrisy he encountered in Switzerland, where due to his mixed status he was regarded prior to 1943 as not German enough and afterwards as too German, he became intent on becoming French. It was in the process of immersing himself in French culture that he devoured Sartre's writings. De Beauvoir relates the first encounter with Gorz in her memoirs, recalling that he knew Sartre's work like the back of his hand and also revealing that his enthusiasm was not unqualified; in an often quoted passage she related that Gorz was troubled by the fact that *Being and Nothingness* seemed to provide no basis for giving preference to one choice over another, to which objection Sartre is supposed to have replied flippantly "that's because you're Swiss."<sup>12</sup> In *The Traitor*, Gorz relates the exchange in greater detail: Sartre had remarked to him that had he, Gorz, been in France rather than Switzerland during the war he would have had to make a choice; to which Gorz countered that even so there still would have been no basis to justify any particular choice. Faced with this (incontrovertible) argument, Sartre accused Gorz of being something of an essentialist who despised the concrete.<sup>13</sup> By this time, of course, Sartre was already moving beyond the framework of *Being*

*and Nothingness* and formulating the ideas about universal responsibility and commitment that would lead to his permanent engagement with Marxism from the late 1940s to the end of his life.

Gorz tells us that he had not yet read Marx in 1947, when he finally settled in Paris, having worked briefly the year before in Brussels as an engineer. But he probably means that he had not carried out a systematic examination of Marx's writings. In any event, *The Traitor*, written in 1955-56, shows him to have been simultaneously absorbed by problems posed by Marxism and in a dilemma over whether to join the Communist Party. So it was not long before Gorz began to parallel Sartre's own trajectory from existentialism to Marxism.

*The Traitor* is a difficult and confusing book which goes far beyond the boundaries of conventional autobiography.<sup>14</sup> It describes a backward and forward movement from childhood to adulthood, from detachment to commitment, and from third person to first person. For much of the text Gorz refers to himself in the third person. This device is related to the Sartrean concept of being-for-others: a form of alienation in which, through the look of the Other, one is assigned a fixed Nature and transformed into an object in which one does not recognize oneself. To assume this reified state is bad faith — taking myself as an object is a denial of my freedom to transcend myself. In Sartrean terms, however, I cannot avoid bad faith, I must assume my being-for-others, while assigning it a meaning of my own making — and this Gorz finally understands himself as having continually failed to do. The narrative structure of *The Traitor* appears to be modelled on the progressive-regressive method Sartre developed in his preface to *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, published independently as *Search for a Method*.

In part, the book presents Gorz's extended meditations on the limitations of both the Marxist and traditional psychoanalytic methods, neither of which is adequate to account for subjectivity — in this case Gorz's own development, his childhood inferiority and persecution complexes, his later choices. Marxism is inadequate because it cannot account for subjective misery: it posits alienation as a purely social and economic condition; moreover, perhaps anticipating Sartre's objection in *Search for a Method*, Gorz observes that Marxism concerns itself only with adults<sup>15</sup>; it has nothing to tell us about childhood complexes, about the mediations of the family.

However, traditional psychoanalysis was also limited. For Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* psychoanalysis was lacking because in the final analysis it reduced the individual to “inexplicable original givens” rather than locating the initial project, the subjective choice by which the individual makes himself a person.<sup>16</sup> For Sartre, we create something with what we are given. To quote Ronald Aronson's remarkably lucid summary of this complex idea:

What we are given — our class, our nationality, our race, our very words, our historical situation, our family background — never affects us mechanically, never imprints itself on us as in a relation of cause to effect, never predestines us to act in a particular way. It becomes what it is for us by being drawn into us and thrown out as a new creation, our project.<sup>17</sup>

This is the central idea that Gorz wishes to explore and illustrate in *The Traitor*. At one point he says that determinism is applicable to early childhood: “under given conditions a child is necessarily the way he is, and anyone would be the same in his place, at his age.”<sup>18</sup> And further on he argues that his own childhood complexes were rooted in an initial given situation (which, he acknowledges, refers in turn to the social world, the realm of Marxist analysis), which was preserved and reinforced by his objective circumstances later in life, and particularly his condition of exile. But Gorz explains that he remains dissatisfied with both the Marxist and traditional psychoanalytic methods because, in his view, while operating at different levels they both explain everything as the result of prior conditions.<sup>19</sup> They cannot account for how the past shapes us in the present, the significance it assumes for us, nor for the ability of the individual to transcend himself. Freedom is absent from the equation. Ultimately Gorz argues that we make ourselves what we are by recognizing ourselves in the objectively limited possibilities available to us. And by reconstructing his own life to grasp how he had chosen himself, Gorz hopes to transcend himself and discover the possibilities of action open to him in the world.<sup>20</sup> However, Sartre's own position on the degree of freedom we have to choose had undergone significant modifications by the time Gorz undertook to write *The Traitor*, and it is arguable that the highly confusing quality of the book resulted in part from Gorz's attempt to straddle Sartre's own conflicting positions, from the radical freedom of *Being and Nothingness* in 1943 to the far more qualified view of human freedom that Sartre — now a PCF (Parti Communiste Français) fellow-traveller — subscribed to by the time Gorz began *The Traitor* in 1955. At the end of the book we even glimpse shades of the practico-

inert, the suitably ugly term Sartre coined in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* to represent the frozen sum of individual praxes that thwarts our individual projects and turns them against us, which in Sartre's later theory is the source of alienation. Although Gorz wrote *The Traitor* before some of Sartre's later work was completed, it suffers, fatally perhaps, from an attempt to cram in too many of Sartre's ideas, both implicitly and explicitly, in the effort at self-understanding. In all likelihood even the book's title has its origin in a line from a preface Sartre wrote to a collection of his plays: "Whatever the circumstances, and wherever the site, a man is always free to choose to be a traitor or not..."<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the book, philosophical reflection is interspersed with the story of the traitor, Gorz's own personal history rendered as a personification of bad faith; so many flights from freedom, successive attempts to deny the real world, to conceive it as "a pure object entirely exterior to him."<sup>22</sup> At one level, he understands this as the consequence of the rootlessness he experienced as a child which converged with his exile as an adult, resulting in nihilism. As a child he had been assigned no roles; there was no being-for-others to assume:

Caught between a mother and a father incompatible not only because of their origins, their religion, their "race," but particularly because of their temperament and values, he had no foundation anywhere, no point of view he could adopt as profoundly his own; he was tempted by all the roles the world offered, while at the same time being unable to commit himself to any of them.<sup>23</sup>

He made, as he puts it, a vocation out of this condition, playing roles without being them, refusing the world: "...avarice, eccentricity, cowardice, systematizing intellectuality, all as a constant total means of existing as little as possible. Everything happens as if, since his earliest childhood, he were trying to suppress himself as a subject, stop living..."<sup>24</sup> Gorz understands his past writing as a means of "dissolving [the world] into ideas and words,"<sup>25</sup> and he suggests that his refusal of the world included also his construction of a universe using *Being and Nothingness*. Among the principal stratagems Gorz discovers himself to have employed to escape from the human world are consecutive efforts to identify with the Other — Gorz's treason — including an adolescent identification with the Nazis and his attraction to abstract universals: God, the French who represented universal reason, the proletariat.

It is not my intention here to recapitulate Gorz's process of self-reconstruction from what he understood as the conditioned choice of himself as a nullity in his childhood to his achievement of selfhood, indicated by his use of the first person. Certainly *The Traitor* raises many interesting questions, not least of which is the striking absence in these autobiographical reflections of any attempt to come to grips with the central political events of the period. Clearly the rise of Nazism and the war deeply affected the course of Gorz's life; reading *The Traitor*, however, we might be led to imagine that they were a matter of relative indifference to him, that so detached was Gorz from the world as to remain relatively untouched by the tragic realities unfolding nearby. Are we to believe that he was not in anguish over the outcome of the war? We have only his description of his feelings of rootlessness, which by virtue of sheer repetition leave the reader with the impression that Gorz is protesting too much: "...he was divided against himself because the world was divided, and he could make no camp's truth his own — neither Judaic nor Christian, neither German nor Allied ... nor Swiss. Ignored by history he felt he was the world's victim..."<sup>26</sup> Is it possible that from the security of his exile in Switzerland, Gorz truly could not choose opposition to the Nazis? If the war's outcome was a matter of indifference to him, why did he fear being sent back to Austria (Germany)? And what of the fate of his Jewish father who, the reader assumes, remained there? Perhaps we should conclude then that Gorz repeatedly invokes his state of non-particularity to shield himself from guilt over a perceived lack of solidarity with the Nazis' chief victims, to whom he was tied at least in the eyes of others. And perhaps, contrary to Gorz's own analysis, we should see in the diverse strategies he deployed to escape the world not an evasion of his recognition of his own freedom to make himself who he was but rather a form of repressed guilt or an expression of his own painful impotence in relation to the events shaping the practical course of his life. Asked about his apparent apathy more than half a century later, Gorz recalls that he had refused to join the German army and even dreamed of joining the French Resistance.<sup>27</sup> But if Gorz harboured such a will to committed action it went undisclosed in the pages of *The Traitor*.

Finally, in a different vein, we might ask whether there is not a distinct connection between Gorz's sense of being alone in the world and the tremendous appeal for him of the philosophy of *Being and Nothingness*, which celebrated the solitary isolated consciousness and seemed moreover to consecrate in ontology the fundamentally antagonistic character of human relations, "a world," to

borrow Marx's description of bourgeois society, "of atomized individuals, hostile towards each other." But all this leaves us in the realm of speculation. Given the general purposes of this thesis, we may confine ourselves to a brief discussion of what *The Traitor* tells us about Gorz's relationship at this stage to the political left and Marxism, with the understanding that, in light of its partially literary character and beyond the facts of biography, the essay should be approached somewhat cautiously as historical evidence of a political position.

*The Traitor* indicates that sometime after the war Gorz began to familiarize himself and find himself in agreement with what he conceived as Hegelian Marxism — interpreted in a way that highlights parallels with Sartre's concept of radical freedom: "...the human condition is man's own work; not because he has created it *ex nihilo*, but because it is his only insofar as he has already assumed it, chosen to live it, recognized himself in the meaning he has given it."<sup>28</sup> His emphasis here on the human condition refers more to an a-historical Sartrean category than a Marxist one, although it is not antipathetic to the language of the young Marx. In the context of his reflections on the objective dimension of personal choice, he plays with a variety of formulations on the same basic idea that Marxism contains a moral imperative to humanize the world: "for Marx, man is what he makes, and it is essential that he make what he is — that is, that he make man, that he be able to recognize himself in what he makes. The categorical imperative of Marxist morality is: Make what you are — in order to be what you make. And what man is for Marx is freedom at work."<sup>29</sup> He will return to this idea in a more systematic way, as we shall see later on. For now, however profound his reflections, they are extremely elliptical and elusive, in keeping with the intellectually taxing nature of the book as a whole.

Gorz recognizes in *The Traitor* that for Marx the fundamental reason for our alienation is the existing social and economic order, itself the product of alienated human labour. For Marx, "Man is impossible in this world of ours, therefore it is this world that must be changed."<sup>30</sup> Gorz agrees; however, he disagrees that social and economic conditions exhaust the question of alienation. While social change is a necessary condition for the elimination of alienation, it is not sufficient to free us from our subjective alienations. Alienation will exist after the revolution. This dissatisfaction with the focus on alienated labour in Marx will have an issue, as we shall see in

Gorz's own subsequent effort to suggest a broader basis than that of alienated labour for the phenomenon of alienation.

Although there is no reference to it in any of Gorz's work, Gorz's initial acquaintance with Marx occurred in the context of the post-war renewal of Marxism in France, which we will discuss briefly below. By the time Gorz emigrated to France some years before beginning work on *The Traitor*, the reconstruction was well under way, based on the revival and reinterpretation of Hegel by Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite, which as Mark Poster shows in his indispensable study *Existential Marxism in Postwar France* also influenced Sartre's existentialism. The reconstruction was also fuelled by the appropriation of Marx's early writings, such as the 1844 Manuscripts, which began to receive attention in France only after the war, and which represented an inescapable challenge to the Stalinized Marxism of the PCF, for which the latter had not bargained.<sup>31</sup> And while Sartre's early philosophy appeared to many not only as politically indifferent but inimical to Marxist social theory, Poster's study, itself sympathetic to the efforts to formulate an existential Marxism, indicates a number of critical points of convergence between the Hegelianized humanist Marxism of the post-war period and early Sartrean existentialism, including the definition of freedom as "a positive self-realization and as the primary *telos* of human reality."<sup>32</sup> And the affinity is seconded by Ronald Aronson: Sartre's rejection of determinism in favour of the idea that men and women shape their world in spite of their alienation constituted a bridge to Marxism.<sup>33</sup> It should also be remembered that in his public defense and popularization of *Being and Nothingness* Sartre stressed its humanist dimension and he quickly began moving towards a notion of political commitment. This theory, which finds its fullest expression in Sartre's *What is Literature?*, is foreshadowed in a famous lecture published in English as *Existentialism and Humanism*, where he sought to attach to his concept of freedom a doctrine of universal responsibility, and it is also articulated in his introduction (discussed below) to *Les Temps Modernes*, the journal founded by Sartre, de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and others in 1946; Gorz would join the editorial board in 1961.

In fact, *The Traitor* itself can perhaps most fruitfully be read as Gorz's complement to this phase of Sartre's development. In a rather roundabout way, it issues a plea for intellectual commitment, without however quite wholeheartedly espousing the position of Communist fellow-traveller that Sartre himself adopted roughly from 1952-1956. It is relevant that *The Traitor* was



written during the period of Sartre's greatest proximity to the PCF, a choice that itself has to be understood in light of the polarization of the French intellectual community during the Cold War, which made neutrality all but impossible: the intellectual was condemned to choose actively or by default. (*The Traitor* was completed in September 1956 just prior to the Soviet invasion of Hungary, which chilled Sartre's rapprochement with the PCF.) Gorz clearly rejects the pretence of elevating oneself above the fray, an act of bad faith which he identifies as having been among his own strategies and which he had in common with those other "solitary and uprooted intellectuals" who, "incapable of participating in the struggles of their time, alien to its hopes, exiled from its history, either because they are bourgeois or because they belong nowhere, consider it from a sidereal viewpoint as an object and being unable to pursue any objective with mankind claim to raise themselves above it..." in the name of some transhistorical absolute.<sup>34</sup> (This argument also provides the occasion for Gorz's belated incursion into the Sartre-Camus controversy, by way of a reference to Camus' neutral position on the Algerian war and a rather inconsequential although invidious comparison of Sartre and Camus.<sup>35</sup>) In the end, then, Gorz appears to grant the validity of Sartre's accusation that his concern with philosophically justifying a commitment masked his effort to escape from making one (however compelling the philosophical dilemma remains). And he implies that he no longer feels a need to have airtight philosophical justifications for making a choice and committing oneself.<sup>36</sup>

However, the question, 'commitment to what?' remains problematic in *The Traitor*. Gorz condemns the intellectual's pretence of remaining above the *mélée* as an act of bad faith. On the other hand, to join the Party appears equally inauthentic. Gorz refers at several points to being tempted by "religious Marxism," the deterministic Marxism of the PCF, which regards human beings as "no more than so much putty."<sup>37</sup> At a personal level he explains this attraction as another form of identification with the Other, a desire to integrate.<sup>38</sup> And elsewhere he observes that all bourgeois intellectuals who join the party are engaged in a flight from freedom since membership entails a submission to the deeply deterministic Marxism which proposes to explain and hence justify everything by the mechanisms of history. Joining the PCF represents a nostalgic attempt to escape contradiction and give a single unambiguous meaning to history and thus to their actions. Instead of understanding their own freedom to choose, these intellectuals can see themselves as

chosen in a double sense: as determined by history and as an elect which recognizes the truth of history. The allegiance allows bourgeois intellectuals to deny their own bourgeois origins and the contradictions to which those origins give rise.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, he argues at another point, the Party is not in need of more intellectuals (possibly one of Gorz's more perspicacious observations, given the impressive line-up in the pre-1956 PCF).<sup>40</sup>

Most significantly, he maintains that history has given rise to the severing of the two moments of Marxism: the "positive and practical plan of construction" and the "perpetual and methodical contestation of every alienation."<sup>41</sup> The construction is occurring in the USSR, where the Party has forbidden criticism of alienation from within and from Communist Parties without. Thus, says Gorz, the contestation of alienation atrophied within the PCF (and other Communist Parties) and was relegated by default to bourgeois intellectuals. With this argument Gorz appears to find a role and a justification for the independent left-wing intellectual: to contest the alienations of both capitalist and existing socialist societies from a Marxist perspective in order to help unite these two moments — a task that cannot be accomplished within the Party. On the other hand, this criticism should not be meted out with parity because "One does not denounce the alienations of a society undertaking to abolish all alienations in the same way as those of a society which is falling apart and which one is trying to change." Gorz's optimism here should be placed in context: as noted earlier *The Traitor* was written during the years which seemed to hold out the greatest promise of de-Stalinization and prior to the invasion of Hungary, which constituted a betrayal of that promise.

This idea that the intellectual was to be critical but sympathetic is virtually an endorsement of the validity of critical fellow travelling, and Gorz goes a little further in this direction. "If, at the decisive moments, [the intellectual] does not know how to fight beside the party and risk his life with it, he has abdicated..."<sup>42</sup> Gorz goes on to declare that the intellectual should avoid a relationship of hostility with the Party as it may eventually have need of him. In what situation the Party may have an objective need of the intellectual Gorz does not say, but we can infer that he has in mind the revolutionary situation in which theory and practice unite. And this would account for his statement that the ultimate objective for the intellectual is union with the Party.

But with all of this talk of the Party we have heard virtually nothing from Gorz on the subject of the working class, in the absence of which the Party and Marxism as a living theory must

presumably lose their meaning. Had Gorz come to concur with the total identification of the Party and the proletariat that Sartre proclaimed (for a limited time) in “Les Communistes et la Paix”? At an earlier point in the narrative, Gorz relates that during a vacation in a village near Salzburg in 1938 just prior to his exile, he contemplated the proletariat as another universal with which he might wish to identify. The proletariat appeared to Gorz as a universal insofar as its elemental needs joined people in a fundamental brotherhood that eradicated divisive distinctions.<sup>43</sup> But he discovered that the proletarians had their own culture, which was closed to him. Thus his projected proletariat, the one with which he shared the deprivation of particularity, did not exist in reality; it was an abstraction. And in retrospect he grasped this identification with the universal proletariat as another manifestation of his treason.

Later on there is an indirect reference to the idea of the proletariat's revolutionary vocation. Gorz observes that the proletariat's role is not foreordained: just as an individual may fail perpetually to recognize his freedom to transcend himself, so may the working class. History may point the proletariat towards a revolutionary calling, but only if the proletariat grasps and chooses that calling will it move in that direction. A *prise de conscience* is a necessary condition, and here there are no guarantees.<sup>44</sup>

At the end of the essay, in the context of his discussion of the role of the intellectual, commitment and the question of the Party, Gorz returns to the proletariat in very vague and abstract terms. He echoes Sartre when he acknowledges that the intellectual and writer cannot address a universal public; he will never be understood by racists and anti-communists. And then in a very enigmatic statement he announces that he has chosen a side: “...the side of those who do not have enough and are not numerous enough to know they are a side...the side of those who have neither constituted Right nor Strength in their behalf, but only their own strength, which consists of ruse, bluff and the capacity to take advantage of its own weaknesses.”<sup>45</sup>

We learn from this that Gorz feels capable now of making a commitment but it is not at all clear to what he is committing himself. The working class may not have had enough (although we do not know by what criteria Gorz is measuring privation); however, in the mid-1950s in France it was certainly numerous enough to know it was a side. Does this passage present us then with the rather nebulous idea of taking the side of the oppressed? It is hard to say. Perhaps it refers to the

most marginal and excluded elements of society, with whom Gorz, as a perpetual outcast, felt a connection.

As for the proletariat, it appears to turn up again when Gorz informs us of his discovery that the (independent left-wing) intellectual can perform the tasks of criticism, can unveil mystifications, but cannot transform the world alone and hence requires “a class revolutionary by its condition.” Without this revolutionary class the intellectual is in trouble: “...if this class does not exist, or if we believe that it has lost its revolutionary vocation, then there is nothing left to do but keep silent, for in this case the intellectual is finished altogether...”<sup>46</sup> Undoubtedly it is partly the result of the peculiarity of his formulations, but at this point it appears as though Gorz regards the proletariat as necessary to afford justification to the intellectual, to give meaning to his inherent spirit of contestation. If the revolutionary subject did not exist, the intellectual might have to invent one. The point has been made by Richard Johnson that just as the PCF regarded intellectuals as useful instruments in promoting its own national or organizational ends, bourgeois intellectuals often saw the proletariat (and the party) as a tool “that can be used to actualize ... [their] own antiestablishment normative vision.”<sup>47</sup>

Finally, Gorz does intimate that the proletariat and the Party are one when he says that the Party incarnates historical negativity. However, insofar as he expresses reservations about how well the Party incarnates that negativity, he stops short of the complete identification Sartre posited during the same period, when he went so far as to assert that the working class only exists by virtue of the Party. Thus, the proletariat, to the extent that it figures at all in *The Traitor*, appears as an abstraction, a necessary intellectual construct, not a living reality. This problem would be solved to a large degree in the 1960s when, as we shall see, Gorz made the acquaintance of some left-wing Italian trade unionists and turned his attention to more concrete problems. As for the concept of the revolutionary subject, it too would ultimately take on a less metaphysical cast in Gorz's writings.

While *The Traitor* is marked throughout by the uneasy and confusing coexistence of *Being and Nothingness* and assorted Marxist concepts, at the very end of the book Gorz can be seen to be moving away from the concerns and terms of existential philosophy and closer to the gates of social and political theory. In what seems like a misplaced aside he broaches a discussion about the consumer society of contemporary capitalism, drawing attention, for instance, to the false freedom

of the automobile, a subject that remained one of Gorz's keen interests — one which he developed further in *La morale de l'histoire* (1958) and to which he gave full expression with the rise of the ecology movement in the 1970s.

Returning to the prism of Gorz's original existential odyssey, the end of *The Traitor* reveals that Gorz has reached a conclusion about his past lived in bad faith. He sees his original project (in the existentialist sense of the meaning we choose to accord our circumstances through our actions) as one of non-identification stemming from the terror of being reduced to an object by others.

Mysticism, nihilism, the temptation of sainthood, treason, subjectivism, nonidentification, a tendency to martyrdom ... This will to annihilate oneself was actually a formidable pride: wanting to be nothing that was determined, wanting to assume no ego in others' eyes in order to be everything in one's own — a solitary subjectivity...<sup>48</sup>

But once Gorz assumes his being-for-others, recognizes himself in the image of the intellectual that his actions have created, accepts himself as the intellectual which he has made himself, he attains to selfhood. "I once thought life would become possible when I had said everything; and I now realize that life for me is to write."<sup>49</sup> But this no longer means writing to remain a solitary consciousness, writing to refuse the world; it means writing to change the world. Gorz has thus transcended himself at the end of *The Traitor* and emerges as the *intellectuel engagé*.

By the time Gorz had begun writing *The Traitor* in 1955 he had been settled in Paris for some seven years. (He confesses in the essay that in 1947 he regarded Paris as mecca and felt sure that if he could only have discussions with Sartre's circle at Parisian cafés and bars he would be at the heart of the world and truth.<sup>50</sup>) He had been able to obtain a working permit because he was fluent in several languages, and, through a Swiss contact, had secured employment from 1949 to 1950 with the World Citizens, a peace movement spawned by the American serviceman Gary Davis who camped out in front of the United Nations building in Paris and, in protest against Cold War sabre rattling, renounced his U.S. citizenship, proclaiming himself a citizen of the world. An illustrious group of intellectuals including André Breton and Albert Camus gave him public support. But Davis was not so well received by all leftist French intellectuals: in her memoirs Simone de Beauvoir remembered Sartre as having agreed with the Communists that Davis was "full of hot air," and she concurred, referring to Davis as "naive" and wondering how he could have been

taken so seriously.<sup>51</sup> Yet an international movement had grown up around what Gorz remembers as “His [Davis] simple and popular idea that to go to war you need people willing to fight and if, as he did, people proclaimed themselves to be citizens of the world, war would become impossible.”<sup>52</sup> And, in Gorz’s recollection, Sartre himself addressed a huge rally organized by the World Citizens at the largest stadium in Paris. Gorz’s own work for the organization was confined to clerical duties because, as he relates, his superiors in the organization’s French secretariat were engaged in a power struggle and wanted to keep Gorz (and Gary Davis himself for that matter) from taking any initiative.<sup>53</sup> The organization lost momentum and Gorz was dismissed after a year due to lack of funds. His work for the World Citizens was as close as Gorz came to anything resembling political activity in the immediate post-war period. As Gorz recalls, it was perilous at that time for foreigners (Gorz acquired French citizenship only in the late 50s) to be politically involved, especially on the left, lest they arouse the suspicions of the watchful inspectors of the Renseignements Generaux.<sup>54</sup>

By the mid 1950s Gorz was earning his living as a journalist. Ironically, he worked initially for a right-wing daily at the behest of Jean-Jacques Servan Schreiber, the director of the centre-left magazine *l'Express*, for which Gorz soon began to work on a regular basis. He makes contradictory claims about his journalism in *The Traitor* which are hard to reconcile, but are probably intended to help illuminate his personal and intellectual evolution. On the one hand, he tells us that journalism was an initiation into reality because it forced him to take an interest in current events.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, he describes his work as a journalist as another attempt to keep his contact with reality at a minimum: “...as a journalist he puts the world into files, builds up interminable dossiers on every subject, claims to exhaust and petrify a country’s reality by statistics...”<sup>56</sup> Whatever its existential significance, his meticulousness was a trait he was noted for, and his thorough attention to concrete issues connected with people’s everyday lives would prove to be one of Gorz’s great strengths — one which set him apart from many other left-wing French intellectuals.

It was at this time that Gorz began to realize his earlier dream (now placed in better perspective) of penetrating the charmed Sartrean circle. In 1955, almost a decade after their initial encounter, Gorz brought Sartre a manuscript of a work of philosophy. This was *Fondements pour une morale*, an attempt produced by Gorz over a ten-year period to deal with the problem of ethics that he found lacking in *Being and Nothingness*. The writing and significance (subjective and

objective) of this book is described at great length in *The Traitor*. Unlike *The Traitor*, however, which was published in book form in 1958, *Fondements pour une morale* was only published for the first time, in a reworked form, in 1977, 22 years after its completion.<sup>57</sup> Dealing at length with specialized philosophical problems and having remained largely unknown, *Fondements pour une morale* is beyond the purview of this thesis. It had no resonance in the development of New Left thought or political ecology. Moreover, in *The Traitor* Gorz himself characterized the writing of this protracted meditation as yet another in his series of strategies to refuse the world. Nevertheless a very brief description of the main problem addressed in the work is warranted since it exercised Gorz for a decade after the war. Gorz saw *The Traitor* itself as an application of the chronologically prior *Fondements*. And some of the issues it raises intersect with the themes of the autobiographical work, particularly the questions of rootlessness and the grounds for moral choice. As he puts it in the preface: "If by an accident of birth and history you belong to no people or group, and if no culture, ideology, class, or value strikes you as your own — can you prefer a given class, value or action over all others, and if so by virtue of what criteria?"<sup>58</sup> This, of course, was Gorz's view at the time of his own situation: an exile without a homeland, without a family, without a past or a present, excluded from all groups. Without an absolute hierarchy of values, he could see no basis on which to choose anything in particular from among the myriad possibilities open before him.

Neither Sartrean existentialism nor Marxism appeared to Gorz to offer an answer. Both philosophies were a species of moral relativism. Both eschewed any idea of transcendental truth or fixed human nature in which a standard of the good or at least the preferable could be rooted. The Sartrean existentialism of *Being and Nothingness* called for authenticity, but beyond that offered no means of deciding between alternatives. Provided they were made in good faith, all choices appeared equally valid. Even *Existentialism and Humanism* with its theory of universal responsibility left people with no means of adjudicating between better and worse courses of action. Even if we accept that when we make a choice we choose for all mankind, there is nothing to tell us which choice we ought to make. As for Marxism, historical necessity disposed of the moral problem altogether — if all outcomes are determined, inscribed in the logic of circumstance, then no course of action can be judged better or worse than another. Individuals and classes simply do

what necessity prescribes. And if every choice an individual makes is the fated result of his social conditioning then from a moral perspective it is all the same.<sup>59</sup>

Gorz's own effort to resolve the problem in *Fondements pour une morale* seems to move in a rather circular direction. On the one hand, he rejects the proposition that there are any transhistorical or absolute values. And he argues that an eschewal of the absolute character of values is only a threat to those who deceive themselves into believing that their values and purposes are possessed of validity beyond the limits of a given period or situation. In other words, the very idea of moral relativism poses a problem only for people who are "in bad faith." On the other hand, those who question and contest the absolute character of values, who recognize the contingency of those values (in the sense of having a validity that is limited to a given situation) are free to contest the very situation which sets the limit to those values ("I am also free to contest this contingency and to want absolutely a particular historical undertaking in the name of a freedom that is won through and derives its meaning from that undertaking").<sup>60</sup> Thus Gorz seems to be arguing that the very state of being aware of the relative nature of one's values affords immunity against their invalidation on the grounds of relativism.

Having reached this rather casuistic conclusion, Gorz's goal, as he describes his own endeavour, was to establish a hierarchy of values taking as his point of departure the ontology of *Being and Nothingness*. In an alienating universe, Gorz argues, everyone — even a prisoner serving a life sentence — will be confronted with three possible choices or attitudes: escape (an effort of liberation); escape into an imaginary world (the aesthetic attitude); and conforming completely to the existing order (the vital attitude). In the preface, he explains that this corresponds to his own experience as he attempted to illustrate in *The Traitor*. Indeed he regarded *The Traitor* as an application of the scheme he set up in *Fondements pour une morale*.

In the course of his exposition, Gorz presents his interpretation of Marx's understanding of the revolutionary vocation of the proletariat.<sup>61</sup> Here in fact is the source of his allusion in *The Traitor* to the error of a deterministic reading of the proletariat's historic mission that we noted earlier. Gorz explains that, for Marx, the very existence of the proletariat embodies the historical possibility of humanizing the world because the proletariat cannot free itself except by suppressing the totality of inhuman conditions. But he argues that in Marx's conception this objective possibility



did not assure a revolutionary outcome. The situation of the proletariat points in a certain direction but the proletariat has to grasp the meaning of the situation, and of this it can only be said that it is probable. Moreover, grasping the meaning of a situation does not mean simply recognizing that it exists and then giving oneself over to its immanent logic, but organizing the given towards new purposes. He notes that, for Marx, the transformation of a given condition cannot be dissociated from the conscious praxis that carries out that transformation. This is what distinguishes Marxism from reformism and authoritarianism. The world changes only through our changing it. Thus it is absurd to imagine a situation where we wait for a revolutionary situation to arise in order to act in it when it does. Action cannot not be subsequent to recognition. Consciousness emerges through successive actions and conquests and the *prise de conscience* by the proletariat is in itself a transformation of the situation; it is action. Gorz's reading here of the Marxian idea of the unity of theory and practice has important implications, as we shall see, for the political analysis and strategy he would go on to espouse and develop in the early part of the 1960s. For now, his understanding of the objective possibility inherent in the existence of the proletariat served as his point of departure for a lengthy meditation in his next book on the choice of the side of the proletariat in Marx as a moral imperative.

Gorz, for his own part, did not appear in *Fondements pour une morale* to ascribe to the proletariat an exclusive status as a carrier, by virtue of the objective meaning of its situation, of historical negativity. In an interesting passage he alludes to the intrinsically contestatory character of minority groups, and he seems to suggest that not belonging to a collectivity was a better guarantee of radical instincts than belonging to one. This may reveal the meaning of the cryptic passage in *The Traitor* in which Gorz referred to being on the side of "those who do not have enough and are not numerous enough to know they are a side."

There is no situation which compels the for-itself to choose its freedom; but there are situations which make this choice more likely because they render the flight of the self towards some "human nature" or preconceived humanity impossible, because they are unbearable, unacceptable, rent by contradictions which I must assume and which propel me to protest; this is in particular the case of the half-breed, the member of a racial or religious minority, the bastard, the excluded, the persecuted, the oppressed. Unable by virtue of his very condition to integrate into any existing community or to assume for himself the being which is conferred upon him by others, but banished from empirical humanity, deprived of his status as an

“individual endowed with rights” and expelled from “human nature,” he can assert his humanity only by transcending his unacceptable situation towards another, assuming himself as freedom: for him, man *remains to be invented* and his humanity resides solely in this undertaking. This is why man, or the possibility of humanity, is on the side of the oppressed...<sup>62</sup>

Interestingly, in the early 1960s, as we shall see, Gorz argued against the revolutionary potential of minorities and the marginalized in direct opposition to Herbert Marcuse, whose *One-Dimensional Man* identified those groups as potential revolutionary catalysts (although, contrary to popular belief, Marcuse did not see them as viable revolutionary subjects). But this passage may hold an important key to aspects of Gorz's continued belief in the possibilities of social transformation even as he ultimately bade farewell to the proletariat and the entire notion of the revolutionary subject. But that is to move ahead of the story.

While *Fondements pour une morale* was consigned to obscurity, both Sartre and de Beauvoir were enchanted by *The Traitor*. Excerpts from the book were in fact the first of Gorz's many contributions to *Les Temps Modernes*. The first excerpt was featured as the leading piece in the journal in 1957, and there was also an excerpt published in *l'Express* in April 1958.<sup>63</sup> When *The Traitor* was published in 1958 Sartre wrote a preface for it entitled “Of Rats and Men,” which stands as a notable literary work in its own right,<sup>64</sup> and was pivotal in placing André Gorz on the French intellectual map. “...I was an absolute nobody,” Gorz recalls, “before *The Traitor* — or rather Sartre's preface — made me exist as a member of the intelligentsia.”<sup>65</sup> The highly favourable reception the book received upon publication continues to find echoes in our own decade; for instance, in his portrait of French intellectual developments in the 1980s, German journalist Jürg Altwegg ranks *The Traitor* as one of the most important books of our century.<sup>66</sup>

### **Reinventing Marxism**

In the latter half of the 1950s Gorz ceased to devote himself to strictly philosophical work and began to fuse philosophy and politics in an attempt to elaborate his own understanding of the content of a humanist Marxism. Here again he followed the lead of his *maitre à penser*, who was deeply involved in producing his own mammoth synthesis of Marxism and existentialism, *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Although Gorz did not adopt Sartre's arcane terminology, many of

the problems he attempted to come to grips with in *La morale de l'histoire* are the same ones Sartre had been wrestling with for the last decade. *La morale de l'histoire* was written between 1956 and 1958, against the background of those crucibles in the history of left intellectuals internationally: the Soviet invasion of Hungary and the Twentieth Party Congress acknowledging the crimes of Stalinism — events that decimated parties throughout the West and deterred even the most enthusiastic fellow travellers. In France, moreover, this was a period of escalation in the war with Algeria. And, crowning all this, 1958 marked the advent in France of de Gaulle and the Fifth Republic. These developments, together with a close rereading of Marx's *oeuvre*, form the main context of Gorz's reflections.

Of course, his was only a single contribution to the tremendous reconstruction project being undertaken in France on the foundations of the Hegel reception and the discovery of the young Marx in the 1930s, a project which proceeded with renewed vigour in the 1950s in response to the landmark political events. The year 1956 has been seen to inaugurate the halcyon days of humanist Marxism in France,<sup>67</sup> and the decade established French dominance in Marxist theory throughout the West for some twenty years.<sup>68</sup> In George Ross's compendious description, there took place in the France of the 1950s an endeavour "...to revise reductionist, mechanical, and politically determined Cold War Marxism toward greater causal complexity and epistemological openness."<sup>69</sup> In opposition to a national Communist party more dogmatically Stalinist than most of its European counterparts, independent left intellectuals sought to free Marxism from the theoretical prison in which Stalinism had immured it, and to establish an independent left intellectuality grappling with the critical problems of the day without being bound by the deformations of the scientific official Marxism of the PCF and of party line on unfolding events.

There are many excellent comprehensive studies in English exploring the nature and history of the intellectual ferment within the French left from the Liberation through the 1950s and beyond, including (in English) Arthur Hirsh's *The French Left*, Mark Poster's *Existential Marxism in Postwar France* and Richard Gombin's *The Origins of Modern Leftism* (translated from the French), as well as Tony Judt's *Marxism and the French Left* written from a less sympathetic angle than the works previously cited. With deference to the limitations of space, it must suffice here to note some of the key groups, individuals and themes associated with this process of intellectual

reconstruction. Much of the work was carried out in a number of theoretical journals. Dominating the developments in many respects was the *Temps Modernes* circle. The journal began publishing in October 1945, with an issue that featured an introduction by Sartre laying out the intentions of the editorial committee and outlining his theory of committed literature (*littérature engagée*) as well as his ideas about individual freedom and universal responsibility. The aim of the journal, Sartre declared, was to take a stand on the social and political events of the day not from a partisan viewpoint but from the point of view of a conception of man that Sartre advisedly called “totalitarian,” or, less controversially, “synthetic.” He defined this conception in contrast with the bourgeois liberal analytical approach based on a view of humans as atoms,<sup>70</sup> which, he maintained, was blind to collective realities, class realities. *Les Temps Modernes*, Sartre promised, would represent a perspective that understood individuals in their social circumstances, without however, submerging the individual in his or her collective situation, be it class or nation. Sartre’s Introduction thus sounded the same problem, in somewhat more popular terms, to which, as we have seen, he later devoted himself in *Search for A Method*; and this question of how the autonomy of the person may be preserved within a socialist perspective constituted one of the focal points of the reworking of Marxism at the hands of French intellectuals in the 50s.

The first political director of *Les Temps Modernes* was Maurice Merleau-Ponty, at the time an independent Marxist philosopher with a sympathetic but critical attitude toward the PCF; however, the journal did not espouse an explicitly Marxist system of analysis in its first half decade of publication. And although it was anti-capitalist and broadly sided with the claims of the working class, it was openly critical of Stalin’s Russia and the PCF, while endeavouring at the same time to maintain a dialogue with the Party<sup>71</sup> (which, it should not be forgotten, rode the crest of its role in the Resistance to emerge as the major party of the left in the immediate aftermath of the war, reaching the peak of its popular support in the 1946 elections when roughly five million French citizens cast their ballots for the PCF, giving the Party 28.6 per cent of the vote). The journal reflected on the war and analyzed the political situation in post-war France; it discussed international affairs and, from the outset, took a strong position against colonialism, a stance which grew even more resolute in face of the Algerian crisis. (During the 50s, *Les Temps Modernes* came under severe pressure for its stand on Algeria; it was seized four times for exposing torture and

urging insubordination among army draftees; Sartre and de Beauvoir were personally threatened and attacked, even bodily, by the right.) The journal mobilized opinion against the Rassemblement pour la France (RPF), the Gaullist party founded in 1947, and tried to stake out a nonpartisan left line in an increasingly polarized political climate of Cold War.<sup>72</sup> Sartre and others helped to launch a short-lived organization, the Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire (RDR), regrouping non-communist leftists. The *Temps Modernes* served as a forum for this organization which initially advocated a revolutionary democracy and a federated and neutral Europe, seeking a “third way” between the American and Soviet superpowers. But the Cold War increasingly compelled French intellectuals to choose between solidarity with the socialist bloc or American-led anti-communism. It was during the period from 1952-56 that Sartre entered his fellow-travelling phase, precipitating a break with Merleau-Ponty whose own fellow-travelling phase came to an end just as Sartre entered his. Merleau-Ponty resigned from *Les Temps Modernes* in 1953. By then, the editorial committee included a number of people who were, like Sartre, communist sympathizers. With the invasion of Hungary in 1956, Sartre's compromising attitude changed; at the end of that year he wrote “Le fantôme de Staline” in *Les Temps Modernes* 129, 130 and 131 (published in book form in translation as *The Ghost of Stalin*) in which he harshly condemned the Soviet Communist Party for a congeries of crimes that he had spent the previous four years trying, to some degree, to rationalize. He also attacked the PCF as a Party that had lost touch with the masses and needed to embark on a thorough program of de-Stalinization, a goal he vowed that *Les Temps Modernes* would promote with determination.

Another leading forum for the revitalization of left thought and political analysis was *Arguments*. Founded in December 1956 under the stimulus of Edgar Morin and Kostas Axelos, the publication engaged, among other things, in a profound probing of the concept of alienation, until its demise in 1962, and attempted to delineate new forms of alienation that were emerging or could be detected in contemporary industrial society. The point has already been alluded to in the case of Sartre and Gorz, but it is also true for the French neo-Marxist reconstruction project generally that alienation was viewed as a problem that exceeded the analytical limits of Marxism; as Pierre Nora and Marcel Gauchet remark a little flippantly in their discussion of the concept of alienation as a keynote theme in contemporary French intellectual history, intellectuals determined that it was “not

merely the radical overturning of the relations of production that will liberate man from himself, it is the overturning of his relation to himself, to his essential being, to his gender, to his work, to his language and even to his unconscious.”<sup>73</sup> Certainly, for the theorists of *Arguments* alienation was not a function only of the labour process.

*Arguments* has been dubbed the revisionist current among the various intersecting intellectual circles in view of the fact that many of its exponents were ex-PCF members, including, unofficially, Henri Lefebvre. Most of the contributors were young and without academic affiliations, and almost all went on to win fame as intellectuals (for example Roland Barthes, Pierre Fougeyrollas). Gil Delannoi underscores the sense shared by the *Arguments* group of a possible real socialism fuelled by the appearance of workers' councils in the Polish uprising of June 1956.<sup>74</sup> Rejecting all dogma and sectarianism, *Arguments* created, in Delannoi's description, a space for all manner of discussion governed by an awareness of a common set of problems born of a new historical context and a commitment to developing Marx's method while rejecting a Marxist system. Contributors drew on and discussed the writings of the young Marx, and introduced the work of the Frankfurt School, as well as other neo-Marxist thinkers such as Lukács to a French audience. Delannoi notes that they devoted particular attention to the nature of revolution and concluded that radical rupture was not possible, that revolution could not be conceptualized as a discontinuity with what went before; human nature, however malleable and indeterminate, cannot be changed in a day.

But the journal did not engage solely in esoteric philosophic debates; it ruminated on the problems of the day and their implications for social transformation: contributors tried to come to grips with Stalinism, for example, and with the nature and future of Gaullism, a subject treated at length by Edgar Morin, for example, in the June 1958 issue.<sup>75</sup> And *Arguments* helped to initiate one of the most fecund themes of 60s radicalism — the critique of the consumer society — with the publication in 1961 of “Les difficultés du bien-être.”<sup>76</sup> The entire issue of the journal was devoted to an exploration and debate by more than a dozen contributors on the nature of the welfare state, and the possible problems associated with the expansion of a relatively high level of material comfort and security. Some contributors dismissed the entire interrogation as the luxury of comfortable intellectuals who overlooked the fact that for most of the world's population material well-being remained nothing more than a remote fantasy; others endeavoured to distinguish

between well-being (*bien-être*) and happiness (*bonheur*), and to formulate a critique of contemporary industrial society as oriented exclusively towards the stimulation and satisfaction of one type of human need — material needs — to the exclusion of all others. As interesting as the substance of the contributions was, what is significant from our perspective is the inauguration of a meditation on the welfare state and the consequences of a rising standard of living for a growing part of the population.

A third major forum of ideas and exchange was the left Catholic monthly *Esprit*, established in 1932.<sup>77</sup> The journal's intellectual roots lay in the personalist philosophy of its founder, Emmanuel Mounier. *Temps Modernes* political director Merleau-Ponty had also belonged to the *Esprit* group before the war. The publication was sympathetic to communism during and after the war, subscribed to the belief in the proletariat as the revolutionary subject, and was highly critical of liberalism as the expression of an atomistic individualism devoid of concern for spiritual ends. After the Liberation, it turned its attention to the writings of the young Marx, thus spurring and partaking in the forging of a humanist Marxism in France. It also explored anarchist ideas, particularly the theories of Proudhon. In 1950 Jean-Marie Domenach took over the direction of the journal, remaining in that position until 1971. He was concerned with the changes wrought by neo-capitalism, and reached the conclusion that the question of power had begun to take precedence over the problem of property.<sup>78</sup>

Even the most cursory overview of the journal milieu in which the intellectual reconstruction of left theory was carried out cannot omit the seminal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group formed in 1946 by Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis (the latter who initially wrote under various pseudonyms such as P. Chaulieu). In 1949 the two intellectuals began publishing a journal which was one of the principal theoretical sources of the *gauchiste* current of the French New Left<sup>79</sup>. Under the direction of ex-Trotskyists who viewed the USSR as a form of bureaucratic conservatism (contrary to Trotsky's own analysis of the Soviet Union as a degenerate workers' State), the journal concentrated from its inception on the phenomenon of bureaucracy in both Soviet and western capitalist societies. The journal's participants developed the thesis that in both self-proclaimed socialist and capitalist societies the bureaucracy had emerged as a new ruling class, replacing the bourgeoisie. However, contrary to the thesis of the managerial revolution associated

with James Burnham, *Socialisme ou Barbarie* did not accept the view that bureaucracy was necessary in light of the technical requirements of an advanced system of production.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, they contended that the historical class contradiction of capitalist society had been superseded by a division between rulers and ruled. Again, for *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, property had become less significant for a left analysis of contemporary capitalism than power and control, the divisions between rulers and ruled — a conclusion in support of which they pointed to the non-capitalist USSR, where workers, although legally property owners, were divested of power by the *nomenklatura*. For *Socialisme ou Barbarie* private property could even be an obstacle to bureaucratic control; and Marxism itself, to the extent that Marxism enjoined the expropriation of the expropriators, could do service as the philosophy of a new class of oppressors.<sup>81</sup> (It is largely due to this set of ideas that Tony Judt sees in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* the real roots of the New Left, especially insofar as Castoriadis and company shifted attention from the Marxian stress on class divisions and the primacy of production relations to the hierarchic bureaucratic organization of society.<sup>82</sup>) By the 1960s, Castoriadis came to reject Marxism altogether as contaminated by a bourgeois and authoritarian worldview and inadequate to the task of analyzing contemporary society.

*Socialisme ou Barbarie* rejected the delegation of power as inexorably producing new instruments of exploitation, and conceived revolution as a process, an unfolding experience in and through which the working class attained consciousness of its capacities and vocation, rather than a moment of political victory. Workers were bound to revolt because the modern system of production was growing ever more complex and demanded creativity and initiative on their part.<sup>83</sup> Reviling vanguardism and substitutionism, *Socialisme ou Barbarie* explicitly appealed to syndicalist traditions of the French working class.<sup>84</sup> For the journal's contributors, only the working class had the collective know-how and experience to organize production from the ground up, and revolution would entail developing consciousness of its ability to run society as a whole.<sup>85</sup>

During the 1950s until it folded in 1965, *Socialisme ou Barbarie* published analyses of the process of bureaucratic rationalization in modern societies and propounded a vision of an alternative to bureaucratic systems in the form of a self-managed society based on spontaneously organized workers' councils. Drawing on the antecedents of council communism and Italian council



movements, as well as various anarchist movements, this current adumbrated the theme of *autogestion*, which was to have an illustrious future in France in the next two decades, and to which we will return.

In the early 50s, the members of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* were at odds with other segments of the French New Left over the former's rigid anticommunism; in 1952 an open and bitter controversy arose between Lefort and Sartre over Sartre's announcement of a fellow-travelling position in "Les Communistes et la Paix," a series of three articles published in *Les Temps Modernes* beginning in July 1952. However, the group gained influence after 1956 in the wake of disillusionment with the USSR. *Arguments'* Edgar Morin completed his process of disillusionment with the USSR by reading analyses of Soviet bureaucracy in *Socialisme ou Barbarie*<sup>86</sup>, although he remained critical, among other things, of the group's blanket use of a monolithic concept of bureaucracy.<sup>87</sup> And in 1956 he travelled to Poland together with Claude Lefort to learn first hand of the experience of workers councils.

There were, of course, many deep disagreements both within and between the groups of social theorists associated with the various journals. As small a group as *Socialisme ou Barbarie* was (it never exceeded a few hundred members), it was rent by sectarianism and began to self destruct from internal divisions.<sup>88</sup> Gorz recalls that in the early 60s relations between Sartre and some of the intellectuals involved in the other journals were so strained that exchanges were impossible.<sup>89</sup> Yet there were also many common threads, as Gorz attests when he remarks that, intellectually one "could feel more or less at home" with all four journals.<sup>90</sup>

What was the set of problems common to the participants in the renewal of left thought in the 1950s?<sup>91</sup> The journals were united in their concern to analyze the nature of the new capitalism and in their detection of new forms of alienation in addition to the alienated labour fundamental to exploitive capitalist relations. And they sought to fashion new tools apposite to that analysis — tools more refined than the dogmatic and mechanistic formulae applied by Stalinist parties. They were united in their rejection of capitalism as a social system that could assure the well-being, both material and spiritual, of the masses of people, and in their belief in the necessity of radical change, in the transformation of existence, in the de-alienation of everyday life and not only the transformation of property relations. Richard Gombin's observation about the *gauchiste* current —

that through it “the front of the revolutionary struggle has ... become greatly extended: the revolutionary process has been drawn out in space and in time”<sup>92</sup> — can be affirmed of the other groups too. And they shared the conviction that in some form and in some way the working class had necessarily to be the primary agent of such change. But they also sought to probe the nature of the contemporary working class, to examine the idea and shape of revolutionary change, to question the nature and role of the revolutionary party. They were also concerned to return the individual to left thought and to resituate the individual within a revitalized Marxist analysis. And, in relation to immediate political issues, they were united, for instance, in their revulsion against colonialism and in their perception of Gaullism as a troubling and even dangerous authoritarianism. The contributors to these journals engaged in an ongoing debate that opened many new avenues for left social and political thought, often informed by an open-ended Marxist perspective. They created a space beyond the rigidities of the PCF line for analyzing the changing economic, social and political conditions of post-war France and of rethinking the socialist project in light of those changed conditions.

### *Salut au prolétariat*

Gorz's *Morale de l'histoire* partakes of this general movement to reformulate left theory, although it rarely explicitly refers to the contemporary debates. While the book forms a reasonably coherent whole in its arguments, *La morale de l'histoire* reads like a collection of essays, prefiguring the form most of Gorz's future work would take. Throughout his life, Gorz appears to have been most at ease with the political and journalistic essay.<sup>93</sup> His books are, in the main, collections of essays, mostly drawn from his extensive journalistic contributions and from his articles in scholarly journals. And the frequent recombination and republication of his essays in different forms actually makes the substantial corpus of Gorz's published work appear even larger than it is.

In the essays that make up *La morale*, Gorz sought to reinvigorate Marxism, especially by restoring a conception of agency that had been obscured by the mechanistic materialism of the Stalinist party. The elaboration of a Marxist humanism to supplant the sclerotic and reductionist Marxism that dominated most western communist parties was also at the heart of the New Left's renewal of Marxism internationally.

One essential task was to ground the belief in socialism in something other than historical necessity, and, without espousing an idealist voluntarism, to reinsert an affirmation of human freedom into Marxism. In short, the revisionists sought to restore the dialectic of subject and object at the heart of Marx's admittedly ambiguous pronouncements about humans as the makers of their own history. Sartre stated the problem succinctly in *Search for a Method*: "How are we to understand that man makes history if at the same time it is History which makes him?"<sup>94</sup> The Communists, in their understanding of historical necessity, reduced the human agent to a machine entirely determined by economic conditions; "...man is a passive product, a sum of conditioned reflexes;"<sup>95</sup> in this view, history progresses according to laws that operate independently of human consciousness.

This problem was Gorz's starting point in *La morale de l'histoire*. He was troubled by the moral neutrality of such determinism, the implication that in history there is no better or worse outcome, only that which must come about on the basis of evolving material conditions. This allows neither for individual nor collective moral choice and obviates the possibility of critical judgement. Gorz's immediate motivation was a desire to contest the political line of the Communist Party and its fellow-travellers to the effect that Khrushchev had no choice but to invade Hungary in 1956.<sup>96</sup> More broadly, he sought to nuance the idea that, given the peculiar circumstances of backwardness and isolation besetting the Soviet Union in the post-revolutionary period, Stalinism itself was an historical necessity.<sup>97</sup> And finally, in challenging a strict historical determinism he wanted to make the point that intellectuals who take up the cause of the working class are making an ethical choice, and not simply throwing in their cards with the social class historically destined to victory.

Gorz thus endeavoured to set Marx's theory of socialism as the telos of history and the proletariat as the revolutionary subject on a new moral and philosophical foundation. In so doing, he attempted to steer a course between the Scylla of historical necessity, in the sense of an irresistible logic (the "iron rails" of history), and the Charybdis of viewing the course of history as contingency, as completely undecidable and subject to revolutionary voluntarism. History, Gorz asserted, sets limits to both individual and collective possibilities; as agents our scope of action is circumscribed, however, the "constraints of necessity are never so unbending as to preclude the operation of human initiative."<sup>98</sup> Gorz's resolution of the problem was similar to Sartre's conclusion

that humans determine themselves within their determinations. Reading the third thesis on Feuerbach — “...circumstances are changed by men and ... the educator must himself be educated” — as an affirmation of the irreducibility of human praxis, Sartre went on to try to demonstrate how man can be both the product of his own product and a historical agent.<sup>99</sup> In agreement with this, Gorz affirmed that there remains in every set of circumstances, every historical situation, a modicum of uncertainty and hence a degree of latitude. “[E]ven in the most strictly conditioned historical actions,” Gorz maintained, “there is always a margin of manoeuvre, contingency, risk...”<sup>100</sup> According to Gorz, this was also Marx’s conviction, at least implicitly, insofar as he presented communism as both the direction in which the internal development of capitalism was leading *and* as a voluntary project to create a human world,<sup>101</sup> “a world that, because it will be made consciously by and for men, will let them fashion themselves and recognize themselves as men — that is, as sovereign agents — by virtue of their own activity.”<sup>102</sup> Gorz added that it was Lenin who underscored this ambiguity in Marx concerning the question of necessity and voluntarism in his insistence that the logic of history alone could not be relied upon to impart theoretical consciousness to the proletariat.

Given the constraints of space, as well as the intricate, sometimes opaque, character of the arguments Gorz presented, we will confine ourselves here to a brief discussion of the way in which Gorz approached the conception of the proletariat as the agent of social transformation — the problem of the revolutionary subject that would continue to exercise him throughout his career. He developed this subject most fully in the book’s title essay, “La morale de l’histoire.”<sup>103</sup> In it, Gorz returned to an argument he raised in *Fondements pour une morale*: even if the victory of the proletariat is inscribed in some inexorable logic of material conditions, as mechanical Marxism holds, this says nothing about the desirability of that victory. Simply because history is tending in a certain direction does not mean that this is the direction in which we should wish it to move. And if the working class is the class destined to triumph in the class struggle, this does not mean that it has any particular merit or that we ought to take its part. But Marx did not side with the proletariat, Gorz drily observed, because he wanted to put his money on a winning horse. Nor was the basis of his choice arbitrary, an expression of sympathy for privation and the historical underdog; in choosing the side of the proletariat, Marx did not simply express a preferential option for the poor.

He espoused the struggle of the proletariat because he believed its claims and goals to be more universally compelling than those of other classes: the content of its struggle was preferable to the content of the praxis of other classes insofar as it coincided with the actualization of humanity.

Here Gorz's argument began to differ rather markedly from his position in *Fondements*, in that he set out to justify Marxism's positing of the privileged, even exclusive, vanguard role of the proletariat in bringing about revolutionary change. And he wanted to do so on particular moral grounds. How did he proceed? By fleshing out the philosophy of freedom that he discerned at the heart of Marxism but which had been obscured by Stalinist "diamat." Gorz argued that, for Marx, the working class was possessed of a moral imperative superior to that of other classes. There is, of course, much in Marx's earlier writings to substantiate such a reading. In his Introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, published in 1844, Marx wrote of man as being the supreme being for man and mentioned the "categorical imperative to overthrow all relations in which man is debased, enslaved, forsaken and despicable."<sup>104</sup> And in his earliest invocation of the proletariat as the revolutionary subject, Marx announced in a well-known passage that the proletariat has a universal character because its sufferings are universal and that it claims no particular right because the wrong committed against it is not a particular wrong but wrong as such.<sup>105</sup> But Gorz himself pursued a somewhat different tack.

He noted that, for Marx, what distinguished the proletariat was that it was impelled to action not by any particular or general interests, but by the defense of its own life. Marx was not referring here to poverty, Gorz maintained, but to the particular condition of the proletariat which entailed being deprived of the very means of securing one's subsistence and owning nothing but one's labour power — itself reduced to an abstract thing by machines, by the wage system and by the alien (to the worker) purposes to which his labour power is put by those who command it. Workers therefore have no interests, Gorz continued; they have nothing other than their human needs. Wage work is not their interest; it is a negation of their work and their being. It is the reification of the worker as the property of others. The real interest of the worker is *not to be a worker*. The demands made by the proletariat in its name are, by their very nature, demands in the name of the authentic being of man, that is freedom. In Marxist theory, the working class, Gorz concluded, is destined for autonomy. The proletariat's need to revolt is bound up with the need to be

free. How does this follow? Gorz's explanation is not altogether luculent. Quoting a passage from Marx and Engels' *The Holy Family* about how the proletariat is compelled to revolt by necessity against intolerable conditions of existence, Gorz interpreted "necessity" in the context to mean something more than material necessity: he saw it as the need to reject being reduced to an object. "The 'necessity' that 'compels' proletarians to revolt," he wrote, "is not, however, an external necessity, a force of circumstance; it is an imperative peculiar to human existence to revolt against the material status made of it in the world of things."<sup>106</sup> Yet proletarians cannot prove they have a physical need to revolt because to do so they would have to die. And if revolt were an actual physical need workers would already be dead. Therefore, Gorz concludes, revolt is not a physical need, a natural reflex or survival instinct, but a subjective autonomous need.

Here Gorz may well have been asking Marx's conception of the necessity of proletarian revolt to carry a heavier interpretive load than it can bear. Need, in Gorz's reading, is an inseparable attribute of being without which a being ceases to be. It is intrinsic and proper to that being in a way that shelters it from any mediating influence through the material world. Having only needs, the proletariat sets out to conquer the conditions of possibility of its own existence, and since there is no authentic existence without freedom (self-determination), the necessity to live and to be free therefore fuse together into the necessity for struggle. (Later on in the book Gorz offered in further support of his interpretation a fairly arcane disquisition on the understanding of need in Marxist theory as negativity and thus an inherent critique of society.<sup>107</sup> His arguments parallel the Sartrean concept of need as going beyond a situation<sup>108</sup> but remain in rather tenuous relation to anything Marx put forward explicitly). Nevertheless it was essentially on this basis that Gorz grounded the moral superiority of the proletarian struggle in Marxist theory; he conceived it as the quintessential expression of the human imperative to reconquer its freedom and thereby its humanity. In the most lucid formulation of the idea he was attempting to elaborate, Gorz affirmed in a slightly different vein, "[i]t [the proletariat] cannot assert that its destitution has become unbearable without at the same time asserting that its social conditions, that this society, are unbearable."<sup>109</sup> And, he continued, "[i]t cannot demand that a need be met without at the same time assuming itself as a free subject."<sup>110</sup> For the proletariat it is a vital necessity to assume its freedom and thus in this social class alone practical necessity coincides with a moral imperative.

However, Gorz cautioned, the proletariat is not necessarily aware of itself as the incarnation of humanity's destiny to autonomy, and this is why workers did not immediately revolt in face of terrible conditions. To revolt, Gorz argued, workers must become conscious of themselves as free agents, but to become conscious of themselves a free agents they must revolt, and this is a vicious circle which can only be broken by agitators who spur workers to action. Even the smallest refusal of indignity will cultivate the consciousness of radical freedom and the potential for a radical revolt. (Gorz provided no concrete historical material here, and it remains unclear whether he was referring to the past or the present, and what period or country he had in mind if any. Apart from a brief discussion of black workers in South Africa intended to illustrate how a boycott organized to protest bus fare hikes led to more generalized awareness of the sum total of injustice, the discussion takes place in the abstract and its significance is therefore questionable). However, Gorz's main and incontrovertible point is that proletarian revolution is not inevitable. Just like freedom itself in Sartre's conception, the revolutionary negation embodied by the proletariat can be hidden and denied. The proletariat, Gorz observed, can succumb to diversionist mystification and the illusions of class collaboration. Even in a context of capitalist crisis, revolt can fail to occur in the absence of consciousness, political education, organization...

Based on these arguments, Gorz defined socialism — the appropriation of the productive forces by the working class — as an “elective necessity” (*nécessité facultative*).<sup>111</sup> Ultimately, socialism is the objective content of even the most modest worker demands because, Gorz insisted, those demands can never be met within the framework of the existing society, but only through a radical transformation of society. It is in this sense that socialism is an historical necessity. But it is not an ineluctable outcome; it is a task, a project that can only be accomplished by a systematic effort.

Rather than continue to examine Gorz's meditations, what is interesting to consider here are his motives. The problems that Gorz was really trying to come to grips with by laying these foundations are, first, why intellectuals should side with the working class, and second, what possible reasons there might be for proletarian struggle in his own time, when material necessity had clearly ceased to be the driving force for workers that it had been in Marx's era.

In the first case, Gorz was able to conclude on the basis of his arguments that solidarity with the working class was for Marx, and remained for intellectuals, an ethical choice. And the basis for this choice was not the transhistorical criteria of absolute principles or values. (As we saw in *Fondements*, Gorz rejected moralism or any a priori determining of prescriptive values.) Rather, the validity of supporting the working class resided in praxis, in its ongoing struggle to humanize its condition, which embodies the struggle for the total emancipation of man.

The second question required some additional argumentation, and different essays in *La morale de l'histoire* reveal a degree of vacillation in Gorz's resolution. It is only late in the book that Gorz finally cautioned his readers about what they may have already suspected: that all his earlier arguments about the vital necessity of proletarian revolt referred to the proletariat of the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>112</sup> While in Marx's day, the struggle for basic necessities had opened up perspectives of revolutionary change because the mere affirmation of the right to live was a revolutionary negation of the existing order, the same could not be said in the 1950s. Thus, Gorz went on to ask, from where might the revolutionary impetus spring today, when the attenuation of the cyclical crises of capitalism has given rise to improved conditions for the working class and revolution has ceased to be a life and death question? What can be the basis for the necessity of revolution? Or as Michael Harrington so elegantly phrased the question, "Where...is there a substitute for the creativity of misery?"<sup>113</sup> This was the key question for Gorz — one that would continue to animate his work for the next three decades.

In reflecting on this problem in one section of the book, the essay entitled "Et Nous?,"<sup>114</sup> Gorz acknowledged that in advanced capitalist countries class consciousness had been eclipsed for a number of reasons. First, he argued, the primary example of socialism in practice was perceived by the working classes of the developed world as a method of economic development, of industrialization, serving the particular national interest of the Soviet Union. (Gorz refrained from making the more obvious point that Soviet socialism as the authoritarian socialism of penury was simply singularly unappealing as a political alternative). The USSR was also seen as a power that was succeeding in protecting certain developing countries from capitalist exploitation. As such, it was regarded by all classes as an impediment to the imperialist gains of the advanced capitalist world from which the working classes in the advanced countries also profited. (Gorz made an



exception in the case of France and Italy which, he pointed out, did not reap direct material benefits from imperialist domination; he cited this as the reason that a substantial communist workers movement persisted in these countries, although it too had ceased to be revolutionary). Thus Gorz advanced a familiar argument about the temporary integration of the proletariat on the basis of its collusion with imperialism, which predisposed it to regard communism as a threat. This is essentially Lenin's theory of the labour aristocracy writ large. In *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin had asserted that capitalists used a portion of the superprofits obtained from imperialism to bribe labour leaders and the stratum of bourgeoisified workers,<sup>115</sup> and he remarked on the tendency of imperialism in Great Britain to divide the workers, to encourage opportunism among them, and to cause temporary decay in the working class movement.<sup>116</sup> The theory that the proletariat of industrially dominant countries profited from hyper-exploitation of the work force in underdeveloped regions of the globe had antecedents dating back to Engels' writings about colonialism in the 1870s and 1880s. And, looking forward, it would be taken up widely by third worldists (including Sartre) in the 1960s, at which time Gorz would dispute it, as we shall see in the next chapter.

It is thus all the more intriguing that at one point in *La morale* Gorz clearly stated: "For the time being, with the advent of a global and no longer merely a national division of labour, class struggle in capitalist society has been replaced, as a motor of History, by the conflict between privileged peoples and 'proletarian peoples.'"<sup>117</sup> But in Gorz's estimation this was a temporary state of affairs. He expressed confidence in the success of colonial revolutions and the ability of the decolonized countries, with the assistance of the USSR and China, to lift the colonialist mortgage. Once the working class of the North no longer benefited from imperialist exploitation, then the class struggle would be reactivated. The revival of radicalism would be helped along, Gorz expected, by the de-Stalinization of the USSR, which might make even Soviet socialism appear as less threatening to workers particularly in the anglo-saxon world.<sup>118</sup>

While this line of argument clearly made the revolutionary impulse conditional, if not upon the creativity of misery then at least upon the creativity of relative privation, Gorz also advanced another, somewhat contradictory theory in *La morale*, in which the revolutionary quest is not at all contingent on the material privations of the contemporary western working classes, but, on the

contrary, is given new impetus by their very enrichment. Here Gorz drew on the argument he had made in the essay “La morale de l'histoire” regarding the moral imperative at the centre of the struggle of the proletariat rooted in the coincidence between the proletarian struggle as the need to live and the need for freedom and autonomy. Invoking this point, he went on to assert that if the urgency of the sheer need to survive has been muted, the meaning of that need, the need to be human, which is inseparable from the need for freedom, remains pressing. Indeed, the removal of the constraint of physiological misery, Gorz argued, reveals the necessity of communism for what it always was: the need for freedom to refuse being reduced to an object, to combat alienation.<sup>119</sup>

Alienation, it must be emphasized, was a crucial category for Gorz, and he spent the better part of *La morale* expounding upon his conception of alienation from an existential Marxist perspective. A serious discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but a short digression is essential to delineate his approach to the question. As previously noted, Gorz disagreed with Marxism that social and economic conditions exhaust the question of alienation and sought a broader basis than that of alienated labour for the phenomenon of alienation. In *La morale* Gorz wedded the Sartrean and Marxist theories of alienation. Very briefly, Gorz's reading of Marx's theory of alienated labour was that alienation obtains when production, the activity of transforming the given, is subjugated by the result of what it produces, when the product of labour turns against the activity that produced it and makes the activity appear as the opposite of what it is: as servitude, and as a thing, a product of its product.<sup>120</sup> To describe alienation as a “condition” was misplaced, for Gorz, given that the being of man is doing — negating inorganic matter and transforming it in accordance with chosen purposes; alienation is not a state, therefore; it is activity itself turned into its opposite, become estranged. Man has no essence other than activity, thus in alienation it is his very activity that becomes frozen.<sup>121</sup> In Sartrean terms, it is the omnipresent effect of the practico-inert; each individual's own project turns against him as an enemy power. It is not that we *are* alienated, but rather that we produce our alienation through our own activity.

Clearly, for Gorz, as for Sartre, alienation was a far more psychological and encompassing problem than the alienation of labour as explicated by Marx. And this is consonant with the approach adopted by French neo-Marxist intellectuals in the 50s and 60s, and with the stretching of the concept by the New Left generally to refer to estrangement and thingification. As Mark Poster

has observed, Sartre shifted the locus of the concept of alienation away from capitalist exploitation and expanded its domain to encompass all the effects of the practico-inert.<sup>122</sup> And Arthur Hirsh goes further, maintaining that for Sartre “alienation is prior to and more fundamental than exploitation as a source of human suffering.”<sup>123</sup>

Gorz used the metaphor of connect-the-dot drawings to illustrate the production of alienation: one uses one's mental powers and energy to create something that could not have been any different because it was there from the start. One's own freedom thus produces someone else's drawing.<sup>124</sup> Alienation is experienced by individuals as their powerlessness to achieve their own purposes, but, for Gorz, we are all complicit in our own alienation, beginning in childhood when we learn to play roles to meet adult expectations. Gorz assimilated the Marxist theory of alienated labour into this broader conception: what is produced turns back upon the manner and activity of producing it. Whether one is a journalist or an engineer, Gorz maintained, one finds oneself before the agency of tools that demand one's action and which do not permit of a great variety of results. And, undoubtedly with a touch of bitterness towards his own livelihood, Gorz added that as a journalist, “you write the articles that are expected of you.”<sup>125</sup> Just as in the case of workers on an assembly line, the product seems to make use of the producer in order to have itself produced by him. Alienation is the antithesis of self-determination, of free praxis.

Alienation provided Gorz with the answer to the waning revolutionary drive of the working classes. Even when communism ceases to be a vital necessity, he asserted, it remains the key to overcoming alienation, the necessary road to the emancipation of humanity, and this desire is experienced most intensely, at least potentially, by that social class which experiences alienation in its most extreme form, the working class.<sup>126</sup> It is this argument, rather than the notion of the temporary integration of a western proletariat seduced by the spoils of imperialism, that, as we shall see, Gorz would seek to develop in his next and far more widely read contribution to New Left theory, *Stratégie ouvrière et néo-capitalisme*. The tenor of the argument resonated with that dimension of New Left thinking which, in a context of affluence and working class apathy, shifted the focus of radical politics from the quantitative to the qualitative, from misery and privation in a material sense to the powerlessness to shape one's world on the micro or macro-scale.

*La morale de l'histoire* constituted Gorz's first contribution to a rethinking of Marxism that was critical to the genesis of an independent left intellectuality in France, outside and against the confines of the mechanical Marxism of the PCF, that would provide inspiration to the new student left and the revolt of May '68. Although it was undeniably a challenge to orthodox Marxism it retained many traditional Marxist ideas — the proletariat as the privileged revolutionary subject; socialism, in the form of the appropriation by the proletariat of the productive forces, as the path to the realization of human freedom — ideas which Gorz would eventually question in turn.

Strangely, no part of *La morale de l'histoire* was excerpted in *Les Temps Modernes*. However it was a year after the book's publication that Gorz began to contribute regularly to *Les Temps Modernes*, and it was at the beginning of 1961 that his name appeared for the first time on the masthead as a member of the editorial committee. He opened a new decade as part of “the family,” the inner circle of people close to Sartre and de Beauvoir.

As this new decade dawned, the “*trente glorieuses*”<sup>127</sup> were earning their epitaph. In the France of the new born Fifth Republic economic planning was the *mot d'ordre* — the outcome of the marriage between Gaullism, armed with the expanded presidential powers of the 1958 constitution, and champions of modernization in industry and the State. The technocratic stimulus to economic modernization, which in fact antedated the Fifth Republic, triumphed over the inertia and resistance of much of France's own capitalist class, and the country was on its way to becoming the world's fifth industrial power. In an economic overview of the boom years, Richard Kuisel provides an enumeration of the macroeconomic indicators of growth and a portrait of the epoch-making changes:<sup>128</sup> between 1950 and 1974 GDP grew annually at a rate of 5.2 per cent; labour productivity rose at an annual rate of 5 per cent; investment levels outstripped those of most other industrialized nations. Profound structural changes were occurring: shifts took place in the industrial base, including the decline of traditional sectors such as mining, metallurgy, textiles, clothing and leather, and the rise of energy, building, public works and consumption industries. The growth of the tertiary sector outstripped that of industry altogether; and as employment on the land declined dramatically, service sector employment took off. The first half of the 60s saw virtually full employment and a rapidly growing demand for consumer goods such as automobiles and television

sets. Spending on social programs doubled from 1960-1965 (to double again by 1969!).<sup>129</sup> And, putting an end to traditional protectionism, France began “going global” via the common market.

Of course there were areas of persistent “backwardness.” While a merger movement increased industrial concentration — making the term oligopoly or monopoly capitalism a viable descriptor — France lagged behind other European countries in this respect. And institutional reform trailed far behind economic modernization: the university system for example remained archaic (and, combined with an exploding student population, this would prove an undisputed factor in precipitating the events of May '68). The traditional petty bourgeoisie in France also survived longer than its counterparts in other industrialized nations. But growth and modernization were by far the dominant forces and it is widely agreed that by the mid 60s they formed the basis of a national consensus in which the traditional left, the PCF and the SFIO (Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière), participated.

In this context, the ideology of the PCF was fast becoming window-dressing concealing a basic acquiescence to the general terms of the capitalist order and an aspiration to assist in rendering it more humane by participating in government. In the early 60s, however, the PCF was not quite so docile with respect to the new order, at least in its discourse, as it would become, especially with the passing in 1964 of Party chief Maurice Thorez, protégé and intimate of Joseph Stalin. On the other hand, the Party declined to tackle the task of adapting Marxist analysis in an effort to make sense of the new developments and their real implications for any notion of revolution or socialism and the means to achieve them. The responses offered by the PCF to the new era of detente and welfare capitalism — essentially warmed over popular frontism — were obviously unsuitable. More urgently than ever the times called for a politico-intellectual alternative, a new left. Some of the groundwork had already been laid just after the war with the Hegel renaissance, the reception of Marx's early writings, and, as discussed above, with the explorations and debates in the various journals. But as Arthur Hirsh has artfully argued, New Left theory came into its own with the convergence in the 1960s of the existentialist, revisionist and *gauchiste* currents, which created the foundations for an understanding of and response to the problems particular to advanced industrial society. The specific term *nouvelle gauche* began to be used circa 1960 in France to refer to the work of international theoretical renovation underway.<sup>130</sup> And while it has been argued that

structuralism took the ascendance in the intellectual universe of France in the 1960s, it is clear that Marxism, especially Marxist humanism, continued to exercise tremendous influence throughout the decade.<sup>131</sup>

Most importantly, by the 1960s there was a significant constituency for the new ideas. The last years of the Algerian war witnessed a radicalization of the intellectuals and especially students. As one contemporary recalls, "The Algerian war opened the eyes of this whole generation, and was largely responsible for moulding it..."<sup>132</sup> It led to a disaffection from the SFIO, seen to be deeply implicated in colonial wars, as well as from the PCF, whose political capital had already been severely depleted by the events of 1956 and whose weak stand on Algeria further undermined the Party's credibility.<sup>133</sup> Opposition to the Algerian war stimulated mass student demonstrations organized by the UNEF (*Union nationale des étudiants de France*), in response to which the State revoked the organization's subsidy in 1962. One historian of the French student left, Hervé Hamon, has described the UNEF in this period as "a veritable youth party," representing half the student body. He maintains that the demonstration concerning Algeria organized by the UNEF on October 27, 1960, was the precursor of the events of May '68 insofar as it showed that it was possible to take action on the left independent of or even in opposition to the PCF.<sup>134</sup> In the case of the PCF itself, the Algerian question triggered various (vain) attempts at reform from within, initiated in the main by the PCF student organization, the UEC (*Union des étudiants communistes*). As George Ross notes, in its desire to protect de Gaulle and ensure the prospects of a postwar left alliance, and in its anxiety about left mobilizations directed from outside the Party, the PCF sought to rein in radical opposition to the Algerian war, among other means by denigrating UNEF and repressing any internal ferment around the Algerian question. This had a profound effect on a generation of leftist students; the PCF's heavy-handed tactics created "a generation of very able ex-Communist young intellectuals..."<sup>135</sup> Likewise, Pascal Ory and Jean Francois Sirinelli point to the crystallization of a new political generation among those born in the 1930s.<sup>136</sup> And Richard Johnson notes: "The Algerian crisis created a new pattern of opposition in French politics. The student and intellectual left emerged as an independent force — one that insisted on distinguishing itself from all established political parties including the Communists."<sup>137</sup> By 1965, moreover, the Vietnam war would also contribute to galvanizing protest and critical reflection among students and intellectuals.

Here then was a genuine audience for fresh approaches from the left to the new realities of contemporary capitalist society, and for probing social and political analysis more than for philosophy.

It was in this climate that the reorganization of the *Temps Modernes* editorial board occurred, leading to the inclusion of Gorz as a member, effective officially in February 1961.<sup>138</sup> Together with Jean Pouillon, he was placed in charge of political affairs. The reorganization has been portrayed by one scholar as having had a political significance beyond the obvious in the history of the journal. In the final part of Anna Boschetti's study of *Les Temps Modernes*, where relations within the journal's editorial board and the relations of Sartre to his close collaborators during the early 60s are discussed, Boschetti portrays Gorz as one of a group of intimates upon whom Sartre and de Beauvoir relied to reestablish Sartre's dominance at a time when, she maintains, the hegemony of the Sartrean philosophy of *engagement* was in crisis.<sup>139</sup> This crisis originated, she argues, with a confluence of developments: the ascendance of the social sciences and the growing specialization of the intellectual; the rise of structuralism, from which perspective the philosophy of commitment was a species of voluntarism; and the disappearance of the social and political conditions of which Sartre's philosophy of *engagement* had been an expression. Rather than locating the reorganization of the editorial board within the project of building a new left, Boschetti claims that with the waning of the Cold War, the end of the Algerian war and the consolidation of Gaullism the basis for intellectual commitment to politics was eroded and had given way to renewed faith in science to solve social problems. But Boschetti exaggerates the dwindling appeal of Sartre's philosophy of commitment. Indeed the resolute and initially isolated opposition of Sartre (taking the lead from Francis Jeanson) and *Les Temps Modernes* to the Algerian war eventually succeeded in galvanizing left protest and earned Sartre and the *Temps Modernes* associates a long line of intellectual credit with French youth.<sup>140</sup> And it was precisely during the period when Sartre and de Beauvoir had all but sequestered themselves — as a result of the wrath their outspoken opposition to the war elicited in some quarters — that Gorz became a member of the board.

The French intellectual landscape was thus indeed reshaped in the late 50s and early 60s, but it entailed a renewal of commitment among a new generation of activists, a continuing reassessment and renovation of Marxist theory and an ongoing effort to analyze the post-war

development of capitalism. The politics of the PCF which had shaped left thought in France for a quarter century were out of step with the realities of neo-capitalism: the Party's insistence (discussed later on in this chapter) that the working class was becoming poorer in absolute terms could not stand up in face of the expanding consumer society, nor, as history and the PCF evolved, could the image of a unified working class awaiting the foreordained opportunity for a seizure of power led by a revolutionary communist party. As Jane Jenson states, "In less than a decade everyday leftist assumptions about the nature of society and its collective actors modernized away from notions formed in the 1930s."<sup>141</sup> And in all this *Les Temps Modernes* sought to play a leading role. Of course, the journal continued to be preoccupied with the conclusion of the Algerian war and decolonization during the early 60s, and Gorz himself contributed to the study of decolonization Gaullist style with an article written in February 1961 devoted to examining the Constantine Plan.<sup>142</sup> In it Gorz documented and analyzed the effects of colonialism on the Algerian economy and criticized the development plan as an extension of war by other means insofar as it failed to provide for desperately needed agrarian reforms. Examining the evolution of agriculture among the Muslim population as an illustration of the vicious circle of underdevelopment, he argued that the Constantine Plan deliberately refrained from effecting agrarian reform and concentrated resources on building up the industrial sector in order to tip the balance of forces against the peasantry, thus averting a possible agrarian revolution. Gorz's other journalistic contributions to *Les Temps Modernes* revealed a wide range of interests and a command of international affairs with special attention to popular struggles in the Third World and labour militancy in Europe: reports on South Africa, Cuba, a strike in Belgium. They also demonstrated an attentiveness to the concrete details of a given situation which exemplified his practice as a journalist. In addition to his participation in *Les Temps Modernes*, Gorz also continued to work for more popular publications during this period such as *l'Express*.

Pursuing a line of speculative psychology, Boschetti suggests that the new members, who joined the *Temps Modernes* editorial board at this time, including Gorz, were relatively obscure and profited from their association with Sartre to accumulate intellectual capital. Once established, she claims, they wanted quickly to rid themselves of the identification with Sartre for fear that it would become a handicap. She singles out Gorz as having already made a reputation as a journalist



specializing in economics prior to his close association with *Les Temps Modernes*, and consequently having had an easier time extricating himself from the Sartrean orbit than more dependent disciples such as Jacques-Laurent Bost and Jean Pouillon.<sup>143</sup> It is true that Sartre's laudatory preface to *The Traitor* helped to put Gorz on the intellectual map in France. However, at least in Gorz's case, Boschetti's suggestion that there was a deliberate attempt to take some distance from Sartre is mistaken. Gorz remained a close friend and colleague of Sartre's until the latter's death in 1980 and he was recognized as an authoritative and sympathetic commentator on Sartre's work (for example, Gorz's own reading of Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, published in English in the *New Left Review* in 1966, was an optimistic one that attempted to rescue Sartre from charges by detractors that he had anthropologized scarcity). Gorz's own recollection is that the inner circle around Sartre and de Beauvoir was "unshakeably loyal;" he personally took pains to prevent outsiders from driving a wedge between Sartre and himself.<sup>144</sup> And while the direct imprint of Sartrean philosophy in Gorz's intellectual production faded in the 1960s, this was not a result of any deliberate effort to liberate himself from Sartre, but undoubtedly grew out of his greater immersion in the exigencies of practical politics — exigencies which Sartre's philosophy even in its 'mature' existential Marxist form as the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* might help illuminate but to which it could not provide an adequate guide.<sup>145</sup> In his desire to grasp the structural transformations of contemporary capitalism unfolding at the time in France and the other advanced capitalist countries and to elaborate an apposite new left theory and strategy, Gorz looked to new sources for inspiration and direction.

### **Gorz's Italian road to socialism**

In the period that intervened between the writing of *La morale de l'histoire* and *Strategy for Labor*, Gorz found a vital source of political ideas in an assorted group of left-wing Italian politicians and trade unionists. Since their influence preponderated in his elaboration of the central ideas of *Strategy for Labor* and since Gorz is often presented, without further clarification, as having introduced Italian Marxism to France,<sup>146</sup> the filiation between Gorz's ideas and those of some left currents in the Italian left deserves close examination.

The Sartrean connection is not entirely irrelevant here but it figures in an indirect way. From the founding of *Les Temps Modernes* in 1946, Sartre and de Beauvoir had cultivated ties with the PCI and with the left-wing Italian socialists. The attraction of the PCI for the *Temps Modernes* circle became even more compelling after 1956 as the paths of the PCI and the PCF diverged more dramatically and Palmiro Togliatti (PCI General Secretary from 1926-64) more openly rejected the Soviet model and refined the *via italiana al socialismo*. Testifying to the relative openness and tolerance of debate that characterized the PCI, the PCF even accused the PCI of indirectly sowing dissension within the ranks of the French party by making concessions to its intellectuals.<sup>147</sup> Sartre, whose relations with the PCF were strained even during his most spirited fellow-travelling years from 1952-56, had much warmer relations with the PCI. He often travelled to Italy and was received warmly by the Party leadership. And he told Michel-Antoine Burnier in 1963 that if he lived in Italy he would join the PCI.<sup>148</sup> But for Gorz, more than for Sartre, this Italian connection proved pivotal. As Gorz later pointed out in an interview, the nature of their respective relations with the Italian left were rather different.<sup>149</sup> Given Sartre's celebrity status and immense prestige, he was unable to develop peer relations with union militants; he was sought out by the leadership, by Togliatti, but stood at a remove from the base. Gorz on the other hand did not face these barriers and cultivated relations with important figures in the Italian labour movement (and with activists from the Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail [CFDT] in France). While these were not exactly rank-and-file unionists, it was such contacts, in Gorz's estimation, that accounted for a significant divergence in their political outlooks during this period. Isolated from workers and their struggles, Sartre prefigured a trend among New Left intellectuals in France and elsewhere in the West when he began to look to the Third World as the only potential source of revolutionary ferment. Gorz, by contrast, maintained a relatively more optimistic assessment of the revolutionary potential of the working class. There was no crisis of the labour movement, he declared, but a crisis of the theory of the labour movement.<sup>150</sup>

This more favourable assessment of proletarian prospects Gorz shared with the left of the PCI and the left wing of the socialists who eventually founded the *Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria* (PSIUP) — the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity — and he drew on these theoreticians for many of the central ideas that he wove together in *Strategy for Labor*. Looking

back, Gorz himself recalled that the work of Italian Marxists was the main object of his studies until 1969,<sup>151</sup> although, as we shall see in the next chapter, the influence of Italian left-wing groups persisted into the 1970s. To credit Gorz with introducing Italian Marxism to France is somewhat misleading, however. For one thing, Italian Marxism itself was not a homogeneous theoretical body. Marxist thinkers within and outside the PCI were seriously divided on many crucial points of theory and strategy. This was precisely what led to the defection from the PSI of Lelio Basso and Vittorio Foa to form the PSIUP in 1964, as well as to the silencing of the left-wing Ingrao current within the PCI after the XI party congress in 1966 and the exclusion of the *Il Manifesto* group from the PCI in 1969. (Oddly, Gorz himself was guilty of projecting a rather monolithic image of the PCI; the little he wrote explicitly about the evolution of Italian communism glossed over important divergences within the party of which he would surely have been aware.<sup>152</sup>) More importantly, Gorz did not offer a systematic exposition or interpretation of the body of work of one or more past or current Italian Marxist thinkers.<sup>153</sup> Aside from writing a few prefatory pieces to accompany articles covering Italian developments for various journals, as well as an introduction to a collection of contributions to the Italian debate republished in *Les Temps Modernes*, Gorz assimilated a substantial part of the analyses and positions of left-wing communists and socialists into his own work. In fact, while it constituted and was received as a major contribution to the elaboration of New Left theory, *Strategy for Labor* is in large part a reiteration of the vision of the Italian left-wing communists and socialists which draws on the French context for its illustrations. The nature and style of the book indicate that the Italian Marxists upon whom Gorz drew also had an unintended but salutary influence on his approach to communicating his ideas: thenceforth, save for occasional articles treating specific philosophical problems, Gorz devoted himself to social and political analysis in a far more lucid and accessible manner than the forbidding abstract style that characterized his earlier writings. Of course, his by now quite extensive experience as a journalist was also relevant in this regard.

Particularly influential on the development of Gorz's thinking were several leading figures from the *Federazione Italiana Operari Meccanici* (FIOM), the metalworkers union of the *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (CGIL), Italy's largest trade union confederation. In particular, the ideas of Vittorio Foa contributed to shaping Gorz's analysis of and strategic response

to the developments of contemporary capitalism. Foa was associated with the journal *Quaderni Rossi*, which has been called “the theoretical matrix of the new Left in the 1960s” in Italy.<sup>154</sup> Founded in 1961 by Raniero Panzieri (the author of the first translation of Marx’s *Grundrisse* into Italian), the journal made significant contributions to the rethinking and renewal of Marxism which had been taking place in Italy since the rediscovery of Gramsci after the Second World War and the introduction of the works of the young Marx to Italy, initially by Noberto Bobbio and Galvano Della Volpe. Much of this rethinking of Marxism — carried out, as in France, in a number of journals — evolved as a critique of the PCI, although there was also a movement of Marxist renewal within the PCI. And this reinvigoration of Marxism gained new momentum both outside and inside the Party with the crisis of Soviet socialism in 1956 and the ensuing de-Stalinization of the PCI.

One of Panzieri’s own theoretical contributions was his development of an argument against the supposed neutrality of technology. He endeavoured to show how machinery was used as a means of control in response to workers’ insubordination<sup>155</sup> (a theme Gorz would contribute to advancing in his work in the 1970s, as we shall see in the next chapter). Critical of the reformism of the mainstream PCI line, the *mot d’ordre* of *Quaderni Rossi* was basically workers’ control: it called for the direct and immediate control by workers of accumulation, investment, management, the organization of work and of industrial strategy, and regarded this control as genuine only insofar as it resulted in a rupture with the capitalist system and the opening of prospects for socialist self-management.<sup>156</sup> Foa wrote the lead article for the first issue of *Quaderni Rossi* which was translated and published in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1962 as part of a series of contributions by Italian leftists to a special issue on the questions of working class pauperization and trade union strategy for which Gorz wrote an extended foreword.<sup>157</sup> Foa believed it was essential to attack the nerve centre of the capitalist system, the factory, and establish a workers counterpower capable of exercising decision-making power against the capitalists in all matters related to working conditions. He criticized the false separation of political and union struggles which confined the purview of trade unionism to immediate economic demands, and he rejected the use of unions by the parties for their own ends. He also pointed to the inadequacy of international cooperation and coordination among labour

unions to counter the coordination of capital. As we shall see, all these arguments were taken up by Gorz in *Strategy for Labor*.

Vittorio Foa was initially a member of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), but he resigned to help form the PSIUP in January 1964. So too did Lelio Basso, another source often cited by Gorz and an acquaintance of the *Temps Modernes* circle. Basso himself was influenced by the thought of Rosa Luxemburg, and this is one likely source of the Luxemburgian strains that Dick Howard discerns in Gorz's early work.<sup>158</sup> A jurist specializing in international law, Basso would serve, together with Sartre on the Russell Tribunal on American intervention in Vietnam which convened in Stockholm in 1967. Basso founded and directed the journal *Problemi del socialismo* in 1958. He was also editor of the *International Socialist Journal*, an intellectual enterprise in which both Vittorio Foa and Gorz participated. Published in Italian, French and English from 1964-66, the journal served as a forum for international exchange of left ideas. Its avowed aim, like that of Gorz's *Strategy for Labor*, was to help develop a revolutionary strategy for the socialist labour movement in advanced capitalist societies. For Basso, as for Foa, the problem was to create the conditions to make the conquest of power by the working class possible and to connect daily struggles for improved conditions with revolutionary aims. He argued the case for a new conception of revolution as a historical process through which the relations of production, and hence also the power relations, are changed, until the day when the working class is strong enough to overthrow these relations and replace them by socialist relations.<sup>159</sup> He viewed this as a more genuinely Marxist conception of revolution.<sup>160</sup> He also criticized the false separation of the economic and the political as a crucial error of working class parties.<sup>161</sup>

Similar arguments were advanced by Antonio Giolitti, director of the journal *Passato e Presente* and one of the PCI's leading intellectual renovators, who left the party in 1957 after being accused of revisionism. An article by Giolitti appeared in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1958<sup>162</sup> (and, judging from the initials AG included in the editor's interpolations, it was presumably edited by André Gorz, although he was not yet an official member of the editorial board). In that piece Giolitti held that the evolutionary road to socialism and the *Zusammenbruchgesetz*, the law of the collapse of capitalism, were based on the same deterministic vision of capitalist development, and he argued that the working class must abandon the apocalyptic vision of revolution. Rather than

looking to the Bolshevik model of a revolutionary leap and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the working class had to begin to conquer and exercise power by working toward concrete solutions to structural problems of the economy and society. In this way, Giolitti argued, it would be able to acquire a theoretical consciousness of its practical positions.

Having delivered a number of papers at the Gramsci Institute in Rome, Gorz also had personal contact with members of the left-wing of the PCI, associated with the figure of Pietro Ingrao in the early 60s, including such well known figures as PCI central committee member Bruno Trentin (like Foa a leading figure in the FIOM) and Lucio Magri. The PCI left called for new analyses in light of the challenge to Marxist orthodoxy constituted by the Italian economic miracle (1953-1963). Rather than imminent or inevitable crisis, neo-capitalism appeared to hold out the prospect of continuing economic growth and rising living standards. At the same time, working class militancy actually seemed to be on the rise. (This was the result of several factors such as labour shortages in the North that precipitated a quite massive immigration from the South and increasing strain resulting from technical and organizational changes.<sup>163</sup>) While the party's right wing saw neo-capitalism as an opportunity for a reformist bid for inclusion in structures of power, the left believed it called for the development of a new radical strategy, capable of posing the problem of overthrowing the system,<sup>164</sup> as well as a new model of development that would direct investment to collective and essential goods rather than consumerist items.<sup>165</sup> It wanted to decentralize power by creating a network of centres of local power and direct democracy to function as counterweights to the State (and the political party) in civil society.<sup>166</sup> Integral to this aim was a strategy of political struggle in the factories. Ultimately, the group propounding these views clashed openly with the Party leadership and was defeated at the XI Party congress in 1966. But its ideas continued to be influential. During the 60s, the PCI's reformist tendencies were the target of attacks by the Italian far left, and within the party the left underwent a kind of revival and refinement with the formation of the *Il Manifesto* group, which was in turn ultimately excluded (a kind of expulsion without anathemization) from the PCI in November 1969.

Gorz thus drew on a number of thinkers and currents within the Italian left, weaving various strands together in a coherent strategy of resistance for a labour movement faced with the new challenges of neo-capitalism. And while Arthur Hirsh depicts *Strategy for Labor* as a synthesis of

the *gauchiste*, revisionist and existentialist critiques of Marxism,<sup>167</sup> virtually all of the central arguments Gorz put forward in *Strategy for Labor* can also be traced back to the Italian radical left — itself imbued with the intellectual heritage of Gramsci. The book is essentially an attempt to come to grips with the structural transformations that had occurred in developed capitalist societies since the Second World War, to ground the struggle for socialism in these new foundations and to formulate a strategy for the transition to a socialist society apposite to the realities of neo-capitalism.

### Theorizing the transition

Gorz's point of departure in *Strategy for Labor* was the evident fact that capitalism was no longer resulting in the destitution of the working class, and that, consequently, sheer material privation could no longer be the basis of the class struggle. The particular pains Gorz took here and elsewhere to affirm this point has to be understood in part in relation to the rather bizarre insistence by the PCF in the late 50s and early 1960s that the conditions of workers were actually deteriorating. While, in Italy, Togliatti and the PCI had already called into question the "pauperization thesis," in France, Party leader Maurice Thorez had gone out of his way to affirm that workers had grown poorer in absolute terms since the Liberation, against all the evidence of a steadily improving standard of living among French workers. Although wages remained lower in France in the early 60s than in other OECD countries due to a more competitive labour market,<sup>168</sup> the average per capita income nearly tripled between 1946 and 1962.<sup>169</sup>

George Lichtheim suggested that Thorez's own understanding of the pauperization thesis rested upon an untenable misreading of Marx's original theory by Soviet ideologues bent on proving that the American working class was witnessing a decline of its living standard. Lichtheim maintained that Marx used pauperization to refer to the tendency of capitalism to produce a reserve labour army, rather than an argument for the decline of real wages under capitalism.<sup>170</sup> Be that as it may, Thorez's proclamations gave rise to considerable controversy within the French left beginning in the later 1950s, and Gorz's response in *Strategy for Labor* was only one of very many interventions.

That such a controversy arose at all testifies to the continuing weight of the PCF in debates on the left even in the less polarized context of the post-Cold War period, when intellectuals in France no longer faced an unenviable choice between supporting the Communist Party or throwing their lot in with the forces of imperialism. The Party still represented close to a quarter of the working class vote in the 60s and controlled the biggest union, the CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail*). As many historians have observed, even as New Left theory blossomed in its various manifestations the terms of left debate in France continued to be set by the PCF,<sup>171</sup> and the Party's influence extended even into the 1970s.<sup>172</sup> The insurmountability of the PCF had some serious adverse effects on the left and gave rise to some sterile controversies — George Ross points to the conflation of socialist internationalism with the defense of the interests of the USSR as a damaging consequence for the left internationally,<sup>173</sup> and this applies *a fortiori* to France, where the PCF was fixated on Moscow. But having to contend with the PCF also had some salutary effects (obviously depending, then and now, on one's perspective). Jane Jenson points out that non-communist left economic analysis cut its teeth on refutation of the pauperization theses, giving rise to a debate about new class relations,<sup>174</sup> as well as an analysis of State monopoly capitalism.<sup>175</sup> Generally, Jenson remarks, there was “an efflorescence of analysis focused on class.”<sup>176</sup>

Gorz developed his contribution to the pauperization debate first in the Foreword he wrote for the issue of *Les Temps Modernes* devoted to the contributions of French and Italian leftists to the subject of pauperization and trade union strategy.<sup>177</sup> Gorz wanted to nuance his intervention sufficiently so as not to lend any possible support to the *embourgeoisement* analysis being advanced by the right as a justification for the end of class struggle (the French counterpart of the end of ideology thesis). He thus responded with an argument for relative pauperization: while the most elementary survival needs were being met for the majority of workers, in relative terms, opportunities to partake in the dominant way of life, which sets the standard, however spurious, for what it means to be a human being, remained closed to them. Drawing a clever distinction between the French words *misère* and *pauvreté* (one which apparently originates with Charles Péguy), Gorz argued that while workers were not destitute they were genuinely poor. Moreover, given that the sum of possibilities denied an average worker had multiplied, there were more poor people in relative terms than ever before in France.



This argument is somewhat problematic considered in light of a critique of consumer society; it invites the riposte that if one finds the food unpalatable one should not complain about the portions being too small — a point we will return to later. More objectionable, however, was Gorz's application of this gauge to advance the argument — whether disingenuous or naive is hard to say — that while there may be generalized austerity in socialist countries there is no poverty because there is no group that does not partake of the prevailing standards. This was not, in any case, consistent with his general view of “actually existing socialism,” which he characterized as “...a massive and systematic effort at State accumulation spurred on by acute scarcity and external threats.”<sup>178</sup>

Gorz reiterated his case for relative pauperization in *Strategy for Labor*, but he also offered more interesting analysis of how capitalism was giving rise to new collective needs which it could not properly satisfy. We will return to this when we examine Gorz's critique of the consumer society, but the general orientation of these arguments too is that poverty is a qualitative rather than a quantitative state, and the refusal of poverty in capitalist societies does not mean struggling for greater purchasing power.

Taking up a thread from *La morale de l'histoire*, Gorz repeated that in Marx's day the demand by workers to have their most basic needs met was intrinsically revolutionary: the mere affirmation of the right to live constituted a negation of the existing order. But this was no longer the case; as he put it succinctly in a later essay:

...from the moment when capitalism is able to allow the workers some degree, however limited, of rights and liberties, enabling them to earn a basic livelihood and even a modest surplus, the need to secure a better way of life ceases to call for revolutionary change. If this better way of life is expressed in purely quantitative terms, capitalism can absorb it.<sup>179</sup>

Thus neo-capitalism had created a situation in which privation would not lead to the formation of a revolutionary will. Nor would there be an inevitable crisis attendant upon the irresistible workings of the capitalist economic process that would assure a socialist victory. In keeping with the broad lines of proto-Eurocommunist analysis, Gorz affirmed in *Strategy for Labor* that in the advanced capitalist countries of the West a Bolshevik style revolutionary seizure of power could safely be ruled out in the short and medium term, if not indefinitely.

If, in retrospect, this seems self-evident, it should be recalled that it was certainly commonly believed by many on the left in and outside France that the Communists had relinquished an opportunity to make a bid for power only two decades earlier when, in the wake of Liberation, they accepted *tripartisme* (the coalition of Communists, Socialists and the Mouvement Républicain Populaire which ruled in France from September 1944 to November 1945 as a provisional government, and then as an elected one until May 1947). Whether there was ever any real chance of either revolution or elected communist government in Italy or France remains open to debate; some, such as George Lichtheim — hardly a starry-eyed romantic — maintain that the possibility genuinely existed but evaporated after 1948;<sup>180</sup> others, such as R. W. Johnson, claim that the idea is so much dangerous nonsense, that the Allies would never have accepted a Communist France and that Thorez had no choice but to concede and respect the spheres of influence.<sup>181</sup>

Whatever the real prospects of revolution had been at one time, for Gorz the moment had passed. The very conception of revolution as a seizure of power hinged on the expectation of a “final conflict,” to borrow a phrase from the communist anthem, resulting from the inexorable workings of economic laws such as the tendency of the rate of profit to fall — a mechanical worldview subscribed to by both the Second International and the Comintern. Catastrophe theory still underlay the thinking of the French Communists. And while, in keeping with Popular Front strategy, the moment of armed insurrection had been postponed indefinitely, it remained central in propaganda to the vision of the transition to socialism. Essentially this idea served increasingly as a cover for the PCF's reformist orientation; as it inclined more and more to integration in the system it needed a revolutionary patina with which to cloak itself.

Although he did not raise this point explicitly in *Strategy for Labor*,<sup>182</sup> Gorz believed that even if a crisis were to arise it would be resolved to the detriment of the workers by a capitalist counteroffensive, unless certain conditions were already in place. The gravamen of his argument was that the strategy of awaiting catastrophe as the moment for seizing power involved the promotion in practice of political victories of the left in the parliamentary arena, while relegating the day-to-day practice of the labour movement to defensive action on behalf of immediate demands, such as wages, divorced from a longer term vision. This created a false and deleterious cleavage

between today's demands and tomorrow's goals. Current struggles had been and were continuing to be seen in isolation from socialist solutions.

As we have seen already, in *Fondements pour une morale* and *La morale de l'histoire* Gorz had castigated the deterministic Marxism of the PCF that posited socialism as an inevitable outcome of iron laws. In *Strategy for Labor* he revealed the practical strategic importance of this critique: the notion of historical necessity weakened the class struggle. Revolutionary inevitabilism, he maintained, had led to revolutionary *attentisme*, which had been used as a means of, or at least had had the effect of, demobilizing the working class. The dream of being in power was not supported by any means of getting there, and a brick wall is thereby erected between the present and the future. Here Gorz followed closely the arguments of the Italians concerning the false separation of the political and the economic and the criticism of the transmission belt theory of the union movement.

Gorz pointed out that, taken in isolation, wage demands did not call the structure of society into question but only the distribution of the benefits. No matter how high the wages, the capitalist was still free to organize the productive process. Wage claims accept the basic premise of a profit-motivated economy, "namely that everything has a price, that money is the supreme value, that you can do anything and everything with human beings provided you pay."<sup>183</sup> For Gorz, wage demands did have a deeper significance in relation to alienation: they in fact constituted the only channel available to express a revolt against alienation; workers sought as much money as possible to compensate for the mutilation of the personality on the job. However this deeper meaning of seeking higher pay remained, Gorz conceded, largely unarticulated, and therefore demands for wage increases possessed limited potential to educate the working class. (The filiation with Lenin's critique of trade union consciousness is obvious here, but as we shall see, Gorz's approach differed dramatically from reliance on the mediation of a vanguard party.) Moreover, an across-the-board wage demand could not unify the working class because it could not encompass all the different categories of labour — skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled — whose wages vary. No general demand for an increase of the minimum wage would mobilize the whole. And even with respect to the most practical results, wage demands proved unsuccessful: according to Gorz, wage increases tended to

precipitate a crisis of inflation since employers use price increases to conserve profit margins as labour costs rise, and consequently the share of national income that goes to workers stagnates.

Gorz may be charged with faulty judgement for attributing to the nefarious influence of the *attentiste* strategy of the Communist parties such a large burden of guilt for labour's preoccupation with the struggle for higher wages at the expense of issues of control over investment and working conditions. As George Ross and Jane Jenson, among many others, argue, this trade-off was the centrepiece of the post-war compromise in the advanced capitalist countries.<sup>184</sup> On the other hand, as longtime CGT leader André Barjonet acknowledged in the aftermath of May '68, the CGT was particularly fixated on wage demands and hostile to any expressions of rank-and-file consciousness that deviated from leadership to the point of 'throwing a wet blanket' on working-class activity.<sup>185</sup> And, Gorz did for the most part accurately assess the damage a strategy based solely on wages would do (and arguably did do).

It was not Gorz's contention that wage demands should be abandoned altogether, and again in harmony with Foa, Basso and others on the Italian far left, he took a very strong position in opposition to the incomes policy, the attempt by governments all over western Europe at the time to win trade union agreement to the tripartite planning of wage increases in the name of the national interest. Thus, Gorz argued that while no concessions ought to be made on wages, neither should they be the sole objective of the union movement. However energetic the struggle to achieve economic demands, it would not precipitate a crisis in the system or advance the conquest of working class power.<sup>186</sup> Consequently, a new approach was vital: an approach which could link the struggle for socialism with the routine struggles of everyday life to render the abstract goal of socialism more concrete and to make it clear why society ought to be transformed even if working people were no longer destitute. This new approach had to help workers understand socialism as the true meaning and intention of everyday struggles.

Gorz thus introduced a strategy of revolutionary reformism. The cornerstone of this strategy was the concept of structural reforms, the master concept of both Italian Communists and left socialists since it had been elaborated by Togliatti in the post-war period. The origins and evolution of the concept have been deftly traced by Grant Amyot in his study of the crisis of the popular front strategy in the Italian Communist Party.<sup>187</sup> On this account, Togliatti had rejected the idea of a

catastrophic crisis of capitalism, whether it was advanced prophetically or prescriptively, fearing, on the basis of past experience, that crisis would be more likely to lead to a fascist takeover than a socialist one. His strategy was to advance a positive program involving various industrial and agrarian reform measures, such as nationalization of large monopolies, banks and insurance companies and the extension of wartime workers' councils as economic planning tools to help solve the country's problems. These "structural reforms," as he called them, were not intended to destabilize the system or hasten the transition to socialism; they were a defensive strategy aimed at promoting a broad alliance encompassing the petty bourgeoisie and even parts of the bourgeoisie itself around the goal of progressive democracy (the first stage of the Popular Front strategy). While in practice this formula laid the groundwork for a new reformist orientation in the PCI, the concept of structural reforms could also be adapted to create a new model of revolution, as it was by the party's left wing in the early 1960s.

According to Grant Amyot, whereas structural reforms were not intended, in Togliatti's conception, to exacerbate a social or economic crisis, the left viewed them as a means to destabilize the system in a direct struggle for socialism. For the left wing of the Party, the object of structural reforms was a shift in balance of power within society in favour of the working class. This more radical view of structural reforms was also taken up by the left-wing socialists such as Lelio Basso, who promoted the idea in various contributions to the *International Socialist Journal* ("...structural reforms can have a revolutionary value inasmuch as they modify the organization of power in favour of the workers..."<sup>188</sup>) Structural reforms were seen to be a dialectical approach: they would provide the working class with weapons to influence collective decisions and, because every change in society that increases the participation of the working class increases its power, this would be a stimulus to press forward with more changes.

It was this left-wing interpretation of structural reforms that Gorz adopted in *Strategy for Labor*. In the book itself, however, Gorz does not discuss the origins of the concept. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, while, given his familiarity with the intellectual developments in the Italian left, it seems unlikely that Gorz mistook this minority view for the mainstream PCI position, he did misleadingly depict the left-wing reading of structural reforms as the majority PCI position in an

article about Italian Communism published in English translation in *The Socialist Register* the same year that *Strategy for Labor* appeared.

### **Revolutionary reforms and the working class**

As noted above, Gorz maintained that in view of the system's capacity progressively to reduce material privation, the socialist movement must move beyond a narrow economic conception of the meaning of socialism to reveal why socialism is worth fighting for. It must create "supplementary mediations"<sup>189</sup> to make the intolerability of the system felt. And this is a central point which will be revisited presently: Gorz argued that while the development of capitalism had raised workers' standard of living, the actual relationships of production and of work had grown more unbearable. If contemporary capitalism had succeeded in mitigating exploitation, this had changed nothing with regard to the question of alienation in the broad sense of oppression and dehumanization.<sup>190</sup> Alienation — an existential question of the quality of life under capitalism — had to be revealed as the cause of unhappiness and frustration, where now workers mistook that cause (by virtue of a misguided emphasis on immediate economic demands by unions and working class parties) for a quantitative problem of insufficient purchasing power. The end toward which structural reforms were the means was far more than the classic communist party vision of the expropriation of the means of production.

Politically, socialism can mean no less than power to the working class; economically, it can mean nothing but the collective ownership of the means of production, that is to say the end of exploitation. But socialism is also more than that: it is also a new type of relationship among men, a new order of priorities, a new model of life and culture. If it is not all this also, it loses its meaning. This meaning, to define it in one sentence, is: the subordination of production to needs, as much for *what* is produced as for *how* it is produced. It is understood that in a developed society, needs are not only quantitative: the need for consumer goods; but also qualitative the need for a free and many-sided development of human faculties; the need for information, for communication, for fellowship; the need to be free not only from exploitation but from oppression and alienation in work and leisure.<sup>191</sup>

It was with this in view that Gorz elaborated his strategy of structural reforms. The socialist movement, he insisted, must put forward a positive alternative to the existing order, along with

intermediary or partial objectives that prefigure the alternative in the present and that can help link the struggle for socialism with the immediate demands and routine struggles of everyday life. To prefigure a future socialist order, these intermediary objectives must revolve around issues of control; they have to prepare the working class to rule. For while wage demands can be accommodated by the system and mostly leave the nature of the system intact, struggles for greater power and control have a more transformative effect; they create a kind of dual power within the system.

The only possible line for the movement is to seize, from the present on, those powers which will prepare it to assume leadership of society and which will permit it in the meantime to control and to plan the development of the society, and to establish certain limiting mechanisms which will restrict or dislocate the power of capital.<sup>192</sup>

And this is part of what differentiates Gorz's intermediary objectives (and the left-wing reading of structural reforms within the broader Italian left) from the meliorist approach of social democratic parties and the then creeping reformism of communist parties. Gorz distinguished carefully between reformist and non-reformist struggles. While reformism rules out from the start any goals which are not compatible with the preservation of the existing system, revolutionary reforms are not conceived as a function of what is possible within the existing system but with a view to what should be made possible. Revolutionary reforms are not subordinated to the logic of capitalist rationality; they point beyond it. At various points in the text, Gorz tried to establish fairly precise criteria for revolutionary reforms: they must be carried out by those who demand it; they always entail the creation of a new locus of democratic power; they do not leave intact the existing distribution of decision-making power; they do not leave to the capitalist State the initiative to reform the system.<sup>193</sup>

Structural reforms should not be conceived as measures granted by the bourgeois State at the end of a compromise negotiated with it... They should rather be considered as cracks created in the system by attacks on its weak points. The distinguishing characteristic of such a strategy is that it aims by means of partial victories to shake the system's equilibrium profoundly, to sharpen its contradictions, to intensify its crisis, and by a succession of attacks and counterattacks, to raise the class struggle to a greater intensity, at a higher and higher level.<sup>194</sup>

To the objection that the system may be able to absorb proposed reforms, he suggested that it is impossible to determine in advance whether a reform carried out within the system will be co-opted; nevertheless, the risk must be run. Here he explicitly invoked Vittorio Foa and Lelio Basso's response to this problem, namely, that there is a danger of cooptation but it is not inevitable, and there is no alternative, in any case, but to run the risk. (Although he overlooked the argument made by Basso that the question of timing was vital in this regard: "If the working class movement can press on to its next objective without giving the system time to readapt by absorbing its last defeat then its actions will have a real revolutionary value; otherwise they won't."<sup>195</sup> Gorz would take up this point later on in elaborating and nuancing his position.<sup>196</sup>) At the same time, Gorz explained, traditional socialist demands, such as nationalization, are not *a priori* structural reforms. They qualify only if it can be shown where they will lead. For instance, if nationalization is targeted towards failing industries such as steel, then it is not a structural reform; to qualify, it must be directed toward centres of capital accumulation, such as the chemical and oil industries.

Thus Gorz presented the strategy of revolutionary reformism as the only viable means to move in the direction of radical social transformation. While, like the Italians, he did not preclude a revolutionary seizure of power at some future date, it was, he believed, only through this progressive strategy of creating a counterpower that the desire for and consciousness of the need for socialism would arise and that the transition to socialism might occur. "... [T]he independent power of workers — in big industry, but also in cities and towns, in State services, regional bodies, cooperatives, etc.— can ensure the dialectical progress of the struggle to a higher and higher level..."<sup>197</sup> For Gorz, the struggle to establish this counterpower was essential to the education of the masses as it enabled them to grasp socialism as the visible goal of current praxis instead of something abstract and reserved for the remote future. Socialism, he maintained, cannot be presented as a system that represents a pre-existing solution to all problems; it must be presented as the overall direction of concrete responses to specific problems.<sup>198</sup> The end must be present in the means.

With the strategy of structural reforms Gorz thus offered a dialectical resolution of the opposition between reformism and revolution. His entire analysis was consistent with his understanding of the unity of theory and practice, which he had arrived at as early as in *Fondements*



*pour une morale*. Taking praxis as his point of departure, Gorz was bound to conclude that revolutions are made not born. In this respect, one of the most marked features of Gorz's revolutionary reformism is its deliberate rejection of the *grand soir*, the sudden and violent rupture with the present, which Tony Judt views as indigenous to the French radical intellectual tradition.<sup>199</sup> Revolutionary consciousness does not materialize spontaneously at the moment of revolution, especially in the context of neo-capitalism which has managed to satisfy basic needs to a large extent. The process of forging revolutionary consciousness is revolution itself. And, in this context, the appeal, for Gorz, of the work of the Italian Marxist left, descending from the Gramscian tradition of Marxism as a philosophy of praxis, is self-evident.

In Gorz's view, the struggle for structural reforms had to be carried out above all in the workplace. One of Gorz's chief purposes in *Strategy for Labor* was to refute the thesis, whether advanced by the end-of-ideology liberals — represented in France at the time by, for example, the sociologist Michel Crozier — or by the left — as in Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* — that the working class had undergone a process of *embourgeoisement* and was now integrated in the dominant order. As noted in the discussion of *La morale de l'histoire*, Gorz proffered an argument for (temporary) integration himself when he attributed the working class's lack of revolutionary temper to its growing enjoyment, during the Cold War period, of the benefits of imperialism. It is evident in *Strategy for Labor* that Gorz's emphasis had shifted significantly, and he now seemed to ascribe the apparent blunting of revolutionary will primarily to the distortions of Communist catastrophism, which engendered an exclusive focus on immediate quantitative demands. Gorz had substituted the idea of working class integration rooted in economic gain for an argument in favour of the derailed revolutionary instincts of the working class, without, however, attempting to reconcile the two theories. He did not return in *Strategy for Labor* to the argument about the origins of the retreat of working-class radical consciousness that he had put forward in *La morale de l'histoire*, even forgoing any attempt to vindicate his prediction that with decolonization the end of the bargain between the working class and the ruling class in the advanced capitalist countries was imminent. He offered no explanation of the relation between that notion and the idea he put forward in *Strategy for Labor* that the working class is not integrated but rather that the means by which it can give expression to its revolt are circumscribed not only by the system but by its own

organizations, which have failed to develop an appropriate strategy. The working-class parties had thwarted the development of revolutionary consciousness by failing to link immediate demands with long-term goals. In *Strategy for Labor*, Gorz clearly rejected the idea that neo-capitalism's ability in one way or another to "deliver the goods," as Marcuse put it in *One-Dimensional Man*, had resulted in the structural integration of the working-class.

Interestingly, in his Foreword to the series of articles by Italian Marxists in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1962, Gorz both anticipated and rejected Marcuse's pessimistic wager in *One-Dimensional Man* on the subversive potential of oppressed minorities in the United States as a potentially oppositional force within advanced capitalism, that was, however, external to the working-class, strictly defined. Not only is Gorz's foresight noteworthy; his counterargument also seems to contradict at least partially his earlier claims in *Fondements pour une morale* with respect to the inherently contestatory character of minorities. If minorities still embody historical negativity, they cannot be a viable collective subject or agency. He argues now that precisely because poverty is concentrated in these groups rather than in the working class they cannot be the basis of organized contestation of the system. Divided by education, race, geography, the marginal could not organize themselves as a cohesive force. In *Strategy for Labor* it appears that the working class alone meets the criteria of the revolutionary subject.

What is it that intervened to influence Gorz's thinking on this point? The historical context supplies at least part of the answer. As noted earlier, the early 60s in Italy witnessed a cycle of intense workers struggles, and although in France too trade union strength grew and industrial conflict actually intensified after 1962,<sup>200</sup> once again Gorz looked particularly to the Italian example, which allowed even greater scope for optimism. He was particularly struck by the 1962 Fiat strikes involving over a million engineering workers, and above all with the strategy of the leadership, which sought successfully to push the struggle beyond wage demands. As a consequence, collective bargaining agreements were extended beyond wage rates and hours to embrace other issues such as the organization of work (classification of skills, work speeds, and so on) and investment policy.<sup>201</sup>

As we have seen, it was partly in connection with these developments that the Italian left-wing trade unionists and the left of the PCI formulated their ideas about trade union autonomy and

the strategic role of the factory. It was with some justice that Gorz asserted, "Whether looked at from the point of view of politics, trade unionism or international affairs, the Italian Labour movement has shown itself in the recent past, as the most militant and lively Labour movement in the capitalist world."<sup>202</sup> As he summed it up, what impressed him most about the Italian trade unionists was "the way in which they linked economic demands with the struggle for self-determination in the workplace and for the transformation of the model of development and consumption."<sup>203</sup> He discerned four principal features of the movement: that it acted at the local or regional level and in the workplace; that it sought to impose new solutions; that it sought to limit by strikes or other forms of struggle the latitude of both employers and the State; and that it sought to strengthen opportunities for workers' initiative and control.<sup>204</sup> The practice of the Italian labour movement, as he interpreted it, was the living foundation of Gorz's own strategy for labour.

While it was the Italian example above all that gave Gorz a more sanguine view of the prospects for a radical labour movement which could transcend economism, within France too arguments such as Marcuse's about proletarian integration were not accepted by many of the intellectuals contributing to New Left theory. Rather more popular in France, at least in the early 60s, was talk of a "new working class," a prominent theme in what was an extensive debate about the recomposition of the working class and about revolutionary agency. This topic will be dealt with at length in the next chapter, but a brief contextualization is called for here.

Ideas about the new working class were being put forward in France by theorists such as Serge Mallet, who became, at Gorz's invitation, a regular contributor to *Les Temps Modernes* in the late 50s and early 60s, as well as by Pierre Belville and by Pierre Naville, one of the leading practitioners of *sociologie du travail*, a discipline which originated in France just after the war with Georges Friedmann, and out of which emerged many of the most important French sociologists in the 1960s, including Alain Touraine and Michel Crozier. The theory took shape especially in the pages of *Arguments* and within the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU), a small left-wing socialist party founded in 1960 on the basis of disaffections from the SFIO, the PCF (including Mallet) and a contingent of ex-Trotskyists (including Naville).

New working class theory was not a set of homogeneous ideas and there were substantial divergences among the proponents. The theory is sometimes caricatured as having sought to

identify a substitute revolutionary agent to replace an integrated working class, but most new working class theorists merely saw certain skilled white collar workers, including technicians and engineers, as a potential source of renewed revolutionary impetus for the working class as a whole. With advancing technology this segment occupied an increasingly pivotal position in the productive process and was attaining to a higher level of consciousness of capitalist contradictions because, having achieved satisfaction of their basic needs, the focus of their conflict with capital revolved around issues of control.

In light of the numerous and substantive contributions to this body of ideas, Arthur Hirsh exaggerates when he claims that Gorz developed the theory of a new working class.<sup>205</sup> However, it is true that already in 1962, before the publication of Mallet's seminal *Nouvelle Classe Ouvrière*, Gorz hinted at the possibility of a new vanguard in the form of the new relatively privileged stratum of technicians.<sup>206</sup> And while in *Strategy for Labor* Gorz certainly retained the working class as a whole as a viable revolutionary subject, he did advance an extended argument for the special potential of relatively well-paid workers in advanced industries. (Again, it was the experience and analysis of the Italian labour movement and its theoreticians that were critical in shaping Gorz's thinking on this subject. In addition to the contributions of French sociology, ideas about the characteristics and potential of the new working class were articulated by many of the Italian theorists and activists, such as Foa and Trentin, upon whom Gorz drew). Gorz regarded this stratum of workers as a prospective catalyst of radicalization by virtue of its ability to reveal a fundamental truth about the proletarian condition: that workers are not alienated only or above all because of the failure to satisfy their most elemental needs, but because their work is divested of any genuine human purpose or social meaning. This goes to the heart of Gorz's analysis and brings into relief the problem of work that would loom large in his thinking in the coming decades.

### **The centrality of alienation and the goal of workers' control**

As noted earlier, the whole point of revolutionary reforms leading to workers' control was to reveal the true content of socialism, which meant far more than ensuring a decent standard of living for all. Indeed, in keeping with the general tenor of evolving New Left thought in this period, Gorz shifted the focus of the critique of capitalism from exploitation to alienation. But in contrast with his

presentation in *La morale de l'histoire* which expanded the category of alienation beyond the bounds of the Marxist analysis, his discussion of alienation in *Strategy for Labor* revolved primarily around alienated labour. Drawing far more on Marx than Sartre, Gorz indicated that it is “the conflict between the human demands of the workers and the inert needs of capital” that the strategy of revolutionary reformism reveals and accentuates.<sup>207</sup> In this discussion allusions to the practico-inert were altogether absent.

In Gorz's view, even if the new capitalism had alleviated exploitation and could continue to absorb quantitative demands, the basic contradiction at the heart of alienated labour remained: workers are forced to sell their labour and have no control over the process and purposes of their work. The system of alienated labour demands that the worker not be allowed to comprehend the work process as a whole or grasp the creative essence of the act of work. Routine predetermined tasks transform less skilled workers into appendages of machines, robbing them of any creative potential in their work; and even highly skilled workers who may, or rather must, take initiative in their work are nevertheless not free to determine their working conditions. It is important to note here that Gorz was formulating these ideas at a time when the semi-skilled *Ouvrier Spécialisé* (OS) was increasingly typical of the roughly six million workers forming the French working class; they performed repetitive tasks often on assembly lines<sup>208</sup> — the apotheosis of alienation within the labour process.

For Gorz, as we have seen, the revolt against this mutilation of the individual is the hidden meaning of ostensibly reformist labour agitation for higher wages (a meaning hidden even to the workers themselves — a valiant attempt on Gorz's part to circumvent the more sobering realities of empirical working class consciousness). Gorz contended that as much money as possible is sought by workers to compensate for this wasting of their lives at work. Here Gorz took up an argument from the *1844 Manuscripts* where, in a renowned passage, Marx maintains that the worker feels at home only in his leisure time, while at work he feels homeless. Gorz also drew on a reformulation of this argument by Bruno Trentin to demonstrate that the growing importance of the sphere of private consumption is partly a distorted mirror image of the condition of alienated labour; consumer needs are compensatory needs.

It is because the worker is not “at home” in “his” work, because this work, negated as creative activity, is a calamity, a pure *means* of satisfying needs, that the individual’s active and creative needs are amputated, and he no longer finds his sphere of sovereignty except in non-work, that is to say in the satisfaction of passive needs, in consumption, and in domestic life.<sup>209</sup>

Or again:

...even when highly paid, the worker has no choice but to sell his skin, and therefore he tries to sell it as dearly as possible. And inversely, no matter what price he receives for selling his liberty, that price will never be high enough to make up for the dead loss which he suffers in qualitative and human terms; even the highest pay will never restore to him control over his professional life and the liberty to determine his own condition.<sup>210</sup>

He cites Vittorio Foa at length to the effect that without the democratization of work even collective ownership of the means of production will not solve the problem of alienation.

The problem of industrial society, with its advanced organization of production and of labor, is the problem of the democratic organization of the workers’ condition at work, the problem of workers’ self-determination of their future and of their present, their work situation, the quantitative and qualitative content of their performance, and thus also self-determination of the social reproduction of their labor power.<sup>211</sup>

For Gorz, as for Foa, the process of subordinating the productive process to the needs of workers was not something to be left for after the revolution, it was part and parcel of the revolution and of the process of forging revolutionary consciousness. This process of taking control by and for workers over the productive process is what Gorz understood as workers’ control; this was in fact the concrete meaning of his strategy of revolutionary reformism when translated into the terms of struggle at the point of production.

In Italy, as we have seen, a concept of workers’ control was being worked out by individuals such as Panzieri and Foa, both in theory, in organs such as *Quaderni Rossi*, and in practice, in major labour disputes such as the Italian metal workers’ strike. It involved privileging the unions as the vectors of working class struggle, which necessarily required union autonomy — freedom for trade unions from the dictates of political parties, freedom to formulate their own political demands. (The issue of union autonomy actually had deep roots in France dating back to

the 1890s when some of the unions reacted to the attempts by the Guesdists to bring unions under the control of the Parti Ouvrier Français. A little surprisingly, especially insofar as he was purporting to develop a strategy specifically for labour, Gorz did not appeal or refer to the history and traditions of the labour movement in France.)

Based on his understanding of the most advanced Italian trade union strategy and practice and on the theory being elaborated by the movements' leaders, Gorz saw the primary goal of the socialist labour movement as the gradual creation of a workers' counterpower capable of contesting every aspect of work relations, including technological changes, schedules, work speeds, job qualifications, apprenticeship schemes and so on.<sup>212</sup> This counterpower would be built through successive battles to wrest more and more decision-making power from the employers. And the unions were to use this power to advance continually the workers' self-determination of the production process. What does this mean concretely?

...instead of fighting against layoffs and reorganization plans, the union should fight for a plan of reorganization, re-classification and re-employment, a plan whose every aspect is under permanent union control. Instead of fighting against new machines and the new organization of labor which these impose, it should fight over the type of machines, the process of their installation, the future organization of labor, the future job classifications, before the reorganization takes place. Instead of fighting against the intensification of exploitation, the union should fight to gain control over the program of amortization and investment to assure that the workers benefit from it.<sup>213</sup>

In Gorz's view, as partial victories of this type would be won, more and more power to determine working conditions would be written into collective agreements until the workers' counterpower became a permanent oppositional force. By itself, Gorz explained, this strategy would not eventuate in the demise of capitalism and the regime of production for profit: it would not bring about working class power, but would lead to new battles, new and partial victories. While Gorz did not specify an ultimate terminus of this protracted process within the workplace, he did make the point that this prolonged power struggle would train the working class to govern the production process by raising the level of both consciousness and competence. For Gorz, the higher level of consciousness and struggle to which the struggle for workers' control gives rise is the contestation of

the capitalist model of development as such. But before turning to that point, it is worth elaborating on the significance, for Gorz, of a strategy centred on the struggle for workers' control.

Some terminological clarification is in order in relation to “workers' control.” Although the distinctions have often been overlooked, workers' control is not a synonym for *autogestion* or workers' self-management.<sup>214</sup> That the two concepts are easily conflated is evidenced not only by their interchangeable use in the discourse of French students and activists in the period,<sup>215</sup> but also in the work of scholars who might be expected to be more precise; witness Tony Judt's possibly telling reference to “the protagonists of workers' self-control.”<sup>216</sup> And he was not alone in this confusion; Richard Gombin, for example, uses workers' control to mean workers' self-management in his *Origins of Modern Leftism*. However, as Gorz insisted — along with Ken Coates, a leading New Left theorist of workers' control in Britain during the 60s, and the circle around *Quaderni Rossi* in Italy, among others — workers' self-management is an end; it refers to the ideal situation of control by the workers over production in a context where capitalist property relations have been overcome; workers' control, by contrast, is strictly speaking a means employed by labour towards that end. In this sense it meshes with the definition of workers' control offered by Stephen Bornstein and Keitha Fine in their study of the subject:

*Contrôle ouvrier*, or “workers' control,” refers, in both France and Italy, to the power of workers to exercise (de jure or de facto) a negative control in the form of an effective veto over issues ranging from limited questions such as assembly-line speeds and working conditions to the most general aspects of national economic and policy-making.<sup>217</sup>

In this sense workers' control was indeed the heart of Gorz's *strategy* for labour.

Gorz defined the concept of workers' control more explicitly elsewhere, but in *Strategy for Labor*, as we have seen, it is clear that workers' control is precisely the struggle to limit the sphere of power of management and gain decision-making control over the full range of work conditions. However — and this is a critical point — the true value and meaning of this struggle to gain control of the productive process is, in a sense, that it reveals itself as doomed to failure, that the struggle cannot be victorious within the prevailing social order. Only by challenging and transcending the capitalist model as such would the workers achieve complete control of the productive process. Gorz made this point succinctly in clarifying his ideas on workers' control a few years later.



To gather momentum, action cannot from the outset be directed against the total structure that is finally responsible for intolerable conditions... . The workers are not *at first* interested in overall political-economic changes... It is by acting upon their present work situation that they will develop an interest in issues and struggles affecting society as a whole. Unless it is bound up with the struggle for worker control in the factory, the fight for democracy is in serious danger of remaining an abstraction.<sup>218</sup>

But workers' control had another primary value for Gorz. As we have seen, he understood the experience of actually existing socialism as a demonstration that expropriation did not, in and of itself, bring an end to alienation; to achieve that end would require some form of workers' self-management. But this is not something that can be accomplished overnight; the working class must learn to govern itself, and workers' control is part of the educative process. For Gorz, workers' control had an important prefigurative function.<sup>219</sup> Thus although workers' control was not synonymous with workers' self-management it was a precondition for it: the two ideas are integrally related. And insofar as Gorz's emphasis on workers' control necessarily pointed to what lay beyond it — the self-government by workers of the productive process — it registered a theme that is the guiding thread of all of Gorz's subsequent work: the idea that one of the most fundamental goals of socialism/revolution is the ability of people to regulate and govern their own lives in and outside the workplace. It is a thread which can also be traced back to the centrality of freedom in Gorz's earliest work: freedom as praxis, as human self activity, finds its vehicle in *autogestion*.

In *Strategy for Labor*, Gorz adopted the term *autogestion*, which in fact first entered the French language in the early 1960s as the literal translation of the Serbocroatian *samoupravljje*, employed to designate the Yugoslav socialist project.<sup>220</sup> And he used it in a programmatic sense to refer to the goal of a self-governing society, although he was short on the details of how it might work in practice. He argued that self-management, far from being a utopian idea, had become a real possibility, especially with advances in automation which augured a different production process involving more highly skilled and autonomous workers and novel forms of work organization. Although technocratic planning at the level of industry and government appear to be necessary in a complex industrial society, Gorz argued, it is not a necessary byproduct of the complexity of social production and exchange, but rather a deliberate holdover from an earlier phase of capitalism where the need to increase production of wealth rendered specialization more necessary.<sup>221</sup> The goal of

self-management was, for Gorz, by no means limited to the workplace; although it was likely to be formulated as a goal first in the work context, it was in fact the ultimate form socialist society had to take — a stark contrast to the image of the bureaucratized societies of actually existing socialism.

*Autogestion* stormed the French political stage only during and in the wake of May '68, when it became something of a catch-all phrase, engendering considerable confusion and numerous subsequent efforts at clarification and definition. But obviously the concept in its New Left incarnation (ideas about workers' control and workers' self-management date back in France to the socialist and anarchist traditions of the nineteenth century) began to take shape prior to 1968, and Gorz's work contributed to this germination. What was critical to emerging New Left analysis generally in France and to the growing appeal of ideas about self-management in particular was the recognition that collective ownership of the means of production did not guarantee the overcoming of alienation. To be more than a bureaucratized authoritarian system, socialism had to involve qualitative changes in everyday life, starting with the workplace.

Gorz's understanding of the significance of workers' control in *Strategy for Labor*, and his allusions to the goal of workers' self-management, converged at the level of theory with aspects of the *gauchiste* analysis in France, although there are sufficient serious divergences to make the approaches mutually antagonistic.<sup>222</sup> Earlier we noted that the *gauchiste* stress on self-management originated with *Socialisme ou Barbarie's* critique of Soviet bureaucracy and vanguardism. In its most rudimentary form, it posited the conscious self-organization of the proletariat as the only means to achieve socialism. Socialism could mean nothing less than the direct regulation by workers of the process of production. Earlier than Gorz, they looked to the experience of workers as evidence of both the desire and potential for self-governing socialism, opening the pages of the journal in the 1950s to workers who supplied testimonials to the thwarting of their initiative within the workplace.<sup>223</sup>

Unlike Cornelius Castoriadis and the *gauchiste* groups, Gorz did not engage with the rich traditions of council communism, and, in *Strategy for Labor* at least, he remained vague about the organizational forms radical working class activity might assume, beyond the trade unions, a point to which we will return. For its part, the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group drew, among other things, on the theory of Anton Pannekoek and the historical experience of the Soviets in the Russian

revolution, in addition to welcoming the establishment of workers' councils in the Hungarian uprising against the USSR as the proof of possibility of workers' self-management. By the 1960s Castoriadis had already rejected Marxism altogether, avowedly in the name of revolution, and, as noted earlier, various splits had occurred in the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group, giving rise to new *groupuscules*. But both the journal, which continued to publish until 1965, and the major themes, such as the critique of bureaucracy and the need for self-management, found an avid audience among various groups of students. Most notable among these was the future nucleus of the March 22 Movement, including the irrepressible Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a member of the neo-anarchist group *Noir et Rouge*, which was itself a vector for discovery of the history and theory of council communism.<sup>224</sup> Mark Poster points out that the journal was widely read at Nanterre prior to May '68 and rightly observes that it was Daniel Cohn-Bendit's principal wellhead of theoretical inspiration, as the book he co-authored (originally in German) with his brother Gabriel, *Obsolete Communism: the Left-Wing Alternative*, attests.<sup>225</sup>

*Socialisme ou Barbarie* is generally credited as the progenitor of the French New Left emphasis on the self-determined activity of the working class and the goal of self-management, and certainly this group attempted to work out such ideas in very great detail, with clear reverberations on the French left in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Tony Judt, for instance, sees in Gorz's *Strategy for Labor* and in the orientation of the CFDT an echo of Castoriadis' claim that workers' management of production (workers' self-management) "...could be generalized into a total project which was socialism..."<sup>226</sup> Richard Johnson, on the other hand, who completely neglects the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group in his study *The French Communist Party versus the Students*, attributes the contemporary revival of what he calls the ancient theme of *autogestion* to Gorz, Bruno Trentin and *Les Temps Modernes*. Within France in the mid 1960s *Strategy for Labor* undoubtedly served as a vector of the self-management theme. Although the CFDT only came out explicitly in favour of workers' self-management in 1970, ideas about workers' control and *autogestion* were also expressed within the union confederation as early as 1964.<sup>227</sup> And here, in addition to interest in the Yugoslav model, it was the influence of Gorz rather than Castoriadis that appears to have been directly pertinent, as will be shown later on. But the pedigree of the idea is less relevant than the fact that it also appears as a natural outgrowth of an existential Marxist

emphasis on the freedom of the subject to create itself, a freedom conceived both as process and as the essence of socialism.<sup>228</sup> And in Gorz's case, the concepts of workers' control and self-management also coincided with central aspects of the theory and practice of the left-wing of the Italian labour movement.

Returning to the idea of workers' control more narrowly conceived, we noted earlier that, for Gorz in *Strategy for Labor*, the strategy of workers' control is what creates a bridge to larger political-economic issues. The struggle against exploitation and alienation in the workplace would necessarily lead to questions about the purposes of the work carried out, the nature of what is being produced, which in turn would expose capitalism not only as a system of exploitation but as an authoritarian system of waste and destruction. The fight for technical control over the conditions of work, including the introduction and application of new technologies, would give rise, in Gorz's view, to questions of content, such as how profits are used, whether productive capacity is being deployed to serve the real needs of people, and so on. This would reveal the "negation of the meaning of productive life, due to the purpose which capitalist exploitation assigns to work."<sup>229</sup> Gorz argued that mass production itself was not the problem: producing mass quantities of an item can be existentially rewarding, he suggested, provided that the item serves genuine social needs; but no such fulfillment can be obtained working for a private company producing objects which will satisfy no social need. Alienation results as much from not having the power to determine the ends of work as from not having control over the work process. Once the struggle within the workplace gives rise to this level of consciousness it must move beyond the confines of the workplace itself. And this brings us to Gorz's analysis of the nature of neo-capitalism and the consumer society, fittingly the final, rather than the first, frontier of class struggle presented in *Strategy for Labor*.

### **Affluent capitalism and the consumer society**

According to Arthur Hirsh's account of the division of intellectual labour within the French New Left in the 60s, Gorz and the UNEF leaders developed a critique of alienation in production, while others developed the critique of alienation in consumption. In fact, however, Gorz allotted considerable space in *Strategy for Labor* to developing his critique of affluent capitalism and the

consumer society, and some of the most interesting parts of the book are devoted to his discussion of needs in contemporary capitalist society.

In form and substance Gorz's critique of affluent capitalism converged in all essentials with the analysis put forward by the New Left throughout western Europe and North America in the 1960s. It shares many common perspectives with both Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* and more especially Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* — a work Gorz read as he was completing *Strategy for Labor*, and for which he reserved high praise. The parallels are in fact quite remarkable, beginning at the most basic level with the two theorists' agreement that although technical progress had enabled modern capitalist societies to improve the standard of living for the majority of people, labour remained alienated and degraded, and society as a whole remained irrational in its use and waste of resources and its continuing repression and exploitation. Like Marcuse, Gorz also believed, that technical progress had created the conditions of possibility for the humanization and liberation of work and life (an idea whose compatibility with the Sartrean concept of scarcity in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is open to question<sup>230</sup>). At the same time, this possibility remained hidden and thwarted by the deliberate perpetuation and organization of scarcity under advanced capitalism which served to contain technical progress and confine it to oppressive productivity within the existing system. Both Marcuse and Gorz saw the neo-capitalist edifice as being built upon the consumption of an ever greater number of commodities assured by the inescapable blandishments of a deceptive marketing industry.

For Gorz, one of the pillars of neo-capitalism was precisely the modification of consumption to suit production. Capital seeks to produce and sell the most profitable goods regardless of their utility, offering a spurious variety of commodities differentiated by little other than brand names and packaging. He concurred that neo-capitalism depends on the coordinated restriction and manipulation of human needs to the point that people come to need what the system has to offer and confine their desires to what it can satisfy. Gorz agreed with Marcuse's conception of advanced capitalism as a gentle totalitarianism equipped with a gigantic apparatus of repression and mystification that perpetuates ignorance and sells stultifying and pacifying diversions and entertainments in place of the culture it destroys. However, pursuing a line of analysis he began in *La morale de l'histoire*, he also sought to identify the radical potential of certain needs that arise

under neo-capitalism, to flush out the fault lines in the system that remained invisible in Marcuse's one-dimensional society.

Although his description of the spiritually stultifying and impoverishing character of the consumer society was far less depressingly rich than Marcuse's, Gorz provided a more fertile explanation for the identification of individuals with consumerism than Marcuse's insistence on the successes of indoctrination in vitiating the individual's free judgement with respect to his own needs. While concurring with and supporting Marcuse's insistence on the system's deliberate efforts to promote desire for commodities of diminished use value, Gorz went beyond the proposition of false needs, which is ultimately very thorny and difficult to verify, by pointing to structural mechanisms through which certain needs arise.

We have already discussed Gorz's argument with respect to the compensatory character of consumer needs — the idea that workers cannot achieve satisfaction in their jobs and are thus driven to seek escape and distraction from this fundamental alienation in the realm of private consumption — a state of affairs that is happily exploited by capital for its own profit. But the notion of compensatory needs was only one of a number of explanations advanced by Gorz to account for the distortions of the culture of consumption.

Gorz's analysis of needs in *Strategy for Labor* is a marked advance over his admittedly much briefer discussion in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1962, as well as over other more culturally-oriented New Left critiques of the consumer society, insofar as it mostly avoids the contradiction of rejecting the satisfactions of the consumer goods as false and alienating while simultaneously asserting that privation of those satisfactions constitutes a genuine form of poverty in relation to prevailing social standards. Whereas in 1962 Gorz could write: "...in a world built for fast cars, walking or cycling means being dominated, being poor, even poorer than the bare-footed person in a world where everyone wears shoes,"<sup>231</sup> his later analysis placed the emphasis more on how the system makes the car indispensable than on how using the bicycle as a means of transportation relegates one to inferior status according to the standards of the prevailing order.

Gorz now argued that neo-capitalism conditions people to want what is most profitable to produce, but it does not only achieve this by means of the techniques of planned obsolescence and propaganda; it does so through the way in which society is structured to suit the interests of

monopoly capital. His argument about the structural conditioning of needs is multilayered and complex: needs are conditioned, he explained, by the development of the means available for their satisfaction, by the nature and conditions of work, and by the way productive techniques transform the natural environment.<sup>232</sup>

The development of capitalism, Gorz argued, gives rise to a blurring of the Marxian distinction between natural and historical needs. With the creation of built environments such as cities, basic needs can only be satisfied in a social manner: they become social needs; these are not new needs but the historical form of irreducible needs. Thus, for instance, the deterioration of the natural environment in cities gives rise to the need for fresh air, which is experienced as the need to get away, to take a vacation, to escape. Presaging an ecological sensibility Gorz observed, "The capitalist trust appropriates air, light, space, water and (by producing dirt and noise) cleanliness and silence — free of charge or at a preferential price. Entrepreneurs, speculators and merchants then resell all of these resources to the highest bidder."<sup>233</sup> Because of the nature of capitalism, these social needs are not met in a social manner; the individual is forced to attempt to obtain satisfaction as an individual consumer. The social need for cleanliness is not met with public services such as laundries but with household appliances the sale of which profits private enterprise. Thus, consumer goods are not necessarily a means of satisfying false needs, but rather the only option capitalism offers to satisfy the social needs to which it gives rise.

Gorz also employed the instructive example of the automobile to illustrate the complex process by which capitalism shapes needs. Since capitalist industry had always been free to invest wherever conditions are most propitious (market demand, available facilities, proximity of raw materials, and so on), a geographic concentration of industry had occurred. The costs of the infrastructure, however, are borne by the collectivity, partly through government which assumes the burden of building roads and other necessary facilities. Large cities have grown up around these concentrations which have become overpopulated, polluted and unlivable; this creates a need for escape and industry responds with an individual means of satisfying this need it has engendered: the automobile. The automobile industry directs capital and labour away from the fulfillment of collective needs such as housing, healthcare, education. Cities begin to be planned around the automobile, and resources are diverted from the creation of means of public transportation to the

infrastructure to support the automobile. Suburbs are built, increasing distances between home and work, and contributing to the atomization of the population. The end result of all this is, of course, that the car becomes a necessity. Contemporary capitalism thus succeeds in individualizing the collective need for transportation while exacerbating the need for escape by aggravating the air and noise pollution in the city.

This process of individualizing social needs raises the cost of reproducing labor power, and the increased cost must be borne by the workers themselves, which eats into their standard of living. Gorz argued, moreover, that since needs are conditioned by what is available, people identify with the goods of the post-war consumer society because there is no alternative at the individual level; as long as people are atomized they remain powerless to define an alternative model of consumption. So they want what is within the realm of the possible to obtain: an isolated individual knows that he may stand a chance of acquiring a car, but on his own he will not obtain public transportation, recreational facilities and so on. It is this acquiescence of the atomized consumer to the available satisfactions that has been mistaken, Gorz maintained, for the *embourgeoisement* of the working class. What appears as the satisfaction of “affluent” needs in the consumer society reveals itself under careful scrutiny as the quest to fulfill quite basic human needs which are mediated in specific ways by the urban environment of advanced industrial capitalism.

For Gorz, the sphere of collective needs thus represented a genuine radical potential. Under capitalism, he maintained, such needs could never be satisfied because the pursuit of the highest profit margins takes precedence over all activities which cannot result in the production of goods and services for the market. Collective services such as education, public transportation, affordable housing, daycare, pollution control and so on are relatively unprofitable, and are seen by private industry to divert a portion of buying power away from its coffers; they can therefore only be created and maintained as public services belonging to the collectivity. The creation and maintenance of public services thus presupposed a constant struggle for collective control over the system, which involved wresting from the private sector some of its decision-making power over economic and social organization. And this struggle would logically extend to a struggle for control of the industries upon which the public sector depends, such as the pharmaceutical industry, if it



was not to be at the mercy of external forces. In this sense, the sphere of collective needs represented a challenge to the very logic of the capitalist system.

Only under a social order in which the ends and techniques of production are subordinated to human needs and development, Gorz maintained, would collective needs be accorded priority. Outside the workplace, he suggested, the struggle for the structural reforms or intermediary objectives that reveal the desirability of socialism was essentially the political struggle for collective services to be paid for by capital and controlled by the people. The parallel between the struggle for workers' control and the struggle for popular control over public services is clear. Also, Gorz implied that this struggle was a higher form of the class struggle insofar as it directly challenged the capitalist model of consumption in the name of an alternative model prefigured in the intermediary objective of public services. However, while Gorz maintained that it is through mass action that people acquire a common consciousness of their common needs, he did not offer a coherent explanation of what it was that would bring the atomized individuals of consumer capitalism together in mass actions in the first place, unless it was simply spillover from the struggle at the point of production. It can also be inferred that the impetus of the new proletarians of the advanced industries, among whom Gorz discerned the unfolding of new and inherently radical needs, is highly pertinent here. This final aspect of Gorz's discussion of needs under neo-capitalism will be dealt with when we look at Gorz's contribution to new working class theory in the following chapter. For now let us turn to the problem of the organizational form Gorz prescribed, or failed to prescribe, for the struggle for collective services, which leads us to the issue of Gorz's views on political parties and the State.

How, from Gorz's vantage point, were the political struggles against consumer capitalism and for collective services to be carried out? And how were the various struggles going on in and outside the workplace to be coordinated? While he acknowledged in a footnote that the struggles of working people must be translated into a unifying perspective and struggle by radical parties,<sup>234</sup> he offered no clear conception of what the working class party is or ought to be. Nor did he devote any attention to parliamentary strategy. In fact, Gorz once again typified New Left thinking in *Strategy for Labor* in regarding the institution of representative democracy as largely irrelevant. As Sunil Khilnani observes, for the French intellectual left generally: "...constitutional representative

democracy, 'bourgeois' or 'formal' democracy, was a contemptible and mystifying illusion; only beginning in the late 1970s did it gradually come to be accepted as a political form in its own right, and not merely an illicit simulation of 'true', direct, or revolutionary democracy."<sup>235</sup>

Gorz himself remained, in principle at least, a proponent of participatory democracy. His enduring pessimism about the value and quality of existing institutional forms was bound up with his view of the capitalist State. In what he did write on this subject, he was capable of espousing a wholly instrumental view of capital's relationship to the State, as in his preface to the American translation of *Strategy for Labor*, where he argued that the primary role of the State is to assure business the conditions propitious to its successful operations and profit. In the text of *Strategy for Labor* itself his argument is slightly more nuanced; here he stressed again that the State subordinates collective interests to private ones by, for example, subsidizing the necessary infrastructure for private industry and helping the latter to secure markets, and that it uses public funds to defray the social costs of private accumulation (education, public health, etc.). He also conceded a degree of autonomy to the State as an "enlightened mediator between the direct interests of the monopolies and those of society..."<sup>236</sup> The State, he allowed, may take measures ostensibly antagonistic to the immediate interest of capital which is to minimize public investment in collective goods such as health and education. The agency that performs this role is the technocratic stratum, which is not a simple lackey of monopoly capital; Gorz described technocrats in the State and in industry as a caste that sees itself and attempts to portray itself as above class interests.<sup>237</sup> By engaging in social spending, the State, guided by technocracy, diverts real or potential surplus value away from the private sector and this results in a permanent tension between the State and capital. However, in his general analysis, Gorz so severely qualified the State's autonomy as to render it nugatory.

Thus, for Gorz, neo-capitalism distinguished itself from traditional capitalism precisely in its acceptance of a mediating role. Provided it did not interfere with private industry's domination of decisions about the general orientation of the economy, the State played a useful role for capital.

**It is in the long-term interest of monopoly capital to insure that occasional redistributions of income render the capitalist system socially tolerable [,] that health and public hygiene slow the exhaustion of labor power, that public education cover future needs for trained manpower, that public city transportation, financed by the entire population, deliver manpower to the factories in good condition, that**

nationalization of energy sources and raw materials place onto the shoulders of the entire population the burden of supplying industrial needs at low cost. The expansion of public activity, in short, is welcome so long as it limits itself to publicly pre-financing the basis of monopoly expansion and accumulation...<sup>238</sup>

To what extent this assertion impugns his own insistence on the sphere of collective needs as a potential challenge to the capitalist system is open to question. Gorz arguably drew a line here between those collective services that challenge the system and those that prop it up, along the lines of differentiating between schemes for worker participation, which are useful to management, and workers' control, which challenges management power. And elsewhere later on he was more explicit when he wrote that, to make them acceptable to capital, the State must make those public services and facilities it considers essential to the smooth functioning of the system more profitable through the use of subsidies. But the point remains quite hazy, and in *Strategy for Labor* Gorz did not attempt to clarify it at all. We are left with what appears to be something of a paradox in his analysis of the interests of private enterprise: on the one hand, the private sector is opposed to public investment and on the other hand it is reliant upon it to ensure the consent of the governed to the dominant order.

Leaving this problem aside, it is clear that power, for Gorz, far from being shared, let alone diffuse, remains concentrated in monopolistic industry, although it is exercised in a mediated form through a technocratic stratum which assumes the functions of planning and coordination on behalf of capital. Given that governments are ultimately subjugated to the will of monopolistic industry mediated through technocracy, parliament had ceased, in Gorz's view, to act as a governing body. He clarified this point in a text written a couple of years after *Strategy for Labor* and based on a lecture he delivered in Mexico on unions and politics. There he observed that the institutions of representative democracy had decayed in Europe and North America; parliament had little real power and decision-making had become the preserve of an oligarchy connected with leading economic groups. This observation was perhaps especially timely and accurate in the case of the Gaullist State, in which technocrats had undertaken a program of modernization despite the reluctance of a large part of the traditional capitalist class. But for Gorz it applied in equal measure to all the advanced capitalist countries, from Sweden to the United States. "There is no nation,"

Gorz wrote, “where major decisions are not made by committees of experts sheltered from publicity, and where parliamentary debates are anything more than ineffective ceremonies.”<sup>239</sup>

Consequently, the formal political arena was not, in Gorz's view, a useful object of struggle or a potential site of resistance to the policies of monopoly capital. Capitalism had given rise to a system of domination in which “‘democracy’ is but a method of manipulating the atomized masses into accepting decisions they do not share in making, of preventing citizens from organizing themselves, from shaping, expressing and exerting their will collectively.”<sup>240</sup> As long as parties operated at the parliamentary level they would remain ineffective.<sup>241</sup> Nor could representative democracy be restored as a robust institution. Again, in a later essay Gorz explicitly stated that it would be useless to attempt to reverse the process of decay of representative institutions to restore powers to parliament through legislation: “Any serious attempt to reestablish democracy must start with the realization that representative democracy has always been, and must necessarily be, a mythical substitute of government by the people.”<sup>242</sup>

In light of the limited character of his analysis, the charge can be laid that Gorz failed adequately to theorize the nature of the neo-capitalist State. And although it is perhaps arguable only with the benefit of hindsight, Gorz (and by implication the Italian left communists and socialists, as well as much of the New Left) can be faulted with underestimating the relative autonomy of the State with regard to their own period. From the vantage point of the downsized and globalized fin-de-siècle, the State, while certainly never the neutral arbiter of interests depicted by pluralist theory, possessed far greater independence in the 1960s and 1970s than it does in the 1990s. Labour was able to exercise a far greater claim on it — and arguably not merely because this suited the interests of capital. Gorz also treated the capitalist State as all of a piece, whereas national distinctions had more relevance than he was prepared to grant. In an argument directed against a group of Marxist theorists including Gorz and favouring an analysis of the State as a viable arena of class struggle, John Stephens has noted persuasively: “The tremendous variation in expenditure among capitalist societies cannot be accounted for by the varying functional needs of capital in various countries.”<sup>243</sup> Gorz deemphasized, moreover, the possible effects of the differentiation of interests within the ruling class of monopolistic industry. Although he alluded to contradictory interests within capital, he tended to depict the capitalist class as monolithic.

To return to the point at hand, given Gorz's view of the ineffectualness of parliament, it is clear that he saw no point in participating in the sham democracy that constituted the organized political process. And the effect of mass democracy was, he observed, to induce parties to become all things to all people in a bid to win the greatest share of votes among a depoliticized electorate, with the result that the competing political parties are virtually indistinguishable from one another with respect to policy and vision.<sup>244</sup> The utility of political parties themselves, at least in their typical guise, was thus cast in doubt without further comment. However, only a couple of years after the publication of *Strategy for Labor* Gorz began to address the issue of the party in a more serious way, as we shall see in the next chapter. For now, having for all practical purposes ruled out any role for the party, mass political action appeared to be confined, in *Strategy for Labor*, to the realm of popular protest; indeed one of the few concrete examples Gorz offered were the mass demonstrations taking place at the time in large Italian cities in favour of public housing and improvements to public transportation. Again, while he indicated that pressure should be exerted by the masses at the urban level against the monopolies' grip on urban life, at the regional level for new industrial development and job creation, and by elaborating an alternative national plan,<sup>245</sup> he was silent on the political means by which these struggles should be carried out.

In an article on the strategy of the Italian communists, Gorz argued that political struggle in representative assemblies complemented the struggles by the unions in the factories, asserting that they provide "an effective outlet at national and state level to the popular forces whose local representatives can develop considerable political weight, even though these representatives are in opposition."<sup>246</sup> However, in a footnote he added that this element of the strategy was peculiarly appropriate to Italy because of the particularity of the Italian constitution and the number of centres of power it provided for, such as regional assemblies and city councils. Controlling these centres, he argued, would give the working class power vis à vis private capital and the State. But given the high degree of centralization of power in France, this probably did not appear to Gorz as a viable orientation to propose in *Strategy for Labor*, which was addressed above all, though by no means exclusively, to the French labour movement.

In *Strategy for Labor*, then, the building of the working class counterhegemony boiled down essentially to activity organized by the unions largely in the workplace. But as we saw when

we looked at the question of workers' control, this was not a strategy by default. The principal reason Gorz offered for the privileging of struggles "at the point of production" was that alienation is experienced most directly by workers in the workplace. He justified his focus on the unions, maintaining that "...the union much more than the party is the body in which class consciousness in a neo-capitalist society is catalyzed and elaborated."<sup>247</sup> The unions, he argued, were not subject to the imperatives of mass democracy, that is the drive to occupy the middle ground to attract as much support as possible, and to address people as consumers above classes. Only in the unions, Gorz asserted, could class realities become a spur to political action as they would reveal the truth of such revolutionary demands as the subordination of production to needs.<sup>248</sup>

To conclude the general discussion of *Strategy for Labor*, it is most important, particularly in light of the later evolution of Gorz's thought, to point out that although Gorz did not allocate much space to sketching a portrait of the socialist society conceived as the overall alternative toward which all genuine intermediary objectives must tend, he did specifically insist on the possibility of emancipation *within* work. We will return to the question of the future of work in much greater depth later on, but some introductory remarks are called for here.

A wide-ranging debate about the nature and purposes of work and the potential for the de-alienation of labour had been taking place in France throughout the 1950s among the practitioners of *sociologie du travail*.<sup>249</sup> And the concentrated and rapid progress in industrialization in the post-war period stimulated extensive reflection on the potential consequences of increasing automation for the future of work. Thus, while reflections on the nature and future of work were central to the contribution of the New Left throughout the developed world, French intellectuals in the 60s could draw upon an extensive recent body of scholarly work. Gorz of course also drew on the primary sources, such as Marx's various writings on the question of work, as well as on the ideas of Italian trade unionists. Early on in *Strategy for Labor*, Gorz quoted Vittorio Foa approvingly on the prospects of de-alienated work:

"Some people think that [the] subordination of workers is an inevitable consequence of the modern organization of production, as inevitable in a socialist regime as in a capitalist one, that this signifies that all industrial society must be condemned, and that this subordination will perhaps not be overcome until the post-industrial society, when human labor has been replaced by machines. We do

not believe in this inevitability; we believe that collective action can achieve democracy.”<sup>250</sup>

But he went further than this in several pages devoted to speculation on the possibilities of transforming work.<sup>251</sup> As we noted earlier in the discussion of self-management, Gorz saw technical development as having the potential to free humans from the necessity of alienating specialization, transformed into a science in Taylorism, that had hitherto been requisite to expanding production. Even within capitalist production at the most advanced levels, Gorz suggested, technology inclines towards a new “humanism of work,” as prefigured in the increasing use of skilled work teams that have the autonomy to decide how the work will be organized internally.

However, the process of the emancipation of work does not stop with the already revolutionary achievement of self-managed production; Gorz affirmed the possibility of creating a society in which work is transcended by the free activity of individual self-realization, as foreseen by Marx in the *Grundrisse*. Gorz quoted a now famous passage from this work to the effect that technical development will ultimately sever the link between the time and energy expended in work and the creation of wealth or output. At this point, human beings will play an essentially supervisory role in the production process, which will permit the reduction to a minimum of necessary labour time in society. Although Gorz declared that automation would be a reality by the end of the century, he reminded his readers that the discussion of future possibilities remained at the level of speculation and warned against delaying action until history moved in the anticipated direction — the costly “error” for which he had denounced the PCF. We will return to the question of the veracity of Gorz’s predictions on the inexorable advance of automation and its implications. For now it is sufficient to note that, once again like Marcuse, Gorz believed the utopian vision of a socialist future had acquired an objective foundation in advanced industrial society and therefore was no longer “utopian” in the widely understood sense of “unrealizable.” And Gorz would continue throughout his life to subscribe to the idea that the technical conditions of possibility for human liberation exist, even as his vision of the nature of liberation and his strategy for achieving it were transfigured.

Of course, the argument put forward by Gorz, Marcuse and other New Left theorists that the technological base built up under capitalism harboured the promise of an end to dehumanizing

labour and penury has been criticized as an erroneous projection of the economic prosperity of advanced capitalist countries, which fell prey, moreover, to a productivist ethos and a drive to dominate nature implicated in ecological destruction and, on some accounts, genocidal and other crimes. A strong case can be made, however, that neither Marcuse nor Gorz advocated or anticipated perpetually growing affluence in the sense of a surfeit of material goods; the accent of both thinkers was very much on the ability of a socialist society to meet fundamental material needs as well as the “rich needs” of self-determination, creative work and leisure. Moreover, Gorz would soon broach the problem of the natural limits of the earth’s resources with the dawning awareness in the following decade of the ecological crisis.

### *Strategy for Labor: the critical reception*

Two somewhat contradictory charges have been laid against Gorz’s strategy for labour in this period, the first far more easily disposed of than the second: that Gorz’s ideas are assimilable to the reformist tradition (Gorz’s socialist strategy “...differed from run-of-the-mill social democracy only by its militant sounding rhetoric”<sup>252</sup>) and that Gorz is guilty of syndicalism (“...Gorzian strategy was dangerously Proudhonian or anarcho-syndicalist, minimizing the problem of State power and the question of politics in general during the process of structural reform”<sup>253</sup>).

That it would be highly misleading to assimilate Gorz’s revolutionary reformism to the evolutionary socialism of the social democrats or the proto-Eurocommunism of the Italian or French communist parties should already be clearly apparent. For one thing, his very attitude to parliamentary democracy would seem to exculpate him on the count of reformism as much as it may inculcate him on the charge of syndicalism. Axel van den Berg, however, situates Gorz within the reformist tradition — which he defines tendentiously as the belief that “bourgeois democratic institutions can be effectively used to achieve peacefully fundamental or significant improvements for the majority of the population at the expense of the privileged minority”<sup>254</sup> — on the grounds of the difficulty of distinguishing fundamental from non-fundamental reforms.

Although his argument addresses Gorz’s work only in passing, three main points may be raised in reply. The definition is tendentious not only because it is capacious enough to include everyone save perhaps the most doctrinaire Marxist-Leninists, but also because the debate about



reformism in the socialist tradition explicitly revolved around the question of achieving a transition to socialism via the institutions of bourgeois democracy and not simply significant improvements. The definition would also seem to exclude Gorz, in view of his jaundiced view of bourgeois democratic institutions, although here Gorz would have to grant that these were the institutions that would have ultimately have to compromise on the structural reforms in the realm of public services.

The third point is the most challenging. Van den Berg maintains that while, on the whole, Marxists of all varieties have dismissed the array of social and economic reforms carried out by the welfare state as leaving capitalist social relations unaltered, they have failed to specify the content of fundamental reforms. As we have seen, however, in *Strategy for Labor* Gorz specifically talked about reforms that modify the balance of forces. He did not prejudge the nature of such reforms, as it was not necessarily clear in advance whether a given reform would contribute to a redistribution of power. Elsewhere and most germanely he quoted Lelio Basso to the effect that what characterizes reformism is not the advocacy of reforms per se but rather the separation of the reformist movement from the revolutionary movement, which not only robs reforms of their anticapitalist potential but promotes the integration of the working class into the system.<sup>255</sup> In the same vein, as we have seen, Gorz took great pains to distinguish his proposals from any type of social democratic reformism, insisting on the point that structural reforms or intermediary objectives were in no sense ends in themselves. Nor did he maintain that the sum of partial victories would amount to a revolution.

We are not advocating a “nibbling” tactic, a bid to progressively take over the centres of power through a war of position and attrition. No partial conquest nor the sum of such conquests will ever lead by their own logic to a miraculous qualitative leap... . If the strategy of intermediate objectives succumbs to this illusion it will fully deserve its detractors' characterization of it as reformist and social democratic.<sup>256</sup>

The intermediary objectives had to be presented and grasped as prefigurations of socialist society which were not ends in themselves but only attained their full signification in a broader struggle; otherwise, Gorz warned, they would be absorbed and past victories would be vitiated.

Van den Berg contends that most attempts to qualify reforms as fundamental or non-fundamental are too vague to be useful, and he does make some illuminating and instructive points,

not only about the weaknesses of Marxist arguments against reformism, but about the extent to which such measures as unemployment insurance and health care may fundamentally modify the nature of capitalist society. In the end, however, his argument can only prevail by collapsing all gradations and even qualitative distinctions within the spectrum extending from reform to revolution, so that he can and does maintain that “Any good liberal is committed to ‘transforming’ capitalist society.”<sup>257</sup>

It is arguable that one of the fatal analytical weaknesses in *Strategy for Labor* is Gorz's conviction that the achievement of partial objectives in the workplace and in the realm of public services, which is integral to the strategy of revolutionary reformism, would continually raise the class struggle to a higher level, rather than producing the opposite effect by rendering working conditions and everyday life under capitalism more livable, and consequently making reformism rather than revolution triumph among the working class. This objection would hold even if the structural reforms carried out were of the variety Gorz foresaw as genuinely revolutionary reforms, presented as stepping stones towards a larger purpose. But that does not make Gorz a reformist, certainly not in the sense commonly understood. On the contrary, it remains one of the most distinctive features of Gorz's work within the New Left analysis of neo-capitalism to have proposed a dialectical transcendence of the reform/revolution opposition.

George Ross argues that in the late 60s a virtual consensus emerged within the left around the viability of revolutionary reformism as a means of achieving a democratic transition to socialism.<sup>258</sup> He is referring here primarily to the ascendance of Eurocommunism, but he fails to mention that the strategy of revolutionary reformism was developed in large part in opposition to the proto-Eurocommunist position of the PCI. Given the intense disagreements over strategy among the participants in left debate during the period, it is important not to gloss over the distinctions. Thus his idea of a consensus excludes a considerable proportion — perhaps a majority — of the New Left, which subscribed to a more traditional insurrectionary model of revolution into the late 1960s and beyond. This was true both in France, where as Hervé Hamon puts it pithily, the left-wing of the UEC sought to “revive the revolutionary myth in all its purity,”<sup>259</sup> and internationally. If the leading international organ of the English-speaking New Left, the *New Left Review*, may be considered exemplary here, it did espouse a position that included transitional goals, but with points

of divergence and different emphases. Recollecting, in 1980, the bones of contention with E.P. Thompson's view of the transition to socialism, Perry Anderson recalled and reiterated some of these relevant differences, including an emphasis on the revolutionary moment in which the expropriators are expropriated. While he concurred with Gorz in his assertion that the short term practice of the socialist movement should seek to link the immediate demands of the working class to the objective of forming a workers' counterpower through the formulation of transitional goals calculated to unbalance the established order, he was very clear that the subsequent stage must entail a rapid and violent convulsion.<sup>260</sup> While Gorz never excluded such an eventuality, he makes no attempt in *Strategy for Labor* to indicate the nature of the final assault. His entire emphasis with respect to preparing the transition to socialism is on the process; it is the process, rather than a prospective moment of expropriation, through which revolutionary consciousness arises. Moreover, for Gorz, as we have seen, expropriating the capitalists was far from solving the root problem of alienated labour, as the experience of the nominally socialist countries had demonstrated. Thus the democratization of work took on a strategic importance, in some respects greater than that of property ownership — a point on which he would later be criticized.

An even starker contrast can be drawn between Gorz's revolutionary reformism and what substituted for political strategy in the work of another redoubtable neo-Marxist intellectual who captured the imagination of the student and intellectual left in the 1960s, Herbert Marcuse. As noted earlier, Gorz's analysis of neo-capitalism converged at many points with that of Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*. In general, Gorz very much appreciated Marcuse's analysis of the gentle totalitarianism pervading advanced capitalist society. And the two thinkers shared many perspectives on the nature of consumer society, although Gorz's discussion of the problem of needs in contemporary capitalist society represented an important advance over Marcuse's less penetrating analysis. But in the early 60s, Marcuse and Gorz drew very different conclusions about the prospects for social change in the advanced industrial societies. At first blush, this was natural enough considering that the two theorists were looking at different national expressions of advanced capitalism. Looking at the state of the labour movement in America, Marcuse became so convinced of the structural integration of the working class and the corresponding triumph of one-dimensional thought that the development or revival of negative or revolutionary consciousness was

inconceivable.<sup>261</sup> There was no point in formulating a concrete strategy for labour to effect social change; the working class would have to be catalyzed from without, if at all. But one did not have to reside in the United States to subscribe to such a pessimistic prognosis. As we shall see in the next chapter, third worldism became a strong current in the French left in the 1960s and was embraced by no less a leading light on the intellectual left than Jean-Paul Sartre.

Gorz, by contrast, paid close attention to labour struggles in various parts of Europe and, inspired by the theoretical and practical work of the Italian left, concluded that revolutionary consciousness could be built up from within in a protracted process of creating a working-class counterhegemony. This view was not so far removed from the one Marcuse came to hold later on, when he embraced German student leader Rudi Dutschke's conception of the "long march through the institutions," but in the first half of the 1960s he offered little more to people working in the field than the Great Refusal, a protest against everything that is. More practical and less romantic though no less thoroughgoing in his opposition to the existing social order, Gorz insisted that struggle for socialism could not be based on immediate and total rejection of the status quo. This did not make him a reformist. Like Marcuse, Gorz was sensitive to the risks that opposition could be absorbed, that even structural reforms conforming to his stringent criteria could be manipulated to the advantage of the system, that demands for workers' control over production could be co-opted with schemes for participation and co-management. And while he took pains to formulate a strategy that would minimize those dangers, he declared that it was a risk which had to be taken because there was no other choice.

Far more frequently than being attacked as reformist in this period, however, Gorz's work is cast as tainted by syndicalism, anarcho-syndicalism or workerism (*ouvriérisme*). These designations are bandied about with remarkable disregard for terminological precision or clarification. Although a vaguely damning connotation is usually apparent from the tenor of the passage, one is never quite sure what analytical or political errors the accuser holds to be integral to the heresy.

Of course, the entire French working class and its organizations including the PCF and the French New Left and French sociologists as a group have also all been tarred with the brush of anarcho-syndicalism or workerism by a varied group of writers. While the term workerism is almost always intended abusively, the syndicalist label in its variations is sometimes applied in a more

ambiguous fashion. Although it too is most often wielded offhandedly in a pejorative way, it is sometimes used in a primarily neutral and descriptive manner to refer to the specific historical phenomena from which the term originates. As a movement or doctrine syndicalism is also invoked in a neutral or positive context as a forerunner of strategies for workers' control and of the goal of self-management.<sup>262</sup>

Let us glance at merely a few problems with applying such nebulous terms to Gorz. First, if workerism or syndicalism is taken to mean a fixation on the spontaneous actions of industrial workers in the workplace pursuing primarily economic demands as the sole legitimate means of bringing about a structural transformation of the existing order, then obviously Gorz does not fit the picture. As we have seen, his major complaint about the strategy of the union movement was that it failed to go beyond purely economic demands. His failure to specify the particular forms of political struggle must not be confused with a rejection of politics *tout court*.

Second, if anarcho-syndicalism is integrally associated with the Proudhonian vision of a society of small independent producers and craftsmen, then Gorz is again exculpated. For one thing, at this stage in his work, he specifically excluded the scale on which production was organized as a problem. In fact, he condemned nostalgia for the age of the artisan, maintaining that mass production was not alienating in and of itself. The atomization of the individual under capitalism was not the result of mass production but of "production which is social in its form but not in its ends."<sup>263</sup> As we saw earlier, as far as Gorz was concerned, producing mass quantities of an item was not dehumanizing for workers provided the item being produced served real social needs.

Third, given that workerism and syndicalism are usually understood as anti-intellectual in essence, what is to be made of the fact that Gorz reserved a pivotal role for intellectuals? Indeed the contribution of intellectuals in elaborating the overall alternative to capitalism and identifying the intermediary objectives which would render this total vision more concrete appears as an important piece in the puzzle of how and why the union movement might be expected to behave differently now than it had in the past when it functioned largely as the footsoldier of the Socialist and Communist parties. Gorz quotes a comment by Lucio Magri antithetical to the workerist assumption that revolutionary consciousness will obtain solely through struggles at the point of production: "...The contents which the proletariat can directly express are not really sufficient to constitute a

positive critique of the capitalist system ... Power will not be achieved by the proletariat without the lasting alliance of the social and political forces which can adhere to a revolutionary solution only insofar as they can see it as a well-defined positive whole."<sup>264</sup> Gorz's emphasis, here and at other points in the text, on the totalizing vision indispensable to the socialist project and the imperative of transcending the false separation of political and economic struggles runs counter to a reading of *Strategy for Labor* as a workerist mirror image of the social democratic or communist view of the narrow focus of trade unions on the economic sphere, reinforcing in its own way the disjunction between the political and the economic.

On the other hand, there is no question that there are serious problems with privileging unions as vectors of social change, as Gorz did. In Gorz's emphasis on unions as the locus of revolutionary struggle, combined with his relative neglect of other forms of struggle and his denial of any potential for the organized political process, it is fair to say that there are anarcho-syndicalist resonances. Nor did this go uncommented at the time. Perry Anderson, for example, criticized the elaboration of a strategy based on unions.<sup>265</sup> He explicitly named Vittorio Foa, but his critique addressed itself by extension to Gorz. Anderson condemned as an expression of despair what he perceived as the then current tendency to formulate an alternative strategy to social democratic reformism based on the primacy of trade unions. Although he concurred, as noted above, with the motivating principle which lay in a rejection of the "mediocrity and immobility of the working-class parties almost everywhere," he regarded the substitution of the unions for the political party as the main vehicle of socialist advance as a serious political regression. In response to what he referred to as "sophisticated syndicalism," Anderson asserted the need to transform the political party not to bypass it, and went on to elaborate a conception of the desirable form a socialist mass party would take, based on the Gramscian concept of the historic bloc. The criticism was apparently well taken, since when Gorz himself began later on to develop a model of a mass party it would correspond to Anderson's in many essentials. In the meantime, it is true enough that *Strategy for Labor* left unanswered the question of the practical means by which the struggle led by unions for workers' control at the point of production linked with or extended to the broader political struggle for public services and popular power.

To account for Gorz's emphasis on unions at the expense of the party, it helps to recall one particular aspect of the political context of the left in France during the early 1960s: the continuing strength of the French Communist Party — which Gorz viewed as a sclerotic organization that had, in practice at least, deserted any genuinely revolutionary vocation. His exclusive focus on the union movement appears in part as a way of circumventing the inescapable force of the PCF in French working class politics. Given that the PCF was unlikely either to reform itself or to be divested of its significant share of political space in the imminent future, any attempt by Gorz to formulate the role of a genuinely revolutionary party would have had to announce itself in direct opposition to the PCF. There was an obvious risk here in alienating the party's still numerous working class supporters, and it may be that Gorz was not yet prepared to take this political risk, choosing for the time being to ignore the problem altogether. But as we shall see in the next chapter, his reticence was temporary.

Another point worth noting is that, in relying so heavily on the Italian Marxists, Gorz overlooked and reflected the weaknesses of their analysis. As Grant Amyot has shown, the Italian left-wing communists and socialists were hardly very clear on the role of party. On the one hand, they seemed to view electoral politics as complementary to the struggles of the institutions of civil society (not only in theory but also in practice, as evidenced by their personal political careers: both Basso and Foa were, for example, members of parliament at various points). And while Basso, for example, warned against the parliamentary delusion — that is, the idea that parliament was the principal locus of power under neo-capitalism — he clearly indicated that parliament could still be used as an instrument — albeit highly limited — of working class struggle.<sup>266</sup> On the other hand, given their arguments against notions of working class integration and for workers' control, the intellectuals on the left of the PCI and outside the party during this period have been seen both at the time and in retrospect as unrepentantly workerist.<sup>267</sup> The left trade-unionists upon whom Gorz drew were aware of the accusations and the dangers.<sup>268</sup> Foa, for example, tried to deflect an apparently widespread charge of anarcho-syndicalism by accusing the critics of union autonomy of denying the unions the right to set political objectives and thus perpetuating the false separation of the political and the economic. Still, the argument in favour of union autonomy did not dispel the difficulty of making clear the lines of demarcation between the role of the unions and the role of the

party. While they admitted a role for a working class party, that role remained ill-defined, just as it did in *Strategy for Labor*.

In addition to Gorz's neglect of the role of the party, his rejection of the formal political process and of parliamentarianism in any form may also be seen as partaking of a syndicalist tradition that has deep roots in the French labour movement. More importantly, however, as one of the sole actual political strategies to respond to the analyses of and gain currency within the New Left, *Strategy for Labor* can be indicted for encouraging the exclusively extra-parliamentary focus that has been seen in retrospect as one of the most serious weaknesses of the New Left internationally. In France, the perception of the bankruptcy of the ballot box was epitomized in one of the slogans put forward by the students in May '68 — "*élections piège à cons*" (elections are a trap for fools) — in an anarchistic spirit the limits of which were driven home to Gorz particularly by the defeat of 1968, as we shall see in the next chapter.

It is worth mentioning here that however mistaken and shortsighted Gorz's blanket rejection of parliamentarianism as a component of a left political strategy may have been, such a judgement does not in any way necessitate an espousal of electoral politics as the only valid and legitimate left politics — a position R. W. Johnson assumes in *The Long March of the French Left* when he dismisses the "theoretical left" in France as a marginal and mystificatory phenomenon. Any overly optimistic reading of the possibilities of parliamentary socialism should be measured against the dismal historical balance sheet, confirmed in recent decades, of French Socialism in office.

### **On the New Left map**

In spite of the undeniable defects and shortcomings of *Strategy for Labor*, it constituted a serious attempt to address one of the critical problems of a New Left confronting the contemporary reality of what we know in retrospect to have been the halcyon days of post-war capitalism. In so far as it strove to locate the possibilities of the development of revolutionary consciousness and to transcend the twin impasses of the revolutionary apocalypse and the accommodating resignation of social democratic reformism, it constituted a significant contribution to the elaboration of a New Left project for France and the West more broadly. Of course, one of the fatal flaws in Gorz's theory was the more or less tacit premise that the working class's revolutionary tendencies had been



derailed by a misguided leadership in the Communist and Socialist Parties. With his eye on the ostensible revitalization of labour struggles in Europe fuelled by a potential new leading stratum in the form of technical workers, and in his desire to validate the integrity of the revolutionary subject, Gorz at once overestimated the revolutionary class consciousness possessed by even the more militant Italian or French working classes at any time in their histories and underestimated the degree of structural integration that had occurred especially during the post-war period. Nevertheless, at a time when some left intellectuals had deemed the contradictions of capitalism so effectively contained as to warrant abandoning the development of a left strategy for the nations of advanced capitalism, Gorz laboured to find a way to heighten awareness of the contradictions and magnify the fissures in the existing order, to build on existing grievances in order to push the struggle forward. Although he failed at this time to specify the contours of political struggles for intermediary objectives outside the unions, his rendering of the left-wing interpretation of the Italian Marxist concept of structural reforms offered a promising basis for a New Left political strategy. Some of the weaknesses of the strategy as he elaborated it would quickly become clear to Gorz himself and, as we shall see, he would soon make an effort to correct them.

George Ross fruitfully places Gorz in a novel and useful category of professional intellectuals that he dubs “sociological artisans,” distinguished from the *grands intellos* such as Sartre himself.<sup>269</sup> He suggests that this group, which also included Serge Mallet, Pierre Naville and Cornelius Castoriadis, complemented the efforts of some of the *grands intellos* (themselves divided in the 60s between Marxism and structuralism) to elaborate progressive modes of thought independent of the PCF. In particular they endeavoured to describe trends in the new capitalism in France and internationally that the official left failed to confront (and, it should be added, were able to reach a wider audience due to their greater accessibility). Ross argues that they deliberately sought to influence the evolution of French politics and that they were more attune to evolving rhythms of French politics and society in the 1960s than the *grands intellos*. It is not surprising then that Gorz’s work should have resonated with the concerns and aspirations of young intellectuals and students who were affected by the events in Algeria and who rejected the official left.

This New Left constituency referred to earlier is described very well in an essay by Marie-Noelle Thibault, “Souvenirs, Souvenirs.” The author, a former student militant, locates the vectors

of the New Left as a movement in this period in the UEC and the UNEF (among which organizations there was a degree of overlap). In keeping with an understanding of the eclecticism of the French student left, Thibault recalls the seminal influence of a variety of “unofficial” Marxist sources and currents — the writings of the young Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Gramsci, the issues of *Les Temps Modernes* devoted to Italian Marxism, *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. The UEC launched “weeks of Marxist thought” which drew tens of thousands of people. Attempting to reconstruct the intellectual space of the individuals who would eventually provide the leadership in the events of May '68, Hervé Hamon also points to the centrality of the UEC in student left politics. He notes that in the late 1950s and early 1960s it attracted people from a variety of political backgrounds since belonging to the UEC was “the intelligent way at the time to be anticommunist.”<sup>270</sup>

And it was precisely within this heartland of French dissident communism that Gorz's work had its most immediate and direct impact. In his 1972 study of the relationship between the French Communist Party and left intellectuals and students before and during May '68, Richard Johnson points out that *Strategy for Labor* was connected with noteworthy developments in the UEC.<sup>271</sup> Following its radicalization in the late 50s/early 60s as a result of the Algerian war, the UEC began to gravitate towards revisionist elements within the PCF, represented by such intellectuals as Marcel Servin and Laurent Casanova, as well as to the analyses of the PCI. By 1963, students sympathetic to the anti-Stalinist positions of the PCI had gained control of the UEC. They demanded a complete revision of Marxist theory and acceptance of diverse tendencies within the party. By 1964, they were in open revolt, supported by Sartre and the *Temps Modernes* circle. Johnson cites an open letter to the PCF Central Committee published in the UEC journal *Clarté* in November 1964, in which, among other things, the UEC attacked Thorez's pauperization theses and argued that Bolshevik-style seizure of power was no longer possible. They posited a gradual evolution towards socialism as the only alternative and called upon the PCF to set forth “intermediate democratic objectives” that would rally larger segments of the population behind the PCF and bring France closer to socialism. The PCF, it was argued, should fight for structural reforms, such as nationalization and democratic planning. As for the CGT, the open letter quoted Bruno Trentin on the importance of workers' control and suggested the CGT should undertake the struggle for

*autogestion*. As Johnson remarks, all of this closely paralleled Gorz's analysis in *Strategy for Labor*, which was published several months before the appearance of the open letter.

This is not to imply that Gorz was the sole influence within the UEC. Two arguments deserve to be made here. Whereas Johnson's study deliberately depicted students as the footsoldiers of the New Left intelligentsia, the reality is more complex; the analyses of left-wing intellectuals often intersected with conclusions the students were reaching in less systematic ways based on their own experience and judgement. Notions of convergence and points of contact are often more fruitful for conceptualizing the relationship between left intellectuals and the student left constituency than a transmission belt theory. Furthermore, the pro-Italian current within the UEC, which Johnson designates the Right Opposition, was immediately challenged by another group (the Left Opposition in Johnson's schema) who dismissed the Italian/Gorzian inspired analysis as warmed over social democracy and out of which the Trotskyist and Maoist *groupuscules* would soon emerge. Where Johnson sees this second current as superseding the first in a succession of left intellectual fads, Hervé Hamon maintains that the two currents coexisted antagonistically and that the struggle between them dominated intellectual life in the Latin Quarter.<sup>272</sup>

In any event, less than a year after their Gorzian-style declaration in *Clarté* and under intense attack from the Party leadership, the "Italians" in the UEC lost their dominance and either quit the organization or were expelled.<sup>273</sup> But Gorz's influence was further extended via the UEC to the progenitors of an important faction in the UNEF called the *Gauche syndicale*. It is to this group that Dick Howard was presumably referring in his assertion that Gorz's analysis of neo-capitalism was influential within the UNEF.<sup>274</sup> And Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman confirm that Gorz was the author who was most read and ruminated upon within this group.<sup>275</sup>

In the post-war tradition of the *mino* (minoritarian) current within the UNEF, the *Gauche syndicale*, led by Marc Kravetz and Jean-Louis Peninou of the Sorbonne Faculty of Letters subsection, stressed the non-corporatist role of the student union and even began to stake out a potential vanguard role for students. An article by Kravetz published in *Les Temps Modernes* in February 1964 offered a sustained critique of the university that prefigured the most reflective and considered student dissent in 1968, including an analysis of the position of students as neo-capitalism's managers-in-training similar to the one Gorz put forward, which we will examine in the

next chapter.<sup>276</sup> The *Gauche syndicale* dominated the UNEF's national bureau until the summer of 1966.<sup>277</sup>

For a variety of reasons, including internecine factional disputes, the UNEF itself went into decline as an organization during the decade, even as student numbers exploded.<sup>278</sup> What is germane here, however, is that these radical students reappeared as instrumental figures in the 1968 student uprising. In general, the UEC and the UNEF were the cradles of the student cadres, including the important Maoist and Trotskyist *groupuscules* formed in the wake of PCF purges. Kravetz and Peninou, for example, were among the older (at the advanced age of 26!) student leaders, who organized the MAU (Mouvement d'action universitaire) and subsequently the Mouvement du 3 mai, which carried out the first occupation of a university building in Paris.

Most significantly, given that Gorz purported to be elaborating a strategy explicitly *for labour*, the impress of Gorz's ideas was not confined to the student left. The ideas Gorz enunciated in *Strategy for Labor* both converged with and influenced important elements of the CFDT, the second largest union confederation after the CGT, and which evolved in the late 1960s into what might be designated a labour New Left. Previously a Catholic union, it undertook deconfessionalization in 1964, and moved toward a non-communist but increasingly radical politics. In his capacity as a journalist, Gorz maintained regular contact with several militants including Gilbert Declercq, Jean Auger, Jacques Delors, Edmond Maire, Michel Rolant and Alfredo Krumnow.<sup>279</sup> And histories of the CFDT confirm that these and other key actors were influenced by Gorz, who participated in several meetings in the early 60s in the Pays de Loire. He was quoted by various CFDT leaders in their reports to congresses, for instance by CFDT Secretary General Eugène Descamps in 1964<sup>280</sup> and Jean Maire, then Secretary General of the Metallurgy section, in his report to a 1965 congress.<sup>281</sup>

In a debate among French trade unionists associated with the three major confederations (CGT, CFDT, FO), Jean Auger echoed Gorz's calls for union autonomy and a shift of emphasis away from wage demands when he stated, "It seems indispensable to me that the trade union movement has (sic) a general strategy of its own, if it is not to fall into the trap of a consumer society and become, by this fact, the social assistant of the capitalist regime. But then our action must change its main character, from quantity to quality..."<sup>282</sup> And this general view was shared by

many of his colleagues in the union. While the convergence of analysis is the salient point here, there is no doubt that after 1968, when the real radicalization of the CFDT occurred, the Krumnow current, one of the three main ideological currents within the union, looked particularly to Gorz as an intellectual inspiration.<sup>283</sup> Discussing the explicit espousal of socialism by the CFDT in 1970, George Ross notes “Its intellectual debts were not to Marx and Lenin, but to French writers like Serge Mallet and André Gorz, and to the more progressive sides of Vatican 2.”<sup>284</sup>

It is clear then that the ideas Gorz advanced in *Strategy for Labor* and other writings, had some significance in the history of the French student and labour left in the 1960s, although it is difficult to ascertain the truth of some of the more sweeping claims that have been made for Gorz's influence in shaping the terms of left debate in France. It is certainly not possible to substantiate Arthur Hirsh's rather hyperbolic assertion that *Strategy for Labor* provided the basis for the French New Left's political strategy.<sup>285</sup> For one thing, the French New Left was divided within itself and to whatever extent Gorz was a source of inspiration, different groups of students looked to different elements of his work. The last claim that could convincingly be made in behalf of the French New Left is that it possessed a unified political strategy. And certainly even if *autogestion* was one of the stated goals of students and elements of the labour movement in May '68, the pedigree was mixed. Finally, of course, “structural reform” does not appear to have become a generalized slogan of any part of the left in France either before, during or after May, as it was in Italy. Even Dick Howard's contention<sup>286</sup> that debates unfolding within the PCI about such matters as workers' control and structural reforms migrated to France due to Gorz's work as editor of *Les Temps Modernes* may be somewhat overstated, given other potential sources and triggers for French discussion of such issues (for instance, the UEC read the journal of the equivalent PCI youth organization). But Howard's claim is probably closer to the truth. Gorz certainly contributed to formulating and popularizing a critique of the nature of neo-capitalism and a labour strategy that responded to the new realities. He sought means to restore a revolutionary vocation to the working class, while acknowledging the changing character of the class.

And Gorz's impact extended far beyond France. By the mid 1960s Gorz had established an international reputation, especially among the student New Left. This international resonance is in part the obverse side of the diverse sources of Gorz's own intellectual inspirations: few theorists

better demonstrated the transnational cross pollination and dialogue that characterized much New Left thought. To note only a few examples of the reverberation of Gorz's ideas, his work was studied by the West German left, and had a particularly significant impact among the Young Socialists of the SPD,<sup>287</sup> and he was cited as a *maître à penser* by Spanish students.<sup>288</sup> *Strategy for Labor* was translated into 13 languages.<sup>289</sup>

In the U.S., Gorz was studied by some of the leading figures in SDS (Students for A Democratic Society) such as Carl Davidson and Greg Calvert.<sup>290</sup> Gorzian analysis, in fact, formed the basis of the strategy outlined in Davidson's "The New Radicals and the Multiversity," an important SDS pamphlet.<sup>291</sup> In it, Davidson, who was SDS Interorganizational Secretary from 1967 to 1968 before joining the staff of the left weekly *The Guardian*, adapted the strategy of revolutionary reformism and workers' control to the student movement. Following Gorz, he urged:

Fighting for reforms and making a revolution should not be seen as mutually exclusive positions. The question should be: what kind of reforms move us toward a radical transformation of both the university and the society in general? First of all, we should avoid the kinds of reforms which leave the basic rationale of the system unchallenged.<sup>292</sup>

He proceeded to elaborate a strategy of student control to enable the university to meet the self-determined needs of students and teachers and place the university's resources at the disposal of the working class. His text also reveals the strong influence of Gorz's analysis of the new working class. He quotes Gorz extensively from an article in the *International Socialist Journal* and *Strategy for Labor* on the dilemma that capital faces in its need to equip people with the skills and knowledge to ensure adequate management of the production process and its simultaneous need to prevent this development from stimulating individual independence and initiative.

As this example indicates, *Strategy for Labor* was the principal reason for Gorz's initial popularity. Gorz himself noted that while *La morale de l'histoire* remained obscure in France, it was well received in Italy and in Spanish-speaking countries, owing, in his estimation, to its attention to the problem of alienation. He makes the astonishing claim that the book remained unknown in France because the problem of alienation was "continually rejected by French Marxism."<sup>293</sup> Here vanity and wounded pride evidently overcame Gorz's grip on reality. Although he may have written the book in relative isolation from debates of the time, alienation was in the

order of an obsession for the revisionist current of the late 50s and remained at the heart of the development of New Left social theory in France. Expounding upon this theme at great length, Mark Poster offers a partial list of relevant publications from the post-war period that alone proves the implausibility of Gorz's contention.<sup>294</sup> And Arthur Hirsh also underscores the centrality of Marx's concept of alienation for all of the currents he identifies as the foundations of the French New Left.<sup>295</sup> Why *La morale de l'histoire* was slighted in France must therefore remain a mystery. But in any case, it was *Strategy for Labor* that spoke most immediately and accessibly to the requirements of building a New Left theory and practice. And in it Gorz gave expression to a number of ideas — including identifying alienation as the critical problem of capitalism at the time — that evolved as common currency among a significant number of students and activists in the New Left throughout the West. Gorz's emphasis in *Strategy for Labor* on the urgency of qualitative change as opposed to quantitative improvements, his stress on the lack of freedom to determine what is produced as well as how it is produced as a central factor of alienation, and his critique of the consumer society and the capitalist model of development as such certainly converged with the direction of New Left thought internationally. In light of the previous discussion concerning Gorz's syndicalist leanings, it is interesting that Karl Klare, writing at the height of New Left intellectual development in which he was himself a participant, quoted Gorz precisely as an exponent of a vision radically different from workerism. In contrast with the orthodox Marxism that tends to “see people primarily in their situation as workers” and to “structure political action around the workplace,” Klare affirmed, Gorz demonstrated that “not just physical, economic deprivation, but the entire social and cultural situation is the subject of revolutionary intervention.”<sup>296</sup>

Gorz thus partook of and helped to shape the emerging New Left consensus on the iniquities of the affluent capitalism of the 1960s. He also contributed to one of the major weaknesses of the analysis: the idea that since capitalism had managed to contain its most flagrant contradictions to eliminate the worst effects of privation, there was no reason to think it would not continue to do so indefinitely. Indeed, there are moments when it seems as though the worst outcome Gorz expected absent the protracted revolution for which he was laying down the strategy was a Scandinavian-style mixed economy.<sup>297</sup> In hindsight, the New Left was rather precipitous in its dismissal of the Old Left's insistence on the inevitability of crisis, although not in its recognition of

capitalism's flexibility in dealing with crisis. And this is an error that Gorz would attempt to address faced with the growing economic crisis of the decades succeeding the 60s. But that is a decade in the future. In 1964, in a context of apparently everlasting affluence, it was a new source of radical demands that was deemed indispensable to renewing the revolutionary vocation of the working class, a catalyst that would galvanize the unions, moving them to emerge from their former torpor under the tutelage of the working class parties and spurring them to deploy the strategy of workers' control in order to link today's immediate demands with tomorrow's socialist goals. And, more than anything else perhaps, it was Gorz's response to this problem in the form of his contribution to the theory of the new working class that captured the imagination of many on the student left and even the trade union left. It is to this topic that we turn in the following chapter.



## Notes

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Self-Portrait at Seventy," *Life/Situations*, trans. Paul Auster and Lydia Davis (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 76.
2. Anna Boschetti, *Sartre et "Les Temps Modernes"* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), pp. 116-117.
3. See Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Itinerary of a Thought," in *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, trans. John Matthews (New York: Morrow Quill, 1979), pp. 33-35.
4. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, n.d.), pp. 526-27. Herbert Marcuse draws attention to this passage in his compelling 1948 critique of *Being and Nothingness* as a crowning piece of evidence in his case against Sartre's ontological concept of freedom. See "Sartre's Existentialism," in *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, trans. Joris de Bres (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), pp. 170-77.
5. André Gorz, *The Traitor*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 232.
6. Gorz made this comment during an exchange with Sartre in *Sartre By Himself*, a film about Sartre directed by Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat. Transcript translated by Richard Seaver, (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), p. 61.
7. This quotation is from Gorz's essay "Sartre and Marx" originally published in 1966 in the *New Left Review* and reprinted in *Western Marxism: a Critical Reader*, ed. New Left Review (London: Verso, 1978), p.186.
8. A number of students of Sartre's relationship with the left single out this aspect of Sartre's concept of radical freedom as having enduring significance for his contribution to New Left social theory. See for example: Ronald Aronson, *Sartre: Philosophy in the World* (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 78-80; Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: from Sartre to Althusser* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press), p. 91; Arthur Hirsh, *The French Left* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982), p. 27.
9. Writing as a contemporary witness to the flowering of both **existentialism and the New Left**, George Lichtheim noted that one of the principal attractions of Marx's early writings was precisely the idea of freedom as "the central constituent of human nature" and "the idea that in and through history, men realize their latent potentialities" — ideas upon which basis socialism was redefined as a struggle for the enlargement of human freedom. This conception was, for Lichtheim, what united Marx with existentialism in the synthesis of the French New Left. "New Left Marxism," *Commentary* (March 1963), p. 242.
10. Gorz, "Sartre and Marx," p. 187.
11. André Gorz, "Preface" to his *Fondements pour une morale* (Paris: Galilée, 1977), p. 14.
12. Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, trans. Richard Howard (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 100-101.
13. Gorz, *The Traitor*, p. 234.

14. For a discussion of *The Traitor* focusing on the issues it raises with respect to the autobiographical genre, see Laura Marcus, "'An Invitation to Life': André Gorz's *The Traitor*," *New Left Review* 194 (July-August 1992).
15. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 62.
16. See the section on existential psychoanalysis in *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 557-575.
17. Aronson, *Sartre: Philosophy in the World*, p. 78.
18. Gorz, *The Traitor*, p. 80.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.
20. *Ibid.*, 93-94.
21. Ironically, I came across this line in a 1969 interview with Sartre where he cites it to illustrate his earlier view of the unconditional character of freedom, by which he was scandalized in retrospect. Sartre, "Itinerary of a Thought," pp. 33-34.
22. Gorz, *The Traitor*, p. 94.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
24. *Ibid.*, pp.75-76.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
27. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author by correspondence, January 7, 1998.
28. Gorz, *The Traitor*, p. 46.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 53-54.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
31. See Poster, *Existential Marxism*, for a superb and comprehensive account of this moment which draws out numerous implications for the direction of post-war independent Marxism in France; on the Hegel revival see chapter one and on the rediscovery of Marx's early writings see chapter two, pp. 49-71. In a characteristically uncharitable way, George Lichtheim confirms the particular interest the works of the young Marx held for the effort to forge a humanist Marxism in France and elsewhere, remarking that the Paris Manuscripts were unearthed "...when 'existentialism' was rampant in Europe and radical intellectuals yearned for mental sustenance more rewarding to the spirit than the dry dust of historical necessity." [Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966) p. 231.] This undoubtedly captures the spirit in which French orthodox Marxism viewed the renaissance. But Lichtheim also concedes the points of convergence between the early Marx and existentialist philosophy at least with respect to the common rejection of positivism, see pp. 236-240.

32. Poster, *Existential Marxism*, p. 105.
33. Aronson, *Sartre, Philosophy in the World*, pp., 140-141.
34. Gorz, *The Traitor*, pp. 215-216 and see also pp. 285-287.
35. Gorz implies that Sartre is someone who “asks nothing for himself” and does not seek admiration, whereas Camus was motivated by a desire for posthumous glory. *Ibid.*, p. 294.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 303.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 297.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 291.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 295.
47. Richard Johnson, *The French Communist Party Versus the Students* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 37.
48. Gorz, *The Traitor*, p. 285.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 297.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
51. de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, pp. 180-181.
52. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*
55. Gorz, *The Traitor*, p. 260.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

57. In her memoirs de Beauvoir described the manuscript as “intelligent but too obviously derivative of *Being and Nothingness*.” (de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, p. 389.) The rather cavalier manner in which de Beauvoir thus disposed of this philosophical work in her memoirs is seized upon by Anna Boschetti in her study of *Les Temps Modernes* to suggest that Sartre favoured exegetes over those who strove to make an original contribution to Sartrean philosophy [*Sartre et “Les Temps Modernes”* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), p. 297 n.16.] She argues that this accounts for his rejection of Gorz’s manuscript, whereas he welcomed the commentary of another colleague, Francis Jeanson, on the moral problem in Sartrean philosophy. She asserts that Gorz’s philosophical endeavours only earned Sartre’s approval when he restricted himself to interpretive analysis of Sartre’s own work.

Some clarification is in order here in the interest of the accuracy of the historical record. We cannot know precisely why *Fondements pour une morale* did not win de Beauvoir’s favour, but in Gorz’s 1976 preface to its long delayed publication — detrimentally if not deliberately overlooked in Boschetti’s study — Gorz himself describes in great detail exactly what transpired with Sartre and his manuscript. He explains that by 1955 Sartre was preoccupied with writing the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and considered ontology and morality to be outmoded and erroneous approaches (*des errements dépassés*). (“Preface,” *Fondements*, p.16.) This could easily account for Sartre’s more enthusiastic reaction to Jeanson’s book, which had been written as early as 1947. And it should be noted too that although Sartre eventually returned to the problem of morality and the project of an ethics, in 1949 he had already abandoned his original efforts to write an ethics, contending in his diary that ethics was a collection of idealistic tricks. (de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, p. 210.) While Gorz was never sure whether Sartre had actually read beyond the table of contents and the opening page, he did receive a word of recommendation from Sartre intended for the publisher Jean Hyppolite. But, as Gorz noted, it was not in anyone’s power to get a publisher to accept this immoderate work by an unknown.” [“Preface,” *Fondements*, pp. 18 (my translation).] Gorz did not pursue the matter; as he explained his resignation, his character was such that he always expected failure and rejection. Moreover, at those times when he did overcome his passivity over the next few years to seek a publisher he could not interest anyone else in the manuscript. (Ibid.) Boschetti’s gloss on Sartre’s intentions and role in the (mis)fortune of the text is therefore questionable at best.

58. Gorz, “Preface,” *Fondements*, p. 11.

59. Ibid., p. 12.

60. Gorz, *Fondements*, p. 118-119.

61. See Ibid., pp. 114-118.

62. Gorz, *Fondements*, p. 121 (my translation).

63. For a good overview of this current and its location within the French left spectrum, see Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France de l’affaire Dreyfus à nos jours*, second edition, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), chapter 9.

64. Although he offered a laudatory evaluation of the book’s merit, his belaboured remarks characterizing as a supreme virtue what he clearly regarded as its lack of style, might well have backhandedly shattered any literary aspirations Gorz may have had. *The Traitor* was Gorz’s last foray into a quasi-literary genre, although he did write a sequel of sorts to *The Traitor* which appeared in two parts in *Les Temps Modernes* in November 1961 and January 1962 under the title

- "La Veillissement." Gorz attributes the abandonment of his literary efforts to his immersion in the concerns of the day, such as the Algerian War and the state of the union movement, which propelled him towards political journalism. Gorz, "Alienation, Freedom and Utopia," interview by R. Maischein and M. Jander, trans. W. L. Habib, *Telos* 70 (Winter 1986-87), p. 153.
65. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
66. Jürg Altwegg, *Querelles de Français*, trans. Jeanne Etoré (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1986), p. 133.
67. Tony Judt, for example, identifies the period from 1956-1966 as the idyll of humanist Marxism in *Marxism and the French Left: Studies in Labour and Politics in France, 1830-1981* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 217.
68. Perry Anderson makes this point in *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 32. Tony Judt offers the same observation, invoking Perry Anderson as an illustration of the point! *Marxism and the French Left*, pp. 169-170.
69. George Ross, "Where Have All the Sartres Gone? The French Intelligentsia Born Again," in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 222.
70. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Introduction to *Les Temps Modernes*," trans. Françoise Ehrmann, in *Movements, Currents, Trends: Aspects of European Thought in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Eugen Weber (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, 1992), p. 470.
71. In a retrospective glance at the birth of the journal, Simone de Beauvoir stressed the desire of the two men at the outset of the project to maintain a dialogue with the PCF in spite of the Party's snarling contempt for Sartre in the immediate post-war period. "Naissance des Temps Modernes," *Les Temps Modernes* 471 (October 1985), p. 353.
72. The journal's preoccupations are discussed by Michel-Antoine Burnier in *Choice of Action*, trans. Bernard Murchland (New York: Vintage Books, 1969).
73. Pierre Nora and Marcel Gauchet, "Mots-moments," *Le Débat* 50, special edition (May-August 1988), p. 175 (my translation).
74. Gil Delannoï, "Arguments, 1956-1962 ou la parenthèse de l'ouverture," *Revue française de science politique* 34 (February 1984), p. 128.
75. Edgar Morin, "La crise française," *Arguments* (June 1958).
76. *Arguments* 5 (1961).
77. On the history of *Esprit* see Dick Howard's essay "Esprit" in *Defining the Political* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
78. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
79. I am here adopting the taxonomy of Arthur Hirsh, which is more or less in keeping with that of Richard Gombin in *The Origins of Modern Leftism*, trans. M. Perl (Middlesex: Penguin, 1975).

80. Gombin, *Origins*, p. 36 n. 25.
81. Gérard Genette, "Notes sur *Socialisme ou Barbarie*," *Arguments* (June-September 1957), pp. 8-9.
82. Judt, *Marxism and the French Left*, p. 190.
83. Gombin, *Origins*, p. 38.
84. Judt, *Marxism and the French Left*, p. 189.
85. Genette, "Notes sur *Socialisme ou Barbarie*," pp. 11-12.
86. Poster, *Existential Marxism*, p. 216.
87. Edgar Morin, "Solécismes ou barbarismes," *Arguments* (June-September 1957), pp. 14-15.
88. For an excellent presentation of the main lines of disagreement within *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, see Gombin, *Origins*, pp. 97ff.
89. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
90. Ibid.
91. For remarks on areas of common interest see, for example, Dick Howard, "The Historical Context," in *The Unknown Dimension: European Marxism Since Lenin*, ed. Dick Howard and Karl Klare (New York: Basic Books, 1972), especially pp. 65-72. In his essay "New Situation, New Strategy: Serge Mallet and André Gorz" in the same volume, Howard remarks that three interrelated problems stood out in the rethinking of French left intellectuals for which 1958 marked a turning point: the society of consumption and the new forms of alienation it brought about; the evolution in the structure and nature of the working class; the role of the revolutionary party and the type of socialism to be created by a revolution (p. 389). See also Tony Judt, *Marxism and the French Left*, pp. 187 and 198-199.
92. Gombin, *Origins*, p. 22.
93. Gorz's journalistic orientation is a target of reproach by Anna Boschetti, who attributes to Gorz a pivotal responsibility in moving *Les Temps Modernes* in a less academic more journalistic direction in the 1960s. In her estimation, this shift diminished the journal's stature as a paragon of intellectual excellence stemming from its innovative fusion of philosophy and news analysis. In addition to undermining its credibility, she suggests, the journalistic orientation left *Les Temps Modernes* with little to distinguish it from competing organs such as *Le Nouvel Observateur* which it helped to found and which was Gorz's principal journalistic outlet. (*Sartre et "Les Temps Modernes"*, pp. 311-314.) This is of course a debatable point which comes down to the thorny, although by no means entirely subjective, question of what constitutes intellectual excellence.
94. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p. 85.
95. Ibid.

96. Gorz, *La morale de l'histoire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), see chapter one, "'On fait ce qu'on peut.'"
97. The thrust of his argument is that conditions of penury in the USSR rendered democracy impossible. Yet while circumstances may have thus dictated a dictator, the particular dictator was not inscribed in the logic of historical necessity; that is, the dictator could have been someone other than Stalin, which in turn would have led to a different outcome for the USSR. *La morale*, pp. 27-31.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 23 (my translation).
99. Sartre, *Search*, pp. 86-87.
100. Gorz, *La morale*, p. 23 (my translation).
101. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 35 (my translation).
103. *Ibid.*, Part III, pp. 147-181.
104. Marx, "Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p. 182.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 155 (my translation).
107. See the section in *La morale* entitled "La situation actuelle du marxisme," pp. 234-237.
108. Sartre, *Search*, p. 91. For an illuminating discussion of the Sartrean concept of need, see Mark Poster, *Sartre's Marxism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 51-53.
109. Gorz, *La morale*, p. 158.
110. *Ibid.*
111. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-180.
- \*112. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
113. Harrington, *The Accidental Century* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 132.
114. Gorz, *La morale*, pp. 205-223.
115. V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), preface to the French and German editions, pp. 13-14.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
117. Gorz, *La morale*, p. 208 (my translation).

118. Ibid., p. 210.
119. Ibid., p. 180.
120. Ibid., p. 48.
121. Ibid., p. 55.
122. Poster, *Sartre's Marxism*, p. 63.
123. Hirsh, *The French Left*, p. 75.
124. Gorz, *La morale*, p. 49.
125. Ibid., p. 50 (my translation).
126. Ibid., pp. 180-181.
127. This widely-used expression referring to the three decades following the Liberation originated in 1979 with the title of a book by Jean Fourastié.
128. See Richard Kuisel "French Post-war Economic Growth," in *The Mitterand Experiment: Continuity and Change in Modern France*, ed. George Ross, Stanley Hoffman and Sylvia Malzacher (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987).
129. For a discussion of the creation of the French welfare state, see Douglas Ashford, "In Search of the Etat Providence" in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield, and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991).
130. Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, p. 167.
131. One of the most fruitful attempts to resolve this minor problem in the history of ideas is the gap theory, which has it that while many of the elite intellectuals, the *grands intellos*, took flight into structuralism, the more numerous lesser lights retained a Marxist or *marxisant* conceptual framework. Variants of this ideas are presented by Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli in *Les Intellectuels en France*, p. 211, and by George Ross in "Where Have All the Sartres Gone? p. 223. The predominant influence of various forms of new left humanist Marxism in the 60s is confirmed by Marie-Noelle Thibault. She asserts that structuralism in its Althusserian form was the enemy for most students on the left, and that Althusser's influence was limited to a select few at the *École normale supérieure* who eventually became the core of the UJC-ML, a Maoist *groupuscule*. ["Souvenirs, Souvenirs," in *May 68: Coming of Age*, ed. D.L. Hanley and A.P. Kerr (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 191-192.] I include a fuller account of her view of the New Left as a movement in this period in the conclusion of this chapter. For the counter-argument, Tony Judt offers an interesting explanation for what he regards as the transition from the era of Sartre to that of Althusser, which need not contravene the gap theory. He suggests that Sartre himself ceased to be a cynosure somewhere between 1958 and 1963, since the humanist reading of Marxism to which he subscribed had in fact been so thoroughly assimilated by a generation of left intellectuals and students that Sartre's own arguments became redundant. Judt maintains, however, that it was roughly in 1963 that humanist Marxism itself ran out of steam, foundering on historical developments of the period which seemed to banish revolution from the horizon, namely economic boom conditions and the quiescence of the working class. For this reason, Judt suggests, students in



- the *grandes écoles* found compelling a theory about the unchanging structures of the system. *Marxism and the French Left*, pp. 190-192.
132. Thibault, "Souvenirs, Souvenirs," p. 192.
133. For a carefully argued case, see, for example, Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, pp. 210-211.
134. Hervé Hamon, "68 — The Rise and Fall of a Generation?" in *May '68: Coming of Age*, ed. D.L. Hanley and A.P. Kerr (n.p.: Macmillan, 1989), p. 14.
135. Ross, "Where Have All the Sartres Gone?" p. 223 and 243n.21.
136. Ory et Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, p. 200.
137. Johnson, *The French Communist Party Versus the Students*, p. 43.
138. This is the exact date given by Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka in *Les Écrits de Sartre: Chronologie et bibliographie commentée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 318.
139. Boschetti, *Sartre et "Les Temps Modernes,"* pp. 298-300.
140. On this point see, for example, Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, chapter 9; Johnson, *The French Communist Party Versus the Students*, pp. 40-44, where the author also offers an explanation of the PCF's weak stance on Algeria; and Burnier, *Choice of Action*, chapter 9.
141. Jane Jenson, "The French Left: A Tale of Three Beginnings" in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 93.
142. The name of the Algerian city was also the name of one of the three departments into which Algeria was divided by the French for administrative purposes). André Gorz, "Gaullisme et néo-colonialisme," *Les Temps Modernes* 176 (February 1961): 1150-1171.
143. Boschetti, *Sartre et "Les Temps Modernes,"* pp. 293-306.
144. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
145. Dick Howard has seen in Gorz's *Strategy for Labor* the imprint of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. "History is interpreted as a series of human praxical 'totalizations' occurring on different levels, each of which surpasses the one that made it possible. Each totalization is the solidification of human praxis, and as the product of praxis, it can be changed by man." And so he continues at some length. ("New Situation, New Strategy: Mallet and Gorz," p. 405.) It is true that there are convergences between the elements of Sartre's *Critique* that Howard singles out and the thrust of *Strategy for Labor*. However, given the preponderant influence of Italian communists and socialists that I am about to demonstrate, this would mean that the thinking of the entire Italian Marxist left had evolved within the terms of Sartre's philosophy. In spite of the congenial personal and intellectual relations Sartre maintained with individuals like Lelio Basso, this is an unlikely proposition at best. What gives all these analyses a family resemblance is a Marxist humanism that emphasizes the unity of theory and practice.

146. Among many examples, see the prefatory remarks to the interview conducted with Gorz by Michel Contat and François Georges for *Le Monde* in October 1980 and republished in *Entretiens avec Le Monde*, 6 vols. (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1985), vol. 6: *La Société*, and George Ross, "Where Have All the Sartres Gone?" p. 242 n.14.
147. Marc Lazar, *Maisons Rouges: Les Partis communistes français et italien de la Libération à nos jours* (Paris: Aubier, 1992), pp. 100-101.
148. Burnier, *Choice of Action*, p. 140.
149. "André Gorz," interview by Michel Contat and François Georges, pp. 205-206.
150. André Gorz, *Strategy for Labor: A Radical Proposal*, trans. Martin A. Nicolaus and Victoria Ortiz (Boston Beacon Press, 1968) p. 20; originally *Stratégie ouvrière et néo-capitalisme* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964).
151. Gorz, "Preface," *Fondements*, p.19.
152. See the article "Aspects of Italian Communism" published under the pseudonym Michel Bosquet, trans. Charles Posner, *Socialist Register*, 1964.
153. Arthur Hirsh, among others, says Gorz initiated the *Temps Modernes'* "Italian period," *The French Left*, p. 223. But the phrase is rather hyperbolic considering that this period involved the publication of two special issues partly devoted to contributions by Italian Marxists, as well as some scattered pieces. Nevertheless the broad influence of some PCI positions on the *Temps Modernes* circle was considerable and was reflected in editorials, many of them written by Gorz.
154. Cited in Norberto Bobbio, *Ideological Profile of Twentieth Century Italy*, trans. Lydia Cochrane, Giovanni Agnelli Foundation Series in Italian History, no. 1 (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p.186.
155. Bob Lumley, "Review of *Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis-Italian Marxist Texts of the Theory and Practice of a Class Movement: 1964-79*," *Capital & Class* 12 (Winter 1980/81), p. 126.
156. Giuseppe Bedeschi, *La Parabola del Marxismo in Italia 1945-1983* (Rome: Laterza, 1983), pp. 106-109.
157. See "Les luttes ouvrières dans le développement capitaliste," trans. into French by Romain Denis, *Les Temps Modernes* 196/197 (September 1962).
158. See Howard, "New Situation, New Strategy: Mallet and Gorz," pp. 402-403.
159. See, for example, his "A New Socialist Party," *International Socialist Journal* 2 (April 1964), p. 162.
160. See Basso, "The Workingmen's International Association," *International Socialist Journal* 5-6 (September-December 1964) and "For a Dialectical Approach," *International Socialist Journal* 8 (April 1965), p. 175.
161. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

162. Antonio Giolitti, "Réformes et Revolution," *Les Temps Modernes* 150-151 (August-September 1958).
163. Grant Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party: The Crisis of the Popular Front Strategy* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 57 and 124.
164. Lucio Magri, "Italian Communism in the Sixties," *New Left Review* 66 (March-April 1971), p. 40.
165. Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party*, p. 59.
166. Ibid.
167. Hirsh, *The French Left*, p. 143.
168. James F. Hollifield, "Immigration and Modernization" in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 145 n.41.
169. Jenson, "The French Left," p.108 n.9.
170. Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, p. 146 n.26.
171. This important point is emphasized by everyone from George Ross and Jane Jenson to Tony Judt in English, and by Hervé Hamon, for example, in French.
172. On the PCF in left intellectual debate in the 70s, see George Ross, "Destroyed by the Dialectic: Politics, the Decline of Marxism, and the New Middle Strata in France," *Theory and Society* 16 (January 1987), pp. 7-38.
173. George Ross, "Saying No to Capitalism at the Millenium (sic)," *Socialist Register* 1995, p. 54.
174. Jenson, "The French Left," p. 110 n. 31.
175. Ibid. p. 110 n.33.
176. Ibid., p. 94. While Jenson seems to regard this attention to class in a generally positive light, she does point out that this concentration on class shrank the space for the development of autonomous politics around the new social movements in the 70s. Ibid., p. 97.
177. Gorz, "Avant-Propos," *Les Temps Modernes* 196/197 (September 1962).
178. Gorz, *Stratégie ouvrière et néocapitalisme*, p. 18 (my translation).
179. Gorz, "Unions and Politics," in his *Socialism and Revolution*, trans. Norman Denny (New York: Anchor Books, 1973), p. 83.
180. Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, p. 91.
181. R. W. Johnson, *The Long March of the French Left* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), p. 25.
182. He argues this point in "Unions and Politics," p. 84.

183. Gorz, *Stratégie ouvrière et néocapitalisme*, p. 39 (my translation).
184. See George Ross and Jane Jenson, "Post-War Class Struggle and the Crisis of Left Politics," *Socialist Register* (1985/1986), pp. 23-28.
185. See André Barjonet, "CGT 1968," in *Reflections on the Revolution in France: 1968*, ed. Charles Posner (Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), especially p. 159.
186. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 20.
187. See Grant Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party*.
188. Lelio Basso, "A New Socialist Party," *International Socialist Journal* 2 (April 1964), p. 162.
189. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 4.
190. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
191. Gorz, *Strategy*, pp. 12-13 (original emphasis).
192. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
193. *Ibid.*
194. *Ibid.*, p.181 n.
195. Lelio Basso, "For a Dialectical Approach," *International Socialist Journal* 8 (April 1965), p. 184.
196. He refers to this point when clarifying his views on the nature of structural reforms in a lecture series in Sweden in 1966. Here he indicates that what distinguishes revolutionary reforms from social-democratic reforms are the organic links between the reforms, the tempo and method of their implementation and whether the temporary blow to the system created by the reform is taken advantage of to mount further challenges. But this belongs to Gorz's later and modified formulation of the strategy of structural reforms. See "Reform and Revolution," in *Socialism and Revolution*, p. 141.
197. Gorz, *Stratégie ouvrière et néocapitalisme*, p. 15 (my translation).
198. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
199. Judt, *Marxism and the French Left*, p. 178.
200. This rising strength must be seen in relative terms, of course. The percentage of unionized workers began to grow a little from 1958 forward, after a long period of decline. It stabilized at roughly 30 per cent of the labour force, but this was a 20 per cent loss compared to the immediate post-war figure of 50 per cent. What is more germane to this point, however, is the resumption of militancy. In his study of French trade unions, René Mouriaux cites layoffs in key sectors such as coal, iron, mining, steel, shipbuilding and textiles, as the trigger for a series of bitter and often violent strikes in 1963. That year more days were lost to strikes than in any subsequent year until 1968. According to Mouriaux, this was the turning point that spurred the secularization of the

- CFDT in 1964. ("Trade Unions, Unemployment, and Regulation: 1962-1989," trans. James Hollifield and George Ross in *Searching for the New France*, pp. 175-176.) Gorz was certainly attentive to these developments, and he closely followed the French miners strike. See his "La grève des mineurs," *Les Temps Modernes* 202 (March 1963).
201. See Gorz's recollections in "La plus grande liberté possible," debate with Peter Glotz and Tilman Fichter, *Les Temps Modernes* 483 (October 1986), p. 65, and for a brief discussion that confirms Gorz's reading of the developments in the Italian trade unions see Grant Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party*, p. 60 and p. 124.
202. Michel Bosquet, "Aspects of Italian Communism," p. 82.
203. Gorz, "La plus grande liberté possible," p. 67.
204. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
205. Hirsh, *The French Left*, p. 144.
206. Gorz, "Avant-Propos," pp. 396-397.
207. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 33.
208. James F. McMillan, *Twentieth-Century France* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), p. 172.
209. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 71.
210. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
211. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 39.
212. For this argument see pp. 40-54 in *Strategy for Labor*.
213. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
214. Rudi Supek writes "... 'workers' control' must be distinguished from workers' self-management, for workers' control involves class antagonism toward employers and the existence of antagonistic class power relations, while workers' self-management represents the surmounting and disappearance of class antagonistic relations and the creation of a new work community of producers..." "The Sociology of Workers' Self-Management," in *Self-Governing Socialism*, vol. 2: *Sociology and Politics: Economics*, ed. Branko Horvat, Mihailo Marković and Rudi Supek (New York: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1975), pp. 10-11. See also Ken Coates, "Democracy and Workers' Control," in *Towards Socialism*, ed. Perry Anderson and Robin Blackburn (London: Fontana, 1965), pp. 290-293, and Yvon Bourdet and Alain Guillermin, *L'Autogestion* (Paris: Éditions Seghers, 1975), pp. 24-25. And for a dissenting view see Michel Raptis, *Socialism, Democracy and Self-Management*, trans. Marie-Jo Serrié and Richard Sissons (London: Allison & Busby, 1980), chapter 10.
215. In interviews conducted during the May events, UNEF leader Jacques Sauvageot and National Union of Higher Education (SNE sup) leader Alain Geismar equated workers' control with libertarian socialism; see, *The French Student Revolt: The Leaders Speak*, trans. R. Brewster (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), pp. 22-23 and p. 43.

216. Judt, *Marxism and the French Left*, p. 220.
217. Stephen Bornstein and Keitha Fine, "Worker Control in France: Recent Political Developments," in *Worker Self-Management in Industry: The West European Experience*, ed. G. David Garson (New York: Praeger, 1977), p. 153 n. The authors offer other useful terminological clarification, contrasting workers' control with co-and-*autogestion*.
218. Gorz, "Unions and Politics," in *Socialism and Revolution*, p. 94.
219. This point is stressed in John D. Stephens, *The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 83-84.
220. Yvon Bourdet and Alain Guillermin, *L'Autogestion*, p. 7.
221. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 126.
222. I am adopting the more restrictive definition of the *gauchiste* current employed by Richard Gombin and Arthur Hirsh, which limits *gauchisme* to that body of ideas inspired primarily by *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. For an excellent presentation of this *gauchiste* current in all its permutations, see Richard Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism*. He notes that most of the *gauchiste* theories were hostile to trade unions, one of many features that place them at irreconcilable odds with a Gorzian analysis.
223. Hirsh, *The French Left*, pp. 122-123.
224. Gombin, *Origins*, pp. 86-87.
225. Poster, *Existential Marxism*, p. 384.
226. Judt, *Marxism and the French Left*, p. 218.
227. See Pierre Cours-Salies, *La CFDT: un passé porteur d'avenir* (Montreuil: La Brèche-PEC, 1988), chapter four, and Michel Branciard, *Histoire de la CFDT* (Paris: Editions la Découverte, 1990), pp. 213-214.
228. Mark Poster draws attention to the parallels between the convictions of the existential Marxists and the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group (*Existential Marxism*, pp. 202-205), and Arthur Hirsh points out that the position adopted by Castoriadis as early as 1949 — namely, that the abolition of private property was a necessary but not sufficient condition for socialism, which also depended on the abolition of hierarchy, of the division between those who give orders and those who take them — was a defining characteristic of the later views of the French New Left. *The French Left*, p. 112.
229. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 55.
230. There is an extensive debate among New Left commentators surrounding the function and implications of Sartre's use of the category of scarcity. It essentially revolves around the question of whether scarcity is deployed by Sartre as an ontological category or a genuinely social and historical category which allows the possibility that it can be overcome. For many critics, Sartre's notion of scarcity leaves us in a Hobbesian world akin to the earlier *Being and Nothingness*, in which the Other is perpetually a threat. Gorz, and following him Mark Poster, have argued that scarcity in the *Critique* is indeed historical, representing an advance over Sartre's earlier ideas. Very briefly, Gorz

likens Sartre's concept of scarcity to Marx's idea of the reign of necessity and suggests that the suppressibility of scarcity is clearly shown by Sartre in his understanding of the group as the dissolution of seriality through common praxis — albeit provisional in the current material and historical circumstances. He defends Sartre against those Marxists who see scarcity as the outcome of the capitalist phase of development. On this reading, the Sartrean understanding of scarcity would not be incompatible with the idea that capitalism deliberately organizes scarcity, although there does not seem to be much evidence in support of the thesis that Sartre himself saw scarcity as having been potentially overcome under neo-capitalism. For this debate see among others the contributions by Gorz and Ronald Aronson to *Western Marxism: A Critical Reader*, ed. New Left Review (London: Verso, 1978); Poster, *Existential Marxism*, 277-287; Hirsh, *The French Left*, pp. 71-75; Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1986), pp. 68-74.

231. Gorz, "Avant Propos," p. 388 (my translation).
232. That part of Gorz's discussion of the question of needs dealt with in this chapter is presented in chapter four of *Strategy for Labor*.
233. Gorz, *Stratégie ouvrière*, p. 86 (my translation).
234. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, pp. 17-18 n.13.
235. Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 180.
236. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 65.
237. For Gorz's remarks on technocracy, see *ibid.*, pp. 120-125.
238. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
239. Gorz, "Unions and Politics," p. 74.
240. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p.viii.
241. Gorz makes this point explicitly in "Unions and Politics," p. 73.
242. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
243. Stephens, *The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism*, p. 77.
244. Gorz, *Strategy*, pp. 13-14.
245. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.
246. Bosquet, "Aspects of Italian Communism," p. 85.
247. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 13.
248. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

249. For a mostly unsympathetic but sometimes useful overview of this debate, see Michael Rose, *The Servants of Post-Industrial Power? Sociologie du Travail in Modern France* (London: MacMillan, 1979).
250. Cited in *Strategy*, p. 39.
251. See pp. 125-131.
252. Axel Van den Berg, *The Immanent Utopia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 290 n.30. Richard Johnson raises a similar charge in relation to a 1968 article by Gorz, "The Way Forward." See *The French Communist Party*, p. 91.
253. Poster, *Existential Marxism*, p. 364.
254. Van den Berg, *The Immanent Utopia*, p. 153.
255. Gorz, "Reform and Revolution," pp. 141-142 n. 6.
256. Gorz, *Stratégie ouvrière*, p. 93 (my translation).
257. Van den Berg, *The Immanent Utopia*, p. 170.
258. Ross, "Saying No," p. 57.
259. Hamon, "68 — The Rise and Fall of a Generation," p. 14.
260. Perry Anderson, *Arguments Within English Marxism* (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 186-197, and especially p. 195.
261. In the years subsequent to the publication of *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse himself acknowledged that he may have glossed over the historical specificity of the American labour movement and underestimated the political traditions of the European working class. He predicted that the potential significance of the surviving oppositional traditions would depend on whether the tendencies which were pronounced in the United States would become dominant in Europe as well. Marcuse arguably had the final word on the subject, as we will see when we turn to Gorz's *Farewell to the Working Class* in Chap.4.
262. Thus Stephen Bornstein and Keitha Fine draw parallels between the goals and strategies of the Revolutionary Syndicalist movement (which they note was internally divided) at its zenith in early twentieth-century France and the broad contours of the goal of *autogestion* as these emerged in the late 1960s and early 70s, especially within the ranks of the CFDT. They point to: "the overthrow of the capitalist system and its replacement with a system of decentralized socialism in which workers would reassume control of the means of production and in which unions would serve as the fundamental unit." They include among the similarities of strategy the rejection of political parties in favour of direct action, such as strikes, boycotts and sabotage. "Worker Control in France," p. 177.
263. Gorz, *Strategy*, p. 67.
264. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.



265. Perry Anderson, "Problems of Socialist Strategy," in *Towards Socialism*, ed. Perry Anderson and Robin Blackburn (London: Fontana, 1965), pp. 239-240.
266. See for example, Basso, "Old Contradictions, New Problems," pp. 251-252.
267. Lazar, *Maisons Rouges*, p. 275.
268. See, for example, the remarks by Italian trade union leaders during a discussion published under the subtitle "A philosophy of our own," in "Trade Union Unity: How and What For?" *International Socialist Journal* 18 (December 1966), pp. 584-85.
269. Ross, "Where have all the Sartres Gone?" p. 226.
270. Hamon, "The Rise and Fall of a Generation," p. 14.
271. Johnson, *The French Communist Party Versus the Students*, pp. 44-54.
272. Hamon, "68 — The Rise and Fall of a Generation," p. 14.
273. A. Belden Fields, *Student Politics in France: A Study of the Union Nationale des Etudiants de France* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 134.
274. Howard, "The Historical Context," in *The Unknown Dimension*, p. 72.
275. Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Génération*, vol. 1, *Les années de rêve* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), p. 196.
276. See "Naissance d'un syndicalisme étudiant," *Temps Modernes* 213 (February 1964).
277. A. Belden Fields, *Student Politics*, p. 134.
278. On this point see Patrick Seale and Maureen McConville, *French Revolution 1968* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 46-47.
279. "André Gorz," interview by Michel Contat and François Georges, p. 206, and unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
280. Cours-Salies, *La CFDT*, p. 160 n.33.
281. Branciard, *Histoire de la CFDT*, p. 214 n.20.
282. "Trade Union Unity: How and What For?" *International Socialist Journal* 18 (December 1966), p. 569.
283. Cours-Salies, *La CFDT*, p. 185.
284. George Ross, "The Perils of Politics: French Unions and the Crisis of the 1970s," in *Unions, Change and Crisis: French and Italian Union Strategy and the Political Economy, 1945-1980*, ed. Peter Lange, George Ross and Maurizio Vannicelli (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), p. 32.
285. Hirsh, *The French Left*, p. 222.

286. Howard, "The Historical Context," p. 68.
287. Peter Glotz, Secretary General of the SPD for much of the 1980s, made this observation in the debate with Gorz published as "La plus grande liberté possible," p. 66.
288. David Caute, *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey through 1968* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 81.
289. Jacques Robin, "Une conscience toujours en éveil," *Nouveau Politis* (October 2, 1997), p. 7.
290. This is mentioned by Karl Klare in *The Unknown Dimension*, p. 30 n.14, and by James Weinstein in *Ambiguous Legacy: The Left in American Politics* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), p. 141 n.9.
291. The pamphlet is reprinted as "Campaigning on the Campus" in *Student Power*, ed. Alexander Cockburn and Robin Blackburn (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969).
292. *Ibid.*, p. 351.
293. Gorz, *Fondements*, p. 19 n.4.
294. See Poster, *Existential Marxism*, chapter two "The rediscovery of Marx and the concept of alienation," and especially p. 50 n.51.
295. Hirsh, *The French Left*, pp. 15-18.
296. Karl Klare, "The Critique of Everyday Life," in *The Unknown Dimension*, p.10.
297. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 99.

## Chapter Two From New Vanguard to New Class Enemy

...the extent to which this civilization transforms the object world into an extension of man's mind and body makes the very notion of alienation questionable. The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment.

Herbert Marcuse  
*One-Dimensional Man* (1964)

Beginning in 1960 I asked myself why in the industrialized countries people would have a desire [to make a revolution], and what might be the outcome of that desire. It was during this period that I sought to bring to light radical needs with revolutionary potential, needs that neo-capitalist development engendered but was unable to satisfy.

André Gorz  
Interview in *Le Monde* (1980)

Even more acutely than the Old Left, the New Left was confounded by the empirical consciousness of the working class which did not correspond (and arguably never had) to the theoretical conceptions of Marxist orthodoxy. Notwithstanding patches of labour militancy in Italy and France, taken as a whole the proletariat of the advanced industrial nations looked less and less like fulfilling, anytime in the foreseeable future, the revolutionary vocation assigned it in classical Marxist theory. Moreover, rather than proliferating to form a majority of the population, the industrial working class was clearly losing ground in the 1960s to a growing stratum of non-manual workers. In addition, with the advent of automated techniques of continuous production, technological progress seemed likely to change the character of manual work itself. The optimistic liberal view, typified in Robert Blauner's 1964 book *Alienation and Freedom*, was that automation would help efface the old class cleavages. In France, while the PCF stubbornly flogged the dated pauperization theory, liberals hailed Daniel Bell's prophecy of social peace and homegrown variants of it (in 1966, the liberal sociologist Raymond Aron published a book entitled *Fin des idéologies, renaissance des idées*): thanks to rising living standards and advanced technology, the working class had been integrated into the system and was being assimilated into the middle class, rendering Marxist

analysis a relic of meaner times; class polarization was dissipating in the solvent of consumer capitalism, ushering in the end of ideology. From a different perspective, New Left mentor Herbert Marcuse sought to account for the containment of the class contradictions posited by traditional Marxist theory. Painting a compelling but grim portrait of the one-dimensional human existence engendered by advanced capitalism, he invoked the absorption of dissent and manipulation of consciousness honed to a fine art by the dreamweavers of the culture industry. Confronted with the ostensibly unassailable ideological hegemony of the late capitalist bourgeoisie, one of the imperatives for the New Left was to find a way out of the theoretical conundrum: revolution required liberated consciousness, but meanwhile consciousness was distorted at best. There were only so many avenues of escape. For Marcuse, if the working class had ceased to be the absolute negation of the existing order, then it was fitting to question the designation of the working class as the sole historic subject of revolution. This interrogation inaugurated one of the principal apostasies of the New Left: a rethinking of the problem of agency. One alternative was to seek revolutionary agents outside the closed circle of consciousness of advanced capitalism (a resort to which Marcuse's student disciples were more inclined than the master himself, contrary to popular misconception). A somewhat less heretical approach to circumventing the theoretical impasse was the identification of new radical needs on the part of some of capitalism's "affluent workers." Consistent with the later writings of Marx and with the views of Trotsky, the argument for the efflorescence of radicalism within the working class held that immiseration, far from being a prerequisite for revolutionary consciousness, could impede its development; consequently, it was precisely the more fortunate sectors of the working class who could arrive at an incisive critique of the system and assume a vanguard role. One of the distinctive features of neo-capitalism was its reliance on a growing stratum of educated workers — technicians, engineers — as well as on the burgeoning middle strata. The stratum of technicians alone expanded by 55 per cent in the mid 1960s.<sup>1</sup> If the old working class was mired in false needs inscribed in the very structures of capitalist society and shaped by its ubiquitous system of propaganda, perhaps the new working class, by virtue of technological change and its position in the production process, was spawning new "rich" (more complex and diverse) needs which might breach the manufactured consensus. This is the essence of what became known as the "theory of the new working class."

New working class theory was bound up with ongoing innovations in the technology of production. The potential effects of mutations in industrial technology on society in general and workers in particular was a subject of wide debate throughout the developed world after the Second World War, spawning a variety of predictions and theories, many of them mutually contradictory.<sup>2</sup> In France, a particularly rapid and intense process of industrialization in the post-war period, which swept away many traditional independent producers and permanently altered the class structure, lent the debate a sense of urgency. In the manufacturing sector, the most rapid growth occurred in the more capital intensive and technically more advanced industries, such as automobile manufacture, electronics, aerospace and nuclear power generation.

Elements of the French left were particularly attentive to the possible effects of automation on working class consciousness and its implications for socialism's prospects. The debate originated among the practitioners of *sociologie du travail* in two journals, *Sociologie du travail* and *Cahiers d'étude de l'automation*. The sociologists mentioned in the previous chapter in connection with this field, including the father of the discipline Georges Friedmann, as well as Alain Touraine and Pierre Naville, played a leading role in the debate. Very broadly there emerged a pessimistic view of automation, namely, that it would contribute to the integration and *embourgeoisement* of the working class, and an optimistic one, expressed in new working class theory, to the effect that automation could actually hasten the transition to socialism.

The leading theorist of the new working class in France was Serge Mallet, with whom Gorz was well acquainted especially after 1964, when they both helped to found *Le Nouvel Observateur*, the weekly news magazine where they worked as journalists for the next decade, and in Gorz's case beyond it. (Mallet's own career, including a budding academic vocation as a professor of political science at the University of Vincennes, was cut short in 1973 with his death in a car accident). As early as 1958, Mallet adumbrated his conception of the new working class in the seminal issue of *Arguments* devoted to the recomposition of the working class. In his contribution, Mallet roundly disputed the mythical notion of a monolithic and unified proletariat possessed of a collective consciousness which expressed itself in a community of interests and emotions; instead he insisted on a more sophisticated theoretical conception of the sociological differentiation of the working class. Further, he asserted that with the expansion of the tertiary sector and the increase of people

employed in administrative tasks there had been a change in the organic composition of the working class which was transforming the nature of the class struggle. (Among other things, the percentage of unionized workers had declined precipitously between 1947 and 1958, from 50 per cent of the labour force to 27 per cent — a phenomenon which labour historian Jacques Kergoat attributes to a multiplicity of factors: the ebbing of the political hopes borne of the Resistance, the difficulties of adapting to a changing industrial base, deep internal divisions among the unions — the traditional affliction of the French labour movement — as well as the emergence, precisely, of a new working class.<sup>3</sup>) In Mallet's estimation, it was workers in the more technically advanced industries who were likeliest to demand a greater share of control over the production process and within the firm.<sup>4</sup>

In his subsequent elaboration of the theory, Mallet linked the tendency towards *embourgeoisement* within the working class not to a perfidious working class leadership but rather to the structure of the working class itself. In his view, mechanization had deprived workers of a collective sense of themselves as producers, and consequently working class demands had shifted from the realm of production to the realm of consumption — basically a struggle for wage gains to fulfill needs created by capitalist industry itself. With the introduction of automation and the rise of the new working class, the focus of union activity would be redirected towards the sphere of production and beyond it to the structure of society.

Mallet proposed a definition of the new working class as composed of workers employed in “advanced” industries, that is, industries and plants in the process of automation.<sup>5</sup> These workers were of two types: manual workers who maintained and oversaw machinery, assuring its smooth functioning, and the growing armies of market researchers working outside the production process. Among the first category of workers, Mallet argued, automation afforded a more complete view of the labour process; it eliminated fragmentation of work and recreated a synthetic vision at the level of autonomous work teams. At a collective level, workers were winning back the autonomy that was lost at the stage of mechanization and fragmentation of tasks. In Mallet's view, automation thus involved a reskilling of the labour force in the form of the collective worker.

In advanced firms, Mallet supposed, the divisions between workers and lower level managers and technicians were being eroded, blurring the hitherto fairly clearcut distinction between productive and non-productive labour. As for the second category of workers, their feeling

of superiority over blue-collar workers had diminished, Mallet maintained, by virtue of their physical distance from those who perform manual work. At the same time, the conditions of these white collar workers in offices so resembled factory conditions as to stimulate a heightened union activism.

This new working class was pivotal, for Mallet, not in terms of its numerical strength but because of the critical position it occupied in the production process. The premise of Mallet's argument and that of new working class theory generally was that this new working class whose primary needs were basically satisfied would be led to militate on behalf of "higher" needs such as the need to self-determine one's activity.

Unionism itself, Mallet maintained, would take a new form based on the higher level of integration of workers in advanced firms. By "integration" here Mallet meant a kind of symbiotic relationship that obtained for a variety of reasons in technically advanced firms, whereby particular workers with particular skills became indispensable to particular firms and these workers in turn develop a greater vested interest in the performance and stability of the firm. This relationship did not, however, result in the cooptation of workers, but rather in a plant-based unionism oriented towards control issues.

Precisely because its basic demands have largely been met, the new working class is brought to make new demands which cannot be answered simply within the field of consumption. Thus its objective situation puts it in a position both to grasp the weaknesses of modern capitalist organization and to reach a state where it is conscious of a new type of organization of productive relations, designed to satisfy those human needs which cannot express themselves within the present structure.<sup>6</sup>

In pursuing these needs the new working class tended to act objectively in opposition to the technocratic structures of neo-capitalist society. Although, as noted in the previous chapter, the expectation of a reinvigoration of the combative spirit of the western working class received some confirmation in the resurgence of union militancy in France and Italy in the early 60s, it was on the basis of fairly scant empirical evidence that Mallet made the sweeping claim that in the early 1960s the most advanced sections of the working class were being "led further and further toward a head-on confrontation with the techno-bureaucratic structure of control over the economy."<sup>7</sup> However, Mallet did not mean that the new working class was resolved to seize political power by whatever

means possible and subsequently to reorganize society. He argued that the new working class was revolutionary in a more restricted sense than is often suggested. He believed that by virtue of its objective position it would aspire to a greater share in management and, by pursuing this end, would modify existing social relations at the base. By being the first to formulate certain demands, the new working class would exercise a decisive influence over other more backward segments of the labour movement. The new working class struggle, which Mallet expected would change the relations of production by extracting an ever greater share of control, was consonant with a conception of revolution as an extended process in lieu of the apocalyptic view of revolution as an abrupt seizure of power.

Gorz is often presented, along with Mallet and Pierre Naville, as one of the chief proponents of new working-class theory in France. It is peculiar, therefore, that looking back on his work in the 1960s, Gorz denied ever having presented a theory of the new working class — a claim he made in a letter to Arthur Hirsh, where he affirmed that he had limited himself to defining new needs and aspirations arising as a result of new conditions of work and a changed cultural environment.<sup>8</sup> His retrospective reluctance to assume one of the mantles history has thus far bestowed upon him undoubtedly reflects his subsequent disillusionment with the subversive potential of the new working class. But as we noted briefly in the last chapter, he certainly helped in the early 60s to elaborate and popularize the idea that technicians, engineers and other intellectual workers formed a potential vanguard by virtue of their particular place in capitalist industry and the inherent conflict between their emerging higher needs and the repressive logic of the profit motive governing capitalist industry.

We have already seen Gorz put forward, either explicitly or implicitly, a number of fragmentary and somewhat contradictory accounts of proletarian class consciousness. At first, in *La morale de l'histoire* he offered a variation on the leninist thesis of the labour aristocracy, arguing that the western proletariat had been temporarily bought off by the benefits accruing from imperialism. He also argued that due to its higher standard of living the working class had ceased to be revolutionary by its very nature, that is, simply by virtue of its struggles for decent conditions, and he tried to discern within Marxism a moral imperative for revolution. Then, in *Strategy for Labor*, he seemed to reintroduce the idea of a repressed revolutionary consciousness within the



working class, implying that the waning of revolutionary impulses stemmed from a deliberately misleading strategy on the part of the working class leadership. On the other hand, his entire strategy of intermediary objectives is based on a rejection of the notion of some prior revolutionary consciousness in favour of a conception of revolutionary consciousness as forged in the course of an extended process of struggle. Gorz oscillated between the Marcusean view that the contradictions of capitalism are a reality experienced by the working class, but of which the class is scarcely conscious due to manipulation, and therefore require a vanguard to bring them to light, and the opposing notion that revolutionary consciousness is bursting at the seams and will erupt spontaneously. Sometimes he suggested that it is mostly blunted and dormant but will manifest itself in moments of crisis.

But even if Gorz believed in long repressed revolutionary instincts among the working class based on the enduring contradictions of capitalism, he constantly probed the new capitalism for incipient oppositional and liberatory forces and tendencies; he sought new sources of revolutionary consciousness intrinsic to consumer capitalism. And here he followed Mallet in detecting in the new working class new radical needs that might defy the blandishments of the consumer society. Gorz did not, it is true, employ the term “new working class;” however he did refer to “new proletarians” in much the same spirit as Mallet used the locution “new working class,” to indicate an ongoing qualitative change in the character of the working class.

Perhaps even more significant for Gorz than the inspiration of Mallet were the arguments of Italian trade union leader Bruno Trentin, who, in September 1962, before the publication of Mallet's *Nouvelle classe ouvrière* made a case for the unity of workers and technicians in an article published in *Les Temps Modernes*. Like Mallet, Trentin believed in growing solidarity among technicians and workers stemming from the contradiction between the free development of technicians' professional abilities and the constricting logic of the profit system. Frustration would impel technicians to seek greater control within and over the production process and to fight for the free development of science and the productive forces unfettered by the exigencies of capital.<sup>9</sup>

Gorz's most extended discussion of the question, which is itself relatively brief, occurs in chapter five of *Strategy for Labor*, and he clarified his argument further in a contribution to the *International Socialist Journal* in August 1965. That he was ranked as one of the leading theorists

of the new working class on the strength of these limited contributions testifies more to the familiarity with *Strategy for Labor* among New Leftists and students than to the scope or depth of his argument. Gorz may be credited more with popularizing than pioneering new working class theory. He did not, for instance, cite any empirical studies, research or interviews of his own in support of his claims for the new proletarians, but referred the reader to the work of Pierre Belleville and Mallet (whose methodologies and empirical data have been sternly disputed<sup>10</sup>). Gorz's own case for the new proletarians was essentially a speculative argument.

Under the impetus of technological advance, Gorz maintained, the standard of living had improved and the nature of work had changed: the complete subordination of workers was no longer necessary to the progress of production; indeed, he observed, unskilled and semi-skilled workers were increasingly being replaced by autonomous skilled work teams in which the traditional divisions between technicians workers and engineers were blurred. The new proletarians were more educated than workers in the past and had acquired the ability to do creative independent work. They were endowed with "...curiosity, the ability to synthesize, to analyze, to invent, and to assimilate, an ability which spins in a vacuum and runs the risk of perishing for lack of an opportunity to be usefully put to work."<sup>11</sup> Here then was the locus of the development of new creative needs within advanced capitalism — needs which could not find satisfaction within the logic of the system, qualitative needs such as "the need to find some satisfaction and some meaning in the work being done."<sup>12</sup>

Gorz contended that precisely because scientific workers and workers in advanced industries were relatively well paid and no longer prisoners of the exigencies of scarcity, they could begin to apprehend themselves as free and creative activity, a self-perception which technological advances also encouraged. According to Gorz, as educated, creative and independent workers, the new proletarians experienced a felt need to apply and cultivate their talents and intelligence and perceived the manifold possibilities of developing the productive forces for human benefit, of subordinating production to human need.

The new creative needs which Gorz saw arising with the alleviation of scarcity could, in his estimation, be just as pressing as basic needs: "...once a certain level of culture has been reached, the need for autonomy, the need to develop one's abilities freely and to give a purpose to one's life

is experienced with the same intensity as an unsatisfied physiological necessity.”<sup>13</sup> However, there is an inescapable contradiction between the requirements of creative activity and the criteria of profitability. The latter will ultimately prevail over the former, ensuring that creativity is sacrificed to the demands of capital which measures all achievements and potential — “the possibility of conquering new domains of knowledge, new chances for the domination of man over nature” — against the sole criterion of short term profitability. And when capital imposes its will against the demands of creativity, technicians in advanced industries discover themselves to be mere wage earners.

Once a certain level of automation is reached, Gorz asserted, the new proletarians experience crushing boredom on the job for want of using their capabilities. He invokes the example of technicians in the nuclear power industries who simply monitor the operation of the machines on screens. In keeping with the idea of the sphere of domesticity as itself an alienating compensation or refuge from the mutilations of alienated labour, Gorz alleged that their only relief from monotony in their work is away from work, when they deploy their skills in the area of home improvement. But ultimately, he argued, they cannot find satisfaction outside their work because they have been deformed in their very education through a deliberate specialization that allows the worker to acquire qualifications while attempting to ensure that the skills are applied in a narrow way. These individuals revolt, but not directly — their revolt takes “the as yet silent form of the neurosis which stems from powerlessness and of escape.”<sup>14</sup>

Like Marcuse after him, Gorz counted on the emergence of new qualitative needs as a central hope for the reinvigoration or resuscitation of the revolutionary tradition in the West. Insofar as it attempts to ground the emergence of these needs in social reality, technology and the production process, Gorz's account of the emergence of these new needs is more cogent than Marcuse's hopeful detection in his *Essay on Liberation*, devoted to the student and youth revolt of the 60s, of an instinctual revolt against surplus repression, rooted in an intrinsic disposition of human beings to morality. It seems within the realm of common sense to assume, for example, that when work calls for greater education there may arise an aspiration to employ those skills and a rejection of mindless and meaningless work. However, Gorz suggested at various points, even the emerging qualitative needs were not necessarily directly palpable and individuals in contemporary

society are generally incapable of formulating what they feel — an idea which seems to some extent to counteract the role of these needs in reviving opposition. Gorz went so far as to present the vanguard of the vanguard, in the guise of the radical intellectual, whose task is to make people conscious of the new needs, which are repressed and obscured by indoctrination, by demonstrating how the satisfaction of those needs is within reach. “Becoming conscious of how things really are and of the possibilities they offer never was a spontaneous process but the arduous achievement of avant-garde minorities or visionaries.”<sup>15</sup> Given the apparent difficulty of rendering the new needs tangible and concrete to the new proletarians themselves, it is not surprising that Gorz had little to say about the relations between the new and old proletarians, or in what way they might act as vanguard, beyond setting an example through their union demands. Nevertheless, the silence on this subject — Mallet was as mute as Gorz — stands out as an additional theoretical deficiency.

Undeniably, Gorz was not altogether clear about what form the revolt of the new proletarians was currently taking or would take in the future. He did not devote his attention to sketching a new form of unionism and new forms of militancy as did Mallet. However, he did intimate in *Strategy for Labor* that the revolt of the new proletarians was currently taking inchoate forms that would become more self-conscious in the future with new generations and particularly at moments of crisis. Like Bruno Trentin, Gorz perceived the schemes for co-management and worker participation as an attempt on the part of employers to neutralize highly skilled technical workers who were liable to be dissatisfied with their lack of responsibility for the organization and the general direction of production. But he felt this could not contain the contradiction indefinitely. Awareness of the condition of alienation, which remained latent among the majority of workers, would become manifest among the new proletarians. Driven by their rich needs, workers would begin to demand self-management, and their nascent consciousness of being alienated in the workplace would extend beyond the factory and office gates to their existence as citizens. They would discover that “the struggle for a meaningful life is the struggle against the power of capital, and that this struggle must proceed without a break in continuity from the company level to the whole social sphere...”<sup>16</sup>

It was in the context of his discussion of the new proletarians that Gorz first raised the issue of a reduction of the workweek as a critical necessity, a theme which, as we shall see, became

central to his work later on. Given that a more highly educated workforce had become a necessity for capital, the cost of the wider reproduction of labour power (to adopt the Marxist terminology employed by Gorz) had risen. At the same time as workers themselves were freed of the pressures of vital necessity, culture in the broad sense of individual self-development had become a pressing need. Rather than meet this need and assume the rising cost of labour power by, for instance, increasing the time available with pay to improve and expand abilities, capitalist industry sought to deflect the need for culture by deliberately transforming leisure into a diversion.<sup>17</sup> Gorz argued that the reduction of the workweek was necessary to oblige capital to assume the cost of the wider reproduction of labour. The additional free time resulting from a reduction in the workweek was not understood by Gorz as idle time, but rather socially productive time employed by workers to develop the broad knowledge and skills increasingly necessary to advanced production, and necessary as well, as one of the bases for transcending the existing order.

Unlike Mallet, Gorz extended his discussion of the new proletarians and the emergence of “rich needs” at odds with the existing order to include an analysis of the position of students that proved influential in student left circles within France and abroad.<sup>18</sup> In Gorz’s variant of new working class theory, students figure as members of the new working class in training.

In the French sociological tradition, assimilating students to the working class was not a completely novel idea. Stephen Goode points out that in 1946 the UNEF’s Charter of Grenoble drew parallels between the student union and the trade union movement, and instructed students to consider themselves members of the working class with no special privileges.<sup>19</sup> As well, A. Belden Fields notes that the UNEF continued to define students as young intellectual workers.<sup>20</sup> Consistent with this tradition, Gorz referred to students as the “new proletarians of culture,” who, like the working class itself, were a potentially revolutionary force. In this dimension of his analysis Gorz was close to Alain Touraine, for whom the universities constituted the loci of a new kind of social struggle in the emerging post-industrial knowledge-driven society. “It is in education,” Gorz announced rather prophetically, “that industrial capitalism will provoke the revolts which it attempts to avoid in its factories.”<sup>21</sup>

Demographic developments form the crucial backdrop to this prediction. In post-war France, as in other highly industrialized countries, the baby boom ensured the explosion of the

student population at the very moment that modernizing capitalism required greater numbers of educated people. Societies were thus impelled to democratize the university system to varying degrees. In France, the university population grew from 150,000 in 1955 to 510,000 in 1967.<sup>22</sup>

In attempting to locate the roots of the increasingly palpable student discontent in the early 60s, Gorz anticipated and converged with the general tenor of the critique of the student condition advanced by the leadership of the student movement and the New Left throughout the West. In this respect, Mark Poster's contention that Gorz laid the theoretical basis for the alliance between students and workers that occurred in May '68 is tenable.<sup>23</sup>

The student left conceived of students as future members of a new working class moulded to meet the requirements of advanced capitalism; they saw themselves as being educated to think critically while at the same time trained to perform narrow functions that negated their critical capacities. Many left-wing students in the 60s saw themselves as being groomed for meaningless and dehumanizing positions as technicians, managers and propagandists of an oppressive technocratic system whose rewards consisted primarily in the accumulation of an ever greater array of consumer goods.<sup>24</sup>

In France, this analysis was stimulated by the Fouchet reforms of 1964-66, named for the then Minister of Education who, in an interesting twist of fate, served as Minister of the Interior during May '68. In a bid to limit the number of university students, the reform plan sought to abolish automatic access to university following successful completion of the baccalaureat examinations (*sélection*). It also proposed to introduce a type of inferior degree in the form of career programs intended to thrust more highly specialized technical and business education upon the majority of students in order to prepare them for jobs in the lower ranks of government and business administration. In addition, programs such as engineering were to be rendered less academic and more practical.

In protest against these plans, UNEF mobilized thousands of young people. Left-wing students condemned the rise of the technocratic university.<sup>25</sup> In his own discussions of the role of students, Gorz cited two noteworthy articles written for *Les Temps Modernes* by Marc Kravetz, one co-authored by Antoine Griset, like Kravetz a founding member of la Gauche Syndicale, the radical alliance within UNEF.<sup>26</sup> They accused the Gaullist regime of promoting earlier specialization in an

effort to industrialize the universities and affirmed that, to be meaningful, the struggle against the process of technocratization had to extend to a critique of the structures of capitalist society as such. And in a notorious pamphlet entitled *Pourquoi les sociologues?* published in 1968 by the soon-to-be founding members of the March 22 movement, the authors analyzed the more empirical bent dominant in the discipline of sociology as reflective of the transition from competitive to “organized” capitalism (the term was used by Marcuse, and following him Mallet, to describe affluent capitalism — understood as a technologically advanced industrial society moving towards automation, in which the economy is regulated through a high degree of State control in the interest of capital, at the same time ensuring a continual improvement in the standard of living for the masses). In their view, sociology as currently taught in the universities was designed to serve the goals of the economic system; industrial sociology, for example, was designed to bring about the adaptation of the worker to his work. It was no accident, they charged, that the degree program in sociology was first introduced in 1958 - coinciding with de Gaulle's accession to power and the advent of an intense period of rational planning. Sociology departments were expected to produce “...*human commodities made to order for the economic needs of organized capitalism.*”<sup>27</sup>

The student leaders decried the stultifying specialization to which the older liberal humanist university education was giving way in a manner similar to Gorz's condemnation of the crippling specialization of the new proletarians. They perceived this new trend in education as designed to permit them to perform increasingly complex tasks requiring greater autonomy, without affording them a sufficiently critical understanding which might induce them to challenge the system.

Gorz concurred with this analysis of the Fouchet reforms, accusing the government of seeking to create in place of the traditional elite education “...a stunted utilitarian alternative heavily biased [sic] towards technology.”<sup>28</sup>

Monopoly capital dreams of a particular kind of specialized technician, recognizable by the co-existence in one and the same person of zest for his job and indifference about its purpose, professional enterprise and social submission, power and responsibility over technical questions and impotence and irresponsibility over questions of economic and social management.<sup>29</sup>

And Gorz added a further damning element to the critique of specialization. He observed that while the industrializing universities now increasingly promoted deforming specialization and

fragmentation of knowledge, the trend of technology itself was away from specialization: the technological workplace of the future would require more polyvalent workers. Thus, he concluded, presaging capital's current exaltation of the virtues of flexibility, a too rigid and narrow focus on training would make the new proletarians insufficiently adaptable and render them ultimately unemployable.

Generalizing from the storm clouds of protest then gathering in the American multiversities, Gorz was prescient in anticipating explosion in the overcrowded and under-equipped French universities, although his logic remains open to challenge. Convinced that "it is impossible in the long run to bottle up independence," he perceived the trend of university revolt as confirming his conviction that less privation and more education would necessarily give rise to a fundamental questioning of the entire social order.

In accordance with this reasoning, Gorz supported the student demand, put forward by the UNEF in France in the mid-60s, as well as by student unions in Italy and Germany, that all students receive payment for quality studies, on the grounds not only that this scheme was a practical means to socialize the costs of the reproduction of socially necessary labour, but also that it situated students as young workers, thus promoting awareness of their contradictions with the needs of monopoly capital.<sup>30</sup> However, Gorz never identified students as such as the vanguard of the working class. Indeed, he maintained that, by themselves, the students could not transcend the limits of corporatism.<sup>31</sup> And he continued to hold this position after May '68. At that time he asserted that the student movement could be a thorn in the side of the bourgeois State and, by virtue of its radicalism and its actions, maintain society in a permanent state of crisis. It could also serve as a beacon for the working class, testifying to the possibility and necessity of radicalizing the struggle on all fronts. But, he warned, the students would be mistaken to take themselves for a vanguard — a tendency, he observed, which was likely to manifest itself only if the revolutionary movement failed to integrate students.

From the vantage point of orthodox Marxist theory, then, Gorz remained fairly cautious about his characterization of the new proletarians. He did not discern a new class so much as assess the implications of certain evident changes in the composition and character of the existing working class. But his emphasis on the pronounced differences in status, wages, and consciousness within



the working class certainly flew in the face of the orthodox Marxist conception of a unitary revolutionary subject. Gorz's proletariat was unified only at the level of 'objective interests,' namely, the end of alienation. Nevertheless, Gorz never ceased to regard the working class as a whole as a viable revolutionary subject and although he never attempted to explain the relations between the new breed of better educated, more autonomous workers in the advanced industries and their less sophisticated confrères in low-skill jobs, he intimated that the stratum of engineers, technicians, students and researchers would set an illuminating example for the numerical majority of the working class whose radical consciousness remained repressed, not only by the system but by the very organizations constituted to defend its interests. In Gorz's conception the new proletarians were thus a definite part of the working class per se, which remained the sole viable agent of fundamental social change. And in this respect, both Mallet and Gorz assumed quite an orthodox Marxist position with respect to the revolutionary subject. Furthermore, the new working class was not to be conflated with the full range of new middle strata; this latter category was the object of extensive debate on the left within and outside the Communist Party in the 1960s and 70s, a debate of which the new working class theory debate is a subspecies.<sup>32</sup> As Stanley Aronowitz put it in a sympathetic presentation of new working class theory, "The old left idea of the university trained 'middle class' as potential allies of the industrial working class has been outstripped by history. The university trained workers may become the heart of the industrial working class and their training itself is part of the production process."<sup>33</sup> And although Gorz's category of the new proletarians was roomier and more amorphous than Mallet's, encompassing students and the lower ranks of bureaucracy, Gorz could still declare in his 1969 Preface to *Réforme et révolution* that between the monopolist bourgeoisie and the working class there was no other social force capable of political hegemony; he cast the middle strata as the defenders of corporate and nostalgic interests, incapable of formulating a political program and dominated by fear which impelled them to occupy the political centre.<sup>34</sup>

As noted in the last chapter, new working class theory gained considerable currency within the New Left in the 1960s, in and outside France. Thus, by 1966, Manuel Bridier could write that the new working class was definitely "in fashion,"<sup>35</sup> while in Stanley Aronowitz's 1968 assessment, "The ideas of André Gorz and Serge Mallet were particularly captivating to radicals in search of a

new constituency which could strike mighty blows against corporate capitalism. Their concept of a 'new working class' gave the New Left a lever for social change."<sup>36</sup> And it was not lost on Aronowitz that the identification of the members of the New Left — composed as it was primarily of students and well-educated salaried employees — with the new working class might contribute to the attraction of the thesis inasmuch as it transformed those social actors cast by orthodox Marxism as middle class radicals into potential revolutionary subjects. But by no means the majority of the left, French or not, old or new, was persuaded by the new working class thesis, which consequently spawned a lively debate.

New working class theory had the significant merit of recognizing the heterogeneity of the working class. Unlike the PCF and other Communist Parties, which hypostatized the proletariat and cast it as a frozen category — a unitary, unified mass — new working class theory acknowledged significant differentiations at the level both of objective conditions and subjective interests. As well, the theory of the new working class bore a considerable resemblance to plausible theories of the potentially destabilizing effects of rising expectations. As one of the most stringent critics of new working class theory concedes, affluence can hasten frustration with archaism, especially in authority relations.<sup>37</sup> It may have been obtuse or naive to imagine that this kind of discontent would produce a revolutionary vanguard, but mounting dissatisfaction with hierarchies and power relations did have real consequences. It is not a negligible fact that in the wake of May '68 the CFDT explicitly endorsed *autogestion* (and recall that one of the three principal currents within the union confederation, the Krumnow current, took its inspiration from Gorz.)

The principal appeal of new working class theory was that it offered a fresh approach to the problem of agency — an approach grounded in the technical and sociological evolution of neo-capitalism. Appealing as this may have been, however, new working class theory was highly vulnerable on both empirical and theoretical grounds and was challenged accordingly, both at the time of its elaboration and afterward. We will examine the reasons for Gorz's own tacit repudiation of the theory at the conclusion of this chapter, but it is worth pausing here to consider some of its more serious deficiencies.

First, a number of the underlying premises shared by the theory in all its variants are clearly disputable. For instance, the theory rests on the unverifiable assumption that the satisfaction of basic

needs necessarily gives rise to the flowering of higher needs. This premise resides in the supposition that “when the production of life—that is of the goods necessary to existence—is a virtually solved problem, then the problem becomes that of the kind and content of the life to be produced: the circle of ‘living in order to work and working in order to live’ is no longer closed.”<sup>38</sup> Leaving aside philosophical questions about the nature of human needs and about any implied moral hierarchy of needs, there is no compelling evidence to confirm the assumption that once their immediate needs are satisfied workers will necessarily mobilize around less primary needs, such as more fulfilling and self-directed work. Gorz and other new working class theorists underestimated the extent to which these workers would be prepared to trade off these needs for better wages, their sense of superior status, and so on, although Gorz acknowledged this problem in his later phase of disillusionment with the subversive prospects of the new proletarians.

Further, new working class theory rests on a one-sidedly optimistic view of the effects of automation on the labour process in industrial production. During the 60s at least, both Mallet and Gorz expected that automation would bring about a reskilling of a goodly part of the labour force insofar as more advanced production technology was believed by them to necessitate a more polyvalent knowledgeable worker. The belief that automation would reduce alienation at work was consonant with the dominant liberal view of the period, which saw technology as requiring greater skill and creativity on the part of workers. However, progress towards automation could and did just as easily result in the degradation of tasks. This was one of the issues at stake in the labour process debate initiated in 1974 with the publication by Harry Braverman of the landmark study *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. Space does not permit us to enter into the details of this debate<sup>39</sup> (the sequel of which is the flexible specialization debate of the late 80s and 90s touched on in the fourth chapter). However, several points deserve consideration here. Braverman concurred, with some qualifications, with the argument of new working class theory that automation opened up new possibilities for reskilling and greater control by workers over the production process.

An automatic system of machinery opens up the possibility of the true control over a highly productive factory by a relatively small corps of workers, providing these workers attain the level of mastery over the machinery offered by engineering knowledge, and providing they then share out among themselves the routines of the operation, from the most technically advanced to the most routine. This tendency to

socialize labor, and to make of it an engineering enterprise on a high level of technical accomplishment, is, considered abstractly, a far more striking characteristic of machinery in its fully developed state than any other.<sup>40</sup>

But, for Braverman while technical evolution might open up possibilities for minimizing alienation, it in no way guaranteed the realization of that promise. Where new working class theorists including Gorz pronounced automation the dialectical negation of the parcellization of work characteristic of the earlier epoch of mechanization, Braverman rejected any notion of an intrinsically necessary form of work organization deriving from continuous process technology itself. He sought to show that technological advance was shaped by the demands of capital and moulded to its purposes — above all the reduction of the unit cost of labour. This was best served by the degradation of work insofar as the simplification and fragmentation of tasks increased the interchangeability of workers and facilitated their replacement by machines which in turn created more competition among workers for the same jobs culminating in a downward pressure on wages. He predicted a polarization of the labour force into two worlds of work: the rewarding, well-paid jobs held by a minority and the low-wage, low-skill jobs available to a majority<sup>41</sup> — a perspective with which Gorz came to agree completely by the 1980s.

While Braverman himself has been accused, among other charges, of overemphasizing deskilling as the invariable long-term trend of capitalism, and of overestimating the indispensability of Taylorist methods to the exercise of control over the labour force, his work offered an interesting corrective to the more optimistic reading of the fruits of automation for workers — one which also tallies with the evidence that unskilled and semi-skilled labour grew as much as skilled labour in neo-capitalist societies from the post-war period to our own time.<sup>42</sup> In elaborating his analysis, Braverman stressed the exigencies of capital as opposed to those of technique, insisting that “the capitalist mode of production enforces upon new processes devised by technology an ever deeper division of labour no matter how many possibilities for the opposite are opened by machinery.”<sup>43</sup>

By contrast, new working class theory implicitly partook of a view of technology as a relatively autonomous force driven by an apparently ineluctable internal dynamic, as revealed in assertions to the effect that “...it is part of the nature of the capitalist system of production to be unable to check the continuous development of the productive forces in any lasting way.”<sup>44</sup> New

working class theory has thus been accused of a reductionist view of the nature of technology. Michael Rose, for instance, has castigated the entire tradition of *sociologie du travail* in France, up until the 1970s, for succumbing to a false view of technology as unfolding according to an inexorable internal logic with inescapable consequences, rather than examining the social and economic context of the development and application of technology as a political issue.

In a related vein, arguably the most fatal criticism revolves around the relationship of technical evolution to the transformation of consciousness. More specifically, to what extent is technology a determinant of working class consciousness? Critics have charged that new working class theory entailed a reductionist view of the formation of working class consciousness and behaviour which posits technology or the work situation as the principal or sole determinant. It is one thing to maintain, as new working class theory did, that changes in the technical relations of production and the organization of work have repercussions on the character of working class behaviour; it is another to fall into the trap of elevating these factors to the preponderant influence on working class consciousness.

Several important critics agree that, in this respect, new working class theory was the mirror image of the theory of *embourgeoisement*. Although new working class theorists and end-of-ideology liberals drew radically different conclusions about the specific impact of automation on working class consciousness and behaviour, they were at one in regarding technology as the crucial variable not only in the organization of work, but in relations between workers and management and among workers themselves, as well as in the nature of union activity, degree of political radicalism and so on.<sup>45</sup> As Duncan Gallie points out, for the new working class theorists this postulate went beyond the Marxian tenet that the work experience affords individuals their sense of identity and opportunities for self-realization and that people's experience of work shapes their wider attitudes to society,<sup>46</sup> although it is certainly arguable that the writings of Marx lent some weight to the premise that technological development assumes some autonomy and acts as a motor force in the contradiction between the forces and relations of production. But whether the emphasis on technological evolution in the transformation of consciousness can be squared with Marxist theory is not the issue.

A more interesting and instructive point concerns Gallie's attempt to test Mallet's hypothesis (as well as the competing hypothesis of Robert Blauner that automation would result in the diminution of class conflict) by conducting an empirical study of workers in oil refineries in England and France. His choice of the oil refineries was probably not accidental inasmuch as this was precisely the area where Mallet felt his case for the new working class to be the strongest. Gallie set out to determine to what extent and in what ways a significant technological shift might influence the social integration of workers, relations between workers and management, and the policies and degree of militancy among unions. The great differences he encountered on all counts between French and British workers indicated that technology could not be the critical variable in working class attitudes; the divergent patterns of social integration, union militancy, and so on were consistent with long-standing national tendencies and traditions. For example, French workers were far more discontent with their incomes and standard of living, more hostile to management and had greater aspirations to share in decision-making than their British counterparts. Given that the workers in question were all from the continuous process sector, the answer did not lie with the level of technological sophistication. Gallie concluded that French workers were responding to certain typically French patterns of industrial relations, such as an authoritarian style of management, and with the expectations shaped by French trade union and working class traditions, such as a more developed sense of social justice. As Gallie observed, "The emergence of a new form of technology occurs, not in some type of social vacuum, but in societies with well-established institutional arrangements, and with distinctive patterns of social conflict."<sup>47</sup> New working class theory was guilty however of neglecting the importance of varying national historical and cultural contexts. This charge is levelled, for example, by Chris Smith<sup>48</sup> and John Low-Beer.<sup>49</sup> Both make the point that the new working class thesis was first formulated and gained currency in France and Italy due to particular political and labour traditions that cannot simply be generalized to other advanced capitalist countries. One particularly noteworthy point is the relative powerlessness of French unions. As Stephen Bornstein and Keitha Fine explain, national collective bargaining was almost unknown in France; the bosses wielded particularly despotic power and unions were not even able to operate within the factories.<sup>50</sup> How this played out with respect to the attitudes of the French working class, old and new, is beyond the scope of this thesis; the point, however, is that

such specificities were never taken into account in the elaboration of new working class theory, least of all by Gorz.

Finding fault in many respects with the high level of abstraction of new working class theory, Low-Beer also remarks of both Gorz and Mallet:

Their arguments are curiously devoid of any references to the individual or collective histories of workers, their social backgrounds, their political attitudes and their prior orientations to work. The causal links between life at work and life outside of work are all in one direction from work to other realms. Our findings show, however, strong causal relationships only in the opposite direction from attitudes acquired outside the work situation to militancy in the work situation.<sup>51</sup>

Interestingly, as we shall see, in his later work Gorz came to deny any causal relationship between the workplace and the development of revolutionary consciousness.

A related but somewhat different objection was raised in the well known *Affluent Worker* studies by John Goldthorpe et. al. in connection not only with new working class theory but liberal industrial sociology as well. New working class theory is accused of being erected upon the questionable Marxist premise that oppressive work relations are the basis of all other forms of oppression.<sup>52</sup> In Gorz's case, it is certainly true that he underwent a shift from a more encompassing view of alienation in *La morale de l'histoire* towards a more restrictive Marxist understanding of alienated labour as the root of all alienation. On the other hand, Gorz's conception of the new proletariat and new working class theory in general arguably broaden what is meant in Marxist terms by alienated labour, which is primarily based on the model of manual labour. Nevertheless, it is fair to pose the question of whether the direct experience of work alone can be seen to determine working class attitudes and behaviour. In doing so, Goldthorpe et. al. raise a point complementary to that of Gallie, and they draw similar conclusions from their examination of a sample of well-paid manual workers in Britain: that the theorists of the new working class were led by their fixation on technology and the work situation to improbable and unsubstantiated conclusions.

Long prior to these critiques based on empirical studies designed to test the validity of new working class theory, the claims for the new proletariat provoked considerable scepticism as well. Relying on Leninist doctrine, the PCF, for one, dismissed the new stratum of technicians and process

workers in the advanced industries as a new labour aristocracy. New Leftists dissented as well. Marcuse, for example, engaged in a running debate with Mallet and Gorz.

In *One-Dimensional Man* and elsewhere, Marcuse, although agreeing that automation was bringing about the decline of manual labour and an increasing expenditure of mental effort on the job, drew opposite conclusions about the implications. At a famous conference held in Korčula, Yugoslavia in the summer of 1964 and attended by a number of leading neo-Marxist thinkers, Marcuse agreed that incipient automation, in minimizing the physical demands of labour, resulted in a homogenization of blue and white collar work. However, he maintained that the new more highly-skilled workers in semi-automated plants were becoming more passive and apathetic, more integrated into the “system of ubiquitous repression.”<sup>53</sup> Marcuse shared the expectation of new working class theory that automation would give rise to autonomous work teams in lieu of the *ouvrier spécialisé* — the semi-skilled worker specialized in the operation of a particular machine — and that, as Mallet suggested, these workers experienced a greater vested interest in the health of the firm; however, in keeping with the idea, developed in *One-Dimensional Man* and other writings, that the productive apparatus itself embodies a logic of domination embedded in technical rationality, he drew a diametrically opposed conclusion about the implications of this development for working-class consciousness. He saw anything short of complete automation (which, he held, truly did harbour the promise of qualitative social change by doing away with socially necessary labour altogether) as engendering isolation and undermining worker solidarity. Moreover, for Marcuse the particular nature of advanced technology in the production process bound workers together in a technological community built upon the machine and the “drugging rhythm” of its operations, which afforded physical satisfaction.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, in blurring the line between blue and white collars, automation stripped workers of the professional independence that had once set them apart as the class which represented the determinate negation of the system. In direct opposition to Mallet and Gorz, Marcuse believed that as their status began to resemble that of white collar workers, the more highly skilled production workers assume some of the same traits, such as a reluctance to organize; trade union activity is thus weakened rather than strengthened. The objective integration at the level of the plant seen particularly by Mallet as the prelude to a new form of unionism was, for Marcuse, inseparable from demobilizing social integration.



Of course it is germane, as Marcuse's interlocutors continually pointed out, that his principal frame of reference was the United States, where there were no encouraging signs in the early 60s of a revival of labour militancy. And, of course, the explosion of white collar unionism in the 60s and 70s also infirms, if only temporarily, Marcuse's argument about the reliably conservative character of white collar workers. Nevertheless, in disputing new working class theory in the mid-1960s, Marcuse remained adamant in his conviction that the western working class in all its constituent parts was irremediably integrated. He adduced a variation on the very argument Gorz had advanced in one section of *La morale de l'histoire*: "... changes in the system of work and rising standards of living have transformed the majority of the organized working class into a labour aristocracy..."<sup>55</sup> For Marcuse, this was not the temporary result of the imperialist bargain; at least until 1967-68, he conceived it as a permanent state of affairs.

### **The sino-soviet dispute**

Many in the New Left shared with Marcuse the view that the proletariat in western countries was integrated into the system and that consequently revolutionary potential lay exclusively outside or on the margins of the heartland of advanced capitalism. They agreed that the technicians, researchers and others making up the new stratum of the working class were equally if not more integrated than the traditional working class and had a greater stake in technocracy as a system. In one of many tergiversations, Gorz would later concur with Marcuse and other critics of new working class theory on this point, as we shall see. But for now his optimism about the potential of the new working class inoculated him to some degree against a fairly unreflective third worldism which began to win over a significant contingent of the French New Left. This included the UEC's Cercle d'Ulm, the famous circle of students at the École normale supérieure around Althusser, which founded the Maoist UJC(ML) in 1966. If the new working class might be found wanting as a viable amendment of the orthodox Marxist theory of the revolutionary subject, the Althusserian Maoists offered a comically implausible alternative of their own in the unlikely candidate of the French peasant. As Richard Johnson relates, the Maoists were encouraged by the 1967 farmers' strikes, and "they predicted that the coming revolution in France would be fought largely by peasant

guerillas.”<sup>56</sup> In the main, however, Maoists and other third worldists looked to the wretched of the earth, the exploited masses of the Third World, as the great dark hope for a living revolutionary force. In this view, common amongst the New Left, the social contradictions of capitalism had been if not supplanted then at least displaced by the contradictions between the imperialist nations and the Third World. This position corresponded to the Chinese line in the sino-soviet dispute, which had arisen in the early 60s beginning with the critique by the Chinese leadership of Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence. Since this policy entailed desisting from actions likely to provoke western governments, such as assisting revolutionary offensives, the Chinese Communist Party accused Moscow of betraying the cause of proletarian internationalism. They were not deterred in their quarrel by invocations of the risks of nuclear war and in 1960 went so far as to virtually welcome the prospect as a purifying act that could clear the way for the construction of socialism. They cast the Third World, with China at the helm, as the new centre of gravity of socialist revolutionary struggle. Relations with the USSR deteriorated, and by 1964 open conflict had broken out between Moscow and Peking.

Even leading figures in the humanist Marxist camp, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, looked to the Third World for a viable revolutionary subject. Sartre's disposition found its most noted expression in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which he characterized the Third World as the shadow from which a new dawn would break and the Europeans as zombies at death's door.<sup>57</sup> Echoing Fanon himself, Sartre virtually glorified the revolutionary violence of the anti-colonial struggle as a political and psychological necessity. In fact their divergent attitudes to third worldism constituted a signal difference in political outlook between Gorz and Sartre.

In his remarks on the sino-soviet dispute, Gorz basically subscribed to the position adopted by the PCI, which favoured the policy of peaceful coexistence then being pursued by Khrushchev. This position is summarized in a 1963 declaration of the PCI Central Committee which Gorz quoted in an article on “Aspects of Italian Communism” (published under the pseudonym Michel Bosquet, translated by Charles Posner and published in the 1964 *Socialist Register*). In essence, Gorz argued, victories against capitalism in the periphery would not bring about the collapse of capitalism in the advanced industrial nations. And, in any case, a military triumph alone would not amount to a genuine defeat of imperialism. Moreover, he reiterated the classical Marxist position

that communism could be built only on the basis of sufficiently developed productive forces to which only the West (and, as Gorz suggested elsewhere, the USSR) could lay claim. It is noteworthy that Gorz went out of his way to present the argument with sufficient qualifications and apologies so as to preempt accusations of implicitly abetting the perpetuation of colonialism by calling for the Third World to remain patient while the struggle for a “rich” socialism unfolded in the West.

For us, the main battle against capitalism takes the form of an economic and social struggle, and victory is a long-term goal. But taking the long view is a privilege of those who are well-fed; it is a luxury. Meanwhile the decisive battle for other peoples is taking place *now* and the long-term, for those who are fighting that battle, is when they will all be dead.<sup>58</sup>

This dilemma, Gorz observed resignedly, was one the left would have to live with: no other option was possible. It is worth recalling that Gorz propounded this analysis in 1963 — after the Evian peace agreement with Algeria — considering that, like the New Left generally in France, he was critical of the PCF's weak position on Algeria, which had itself been informed precisely by Moscow's peaceful coexistence policy. Peaceful coexistence was evidently easier for Gorz to accept after the resolution of the Algerian crisis.

In Gorz's admittedly cursory discussion of the general problem of colonialism and underdevelopment, he rejected what he regarded as a facile division of the world into two opposing camps, a conception that ignored the pattern of uneven development between and within the industrialized capitalist countries. Such a Manichean conception, he felt, implicitly sanctioned war. He made the point in the essay “Colonialism at Home and Abroad” included in his first book length publication following *Strategy for Labor, Le Socialisme Difficile*, published in 1967 and translated into English by Norman Denny as *Socialism and Revolution* in 1973.

It is easy to reply that the laboring classes in the advanced capitalist world today are not revolutionary, and that there is little to be gained by uniting with them. The argument, although it may be immediately and tactically valid, cannot be sustained in a context of long-term strategy. It amounts to abandoning all hope for socialism in the advanced capitalist countries, and to envisaging a world where the so-called rich nations will all be on one side of the barricades and the poor nations on the

other, and in which socialism can be achieved in the advanced countries only as a result of world war.<sup>59</sup>

As third worldism extended its hold on the New Left throughout the West, and as the Chinese model in particular, including the misconstrued Cultural Revolution, superseded the discredited USSR as the hope for “actually existing socialism,”<sup>60</sup> Gorz persisted in combatting the idea that the real revolutionary vanguard lay in the oppressed masses of the Third World and in defending the western working class as a veritable and viable revolutionary subject, however quiescent it might currently appear. In the early 1970s, third worldism in France found perhaps its strongest vehicle in *La Gauche prolétarienne*, one of the *groupuscules* to emerge from the debris of May '68. Led by Alain Geismar, who had been at the helm of the largest professors union during the May events, it won the sympathy and support of Sartre himself. Meanwhile, Gorz's attack on third worldism grew more caustic; he now ascribed it to a guilt complex. In the opening paragraphs of a 1970 essay written for the American edition of *Le Socialisme Difficile* he wrote:

I wonder whether it is not a Christian feeling of guilt, rather than revolutionary fervor, that has led many of us, mainly students, to the conclusion that our own needs, frustrations and crippled lives are not really very important compared to the Third World's atrocious misery; that it would be indecent for us to desire anything more for ourselves...<sup>61</sup>

This was a rather hypocritical accusation in light of Gorz's own observation seven years earlier about the privileges of those who are well fed. Could that not also be dismissed as so much Christian guilt? Ironically, moreover, the self-same argument about the guilt of the privileged has been made about the investment of bourgeois intellectuals in the working class.<sup>62</sup>

Nor did Gorz's apparent change of attitude stop there. These guilt feelings, Gorz went on, distorted political analysis, giving rise to misconceptions about the wealth of the West being accumulated on the backs of the toiling masses of the Third World. Here again Gorz completely reversed himself with respect to the explanation he had proffered in *La morale de l'histoire* for the non-revolutionary character of the western proletariat, namely that it had profited from imperialism. But typically, rather than admit a change of mind, Gorz failed to acknowledge having held this position. Instead of engaging in self-criticism, he simply attacked as false the popular belief on the

left that “all classes in the capitalist metropolises share in the fruits of the Third World's exploitation,” and therefore have a stake in it.

Specifically addressing an American readership, he sought to show that the well being of people in the developed world did not depend on the exploitation of the developing countries. In spite of the fact, Gorz conceded, that the phase of capital accumulation benefited greatly from the looting of Third World resources and that imperialism directly caused underdevelopment by imposing on the Third World countries certain economic, social and political patterns inimical to development, the Third World had ceased to be an important source of capitalist accumulation for the developed nations. In support of this assertion, Gorz explained that the lion's share of surplus capital was not invested in the Third World, citing import statistics, among other arguments.

While he failed to discuss the question of debt repayment, which continued to ensure a net transfer of wealth from the South to the North, the general thrust of his argument at the time was correct, that the main source of the wealth of developed countries, in the post-war period at least, has been the developed industrial base and the high level of productivity and exploitation of the domestic labour force. Gorz also noted a point equally applicable today, that the transfer of jobs from the high-wage north to the low-wage south hardly benefits the working class in the metropolitan countries. Gorz concluded, then, that whatever profits made by corporations abroad were not shared with the working classes at home. (It is arguable, however, that cheap imports from the Third World, for instance, benefited the working classes in the advanced industrial nations).

Furthermore, Gorz contended that if crimes of exploitation continued to be committed by big corporations against the nations of the Third World, these were not carried out in the interests of the working classes of the developed world.

The same capitalist logic which prevents the economic and social development of the Third World prevents the utilization of the metropolises' huge economic surplus for purposes that are necessary but not profitable in financial terms: doing away with disease, slums, unemployment ghettos, malnutrition, illiteracy, pollution inequality, stupefying and subhuman work in the metropole itself...<sup>63</sup>

There is some justice in this argument, although it ignores essential considerations of scale and degree. But regardless of the validity of the analysis and conclusions, given that he was criticizing

purported misapprehensions of which he himself had partaken earlier, he ought to have acknowledged the fact. Perhaps most unconscionably, after harshly chastising those whose analysis of Third World exploitation he had deemed excessively simplistic, Gorz himself repeated just such a facile account of the West's reliance on the ongoing pillage and plunder of the Third World in various essays dealing with political ecology written only a few years later.<sup>64</sup>

### May '68

By 1970, when Gorz admonished American readers against the excesses of third worldism, the events of May-June 1968 had intervened to bolster his belief that the New Left should focus its energies on the West and keep the faith with the working class. However, in his own account of the origins of May '68, his determination to counter the third worldist perspective conceivably skewed his judgement, causing him to underestimate the centrality of the protest against the Vietnam war, widely acknowledged as a primary catalyst of the May events. By this time, Gorz was a well-known figure in French journalism, writing for *Le Nouvel Observateur* under the pseudonym Michel Bosquet.<sup>65</sup> *Le Nouvel Observateur*, which was conceived and launched through the combined efforts of journalists from *France Observateur* and *L'Express*, had close fraternal relations with *Les Temps Modernes*; in addition to Gorz, a number of other associates of the journal were involved in founding the independent left weekly, and Sartre himself was a supporter of the project.<sup>66</sup> The paper gave him a relatively large and growing readership: by the end of 1965 it had a circulation approaching 100,000, and by 1968 that figure had doubled.<sup>67</sup> There was overlap between its audience, a good part of which came from the proliferating university population, and that of *Les Temps Modernes*, of which Gorz also became political director at around the same time. In their irreverent depiction of the French intellectual milieu of the 1960s and 70s, Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman refer to Gorz's writing as exhibiting an extraordinary pedagogical talent and comment that, "his aptitude for grasping ideas and bringing them to life in concrete and persuasive articles earned him a considerable readership among activists."<sup>68</sup>

Although May '68 in France has gone down in historical memory, either with sympathy or scorn, as the high point of the international student revolt, the most significant aspect of the events

was the moment when, inspired by the example of students embattled against the regime, nine or ten million workers descended into the streets, ultimately defying even the *mot d'ordre* of their own union confederations. Not only did this appear to numerous observers as an action critique of Marxist structuralism, which could offer no explanation within its own terms to account for the uprising, but this, the largest strike in French and European history, also seemed to defy any complacent assumptions about the irremediable integration of the working class.

There have been myriad interpretations of the May-June events, but to this day no completely satisfying explanation has been advanced to account for the massive student-worker protest, much less to decipher its relationship to the international context of explosive student protest. Undoubtedly the strains of rapid modernization in France were, in a broad sense, at the root of it<sup>69</sup>; but its specific causes and catalysts, its goals and gains, its historical import nationally and globally are all sources of interminable scholarly disputation. Needless to add, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to enter into the vast and wide-ranging debate on the nature and meaning of May '68, which has given rise to a profuse literature in the last 30 years.<sup>70</sup>

It has often been argued that May '68 was unforeseen and unexpected. However, for proponents of new working class theory convinced of the subversive potential in the alleged alienation of educated workers and students, May '68 did not come as a complete surprise. And the events did appear in many respects as confirmation of their views.<sup>71</sup> For Mallet, for instance, May '68 proved that the workers in the advanced industries could and would play a vanguard role.<sup>72</sup> For Alain Touraine, another exponent of a variant of new working class theory, May '68 was a new form of class struggle expressive of the contradictions intrinsic to neo-capitalism: the adversary in the struggle was technocracy and the stake was decision-making power. Not surprisingly, for Touraine the locus of this new struggle was the university; students were revolting against being trained as cogs in the technocratic apparatus.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, May '68 was hailed by the New Left internationally as the first socialist struggle apposite to neo-capitalism, a phenomenon which demonstrated that revolution was possible — even likely — in the countries of advanced capitalism, and a prelude to a new type of revolutionary tradition in the West.<sup>74</sup>

Gorz shared this optimistic judgement. He considered the events of May to have been foreshadowed by strikes in Belgium and Italy, as well as by the student movement in Italy which

exploded in 1967. And he saw portents in France itself, in those strikes which saw workers struggling not for wages, but for more control over working conditions, including a reduction in working hours. As Gorz understood it, an unprecedented mass radicalization took place in May during which people from all walks of life became aware of repressed needs and possibilities. With respect to working-class action, Gorz initially saw May '68<sup>75</sup> as a vindication of the idea that the new working class could play a vanguard role. He identified engineers and technicians as the driving force behind the challenge to management's authority, to the hierarchical division of labour, to income inequality and to the logic of the profit motive. And he interpreted the rejection by the union rank and file of the 10 per cent wage increase proffered by the government in the May 27 Grenelle agreements as an expression of a desire for workers' control.<sup>76</sup>

The rejection of the initial Grenelle agreements was indeed a momentous event in French working class history. Whether it can legitimately be interpreted as a determination to hold out for workers' control, as Gorz and others believed, is still an open question, as is the nature of the control that workers may have been seeking.<sup>77</sup> In his analysis of the events, Gorz himself underscored the very indeterminacy of the demands put forward by workers and students. However, he rather incautiously interpreted this indeterminacy as objectively representing a total rejection of the capitalist system.<sup>78</sup>

Gorz was especially struck and encouraged by the actions of younger workers. Like Mallet and others, he saw May '68 as evidence of a deep cleavage between generations of workers and students. In his view, the events were clearly the expression by young people — students and workers — who, precisely because they had not experienced severe material privation and had received a level of education superior to that of their parents, could abhor a social order based on a system of blind deference to authority in which people work frantically to be able to afford possessions which these young people now took for granted.

He considered the Fouchet reforms intended by the government as a response to the inadequate match between education and the job training needs of industry as an important trigger of the student revolt. And, according to Gorz, in protesting the *sélection*, a minority of students realized that only the abolition of the social division of labour could address the problem of unequal access to culture. In rejecting the idea of culture as the birthright of a certain class, this minority was



necessarily led to challenge the division of mental and manual labour and to espouse the demand for self-management in all spheres of social life.<sup>79</sup>

At the outset of the student revolt, Gorz signed a manifesto, together with Sartre, Lefebvre and Lacan, among others, expressing solidarity with the students. The text was published in *Le Monde* on May 10, 1968. The signatories declared that the movement is a manifestation of "... the will to escape, by any means possible, an alienated [social] order — an order which is so highly structured and integrated that there is always the risk that mere contestation will come to serve its purposes."<sup>80</sup> And elsewhere too Gorz suggested that the May revolt bespoke a deep-seated anti-capitalist sensibility among students and workers.<sup>81</sup>

But Gorz advanced another argument which may contravene his own reading of May '68 as a rejection by youth of the existing order. He cited young people's feelings of insecurity about landing a job in conditions of inadequate training and the levelling off of employment in industry as major factors contributing to the May explosion, noting that the number of individuals seeking employment had doubled in the two years preceding May '68. Not only, moreover, were young people faced with a stagnating job market, but both students and workers felt that society could not properly channel or utilize their abilities at work.<sup>82</sup> However, rather than supporting the idea of a great refusal of the existing social order, such uncertainty about the future can just as easily point to a fear of failure to be integrated into the existing order.

### **A new vanguard party**

In a reasonable characterization of the events, Gianni Statera observes that while it is debatable whether May '68 constituted a genuinely revolutionary situation, it was more than a revolt.

"Sectorial and traditional union-type claims, genuinely revolutionary drives, and outbursts of intellectual *contestation* merged in May 1968, thus giving birth to a precarious coalition..."<sup>83</sup>

Statera stresses that the disparate forces of subversion in May did not constitute an organic alliance.

And here is precisely where Gorz saw its fundamental weakness. But this raised some tough questions about the merits of spontaneity and decentralization and the problem of revolutionary organization. It was to these questions that Gorz turned his attention in the aftermath of May.

In his 1969 preface to *Réforme et révolution*, a republication under a new title of parts of his earlier work, he reproached himself for having been laconic and ambiguous in *Strategy for Labor* on the subject of the political dimension of a revolutionary strategy. He invoked objective conditions as his primary excuse: the working class, he charged, was not sufficiently advanced at the time to address the issue of political power. Moreover, the extreme degree of centralization of political power in France meant that even in the unlikely event of a legal accession to political power by the parties of the left, the authoritarian State would remain intact and with it the system of domination intrinsic to the modern State. A viable political strategy, Gorz continued, had therefore to emphasize a decentralist approach such as the one outlined in *Strategy for Labor*, which sought to build direct democracy from the base. In light of what had transpired in May, Gorz reasoned that the first obstacle to the problem of power had been largely surmounted. However, what May 1968 revealed — and more specifically its defeat — were the drawbacks of not having a more centralized revolutionary organization. In the absence of coordination and organization, Gorz judged, May had left no lasting gains.

It was primarily in light of these conclusions that Gorz formulated his conception of a new type of revolutionary party, although he had already begun — albeit in a highly cursory way — to consider the organizational question several years prior to 1968. As early as 1965, within a year of publishing *Strategy for Labor*, he had sketchily delineated the role of a working class party, taking his cue from Perry Anderson — precisely that article referred to in the previous chapter in which Anderson criticized the exclusive focus on unions in the alternative political strategy offered by theoreticians such as Vittorio Foa. Offering an extensive quotation from that essay, Gorz now agreed with Anderson that the working class party was indispensable to “weld together the scientific and technical neo-proletariat, the students and the teachers with the working class” in an historic bloc.<sup>84</sup> He reiterated Anderson's distinction — one that had also been drawn by members of the Italian far left such as Lelio Basso — between the bloc and the traditional left conception of an alliance or a coalition. And he recapitulated Anderson's contrast between the “promiscuous populism” of coalitions, that is, the tendency to reduce diverse sectional demands to the lowest common denominator in an attempt to please all factions and interests, and the integration of these various demands in a coherent, overarching vision. “The bloc,” Anderson had written, “is thus a

synthesis of the aspirations and identities of different groups in a global project which exceeds them all.”<sup>85</sup> This would remain the touchstone of Gorz’s conception of the role of the party. However, he made it clear from the outset that by virtue of its centralizing function the party was no more than “a necessary evil,” “a temporary structure which must voluntarily abolish itself once its work of getting rid of the bourgeois state was done.”<sup>86</sup>

Before 1968 Gorz still referred vaguely to a hypothetical “revolutionary party,” without admitting outright that what he had in mind was a replacement for existing parties claiming to represent the working class, particularly the PCF. Prior to May ’68, while it was clear — and Gorz said as much — that the PCF had ceased to be a revolutionary party, its influence within the working class was incontrovertible and not easily impeachable in practice. Thus Gorz probably had not dared to propose an alternative to the PCF, preferring to bypass the problem of the party altogether and focus on the institutions of civil society such as the trade unions. Or perhaps he had wished to leave open the possibility of a transformation of the PCF itself. After ’68, however, he was clear in his intent for this new party to supplant the PCF, which had proven itself bankrupt during the May events.

Unlike many of the more naive spirits on the New Left within and outside France, Gorz did not consider that the Party, under the leadership of Émile Waldeck-Rochet since Thorez’s death in 1964, could have or should have attempted to seize power in May. Rather he argued more credibly that the Party might have used the events to alter the balance of forces.<sup>87</sup> As it stood, the PCF had done the opposite, endeavouring to defuse the potentially revolutionary situation in the interest of its relentless pursuit of a share of State power.<sup>88</sup> And in this too, Gorz charged, the PCF made the grave error of regarding the State as a neutral instrument which could simply be deployed with minor adjustments for the transition to socialism.

What Gorz’s analysis of the PCF’s attitude in May ignored were the geo-political factors underpinning PCF policy, including once again the logic of peaceful coexistence, and also the USSR’s desire to see de Gaulle remain in power as a counterweight to the hegemony of the United States. Perhaps underestimating the weight of such imperatives for a party aligned fixedly on Moscow, Gorz judged that the PCF should have been more receptive to the call for a provisional government — a union of the left, such as that proposed on May 27 by François Mitterand (then

leader of the FGDS — Fédération de la gauche démocratique et socialiste) in a bid to create a non-communist left party which would absorb the old SFIO. The project was also supported by Pierre Mendès-France<sup>89</sup> (a former Radical and then the widely respected leader of the PSU — the modernizing left cum New Left party riven by numerous internal ideological fissures), whom Daniel Cohn-Bendit scornfully dubbed “the left-wing de Gaulle.” Whatever might be the reformist or opportunistic colouration of such a transitional government, Gorz speculated, it would have given concrete form to the popular victory over the Gaullist regime and raised the struggle to a new level by irremediably altering the balance of forces. The radicalism of the popular movements, he was persuaded, would have ensured that no unacceptable compromises on program could be imposed.<sup>90</sup> In any event, the reality was that the PCF had contemptuously rejected the prospect of a provisional government with Mendès-France at the helm.

Notwithstanding the New Left's disgust with the Party's perceived perfidious behaviour in May '68, the PCF did not wither away. Yet in declaring the need for a new revolutionary party, Gorz did not even attempt to dispose of the PCF's survival of May with a substantial working class constituency intact or to consider how any new party might contend with that reality. From certain remarks it can be inferred that he presumed (incorrectly) that the PCF had so thoroughly discredited itself as part and parcel of the established order that a new party could easily outflank and marginalize it. However, he did not directly address this issue.

In articles written in the aftermath of May '68, Gorz explicitly condemned any revival of the anarcho-syndicalist model of the spontaneous general strike culminating in the downfall of the regime. Waiting and hoping for a more consequential repeat of the May events was, he warned, nothing more than a return to revolutionary *attentisme*. The revolutionary left would have to learn from the mistakes of May. What struck Gorz above all was the inability or unwillingness of any of the existing political and union organizations to channel the imaginative and daring potential released by the spontaneous movement into actions which might have borne fruit, and towards objectives which, once achieved, would have instituted irreversible changes.<sup>91</sup> In an interesting dialectical twist, Gorz affirmed that it was due to their inertia, as well as their obstinate insistence on not going beyond the standard old demands, that the movement assumed the anarchistic and ultra-leftist character for which the PCF and CGT reproached it.

While the question of seizing power had arisen in May, no viable instrument existed to achieve that end. Spontaneity was an indispensable phase in any revolutionary process, but what had been lacking was an organization able and determined to sketch the path from the society rejected by the revolutionary movement to the one which it confusedly demanded — to articulate the mediations necessary between immediate demands and the maximalist position of total refusal. As a result of this failing, May '68 was revolutionary in form but not entirely so in substance. Without coordination, lacking unity of perspective and purpose, it could not but have fragmented into a multiplicity of local actions and disconnected interests.

Far from seeing May as invalidating the strategy of intermediary objectives he had set forth in *Strategy for Labor*, Gorz viewed it as confirmation. In the absence of intermediary objectives, he remarked insightfully, “the movement will not be able to move beyond the moment of refusal, which will be taken as an end in itself in the form of festival and liberating violence; if the hitherto repressed possibilities are not given concrete form in a real project for social change, they will wear themselves out in subjective exuberance, in acts and objects of the imagination (words, images, celebrations).”<sup>92</sup> Gorz thus cast the new revolutionary party as the indispensable vehicle of his strategy of revolutionary reformism.<sup>93</sup>

By itself, Gorz's critique of the limits of spontaneity was by no means a singular contribution; after the defeat of May, disillusionment with spontaneity was widespread among left-wing students and the issue of organization and party took centre stage. “The issue at stake became that of *the* new organized revolutionary party, its structure, its strategical and tactical orientation, its relations with other political forces.”<sup>94</sup> This corresponded to the phase in the history of the New Left— comparable manifestations of which appeared in France, Italy, Germany, the US and elsewhere — when the affinity for participatory democracy gave way to a recrudescence among surviving nuclei of student activists to a dogmatic and authoritarian Marxism-Leninism and issued in the formation of *groupuscules*, small, ideologically rigid and mutually belligerent bands of dedicated activists, very roughly divided among various Maoist and Trotskyist tendencies.<sup>95</sup> (There is no neat historical division, however, between an earlier anti-authoritarian New Left and a later doctrinaire vanguardist New Left. Moreover, in France and Italy there were actually two sets of *groupuscules*, those pre-dating May '68 such as the UJC(ML) and the JCR in France, which played

significant role in the events themselves, and the groups emerging after the defeat of May such as the French Gauche prolétarienne.<sup>96</sup>)

Although Gorz sought to demonstrate the impasse resulting from excessive reliance upon spontaneous grassroots revolt, he viewed with a jaundiced eye “the proliferation of self-appointed vanguard parties.”<sup>97</sup> The challenge was to steer a course between the Scylla of directionless spontaneity and the Charybdis of bureaucratic centralism. In elaborating his conception of the party, Gorz refused to sacrifice a quintessential feature of his theory of revolution: his emphasis on the self-emancipation of the oppressed. It was this hallmark of New Left thought that was jettisoned by the *groupuscules* in the postlude of '68. In September 1968 Gorz called for “...an organization that would not want to direct and to rule the masses, but would help them towards self-organization, self-rule and the exercise of power from below.”<sup>98</sup>

Once again the Italian far left was a source of inspiration for Gorz, supplying him, in the form of the Lotta Continua movement, with elements of what he considered a suitable theory and practice for a new type of revolutionary organization. While, as in France, Maoist and Trotskyist *groupuscules* were a not insignificant force in Italy, both in the student rebellion in '67-'68 and during and after the Hot Autumn, Italy also saw the growth in the late 60s of more anti-authoritarian and populist extra-parliamentary groups which continued agitating in the early 70s. Succeeding in actually developing ties with workers in factories, they were much more influential than any of the remnants of the New Left implosion proved to be anywhere else in Europe or North America.<sup>99</sup> These groups, whose members numbered in the tens of thousands, made up the milieu of the *operaisti* — a term which apparently does or at least did not have the same derogatory connotation in Italian as did the label “workerist” in English or *ouvriériste* in French,<sup>100</sup> although the groups have certainly been characterized as culpable of the same defects as workerism in the pejorative sense, namely “...an uncritical celebration of anything and everything the workers happen to do in the course of a given struggle...” and a reading of all worker action as intrinsically revolutionary.<sup>101</sup> The *operaisti* included Il Potere Operaio (not to be confused with Potere Operaio, another workerist group with almost an identical name but which adopted a Leninist vanguardist position), also known as Potere Operaio Pisa, which in turn gave rise to the largest and most influential of these groups, the Turin-based Lotta Continua.<sup>102</sup> Led by former student leader Adriano Sofri, Lotta

Continua adopted the watchword of “organized spontaneity.” While the group was convinced of the need for a political organization to link all dimensions of social struggle, they rejected the Leninist conception of the vanguard party and the theory of democratic centralism in favour of an organization devoted to nurturing a decentralized workers struggle at the local level, including the factory, the neighbourhood and the school, and to uniting the mass vanguards thought to arise more or less spontaneously in the course of such struggles.<sup>103</sup>

Inspired by the example of Lotta Continua, Gorz remained highly decentralist in his newly centralizing vision, seeing the party as the culmination of a gradual process whereby an external vanguard of students and intellectuals strives to bring together dispersed activists engaged in disparate local struggles, thus galvanizing the creation of an internal mass vanguard and creating a counter-hegemonic bloc. Rather than exert a moderating influence on the goals of local mass struggles, the party's aim would be to press the struggle ever forward towards more advanced objectives, without however exercising any centralized control. Moreover, Gorz contended that the party should use its own authority to challenge the central authority of the State. “It [the party] must *break down* the power of the State by acting as the vehicle of mediation and synthesis for the autonomous power centres striving to emerge at the different levels of civil society.”<sup>104</sup>

But the main function of the party as conceived by Gorz was educational, cultural and programmatic. Once again in harmony with the spirit of the New Left, Gorz emphasized the task of changing consciousness to the exclusion of virtually all else. In a word, the party's role was to “[demonstrate] the necessity of change by arguing its possibility, and thereby bringing to life the latent needs which society has repressed.”<sup>105</sup> It is in this respect that the new revolutionary organization definitely qualifies as a vanguard party. (In his own writing Gorz tended to blur the distinction between the external vanguard and the revolutionary party which is central to Lotta Continua.)

Gorz depicted the party as the embodiment of the prior socialist consciousness to which only a minority can accede in normal circumstances — only a minority even of those purported to be possessed of new radical needs. The party, on this account, is necessary to reveal those needs to the people who may experience them without being fully aware of precisely what they are experiencing. Gorz attempted to support this highly problematic although not entirely indefensible

idea by alluding to the notion of repressed needs, as in the case of homosexuals who may be delayed in realizing or “discovering” their sexuality. Similarly, the party can stimulate awareness among the most oppressed sectors of society, who are conscious of their oppression but lack the ideological and cultural means to give expression to it.

Gorz specified that the new party must fulfill four functions<sup>106</sup> — each of which constitutes an effort to transform consciousness.

(1) Theoretical analysis and elaboration — essentially to identify and analyze the evolving contradictions and vulnerabilities of capitalism.

(2) Ideological synthesis — to integrate sectional demands in a coherent unifying perspective while respecting the specificity and independence of those demands. This refers again to Gorz's concurrence with Anderson's definition of the anti-capitalist bloc, which must go beyond an aggregation of individual demands, a shopping list which can never amount to a coherent critique of the existing order, towards “...a higher conception of rationality, of culture: a conception in the light of which sectional demands are at once critically illuminated in their relativity, integrated and transcended at a higher level...”<sup>107</sup> He offers no indication as to the concrete procedures by which disparate interests will be thus sublated.

(3) Education and political leadership. This overlaps with the first function. Here Gorz emphasizes the need for leadership to provide institutional and ideological continuity in order to sustain the struggle during slump periods. It is an educational function in that it involves showing workers engaged in local struggles over immediate demands that these demands imply more far-reaching changes than those being pursued. For instance, the party would seek to show intellectual workers that their grievances stem from the same contradictions between forces and relations of production as do those of other workers.

(4) Seizing power and transforming the State.



Of all the functions of the new party, it is this last one, arguably the most pivotal, which is most murkily articulated. Gorz begins by inveighing against the distortions wrought in political life by the high degree of State centralization and attendant bureaucratization, particularly in France but also in all advanced capitalist countries, with the result that popular movements are inclined to look to the State for solutions to problems. What Gorz then describes under the heading of seizing power and transforming the State is actually the party's role in critiquing the central authority of the State.

Here is where Gorz's party appears as the antithesis of the Leninist vanguard party: to combat statism and centralized authority in practice, the party must give full autonomy to the initiatives of the base. Gorz thus in no way negated his previous emphasis on the centrality of the self-emancipation of the workers at the point of production through struggles for workers' control. On the other hand, he never specified how the party would intersect with any of the decentralized and autonomous struggles in the workplace or the cities — an especially complex problem considering that Gorz eschewed delegation, insisting on direct democracy. He never explained, moreover, how participatory democracy might function, save for some passing allusions to assemblies and councils. Thus, if Gorz was clear on the party's role as intellectual vanguard and demystifier of needs, he had nothing to say about the practical relationship between the leadership and the base, beyond vague rhetorical formulations about how the masses participate in defining the political program through their myriad struggles and how the party must trust the independent dynamic of the movement. Failing to specify the mechanisms that would safeguard the democratic elaboration of party policy, Gorz's entire conception of the party as “the site of free debate and direct democracy” remained so vague as to be without substance.

In stressing the analytical and pedagogical role of this new revolutionary formation, Gorz exhibited an astonishing faith in the power of theory and rational argument: “If despite its severe contradictions and crisis the capitalist system is not yet discredited, but on the contrary can glorify its performance without fear of ridicule, this is directly attributable to the dearth of Marxist theory in the West.”<sup>108</sup> Given that this was the supposition underlying Gorz's effort to fashion a political strategy for the New Left in light of the failure of May '68, the insubstantial and unconvincing outcome is not altogether surprising.

What is perhaps most salient in Gorz's conception of the nature and functions of a new type of revolutionary party is his apparent exclusion of *any* parliamentary role for it. Gorz remained firm that party should not seek State power, as this is precisely what constituted the decadence of the existing anti-capitalist parties.<sup>109</sup> While Gorz thus confirmed the status of the party as an organized extra-parliamentary opposition, it remains unclear whether he precluded any and all bids for political representation within the existing institutions of the State at any level. But there is no mistaking his abiding indifference and even animus after 1968 towards any form of electoral politics. (This is all the more noteworthy given that one of the incontestable, albeit highly ambiguous, legacies of May '68, apparent with the benefit of hindsight, was the confluence of conditions and the constituency that enabled the tenuous alliance of the parliamentary left to win its 1981 electoral victory.) Ultimately, it is clear that Gorz was really not talking about a party at all, but rather about a structured and coordinated social movement.

### **New Directions**

Just a few years after 1968, Gorz, now political director of *Les Temps Modernes*, published two essays that betokened a distinct shift in his thinking: the first consisted of a further reflection on the events of May which provoked a fateful controversy within the journal's editorial board and heralded Gorz's preoccupation with the issue of the division of labour; the second proposed a sweeping reconsideration, if not complete renunciation, of the theory of the new working class.

Published as the lead article in the April 1970 issue of *Les Temps Modernes*, Gorz's "Détruire l'Université" was the catalyst that prompted two members, Pontalis and Pingaud, who were already ill at ease with some of what they regarded as extremist positions adopted by the journal under Gorz's direction, to resign.<sup>110</sup> A rather ill-considered and inflammatory essay, it seems in retrospect to have been somewhat atypical of the general tenor of Gorz's thinking and to contradict the spirit of transcending the reform-revolution dichotomy. Completely contrary to Marcuse, who considered the university one of the last refuges of oppositional thought and had warned the students against destroying the institution,<sup>111</sup> Gorz argued in the wake of '68 that the university was irredeemably bankrupt and there was nothing to be done but to destroy it. The

prospect of reforming the university had always been and continued to be an illusion; the idea that access to university education was open to all and based on merit was fiction. Beginning with the Fouchet reforms, the selection process which was intended to limit *ex ante* the number of students, had given the lie to the idea that everyone had an equal opportunity for social mobility via a university education. Now, with the Faure reform, there could be no further illusions.

Gorz did not enter into detail, but he was referring to the reform introduced by Edgar Faure, appointed Education Minister subsequent to the May events. This reform, which precipitated a very small scale revival of militant student protest in the fall of 1968, has been seen as one of the most dramatic in French educational history.<sup>112</sup> Associated with de Gaulle's post-May '68 promise of "participation," the reform provided for a greater measure of autonomy for the university through such measures as more self-government by students and teachers. Although ultimately unsuccessful, its avowed aim was to create more human-scale institutions and more democratic governance, to be realized by such concessions as decentralizing the faculties and circumscribing the hitherto despotic power of full professors.

From the perspective of the left at the time, the Faure reform entailed only the veneer of participation while pursuing the project of creating a technocratic university. The jaundiced eye with which the plan was viewed is captured in the assessment of historian and journalist Daniel Singer, who characterized Faure's plans as a bid to "isolate the revolutionaries and assure the bourgeoisie there would be no more explosions."<sup>113</sup> Gorz's analysis was more nuanced if equally critical. In his judgement, these reforms were intended to preserve the illusion of equal access to higher education when the reality was very different. There might be free access to universities but studies were an avenue leading to a dead end. The sheer number of graduates devalued university degrees and the *sélection*, against which students had fought so passionately, had for all intents and purposes shifted from the university to the job market. According to Gorz, the State would simply bide its time until parents realized that to find jobs their offspring would have to attend selective professional schools rather than the general arts faculties still open to all.

Gorz thus exposed an open secret of liberal democracy: that democratized access to higher education (which France had hardly achieved in any case) could never go hand in hand with social mobility, simply because the prospects of mobility are limited by definition in bourgeois society. In

Gorz's estimation, the thrust of the student critique in May '68 was the recognition of precisely this fact: for studies to cease to be a class privilege, everyone would have to be accorded the right to study, but in that event, the social division of labour would have to be challenged. Studies would have to serve a purpose other than providing an entry ticket to a career. However, Gorz argued, the university could not play this new role as purveyor of an oppositional culture leading to the abolition of the division of labour, any more than it could serve the function of responding to the demands of the capitalist economy. Gorz maintained that the university was the bastion of a mandarin culture whereby the production of knowledge is separated from any practice whether practical or oppositional. This assertion was not altogether consistent with the critique of the university mounted by radical students who protested precisely the harnessing of the university to the functional demands of modernizing capitalist society. But Gorz did not attempt to resolve the contradiction. Instead, he leapt abruptly to the conclusion that reform of the university was neither possible nor desirable, and destruction the only solution.

In this context, moreover, he offered a flimsy defense of student violence. This affirmation of violence sounded a novel (and fortunately transitory) note in Gorz's thinking. Although throughout the 60s Gorz had not precluded the possibility that a far-reaching social transformation might at some stage entail violence, he did not quite promote violent action in the way, for example, that Sartre did.<sup>114</sup> "Détruire l'université," however, could easily be construed as an endorsement of the violent tactics that began to be employed by various *groupuscules* on campus at the outset of the 1970s, during the brief revival of protest on the campuses of Nanterre and Vincennes. The character of this dissent, involving physical attacks and vandalism, was remote from the spirit of May '68.<sup>115</sup> It is probably more than coincidence that at this time offensive violence was regarded as a legitimate method of struggle by Lotta Continua, even to the point of degenerating into advocacy of violence against individual business executives.<sup>116</sup>

Nor was "Détruire l'université" simply a lapse in this regard. In the 1970 prefatory essay included in the American edition of *Socialism and Revolution*, Gorz referred to explosive violence as a necessary but not sufficient condition of the development of revolutionary consciousness, although in this instance he raised the point in the context of a discussion not of students but of "outcasts," namely, the marginal and poorest sectors of advanced capitalist society, including

immigrant labour. Here he contended that while violence could not substitute for effective action, it was nevertheless “the first and necessary step by which the oppressed refuse their oppression and assert themselves as potential subjects and agents of history.”<sup>117</sup>

To return to the question of the university, this essay heralded a distinctive shift. Of course, from the beginning Gorz had criticized corporate action in defense of student interests and certainly implied the need to surmount the limitations of the university in bourgeois society by abolishing the division between elite and utilitarian culture and creating a more polyvalent education — a task, Gorz had indicated, that required a close alliance between students and the working class. Nevertheless, Gorz had also endorsed a cultural battle for the self-determination of education by educators, and in his proposals for a new type of revolutionary party he had argued that student sectional demands had to be integrated in an overall programme of working class struggle as a “specific and autonomous component.”<sup>118</sup> Now, however, he had come to see the battle as necessarily waged strictly from outside the university. The only task remaining to the student left in the aftermath of ‘68 was to ensure that the crisis of bourgeois institutions was not masked. The real task of overturning the division of labour could not be accomplished or even assisted by students within the universities and lycées, but only by workers in the plants and offices. This ideological modulation, which discloses a less optimistic view of the pivotal role of students than that which Gorz had espoused in previous writings, was clearly coloured by the virtual collapse of the student movement in France and Italy subsequent to ‘68, and by the attendant tendency of the *groupuscules* to return to a narrow focus on the working class understood as the unitary body of industrial workers of orthodox Marxist theory and considered revolutionary its very nature (contrary to the precepts of Leninism itself in this instance). Writing almost contemporaneously with the publication of “Détruire l’université,” Dick Howard viewed this article as evidence of a shift towards Gorz’s earlier existentialist position.<sup>119</sup> Howard offered this assessment without any supporting observations or argumentation, but why it should be so is hardly self-evident. Indeed, if anything this article can be said to herald a phase in Gorz’s political evolution that might justly be designated as workerist in certain respects (although Gorz certainly never uncritically championed any and all demands and actions on the part of workers and remained critical of those who did).<sup>120</sup>

Again, we should note the crucial influences upon Gorz at this point of a number of groups on the Italian far left, which, prior to the Hot Autumn of 1968, explicitly rejected the university as a relevant arena of struggle.<sup>121</sup> This was true too of the French *groupuscules*, which apparently did not exercise much appeal for Gorz. Unlike Sartre, he did not extend any practical or symbolic support to the Maoist-leaning Gauche prolétarienne, which had been formed by former members of the UJCml (Union des Jeunesses Communistes - Marxist-Léninistes) and members of the anti-authoritarian March 22 movement who had soured on spontaneity and now openly advocated organized violence against the established institutions of the regime, including the PCF.<sup>122</sup> When the UNEF tried to organize students against the Faure reform, the *groupuscules* hindered its efforts, determined to see all energies concentrated on building direct ties with workers.<sup>123</sup>

Among the majority of the post-1968 groups, French and Italian, Maoist or not, the influence of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (as imagined by western leftist intellectuals and activists) was undeniable, and it induced in young would-be revolutionaries a zeal to eliminate barriers of class and occupation and to “go to the people” (among the Maoists especially, the ill-defined populist category of the people was substituted for the working class, and the exhortation to go to the people was propagated as early as May 7, 1968 by members of the UJCml<sup>124</sup>). In some instances, students actually withdrew from the university to go to work in factories and, as Robert Lumley has observed in the case of Italy, while the numbers of students to travel this path were few, they represented a noble ideal in the hearts and minds of many more.<sup>125</sup> In other cases, the cultivation of a direct relationship with workers took the form of providing services of various kinds with an attitude of humility consonant with the rejection of traditional vanguardism. This received support on the theoretical plane, from such figures as Sartre, for example, who devised a compatible conception of the role of the intellectual which involved placing one's acquired knowledge at the direct disposition of the masses (although he conveniently provided a loophole justifying the completion of his own monumental work on Flaubert!).<sup>126</sup> Interestingly, the tendency of student militants in this period to dismiss bourgeois culture and learning out of hand was trenchantly assailed as a bourgeois delusion by Gorz's colleague and mentor Vittorio Foa, who admonished: “...[the] workers dream and desire for books is rightful even when the books themselves are full of lies. Culture and books can be criticized when they have been mastered, not

by rejecting them *a priori*, and then delegating the leadership of one's struggles to the offspring of the capitalists."<sup>127</sup> Foa would presumably have regarded Gorz's injunction to destroy the university as politically irresponsible.

In Italy, the turn to the people and the factories was given added impetus by the (correctly) anticipated turmoil attending the renewal of national labour contracts in the fall of 1968.<sup>128</sup> In contrast with the *groupuscules* in France, however, the Italian *operaisti* actually had some success in organizing workers in various factories throughout Italy, employing a strategy of establishing *comitati di base* (rank and file committees) in the factories to incite wildcat strikes in defiance of official union directives.<sup>129</sup> Their general objective was to radicalize existing struggles and promote the ultimate aim of *autonomia* (workers' autonomy or workers' self-management).

There was yet another group on the Italian far left that exercised a pivotal influence on Gorz's broader intellectual and political evolution in the early 1970s: *Il Manifesto*.<sup>130</sup> In some sense the heirs of the Ingrao current within the PCI, a group of individuals who were inspired by the new wave of student and worker struggles commencing around 1967 and sought to move the Party leftward in its domestic and foreign policy positions decided to launch a journal in 1969, after the XII Party Congress — a decision which led to their exclusion from the Party in November of that year. The *Il Manifesto* group was formed in 1970 and led, among others, by Lucio Magri and Rossana Rossanda, the co-editors of the review. The guiding premise of the group was that western society was ripe for socialist transformation as a result of the inability of capitalism to ensure a satisfying quality of life and to meet the new creative needs it unwittingly engendered.<sup>131</sup> The group advocated a new form of struggle apposite to advanced capitalism in which the working class mobilizes directly against the capitalist division of labour in order to fuse economic, social and political demands. (In the analysis of *Il Manifesto*, technicians and intellectuals and students counted as close allies of the working class.) Partaking of a revival of the tradition of council communism in Italy in the late 60s, the *Manifesto* group believed that the new form of struggle should be carried on through councils organized within civil society rather than in political institutions.

In many essentials, the analyses of the *Manifesto* group intersected with those of Gorz. This is not surprising: as Grant Amyot observes in surveying the theses of the *Manifesto* group published

in September 1970, the Manifesto group articulated many of the themes of the international New Left, particularly in its insistence on the problem of the quality of life under capitalism.<sup>132</sup> As with the other groups on the Italian far left, what is pertinent here are certain influences and convergences: Gorz did not subscribe to any party line and he had significant differences with Il Manifesto. For example, Il Manifesto identified China as the new organic point of reference of the revolutionary forces on a world scale, although the members were not third worldists in the sense of ascribing to China or the Third World generally the commanding role in the international socialist movement.<sup>133</sup>

Above all, the shift in Gorz's thinking in the opening years of the 1970s was informed by developments within the labour movement in both France and Italy, namely, a renewal of worker militancy ostensibly around qualitative issues such as working conditions and control. This was the foundation in practice for the intensified workerism among the Italian populist and other far left groups in Italy and France. The events of May in France and the Hot Autumn in Italy had already seemed to reaffirm the strength of the working class, and they were followed by aggressive labour actions in both countries (and elsewhere in the West) to the point that even Herbert Marcuse, the leading left theorist of working class integration, was induced to ponder a possible resuscitation of class conflict within the advanced capitalist countries.<sup>134</sup> Although technicians and white collar workers continued to partake in strike action and new forms of struggle, as John Low-Bear's study confirms, "[i]n the early seventies, technicians were displaced from the political limelight by young, semi-skilled workers, often immigrants from rural areas. These became the most militant actors in the French and Italian labor movements, leading to a critical reevaluation of the new working class thesis."<sup>135</sup> Rank-and-file workers often defied the directives of their own unions, embarking on various unauthorized actions. Governments all over the western world were reporting a serious problem with worker dissatisfaction manifesting itself in high rates of absenteeism and turnover, impromptu wildcat strikes, sabotage and so on, which precipitated a spate of studies and industrial reform schemes.<sup>136</sup> French capital was galvanized by spectacular strikes into introducing schemes for job enrichment (conferring greater responsibility on workers and work teams by such means as abolishing the time clock, making work crews responsible for the quality and quantity of their output) and job enlargement (recomposing a number of fragmentary jobs into a more complex task)



to humanize factory work. The most famous of the French labour struggles were the strike and occupation at the LIP watch factory in 1973 and the assemblers' strike at the LeMans branch of Renault also in 1973, the latter which precipitated a *grande peur* of a revolt against work.<sup>137</sup>

In fact, in the aftermath of May, in spite of the wage gains granted by the Grenelle agreements, there occurred in France what sociologist Claude Durand described as a crisis in the organization of work.<sup>138</sup> In addition to a growing number of strikes in which working conditions figured as a central demand, there were among the more traditional production workers various expressions of a revolt against the Taylorist organization of work: absenteeism, slowdowns, poor quality of work and service, and so on. Among the young, Durand noted, "a rising standard of living no longer appears to be a sufficient reason to tolerate dehumanized work."<sup>139</sup>

May '68 might have passed into history, but there appeared to be an immediate legacy of labour radicalism that was bound to influence the perspectives of left-wing intellectuals determined not to give up on the advanced capitalist countries as a locus of revolutionary agency. We may recall too that it was at the beginning of the 1970s that the CFDT, which had for several years been evolving in a leftward direction and grappling with the implications of the recomposition of the working class for trade unionism in France, officially espoused *le socialisme autogestionnaire* at its May 1970 national convention.<sup>140</sup>

In an interesting analysis, Durand links this crisis in the organization of work to an important turning point in social theory and popular perception concerning the idea of progress and the social benefits of science and technology. He sees this period in the early 70s as the beginning of a widely perceived disjuncture between technological advance and social progress.<sup>141</sup> Whereas previously technological progress was expected to yield social rewards (a conviction that cut across the political spectrum ), a decoupling now occurred. Technical progress began to be viewed either as detached from or as an obstacle to social progress.<sup>142</sup> Such a conception had serious implications for a central premise of Marxism: namely, that the development of the productive forces constituted an unmitigated good, albeit one that could only be fully realized under socialism. And the corollary insight that the unfettered development of productive forces such as technology under either a capitalist or socialist system might impede social progress was at the heart of the critique of growth advanced by the nascent ecology movement that we will look at in the next chapter. For Durand, the

dawning consciousness of a divorce between technological advance and social progress was due in part to a growing realization that oppressive methods of work organization were not a technical necessity, as experiments in the humanization of work demonstrated. While Durand is critical of Gorz, in many respects his work in this period supported Durand's thesis, as we shall see shortly.

### **Farewell to the new working class**

Gorz might have found encouragement in May '68 for his sanguine view of the prospects for the new working class, as did his colleague Serge Mallet and the sociologist Alain Touraine. But while Gorz continued to view May '68 as confirmation of the possibility of revolution in advanced capitalist countries, within only a few years he virtually recanted his previous casting of the technical and scientific workers in the role of new revolutionary vanguard. He moved so far in the opposite direction that in the course of an acclamation of the subversive potential of the technoculture written in the 1990s, Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux single Gorz out for condemnation in view of his assessment of technical experts as adjuncts to the capitalist order who have lost their critical capacity.<sup>143</sup>

The revival of militancy amongst the traditional working class was undoubtedly relevant to Gorz's shifting position, which can be seen as a predictable outgrowth of his increasing focus on industrial workers at the expense of other social categories, such as students, already apparent in "Détruire l'université." But the more immediate intellectual context for his growing doubt about the new working class was a seminal analysis published in the *Il Manifesto* journal in 1969 and reprinted in April 1970 in *Les Temps Moderne*, presumably on Gorz's initiative.<sup>144</sup> The article sought to clarify the nature and position of technical and scientific workers, and in the process it challenged some of the central premises of new working class theory.

Looking at the issue of whether the gap between such workers and their blue-collar counterparts had been narrowed, the Manifesto article's authors agreed that the extension of the capitalist division of labour throughout the enterprise had indeed led to the proletarianization of the majority of clerical and technical staff and that their diminished condition rendered technical

workers more inclined towards trade union activity; at the same time, they pointed to the importance of perceived differences in status in perpetuating divisions among technical and white-collar employees and production workers. The article went further in distinguishing between proletarianized white-collar workers and those technical and scientific workers whose specialized skills in gathering and managing information earned them a modicum of autonomy and power within the enterprise — an advantage deriving precisely from the dispossession of the majority of workers: “The power they [technicians] wield as innovators and as experts in the decision-making process belongs exclusively to the technicians only because capitalism, in order to control this power better, has taken it away from the majority of workers.”<sup>145</sup>

For the Manifesto contributors, this did not imply that technicians were content in their roles. However, technicians as a group failed to identify the division of labour as the real cause of their various frustrations; instead, they tended to attribute it to archaic forms of business organization. Trained in an instrumentalist rationality, they viewed the parcellization of work as a technical necessity that is politically neutral. Nevertheless, the Manifesto authors observed, technicians had grown increasingly dissatisfied for a combination of reasons, including a more anti-authoritarian culture propelled by the student revolt and a mounting anti-authoritarianism affecting the working class as a whole. On this account, then, it was the revolt of the broader working class that was driving the disaffection of technicians, and not the converse as new working class theory had it.

While the article concluded that the mobilization of technicians is possible, it nevertheless underscored the ambiguous class position of technical and scientific workers. Gorz clearly found the arguments raised by the Manifesto authors persuasive, as he went on to raise many of the same issues in the essay that marked his own turning point with respect to the new working class, “Techniques, techniciens et la lutte des classes,” published in *Les Temps Modernes* in August 1971.<sup>146</sup>

Gorz's *volte face* was bound up with a critique of the traditional Marxist view of the neutrality of science and technology, a theme also sounded in the Manifesto piece. Consideration of the ideological incrustations of science and technology did not, of course, originate with the New Left; it had antecedents for example, in the interdisciplinary work of the American Lewis Mumford,

in the Sorcerer's Apprentice conception of technology as an autonomous, largely nefarious force escaping human control articulated by French philosopher Jacques Ellul and in the neo-Marxist work of the Frankfurt School. The bias of technology became an important motif in New Left thought internationally, especially via the reflections of Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas.<sup>147</sup> Gorz's own reflections on the subject in turn proved influential within the radical science movement.<sup>148</sup> And as we shall see in the next chapter, the critique of scientism as an ideology was one of the linchpins of the political ecology movement, acquiring a practical political basis in the protest against France's nuclear energy program.

Contrary to orthodox Marxist theory, Gorz now agreed with Marcuse and Habermas that the development of the productive forces was not a neutral process that could ultimately be harnessed without difficulty in the building of socialism. While technological progress had created the conditions of possibility for liberation, the development of the productive forces under capitalism is marked by capitalist relations of production which can subvert or mask their liberating potential. A radical societal transformation is thus predicated upon the simultaneous transformation of the techniques of production and the organization of work. Indeed even the suppression of private property in the means of production will not by itself transform capitalist relations of production so long as the techniques of production bear the imprint of the capitalist division of labour.

In contrast with some recent post-structuralist critiques which regard science as one interest-bound narrative among others, Gorz did not adopt such a reductionist line: he conceded a degree of irreducible autonomy to scientific and technological development, which he located in the worker himself as free praxis.<sup>149</sup> Concretely, this meant, for Gorz, that scientific workers remained free to ask different questions from those to which they are directed and to develop solutions never posed by the bourgeoisie, although he failed to explain how this freedom might be put into practice.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, he observed that the very success of the possessors of this knowledge hinges on their willingness to place the interests of capital first, and in "Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle" he goes so far as to affirm that to a large extent their knowledge is functional only "in relation to the orientation and priorities of monopolistic growth."<sup>151</sup> How meaningful the notion of autonomy is on this account is questionable. (Gorz's most complete albeit still sketchy statement on

the subject may be found in an article written for *Les Temps Modernes* in 1974, "On The Class Character of Science and Scientists."<sup>152</sup>)

Given that, like technology itself, scientific and technical knowledge and skills are inextricably linked to the dominant system, Gorz concluded that it was politically retrograde to defend the rights of technical and science workers to use their existing skills: what had to be challenged was the content, orientation and biased character of science and technology. Here we can discern a distinct shift in emphasis from Gorz's earlier writings, which pointed to the frustration of the new proletarians who are deprived by capitalist industry of the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills. So far, however there is no irreconcilable contradiction; but Gorz did not stop here.

Drawing upon essays by Stephen Marglin and by the Italian trade unionist Antonio Lettieri,<sup>153</sup> and invoking the alleged achievements of the Chinese Cultural Revolution,<sup>154</sup> he elaborated an idea that he had only alluded to in passing in earlier work, namely, that the "minute and stupefying fragmentation of tasks" under capitalism is not a technical necessity but a political imperative. The first time Gorz drew attention to this was in his 1965 essay "Capitalist Relations of Production and the Socially Necessary Labour Force," where he noted that the reorganization of tasks occurring in technically advanced industries, which entailed greater control by workers, revealed that the hierarchical relations within the factory were not a necessary derivative of technology itself but existed due to capitalism's need for shattered and atomized men to perpetuate its domination over individuals not only as workers but also as consumers.<sup>155</sup>

In "Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle" Gorz reiterated and expanded on this observation that the organization of work under capitalism is designed not primarily to maximize productivity but to perpetuate control and exploitation. The proof he adduced is that hierarchy and parcellization can be dispensed with or at least mitigated with salutary results for efficiency and productivity, as experiments in job enlargement and the introduction of autonomous work teams were confirming. Offering a rich analysis of the nature of productivity from the vantage point of capital as opposed to that of labour, Gorz arrived at the conclusion that the ultimate purpose of the minute division of labour is to render the overall labour process opaque to workers and impede any aspiration to control. He summarized the resulting vicious circle as follows: since the ends of

production are not determined by the workers in accordance with their needs, the production process must be based on forced labour; if capital must rely on unwilling workers, the work must become regimented and idiotic; the more regimented and idiotic it becomes, the less willing are the workers to perform it.

We saw earlier that one of the arguments in favour of the new working class as a potentially radical group was the tendency of advanced technology and production processes to afford the worker a greater grasp of the production process as a whole. Now, however, in harmony with the analysis of the Manifesto article, Gorz argued that due to the capitalist division of labour, technical and scientific knowledge had become so fragmented that even highly educated technical workers tended to be “specialized imbeciles” deprived of a broad understanding of the production process and its aims.<sup>156</sup> Still, the similarity between the alienated condition of production workers and technical workers, their parallel relationship with capital, did not automatically warrant the latter’s inclusion in the category of working class. It was important, Gorz now cautioned, to distinguish between two types of situations: the more common case in which technicians have control over production workers, who are accorded inferior status, and the less frequent circumstances in which the process is carried out by technical workers with no authority over other workers. (Regrettably, Gorz himself was unclear about when he was referring to the first group and when to the second, so the impression remains that his analysis applies to technical workers generally, which is not an insurmountable analytical problem, given Gorz’s warning that the first category is far more common.) In the first instance, as the group entrusted with the task of maintaining hierarchical structure within the plant, technical workers play a dual role, both technical and ideological. Insofar as they are indispensable to the successful deployment of semi-automated machinery which serves to dequalify previously skilled workers, the stratum of technical and scientific workers functions as the guardian of the capitalist division of labour: “They represent the skill and knowledge of which the workers have been robbed, the separation between intellectual and manual work, between conception and execution. They enjoy significant financial, social and cultural privileges. They are the workers’ most immediate enemy.”<sup>157</sup> But, Gorz maintained, the differences between these technical workers and productive workers are not differences of class. Objectively, low-ranking technicians are members of the working class to the extent that they are oppressed, exploited and

alienated in the work they perform. However, their membership in the class must be qualified insofar as they do not think of themselves as members of the working class. Here again we can detect the imprint of the Manifesto article with its emphasis on the importance of perceived differences in social status.

It is noteworthy that in a subsequent abridged version of the article for *Telos*, Gorz evidently changed his mind again, maintaining that there is “an unbridgeable *objective* class distinction” between technical supervisory staff and production workers which will require a herculean ideological effort to overcome.<sup>158</sup> Essentially, he categorized them as petty bourgeois, in a servile position in relation to the ruling class.<sup>159</sup> He reinforced this analysis in his 1974 essay on science and scientific workers, where he argued that in spite of the proletarianization of scientific workers, their position of relative privilege in relation to the rest of the working class justified the perception of them as oppressors.<sup>160</sup> One regrettable constant running through Gorz's shifting positions is a failure to define technical, scientific or intellectual workers in concrete empirical terms. Sometimes he seems to use the terms interchangeably, sometimes he inserts distinctions, but they remain nebulous categories, and this is a fundamental weakness in his analysis.

As for the central question of the relations between technicians and production workers, Gorz now argued that the immediate interests of these privileged groups of workers were not intrinsically antagonistic to the system. In contrast with his earlier ideas about the new qualitative needs of new proletarians — particularly the desire for autonomy — which the capitalist system cannot accommodate, he now rather summarily dismissed the aspiration to self-management:

There is a significant proportion of highly skilled personnel who believe that they must be anti-capitalist and socialist because they are in favour of self-management, that is, in favour of running the plants themselves without being controlled by the owners. In truth, there is nothing socialist in this technocratic attitude; doing away with the owners and their control would not abolish the hierarchic structure of the plant or laboratory, or administration; it only might alleviate the oppression suffered by employees in responsible positions without diminishing the oppression these employees inflict on production workers.<sup>161</sup>

Thus, again in keeping with the analysis of *II Manifesto*, nothing short of an explicit abjuration of the division between intellectual and manual labour qualified for Gorz as genuinely subversive —

an emphasis that has more to do with Maoism than traditional Marxism, which reserved the solution of the problem of the division of labour for the later stage of communism. (It should be noted too that this was not only a theme sounded by *Il Manifesto*: the abolition of hierarchy based on the division between mental and manual labour was a major preoccupation of the Italian far left as a whole.<sup>162</sup>) Underpinning Gorz's view were two key premises: the first, a highly disputable presupposition for which Gorz supplied only the scantest anecdotal evidence, is that technicians do not possess any superior knowledge that workers could not acquire from practical experience.<sup>163</sup> And, the second, more defensible, but resting in part on the first, as well as on the imagined accomplishments of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, is that while specialization cannot be immediately abolished, privilege can.<sup>164</sup>

In any event, Gorz's criteria for what qualifies as potentially revolutionary consciousness among those people he once grouped together under the rubric "new proletarians" had become more stringent. What was the likelihood that this consciousness could flower among technical staff? Gorz did concede that technical supervisors were likely to side with the working class in times of acute crisis. In such circumstances, their ambiguous position as simultaneously oppressor and oppressed would render them responsive to workers' demands for equal pay and attacks on the division of labour, and the balance might tip in favour of solidarity. Gorz noted that there were instances of this kind of solidarity in May '68. But, he warned, it was far from likely in normal times, when technicians must be prodded to question their role. In a considerable retraction of earlier views Gorz wrote: "But the fact that...ideological conversion is possible does not mean that it is inevitable. And it certainly does not mean that technical workers are destined to form the vanguard. The nature of their role in production does not prepare them for class confrontations, let alone for assuming positions of leadership."<sup>165</sup> How then, Gorz asked, might one account for the many strikes witnessed in recent years by groups such as draughtsmen, engineering and technical personnel in Italy, France and Britain? He replied that these erupted mainly among the second category of technical workers who did not command subordinate manual workers and were subjected to the same hierarchical control and minute division of labour as manual workers. But their incipient revolt was not unambiguous; Gorz declared that they were primarily motivated by something other than the protest against alienation he proffered as an explanation in *Strategy for*



*Labor*. In Gorz's revised interpretation, they were loath to be submitted to the same evaluation, fragmentation and hierarchical regimentation as ordinary workers: "...they rebel not *as* proletarians but *against* being *treated* as proletarians."<sup>166</sup> And "[t]hey refuse proletarianization for themselves (but only for themselves)."<sup>167</sup> With this admission, Gorz confirmed status as a key factor in the consciousness of the "new working class," and he tacitly concurred with the conclusions of scholars such as Goldthorpe that the new working class was likely to lean in a corporatist direction: it did not identify itself or its aims with the working class as a whole. The conclusion has been echoed in the recent work of French sociologist Robert Castel who identifies May '68 as an exception to the dominant tendencies among technicians and engineers which are "the defense of their specific interests by way of maintaining social differentiation and respect for hierarchy, rather than aligning themselves with the positions of the working class."<sup>168</sup>

At the beginning of the 1970s, however, Gorz's own conclusions about the future of the new proletarians were not all gloom. To understand where hope lay in Gorz's view, we must understand his analysis of the roots in the school system of technicians' ambiguous attitude towards their own privileged position.

Gorz pointed out that technicians were not the product of the liberal arts education provided by the universities, but rather of the disciplinarian, narrow, regimented type of education meted out by technical and engineering schools which, unlike the liberal arts education, is not concerned with ultimate ends and values, but with devising and perfecting the means to ends determined elsewhere. This, Gorz suggested in a somewhat conspiratorial vein, was a deliberate strategy on the part of capital so that the recipients of a technical education are prepared to be passive in relation to authority and do not employ their technical know-how for subversive ends. "People who actually control the more or less automatic processes involved in key sectors of production must, by some means or other, be integrated into the system's privileged strata, and be made blind as to their own class position"<sup>169</sup> Thus, for Gorz, the separation between higher culture and technical skills was part and parcel of the social division of labour.

However, in Gorz's view, the dynamics of advanced capitalism were giving rise to two inescapable contradictions: first, in order to assure a sufficient supply of unqualified workers the system was obliged to fail a certain number of aspirants to technical careers; and second, at some

point so many technical workers would be needed that they could no longer be regarded as an elite and their privileges would be revoked. In a hazy prognosis concluding “Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle,” Gorz anticipated two possible reactions to this situation: on the one hand, the frustration of having suffered through a stultifying education only to wind up with a mind-numbing job could produce either fascist or reformist sympathies. But Gorz predicted another possible reaction which, in his estimation, harboured greater subversive potential: the discovery early on that the values inculcated by the educational system are fraudulent and the consequent emergence of an anti-authoritarian attitude of “fuck the school and fuck the system.”<sup>170</sup> Thus, the political orientation of the second category of technical workers, which in Gorz's prediction was ultimately to form a majority, was not a foregone conclusion: in the future the new proletarians could swing either way.

Rather disingenuously, Gorz remarked that when Serge Mallet and others wrote about the “new working class” ten years earlier they had missed this ambiguity. Certainly, as we have seen, Gorz himself made more sweeping if not more unequivocal claims at the time about the new proletarians, and he might have been more guarded in his optimism and more attentive to the ambiguous situation of technical workers. Furthermore, while Gorz acknowledged that Mallet and others had then made a valid distinction between the old working class, whose demands were essentially confined to quantitative matters — wages and the like — and the new working class, which struggled for more qualitative goals, he now contended that as technical education and the technicization (or “intellectualization”) of work became more and more widespread, this distinction between the old and new working class was becoming obsolete, at least as concerns younger workers. These latter, in Gorz's estimation, knew or sensed that the technical worker was the proletarian of the “technological society.”

Thus Gorz seemed to be holding out some kind of hope for a newer new working class unified with the old working class insofar as the former had been stripped of all privileges and the latter was better educated — and both had an interest in overcoming the division of labour. (Here he seriously underestimated the abiding status value of mental over manual labour, which Goldthorpe's study highlighted). To this newest working class he ascribed the quest for satisfaction of the inherently oppositional qualitative needs he had previously identified in the technicians.<sup>171</sup> In this way, by the 1970s Gorz had qualified his adherence to the theory of the new working class to

the extent that, looking back, he could justly maintain that after May '68 he no longer considered the mental and technical workers a vanguard.

In fact, he went so far as to modify his purportedly factual understanding of the role the new working class had actually played in May '68 to suit his current theoretical predispositions, displaying (not for the first time) a rather cavalier attitude towards empirical investigation. Whereas in September 1968 he had claimed for engineers and technicians a leading role, he now asserted that technical and scientific personnel, "...did not as a rule prove to be the driving force of subversion: they were drawn into the battle by the revolt of students and young manual workers..."<sup>172</sup> Tailoring his historical reading to suit his new interpretation of the role of technicians, Gorz maintained that the demands of young manual workers were generally more radical than those of technicians. In his estimation, the young blue-collar workers sensed that the oppressions of the workplace, including the parcellization of work, were not technically necessary but politically desirable for the ruling class, and sought the abolition of all power from above, through the establishment of workers councils. Technical, scientific and managerial employees, on the other hand, did indeed, on their own initiative, call into question the rationality of the decisions of senior management and, out of a sense of frustration, were prompted to demand local self-management, thus rejecting private ownership and the centralized power structure; but they were not prepared to challenge the capitalist division of labour — which had become, by this time, the *sine qua non* of revolutionary praxis for Gorz.

On the positive side, in severely qualifying, if not disavowing, his initial optimism about the potential of the new working class Gorz can be seen to repudiate a technological determinist standpoint that could be read from his earlier faith that as the productive forces develop under capitalism, demanding more intellectual and less physical work, so necessarily do the intellectual and creative faculties of social individuals, thus calling forth people's creative capacities and spurring them to pursue their own ends and refuse to serve those of capital.<sup>173</sup> He now correctly warned against any mechanistic interpretation of the Marxist conception of the contradiction between the forces and relations of production. In rejecting as false capital's claim to be merely obeying the imperatives of technology, he moved away from an emphasis on objective technical requirements arising from the production process as the central determinant of consciousness, and

conceded that the outcome for the class consciousness of new technical workers in plants employing advanced technology would differ depending on the social relations within a given plant. "How [technical workers] behave in a period of confrontation will depend mostly on their previous political and ideological education..."<sup>174</sup> This brings Gorz much closer to the conclusions of John Low-Beer, who found, in his empirical research on the Italian new working class, that the class origin of technical workers and their political roots were pivotal factors in determining their degree of militancy, and also stressed the fundamental ambivalence that typified the situation of technical workers.<sup>175</sup> But in his general conclusions, Gorz in many ways most closely resembled the position to be taken up later on by the structuralist Marxist Nicos Poulantzas. Indeed, it has been suggested that Poulantzas consciously built on Gorz's work in this period.<sup>176</sup>

Gorz almost never engaged directly with Marxist structuralism, but he did offer some brief critical remarks in his May 1969 preface to *Réforme et révolution*, charging that structuralism, in doing away with the agency of the masses and making revolution dependent on outside agitation by the possessors of "science," partook of the ideology and theodicy of Stalinism.<sup>177</sup> But while there may have been an unbridgeable divide between Poulantzas' structuralist Marxism and Gorz's humanist variant, Poulantzas' contribution to the debate on the new middle strata revealed distinct similarities with Gorz's revised interpretation of the role of technical and scientific workers.<sup>178</sup> Without entering into detail, according to George Ross, Poulantzas developed his theory of the new middle strata in critical response to the PCF's mid-1970s evolution towards a Eurocommunist-style conception of a broad anti-monopolist alliance, in which white-collar groups figured as allies of the traditional industrial working class. Convinced that such designated allies would prove unreliable, Poulantzas classified them as a new petty bourgeoisie enmeshed in the oppression of manual labour (this is a thrust of his 1974 *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*). Like Gorz, he argued that in exercising a supervisory function, this class played a role in depriving the working class of knowledge in the labour process; it also played an ideological role in justifying capital's power on the basis of a new ideology of inequality based on specialized scientific and technical knowledge. Although Poulantzas conceded that this class was vacillating in its politics and could lean to the left in some instances, he believed that its ever present fear of proletarianization rendered it, for the most part, a safe ally for capital.

## To what end work?

The New Left and May '68 had opened up the vistas of agency rendering possible within a socialist perspective a more plural concept of the revolutionary subject, sometimes only to return to a conception of the traditional working class as the sole actual and potential bearer of genuine oppositional consciousness. In the immediate aftermath of '68, Gorz's writings typify this regression in certain respects. Having rejected the new working class as a new agent or at least a new vanguard of revolutionary socialism, he appeared at least temporarily to return to a narrow view of the proletariat as the only viable revolutionary subject. However, he was not entirely consistent in his analyses, and his conception of the actual or potential agents of fundamental social change and the role of the unions remained nebulous and confused.

He was particularly struck by the image of workers outpacing their union organizations, which could be interpreted as the manifestation of a latent revolutionary potential. In this context and in spite of his genuine belief in the need for a new type of revolutionary party, Gorz moved closer to a kind of spontaneism which has been likened to a Luxemburgian position,<sup>179</sup> but which, as we have seen, had more immediate ties with the Italian *operaisti* and was marred by the simplistic and unsubstantiated idea that the working class is revolutionary by its very nature — the very idea Gorz had himself set out in *La morale de l'histoire* to challenge, on the grounds that new social conditions had rendered it obsolete. He became more sharply and openly critical of centralized unions and placed greater emphasis on the decentralized activities of local unions and shop stewards. If the unions wanted to remain relevant they would be obliged, in Gorz's view, to offer a more radical overarching perspective. Gorz entirely failed, however, to reconcile this prescribed political role of the unions with the indispensable mass party.

By the dawn of the 1970s, then, Gorz had lost faith in the new working class but not — at least not yet — in the radical inclinations of the working class or in the promise of cultural revolution heralded by the crisis of May '68. Notwithstanding the numerous contortions in his thinking that we have observed, the renewed vigour with which Gorz advocated workers' control was in tune with the spirit of much of the New Left in the 1970s, when *autogestion* was placed squarely on the political agenda, admittedly as a catch-all concept espoused even by the

reconstituted Socialist Party, and when the virtues of the institutions of civil society began to be widely touted against the centralized State.

In his advocacy of workers' control, Gorz has been somewhat unfairly accused of making control an end in itself to the detriment of the ultimate structural change: the expropriation of the capitalist class. Recalling Gorz's insistence that a change of ownership of the means of production would not by itself produce a transformation of the social relations of work, Robert Cessieux maintained conversely that the workplace could be democratized, at least formally, without fundamentally altering the system of economic exploitation: if you change the system of authority and the command methods without changing the economic relations of production, Cessieux observed, you will always have a capitalist regime.<sup>180</sup> While it is true that Gorz did not place his emphasis on the explicit change of ownership of the means of production (and the example of the Soviet Union provided ample reason to consider state ownership as an insufficient condition for the foundation of socialism), he was explicit about the sweeping transformation required to make self-management an enduring reality: "But neither the workers' councils nor the factory or shop committees, nor the workers' power they stand for can prevail unless the political power of capitalism is broken, i.e., unless the capitalist state itself is overthrown and the capitalist relations of production and division of labour abolished."<sup>181</sup>

In the first years of the new decade, Gorz continued to write and lecture on workers' control and to pursue his exploration of the problems of technology and the division of labour. Paul Thompson alludes to Gorz's pioneering role in this period in re-establishing the centrality of the labour process and the division of labour to the question of alienation.<sup>182</sup> And Gorz did indeed open the collection of essays he edited on the subject with the classical Marxist declaration that "[t]he capitalist division of labour is the source of all alienation."<sup>183</sup> There is some small irony in this, of course, insofar as the existential Marxism and New Left social theory to which Gorz had significantly contributed bore considerable responsibility for detecting the roots and manifestations of alienation beyond the confines of the labour process in the first place.

More importantly, another significant and lasting self-reversal came out of these studies in the early 70s. Whereas earlier Gorz believed, like Mallet, that semi-automated production required a more polyvalent worker thus leading to a degree of reskilling, he now contended that the history of

capitalist technology including automation could, on the whole, be read as a process of deskilling.<sup>184</sup> And it was the result not of a technical necessity but a political option: “work has been fragmented, simplified and made more and more moronic,” Gorz alleged, “mainly to deprive the workers of any vestige of power over the production process, to shield the process from ‘human hazards’ such as skill and intelligent initiative.”<sup>185</sup>

Some reskilling might occur through deliberate efforts at job enrichment, but Gorz no longer regarded it as intrinsic to the logic of the production process. Indeed, Gorz's ultimate contention that the majority of jobs have been routinized to the point that the individuals occupying them are largely interchangeable forms part of the foundation of his later work (in this later phase Gorz has thus aptly been described by Alan Scott as holding a “strong Braverman position.”<sup>186</sup>)

At the same time, Gorz was also a vocal critic of the experiments in humanizing work then being introduced in France in response to the “crisis of work.” In an article written under the pseudonym Michel Bosquet for *Le Nouvel Observateur* and published in English translation as “The Prison Factory” in the *New Left Review*, Gorz was cynical about the future of these job enrichment schemes modelled on US reform experiments inspired by the findings of American social psychologists such as Frederick Herzberg. Gorz acknowledged that by making work less oppressive, such schemes improve productivity, but he claimed that the vast majority of French bosses would continue to resist job enrichment, not, as they tended to claim, because it was technically difficult or financially prohibitive, but for political reasons: because it would undermine their despotic power.<sup>187</sup> He maintained that job enrichment would lead to critical reflection on the ends of work and the nature of the system. Ironically, Gorz can be seen here to share the assumption that apparently made French managers hostile to enrichment, namely that the more you give workers the more they will want. And while he provided no evidence to support his claims about why job enrichment schemes might be or were rejected, empirical research conducted by French sociologist Claude Durand confirmed that managers in the early 70s did in fact fear that the restructuring of tasks would whet workers' appetite for self-management.<sup>188</sup> But Durand's study also suggested that the reasons for resistance to job enrichment were varied and complex, with cost considerations ranking uppermost in order of importance.

Analyzing the same subject from a different and more convincing angle, Gorz also argued in a separate essay from the same period that job enrichment was a new form of manipulation designed to reconcile workers with the despotism of the workplace.<sup>189</sup> As in the case of his criteria for what constitutes revolutionary reforms and what distinguishes workers' control — that is, any gains must not be obtained passively but must be wrested from capital in the process of struggle — he condemned job enrichment undertaken at the bosses initiative, which, in his view, served only to consolidate the power of capital.<sup>190</sup> The substance of the reforms was less important than the context in which the reforms were made, because ultimately the point, for Gorz, was not the reform of work within the existing system but the abolition of the system itself.

The struggle for job enrichment had merit only if it led beyond itself to the struggle for socialism; anything less was mere reformism. As Gorz put it:

[T]he ambiguity of “democratization” of the work process is that of all reform. When instituted from above, it is a reformist co-optation by capital of workers' resistance; when imposed from beneath in a test of strength it opens a breach in capital's system of domination. But that test of strength can be won only if it goes beyond the limit of the factory.<sup>191</sup>

Most importantly in this regard, Gorz returned again and again in his arguments about job enrichment to a central point he had made in *Strategy for Labor*: that alienation cannot be overcome without redefining the ends of work. He objected to the premise at the heart of job enrichment schemes that work well done has its own inner meaning and is its own reward regardless of its final result. No matter how rewarding the labour process may be, if the products manufactured or the services provided serve indefensible or destructive purposes, such as the production of weapons of mass destruction, then alienation is undiminished. This was a significant contribution of New Left thought, prefiguring the anti-productivism that emerged as a distinguishing theme of the French political ecology movement, as we shall see in the next chapter. And it remained at the core of Gorz's thinking throughout his many theoretical twists and turns. In his initial enthusiasm for the new working class, what Gorz had found appealing was precisely a perceived shift from an emphasis on emancipation within consumption (freedom from poverty) to an emphasis on emancipation within work and the questioning of the ends of economic growth itself. Already in



*Strategy for Labor* Gorz had asked, “Why live only in order to produce? Why produce if the things produced and the manner in which they are produced do not produce men and a life which are ends unto themselves?”<sup>192</sup> This questioning of the ends of work was often absent from socialist theorizing about the labour process, and arguably from the current in the historical socialist tradition. Marx himself had set the tone for an overweening concern with form and quantity over substance when in his discussion of the labour process in *Volume I of Capital* he declared that what distinguishes one economic epoch from another is not so much what is produced, but how it is produced and with what means.<sup>193</sup> This helped to fix Marxist attention from the outset on the process rather than the ends of production. Raymond Williams observed that it is typical not only of capitalist thinking to concern itself solely with the quantitative dimension of production but also of a goodly part of the socialist tradition in which production “is seen as in itself and as such the solution to poverty.”<sup>194</sup> He singled out British social critic and craftsman William Morris as exceptional in his concern with the kinds of production that ought to be carried out and not simply the extent.

Throughout the 60s and the opening years of the 1970s, implicitly and explicitly, Gorz reaffirmed a positive vision of work inspired by the young Marx, a vision of work as a creative human need that goes unfulfilled in the conditions of extreme alienation prevailing in the capitalist workplace; but, partaking of the socialist tradition, Gorz maintained that productive labour had the potential to be transformed and he held forth the possibility of ending alienation within work, making this the *conditio sine qua non* of human liberation. “[T]he emancipation of the working class, its power, begins through the struggle to recover its physical, psychic, intellectual and cultural integrity at work, that is to say in the struggle to impose the power of self-determination of the labour process.”<sup>195</sup> Transferring ownership of the means of production was not sufficient; real liberation entailed the collective power of decision by producers over the form, substance and organization of their work.

It is important to set this idea against Gorz’s simultaneous defense of the desirability and possibility of work reduction. This was a proposal to which Gorz had alluded throughout the 60s, but which he began to press more insistently in the early 1970s with the first signs of economic downturn, including mounting joblessness. In this context, the idea that productivity gains should be

translated into reduced working time gained currency in various circles, most notably the ecology movement, as we shall see in the next chapter. Gorz himself was once again inspired by the analyses and proposals of *Il Manifesto* and some far left Italian trade unionists, particularly Antonio Lettieri,<sup>196</sup> and he soon came to embrace work reduction as the key to a new utopian vision.

Far more will be said about this in subsequent chapters; for the time being it suffices to mention that in Gorz's view at this time, work reduction presupposed some form of self-managed socialism. It had to go hand in hand with the de-alienation of productive labour because “[t]here can be no emancipation of the social individual in his free time unless he is also emancipated in his main social activity — work.”<sup>197</sup> In fact, Gorz rejected the opinion of certain labour sociologists and trade union leaders that workers cannot be reconciled with work, even under conditions of job enrichment and workers' self-management, and that the only freedom to which workers can ever aspire is outside work itself. He contrasted that opinion unfavourably with the opposing conviction of CFDT leader Edmond Maire that “liberation in work is the first priority” since “[a]s long as your work remains boring and distasteful, there can be no real ‘quality of life’ even if you have two or three days a week of ‘culture’ and ‘liberation.’”<sup>198</sup> It was this conviction in the necessity and possibility of the emancipation of work that would dissolve in the crucible of the first decade of post-war crisis, when Gorz arrived at a conclusion about the impossibility of liberation within work similar to that of the pessimistic labour sociologists he criticized here.

## Notes

1. This spectacular growth rate declined subsequently and, according to Michael Rose, technicians accounted for only three per cent of employed persons in 1970. [*Servants of Post-Industrial Power? Sociologie du Travail in Modern France* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1979), p. 16.] But it was in any case not the numerical significance of this segment that impressed New Left theorists.
2. The automation debate in France originated in the early 50s, partly in response to the literature that issued from the debate on the subject in the U.S. among theorists such as John Diebold, Friedrich Pollock and Peter Drucker. Some of the major French left theories of automation are covered in Michael Rose's *Servants of Post-Industrial Power? An excellent account of the automation debate in the U.S. context is presented by Jeremy Rifkin in *The End of Work* (New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 1995), chapter 6.*
3. Jacques Kergoat, "Les syndicats français mis au défi," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (March 1996), p. 8.
4. Serge Mallet, "Une classe ouvrière en devenir," *Arguments* 12-13 (January-March 1959), pp. 16-20.
5. For Mallet's discussion of the composition of the new working class, see *The New Working Class*, trans. Andrée and Bob Shepherd (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975), pp. 66-68.
6. Serge Mallet, "Socialism and the New Working Class," *International Socialist Journal* 8 (April 1965), p. 164.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
8. Arthur Hirsh, *The French Left: A History and Overview* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982), p. 243 n.8.
9. Bruno Trentin, "Les doctrines néo-capitalistes et l'idéologie des forces dominantes dans la politique économique italienne," *Les Temps Modernes* 196-197 (September 1962), p. 672.
10. See for instance Duncan Gallie's censorious comments on Mallet's methods in *In Search of the New Working Class* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 27. Empirical studies testing new working class theory were conducted in the late 60s and early 70s in France; for a discussion of this literature see John R. Low-Beer's excellent study, *Protest and Participation: The New Working Class in Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 218-224. Some of Low-Beer's conclusions deriving from his own empirical research on the new working class in Italy will be discussed below, along with those of Gallie and another important empirical study by John H. Goldthorpe, et. al., *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
11. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor: A Radical Proposal*, trans. Martin A. Nicolaus and Victoria Ortiz (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 106.
12. *Ibid.*, p. ix.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

14. Gorz, *Stratégie ouvrière et néocapitalisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), p. 101 (my translation).
15. Gorz, "Preface," *Strategy for Labor*, p. x.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
18. In an essay discussing Mallet and Gorz, Dick Howard notes that Gorz's article "Capitalist Relations of Production and the Socially Necessary Labour Force" [*International Socialist Journal* 10 (August 1965), pp. 415-429] played an important role in determining the strategy of the UNEF and the SNEsup (university teachers union) in the period leading up to May '68. "New Situation, New Strategy: Serge Mallet and André Gorz," in *The Unknown Dimension: European Marxism Since Lenin*, ed. Dick Howard and Michael Klare. (New York: Basic Books, 1972), p. 407. As mentioned in the previous chapter leading figures within the American SDS were also influenced by Gorz's presentation of new working class theory.
19. Stephen Goode, *Affluent Revolutionaries: A Portrait of the New Left* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), p. 68.
20. A. Belden Fields, *Student Politics in France: A Study of the Union Nationale des Étudiants de France* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 25.
21. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 107.
22. These figures are cited in George Ross, "Where Have All the Sartres Gone?" in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 224.
23. Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 369.
24. The French analysis will be illustrated below; other similar analyses may be found in the writings of the new student left throughout the West. For a British variant see, for example, Gareth Stedman Jones, "The Meaning of the Student Revolt," in *Student Power*, ed. Alexander Cockburn and Robin Blackburn (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969), and for an American perspective see Carl Davidson "Campaigning on the Campus," in the same volume. For a brief reference to the germane views of the Pisan branch of the Italian student left, see Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 65.
25. See for example François Josse, "L'adaptation de l'université à l'industrie," *Les Temps Modernes* (March-June 1965), in which the author analyzes the Fouchet Plan as inaugurating the technocratic university subjugated to industry's need for administrative personnel.
26. The articles are "Naissance d'un syndicalisme étudiant," *Les Temps Modernes* 213 (February 1964) and "Critique du syndicalisme étudiant," *Les Temps Modernes* (May 1965).
27. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, et. al., "Why Sociologists?" in *Student Power*, ed. Alexander Cockburn and Robin Blackburn (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 376 (original emphasis).

28. Gorz, "Capitalist Relations of Production," p. 423.
29. Ibid., p. 425.
30. See "Capitalist Relations of Production," pp. 420-421.
31. Ibid., p. 421.
32. On this topic, see George Ross, "Marxism and the New Middle Classes: French Critiques," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 5 No. 2 (March 1978) and "Destroyed by the Dialectic: Politics, the Decline of Marxism, and the New Middle Strata in France," *Theory and Society* 16 (January 1987).
33. Stanley Aronowitz, "New Working Class, Old Labor Movement," *New Politics*, Vol. VII, No. 3 (Summer 1968), p. 65.
34. Gorz, *Réforme et Révolution* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), p. 40.
35. Manuel Bridier, "New Working Class or New Bourgeoisie," *International Socialist Journal* 13 (January-February 1966), p. 3.
36. Aronowitz, "New Working Class, Old Labor Movement," p. 63.
37. Rose, *Servants*, p. 18.
38. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 101.
39. For an incisive overview see the articles by John Bellamy Foster and Peter Meiksins in the special issue devoted to Braverman in *Monthly Review*, Vol. 46, No. 6 (November 1994). And see Paul Thompson, *The Nature of Work: an Introduction to the Labour Process Debates* (London: Macmillan, 1983).
40. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), p. 230.
41. See Braverman "The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century," *Monthly Review*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (May 1982).
42. Michael Rose notes that while between 1962 and 1968 the number of workers classified as skilled in France grew by 14 per cent, the percentage growth of semi-skilled workers was comparable. *Servants*, p. 90.
43. Braverman, "The Degradation of Work, p. 7.
44. Mallet, "Socialism and the New Working Class," p. 159.
45. This is a central point in Goldthorpe, et. al., *The Affluent Worker*, in Gallie, *In Search of the New Working Class*, and in Rose, *Servants*.
46. Gallie, *In Search of the New Working Class*, p. 4.
47. Ibid., p. 30.

48. Chris Smith, *Technical Workers: Class, Labour and Trade Unionism* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 35.
49. Low-Beer, *Protest and Participation*, p. 23.
50. Stephen Bornstein and Keitha Fine, "Worker Control in France: Recent Political Developments," in *Worker Self-Management in Industry: The West European Experience*, ed. G. David Garson (New York: Praeger, 1977), p. 158.
51. Low-Beer, *Protest and Participation*, pp. 229-230.
52. See Goldthorpe, et. al., *The Affluent Worker*, 179-187.
53. Herbert Marcuse, "Socialism in the Developed Countries," *International Socialist Journal* 8 (April 1965), p. 147.
54. Marcuse expounds this idea in *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), pp. 24ff.
55. Marcuse, "Socialism in the Developed Countries," p. 145.
56. Richard Johnson, *The French Communist Party Versus the Students* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 64. This prediction was all the more paradoxical in light of the ongoing and spectacular contraction of the French peasantry, which declined from 21 per cent to 12 per cent of the population in the period between 1954 and 1968; R.W. Johnson, *The Long March of the French Left* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), p. 120.
57. Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963).
58. Gorz, "Le débat sino-sovietique," *Les Temps Modernes* 204 (May 1963), p. 1939 (my translation).
59. Gorz, "Colonialism At Home and Abroad," chap. in *Socialism and Revolution*, trans. Norman Denny (New York: Anchor Books, 1973), p. 218.
60. The enchantment of French intellectuals in particular with Mao's China and the Chinese Cultural Revolution has been the subject of much excoriating commentary and a variety of interpretations. *Le Débat* characterized the French embrace of Mao by a wide circle extending beyond the "grands intellos" with Maoist sympathies such as Sartre and Althusser, and beyond the *groupuscules*, as "...one of the most amazing examples of collective myth-making in our history." ["Dictionnaire d'une époque," *Le Débat* 50 (May-August 1988), p. 193 (my translation).] The authors of the unsigned entry offer rather uninspired hypotheses about the relevance of a disintegrating Catholicism, a deep-seated contempt for the individual and a delight in the humiliation of bourgeois experts, as well as the projection by intellectuals onto the Chinese context of sympathy for the beleaguered French peasantry in modernizing France.
- Noting the "widespread enthusiasm for a hideously sanitised version of the Cultural Revolution" during and after May '68, Keith Reader more interestingly attributes the appeal of the phenomenon of the Chinese Cultural Revolution to the idea that the realms of culture and ideas were validated as legitimate terrains of revolutionary struggle. [*Intellectuals and the Left in France Since 1968* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 10.] Ellen Meiksins Wood makes a similar

argument but from a more traditional critical Marxist perspective. She remarks that Maoism generally, with its doctrine of overcoming backward conditions unpropitious to building socialism through great leaps forward, opened up the possibility — appealing to western intellectuals — of detaching the possibility of revolution from material conditions of productive relations and class and shifting it onto the terrain of political and cultural struggles [“Marxism Without Class Struggle?” *Socialist Register* (1983), p. 250.] Reader’s account draws on the contemptuous treatment of the phenomenon of French Maoism meted out by Serge Quadruppani in a caustic assault on the new philosophers and the phenomenon of French left disaffection in the 1970s; in Quadruppani’s estimation the (superficially paradoxical) appeal of the Cultural Revolution for western intellectuals generally lay in the idea of the abolition of the intellectual as a specialized function. [*Catalogue du prêt à penser français depuis 1968* (Paris: Balland, 1983), p. 42.] Quadruppani also refers insightfully to the inability of much of the left intelligentsia to imagine socialism without reference to a model (p. 43) — a fault from which Gorz must be exempted.

These latter types of explanation are more compelling especially insofar as they go beyond French specificities, accounting equally for the fascination with Maoism that gripped the New Left internationally. French intellectuals were by no means singular in their espousal of the myth of China. Robert Lumley (*States of Emergency*, p. 128 and passim), Riccardo Albione [“The Crisis of the Italian Revolutionary Left,” *International Socialism* 6 (Autumn 1979), p. 139] and Stephen Hellman [“The ‘New Left’ in Italy,” in *Social and Political Movements in Western Europe*, ed. Martin Kolinsky and William E. Paterson (London: Croom Helm, 1976), p. 254 and passim] all emphasize the prevailing uncritical acceptance of the virtues of the Chinese model and the Cultural Revolution among the groups on the Italian far left. Hellman writes: “Often taken at face value, [China’s] intransigent rhetoric, open support of guerilla movements, and Cultural Revolution and Red Guards convinced many students and militants that this was the cutting-edge of anti-imperialist and truly revolutionary struggle in the world.” More merciful than most in his verdict, he acknowledges that while, in hindsight, the infatuation with China appears naive, the Chinese model did provide, at least superficially, a “pointedly different example than the USSR of a revolutionary process, a party-masses relationship, anti-bureaucratic measures, and so on.” In a related but more sophisticated and critical vein, Lumley suggests that the myth of China was fabricated by intellectuals and activists as a backward-looking utopia — backward-looking insofar as it entailed a simplistic ideal of a homogeneous class-based culture that flew in the face of the contemporary reality of cultural diversity in industrial societies. Looking back on the popularity of Maoism in France, the Green economist Alain Lipietz similarly distinguishes a utopian “Maoism of the Europeans” detached from the historical reality of Maoism, but sees as its essence the liberatory character of the Maoist injunction “dare to struggle.” “Choisir sa gauche,” *Le Débat* 13 (May 1981), pp. 25-26.

61. Gorz, *Socialism and Revolution*, pp. 3-4.

62. Analyzing French novelists such as Malraux, Sartre and de Beauvoir, Victor Brombert detects in their writings of the 30s and 40s a near pathological guilt complex over having been born to privilege and not having suffered enough, which he likens to Christian guilt. *The Intellectual Hero: Studies in the French Novel 1880-1955* (Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1964), esp. p. 145.

63. Gorz, *Socialism and Revolution*, p. 9.

64. See for example Gorz’s October 1973 essay “L’imperialisme sans rivages: les multinationales,” in his collection entitled *Écologie et politique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978), translated into English as *Ecology as Politics* by Patsy Vigderman and Jonathan Cloud (Montreal: Black Rose

Books, 1980). Here Gorz asserts that multinational corporations take the bulk of their profits from the Third World.

65. In *The Traitor*, Gorz attributed his use of pseudonyms to his fear of being reduced to an object and his consequent refusal to assume his being-for-others. The pseudonym was one means among others to exist as “an anonymous and invisible subject” [*The Traitor*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 279]. According to Conrad Lodziak and Jeremy Tatman, however, there was also a more mundane reason, at least for his having adopted the pseudonym Gorz, which he did while writing *The Traitor*, namely that the political content of the book would have jeopardized his application for French citizenship. [*André Gorz: A Critical Introduction* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), p. 138 n.51.] And years later, in an explanatory note prefacing *Écologie et politique* he claimed that the pseudonym Michel Bosquet was assigned to him by his first employer to sign newspaper articles, where the genre of which did not lend itself to in-depth analysis. *Écologie et politique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978).

66. For an unflattering, often glib, occasionally insightful depiction of *Le Nouvel Observateur* as superficially leftist, elitist and contemptuous of the working class from its inception, concerned with novelty and the quest for new subjects, see Louis Pinto, *L'intelligence en action: le Nouvel Observateur* (Paris: Éditions A.- M. Métailié, 1984). Heavily influenced by the theories of Pierre Bourdieu concerning the accumulation of intellectual capital, Pinto devotes substantial space to an unflattering portrait of Gorz as the theoretician par excellence of *Le Nouvel Observateur* and its guardian of revolutionary purity until the 1970s.

67. Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France de l'affaire Dreyfus à nos jours*, second edition (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), p.207.

68. Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Les intellocrates* (Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 1981), p. 303.

69. This argument has frequently been made. An early and persuasive rendition of it may be found in George Ross, “The May Revolt in France and the Role of the Communist Party,” *New Politics*, vol. VII, no. 1 (Winter 1968).

70. Within less than six months of the May events, no less than 124 books on the subject had already been published, and it has been remarked that this “interpretive fever” became a part of the events themselves; “Le mystère 68” round table discussion in *Le Débat* 50 (May-August 1988), p. 175. To mention only a few useful and interesting sources published in the ten years after May '68 and reviewing or proffering analyses of the events, see: Philippe Bénéton and Jean Touchard, “Les interprétations de la crise de mai-juin 1968,” *Revue Française de Science Politique* 20 (June 1970); Alain Touraine, *Le communisme utopique: le mouvement de mai 1968* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972) about which some brief remarks will be made below; Daniel Singer, *Prelude to Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970), which viewed May '68 as the spark that would inaugurate a new revolutionary spirit in the West. One of the most provocative interpretations was advanced by Régis Debray who invoked the cunning of history in his clever and, in parts, compelling assessment of May as having paved the way for contemporary capitalism in France. In “A Modest Contribution to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Tenth Anniversary,” *New Left Review* 115 (May-June 1979) he argued that French culture and ways of life had not kept pace with the modernizing economy, and May '68 succeeded in liberating the economy from the deadweight of obsolescent institutions and practices, such as the liberal arts education, the work ethic, the patriarchal family. One of the more fashionable recent trends, in keeping with the spirit of postmodernism, is to deny that May '68 had



any coherent meaning at all; this leaning is illustrated in various essays in *May '68: Coming of Age*, ed. D.L. Hanley and A.P. Kerr (n.p.: Macmillan, 1989).

71. Whether May-June '68 validated new working class theory has been the subject of one of many extensive sub-debates, with no conclusive evidence adduced on either side. On the one hand, it has been argued that technicians and skilled workers led the fray in '68, engaging in the most innovative actions and emphasizing issues of control over traditional bread and butter demands. On the other, detractors have sought to refute both the leading role of the new working class and its extra-economistic motivations. See the temperate assessments of the issue and some of the empirical evidence in Gallie, *In Search of the New Working Class*, pp. 28-29, and p. 298 and Low-Beer, *Protest and Participation*, pp. 222-223. For a more hostile critic, see Rose, *Servants*, esp. p. 91 and p. 96. Rose claims that it was most often semi-skilled mass production workers at the forefront of struggles during the May-June events, that grievances were primarily economic, and that even if there is evidence to suggest that workers in automated plants may have desired greater control over the production process, this did not mean they wished to challenge the capitalist system as such.

72. See his 1969 essay "May-June 1968 — The First Strike for Control," included in *The New Working Class*, and esp. pp. 6-14.

73. Alain Touraine, *Le communisme utopique: le mouvement de mai 1968* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972).

74. For an extended interpretation in this vein, see Daniel Singer, *Prelude to Revolution*. As it turns out, R. W. Johnson's antithetical argument, while perhaps a little overstated, appears closer to the truth. "...the Events were taken by many radicals in the West as proof of the possibility of revolution in even the most advanced capitalist society, while, if anything, they proved the opposite. The intelligentsia and the proletariat had done all that revolutionary theory might ever have asked of them; the state machine trembled - but was unharmed; the Right triumphed." *Long March*, p. ix. And in any event, with all due deference to caveats about premature proclamations of the end of history, the last 30 years seem to have definitively refuted the optimistic view expressed in 1968 about the renewal of revolutionary impulses in the West, at least in this millennium.

75. One of Gorz's earliest meditations on the May-June events is an essay written in September 1968 and included in English as "What are the Lessons of the May Events?" in *Reflections on the Revolution in France: 1968*, ed. Charles Posner (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970).

76. *Ibid.*, p. 261. The first attempt to negotiate a settlement of the strike occurred on May 25. Led by Georges Pompidou, representatives of the State gathered with management and the union confederations (CGT, CFDT and FO — *Force Ouvrière*) for sector by sector talks. After 25 hours, they concluded the Grenelle agreements, named for the rue de Grenelle, the location of the Hôtel du Châtelet where the negotiations were held. The agreements provided for a small increase in the minimum wage, an overall wage increase of 10 per cent, a planned reduction of the workweek to 40 hours (the 40-hour week was officially introduced by the Popular Front government in 1936, but in practice until the mid 60s the workweek averaged around 45 hours), and the possibility of greater recognition of trade union rights. The CGT was satisfied with the agreements, while the CFDT was less so, but the rank and file rejected them outright — CGT leader Georges Séguéy was heckled by a stronghold of CGT/PCF support, the Renault workers at Boulogne-Billancourt. In face of the widespread opposition, the CFDT refused to sign the agreements, the negotiations collapsed and the strike movement intensified. An improved version of the Grenelle agreements, including a 35 per cent increase in the minimum wage, was finally signed once the strike movement had exhausted

itself and any lingering resistance had been subjected to severe state repression with the blessing of the PCF.

77. In more recent historiography a virtual consensus has emerged around the idea that the workers were essentially fighting for wage increases. James Hollifield for example says that workers had few revolutionary designs and little sympathy with radical students; in his estimation, trade unions essentially wanted a share of profits from the economy they had helped to build. "Immigration and Modernization," in *Searching for the New France*, p. 126. But this categorical denial of any but economic motives among the strikers misses many of the novelties of May '68, including some of the self-perceptions of the actors. It would be rather cavalier to dismiss as mere rhetoric the CFDT's espousal of *autogestion* in the wake of May. [For an account of the CFDT's evolution during and after May '68 see Frank Georgi, "La CFDT en mai-juin 68," in *1968: Exploration du mai français*, Actes du Colloque "Acteurs et terrains du mouvement social de mai-juin 1968," volume 2, edited by René Mouriaux, et al. (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1992).] It was reported in *Le Monde* that as the strike progressed, "The CFDT placed more and more emphasis on structural reforms and the recognition of 'workers' power' in factories." [Cited in Andrée Hoyles, *Imagination in Power: the Occupation of Factories in France in 1968* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1973), p. 26.] French labour historian René Mouriaux takes a more balanced approach to assessing worker demands and desires in May '68, referring to widespread insistence on wage increases, better working conditions and job security "in addition to the hopes for worker self-management." [Trade Unions, Unemployment and Regulation, 1962-1989," in *Searching for the New France*, p. 178 (my emphasis).] On the other hand, as a number of critics have pointed out, even if it is granted that at least some segments of the striking workers in May '68 were seeking a greater measure of control within the workplace we cannot infer a fundamental opposition to the capitalist system as such from a struggle for increased decision-making power and autonomy, at least not on the part of the rank and file.

78. See, for instance, Gorz, "The Way Forward," *New Left Review* 52 (November-December 1968), pp. 48-49.

79. *Ibid.*, 258-259.

80. Reprinted in *Les Écrits de Sartre: Chronologie et bibliographie commentée*, ed. Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 463 (my translation).

81. Gorz, *Socialism and Revolution*, p. 27.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 257-258. The idea that the rise in unemployment was a decisive factor in precipitating the May events has been challenged by Chris Rootes, who concurs with Ronald Inglehart's view of May '68 as the expression of emerging post-materialist values. Inglehart's interpretation shares a basic premise with new working class theory, namely, that the satisfaction of material needs gives rise to concern with quality of life issues not directly related to consumption, such as participation in decision-making, a desire to exercise creativity, appreciation of nature, and so on. In a sense, by underscoring the importance of basic material concerns in kindling student protest, Gorz was departing from the assumption that relative affluence engenders concern with qualitative issues. Rootes argues persuasively that "The proposition that the small increase in unemployment and worsened job prospects for graduates fuelled anxieties about threatened affluence is supported neither by the magnitude of the shifts in the labour market or the changes in the fortunes of the groups mobilised, nor by the themes of the protest itself." "Student Activism in France: 1968 and

After,” in *Social Movements and Protest in France*, ed. Philip G. Cerny (London: Frances Pinter, 1982), p. 21

83. Gianni Statera, *Death of a Utopia: The Development and Decline of Student Movements in Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 262. It has been observed with justice more than once that if May '68 was not a revolutionary situation it would be hard to imagine what would fit the bill. Although he draws sobering conclusions from this insight about possibilities for radical social change in contemporary society, R.W. Johnson, for example, remarks: “If one believed that May 1968 had not, in fact, been a revolutionary situation, it became difficult to believe in the arrival of such a situation at all, for no greater challenge to the existing order than that posed by the Events could easily be envisaged.” *Long March*, p. 65.

84. Gorz, “Capitalist Relations of Production,” p. 429.

85. Perry Anderson, “Problems of Socialist Strategy,” in *Towards Socialism*, ed. Perry Anderson and Robin Blackburn (London: Fontana, 1965), p. 242.

86. Gorz, *Socialism and Revolution*, p. 176.

87. The idea that the PCF could have used the May events to any political advantage for the working class is not without its detractors; see, for example, R.W. Johnson, *Long March*, pp. 60-61.

88. There are other theories about the PCF's comportment, including the notion that Moscow intervened to ensure the PCF's tacit cooperation with de Gaulle. This idea seems entirely plausible in light of the USSR's undoubted interest in having a leader such as de Gaulle, who was bent on pursuing a course independent from the USA, remain in power, and its desire not to provoke the Americans by attempting to upset the established balance of terror. Gorz never linked the PCF's feeble position during May to the logic of the peaceful coexistence policy he had endorsed with respect to the Third World five years earlier. Naturally he had never subscribed to the underlying reasons for the policy — the USSR's acceptance of a more or less permanent division of the world into spheres of influence under the tutelage of the two superpowers. But Gorz might have reasoned that if Moscow had decided it was wiser not to provoke the capitalist powers by fomenting or abetting revolution in the Third World, it was even less likely to allow one of its most loyal satellite parties to advance the revolutionary cause in the heart of western Europe. And then there is the also the rather compelling suggestion, apparently voiced first by André Glucksmann, that the USSR was equally anxious about any incipient revolutionary impulses spreading eastward... David Caute, *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey through 1968* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 251.

89. For a discussion of the phenomenon of Mendèsisme in the latter part of the 1950s see Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France*, pp. 193-195.

90. Gorz, “Préface,” *Réforme et révolution*, pp. 30-32.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

92. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

93. He amended it slightly from its formulation in *Strategy for Labor*, especially with respect to the question of rates. Gorz now tried to specify the relationship between a socialist strategy of

intermediary objectives and the final outcome of a transition to power, which was ignored in his previous work. In short, he explains that there must be organic links between the reforms, conceived in advance by the revolutionary party to ensure a strategy of escalation. The transition to socialism cannot be conceived as a long drawn out process; the radical reforms must be implemented successively within a short span of time and during a crisis. He omitted to address, however, the crucial issue of the nature and form of the transition, and thus did not add much to the original exposition. See "Reform and Revolution," in *Socialism and Revolution*, esp. pp. 148-150.

94. Statera, *Death of a Utopia*, p. 225.

95. For an excellent comparative survey of the "leninist turn" among left-wing student activists in Europe see Statera's final chapter, "The Decline of the Student Movements." For a portrait of the French *groupuscules* which concentrates on the period prior to May '68, see Ehud Sprinzak, "France: The Radicalisation of the New Left," in *Social and Political Movements in Western Europe*, ed. Martin Kolinsky and William E. Paterson (London: Croom Helm, 1976).

96. On this point in the Italian context see Hellman, "The 'New Left' in Italy," especially p. 267.

97. Gorz, from the 1970 essay included in the American edition of *Socialism and Revolution*, p. 65.

98. Gorz, "What are the Lessons of the May Events?" p. 265.

99. See Statera on the Italian groups, and for an exhaustive treatment of extraparliamentary politics of the left in Italy from 1968 to 1978 see Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency*, esp. chapter 9. See also Hellman, "The 'New Left' in Italy." Gorz himself reviews the debate leading to the splintering of Potere Operaio out of which Lotta Continua emerged in "Italie: ni trade-unionistes, ni Bolcheviks," *Les Temps Modernes* 279 (October 1969). The journal *Radical America* provided translations into English of some primary source material: see "Working Class Struggles in Italy," *Radical America*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (March - April 1973) and "Italy: New Tactics and Organization," *Radical America*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (September-October 1971). Hellman, however, accuses the journal of misleadingly conflating the positions of Lotta Continua with those of the Italian extraparliamentary left as a whole. "The 'New Left' in Italy," p. 271, n.34.

100. Lumley, *States of Emergency*, p. 45 n. 12.

101. Hellman, "The 'New Left' in Italy," p. 257.

102. For Gorz's own understanding of some of the internal debates, see his "Italie: ni trade-unionistes, ni Bolcheviks," pp. 300-394.

103. Sofri first elaborated his conception of the revolutionary organization in a 1968 article which was republished in French translation undoubtedly on Gorz's initiative in October 1969. It was then translated from the French into English by John Huot for a special issue of *Radical America*. "Organizing for Workers Power," *Radical America*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (March-April 1973).

104. Gorz, Préface," *Réforme et révolution*, p. 56 (my emphasis, my translation).

105. Gorz, "Reform and Revolution," chap. in *Socialism and Revolution*, p. 170.

106. He enumerates these with minor variations in a number of different essays, including “Limites et potentialités du mouvement de mai,” *Les Temps Modernes* 266-267 (August-September 1968), published in English as “The Way Forward,” *New Left Review* 52 (November-December 1968) and the 1969 preface to *Réforme et révolution*.
107. Gorz, “The Way Forward,” p. 57.
108. Gorz, Préface,” *Réforme et révolution*, p. 46.
109. Gorz, *Socialism and Revolution*, p. 105.
110. Simone de Beauvoir relates this incident in the final volume of her autobiography, *All Said and Done*, trans. Patrick O'Brian (Middlesex: Penguin, 1977), p. 153.
111. After declining an invitation by the students to visit Columbia University during the insurrection in the summer of 1968, Marcuse, writing in *Partisan Review*, cautioned, “I have never suggested or advocated or supported destroying the established universities and building new anti-institutions instead. I have always said that no matter how radical the demands of the students, and no matter how justified, they should be pressed within the existing universities. I believe that American universities, at least quite a few of them, today are still enclaves of relatively critical thought and relatively free thought.” [Cited in David Caute, *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey through 1968* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 171.] Marcuse went on to say that this one of the rare instances where the goal might be achieved within the existing institution. It is arguable that knowing the larger cause to be futile, Marcuse deliberately missed the point that students at Columbia saw themselves as having gone beyond the confines of revolt against the specific structures and practices of the university itself and saw themselves as attempting to stake a claim for the transformation of the larger society.
112. See, for instance, the assessment of John S. Ambler, “Educational Pluralism in the Fifth French Republic,” in *Searching for the New France*, p. 207.
113. Singer, *Prelude to Revolution*, p. 247.
114. Sartre's endorsement of the necessity of violence in his preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* formed a fairly constant theme in his thought, which achieved its fullest expression in his Maoist phase in the early 70s. See, for example, his essay “The Maoists in France” in *Life/Situations*, trans. Paul Auster and Lydia Davis (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977). Tony Judt is particularly scathing on this much reviled aspect of Sartreism, remarking that Maoism's appeal for Sartre lay in the prospect of “violent action changing other people's worlds at a comfortable distance in time or space.” *Marxism and the French Left: Studies in Labour and Politics in France, 1830-1981* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 195.
115. On this point see Statera, *Death of a Utopia*, p. 268.
116. *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.
117. Gorz, *Socialism and Revolution*, p. 16.
118. Gorz, “The Way Forward,” p. 57.

119. Howard, "New Situation, New Strategy: Serge Mallet and André Gorz," p. 413 n.47.
120. See for instance Gorz's discussion of the debate between leaders of the Italian *operaisti* groups in "Italie: ni trade-unionistes, ni Bolcheviks," p. 391, where he disagrees with the argument that any quantitative union demand calls the entire system into question because it is objectively incompatible with the logic of capitalism.
121. See Lumley, *States of Emergency*, pp. 112-115 and Statera, *Death of a Utopia*, p. 221-222, pp. 231-232, and p. 248. This despite the fact that virtually the entire leadership of these groups, along with many members, was composed of students, intellectuals and civil servants; Riccardo Albione, "The Crisis of the Italian Revolutionary Left," p. 139.
122. For Sartre's account of his relationship to the Gauche prolétarienne see the essays entitled "The Maoists in France" and "Justice and the State" in *Life/Situations* (the title of the English translation of *Situations X*), trans. Paul Auster and Lydia Davis (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).
123. Statera, *Death of a Utopia*, p. 262.
124. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
125. Lumley, *States of Emergency*, p. 113.
126. See Sartre, "A Friend of the People," in *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, trans. John Matthews (New York: Morrow Quill, 1979).
127. Cited in Lumley, *States of Emergency*, p. 115.
128. Statera, *Death of a Utopia*, p. 221 and p. 249.
129. Lumley explains the particular structural conditions that were conducive to a greater measure of student-worker unity in Italy. (*States of Emergency*, p. 114) And on the successes of the *operaisti* see, Statera, *Death of a Utopia*, p. 250, and Hellman, "The 'New Left' in Italy," p. 259 and 267. The groups boasted the repeated wildcat strikes at Fiat as their greatest victory.
130. Already in "Détruire l'université" Gorz referred to an article published in the *Il Manifesto* journal, which he would later include in *Critique de la division de travail*, a collection of essays he edited in 1973.
131. On the *Il Manifesto* group see Grant Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party: The Crisis of the Popular Front Strategy* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 170-196; Lumley, *States of Emergency*, pp. 232-233; Lucio Magri, "Italian Communism in the Sixties," *New Left Review* 66 (March-April 1971); and "Il Manifesto and Italian Communism: an Interview with Luciana Castellina," *New Left Review* (1985).
132. Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party*, p. 181.
133. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
134. The most obvious measure of the surge of militancy is the number of strikes. See the data provided by Mouriaux in his survey, "Trade Unions, Unemployment and Regulation," pp. 179-180.

The relationship between the May events and the subsequent phase of labour militancy in France has been the subject of controversy. Some have argued for a "May effect," at the origin of the intensification of industrial conflict, while others see significant discontinuities between the nature of the workers revolt in May and in the early 70s. See for instance Claude Durand, *Le travail enchaîné* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978), p. 71-75. Michael Rose argues that the trend towards a higher rate of industrial conflict predated the events of May; he sees May as a catalyst rather than a cause and attributes the post-May intensification to longer term factors. (*Servants*, pp. 148-152.)

There are also arguments over the nature of the demands and how central control issues actually were. Rose, for example, maintains that wage claims remained primary and qualitative issues peripheral, while Mouriaux reaches less categorical conclusions on this point. It seems clear however that the proportion of strikes around working conditions did increase. Two points on which there seems to be consensus are the greater leadership role in the post-May conflicts of groups such as immigrant workers, unskilled workers and women, and the adoption of relatively novel methods, such as sabotage and slow downs.

135. Low-Ber, *Protest and Participation*, p. 21. Gorz himself wrote an article specifically on the political dynamic of immigrant labour in 1970, where he argued that capital uses immigrant labour (which constituted 25 per cent of the French labour force at the time) to both economic and political advantage. He maintained that although segments among immigrant workers could be highly combative, the general effect of immigrant labour is to neutralize the working class. This occurs because, as dirty menial jobs are sloughed off onto immigrant workers, the indigenous working class gets "promoted" into technical work and the tertiary sector, with the result that a part of it identifies with the petty bourgeoisie, while immigrant workers themselves remain marginalized and without political weight or rights. Gorz saw this divisive effect on the working class as more important than the economic benefits derived by capital from immigrant labour, which consisted in particular in escaping the social costs associated with the reproduction of the labour force; in addition to paying immigrant workers less, host societies do not bear the costs of supporting them through childhood and adolescence. "Immigrant Labour," *New Left Review* 61 (May-June 1970), pp. 28-31.

136. This was true even in the United States — the model of worker integration. See the references in John Bellamy Foster's contribution to the *Monthly Review* special issue on Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, Vol. 46, No. 6 (November 1994), p. 3. In Europe, a 1973 report on social policy issued by the European Economic Community recommended the abolition of assembly-line work. (Claude Durand, *Le travail enchaîné*, p. 72.) The response of the French government is discussed in Borstein and Fine, "Worker Control in France," pp. 158-161.

137. Writing in *L'Express* in February 1972, Georges Valence observes that at every level of the world of work, from the factories to the offices, workers were refusing stultifying work and poor working conditions and that a great fear had taken root that "workers will refuse to work, machines will grind to a halt and the consumer society will dissolve." Ranking the revolt against work as the chief problem of the decade, he goes on to affirm that "workers are demanding happiness in production as the key to happiness itself" and that, especially among younger workers, consumption is no longer sufficient compensation for mind-numbing work. "Des O.S. à la peine," reprinted in "Le Dossier de l'Emploi 1964-1994," *Les Cahiers de l'Express*, January 1994, p. 25 (my translation).

138. Durand, *Le travail enchaîné*, p. 7 and *passim*.

139. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

140. For a summary of the position of the CFDT in the early 70s, see Bornstein and Fine, "Worker Control in France," pp. 161-169.
141. Durand, *Le travail enchaîné*, p. 156ff.
142. On the theoretical plane, Jürgen Habermas had made the point succinctly in 1968: "...relative growth of the productive forces no longer represents eo ipso a potential that points beyond the existing framework with emancipatory consequences.... For the leading productive force — controlled scientific-technical progress itself — has now become the basis of legitimation." *Toward a Rational Society*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 111.
143. For these authors, computer technology harbours an inherently anti-authoritarian promise in spite of the purposes to which it is put by capital insofar as it engenders a dispersal of knowledge and power and frees people from the waged workplace. As we shall see later, there is a certain overlap here with points Gorz himself would raise in his most utopian work *Paths to Paradise*. Like Gorz, Aronowitz and Giroux regard the question of whether that potential will be realized as a political question, not a technical one. However, there are also important differences in the analyses of the nature of the emancipatory possibilities of contemporary technology which are regrettably beyond the scope of this note. See *Education Still Under Siege*, second edition, (Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 1993), especially p. 190.
144. An English translation of the article is included under the title "Challenging the Role of Technical Experts" in *The Division of Labour* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1976), an anthology edited by Gorz and originally published in 1973 as *Critique de la division de travail* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil).
145. *Ibid.*, p. 136 (original emphasis).
146. It was subsequently translated by John Mepham as "Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle" and republished in *The Division of Labour*. My references are to the English translation.
147. Although both regarded science and technology as legitimating capitalism, their views on the subject were not identical, as Habermas makes clear in "Science and Technology as 'Ideology,'" an essay dedicated to Marcuse in *Toward a Rational Society*.
148. Smith, *Technical Workers*, p. 36.
149. It is on this basis that Gorz takes issue with Marcuse's grim portrait of a technological society that can permanently integrate workers. ("Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle," p. 185, n. 12.) This also qualifies Mitchell Cohen's claim that in this article Gorz depicts the structure of domination as flowing from the reality of large-scale production technology itself. ["Review of *Farewell to the Working Class* by André Gorz," *New Political Science* 12 (Summer 1983), p. 109.] It is true, however, that the issue of scale takes on political significance for Gorz in the 1970s, as we shall see when we explore Gorz's ecological turn in the following chapter.
150. Gorz, "Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle," pp. 165-166.
151. *Ibid.*, p. 165.



152. This is the title of the translation of the article that was included in the anthology *The Political Economy of Science*, ed. Hillary and Steven Rose (London: The Macmillan Press, 1976). My references are to the translation. Again Gorz argues in this essay that while science bears the imprint of bourgeois ideology, science itself is not thereby so tainted as to rob the specialized knowledge it has made available of any value. (p. 60) On the other hand, Gorz is concerned to show — and this is one of the strengths of the essay — that the types of knowledge sanctioned as scientific in bourgeois society are very much determined by their functionality to the capitalist system and, conversely, that certain kinds of valid popular knowledge are denied the legitimation attached to the classification “scientific.”

153. The significant essays — Stephen A. Marglin, “What do bosses do?” and Antonio Lettieri, “Factory and School” — are included in the collection *The Division of Labour*, ed. André Gorz.

154. To his discredit, Gorz simply parrots the II Manifesto group's assessment of the Chinese Cultural Revolution as a model of the endeavour to transcend the separation of intellectual and manual labour and a confirmation of the idea that productivity does not require a capitalist-type division of labour. There is no evidence to suggest that Gorz engaged in any independent study of the Cultural Revolution; thus, he simply partook uncritically in the distorted conception of it shared by many New Left intellectuals in France, from Sartre to Althusser, and all over the western world during the early 70s.

155. Gorz, “Capitalist Relations of Production,” p. 428. Serge Mallet had also made this point in 1965 in his writings on the new working class. Pointing to the findings of American sociologists such as Elton Mayo to the effect that Taylorist forms of organization could be an impediment to productivity and noting the reluctance of capital notwithstanding these findings to implement reforms, Mallet suggested that in order to preserve its decision-making power, capitalism needs a system of production in which the producer is reduced to the state of a thing and it would defend the system even if productivity was liable to suffer. See “Socialism and the New Working Class.”

156. *Ibid.*, p., 166. And cf. II Manifesto, “Challenging the Role of Technical Experts,” p. 131.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

158. Gorz, “Technical Intelligence and the Capitalist Division of Labor,” *Telos* 12 (Summer 1972), pp. 35-37.

159. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

160. Gorz, “On The Class Character of Science and Scientists,” pp. 65-66.

161. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

162. Lumley points this out in *States of Emergency*, p. 135 and p. 141 n.40, noting that it prevailed among those who looked to the Chinese model as well as those who did not.

163. Gorz, “Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle,” pp. 175-176.

164. *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178. Discussing the views held by II Manifesto and of Gorz on the division of labour, Claude Durand comments restrainedly: “It is worth asking whether these neo-Marxist analyses, which converge with the theses of the CFDT in many respects, draw excessively on the

experimentation with the mainly pre-industrial patterns [of labour organization] in Chinese society and to what extent these are transferable to our own highly differentiated societies.” *Le Travail enchaîné*, p. 177 (my translation).

165. Gorz, “Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle,” p. 177.

166. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

167. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

168. Robert Castel, *Les métamorphoses de la question sociale*. (Paris: Fayard, 1995), p. 358.

169. Gorz, “Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle,” p. 181.

170. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

171. See, for instance, his 1971 article on “Labor and the ‘Quality of Life,’” where he invokes various surveys and documents in support of an argument for a shift in the concerns of workers towards extra-economic goals such as work reduction. And he declared, for example, that since 1967 workers in Renault plants had “discovered the basic difference between earning more and living better.” Chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, trans. Patsy Vigderman and Jonathan Cloud (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), p. 133.

172. Gorz, *Socialism and Revolution*, trans. Norman Denny (New York: Anchor Books, 1973), p. 27.

173. See, for example, Gorz, *Réforme et révolution*, p. 14.

174. Gorz, “Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle,” p. 177.

175. Low-Beer, *Protest and Participation*, 209.

176. Smith, *Technical Workers*, p. 53. This is not the only parallel to have been drawn between Gorz and Poulantzas: Axel van den Berg likens Poulantzas' 1978 defense of the democratic road to socialism to Gorz's early strategy of revolutionary reform. Van den Berg's comparison is however undoubtedly somewhat tendentious; as noted in the previous chapter, he wishes to discount all Marxist criticism of social democracy on the grounds that there is no real basis upon which to distinguish between meliorist reforms and those that upset capitalist social relations. *The Immanent Utopia*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 290 n.30 and see also pp. 171-172.

177. Gorz, *Réforme et révolution*, p. 18.

178. Extensive accounts of Poulantzas' position on the new middle strata are provided in George Ross, “Marxism and the New Middle Classes: French Critiques,” *Theory and Society* 5 (March 1978), pp. 171-6 and Smith, *Technical Workers*, pp. 49-57.

179. By Dick Howard in “New Situation, New Strategy,” and the characterization is endorsed by Hirsh in *The French Left*, p. 223.

180. Related by Durand in *Le travail enchaîné*, pp. 177-178.

181. Gorz, "Workers' Control is More Than Just That," *Canadian Dimension* 1 (June 1971), p. 28.
182. Thompson, *The Nature of Work*, p. 71.
183. Gorz, Preface to *The Division of Labour*, p. vii.
184. Gorz, "The Tyranny of the Factory," trans. Bert Grahl, in *The Division of Labour*, p. 57.
185. Michel Bosquet, "The Prison Factory," *New Left Review* 73 (May-June 1972), p. 29.
186. Alan Scott, *Ideology and the New Social Movements* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 95.
187. Gorz, "The Prison Factory," pp. 32-33.
188. Durand, *Le travail enchainé*, p. 164.
189. Gorz, "The Tyranny of the Factory."
190. A kindred perception of job enrichment schemes as a ploy to legitimate capitalist management through worker participation and more thoroughly integrate workers into the system was shared by the French union confederations, which, as a result of the highly antagonistic character of industrial relations in France, tended to be more sceptical about job enrichment than their counterparts in other countries. The attitude of French unions is discussed by Durand, pp. 124-129.
191. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
192. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 102.
193. "It is not the articles made, but how they are made and by what instruments, that enables us to distinguish different economic epochs." Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, *The Process of Capitalist Production*, ed. Friedrich Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p. 180.
194. Raymond Williams, "Socialism and Ecology" (London: Socialist Environment and Resources Association, n.d.), p. 10.
195. Gorz, Preface to *The Division of Labour*, p. x.
196. See Lettieri, "Factory and School," in *The Division of Labour*, pp. 154-156, in which he calls on unions to adopt the goal of a 36-hour week both to allow workers more time to develop their intellectual powers and to open up jobs for unemployed young people.
197. Gorz, "Arduous Socialism," chap. in *Socialism and Revolution*, p. 201.
198. Michel Bosquet, "Tomorrow's Tools," chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis and Everyday Life*, trans. John Howe (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1977), p. 104.

### Chapter Three Less But Better: Gorz and Political Ecology

In France, a party like les Verts draws its inspiration in large part from the thought of theoreticians such as Edgar Morin, René Passet and perhaps above all André Gorz.

Jean-Paul Deléage  
“L'Écologie, humanisme de notre temps” (1993)

*L'Utopie ou la mort*

Title of a 1973 book by agronomist René Dumont,  
the Ecology movement's 1974 presidential candidate

As Gorz sought to develop innovative left analyses and strategies taking into account the structural changes associated with neo-capitalism, the very conditions that had demanded a novel approach started to unravel.<sup>1</sup> In the 1970s, the swelling prosperity of the West, a given of New Left analysis, showed the first signs of debility and stagnation. In France, the abundance and security of *les trente glorieuses* began to recede even prior to the oil crisis of 1973-1974 — conventionally seen to mark the beginning of the end of the post-war economic miracle. Although the adverse impact was not felt by the majority of working and middle-class people until late in the decade, a rapid and steady rise in structural unemployment signalled the onset of the sustained socio-economic crisis of the post-60s era.

At about the same time, awareness began to dawn in the countries of advanced capitalism that galloping industrial growth was producing some deleterious effects on the earth's natural resources, hitherto discounted as “externalities” of the production process. Evidence of environmental pollution began to receive more serious attention, as did the projected depletion of certain vital but finite resources. The spectre of scarcity that returned to haunt the advanced industrial capitalist countries in the 1970s was thus a two-headed phantom. And this twin crisis of economy and ecology posed a challenge to some central assumptions of Marxist political economy, as understood by the traditional left, both communist and social democratic, as well as by the neo-

Leninist and Maoist left of the late 1960s, about the unquestionable virtue of the transformation of nature in man's image, and about the viability and desirability of unfettered economic growth.

For the remnants and heirs of the New Left, the emerging crisis provided the impetus for reviving and recasting the critique of the system of production and consumption which had been elaborated in the 1960s, in response to the new conditions of relative affluence for an expanding part of the population. Witness to the unsettling outcome of the growth economy in the form of a rapacious and wasteful consumer society, the New Left, in France and throughout the West, had already called into question the reigning ethos of production for production's sake, the eternal quest for commodities, the automatic identification of technological advance with social progress, and the pursuit of quantitative growth at the expense of qualitative development. As we have seen, these concerns animated Gorz's own critique of neo-capitalism. But whereas the New Left generally took for granted a constantly expanding economic pie and advanced what was essentially a moral and cultural critique of consumerism as alienating and stultifying, ecologists demonstrated that Promethean conceptions of growth and development were not merely undesirable, they were unsustainable and ultimately suicidal. The critique of the consumer society was given a material basis in the 1970s.

Whatever their bias, many accounts of the unfolding history of ideas in France in the 70s focus on the rise of post-structuralism, with its at best ambiguous political implications, and the spectacular repudiation, by many of the high priests of theory, of the heritage of left thought in all its guises. But while the disaffection from the left of many prominent intellectuals constituted a sensational event — particularly in the country which had given birth, nearly a century earlier, to the very term *intellectuel* as an epithet indelibly associated with left politics — accounts of French intellectual history which dwell on this tale to the exclusion of other developments are at least incomplete, if not misleading.<sup>2</sup> The story of disenchantment, culminating in the fairly hegemonic liberalism of the later 1980s, far from cornered the expanding universe of social, political and philosophical ideas in France in the 1970s. We need only consider a phenomenon which would be inexplicable if the intellectual turn to the right had constituted the sum and substance of systematic thought in the period: the remarkable growth in French Communist Party membership in the mid-1970s, when the PCF embarked on its Eurocommunist interlude in 1973-1979, with many of the

new recruits coming from the new middle strata, including intellectuals. Meanwhile, under the shrewd tutelage of François Mitterand, a reconstituted Parti Socialiste emerged from the Congrès d'Épinay in 1972. And, having immediately (in June) entered into a Common Program with the PCF to assure its credibility on the left — in a clever and ultimately successful bid to gain the political upper hand from the Communists — the PS went from strength to strength (the 1978 electoral defeat notwithstanding), with the support and contributions of numerous intellectuals, if not the luminaries of the French intelligentsia. Moreover, within the caste of intellectuals which Max Gallo chastized in *Le Monde* in 1983 for its silence concerning the Socialist electoral challenge<sup>3</sup> there was not uniform hostility or indifference to left-wing ideas; at least some of the former progenitors and sympathizers of anti-authoritarian politics remained disposed to doubt the power of parliamentarianism.

Nor is the renewal of the official left parties the end of the story. The 1970s witnessed, in addition, the advent of the *deuxième gauche*,<sup>4</sup> an admittedly nebulous politico-intellectual current associated variously with the CFDT, the faction of the PSU that followed the party's Secretary General Michel Rocard into the reconstituted Parti Socialiste, and the journal *Autogestions et socialisme*, founded in 1966 by Yvon Bourdet, which centred on an effort to elaborate a decentralized self-managed socialism.<sup>5</sup> As we have noted previously, *autogestion* became the omnibus concept of the French left as a whole in the 70s, signifying very broadly "...the sum of the hopes and protests expressed in May '68."<sup>6</sup> Even the PCF ultimately yielded to its pervasive allure, adopting its own version of *autogestion* in 1979.

And finally, most important for our purposes is the conservation, to use an apposite metaphor, of a large part of the heritage of May '68 by virtue of its assimilation in a new radical vision — that of political ecology. As the ex-Maoist "new philosophers" belatedly discovered the horrors of Soviet labour camps and acknowledged the failures of Third World regimes that had stood as alternative models of socialism, and as they disavowed the aspiration to change life and society as totalitarian by definition, the ecology movement, which grew apace in the 1970s and well into the 1980s, articulated a vision of change that, while breaking with some basic assumptions of Marxist and more broadly left thinking, also partook of the ethos of the French New Left and posed a profound challenge to the prevailing order of things. In its social, political and philosophical

critique, as well as its vision of the good and just society it represented a novel constellation of ideas in French intellectual and political history. Needless to add, the ecology movement, which developed earlier in France than in most other western countries, was hardly lacking in intellectuals in its leadership or its supporters. Indeed, like the New Left which it succeeded, ecology found its main constituency not in the working class, but in the young, highly educated middle class; and although it shared many ideals and concerns with various incarnations of the left, the movement's themes were often at counter purposes with traditional left and working-class concerns and organizations.

The social profile of the ecology movement was typical of the new social movements which arose in France (and in all the countries of advanced capitalism) from the embers of the amorphous participatory democracy current of the 60s New Left. They emerged in parallel with — but outlived — the hard-line *groupuscules* such as the Maoist Gauche prolétarienne (dissolved in 1973), although, in the end, the French new social movements proved less vigorous and enduring than those in other parts of Europe. Along with the feminist, regionalist, anti-nuclear and other movements, the ecology movement helped to sustain what de Gaulle once referred to as France's "perpetual political effervescence" in the decade of the 70s — even as the *grands intellos* were collectively cutting a rather less ebullient figure in light of their rising fear of the perils of totalizing social thought. What distinguished the new social movements is that they did not cohere primarily around labour issues or economic demands per se; rather they broadened and redefined the boundaries of the political, pointing to possible new and significant contradictions and divisions within an evolving industrial society which, to some observers, had changed sufficiently from the paradigm of industrial society to warrant the not-yet-ubiquitous prefix "post."

The thesis of an emerging 'post-industrial' society has been primarily associated, in the Anglo-American world, with Daniel Bell's thesis that structural changes occurring in capitalist society would lead to a knowledge-based service economy ruled by an elite technical and professional class led by scientific researchers and engineers.<sup>7</sup> However, it was Alain Touraine's conception of post-industrial society which gained currency among elements of the New Left in France in the 1970s. There are similarities between the two concepts: most significantly the declining role of the working class and the ascension of knowledge as the economic motor of

society. But there are also important differences.<sup>8</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, according to Touraine's model (developed in books such as *Le communisme utopique*, analyzing the significance of the May events and *La Société post-industrielle*, published in 1969, four years prior to the appearance of Bell's *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* in 1973 and seven years before the 1976 French translation of that book), the primary contradiction of industrial society — the class conflict between capital and labour, an essentially economic struggle — had been superseded by the conflict between the makers and executors of decisions, the rulers who govern the vast bureaucratic institutions of industrial society and the ruled who possess less and less control over every aspect of their lives. This new primary contradiction gives rise to new social antagonisms and new social movements which displace the labour movement as the most consequential social actors. Whereas Daniel Bell's model minimized social conflict, in keeping with his prior prophecy of the end of ideology, conflict remained at the heart of Touraine's vision of the programmed society of the post-industrial age, with the new social movements playing a leading role. Without judging the merits of the thesis, it is easy to see how it would have proved influential in the 1970s.<sup>9</sup> Positing as it does a broad and multiform movement of people for control over their own lives, it offered an analytical tool to explain the ascendance of *autogestion*, as well as the proliferation of new social movements, such as the anti-nuclear and feminist movements.

The new social movements have, of course, been the object of a multiplicity of interpretive efforts, spawning a voluminous academic literature in the 1970s and 80s.<sup>10</sup> Most optimistically, from the perspective of those probing the legacy of '68, they have been read, in the tradition of Touraine, as the incubators of a fragmentary, still inchoate post-Marxist radicalism, retaining the New Left's critique of consumerism, alienation and technocracy, but resting on a more ample vision of the contradictions of advanced capitalist industrial society, and espousing a more plural conception of the agency of social change, as well as of the strategies liable to effect change.<sup>11</sup> On this account, the new social movements represent the reshaping of oppositional politics, incorporating new issues that could no longer be subsumed under the primacy of the struggle between labour and capital. It was towards a similar understanding that Gorz himself moved during the decade of the 70s.<sup>12</sup>



One of the *maitres à penser* of the ecology movement in its inception, Gorz incarnated the link with the legacy of the New Left and May '68 in his ecologically-oriented writings of the 1970s. Indeed it was Gorz's ongoing critique of the alienating system of production and consumption, given expression in accessible essays linking social, economic and environmental problems, which was taken up particularly by the more immediate intellectual leadership of the new movement, including such figures as René Dumont, Serge Moscovici and Brice Lalonde. But as we shall see in this chapter and the next, Gorz's own ideas also evolved significantly in the 70s. According to Arthur Hirsh, the greening of André Gorz was a logical outgrowth of his earlier ideas; he was propelled into ecology by his need to solve a theoretical problem for which traditional left theory did not have an answer: the impossibility of overcoming the division of labour so long as technology bore the imprint of capitalist rationality.<sup>13</sup> It was a burgeoning interest in the development of alternative technology, Hirsh suggests, that led Gorz to explore the work of ecological thinkers in the Anglo-American world. While there is certainly justice in this argument, it is perhaps too internalist, underrating the weight of the larger historical context in which some of the intellectual developments transpired and underestimating the extent to which Gorz's own thinking was reshaped in important ways by the deepening ecological and economic crises, the rise of the ecology movement and the evolution of the labour movement. Before turning to Gorz's ideas, therefore, it is important to locate the evolution of his thought in the emergence of an ecological consciousness in France and the birth of the ecology movement. It is not our intention here to trace in detail the origins and early history of the French ecology movement; however the broad outlines are useful as a starting point for understanding Gorz's trajectory in this period.

### **The roots of political ecology**

It should be noted at the outset that although there was considerable overlap in the origins of both the environmentalist and political ecology streams, there are irreconcilable differences between environmentalism — essentially a movement and doctrine concerned with sound resource management, which does not consider its aims to be at variance with the existing economic/social/political order — and political ecology, a movement and worldview which conceive social justice as an integral aspect of an ecologically viable society and consider the radical

transformation of the existing order, including changes in the consciousness and character of individuals, as imperative to the achievement of that aim. It is the emergence of the latter movement in France in the 1970s with which we are primarily concerned here.

However, the congeries of ideas and events out of which political ecology originated included the defense of nature movement, which was also at the root of French environmentalism. Concerned with the adverse effects of pollution and development on natural heritage, this current dated back to the mid-nineteenth century in the form of zoological and botanical associations. In the 60s it was associated with the person of Jean Dorst, author of a 1965 book entitled *Avant que nature meure*, as well as with the movement in the late 60s to save the Vanoise national park from the encroachments of developers. In 1969 diverse local groups consolidated their efforts by forming the Fédération française des sociétés de protection de la nature. It gathered new momentum in face of various incidents of environmental damage, such as the oil spill in Torrey Canyon in March 1967.

Another related influence was the mobilization of opposition to the impingement of industry upon specific environments, issuing in, for instance, protests against river pollution and urban development projects such as highway construction. A good example is the lively ban-the-automobile movement; active in Paris in 1970, it was part of a (successful) protest against the plan to build an express lane on the shores of the left bank of the Seine. It was this type of activism that led in 1971 to the creation of France's first (toothless) Ministry of the Environment, le Ministère de l'environnement et de la protection de la nature, under Robert Poujade, who resigned prematurely on the grounds that his ministry was devoid of the necessary power to accomplish its stated aims.

One of the pivotal events in the genesis of the ecology movement both in France and internationally was, of course, the publication in 1972 of *The Limits to Growth*, the report commissioned by the Club of Rome and based on research conducted at MIT. It held out the prospect of a grim future for humankind in the absence of meaningful measures to conserve vanishing resources and combat environmental degradation. It was followed the same year by the publication in Britain of *The Ecologist's A Blueprint for Survival*. The concerns these reports raised were driven home by the oil crisis that began one year later, resulting in growing public awareness of environmental problems. However, there were other prior and parallel developments that

contributed to a budding ecological sensibility and were crucial to the formation of the ecology movement in France.

Preceding the *Limits to Growth* study was a succession of alarming findings and forecasts of scientific ecology, as well as the more popular and accessible vulgarizations publicizing the dangers of depleting non-renewable resources, the adverse effects of pollution, and the mounting strain on the earth's carrying capacity stemming from exponential population growth. *Silent Spring*, the pioneering work of Rachel Carson on the deleterious effects of pesticides published in 1962 (and in French translation one year later), was a seminal influence in this vein, as was the early work on the population explosion by Paul Ehrlich, translated into French in 1971, and the work of Barry Commoner translated in the late 60s and early 70s. The urgent tone and dim outlook of some of these documents lent the early phase of the international ecology movement, including its French manifestation, what has been described by some commentators as a “catastrophist” colouration. In its opening years of publication the first French political ecology periodical, *La Gueule Ouverte*, sported the tagline: “the paper that heralds the end of the world” (*le journal qui annonce la fin du monde*).

Resting — uneasily in some respects — alongside the scientific sources of ecological consciousness was the critique of the technological society advanced by such figures as Lewis Mumford and the French thinker Jacques Ellul, as well as Habermas and Marcuse, and culminating in the understanding that technology is not a neutral force. The significant conclusion drawn from this critique by the New Left, including Gorz, and assimilated and developed by the political ecology movement, was that a change in the ownership of the means of production would not render contemporary techniques benign and suitable for building an alternative to capitalist society: “...whatever the property arrangements, a large part of contemporary technology leads straight to dictatorship (and to chaos).”<sup>14</sup> Following upon this critique of technology was an Anglo-American current of thought, influential in France in the 1970s, which advocated the reorientation of technology in the aim of creating human-scale communities.<sup>15</sup> It included such thinkers as E. F. Schumacher (whose 1973 *Small is Beautiful* was only translated into French in 1978), Murray Bookchin and Jeremy Rifkin. It was particularly influential in the second half of the 70s, when the ecology movement promoted the idea of social experimentation and creating alternatives using soft

technology.<sup>16</sup> Ivan Illich is also a representative of this tendency, but he holds an unparalleled place in the development of French political ecology in general, and in Gorz's intellectual evolution in particular, which will be dealt with at some length below.

Analyses of the implications of technological advance and the scientific identification of environmental dangers — in this instance the dangers of ionizing radiation, publicized in France in the 1950s and 60s particularly through the efforts of Jean Pignero — combined to produce one of the first concrete mass manifestations of a politically oriented ecological sensibility in the form of the movement against nuclear energy — a movement unanimously considered a spearhead in the fusion of the political ecology movement in France. The more remote origins of the protest against nuclear power in France and elsewhere lay in the sensitization of at least a part of the population to the dangers of radioactivity through the work of scientists and others in the movement against nuclear weapons which arose in the wake of Hiroshima. But the movement against nuclear power had a separate and more robust presence in France in the 70s than the nuclear disarmament movement. The initial target of the anti-nuclear movement was the Giscard D'Estaing government's plan to embark on the construction of nuclear power plants. As early as April 12, 1971, 1,500 people came together in France's first anti-nuclear demonstration organized to protest the building of a nuclear power station in Fessenheim; by 1973 roughly a hundred groups were banding together to press for a moratorium on nuclear power until a substantive public debate could take place (a demand supported by the CFDT, in contrast with the PCF-led CGT, which was hostile to the anti-nuclear movement, seeing it as an irrational obstruction of the growth of the productive forces<sup>17</sup>). Protest was galvanized above all by the decision, announced by Prime Minister Pierre Messmer on March 4, 1974 in the wake of the oil crisis, to launch the world's most massive nuclear power program, with the goal of supplying 70 per cent of the country's electricity needs by 1985.

The French government's nuclear energy program thus provided a specific object around which diverse and dispersed currents could crystallize. A number of different objections were raised, ranging from the risks of accident and the accumulation of radioactive waste to more political arguments, such as the necessary relation between nuclear power and the maintenance of a high-security State (a concrete illustration of the idea that technology is not neutral but implies specific forms of social and political organization). This line of criticism is exemplified in several articles

Gorz/Bosquet wrote for *Le Nouvel Observateur* and other publications.<sup>18</sup> He argued the rather questionable proposition that the nuclear option in France was motivated by a hidden agenda which had nothing to do with fear of energy shortages and everything to do with a desire on the part of the industrial bourgeoisie to avoid commercial risks and secure a global subcontracted market for French subsidiaries by subordinating itself to American interests.<sup>19</sup> In developing this line of analysis, he added to his enumeration of environmental and economic objections to the nuclear energy program a warning about the threat of “electrofascism”: “Nuclear society implies the creation of a caste of militarized technicians, who obey like a medieval knighthood its own code and its own internal hierarchy, who are exempt from the common law and are invested with extensive powers of control, surveillance, and regulation.”<sup>20</sup> This type of argument had resonance at the time, and it was on similar grounds that the CFDT rejected the nuclear power program, declaring, “...we reject the model of society which is implicit in the way the nuclear power stations are run and the way they affect the wider society.”<sup>21</sup> It was in fact, Michel Rolant, one of the leading figures in the CFDT with whom Gorz had close contact in the 1970s, who played a pivotal role in building the *Syndicat des personnels de l'énergie atomique*, a union which worked in collaboration with ecologists to develop an anti-nuclear, alternative energy policy.<sup>22</sup> Gorz's published offensives against nuclear power succeeded in arousing the ire of the nuclear industry in France, and Gorz recalls that the decade-long one-man campaign he waged against the “thermodynamic, economic and political absurdity of nuclear power” in *Le Nouvel Observateur* cost the magazine a great deal of money as, having failed to silence Gorz through pressures exerted on the editor-in-chief, *Électricité de France* (EDF) finally pulled its advertising.<sup>23</sup>

The landmark event in the anti-nuclear struggle was the protest in the later 70s against the Superphénix reactor, a little-tested breeder reactor of then unprecedented size, sited in Creys-Malville on the Rhone between Lyon and Geneva. According to Brendan Prendiville, this project was opposed particularly for the socio-political reason that it signalled the advent of a nuclear society<sup>24</sup> — precisely the type of objection expounded by Gorz and others. During the summer of 1976, 10,000 people camped out at the Malville site; the CRS (Compagnies républicaines de sécurité — the national security guards) was called in, but the protest was otherwise ignored by the government, which refused to discuss the nuclear energy program. On July 31, 1977, the struggle

reached its climax when an enormous demonstration was organized and 30,000–40,000 protestors penetrated the forbidden zone. Although the organizers called for non-violence, a few hundred demonstrators from the Maoist and Trotskyist *groupuscules* attacked the armed police guards, provoking a violent counterattack in which a 33 year-old teacher and peaceful protestor, Vital Michalon, was killed.

Another highly symbolic conflict was the struggle over Larzac, a large military base in the Southwest of France targeted for a large-scale expansion. In 1971, the government, represented by Defense minister Michel Debré, attempted to buy out the land of some one hundred French peasants, who responded by defying the authorities. Thus began a decade-long battle. The peasant resistance became a *cause célèbre* on the French left. Maoist intellectuals saw in it the potential for a peasant-led revolutionary seizure of power, and intervened to galvanize, organize and guide the protest.<sup>25</sup> But they were not alone to descend upon and mythologize Larzac: they were joined by anarchists, the Catholic left, and the ecologists, among others. Within the French *autogestionnaire* left, Larzac rivalled the LIP strike as the avatar of the struggle for self-management. In August 1974, 100,000 people turned out for a rally. The Larzac battle proved one of the very few victories of the period. So symbolically charged was the issue that when the Socialists came to power in 1981 they immediately cancelled the plans for the expansion of the base.

The American counterculture is also widely cited as a significant inspiration of the French ecology movement. The communal movement of the 60s in America was, for instance, a spur to the previously mentioned neo-ruralist or back-to-the-land movement, which centred on the creation of a spate of libertarian communities in the years from 1969-1972. And it was often an incubator of a new naturalist tradition which took the form of rejection of synthetic products and medicine in favour of such practices as homeopathy, organic gardening and vegetarianism. Like May '68, it was seen as a revolt against a technocratic programmed society. Which brings us to the last but far from least important precursor of political ecology.

Of all the various social movements to emerge in the 1970s, the political ecology current was arguably the most genuine heir of the New Left both in France and internationally. In France, the filiation with the ideas of May '68, particularly the libertarian spontaneist current, is unmistakable, and it is widely agreed that May '68 harboured the embryo of the ecological critique

of contemporary industrial society. The strong affinities with the New Left will come into relief as we examine the contours of the set of ideas that took shape as political ecology. But it is worth noting one obvious claim for filiation in the form of biography: many of the leading theorists and activists of political ecology were the progeny of the New Left.

To take but one example, Brice Lalonde, one of the most prominent figures in the history of French political ecology and the person to whom Gorz/Bosquet dedicated his 1977 book *Écologie et liberté*,<sup>26</sup> was also a child of '68.<sup>27</sup> Lalonde was the de facto leader of Les Amis de la Terre, the French affiliate of Friends of the Earth, an organization founded in the United States in 1969. Formed in 1970-71, les Amis de la Terre was the closest thing French ecologists had to a national organization in the 1970s, building a network in the latter half of the decade which served as a coordinating body for hundreds of groups operating autonomously. Lalonde had previously been a member of the Mouvement d'Action Universitaire, a group active in the May events, composed, as noted previously, mostly of graduate students and researchers, including Marc Kravetz, the author of the 1964 article on student unionism for *Les Temps Modernes* referred to in chapter one). After '68 Lalonde joined the PSU, but devoted his energies to Les Amis de la Terre. In the 70s he insisted that the ecology movement should never form a political party, but he did believe that local groups retaining their autonomy should be free to forge alliances and participate in elections. Supported by the organization, Lalonde himself stood for President in the 1981 elections. In the late 1980s, however, he went on to spearhead the institutionalization and parliamentarization of the political ecology movement, ultimately launching Génération écologie in 1990 as a rival party to les Verts — France's first Green party, formed in 1984 and led, in the latter half of the 80s, by biologist and environmentalist Antoine Waechter. Lalonde himself came to occupy the post of Minister of the Environment in 1988 under Prime Minister Michel Rocard, the one-time PSU leader who joined the PS and headed the *autogestionnaire* current in that party.

Apart from personnel and personality, the essential thematic continuity with the New Left is evident, for instance, in the centrality of the critique of the consumer society and the questioning of the ends of production and work, to which Gorz made a vital contribution, together with, among others, Marcuse, the Situationists, and Henri Lefebvre in his critique of everyday life.

In his own argument for the continuity between May '68 and political ecology, Dominique Allan Michaud observes that during the 60s a challenge to the inverted logic whereby production influences the consumer in order to gear needs to its own priorities lay at the heart of French intellectual reflection. He invokes Gorz as the leading exponent of this critique, which, having nourished the intellectual content of May '68, resurfaced as a cornerstone of political ecology.<sup>28</sup> More broadly still, political ecology incorporated and built on the New Left themes of alienation in work and leisure, the oppressive deployment of expertise and specialization to perpetuate social hierarchies and deprive people of decision-making power over their lives, and an accent on quality of life counterposed to the single-minded preoccupation with the expansion of material wealth. It partook of the heritage of the New Left too in its utopian vision, its demand for a transvaluation of values, its anti-authoritarianism, and its commitment to more direct or participatory democracy. Like the more libertarian New Left, political ecology understood revolution as a far-reaching change in the way we think and live, as opposed to a seizure of power by a vanguard party. Subscribing to the May '68 caveat "*Il n'y a pas de lendemains qui chantent*" (there are no bright tomorrows), ecologists rejected the *grand soir* and placed the emphasis on changing consciousness and values in the here and now. Gorz/Bosquet summed up this sentiment in a rather ominous manner when he wrote in *Le Nouvel Observateur*.

The current crisis is unlike previous ones in that it heralds nothing: no transcendence of capitalism, no redemptive revolution. Prophetism is itself in crisis. Modern times are coming to a close: for 200 years the West lived in the belief that tomorrow would be better than today, that the future was worth the sacrifice of the present... This belief is dead. The future promises nothing. (*L'avenir est vide de promesses*).<sup>29</sup>

In the beginning, the ecology movement was as obdurately committed to extra-parliamentary politics as the New Left. Political ecologists eschewed traditional party politics throughout the 70s, and the majority rejected the idea of forming a political party. Although they did not disdain to participate in elections for pedagogical purposes, they scorned electoralism.<sup>30</sup> The team at *La Gueule Ouverte-Combat Non-Violent*, one of the leading organs of political ecology, spoke for the majority of the movement when it declared on January 19, 1978: "The alternative society that we want to bring about requires forms of action and organization of a sort other than electoralism."<sup>31</sup> The Common Program did not escape the indifference to politics as usual. Shortly



after the agreement was signed, Gorz/Bosquet remarked in *Le Nouvel Observateur* that even if an anti-monopoly coalition were to win an election, this would hardly herald the end of oppression; only a change in the balance of forces could genuinely transform social relations, and no election could achieve that end.<sup>32</sup>

The nature of new social movement projects are usually contrasted with the totalizing character of the New Left worldview in that they have generally been more circumscribed and specific in their ambit and their aims. But radical ecology in all its national manifestations, including the French variant, is in many ways an extension of the universalizing vision of the international New Left, as we have argued elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> The animating principle of ecology — that everything is related and interrelated, that we must consider chains of consequences — inclined the political ecology movement towards a descriptive totality, to use Martin Jay's term, that is, in the broadest sense, the idea that historical reality forms a whole that can be apprehended (and the meaning of which can only be grasped) as such. However analytically imprecise, the totality conceived by political ecology was even more all-encompassing than the social totality of the left insofar as it extended to man's relation with nature. But political ecology also differed in important ways, particularly on the prescriptive side, from its New Left forebears. In spite of its critical holism it was marked, for example, by the preoccupation with totalitarianism which swept the French intellectual world in the later 70s.

It is worth pausing here to consider the resurgence of totalitarianism as a master concept.<sup>34</sup> Of course, the concept had an ideologically charged history which is sometimes overlooked in the literature. Originating with Benito Mussolini's reference to totalitarian will, it was used to describe the situation of total coordination through terror and the eclipse of society by a monolithic State characteristic of Nazism. Developed by Hannah Arendt (*Origins of Totalitarianism*) and the conservative theorist J.J. Talmon (*Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*), it became an ideological weapon in the Cold War when it was deployed to assimilate the Soviet Union to a fascist regime. In France, in addition to being wielded by liberals such as Raymond Aron, it was a cornerstone in the later philosophical work of Albert Camus, who had made a link between revolution itself and totalitarianism in *The Rebel*. In the 50s and 60s, totalitarianism was also a keyword in the lexicon of the leading thinkers of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, who had also employed it to characterize the USSR,

although from a non-Marxist libertarian-left perspective (Castoriadis and Lefort actually found a new and wider audience in the 1970s).<sup>35</sup>

The idea of an inexorable logic binding Marxism and revolution to totalitarianism was revived as the repressive character of the Soviet regime and other examples of existing socialism finally registered with indelible impact among French intellectuals, particularly following the publication — attended by much media publicity and waves of intellectual self-flagellation — of the French translation of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* in June 1974.<sup>36</sup> It was reinforced by revelations about Third World revolutionary regimes, such as Jean Pasqualini's *Prisonnier de Mao*, which served in particular to disabuse some formerly dogmatic Maoists of any high hopes they had harboured about the nature of democratic peoples' republics. In addition to contributing to the eminence and enrichment of Jacques Lacan, as the disheartened turned for solace and illumination to that fashionable brand of psychoanalysis in France,<sup>37</sup> disillusion was recycled as theory by the “new philosophers”<sup>38</sup> — a God that Failed phenomenon *à la française*, giving rise to a current that might fittingly have been dubbed *Socialisme et Barbarie*.<sup>39</sup> The shibboleth of the new philosophers was “the gulag is in Marxism.”

Converging and intersecting with the new philosophers' condemnation of Marxism and revolution as intrinsically totalitarian was the renunciation of the category of totality by post-structuralist philosophy — the emerging dominant mode in high theory in the 1970s, of which two leading representatives were Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. The critique of totality also found expression before the decade of the 1970s in the work of two otherwise inimical German philosophers: Karl Popper and Theodor Adorno, both largely unknown at the time in France.<sup>40</sup> Put very crudely, post-structuralism rejected any notion of an immanent goal, or even coherent meaning, in the movement of history as absolutizing metanarrative; more importantly for our purposes, it condemned any vision or project of comprehensive social change — any normative totality, that is — as totalitarian insofar as it seeks to grasp and transform the whole, an endeavour which, on this view, results in the suppression of difference.<sup>41</sup> Post-structuralism rejected not only normative totality but descriptive totality as well, and thus any totalizing analysis, as false and dangerous. The very idea of a social system was suspect, as was systematic thought itself; fragmentation and

discontinuity were the order of the day. Foucault, one of the *maitres à penser* of the new philosophers, is a representative figure in this regard.<sup>42</sup>

It is not surprising, of course, to find some significant imprints of the concerns of high theory and the intellectual celebrities on middle-range ideas and the perspectives of popular movements. Some of the themes raised by the new philosophers and the progenitors of post-structuralism found their way into political ecology, albeit in more diluted form, and some converged with the observations of the remnants of the post-'68 libertarian left. According to Sunil Khilnani, for example, the idea of totalitarianism became central to the self-managed socialism of the *deuxième gauche*.<sup>43</sup>

As noted above, political ecology did not jettison what amounted to systemic critique — the very notion of an eco-system, the parts of which are mutually dependent and dynamically interactive, is in some sense a “totalizing” model. Unlike many of the *grands intellos*, moreover, political ecologists remained committed to a radical alternative to the existing order involving nothing short of far-reaching social transformation on a global scale. However, in contrast even with the New Left, political ecology tended to reject master schemes of interpretation (“grand narratives” to use the post-structuralist vocabulary) in favour of more open-ended explanation of social and environmental problems. The movement's leaders expressed greater humility in face of the task of interpreting the world:

The ecologists know precisely which symptoms they want to see disappear, but they don't always know from what illness the symptoms derive. A sick person's fever may have diverse causes. It is likely that there are numerous causes at the root of the ecological crisis. Consequently there is no solution to this crisis, but only a series of circumstantial solutions, never definitive.<sup>44</sup>

Further, like the new social movements generally, political ecologists rejected the idea of primary and secondary contradictions; the struggle for a liberated society had to be fought on many fronts. In tune with the spirit of the times, ecologists eschewed a prescriptive totality as at best premature, at worst malevolent, and favoured a variety of social projects over a single encompassing one.<sup>45</sup> Dominique Simonnet offers a poetic rendering of the (inordinately vague) vision of the transition as conceived by ecologists: “A diffuse and gradual development, like a colour photograph taking shape

slowly on an undifferentiated surface.”<sup>46</sup> Political ecology thus partook of the breakdown of certainties that defined the *Zeitgeist* of the period.

The ecologists' vision of social change was more humble and tentative than that of their predecessors on the left, including the New Left, without, however, degenerating into tinkering meliorism. They did not claim to have all the answers, and were in accord with the strategy of social experimentation in vogue not only among ecologists but also within the *autogestion* current in the Parti Socialiste.<sup>47</sup> Brice Lalonde and Les Amis de la Terre defined politics as “envisioning and experimenting with social forms.”<sup>48</sup> Serge Moscovici talked about ecology's insistence on the need for a plurality of social forms, a vision of *societies* in the plural.<sup>49</sup> When Gorz/Bosquet outlined his utopian vision for the 70s it was under the modest title “Une utopie possible parmi d'autres” (One possible utopia among others). All concurred in the imperative to respect difference and diversity, which meant, in practical political terms, abolishing all forms of discrimination — sexual, social, racial.

Of course, any differences political ecology may have had with the New Left dwindle into insignificance beside its fundamental departure from and antagonism to the worldview underpinning the traditional Marxist and social-democratic left. The Common Program signed by the PS, the PCF and the MRG (Mouvement des Radicaux de Gauche) in 1972 is as good an illustration as any of the traditional politics of the left; shaped in large part by the PCF, the program revolved around Keynesian measures to promote full employment, higher wages, an expanded welfare state, nationalization and national planning. It rested, as Alain Lipietz has noted, on the orthodox view that capitalism, while initially revolutionizing the productive forces, later became an impediment to their full development by maintaining private appropriation and the anarchy of production.<sup>50</sup>

Replicating and elaborating on New Left critiques of the centralism, electoralism and Jacobinism of the Old Left, political ecology also helped to systematize and circulate ideas that had germinated in the New Left, but had not necessarily emerged as dominant themes, for instance, the imperative to redefine relations between man and nature. As René Dumont explained:

...man constantly modifies his environment, and there is often an antagonism between man and nature. But should we exacerbate this antagonism or reduce it? We've been told by everyone from Christians to Marxists: “Dominate and master

nature.” We say, on the contrary, that we must respect and get to know nature, make use of it without degrading and compromising it.<sup>51</sup>

Again, this critique of the domination of nature has antecedents in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. Even in the Institute for Social Research's early Marxist stage, the members were uneasy with the Prometheism at the heart of Marxism itself, the notion that man becomes himself by subduing and transforming nature through work, and they were critical of the Marxist reification of nature as little more than raw material for exploitation.<sup>52</sup> Contrary to the traditional left's celebration of the mastery of nature, Institute members went on to posit the domination of nature as repressive and leading ineluctably toward the repression of human beings.<sup>53</sup>

In this context, it is worth commenting on the evolution of Gorz's own attitudes concerning the relations of man and nature. The germs of an environmental sensibility can be detected in Gorz's writings early on — for instance, in his concern, in *Strategy for Labor*, with the depletion and monopolization by capital of natural resources such as air and water,<sup>54</sup> and his comments about the ruthless exploitation of the natural environment without regard for its preservation as a living environment, which he saw as characteristic of the United States.<sup>55</sup> However, these passing considerations coexisted with a Promethean vision of human relations with nature, which ecologists came to regard as one of the pernicious premises uniting the political left and the right.

In *La morale de l'histoire*, Gorz talked about how man must create the conditions in which he can satisfy his needs and asserted that these conditions must be forged through a conquest over nature; man must produce an anti-natural order to guarantee his survival, and this anti-natural order is never finally achieved; it is always a work in progress.<sup>56</sup> During the 1950s and 60s, Gorz frequently invoked notions of the “mastery of nature” and the “domination of man over nature” in a positive light. In *Reform and Revolution*, for example, he talks about man liberating himself from nature, transforming it, bending it to his will.<sup>57</sup> This view of nature as inert substance to be subordinated by man parallels the dim view of matter underpinning Jean-Paul Sartre's existential Marxism. As Mark Poster notes, Sartre operated with a “much too flat and undifferentiated” concept of matter as “inert, inorganic, passive externality.”<sup>58</sup> He all but ignored nature “leaving the implication that minerals and rocks, plant life and animals are all nothing but variations of inert

passive matter.” In Sartre’s work, Poster observes, “[t]he question of ecology is completely suppressed.”

In his earliest writings, Gorz appears to oscillate between a dichotomous, even antagonistic, view of the relationship between the human and the natural, where inorganic nature is regarded as non-human, or even anti-human, and a more positive view of nature as essential to human existence and part of what constitutes elemental human needs.<sup>59</sup> But in both cases only a purely instrumental relationship between man and the natural world can be discerned.

In the 1970s Gorz’s position grew more complex. Taking a cue from the Frankfurt School, Gorz now asserted that “[t]he total domination of nature inevitably entails a domination of people by the techniques of domination.”<sup>60</sup> He thus made the link between the subjugation of the natural world and human oppression. However, this insight seems to have been stillborn in his intellectual evolution; he was not thereby prompted to rethink the relationship between humanity and nature or to question the implications of anthropocentrism in any way. On the contrary, in the same breath he was at ease uttering: “All production is also destruction. This fact can be overlooked as long as production does not irreversibly deplete natural resources...”<sup>61</sup> Gorz took the position — which he never subsequently retracted or modified — that human life must necessarily interfere with some of the ecosystem’s natural equilibria — the destruction integral to production must be “repeated again and again” — but that the Promethean project of mastering nature was, nevertheless, “not necessarily incompatible with a concern for the environment.”<sup>62</sup> For Gorz, this concern was definitely a matter of enlightened human self-interest. In his estimation:

The fundamental issue raised by ecology is simply that of knowing:

- whether the exchanges, which human activity imposes upon or extorts from nature, preserve or carefully manage the stock of non-renewable resources; and
- whether the destructive effects of production do not exceed the productive ones by depleting renewable resources more quickly than they can regenerate them.<sup>63</sup>

This is a relatively narrow and technical view of the stakes of ecology, and it confirms that Gorz was certainly never an ecologist in the sense used by historians of the ecology movement such as

Andrew Dobson. Dobson contrasts a (morally inferior and politically moderate) environmentalism based on considerations of human self-interest and content to treat the symptoms of environmental degradation without attending to more fundamental social, political and cultural causes, with an ecologism that accords intrinsic value to non-human nature and poses a challenge to the anthropocentric worldview.<sup>64</sup>

There is no hint in Gorz's writings of any concern with non-human nature for its own sake, beyond its necessity and utility to human beings. And Gorz confirms this bias. "I am consciously anthropocentric *in as far as*, in my view, human beings alone are capable of consciously, intentionally pursuing goals they themselves define, including the goal of saving the biosphere from the consequences of their own doing."<sup>65</sup> Gorz argues that to attribute the status of subject (in the sense of a being capable of reflective awareness and self-questioning of its intentions and purposes) to Life, the Planet, an ecosystem or anything other than human beings is an anti-humanist philosophy which constitutes "the ideal ground on which dictatorship, oppression, totalitarianism flourish" because they are ideologies incapable of self-interrogation and self criticism." In this account non-human nature can have no status other than so much inert matter, an open field to be exploited and harvested by humanity. But does recognizing the inherent interests of non-humans lead ineluctably to eco-fascism? Is it inconceivable to imagine a system, for example, where relations with the non-human world are based on an ongoing adjudication of competing interests on the basis of the moral principle that no higher interest of a non-human being should be sacrificed to the lesser interest of a human?<sup>66</sup>

It is interesting to contrast Gorz's position in this regard with that of Marcuse who attempted to build a philosophical argument for Nature as a subject. While Marcuse ultimately affirmed that it would be impossible to eliminate all suffering imposed on the natural world through human intervention and that the best that could be hoped for was an effort to reduce the extent of cruelty and violence, he nevertheless distinguished between the treatment of nature as something possessed of intrinsic value existing for its own sake and its reduction to brute raw material — a distinction absent in Gorz's writings.<sup>67</sup> Thus "deep ecologist" John Rodman, overlooking the particularities of national or continental traditions, charges that Gorz's view of ecology is tantamount to "a generalized version of the resource conservation tradition of Gifford Pinchot and Theodore

Roosevelt, who warned that excessive timber-cutting would jeopardize the sustainability of American prosperity.”<sup>68</sup>

But while Gorz did not disavow an instrumental attitude to non-human nature, neither was his vision limited to a narrow environmentalism concerned primarily with resource management within the framework of the existing social and economic system. In a sense, for Gorz, the ecological crisis merely dramatized a prior and previously established imperative to transform the system of production and consumption and change the way we live. Or, to look at it from another angle, he anticipated the propensity among ecopolitical thinkers in the late 70s and early 80s to draw out the emancipatory potential latent within the ecological critique of industrialism.<sup>69</sup> Ecology was essentially the scientific validation of the indictment of the existing social order as “barbaric disorder,” which was at least part of the meaning of May ‘68.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, had it not been possible to read the ecological crisis as lending weight to the case for radical social change, it is safe to speculate that it would not have commanded the interest it did for Gorz.

Gorz's position cannot easily be accommodated by the too facile binary scheme equating anthropocentrism with political moderation and ecocentrism with political radicalism proposed by Dobson (and a variation of which is also at the heart of Rodman's dismissal of any claim Gorz might have to be taken seriously as an ecological thinker).<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, Gorz's failure even to attempt to contemplate, let alone explicitly theorize, a desirable relationship between human and non-human nature is a serious shortcoming. Indeed, two decades later, reflecting on the origins of political ecology, he virtually removed nature from the picture by asserting that the “nature” that was the object of concern of the political ecology movement was not the terrestrial eco-system of scientific ecology but rather the natural environment in the sense of Habermas's concept of the life-world, that is, an environment not governed by bureaucratic specialists whose “structures and workings are accessible to intuitive understanding” and in which people recognize themselves.<sup>72</sup> Now, while it is true that political ecology was in part a protest against the bureaucratic organization of life, it is preposterous to elide the natural eco-system from the preoccupations of political ecology in this way, and Gorz can be faulted here with carrying polemic past the point of reasonableness. But, in any case, it was not in the recasting of the relations between human beings and non-human nature that Gorz exercised his influence among French ecologists.



Where Gorz did prove a considerable inspiration in the elaboration, articulation and dissemination of the set of ideas that may be grouped loosely under the rubric of political ecology was in the realm of the evolving social and political critique, and above all its challenge to the commitment to perpetual growth underpinning both liberal and left worldviews. In even broader terms, Gorz may be seen as having made an important contribution to what Krishan Kumar has referred to as the rediscovery of the dark side of industrialism, which represented one pole of social theory growing out of the 1960s, as well as to the concomitant revival of utopian thinking, a theme which will be considered in the conclusion.

### The themes of political ecology

With its roots in many different soils, it is not surprising that the ecology movement was at the outset heterogeneous and internally divided — as in fact were all the new social movements (the fratricidal controversy within the French women's movement over the attempt by *Psychanalyse et Politique* to register as their personal property the name *Mouvement de liberation des femmes*, over the objections of the many feminists in other groups is legend<sup>73</sup>). The diffuse and eclectic character of the movement, both organizationally and doctrinally, was also reinforced by the anti-institutional temperament of political ecology and its philosophy of decentralization. The style as much as the substance of the political ecology movement was imbued with the libertarian spirit of May '68.

Contemporaries and scholars have frequently described the ecology movement in the 70s as a cluster (*nebuleuse*) or a tendency (*mouvance*) rather than a movement. One scholar and activist describes political ecology as a puzzle composed of many interlocking parts:

... a multi-faceted object that you have to keep turning under the same light to see its cohesiveness. A scientific discipline, a critical theory of the economy, an analysis of industrial society, the outlines of political proposals, a moral sensibility, a social movement, a certain *joie de vivre*, and even the pleasure that lies in contemplating a pretty flower or a small bird.<sup>74</sup>

On the other hand, whereas, with the possible exception of feminism, the other social movements tended towards single issues, the concerns of political ecology, as noted above, were extremely broad in scope from the beginning, moving far beyond a narrow environmentalism. Although one

founding component of the movement, the defense of nature current, tended to be quite resolutely apolitical, the majority was highly politicized; it understood ecology as a political problem,<sup>75</sup> which is why the French ecology movement is aptly described as political ecology. This is clear from the definition of ecology proposed by Les Amis de la Terre; ecology, the organization explained, is “not only a science or a morality or a political theory.”

It is all those things at once and much more. It is a new understanding of the natural mechanisms upon which man depends and of which man is an integral part. It forecasts the end of a system of technological domination that man thought himself able to impose upon nature. It is the invention of a new way of living that requires everyone's participation. It is a political struggle, even though it transcends the machinations of parties and politicians.<sup>76</sup>

For French political ecology in the 1970s, then, the ecological crisis could not be resolved simply through sounder resource management and conservation. The limits to growth discerned by ecologists pointed to the imperative of far-reaching change in patterns of production and consumption and a sea change in the value system of contemporary industrial civilization. Thus there were no sharp boundaries between ecological and social and political issues. Like the New Left before it, political ecology pushed back the frontiers of the political.

As a confluence of currents, the political ecology movement never attained a high degree of theoretical systematization or precision. But in spite of a number of perplexing internal contradictions impeding a completely coherent synthesis of ideas, the set of themes that came to be known as political ecology did achieve a degree of coherence as an emergent worldview, an overarching vision of a sane and just society which broke irremediably with certain axiomatic left ideas.

While, in face of economic contraction, much of the orthodox left, both Communist and social democratic, fought a largely rearguard defensive action to promote Keynesian solutions, ecologists proposed a more innovative solution: produce differently, consume differently and live better. This was far from a message of dour asceticism or grim austerity — there was no contradiction between reduced consumption and increased happiness. Ecologists pointed out that possessing fewer but more durable goods, for instance, is not tantamount in any way to material privation and ought not be equated with a lower standard of living. Qualitative criteria should be at

least as important in measuring well-being as quantitative criteria. And this was precisely the message Gorz expounded time and time again in his journalistic contributions and his essays throughout the 1970s. It became his watchword for the next quarter century: “less but better” — we can live better by producing less and consuming differently.

In the 1970s it was as Michel Bosquet that Gorz issued his injunction, and it was the work of Michel Bosquet that was invoked by ecologists in support of their arguments.<sup>77</sup> Gorz used the pseudonym to sign the articles and essays he published in some of the leading organs of the ecology movement, such as *La Gueule ouverte*, founded by Pierre Fournier in November 1972, and *Le Sauvage*, the first theoretical journal of political ecology, founded by Alain Hervé of Amis de la Terre in 1973 and owned by the *Nouvel Observateur* group.<sup>78</sup> Gorz attended the meetings of the small editorial group, seeking, in his words, “to politicize ecology by pointing to its incompatibilities with the maximizing logic of capitalism.”<sup>79</sup> It was also as Bosquet that Gorz addressed the French public in the pages of *Le Nouvel Observateur* itself, which attained the height of its popularity in the mid-1970s with a circulation exceeding 308,000.<sup>80</sup> This weekly news magazine, of which Gorz became assistant editor-in-chief, has been described as the incarnation of the contestatory side of the press,<sup>81</sup> but has also been viewed with a rather more jaundiced eye by certain left critics, such as George Ross, for whom “*Le nouvel obs*” exemplifies the trendy leftism of the period, overly eclectic and subject to fashion.<sup>82</sup>

In his columns for *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Gorz/Bosquet aimed his analytical skills at a miscellany of targets, from the cost of laundry detergent to a profile of a revolutionary socialist priest in Brazil. (A selection of his journalistic contributions to *Le Nouvel Observateur* in the 1970s was also published pseudonymously in 1973 under the title *Critique du capitalisme quotidien*, translated into English in 1977 as *Capitalism in Crisis and Everyday Life*). It was only in 1978 that Gorz unmasked his double identity, subsequently abandoning the pseudonym, when he published the collection of essays and articles *Écologie et politique* (translated as *Ecology as Politics*) under the name André Gorz/Michel Bosquet, with a prefatory explanation.<sup>83</sup>

It is worthwhile here to examine a number of interrelated themes explored and advanced by leading proponents of French political ecology in the 1970s — themes which overlapped with the general outlook of the burgeoning ecology movement throughout the West: the critique of the idol

of growth and “productivism,” the rejection of technological euphoria, the critique of the hypercentralized State and the defense of the local; the critique of the multiple dependencies created by the tools and institutions of contemporary industrial society, the critique of the politics of full-employment and a fresh approach to the problem of work. As we shall see, these are the very same themes sounded by Gorz/Bosquet throughout the decade.

The systematic critique by the budding ecology movement of productivism — the ceaseless quest for economic growth — is often regarded with some justice as an original contribution to social thought, although like everything else it is not without antecedents.<sup>84</sup> Certainly in relation to the dominant views of the traditional left, the critique of growth represented a radical departure. In the historical scheme of socialists, capitalism had served the indispensable function of revolutionizing the productive forces, opening up limitless possibilities for growth. But the structures of the capitalist social system, such as private appropriation, are such that capitalism engenders an anarchy of production which becomes an impediment to growth. Socialism would unfetter the productive capacities that are not fully and efficiently exploited under capitalism, thus priming the engine of growth.

For ecologists, by contrast, untrammelled industrial growth, whether driven by private enterprise or the State (including nominally socialist states), runs aground on the limits of the biosphere — the physical limits of finite resources. They disavowed the pursuit of an ever expanding growth rate, measured in the misleading terms of the GNP, which hides the costs to the environment of ceaseless production. Even if the forecasts concerning the rates and dates of depletion of non-renewable resources such as fossil fuels were often exaggeratedly alarmist, as were the scenarios of other environmental catastrophes in the making such as global warming, the premise of ecology, that the earth's capacity to sustain current levels of consumption was not infinitely elastic, had to be reckoned with.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the unbridled pursuit of growth requires particular forms of social organization and implies a narrow vision of the human vocation and potential. In this sense, Guillaume Sainteny has defined productivism as “a centralized hierarchical system characterized by the parcellization of tasks and gigantism of production units, in which man is considered solely as a producer and consumer.”<sup>86</sup>

Finally, ecologists contended, the mere fact of economic growth does not assure social justice or a more fulfilling quality of life. Serge Moscovici evocatively summed up the different attitudes towards growth:

Liberals want to make the pie grow without worrying about how it will be divided up: that will be left to the market. Socialists want to increase [the size of the pie] while sharing it more wisely: if the distribution is changed, the pie can continue to grow. Ecologists think about the quality, taste and nutritional value of the pie: is it necessary to exhaust oneself and one's resources in creating a gigantic but poisonous pie? We certainly want pie, but we want good pie that we can go on baking: we're looking for a different recipe.<sup>87</sup>

In questioning the hitherto uncontested virtue of growth, ecologists occupied uncharted political territory at the time in France; in a rare instance of concurrence between right and left, both Raymond Barre, who replaced Jacques Chirac as prime minister in 1976, and PCF leader Georges Marchais attacked the *Limits to Growth* report.<sup>88</sup>

For ecologists, no techno-fix would surmount the problem of limits in the long term. A refusal to deify science and technology as the secular miracle-worker was at the heart of ecological thinking. And in general, the dissociation we noted in the last chapter between technological progress and social progress was fuelled in the 70s by the economic crisis: capitalist restructuring, government austerity plans and growing unemployment were evidence that technological progress did not automatically or necessarily lead to an improvement in living standards for all.

Unsustainable growth went hand in hand, for ecologists, with the distortions of the consumer society, which, once again, recognized no limits; on the contrary, to fulfill the productivist quest appetites were deliberately stimulated. Here, as mentioned above, ecologists combined the moral and social critique of consumerism advanced by the New Left with the environmental imperative to promote economic contraction through reduced consumption. The rapaciousness and waste generated by the incessant stimulation of consumer demand was not merely immoral from a social perspective, it was a crime of larceny committed against future generations. Contrary to popular misconception, French ecologists, like most ecologists, did not espouse zero-growth, but called for a slower rate of growth and a contraction of consumption in the advanced industrial countries.

In the critique of growth, productivism and consumption advanced by ecologists, Gorz/Bosquet was an oft-cited authority. As we have seen, his critique of the direction of the productive system by oligopolistic industry dates back to *La morale de l'histoire*, in which he emphasized how, contrary to popular belief and mainstream economic theory, production had come to drive consumption. To ensure continuing outlets for its goods, industry deployed the techniques of fashion, advertising and planned obsolescence in order to create a craving for conformity and status that became more powerful motors of consumption and expansion than material needs themselves. Moreover, Gorz had already insisted in his early writings, at least an element of contemporary consumption was a distorted form of compensation for the alienation in working life arising from the mutilating division of labour. And finally, workers were urged to consume in the interest of assuring their ongoing employment. All of this was at the root of production for production's sake, the absurdity of which Gorz exposed in the 60s when he raised the question of the ultimate purposes served by the production of many consumer goods and services. At the time, he also cited the work of Marcuse in support of his own critique of productivism, concurring with Marcuse's contention that quantitative growth did not necessarily give rise to qualitative change but rather that qualitative change depended, in Gorz's phrase, on the "subordination of economics to ethics."<sup>89</sup>

For Dominique Allan Michaud, Gorz's critique of consumer capitalism in the 60s represents a prefiguration of his ecological concerns.<sup>90</sup> And Gorz shares this assessment of himself as what he calls "an ecologist avant la lettre," pointing to the critique he developed in *Strategy for Labour* of the incorporation of waste into vital goods in the interest of maximizing consumption, and the way people are prevented from using "free" natural resources so they can be sold back to them as goods for individual consumption.<sup>91</sup> But it might be more accurate to say that his ecological concerns are a consistent extension of his earlier critique of consumer capitalism and that, by linking the critique of neo-capitalism to ecological concerns, Gorz was an important transitional figure, tying a thread from the New Left to political ecology in France. This was a thread Gorz himself traced when he wrote:

**Either consciously or (perhaps more often) unconsciously, the ecologists in the final analysis bring scientific support to those people who, in an apparently irrational way, experience the existing order as barbaric disorder, and reject it — by refusing the present forms of production and consumption, work and technology, and by**

insisting that it is possible to live better while producing and consuming less, provided we produce, consume and live in a different way. In a sense, this is exactly what was being said by the protagonists of May 1968.<sup>92</sup>

There is no doubt, as Gorz himself has noted, of the essential continuity between his own critique of the capitalist model of consumption and growth, which he put forward in the early 1960s, and a fair number of the themes later taken up by the ecology movement.<sup>93</sup> However, his critique of growth was certainly more refined and developed in the 1970s. And whereas previously he had regarded scarcity as a condition perpetuated by capitalism, he now conceded the basis in the biosphere of at least some forms of scarcity. This is what Gorz intended in referring, in the above passage, to the “scientific support” provided by ecologists. Gorz's acknowledgement of the physical limits to growth, which was an essential premise of his thinking in the 1970s, was actually a completely novel element. Previously he had expressed far greater faith in the power of science and technology to circumvent the consequences of any possible resource shortages, affirming in 1970 for instance that ensuring access to cheap mineral resources in the Third World would prove less important to capitalist economies than was frequently assumed, since the search for alternative sources of raw materials and new technologies “may even make for unprecedented economic growth and scientific advances.”<sup>94</sup> Gorz remained convinced however that the solution to the problem of scarcity, whether inscribed in the biosphere or socially constructed, lay in a redefined socialist project.

“Growth-oriented capitalism is dead,” Gorz wrote in the late 1970s. “Growth-oriented socialism, which closely resembles it, reflects the distorted image of our past, not our future.” “Marxism,” he went on, “although irreplaceable as an instrument of analysis, has lost its prophetic value.”<sup>95</sup> This last statement relates to the dawning awareness that technological progress does not automatically bring social progress in its train and may even prove inhibiting or antithetical to it. Thus, Gorz continued, “The development of the forces of production, which was supposed to enable the working class to cast off its chains and establish universal freedom, has instead dispossessed the workers of the last shred of their sovereignty, deepened the division between manual and intellectual labour, and destroyed the material and existential bases of the producers' power.”<sup>96</sup>

Moreover, economic growth within the framework of the neo-capitalist system certainly did not assure greater equality. The very nature of the goods produced in contemporary industrial

societies and the logic of constantly upping the ante of satisfaction and status that propels consumerism precluded fairer distribution: “how,” Gorz asked rhetorically, “can one equitably distribute supersonic air travel, Mercedes Benzes, penthouse apartments with private swimming pools, or the thousands of new products, scarce by definition, which industry floods the market with each year in order to devalue older models and reproduce inequality and social hierarchy?”<sup>97</sup> Consumer society does not fulfill human needs; it creates and maintains a state of perpetual longing and frustration. It conspires to the homogenization of desire itself, rendering it coterminous with the desire for higher income, greater purchasing power.

Reiterating the argument he made in the early 60s, Gorz invoked the difference between destitution (*misère*), a measurable fact, and poverty (*pauvreté*), a relative condition, in order to demonstrate that growth leaves inequality intact. But he goes further than this: contesting the common equation of *more* with *better*, he pointed to an actual deterioration in the quality of life attendant upon the relentless pursuit of growth. Drawing on the arguments of various social critics and economists including Jacques Attali and Marc Guillaume, and Ezra Mishan, an economist who wrote a book entitled *The Costs of Economic Growth* in 1967, Gorz contested the validity of a purely quantitative approach to evaluating living standards: the poor may consume more than they did in previous decades but they do not live better. Families now require two incomes; with both parents working there is scant time for cooking and repairing things, and thus they are forced to rely on packaged goods and services; they buy prepared foods and hire plumbers.<sup>98</sup> It was possible, Gorz asserted, to live better in a qualitative sense while producing and consuming less. Echoing the argument he had made throughout the last decade, Gorz reiterated that higher wages were no guarantee of a rewarding existence: “Living better depends less and less on individual consumer goods the worker can buy on the market, and more and more on social investments to fight dirt, noise, inadequate housing, crowding on public transportation, and the oppressive and repressive nature of working life.”<sup>99</sup>

For Gorz, as for political ecologists in general in the 1970s, the critique of growth and the corresponding injunction to reduce consumption and promote economic contraction had to be formulated in a manner sensitive to the issue of existing inequalities between the northern and southern hemispheres. One of the leading French political ecologists, René Dumont, who was the



ecology movement's presidential candidate in 1974, was both a socialist and a student of the Third World, especially North Africa and Vietnam. In his *L'utopie ou la mort* he pointed out that the celebrated growth rates of the industrialized countries often obtained at the expense of Third World countries, which were condemned to unequal exchange, dependency and famine. By buying raw materials and scarce resources cheaply from the Third World, Dumont charged, the industrial nations were robbing them of a material base for the future. Political ecologists also endeavoured to show how the negative effects of growth, including polluting industries and garbage, were exported to the Third World.<sup>100</sup> And it was repeated continuously that consumption was grossly uneven, with the industrialized West devouring far more than its fair share of planetary resources. Third-worldist arguments about the pillage of the developing nations by western capitalism, preeminent in the 60s, were thus preserved in the worldview of political ecology. So too was the favourable image of the Chinese Revolution held by left intellectuals and activists, at least in the early 70s. Dumont, for example, invoked China as a model for the construction in the Third World of an agricultural and industrial base using local resources and recycling waste, although his enthusiasm for the Chinese model was not unqualified.

Gorz was familiar with and quoted approvingly Dumont's *l'Utopie ou la mort*, among other writings.<sup>101</sup> As we noted in the previous chapter, Gorz himself returned to a rather brutal characterization of Third World exploitation, which he had earlier criticized as a symptom of Christian guilt.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, while he concurred with the insistence of political ecologists on the need for a new model of development for the Third World<sup>103</sup> — a model different from the unsustainable race to catch up with the West advocated by conventional economic theory, one which would not reproduce the depredations of western industrialism<sup>104</sup> — Gorz was sometimes circumspect about engaging in prescriptive arguments of this type, lest he be seen to be condemning the Third World to permanent unequal status. He was not alone in stressing that the burden of reducing consumption must fall to the West “if only to leave a bigger share of resources for the peoples who have not yet developed their industries.”<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, Gorz continued to focus his attention on the problems and potential of the advanced industrial capitalist nations.

Less perhaps than other theoreticians of political ecology did Gorz exchange the specificity of the critique of capitalism for the rather more nebulous although not infertile analytical category of

“industrialism,” the ecological equivalent of convergence theory that gained currency within the ecology movement inside and outside France. Whereas for the traditional left — communist and socialist — all the problems plaguing contemporary industrial society were attributable to the nature of capitalism, for most ecologists the perversions of a capitalist economy based on the pursuit of profit represented a partial but not exhaustive explanation. It had been shown in practice, moreover, that actually existing socialism was as productivist and growth obsessed as capitalist societies, if not more so. And the untempered quest for growth in a socialist regime was bound to produce the same catastrophic results as in a capitalist regime (and already had, if the reports trickling in of environmental degradation in the socialist countries were any indication). For that matter, many political ecologists rejected the Promethean impulse that they discerned at the very heart of Marxist theory. (It is interesting to note in this regard that Adriano Sofri, the leader of Lotta Continua in the 70s, who subsequently embraced ecology, came to regard Marxism, in its elevation of culture over nature, as an apology for industrialism.<sup>106</sup>) Rather than identifying capitalism as the source of all the current ecological problems, some French ecologists located the attitudes underpinning productivism in anthropocentrism, the drive to master and dominate nature, in which Marxism could be seen to partake<sup>107</sup>; others, drawing on the emerging feminist critique of patriarchy, stressed the distortions inherent in the masculine domination of the natural and social world.

The elaboration of a category of industrialism applicable to both the capitalist West and the socialist world was also consistent with the heritage of the New Left, which had discerned common features and failings in all advanced industrial societies, whether capitalist or nominally socialist. However, the ecologists' introduction of the problem of the domination of nature as a feature of the critique of industrial civilization and their heresy with respect to the religion of progress elicited a particularly hostile response in some quarters. Like Greens everywhere, French political ecologists were caricatured by adversaries on the left and the right as anti-modern devolutionists who favoured a regression behind technology and wanted to return France to the Middle Ages. This was clearly a gross misrepresentation of the majority position of French political ecology in the 1970s (or later for that matter — the French ecology movement never sprouted a current of any significance advocating the wholesale rejection of industrial society, such as the Fundi [fundamentalist] wing of die Grünen in Germany); the ecologists simply rejected blind faith in the benefits of scientific and technological

advance, untempered by any considerations (moral, social or political) beyond the feasibility of a given project. As Serge Moscovici put it, “The question is not: ‘Are you for or against technological progress?’ but: ‘what kind of technology, what kind of science?’”<sup>108</sup> Ecologists rightly insisted that it was possible to criticize scientism without opposing science and to question technical rationality without embracing irrationalism. And, as we shall see below, in Gorz’s case there were significant ambiguities in the attitude towards technology.

Finally, the critique of Enlightenment rationality begun by the Frankfurt School and taken up by post-structuralism did not lead, at least in the case of the leading exponents of political ecology in the 1970s, including Gorz, to a rejection of rationality *per se*.<sup>109</sup> Gorz himself counterposed the economic rationality of political economy to what he defined as ecological rationality, a contrast he would go on to develop more fully in the 80s and 90s. In his analysis, economic rationality, which governs the sphere of production for exchange regulated by the market under capitalism and by the central plan under socialist regimes, is essentially quantitative calculation indifferent to notions of beauty or morality; while the telos of ecological rationality is to expose the limits of economic rationality by revealing the paradoxes it engenders if left to operate unchecked — for example, production becomes destructive when the costs in terms of resource depletion outweigh the benefits.<sup>110</sup> We will return to this notion when we look at Ivan Illich’s concept of counterproductivities below.

Since they were concerned with the irreversibility of the problems caused or exacerbated by destructive human practices, such as the depletion of nonrenewable resources and the extinction of species, ecologists necessarily espoused a favourable attitude towards conservation, and they even salvaged elements of politically ambiguous or “reactionary” philosophies such as naturalism. However this did not imply political conservatism, as the ecologists’ detractors often alleged. In the early 70s, one strategy of the PCF and the PS to discredit the ecologists was to allege filiations with the intellectual tradition of Maurras and Pétain.<sup>111</sup> Indeed political ecologists were continually compelled to distance themselves from the lineage of backward-looking ideas to which, in the eyes of traditional leftists, they were purportedly heir. Serge Moscovici was a particularly eloquent spokesperson on this point, contrasting liberalism and socialism, as doctrines which seek to make a *tabula rasa* of the past and consider only the future as the bearer of progress, with the attitude of the

ecologists that “there are no dustbins of history.”<sup>112</sup> For ecologists, Moscovici explained, “Novelty has no more intrinsic value than change. Everything depends on the content, the circumstances and the necessities.”<sup>113</sup> Ecologists subscribe to the rule of recycling not only with respect to material goods but also ideas and ways of life, for all concrete solutions to today's concrete problems entail a reinvention of resources that come from the past. “Ecologists think in the present but that doesn't lead them to conclude that everything that is and everything that was must necessarily disappear or depreciate.”<sup>114</sup> This attitude, Moscovici underscored, was far from a fetishization of the past and tradition or a rejection of the new. Political ecology, he pointed out, was itself something new.<sup>115</sup> And if political ecology encompassed a critique of modernity in its questioning of the benefits of a narrowly defined idea of progress and its rejection of productivism and technocracy, it was a decidedly modernist critique of modernity, which, as Guillaume Sainteny has noted, sought a selective usage of technological, economic and political modernization.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, Robyn Eckersley maintains of the ecology movement more broadly that those ideas associated with conservatism, such as prudence in innovation or the use of organic political metaphors, have been reworked by ecopolitical theorists into “a new constellation of ideas with a distinctly radical edge,” posing a fundamental challenge to the economic and political order and to existing power relations.<sup>117</sup>

### **Neither left nor right?**

This brings us to another contentious issue: the question of how to situate the ecology movement (and Green philosophy more generally) in political terms. The French political ecology movement has been variously associated with everything from fascism to the traditionalist right to the centre and the far left. Elements of the movement have also proclaimed ecology beyond left and right. Brice Lalonde, for example, insisted that notions of right and left were not relevant since they refer to antiquated cultural traditions and party politics rather than social movements.<sup>118</sup> But he qualified this assessment with respect to class relations, classifying political ecology as socially on the side of the workers, even as it raised questions that the workers movement refused to ask. Serge Moscovici, for his part, insisted on the natural links between political ecology and the socialist tradition, remarking that the desire for a less hierarchical, more open and just society, which is historically the

province of socialism, informed the development of ecology.<sup>119</sup> He added that ecology had taken up causes that socialists had abandoned, such as the struggle against militarism (although the extent to which this particular badge of distinction applies to Gorz is questionable in light of the rather surprising stand he would take in the early 80s in favour of an independent nuclear force for Europe<sup>120</sup>).

The political ecology movement, in its early phase at least, has frequently been viewed as closest to libertarian socialism in its general orientations<sup>121</sup>; this in spite of the fact that the term “socialism” was not used by everyone, and for many ecologists the role of the working class was unclear at best — a point to which we shall return. Herbert Kitschelt, an eminent scholar of new social movements, categorizes the French political ecologists as left libertarians. He explains: “The concept of ‘left libertarian’ involves a modification of socialist conceptions of an egalitarian society in an anti-authoritarian direction. It emphasizes democratic decision-making and communitarian values of reciprocity, which distinguishes it from the concern with efficiency, personal interest, centralized control or economic growth.”<sup>122</sup> This description captures the general temper of the movement and suffices to confute any notion of filiations between political ecology and the historical right.

Kitschelt explicitly differentiates left libertarianism from anarchism on the grounds that the former acknowledges the crucial role played by institutions at the national, regional, and worldwide levels. However, anarchism has also been invoked as the ideological forebear and fount of political ecology. Indeed the American anarchist philosopher and social ecologist Murray Bookchin made Gorz the target of a typically splenetic tirade, rebuking Gorz's *Ecology as Politics* for its silence on the purported anarchist pedigree of ecology.<sup>123</sup> But this debate takes us too far afield from the question of whether ecology can be said to partake more broadly of a left culture.

Kitschelt also sets the left libertarianism of political ecology apart from the ideas of individual freedom proper to the liberal tradition. Here his typology overlooks an incipient divergence between the left libertarians and the more liberal leaning (which included Brice Lalonde, at least by the later 1970s) among the political ecologists, which was discernible even in the early phases of the movement.<sup>124</sup> This fissure was evidence of what Alain Lipietz identifies as the ambiguity of the libertarian stream flowing from May '68 which, as Lipietz puts it, embodied one

trajectory leading from *Socialisme ou Barbarie* to Raymond Aron.<sup>125</sup> (The same split manifested itself in the *autogestionnaire* current, especially in the 1980s when a segment of it embraced the ethos of entrepreneurship as the highest expression of self-managed socialism!<sup>126</sup>) We will return to this problem below in relation to the attitudes of political ecology towards the State.

On balance, however, political ecology in the 1970s was most easily identifiable with the left. But the question can also be approached from another, not necessarily incongruous, perspective as an attempt to erect an entirely new paradigm in contradistinction with the productivist anthropocentric logic uniting the right and the left. This is the viewpoint of, for example, Guillaume Sainteny, Alain Lipietz and Carl Boggs. The latter, as we noted earlier, saw the ecology movement internationally as part of an emerging post-Marxist radical politics:

Whereas liberalism constitutes little more than an ideological cloak for privileged interests, Marxism offers essentially superficial outdated formulas for confronting the crisis — seemingly oblivious to fundamental changes in class and power relations, to the new historical opportunities. Both traditions are enclosed within the parameters of capitalist (industrialist) rationalization; insofar as they are twin ideological expressions of a phase of history that seems to have exhausted its potential, their prescriptions for change are necessarily feeble. In this context, the Green phenomenon can be understood as a quintessentially post-industrial (and therefore post-liberal and post-Marxist) expression — as a new paradigm of thought and action that demands a break with the old systems of meaning.<sup>127</sup>

New paradigm or not, political ecology, as it was formulated by prominent movement theorists in its early phase, tended to regard capitalism as the principal culprit of the ecological crisis. Witness, for example, the explanation given by René Dumont in 1974 for his candidacy in the presidential elections:

What is currently bringing about the destruction of ecosystems is the profit motive elevated to the status of a law of development. The profit motive entails a constant increase in production, a form of production which is not designed primarily to be useful to man but to extract surplus, surplus value, profit in the capitalist system. Hence, ecology must seek an economic structure and, it follows, a political structure, that is different from the current one.<sup>128</sup>

This was essentially Gorz's position as well. He has deservedly been associated by commentators with the left libertarian branch of the movement. For instance, in his discussion of the left libertarian/liberal split, Dominique Michaud affirms that "Gorz/Bosquet personifies an eco-

socialism particularly unreceptive to the siren song of liberalism.”<sup>129</sup> He remained resolutely anticapitalist, and his stance set the tone for subsequent ecology activists who sought to blend a socially “progressive” politics with ecology. In fact, by the later 1980s, when the “neither left nor right” position ultimately prevailed within les Verts under the auspices of Antoine Waechter, and when liberal reformism distinguished Brice Lalonde's *Génération Écologie*, Gorz's brand of ecological socialism could be counterposed to those now dominant tendencies.<sup>130</sup>

Gorz regarded political ecology as a creed and movement of the left, and he was also critical of tendencies to overlook the specifically capitalist content of the dawning ecological and economic crises. In fact, he viewed the ecological crisis as a factor exacerbating an economic crisis that could be analyzed in classical Marxist terms as a crisis of overaccumulation.<sup>131</sup> In 1972, he remarked that ecological movements have a utopian countercultural character and tend to embody a moral revolt that rejects the whole of capitalist civilization without making explicit the class nature of the society which gave birth to this civilization.<sup>132</sup> He criticized the ecology movement for its lack of a specific socialist perspective and, quoting Paul Mattick, he confirmed the abiding indispensable role of the proletariat as the exclusive agent of the type of sweeping social change necessary to an ecological society more desirable than capitalism in survival mode.<sup>133</sup> This was one of the few instances, however, when, writing as Michel Bosquet on the topic of ecology, Gorz explicitly linked the project of political ecology with his emphasis in other writings on the goal of workers' control.

Gorz did discern in the crisis of the 1970s “...dimensions which Marxists, with rare exceptions, have not foreseen, and for which what has until now been understood as 'socialism' does not contain adequate answers.”<sup>134</sup> He invoked as examples of these hitherto unaddressed problems a crisis in our relations with nature, with our bodies, with future generations. He noted that Marxist economists, like their liberal counterparts, had dismissed any concerns about the finite resources of the planet as reactionary or irrelevant. In Gorz's view, moreover, the contradiction between social production and private appropriation was not the Gordian knot which, once cut, would resolve the multiple crises facing the developed world. In Gorz's estimation, for instance, not all private appropriation was detrimental — it is not detrimental when the object of desire is free and unlimited<sup>135</sup> — nor was it the most important cause of poverty in the industrialized world.

Many contemporary Marxists, he charged, failed to recognize the relative character of poverty; they had succumbed to the one-dimensional universe of quantitative thinking in conceiving inequality as an economic difference, and they missed the point that only social equality could really achieve equality in consumption.<sup>136</sup> If social hierarchy were abolished, Gorz maintained, repeating an argument he had made as early as 1962, material inequalities would be insignificant, because if no person is deprived more than others then no one is poor. Then, taking the relative character of poverty as his point of departure, Gorz distinguished between different causes of poverty, not all of which were related to private appropriation. One cause of poverty unrelated to private appropriation is exclusive access, that is when a powerful minority bars access to scarce natural resources, which by their nature cannot be equally distributed.<sup>137</sup> What can be inferred here is that the power of the minority is not necessarily vested in its title to property.

Of course, if the condition for abolishing poverty in the countries of advanced capitalism is the overcoming of social hierarchy, as Gorz maintained, it remains to be demonstrated to what extent this social hierarchy can be eliminated in a context in which private property and private appropriation are maintained. Nevertheless, as we saw earlier, Gorz was clear that the problems afflicting contemporary capitalist society could not be solved by a “mere” change in the ownership of the means of production. He agreed moreover that the existing industrialized societies both capitalist and nominally socialist shared certain objectionable features including the expansion of gigantic bureaucratic institutions which strangled the sphere of individual and community autonomy, breeding dependence and passivity. Indeed, in stressing the importance of reconquering individual sovereignty, Gorz sometimes carelessly formulated his ideas in a manner difficult to distinguish from self-help ideology, as when he insisted that, above all else we must conquer the power to solve our own problems.<sup>138</sup> But in such declarations, as in the analysis of institutional authority and domination which Gorz fruitfully combined with the critique of economic growth in the 1970s, it is rather the libertarian ideas of Ivan Illich that permeate Gorz's thinking.

### **The long shadow of Ivan Illich**

A source of inspiration for the ecology movement internationally, Illich's iconoclastic work met with “meteoric popularity” in France in the 1970s,<sup>139</sup> and it is difficult to overstate its impact on the



development of French political ecology — Brice Lalonde and Dominique Simonnet, two leading figures in the French ecology movement in the 1970s, proclaimed that “‘ecology without Illich would not be ecology’”<sup>140</sup> — or on the evolving worldview of André Gorz. In Gorz's case, although it is risky to infer too much from such things, there are even some striking biographical parallels. Only two years Gorz's junior, Illich was also born in Vienna to a mixed Jewish/Catholic couple. He also fled to escape the Nazis, taking refuge in Italy. And like Gorz he also studied chemistry as an undergraduate, subsequently abandoning the science for the humanities. There the biographical similarities end however. Going on to post-graduate studies in philosophy, theology and history, Illich became a deeply religious man and entered the priesthood (after much conflict with the Church over his controversial ideas he ceased to exercise his functions, but he was never expelled). Working as a parish priest in New York in his late twenties, he moved first to Puerto Rico and then to Cuernavaca, Mexico, where he set up the renowned Centre for Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC), which became a forum for the discussion of institutional alternatives in the 1960s.

Illich's intellectual contribution consists in a wide-ranging, sweeping and provocative critique of the institutions and technology of contemporary industrial society, both capitalist and nominally socialist. Schools, medicine, energy - there was little that escaped his critical gaze. It was perhaps his general indictment of contemporary industrial society in *Tools for Conviviality* which became the single most important reference point for French political ecologists. An early version of the book was published in the French left Catholic journal *Esprit* in 1972, and the French translation of the final monograph was published in 1973, the same year the book appeared in the original English. The principal thesis was that rather than liberating people, machines have come to dominate and enslave them: “Neither capitalist nor ‘socialist’ societies can escape the domination of constantly expanding industrial tools.”<sup>141</sup> Nowhere did the postulate of a disjuncture between technological advancement and social progress inform social theory more decisively than in the work of Ivan Illich.

The key concept in Illich's *oeuvre* is the dialectical notion of counter-productivities. Illich maintained, to put it very simply (and Illich is often overly simplistic himself) that in modern industrial society the intended purposes served by tools (broadly defined to include production technology as well as institutions) are transformed, beyond a given point, into their opposites, such

that, for example, medicine engenders disease, schools obstruct learning, the legal system creates injustice... A tool becomes counterproductive when it crosses a certain limit point and begins to produce more negative than positive effects. To take one of Gorz's favourite examples, the automobile, which was designed to speed the pace of travel, ends by paralyzing motorists, costing more time than it saves, due to traffic congestion, parking problems, and so on.<sup>142</sup> But how can we determine when that pivotal limit has been crossed? At what point did traffic jams begin to slow the speed of travel? Illich replies that it cannot be measured precisely; it is an extended process. And this process is related to another foundational concept in Illich's work: his conceptualization of two distinct spheres of production within society, autonomous and heteronomous.<sup>143</sup> The sphere of autonomous production is that in which individuals produce use values for themselves and their families and neighbours, while the sphere of heteronomous production encompasses the production of exchange values, standardized goods for the market.

In Illich's theory, it is when heteronomous production gains hegemonic control over the satisfaction of needs, when it becomes, in Illich's term, a "radical monopoly," that counter-productivities obtain. This imbalance prevailed, according to Illich, in every country in the world where per capita income had attained a level comparable to that of Cuba. The escalating production of both goods and services, he warned, had exceeded an optimum level in the West and the East alike and now threatened to destroy society by destroying communities, atomizing populations, extinguishing people's abilities and transforming them into mere passive consumers.<sup>144</sup> The growth of industrial production had come to upset the balance between what people need to do for themselves and what they need to obtain ready made, rendering them dependent on the production of ever greater quantities of heteronomously produced goods and services.<sup>145</sup> In Illich's view, a society that defines satisfaction in terms of maximizing consumption of industrial goods is an unfree society, where the individual's autonomy is intolerably limited. "People need not only to obtain things, they need above all the freedom to make things among which they can live, to give shape to them according to their own tastes, and put them to use in caring for and about others."<sup>146</sup> The (unverifiable) premise underpinning this assertion was Illich's conviction that the pleasure derived from satisfying a need only assumes its full meaning in personal awareness of performing an autonomous action.<sup>147</sup> Another central feature of Illich's critique of industrial civilization is his

particularly scathing condemnation of the stultifying effects of professionalization and the cult of expertise — another integral aspect of heteronomous production conspiring to thwart people's power to govern their own lives. Illich charged that an array of specialists — doctors, teachers, social workers, politicians, administrators and so on — had come to exercise a monopoly over the definition of needs and in so doing finished by creating not only the need for their services but also a mutilating dependency upon them, such that people are no longer capable of identifying their own real needs on the basis of their experience. Every aspect of existence was managed by a specialist. As early as kindergarten, Illich observed, children are entrusted to a “pediocratic team” composed of a host of specialists: the allergist, speech pathologist, pediatrician, child psychologist, social worker, physical education instructor and teacher.<sup>148</sup> Citizens had been transformed into clients — passive consumers of the care proffered by professionals — and personal competence, autonomy, diminished accordingly. Illich discerned and decried a loss of control by individuals over their daily lives.

Illich's critique of the crippling of autonomous human activity by the hegemony of the heteronomous mode of production, as well as his call to enlarge the realm in which people produce and do things for themselves and their communities, is the basis upon which Gorz would erect his own vision of the dualist society that we shall explore below. More generally, Illich's ideas about the social limits to industrial growth dovetailed, in the understanding of political ecologists, with the new awareness of the physical limits to growth. The theme of counter-productivities became central to the discourse of French ecologists; it was invoked time and again by Brice Lalonde, Bernard Charbonneau, Serge Moscovici, among many others. Following Illich, political ecologists sought to expose the counter-productivities in various fields, including transportation, medicine and education.

Illich's denunciation of the cult of expertise also found a receptive audience among political ecologists. This is not surprising since it converged with some of the thinking that flowed from the New Left critique of science, the division of labour and the power hierarchies built upon credentialism, noted in the previous chapter, including Gorz's own (post-1971) evaluation of the function of technical experts in the workplace in dispossessing subordinate workers of knowledge and control. As we have seen, Gorz had criticized the delegitimation of various forms of knowledge based on practical experience through their classification as “unscientific.” The same idea was

elaborated by at least one strand of the French feminist movement that sought to validate subjective knowledge rooted in the experiences of daily life against the claims of specialized expertise.<sup>149</sup> The anti-nuclear movement too promoted skepticism in face of the dismissal by government-employed technical specialists of any doubts regarding the safety or benefits of nuclear energy. Although its own *raison d'être* was rooted to a great extent in the research and analyses of scientists, the political ecology movement tended to cast scientific and technical experts as a new priesthood presiding over occult knowledge rendered inaccessible to the uninitiated and wielding the power to make pivotal decisions on behalf of entire populations. In opposition to this mystification of expertise, the political ecologists proclaimed "*nous sommes tous des spécialistes*" (we are all specialists).<sup>150</sup>

Finally, elements of Illich's undeniably foggy prescription to remedy the ills that he diagnosed in contemporary industrial society also coincided with and helped to shape the thinking of the ecology movement, particularly the exhortation that people should seek pleasure in leisure and conviviality rather than production and consumption. In Illich's view, a more sane and "convivial" society would require a transformation of the nature of tools in the context of a highly decentralized "post-industrial" socialism that would encourage the synergistic co-existence of several equally valuable modes of production. (It should be noted here that Illich used the term "post-industrial" in a normative way to indicate a desirable outcome of social change, rather than as a descriptive or analytical concept intended to explain social and economic developments that have occurred or are taking place.<sup>151</sup>)

While Illich did not propose the elimination of industrial production, he did recoil at what he regarded as the degeneration of socialism into the struggle for a more equal distribution of the goods and services of industrial civilization, insisting, by contrast, on the renunciation of what passes for wealth in our time in favour of a vision of joyful austerity. For Illich, radical political ecology entailed "the study of the destruction of the space of freedom as a result of enrichment."<sup>152</sup> More specifically, he called for the abolition of the monopoly of industry and the introduction of human-scale tools that would afford people the independent means to make things and to shape their own destinies.

In his view, moreover, eliminating industry's monopoly clearly did not merely entail a transition from private to collective ownership. An exponent of a view of technology as an

autonomous force within society governed by its own logic, Illich believed that the question of ownership of technology was not the decisive factor. Certain tools he insisted were destructive regardless of whether they were owned by stockholders, the State or a workers' commune.<sup>153</sup> Of course, while Illich was not an advocate of a regression behind technology, as evidenced by his assertion that the level of technology does not determine the difference between convivial and manipulatory tools,<sup>154</sup> the vague definition he provided of what constitutes convivial tools leaves the question open to arbitrary judgements. For Illich, the essence of a tool that promotes conviviality is that it must be easily used by anyone without extensive training or accreditation for a purpose that is not pre-determined but freely chosen by the user.<sup>155</sup> Ultimately, Illich's vision of the convivial society shares something with William Morris's utopian projection in *News From Nowhere* of a civilization that has deliberately chosen to eliminate many forms of large-scale technology and promote self-production.

Illich was an important voice in that current of thought which maintained that people and societies can take control of technology, rather than allowing technology to control them. As such, he had an important influence on the soft technology movement in the West, as well as on the alternative technology movement involving advocacy of an alternative approach to Third World development. And, in France, his imperative to transform technology in order to reconquer autonomy from a heteronomous system perpetuating institutional dependence and submission to the rule of experts became the chief social message of political ecology in the 70s.<sup>156</sup> Gorz is a representative figure in this regard. Consistent with his earlier view that technology is not a neutral force but, rather, is imbricated with the social relations of the social order in which it was developed, he drew heavily in the 70s on Illich's analysis of the nature of tools to arrive at the conclusion that the transformation of technology was the *sine qua non* of genuine societal change. Socialism, in Gorz's reading, would depend on the development of tools and methods of production that can be controlled jointly by producers and consumers at the level of the community, promote greater economic autonomy and are environmentally friendly.<sup>157</sup>

Beyond enunciating the goal of an emancipated society, Illich himself left completely untheorized the process of convivial reconstruction, apart from vague calls for a cultural revolution whereby citizens would challenge the "totalitarianism of the specialists."<sup>158</sup> His vision of the advent

of convivial society is predicated upon a naive hope for a morally and spiritually motivated universal renunciation of grasping affluence and power. And while this is not the place to assess the import or coherence of Illich's *oeuvre*, it should be noted that there are other extremely dubious aspects that seem to have gone unmentioned in the appropriation of his work by the French ecologists, including Gorz. For instance, Illich exhibits what might, in this instance, justly be described as a Malthusian strain when he condemns modern medicine for having helped greater numbers of children in poor countries to survive into adolescence, thus causing populations to exceed the capacities of their environments.<sup>159</sup> In a related vein, there is a tendency in his work to descend a slippery slope from a notion of felicitous austerity to a conception of virtuous asceticism or even suffering; for example, from the insight that the medicalization of life causes people to lose their ability to cope with illness and discomfort, Illich inclines towards the extreme of validating pain as a necessary, even ennobling, experience. Similarly he can be accused of romanticizing poverty and the value of fending for oneself. In general, he was wont to carry illuminating and thought-provoking insights to rather counterproductive extremes. But rather than engage critically with some of these extremes in his critique of institutions his admirers — Gorz among them — tended either to ignore them or incorporate them.

Illich's uncompromising critique of institutions and experts looms very large in Gorz's evolution in the 1970s; rare was the essay that did not explicitly or tacitly invoke an Illichean theme or concept. Gorz first discovered Illich by way of a speech the latter made upon becoming the rector of the University of Puerto Rico, which Gorz published in *Les Temps Modernes*.<sup>160</sup> After the French translation of Illich's *Deschooling Society*, Gorz interviewed him for *Le Nouvel Observateur* but was not satisfied with the interview and it went unpublished.<sup>161</sup> Subsequently Gorz had a hand in preparing the French version of Illich's essay "Retooling Society" (the first draft of his book *Tools for Conviviality*) for publication by *Le Nouvel Observateur* as *Libérer l'avenir*. In 1974, when Illich was getting ready to publish *Medical Nemesis*, he invited Gorz to Cuernavaca, where Gorz attended his seminars and studied the documents Illich had made use of in writing the book.<sup>162</sup> Upon returning to Paris, Gorz published an extended article entitled "Quand la médecine rend malade" in two successive issues of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, which Gorz remembers as having a terrific impact on readers.<sup>163</sup> And Illich remained for Gorz an enduring source of inspiration and intellectual

sustenance. "We had a privileged and very strong relationship," Gorz recalls; "I learned a lot from him but could not or would not go along with him all the way..."<sup>164</sup> Unfortunately, if Gorz did not travel the distance with Illich, he sometimes appropriated Illich's arguments in a rather uncritical way. A case in point is precisely Gorz's amplification of Illich's views on medicine. An excellent illustration is the essay "Medicine, Health and Society" featured in *Ecology as Politics*.<sup>165</sup> There are assuredly aspects of Illich's critique of modern medicine and the high degree of specialization it has come to entail that offer a useful corrective to any blind faith in technical progress as the remedy to all ills; these include an emphasis on the role of social conditions in producing or combatting illness, and attentiveness to the dangers of overmedicalization and the dependence on medical specialists to handle every aspect of the universal business of birth and death.<sup>166</sup> This critical perspective was especially timely in France where, by 1980, the French were spending six times as much per capita on healthcare as they had in 1950, and were setting a record for consumption of prescription and over-the-counter drugs.<sup>167</sup> However, in explicating the thesis of Illich's *Medical Nemesis*, along with that of derivative studies, Gorz uncritically recapitulates even the most dubious assertions based on specious reasoning, such as the charge that medicine has become the most wasteful, polluting and pathogenic of all industries; that virtually all disease is social and psychological in origin, including widespread iatrogenic illness; the "fact" that in the last decade or so people have been sicker than they had been previously, as well as dying younger not only in spite of but because of the expansion of medical care. Gorz neither provides evidence to substantiate such sweeping allegations, nor questions the validity of any of the evidence presented by Illich. He fails for example to raise the obvious possibility that if cancer rates have increased it is because people are living longer and many other diseases and illnesses to which they might previously have succumbed have been eradicated or more successfully treated. On occasion Gorz makes his own highly debatable charges without any supporting documentation, such as his contention that in 90 per cent of cases, sick people would heal without any therapeutic intervention. Further, some of the more compelling facets of the critique, such as the attention to the social origins of some illness, are carried by Gorz, following Illich, to an extreme that strains credulity, as when he locates the ultimate cause of the (itself unproven) growth in morbidity in the parcellization of tasks in the workplace and the dominance of market relations. Nor does Gorz express any skepticism with respect to Illich's rather

fatalistic and stoic attitude to disease and death — an attitude which is scarcely compatible with Gorz's Marxist and existentialist aversion to the category of the natural in human existence.

However, if Gorz too often suspended critical judgement in relation to Illich's work it was because there was much in Illich's *oeuvre* that Gorz found consonant with his own worldview. And as should be clear, Gorz was not merely a publicist for Illich. Beyond presenting Illich's work to a broader French public, he integrated the main themes of Illich's social and institutional critique into his own evolving worldview, finding in them some of the insight into the current crisis that Marxism and socialism, uncritically fixated on the development of the productive forces, could not provide: the idea of counterproductivities, the imperative of creating human-scale tools as the precondition of social change. Moreover, Gorz understood important aspects of Illich's work to converge with his own; Illich's commentary on how giant institutions educate and direct people to consume services reinforced Gorz's own critique of the consumer society; his understanding of the “modernization of poverty” whereby the poverty line is constantly ratcheted up as society transforms new industrial goods into necessities matched Gorz's view of inequality and envy as the indispensable motors of growth; his analysis of the crippling effects of professionalization was compatible with Gorz's own preoccupation with the distortions of the division of labour.

Dominique Simonnet, a contemporary of and participant in the nascent French political ecology movement, who ranks Gorz/Bosquet as “one of the chief theoreticians of French ecology,”<sup>168</sup> contends that Gorz “felicitously marries Marx and Illich”<sup>169</sup> — a union over which Gorz indeed professed to have presided. In Gorz's estimation, Illich's analysis of the radical monopoly of heteronomous production and mega-institutions, which engendered passive consumers of goods and services dependent on the marketplace, was entirely compatible with Marxism.

What Illich is describing is nothing but the extension of market relations into all areas of personal and social life, and their domination by industrial, banking, and government monopolies. What he is denouncing are simply the capitalist relations of production — which are supported by capitalism's division of labour.<sup>170</sup>

It is interesting to consider the claim that Gorz wed Marx and Illich in light of Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli's view of May '68 as a fragile synthesis of Marxist and libertarian aspirations which subsequently came apart.<sup>171</sup> Of course, the alleged shattering of that synthesis may



itself be overstated, at least with regard to the early phase of the ecology movement, when, according to Serge Moscovici, Marxist analysis remained omnipresent even when solutions at variance with Marxism were put forward.<sup>172</sup> But in any event, in combining Marx and Illich in the 70s Gorz can be seen as preserving and building on that synthesis of libertarianism and Marxism, which is precisely why he is usually classified among those thinkers building a new red-green eco-socialism (although Gorz never identified himself as an eco-socialist and would later distance himself from the ecology movement, referring to it in a rather detached way).

Notwithstanding Gorz's affirmative conclusions, however, the question of the compatibility of Marx and Illich remains debatable. It is arguable that for Illich the major deficiency of contemporary civilization lay in the technology of industrial production per se, rather than in the form of social organization. The inequities of the distribution of the social product were far less relevant in Illich's worldview than the problem of excessive enrichment *tout court* ("...wealth can only be equally shared if it is limited. The equal distribution of excessive wealth destroys the necessary conditions for equal productive freedom"<sup>173</sup>) — a problem inconceivable within the framework of classical Marxism, which has no place for a notion of excessive production or consumption, and no concept of sufficiency. Thus, where the main contradiction for Marxism lies in the private appropriation of social production, Illich's critique is only peripherally concerned with class analysis. Similarly, the form of social organization that would underpin Illich's convivial society, to the extent that it can be inferred from Illich's work, is completely at variance with the highly industrialized centralized system of production that would seem to be consistent with the Marxist vision. The sharp anti-institutional bias in Illich's work, which so inspired Gorz during this period, may share more with the anarchist tradition, within which Illich himself is most fruitfully located, than it does with the Marxist tradition, as does Illich's clear indictment of a powerful central State, of any sort. For Illich, socialist planning was no solution, because the problem was not one of ensuring equal access to industrial goods and services, but of creating the space for people to do things for themselves. The idea of a benevolent central State was a contradiction in terms; the technocratic State would invariably act as Big Brother.<sup>174</sup>

## The State and civil society

Indeed, Illich's critique of the perverse effects of the tentacular institutions of contemporary industrial civilization that administer people from cradle to grave fed into the anti-Statism that emerged as a salient theme in the new social movements and the *deuxième gauche* in France. Although with the subsequent retreat of the State in the 80s and the dismantling of social welfare programs, Illich's dire warnings about dependency seem dated,<sup>175</sup> in the 70s they converged with the championing, by elements of the French left and former left, of civil society against the State, a theme which was also developed in parallel in the ecology movement.

As Sunil Khilnani argues, the French left historically had been marked by a feeble conceptualization of the relations between civil society and the State.<sup>176</sup> Marxism, for example, had envisioned the ultimate overcoming of the dichotomy between State and civil society. However, within a part of the French left in the 1970s there was "...a dawning sense that the distance between state and society must be structured and represented, not effaced."<sup>177</sup> This idea would also guide Gorz in his redefinition of socialism in subsequent decades, when he engaged in a detailed defense of the State as the indispensable basis of a vibrant civil society. In the 70s however, Gorz placed the emphasis on a critique of the overweening role of the State, in tune with the general orientation of political thought among the *deuxième gauche* and the new social movements.

Political ecologists deplored the hypertrophy and excessive centralization of the French State, which they saw as stemming from the historical conflation of the State and the nation that had accelerated during wars.<sup>178</sup> Building upon the anti-Jacobinism of the libertarian stream of May '68, their critique of the State combined elements of both a socialist and anarchist analysis. Dominique Simonnet explains that ecologists subscribed to the Marxist view of the State as an instrument of oppression wielded by technocrats in the service of the ruling class, but also articulated a critique of the social State. Noting a degree of continuity between the ecologists' reading of the State and the image of the police State purveyed by *gauchisme*, he points out that the ecologists stressed the regulatory function rather than the violent character of the State: "an insidious form of oppression distinguished by the regulation of all forms of behaviour..."<sup>179</sup> In an Illichean vein, they were highly critical of the taking charge of the individual by specialized institutions, which resulted in a diminished sense of personal responsibility. As Brice Lalonde objected, "Socialism is about

solidarity and reciprocity not about the State assuming responsibility for every little thing (*la prise en charge par l'État de chaque eternement*).<sup>180</sup> And drawing in part upon Gorz's analysis, they saw the State as the main buttress of the consumer society.<sup>181</sup> In Gorz's reading — consistent in this regard with his earlier instrumental view of the relation between capital and the State — the State abets capital in destroying people's autonomous capacities by teaching them, through its schools and other institutions, that there is a specialist for every task, that people must be certified to make and do things. By inculcating deference to expertise and by educating people to consume instead of teaching practical skills, the State ensures that people come to depend on goods and services that can only be purchased on the market.<sup>182</sup>

For Gorz/Bosquet and the ecologists, the inflation of the State and the concomitant atrophy of individual autonomy led to the withering away of civil society, defined as the web of social relations that exist outside the framework of institutions: mutual aid, housing coops, face-to-face relations of solidarity — in Gorz's terms, those relations based on reciprocity and voluntarism rather than on legal obligation.<sup>183</sup> Where ex-Maoists-turned-new-philosophers saw only totalitarianism abroad, ecologists perceived totalitarianism at home in the total State.<sup>184</sup> One of the distinguishing features of French political ecology from the outset was a fervent anti-statism (which, at its limits, could shade off into or at least converge with liberalism, as Dominique Michaud has shown). As Serge Moscovici expressed it, “To struggle for freedom today means above all to struggle for society against the State.”<sup>185</sup>

If, as Michael Rustin charged, the New Left's critique of welfare reformism and dependency may have ultimately helped to undermine the legitimacy of the welfare state, the case can thus be made *a fortiori* against the ecologists in France and throughout the West.<sup>186</sup> Indeed, there was a certain overlap, sometimes deliberate, sometimes unintended, between the anti-statist discourse of the ecologists and the neo-liberal ideology in which capitalist restructuring was wrapped, particularly in the “soft” form it took in the Parti Socialiste with the transmutation of the Rocardian *autogestionnaire* current into a virtual cult of entrepreneurship and the like.<sup>187</sup> Thus, for instance, while conceding the need for social solidarity, Brice Lalonde raised questions about whether and when a safety net becomes a stifling security blanket: “...I'm not at all sure that Social Security should be expanded to cover every sort of risk. After all, isn't risk the corollary of responsibility?”

Being insured against everything all the time is a problem.”<sup>188</sup> As Robyn Eckersley points out, such attitudes can be read as consonant with the New Left’s emphasis on participation and self-management, and with the conviction that exclusive reliance on the redistributive mechanisms of the State to redress inequalities “merely brings the dispossessed into the market as passive consumers rather than self-determining producers.”<sup>189</sup> Yet however reasonable such reflections are in and of themselves, this type of discourse can also provide aid and comfort to those forces intent on revoking social benefits for reasons that have nothing to do with concern for the flowering of individual autonomy. And although Gorz repudiated the neo-liberal direction in which some proponents of *autogestion* were moving, his own writings in the 70s were not altogether clear of this slippery slope, as we shall see when we look at his epilogue to *Ecology as Politics* at the end of this chapter.

Given the ecologists’ jaundiced view of the centralized State, it is not surprising that the conquest of State power, the goal of the traditional left, was not on political ecology’s agenda. Political ecologists did, however, have practical (if not easily practicable) ideas about how the distance between civil society and the State should be structured. They regarded the nation state as a level of government too far removed from ordinary citizens for many of the functions it currently exercised.<sup>190</sup> Decision-makers rarely had to live with the consequences of their decisions. To remedy the problem, ecologists called for decentralization to ensure that people who make decisions are bound to listen to the people who implement those decisions, and are accountable for their decisions.<sup>191</sup> They believed that society could only be humanized by rejecting the gigantism of the contemporary industrial nation state in favour of the human scale and a greater degree of local self-reliance.

The advocacy of decentralization of decision-making power to local communities as a necessary component of an ecological society was central to Green thinking everywhere, as evidenced by the international Green slogan “think globally, act locally.”<sup>192</sup> It had a particular significance in France where centralization reached its height and localities were devoid of any power.<sup>193</sup> Of course the localist emphasis was accompanied by a strong international perspective, flowing from an understanding that ecological problems did not recognize national boundaries and

evidenced, for example, in the concern with North/South inequities that we noted above, which served as a counterweight to any potential parochialism.

It is also important to distinguish the accent on the self-reliance of local communities from the goal of self-sufficiency or autarky, which French political ecology did not espouse. Self-reliance meant that each community — whether a city, a town or a neighbourhood — should produce at least half of what it consumes, even if the price to be paid for this choice was a return to seasonal patterns of consumption because the practice of transporting perishable products long distances would be abandoned.<sup>194</sup> While political ecologists did not rule out all centralized functions, their foundation of the good, ecologically viable society was the small-scale local community. In their view, economic units had to be sufficiently small so that production might be adapted to local needs and to the use of soft technology and could be placed at the disposal of community members for autonomous activities.<sup>195</sup>

Gorz/Bosquet's position is once again representative. He argued that large-scale centralized industrial production is in many respects more efficient, whether regulated by the market or the State, but with its development, towns, cities and regions cease to serve their own needs but instead produce for the “totally abstract needs of faraway and anonymous users.” In contemporary industrial societies, people no longer consume what they produce or produce what they consume. But Gorz's reflection on this problem in the 70s led to a significant shift in his thinking on the question of scale, compared with his position in the 1960s — a shift that undoubtedly owes something to Illich's influence.

In *Strategy for Labor*, as we have seen, Gorz had no use for the “sentimentalism of the age of the artisan” which perceived nefarious social consequences inherent in the form of mass production itself; on the contrary, he insisted the problems of industrial capitalist society stemmed strictly from the incongruity of production that was social in form but not in ends.<sup>196</sup> Quoting Vittorio Foa, he affirmed that there was nothing intrinsic to the modern organization of production that would prevent the reshaping of the ends of production in a socialist direction.<sup>197</sup> In the 1970s, however, he arrived at a different conclusion, namely that large-scale industrial production is by definition heteronomous production: it must be regulated from outside by other large institutions. In his preface to *The Division of Labor*, an anthology he edited, he remarks that giant institutions such

as multinational firms do not lend themselves to control and ownership by the associated producers; collective ownership in these instances is nothing but an abstraction. Referring to Illich's *Tools for Conviviality*, he asserts that only the decentralization of production and management can surmount this problem.<sup>198</sup> And he repeated this argument throughout the 1970s. In *Ecology as Politics* he warns: "it is an illusion to think that notions of 'voluntary cooperation,' of 'democratic planning,' of 'worker management' will ever be able to have any meaning in a factory where 20,000 workers make tires for an entire country."<sup>199</sup>

At the same time, he stressed the need for balance between centrally-planned production and local self-sufficiency, and allowed a place in principle for national and international institutions. Gorz was not insensitive to the possible contradiction, noted by more than a few contemporary and later commentators, between the allergy of ecologists to centralization and to the political institution of the State and the fact that the nature of many of the changes they desired would require the wide-ranging intervention of the State.<sup>200</sup>

Gorz alluded to this contradiction although he did not expend sufficient energy to resolve it:

Of course, it can be objected that it is impossible to change the tools [technology] without transforming society as a whole, and that this cannot be accomplished without gaining control over the state. This objection is valid providing it is not taken to mean that societal change and the acquisition of state power must *precede* technological change. For without changing the technology, the transformation of society will remain formal and illusory.<sup>201</sup>

These remarks would imply a complex relationship between political action with state power as its object and other forms of social action; yet in his 1970s writings Gorz nowhere attempts to elucidate the particulars of this relationship. And this is one of the great weaknesses of the utopian vision he began to elaborate during this period, and which Arthur Hirsh is rather too generous in describing as a "detailed and realistic model of an ecological, post-industrial, utopian socialist society."<sup>202</sup> Nor, we might add in advance, did Gorz concern himself with possible tensions between the affirmation of individual freedom and autonomy and the constraints on individual freedom that ecological imperatives might well imply. And finally, in developing his utopian project he avoided the core issue of the entire socialist tradition, namely the question of the ownership of the means of production. It was one thing to dismiss collective ownership as the panacea orthodox Marxists

deemed it, but the question still had to be addressed in any conception of total social transformation. However, Gorz simply evaded the issue — a tactic practiced by political ecologists generally, notwithstanding declarations by Amis de la terre in favour of cooperative or communal property.<sup>203</sup>

### **The contours of Gorz's utopia**

In his efforts to balance the demands of an industrial economy with the possibility of self-management and ecological sustainability, Gorz/Bosquet sketched a portrait of a society in which centrally planned production coexisted in (unexplained) equilibrium with small-scale local activities in such a way as to bring about that synergy between heteronomous and autonomous production conceived by Illich. In an essay with the modest title “Une utopie possible parmi d'autres” (translated as “A Possible Utopia” in the English edition of *Ecology as Politics*), Gorz conceived a society based on two co-existing spheres of existence: the sphere of socialized production or socially necessary labour, democratically organized and planned at the regional level, and the sphere of autonomous or own-use production in which individuals and groups within a community carry out activities of interest and use to them. Citizens would devote a limited number of hours (20 in this scenario) to work in centrally planned industries devoted to the production of durable basic goods and necessities. But, in the tradition of Charles Fourier and William Morris, self-directed work for self-determined ends is the distinguishing good of Gorz's utopia: in their freed time citizens would have access to workshops equipped with convivial tools open 24 hours a day in which they would produce non-essential goods for themselves outside the market economy. Thus a space for individual sovereignty would be erected alongside the other-directed sphere of heteronomous production and the State. Another aspect of Gorz's utopia is the centrality of collective services. As we saw in chapter two, Gorz saw collective services such as public laundries and public transportation as essential structural reforms and the basis of a socialist form of social organization, but now the environmental crisis is invoked to add weight to the argument in favour of such services because these are less wasteful, more energy efficient, and so on.

We will have more to say about Gorz's dualist utopia in subsequent chapters. It is worth noting here however that Gorz's effort, however flawed, to spell out the good life and the good

society in more concrete terms in the 1970s was also in a line of continuity with the utopian spirit of the New Left. Where high theory, dominated by post-structuralism, increasingly viewed utopian thinking as totalitarian by definition, political ecology incorporated the critique of totalitarianism into its evolving utopia in a promising renewal of the utopian spirit tailored to what were (and remain) arguably the most pressing problems of the age. Ecologists revalorized utopian thinking; in Serge Moscovici's felicitous phrase, "...those who cannot dream the future cannot change the world."<sup>204</sup>

Dominique Simonnet draws an eloquent if somewhat hyperbolized contrast between the disenchantment that set in among many people in the 1970s and the lamp of hope kept lit by the ecology movement and its leading theorists. "The children of Marx and Coca Cola..." he writes, "rejected Coca Cola in '68 and Marx in '78. It was the end of dreams, the death of utopia; the discarding of ideologies." With the successive disappointments of actually existing socialism, Simonnet continues, "The beacons of *gauchisme* were extinguished one by one. There was no sun shining on the ideological horizon of the 1980s." For their part, however, the ecologists declined to participate in burying the hope of change in France and instead "sowed small seeds of utopia."<sup>205</sup>

The utopian vision of the ecologists is a chastened utopian vision at least in comparison with any "land of cockaigne" images or the cornucopian utopia of the traditional left, where incessant growth controlled by the associated producers yields endless abundance equitably shared. A subtitle in a pamphlet in which French ecologists discussed their ideas declared, "there's no free lunch;" extrapolating from the concept of entropy, they pointed out that a gain in one place means a loss somewhere else: the ideology of the "miracle" of technology hides the reality, namely that it depends on energy consumption and thus the expenditure of irreplaceable resources.<sup>206</sup> Echoing Illich, ecologists subscribed to the goal of happy austerity. As Serge Moscovici explained, the austerity of the ecologists is not an austerity of privation and scarcity but restraint: not using what we can do without so as to preserve the possibilities of abundance and share them in a more equitable manner.<sup>207</sup>

In his article on the political ideas of the ecology movement, Claude Journès also points to a number of similarities between political ecology and the tradition of utopian thinking.<sup>208</sup> However, he overlooks what is arguably the most central common theme: the shortening of the working day, a



cornerstone of utopia from Thomas More to William Morris. In France the reduction of working hours was integral to the utopian vision in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, assuming the character of a genuine political project in the 1883 pamphlet *Le droit à la paresse* (The Right to be Lazy) written by none other than Karl Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue.

In the post-war period in France, the idea of work reduction was raised within the *Sociologie du travail* circles as a possible alternative in face of what was perceived by some as the insurmountable persistence of the parcellization of work as a result of the degrading effects of capitalist technology on the labour process. Georges Friedmann, for example, while harbouring some hope for the possibilities of reconstituting craft labour, was pessimistic about the prospect and saw as a potential compensation for perpetual parcellization the extension of leisure as the outlet for human creativity.<sup>209</sup>

The New Left was the first social movement to challenge specifically the work ethic as it expressed itself in traditional bourgeois and even orthodox socialist ideology. And although the reduction of working hours was not a strategy championed by the students, the movement opened up a wide-ranging debate on the question of work. As Dominique Michaud rightly observes, the New Left embodied a desire to create new social relations of work, to work differently and without bosses — challenges to the traditional ideology of work which were translated among ecologists as the desire to achieve greater conviviality in work and to shape the ends of work to ensure the production of socially useful goods and services.<sup>210</sup>

Even prior to the May events, the theme of the abolition of work was sounded in a famous pamphlet written by Mustapha Khayati, the abbreviated title of which is *De la misère en milieu étudiant* (on the Poverty of Student Life), issued in 1966 by the Situationist International and a group of Strasbourg students (including Daniel Cohn-Bendit). There it was asserted:

Far from being a “utopia,” (the) abolition (of work) is the first condition of the effective overcoming of the commodity society, of the abolition — in everyone's daily life — of the separation between “free time” and “working time,” complementary sectors of an alienated life where the internal contradiction of the commodity, between use value and exchange value, is endlessly projected.<sup>211</sup>

One of the slogans that took its immortalized place on the walls of the Sorbonne in May '68 was simply “Never Work!” More seriously, the Situationists decried the sacralization of work and its

role in maintaining the order of domination, and, recalling the ludic vision of the utopian socialist Charles Fourier, they called for the suppression of work in favour of a new type of activity, akin to play.<sup>212</sup> The repudiation of work as the centre of existence also came to be interpreted as the deeper meaning of the disaffection from work evident particularly among young factory workers in the late 1960s and early 70s that we noted in the previous chapter. Of course, the challenge to the work ethic was not confined to France; it was posed by the New Left internationally. Rudi Dutschke, the de facto leader of the German student movement and an avid student of Marcuse, viewed the reinforcement of the work ethic as a principal means of perpetuating the subordination of the masses under capitalism.<sup>213</sup> And Dutschke, along with other New Left intellectuals throughout Europe, was inspired by the end of utopia thesis advanced by Marcuse in one form or another in his writings from the 1950s forward; he posited the idea that utopia — in the negative sense in which the term was intended by Marx and his successors of an outcome remote from any historical conditions of possibility — had been transcended, and that the utopian socialist vision had acquired an objective foundation in the technical capabilities of advanced capitalism. Drawing on the more speculative passages from Marx's *Grundrisse*, Marcuse ventured that the productivity gains achieved by technology made it possible to envision a massive reduction of labour time and the possibility to begin measuring the quality of life in terms of available free time. Marcuse argued the dialectical proposition that technical progress, although bound up with the current system of domination, had at the same time created the conditions for liberation, a liberation which would necessarily entail the redesign and redirection of technology itself. But even under the current system, technical progress was manifestly leading to the mechanization of socially necessary labour, which would open up the possibility of a new form of human society.<sup>214</sup> A kindred idea was also put forward in the 60s by the American political theorist Martin Sklar.<sup>215</sup>

The idea of reducing working hours as a political demand and strategy began to be widely discussed in France in the 1970s, and the French political ecologists, including Gorz, made it a centrepiece of their utopia. Claude Journès is wholly mistaken in suggesting that the issue of work was not an essential question for the movement.<sup>216</sup> Work reduction is at the heart of political ecology for particular reasons. The ecological worldview is premised on less and better production and less and better consumption as a necessary limit on galloping growth, which threatens the global

ecosystem; this leads to political ecology's explicit rejection of the Keynesian imperative of growth at any cost — which meant, if need be, digging holes just to fill them up again, provided it would create jobs.<sup>217</sup> Keynesianism presupposed perpetual growth as the secret to full employment (although, in fairness, Keynes himself forecast that by the year 2000 the workweek would be reduced to 18 hours<sup>218</sup>). But ecologists saw matters very differently. And not only ecologists. Against a background of mounting unemployment in France — where the number of jobless rose from 500,000 in 1974 to more than one million in 1977, and doubled again by 1981, nailing the lid more firmly than anything else on *les trente glorieuses* — the 70s brought forth a plethora of publications exploring the theme of transforming work and reducing working time, initiating a new tradition in French sociology of work and futurology: titles such as *La fin du travail* (The End of Work), *Vers la semaine de 30 heures* (Towards the 30 Hour Week), *Travailler deux heures par jour* (Working Two Hours a Day)... All of these challenged the 40-hour week as a dubious dogma. Why did full employment have to be defined as the 40-hour week?<sup>219</sup> Technology had engendered productivity gains that made it possible to produce at the same level while working less, thus ending the environmentally-damaging and humanly alienating cycle of toiling and consuming for production's sake. Ecologists contested the entire attitude of our civilization towards work. It was time, they urged, to question the historic sanctification of work divorced from content or ends, the conception of work consecrated by both Christianity and Marxism as an “instrument of redemption,” as Jacques Julliard, one of the leading figures of the *deuxième gauche*, expressed it.

Of course, the history of the labour movement itself had been the history of struggles to reduce working hours. The designation of May 1 as International Workers' Day originated with the Second International's demand for the eight-hour day, presented not only as an issue of health and safety, but also as a quest for free time for personal development.<sup>220</sup> And the demand for a reduction of working hours was a component of the strategy of the French trade union movement, although as a motive for social conflict, shorter hours had consistently taken a back seat to wage demands, with few exceptions, since the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>221</sup> As joblessness continued to rise in the 70s, the unions pressed more insistently for the 40-hour week and retirement at 60 as part of a package of measures to combat unemployment which included raising the minimum wage to stimulate consumption.<sup>222</sup> A joint CGT- CFDT agreement was signed on September 15, 1970 calling for a

reduction of the workweek and lowering of the retirement age. A proposal for earlier retirement was also included in the Common Program of the left. But this was not what ecologists had in mind. They pointed to the absurdity of retirement as forced inactivity for the elderly, often accompanied by segregation and a loss of a sense of purpose; why, they asked, cram our leisure years into old age, when they can be distributed more evenly throughout our lives?<sup>223</sup> In general ecologists objected to forms of work reduction resulting in the creation of blocks of designated leisure time, such as extended vacations,<sup>224</sup> which they saw in part as yet another deliberate effort to stimulate consumption; the lowering of the retirement age was the route to a Golden Age market. Gorz would later refer to holidays as “a perfect example of programmed *interruption* to active life, a period of pure consumption, unintegrated with everyday existence, doing nothing to enrich normal life with new dimensions.”<sup>225</sup>

Unlike the unions, which regarded reduced working hours essentially as a defensive measure rather than a positive goal (this in contrast with the position of the labour movement earlier in its history), the ecologists thus advanced a critique of the distribution of work in political and philosophical terms. At the same time, they tended to view with scepticism one of the cardinal aspects of the Marxist utopian vision: the potential for industrial work to be satisfying under a different form of social organization and with the advent of advanced technology. They remained at best agnostic about the possible overcoming of the division between work and life — a project which stood at the heart of the passage quoted above from the Situationist International. Serge Moscovici announced pessimistically “The idea that industrial work can be easy looks more and more like a myth. All we can do is reduce the amount and introduce a few changes.”<sup>226</sup> This is a fairly radical departure from the messianic tradition of the left, old and new, which looks forward to an eventual historical stage in which the contradiction between work and life is transcended, as all the fundamental social antagonisms are resolved.

At the end of 1975, a colloquium of academics and activists was held on the subject of employment and the environment and the proceedings were published in a book edited by Les Amis de la Terre entitled *Perdre sa vie à la gagner* (a marvellous play on words that may be translated roughly as “wasting your life earning a living”). The preface remarks that a more intelligent application of science and technology would allow us to live well and in an environmentally sound

manner while working two hours a day.<sup>227</sup> This assertion itself refers to the study published in 1977 under the name ADRET, a pseudonym for a collective of researchers, union activists and workers led by M.L. Verlet, a researcher at the Université de Paris-Sud, in which a case was made for the feasibility of working two hours a day, and the immediate demand for a 32-hour week without loss of pay was promoted. Guy Aznar, one of the leading figures in the movement for work reduction and someone with whom Gorz felt a great affinity through the next decades,<sup>228</sup> published the first of many subsequent books — including *Tous à mi-temps* (Part-Time Work for All) 1980, *Le travail c'est fini et c'est une bonne nouvelle* (Good News, Work's Finished) 1990, *Travailler moins pour travailler tous* (Work Less so More May Work) 1993 — on the topic of reorganizing work and reducing working hours. In his 1978 study *Non aux loisirs, non à la retraite*, he struck an Illichian note in condemning the relegation to specialists of tasks that people can and ought to do for themselves, and he pursued Georges Friedmann's vision of expanding leisure time as a compensation for the performance of routine tasks.

As we saw at the end of the last chapter it was in the early 70s, prefiguring this period of intellectual ferment on the future of work, that Gorz began to devote serious attention to the issue of work reduction. And although at the decade's dawn he explicitly disavowed the abandonment of the goal of liberating work as such, he gradually came to share the conclusion that liberation *from* socially necessary work was a more concrete utopia than the liberation *of* work *tout court*.

It was again as Michel Bosquet that Gorz made his first contributions to the public discussion of work reduction, in a number of articles published in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, and particularly a lengthy special feature published in December 1978, replete with surveys and interviews, entitled “Quand les chômeurs seront heureux...” (When the Jobless Shall Be Happy...). Gorz contended that the solution to the problem of unemployment was not more growth but the creation of a society in which time is liberated for living. In his view, unemployment in the 70s had become a structural rather than a conjunctural problem. The third industrial revolution had broken the historical link between expanding production and job creation. Human labour was no longer the source of all wealth; it was now possible, thanks to technological advances in production, including automation and the micro-electronic revolution, to produce ever more with a diminishing expenditure of human effort. As Marx himself had foreseen, the increasing sophistication of

machines was leading to the abolition of work. Not only would the technological displacement of industrial jobs persist, but the much-touted panacea of the growing service sector would also succumb to mechanization, thus failing to absorb the growing number of jobless. In the meantime, as was already occurring, capital would exploit the threat and reality of unemployment to keep workers competing among themselves and exercise downward pressure on wages, while the State mitigated the problem with job creation measures to maintain social stability.

But, Gorz affirmed, this situation did not have to issue in a society inequitably divided among the “fortunate” workers and a growing segment of marginals excluded from the world of work. It could, on the contrary, harbour the promise of Gorz’s own dualist utopia. Productivity would continue to increase, enabling people to work half as much while assuring each person not only the necessary minimum but a decent standard. Individuals would thus be spared being compelled to spend the better part of their waking hours at jobs which, for the great majority, were so fragmented, degraded and deskilled that they provided no personal fulfillment in any case, as a growing disaffection from work among young people attested. Unable to work in the fields for which they were trained, relegated to jobs for which they were overqualified or in which there was no security or opportunity for advancement, more and more young people, Gorz argued, invoking various opinion polls, had ceased to identify strongly with work. In Gorz’s view, this heralded a momentous cultural shift, a displacement of work from the centre of life and consciousness, from which Gorz would go on to draw novel conclusions about the question of transformational agency, as we shall see.

There was no doubt in his mind that the goal of a substantial reduction in working hours was both desirable and viable, although he outlined no program to achieve this demand, beyond alluding to the need for concerted action on the part of civil society, the labour movement, political forces and the State. He held out the 20-hour week as a possible goal for the 1990s; but in keeping with his accent on individual autonomy he preferred work reduction schemes which allowed individuals to discharge a given number of hours of socially necessary labour, calculated per week, per year or per lifetime, at a pace they themselves determined.

What were citizens to do with their new-found free time? Here Gorz was not quite so sanguine as Brice Lalonde, who remarked that ecologists rejected the idea of a leisure policy as a

necessary accompaniment of work reduction: “We would simply tell people: you’re free, sort things out for yourselves.”<sup>229</sup> His view converged with that of Serge Moscovici, who was less cavalier than Lalonde about the politics of free time, observing that given the productivist ethos and the consumer society, in the absence of a transvaluation of values the reduction of the workweek would likely lead people to look for second jobs.<sup>230</sup> In Gorz’s view, the contraction of the sphere of obligatory labour went hand in hand with the expansion of a sphere of self-production and self-service outside the market, as he outlined it in his dualist utopia. But this would not be an automatic transition. He foresaw the need for activities midway between autonomous production and public service to ease people into a constructive use of expanding free time, although for now he supplied no further details about how and by whom such activities would be organized, and how people would be enlisted.

Nevertheless, it should be clear that, for Gorz, the reduction of working hours was no mere job creation strategy; it was the basis of a new social project to liberate people for living, a project he would elaborate, refine and champion over the next two decades, and which he regarded as fundamentally left-wing and anti-capitalist; a project that represented the very essence of socialism insofar as it was to “culminate in diminishing rather than increasing large-scale production for the market; it would replace capital with human labour, exchange-value with use-value. It would create an expanding space beyond the logic of capitalist accumulation.”<sup>231</sup>

### **Contradictions and shortcomings**

With the potential of redistributing and reducing working hours, Gorz had thus found the theme which would dominate his intellectual efforts for the rest of his life. From the start, however, there was something of a paradox at the heart of Gorz’s conception of the future of work and its utopian possibilities. In casting the gains afforded by the refinement of capitalist technology as the basis of the new civilization of free time, Gorz implicitly posits technology as at least politically malleable if not neutral, although he never addresses or resolves this contradiction and his oscillations make his position rather difficult to sort out. Gorz clearly maintained that capitalist technology was indelibly stamped with the imprint of capitalist social relations, even though the fragmentation and deskilling this technology engendered was not, contrary to what Marx believed, an inexorable requirement of

the technology of the factory; in fact, the deformations attendant upon the technical division of labour were not an objective requirement of efficient production but, rather, designed to perpetuate capitalist domination.<sup>232</sup> And similarly, in *Ecology as Politics* he asserts that science and technology do not require gigantism; they give birth to oversized tools because capital demands them and refuses all others.<sup>233</sup> Nevertheless, even if the alienation intrinsic in the capitalist production process was not a technical requirement, it could not be overcome by a change in the ownership of the means of production; as we have seen Gorz repeat time and again, capitalist technology bore the marks of the capitalist social order and thus the collective appropriation of the means of production would change nothing in the mutilation and oppression of labour.

Yet it is not clear what other kind of technology is to be used in the realm of heteronomous production, which is consigned to the production of basic necessities in Gorz's dualist utopia. Gorz does not propose that convivial tools be used in the centrally planned heteronomous sector but only that this sphere ensure the efficient production of convivial tools to which people are to have access in the autonomous sector. The truth is, and this becomes clearer in his work in the 1980s, that Gorz ultimately concedes the inevitability of alienation in the realm of heteronomous production as an outcome of inexorable technical requirements attached to large-scale production, rather than the result of deliberate decisions on capital's part to dispossess workers of control over the production process, as he had previously maintained. In other words, he implicitly came to agree with the position he had contested in Marx that efficient production involved a degree of gigantism and an alienating division of labour. Nevertheless, centralized large-scale industrial production remained indispensable in his dualist utopia, and the puzzle remains, how can inherently oppressive technology (perhaps even technology imbued with capitalism's logic, for Gorz never explicitly rules this out) be employed in the production of the convivial tools essential to the expansion of human self-determination and autonomy?

The confusion or ambivalence in Gorz's position on the nature of technology and the production process was also apparent in political ecology more generally, as well as in aspects of New Left thinking. In his discussion of political ecology, Dominique Michaud remarks on the tension within the ecology movement between the critical impulse that questioned automatic assumptions about the beneficial character of technical development and the simultaneous faith in



the liberating potential of alternative technology.<sup>234</sup> He points out as well that when Illich suggested that there might be non-convivial uses of convivial tools he contravenes the principle of the non-neutrality of technology, implicitly conceding the possibility that tools can be directed toward different purposes and ends depending on the intentions of the users. Michaud contends that such ambivalence regarding the nature and uses of technology was characteristic of eco-activists.

New Left social theory was also marked by an ambivalent attitude towards technology. For example, one of the dialectical presuppositions of Herbert Marcuse's vision of the end of utopia is that technological progress, even under the existing system of domination and even with the understanding that the technology itself is not neutral, will, by automating socially necessary labour, create the conditions that render liberation possible, opening up the possibility of a new kind of society in which technology in turn will be redesigned to suit redefined (and more genuine) human needs. Indeed long before the idea was seized upon by the heirs of the French New Left, Marcuse himself claimed that automation creates the possibility of almost total abolition of socially imposed work or alienated labour. "The system contains in itself a very real trend — not utopian in the slightest — towards a society in which work time would become fringe time..."<sup>235</sup> The end of necessary work, Marcuse affirmed, was not a utopia, it was a real possibility.<sup>236</sup> In Marcuse's view the progress of automation was subversive of the existing order; it undermined capitalism's hierarchical structures and its political stability. This assertion betrays a definite tension in the view of capitalist technology as inherently repressive but also potentially liberating.

It would not have been unreasonable for Gorz or the political ecologists to adopt explicitly the ambivalent stance in relation to technology that they assumed in practice and to grant that the ends of particular technologies are not necessarily wholly determined by the hierarchical capitalist relations of production within the framework of which these technologies were developed. As it stood, political ecology tacitly accepted that the ongoing technological revolution was a mixed bag: some technology held promise for ecological and social progress without being convivial in the sense of simple to operate or easy to repair. For example, some ecologists speculated that computerization might facilitate decentralization (an outlook shared incidentally by the co-inventor of the microprocessing chip, Robert Noyce<sup>237</sup>); similarly, it was the efficiency of current production technology that rendered work reduction, a central feature of the ecologists' exiguous utopia,

possible. Gorz himself predicted at one point that microelectronics would render possible the realization of the Marxist dream of the polyvalent many-sided producer with unlimited abilities, and that computer technology would enable a small workshop to produce as efficiently as a large factory.<sup>238</sup> Here computer technology definitely appears as a neutral tool although it was indisputably developed within the system of advanced capitalism and, if the theory holds, ought to be tainted by capitalist social relations. At all events, this celebration of microelectronics was hardly consistent with his frequent affirmations that “capitalism develops only those technologies which correspond to its logic and which are compatible with its continued domination.”<sup>239</sup>

Another possible inconsistency detectable in Gorz’s incipient utopian vision of the dual society pertains to the complex question of the character of needs. As Gorz becomes more attuned to ecological concerns in the 1970s and further elaborates his critique of the spiral of growth and consumption, it is possible to infer from his writings an inchoate conception of natural limits and sufficiency that at first glance can only coexist uneasily with the abjuration of any positive anthropology and the vigorous defense of the historical character of all human needs, even the most vital ones, in his earlier work. We alluded in a previous chapter to a similar tension underpinning the neo-Marxist critique of the consumer society, which, while skirting any explicit theorization of the nature of human needs, rested on a distinction between true and false needs that on its own terms could only be arbitrary insofar as it contravened the postulate of the historicity of human nature and needs. For Ivan Illich, who did not shy away from an essentialist position on human needs, the development of certain social and technical systems has perverted natural needs, or at least impaired the ability of people to determine their needs. This premise seems to have been tacitly endorsed by Gorz in his ecological writings. And in any case, the project of producing less and consuming less but living better presupposes a notion of sufficiency with respect to the acquisition and consumption of goods and services by societies and individuals; it must rest on an idea similar to that expressed by Rudolf Bahro, the East German-born political philosopher who also moved towards ecology in the 70s, later becoming the leading figure in the Fundi wing of *die Grünen*, and from whose renowned *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* Gorz drew some inspiration in the later 70s, namely that the quantitative quest for the satisfaction of material needs has reached a point in the developed

world where it should give way to the qualitative endeavour to develop and satisfy spiritual and cultural needs.

If society is so far industrialised that it can fairly reliably satisfy the elementary needs of its members at the level of culture that has been attained, then the planning of the overall process of production must...give priority to the all-round development of human beings, to the increase in their positive capacities for happiness.<sup>240</sup>

But even here the problem of negotiating what exactly is included in the category of “elementary needs at the level of culture that has been attained” presents itself; does a television set count as an elementary need, does something as environmentally noxious as an automobile? Can we distinguish between genuine needs and “mere” wants, or worse, wants that have been induced by agencies of manipulation? Such questions, which any worldview predicated on the imperative of reducing consumption must necessarily address, are, as Andrew Dobson has observed, intractable; and, in Dobson’s opinion, no satisfactory theory of need has yet been advanced by ecologists.<sup>241</sup> In the 70s Gorz did not address the question in any explicit way. At the time his resolution of the question may be seen to reside in his proposal of a new egalitarian moral imperative that is to govern the dualist utopia: *The only things worthy of each are those which are good for all; the only things worthy of being produced are those which neither privilege nor diminish anyone; it is possible to be happier without affluence, for in a society without privilege no one will be poor.*<sup>242</sup> This precept, which circumvents the question of needs at least in the short run by maintaining that any given level of consumption beyond subsistence can fully satisfy the material needs of society’s members provided it is equal, is consistent with the proposition he had defended from the 1960s forward, as we have seen, that where there is no privilege there is no poverty. But this levelling spirit does not square easily with the accent on individual self-determination, autonomy and difference, and, more problematically still, implies some overarching agency of judgement and control which arbitrates the question of what is good for all.

Gorz did eventually attempt to come to grips with the problem of human needs and sufficiency in a more direct and probing manner. He touched on the problem in his postscript to *Farewell to the Working Class*, where he suggests the possibility of achieving a social consensus around the nature and level of consumption to which all are entitled and agreement on the limits that

cannot be crossed. In an article written in 1993 and published in English translation as “Political Ecology: Expertocracy versus Self-Limitation” in the *New Left Review*, he offers a stimulating speculation on the historical phenomenon of the self-limitation of needs and its implications for the future beyond capitalism. Although it takes us ahead of Gorz’s own trajectory, it is worth presenting an outline of his argument here, as it represents a more considered reflection on the problem of need.

Gorz suggests that in traditional cultures the intensity and duration of labour was regulated in accordance with a norm of sufficiency established by the direct producers; a pre-industrial ethos prevailed, captured in the observation of a nineteenth-century Mexican landowner that “*As soon as the Indian earns three reales a day, he will never work more than half the week, so that he will still have the same nine reales he gets at present.*”<sup>243</sup> It was due to this logic of self-limitation, Gorz contends, that capitalists had difficulty compelling people to conform to the long working hours they imposed on workers with the advent of industrial production; they had to resort to paying people less to impel them to work longer to obtain what they needed. But ultimately industrial capitalism finished by erasing the established common norm of sufficiency: when producers were dispossessed not only of the means of production but of control over the production process, production was divorced from the felt needs of the direct producers and made to serve the needs of capital, namely, the need to profit and grow. Thus came into being an apparatus of manipulation designed to select and create the needs of greatest advantage to capital: the needs related to commodity consumption. With this development, Gorz argues, the common norm of sufficiency was eradicated and people became less inclined to limit their expenditure of effort in work.

But it is in the resurrection of the self-limitation of needs as a social project that Gorz perceives the non-authoritarian solution to the problem of curbing consumption by redefining needs. He acknowledges however that capitalism has destroyed any anchorage for a common standard of sufficiency and that this poses a formidable obstacle to the process of restoring one. Nevertheless, he views the effort as central to a viable eco-social politics. Political ecology must aim to “restore politically the correlation between less work and less consumption on the one hand, and more autonomy and more existential security on the other...”<sup>244</sup> This notion of promoting the self-limitation of needs as the democratic alternative to bureaucratic and authoritarian decisions about

what is necessary and what superfluous is compatible with Illich's call for a voluntary embrace of felicitous austerity and the injunction of many ecologists on behalf of voluntary simplicity. But Gorz does not propose to rely on individual choice, stressing the need to provide institutional guarantees that reducing working hours will give people the benefit of a freer, more relaxed life, which in turn will presumably encourage them to consume less while living better.

The imperative to limit consumption raises another interesting question in face of which Gorz appears to have oscillated remarkably: the compatibility of ecology and capitalism. In the essays contained in *Ecology as Politics*, Gorz assumed two mutually contradictory positions at once: that capitalism can accommodate ecological constraints and that ecology is inherently incompatible with and subversive of capitalism. This contradiction did not go altogether unnoticed by reviewers: John Rodman justly complained of glaring inconsistencies not only among different essays but virtually side-by-side in the same text.<sup>245</sup>

On the one hand, Gorz argues that capitalism can accommodate the need to respect environmental limits by passing along the costs of environmentally friendlier production practices and resource conservation to the consumer, with the result of increasing income inequality. Initially the ruling class will resist but ultimately it will "assimilate ecological necessities as technical constraints and adapt the conditions of exploitation to them."<sup>246</sup> Because of the adaptability of capitalism to environmental demands, Gorz contends, the ecological movement can throw up obstacles to capitalist development and force a number of changes, but in the end the social order will only grow more exploitive and authoritarian as prices rise, purchasing power diminishes and the State increases its power of regulation based on technocratic calculations of acceptable levels of pollution. For this reason, Gorz maintains, "...the ecological movement is not an end in itself, but a stage in the larger struggle."<sup>247</sup> On the other hand, Gorz adduces a fundamental irreconcilability of the ecological perspective with the rationality of capitalism, which is based on the grow or perish imperative, that is, "creating the greatest possible number of needs and seeking to satisfy them with the largest possible amount of marketable goods and services in order to derive the greatest possible profit from the greatest possible flow of energy and resources."<sup>248</sup> "[M]ore is the keyword of capitalism," he affirms; without growth capitalism is dead.<sup>249</sup> Here Gorz is clearly indicating that capitalism cannot accommodate the ecologically necessary brake on growth. Rather than affirming

the adaptability of capitalism to ecological constraints, he goes so far as to concur with the idea that if ecological rationality does not prevail, human survival itself will be threatened.<sup>250</sup> Moreover, he affirms at various points that “ecology, by virtue of the new parameters it introduces into economic calculation, is almost by definition a subversive anti-capitalist discipline.”<sup>251</sup> Ecology introduces criteria extrinsic to profitability, criteria which according to Gorz include the optimum husbanding of natural resources, as well as the optimal satisfaction of people in their work, and which cannot be integrated into a capitalist framework. Thus he argues, ecology is a specific and autonomous component of the struggle against the existing social order and ought not be subordinated to the project of the current socialist left.<sup>252</sup> The inconsistencies between the two positions outlined above are undeniable.

A charitable exegesis might offer that the contradiction is only apparent insofar as, for Gorz, the greening of capitalism may ensure the survival of the species by means of some type of techno-fix and authoritarian state control, but survival alone is hardly the goal. And indeed Gorz declares that if society is programmed, and converted, as Ilich characterizes it, into a planetary hospital, planetary school and planetary prison, then under such conditions survival is not worth the struggle.<sup>253</sup> A genuinely ecological society, on the other hand, a society worth fighting for, would necessitate the end of corporate capitalism with its subjugation of consumption to the dynamic of productivism. But the resolution cannot be quite so simple a matter because, as noted earlier, Gorz fails to provide a substantive definition of ecology beyond the objective of resource conservation, which is precisely what Green capitalism would accomplish, although here he is clearly intimating that an ecological vision comprises a great deal more. Furthermore, he occasionally suggests that survival is indeed an overriding concern, as when he declares that “If there were no other options, it would be preferable to have non-nuclear capitalism than to have a nuclear socialism, for the former would weigh less heavily upon future generations.”<sup>254</sup>

At one point he confesses to seeing merit in both sides of the argument concerning capitalism's adaptability to ecological constraints, and concludes that: “...non-growth is contrary to *the logic* of the capitalist system and incompatible with the functioning of capitalism *as we know it*; but it is not *necessarily* incompatible with the *survival of capitalism in some other form*, for a limited but perhaps prolonged period.”<sup>255</sup> This is actually quite a sound position but he rarely

expresses it in so lucid a manner, and contradicts it too often in other essays. Still what Gorz/Bosquet appears to be aiming at amid the confusion is a clear distinction between an environmentalist reformism that can avert ecological crisis, at least for the foreseeable future and thus render capitalism more durable, and a radical political ecology which goes far beyond sound bureaucratic management of finite resources to encompass the far-reaching social, economic and cultural changes requisite to the goal of producing and consuming less and differently while living better; only through such fundamental change can the long-term survival of humanity be assured, together with a decent way of life for the majority of people. It is this radical ecological project that is ultimately antagonistic to and irreconcilable with capitalism in any form — or for that matter with existing socialism or even the social-democratic project of the existing socialist parties in the West, which remain mired in the logic of growth, productivism and statism.

Gorz actually confirmed precisely this interpretation when confronted with the ambiguity of *Ecology as Politics* with respect to the question of capitalism's potential to accommodate ecological constraints in a 1990 interview with John Keane. There he distinguished clearly between "environmentalism," on the one hand, which aims essentially at minimizing the adverse effects of the productive system on the environment and which is compatible with capitalist rationality (as borne out, Gorz rightly maintains, by the developments of the last two decades) and political ecology, on the other hand, which challenges the very logic of capitalist accumulation, dependent upon an ever greater flow of commodities and services.<sup>256</sup> Hence, during the 90s, Gorz reiterated the position that ecological modernization is incompatible with the interests of capitalism because, while the conversion of classical industries along ecological lines may be a boon to growth in the short term, it must at the end of the day lead to a contraction of growth. "There can be no ecological modernization," he wrote, "without restricting the dynamic of capitalist accumulation and reducing consumption by self-imposed restraint."<sup>257</sup>

If, for Gorz, the future of humanity, or at least any desirable and sustainable future, rested ultimately on the transcendence of the capitalist social order, how was this transformation to be achieved? In his New Left phase, Gorz had devoted considerable attention to the problem of strategy — whatever the failings of his accent on the struggle for workers' control at the point of production or his subsequent ideas concerning a new type of revolutionary party. His concept of

revolutionary reformism was a promising alternative to the *grand soir* tradition of an apocalyptic moment during which power in the form of the State would be seized. In the 70s, however, he was guilty of a seemingly studied avoidance of the question of how the social changes required and desired by the ecologists are to be brought about. It is interesting, in light of Gorz's critique of the excessive spontaneity of May '68, that he did not address the organizational issues and controversies facing the French ecology movement in the 70s; nor did he return in this context to his model of a new type of vanguard party. Penned in a prophetic mode, his writings testify to an unbridgeable gap between theory and practice.

Gorz's failure of strategic imagination reflected in an exaggerated way a tendency of the ecology movement generally to gloss over the problem of the pathway to change. From their inception Green movements internationally have suffered from a paucity of strategic thinking, tending to emphasize the imperative of cultural change, the revitalization of civil society, and especially the need to transform individual consciousness, at the expense of concrete political and economic strategies for changing the social structure supporting environmental and human degradation.

Carl Boggs' sympathetic but devastating critique of the lack of strategic thinking evidenced in the work of a number of leading ecological theorists in Germany and England<sup>258</sup> is equally applicable to the French political ecology movement and to Gorz/Bosquet (although the deficiencies in the case of the French movement cannot be ascribed to an excess of spiritualism, or the lack of an explicitly anti-capitalist perspective or an underlying functionalist social theory that considers conflict aberrant,<sup>259</sup> as Boggs variously understands the roots of the problem among German, British and American Green thinkers). They ignored questions of power so central, and for good reason, to both the Marxist and social-democratic traditions: how should the system of production be owned and controlled? Can popular control be exercised without socializing property? How can a comprehensive reordering of social priorities be achieved where private ownership and the market hold sway? As Boggs observes, these issues are immensely complex, but ecologists often failed even to pose them in a duly serious manner.

Gorz offered no answers to these fundamental questions. In most of his writings during the 70s, he implied or directly declared that decentralized democratic socialism was the precondition of



an ecologically viable future. In his elaboration of what might be classified as an eco-socialist worldview, he continued to locate economic and social as well as ecological problems in the historical reality of capitalism, while pointing also to some problems that lay beyond the problematic of capitalism in the realm of industrialism. And although he rarely made the link explicitly, in the early 70s at least, the ecological ideas he was advocating under the pseudonym Michel Bosquet were coterminous with his enthusiasm and hopes for spontaneous shopfloor actions and his advocacy, as André Gorz, of workers' control. The proletariat remained for him the only force capable of bringing about the necessary social changes, as he suggested in his approving citation of Paul Mattick, noted above. Even as late as 1978, he affirmed that the goal of work reduction depended above all on the capacity of the labour movement to negotiate the sharing of the fruits of technological progress and especially the length of the work year.<sup>260</sup>

On the other hand, there are also essays written in the mid-70s in which he appears to embrace, indirectly, the idea of prefigurative communities and pockets of alternative culture as the nursery of an eco-socialist future, to be built through a slow organic process of local social movement struggle. In his enthusiasm for examples of people and communities seeking to assert their autonomy, there are times when Gorz seems dangerously on the verge of espousing self-help doctrines as avant-garde left theory. This is the case in his essay on America, "Continuing the American Revolution," which serves as the epilogue to *Ecology as Politics*.

By far the weakest piece in the collection and deservedly dismissed by one reviewer as journalism "lacking in all proportion" and "prone to wish-fulfilling fantasy,"<sup>261</sup> it consists of a succession of utterly impressionistic short portraits of disparate individuals and micro-movements in California, which exhibit, in Gorz's view, basic affinities with the project of *autogestion*. Thus we are introduced to Heinz, whom Gorz describes as a typical American: an Austrian immigrant and pioneer of cybernetics living in Northern California who is building his house, a model of alternative technology, with his bare hands; Dan, who runs a small but thriving business producing closed circuit television sets and equates socialism with free enterprise; California Governor Jerry Brown, an admirer of Gandhi and Mao, initiate of Zen Buddhism, and a devotee of Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, the principles of which he applies to his daily life, declining to occupy the gubernatorial mansion and instead renting an apartment where he sleeps on a mattress on the floor.

Brown, Gorz tells us, believes that institutions designed to take charge of people's lives create dependency and resentment; his slogan, "expect less from government and more from yourself," Gorz interprets as nothing less than a neo-anarchist commitment to the efflorescence of personal sovereignty.<sup>262</sup> And Gorz is also enchanted by the do-it-yourself spirit he discovers on his highly selective tour of California; he marvels that one-third of Americans bake their own bread once in a while, and that supermarkets sell a variety of organic bread — the possibility that the counterculture was being co-opted by consumer capitalism apparently never occurred to him in this context, in spite of his familiarity with the work of Herbert Marcuse.

The revolution, Gorz intimates, is in progress in America; along with giant state institutions, he claims, corporate capitalism has been discredited in the U.S. He quotes Karl Hess — progenitor of the Community Technology movement, which aimed to show communities how to adapt technologies to the human scale and thus escape from the domination of the system — to the effect that the revolution is made by tens of millions of people trying to organize to take charge of their own lives.

The most charitable thing that can be said about this essay, in which baking bread figures as a virtually revolutionary act, is that, coming from the intensely statist context of France, Gorz was more apt to misread and romanticize American hostility towards State and government, and interpret the ethos of rugged individualism as a cultural context propitious to the spirit of self-management, rather than an expression of more classical liberal anti-egalitarian, everyone-for-himself ideology, a point which recalls the possible dangers of the critique of the dependency engendered by a powerful welfare state, as discussed earlier in relation to political ecology's anti-statism and Michael Rustin's observations on the New Left.

Still, it taxes credulity to imagine that Gorz could have been unaware that such ideas are the cornerstone of the Anglo-American Right, as would be demonstrated all too effectively in the next decade by the regimes of Reagan and Thatcher — regimes which Gorz would categorically condemn. And while it should be evident, given all that has been said thus far about Gorz's social vision, that he would vehemently oppose practices which had the effect of throwing people onto their own resources in the existing capitalist system, a digression is warranted, in light of the

foregoing summary, to underscore his reproval of the assault on the welfare state in the context of capitalist austerity programs:

*[S]elf-organized mutual aid must never and in no way be imposed by the State in place of existing public benefits. Governments of the right and sometimes even of the left try to impose in the name of anti-statism, a convenient solution that consists in reducing State social expenditures to ask the unemployed, the infirm, the elderly, families — which is virtually tantamount to women — to help themselves. [...] It must be stressed that self-production and mutual aid do not result in greater autonomy unless we are freed from the constraint of providing for basic necessities.<sup>263</sup>*

Even if we discount Gorz's musings in *Ecology as Politics* on the ongoing American Revolution as something of a lapse in judgement, it does confirm a paucity of strategic thinking about the genesis and nature of the cultural revolution Gorz considered necessary to realize the dualist utopia. How, in a culture of dependency on specialists, are people supposed to acquire the basic non-academic skills necessary to repair their own toilets? At various points Gorz suggests that a change in the school system, along lines similar to those proposed by Illich in his *Deschooling Society*, will be essential. But a fundamental redesign of the school system to encourage the acquisition of basic life skills presupposes a prior change in power relations, the route to which Gorz leaves uncharted.

The question of how social change is to be effected is of course inseparable from the question of the agency of transformation. As we showed earlier, when he discovered ecology Gorz was still wedded to a process of socialist transformation, at the heart of which was the struggle of workers at the point of production. In the course of the 1970s, however, Gorz began to move away from the realm of production as the defining feature of life and this had dramatic consequences for his conception of the revolutionary subject.

Ecology had no obvious collective subject, no real conception of a vanguard, but its leadership, its footsoldiers, its audience were clearly not the *ouvriers spécialisés*, the category of semi-skilled workers upon which Gorz, having grown disillusioned with the radical potential of the new working class, had latterly pinned his hopes for workers' control. This was part and parcel of the problem of moving beyond appeals to the universal interest of mankind in preserving its own

habitat to developing a viable strategic approach. Could any identifiable group be seen as having a special interest in repudiating the religion of growth and consumption?

Gorz did indeed detect a “movement” in germ on the horizon that portended a potential new vanguard. Its most active manifestation, in practice and theory, was in the Italian far-left, in a constellation of groups, protest actions and notoriously abstruse theoretical currents sometimes conjugated together under the label *Autonomia*, and thus Gorz once again drew inspiration from the Italian political scene, although at a greater remove than he had from the left-wing of the PCI and the PSI or even from *Lotta Continua*.

In Italy, as elsewhere in the West, the economic crisis of the 70s, together with the counteroffensive of capital against the gains won by workers in the previous decade, had accelerated the polarization of society into a majority segment benefiting from the period of rapid industrialization and a smaller but expanding segment excluded from those advantages. Austerity policies were implemented by the Christian Democrats with the tacit acceptance of the PCI, then intent on pursuing its “Historic Compromise” power-sharing strategy. Major factories refused to hire new workers, aggravating unemployment, especially among younger workers, and new small businesses, some of them financed by industrial giants to decentralize production and escape union pressures, paid low wages and few benefits.<sup>264</sup> In this context there emerged a growing body of unemployed (the figure of two million unemployed in 1977 is considered by some a conservative estimate) and precariously employed, typically young workers, as well as a substantial number of young prospectless university graduates. What bound together this population, often referred to as the *emarginati* or marginals, was relative exclusion from the world of work and the security and benefits it affords. And indeed, according to Robert Lumley in his study of the Italian far left in and after 1968, social inequalities in Italy were increasingly perceived in terms of exclusion from life opportunities rather than of economic exploitation in the workplace.<sup>265</sup> However, as Lumley observes, what was distinctive about a significant proportion of these youths is that they did not want to be integrated; they rejected the values of the dominant society. Although many among them were unemployed, they did not demand the right to work; they wanted to be able to enjoy their lives and develop their individual abilities.<sup>266</sup>

From among the ranks of the *emarginati* emerged a variety of political projects and protest actions, many involving direct action and sometimes violent clashes with police. The youth movement engaged in squatting, organized politicized pop festivals, took part in *autoriduzione* (self-reduction: a movement to refuse price increases that began in Turin in 1974 with the refusal by FIAT workers to pay bus fares hikes, spreading through Northern cities and to Rome<sup>267</sup>), and in 1977, faced with the introduction of a new university quota system (the Malfatti bill), organized mass protests involving university occupations and marches, including a demonstration in Rome that mobilized 50,000. What is germane for our purposes is that a central theme of the youth ferment was the refusal of work. As Lumley explains, while there were differences among the various currents, “[t]hey were united in rejecting the ‘ideology’ according to which ‘labour is the fundamental value in social life and in progress.’ Moreover they questioned the idea that time itself should be organized around the requirements of the productive system rather than in accordance with the needs of human fulfillment.”<sup>268</sup> These ideas were given varied theoretical expression by elements of the *Autonomia* constellation. Yet another product of the *operaismo* tradition, *Autonomia* officially began as an attempt by a few hundred activists in 1973 to create a new national organization of the revolutionary left; within two years, rent by internal divisions, it disintegrated into competing fractions (among which were a number committed to armed struggle, some shading off into the terrorist groups that arose in the same period, such as the Red Brigades, and resulting in the severe repression of *Autonomia* in 1979, including the imprisonment of its major theoreticians, such as Toni Negri). Its strategy was to galvanize and escalate existing struggles and, presumably as a consequence of the organization(s)’ significant involvement with popular struggles on the ground, these struggles and movements are sometimes associated with the *Autonomia* label. Again, the main point here is that among *Autonomia* theorists such as Negri, the *emarginati* was seen as a potential revolutionary force, along with other categories hitherto neglected by the left such as immigrant and women workers, and the “refusal of work” was interpreted as a sign of radical political renewal.

The problems of dualization and youth marginalization also drew attention in France, of course. The phenomenon of a growing number of young people excluded from the world of work, school and consumption was hard to ignore. It was seen pessimistically by some sociologists as a

breeding ground of delinquency, but the advent of enforced idleness and the concomitant emergence of a host of young people disconnected from society was also interpreted as a symptom of the breakdown of the model of industrial society, a breakdown characterized as well by the decline of the labour movement and the networks of socialization associated with it.<sup>269</sup> And although there was no mass movement corresponding to the Italian one, a number of activists, many of them anarchists, did organize themselves as the Autonomes in the fall of 1977. According to Bernard Brown's account, the group was committed to destabilizing the State and widening what they called "infinite spaces within everyday life."<sup>270</sup> Trenchant critics of consumer society, the Autonomes demanded free public transport and engaged in such actions as sabotaging parking metres; they encouraged all efforts to cheat the system as acts of political contestation. Some resorted to violence, hurling molotov cocktails and breaking store windows. The terrorist group Action Directe was linked to the Autonomes current. According to Brown they enjoyed considerable support among young people; he cites one poll indicating that 13 per cent of university students considered themselves Autonomes sympathizers.

As in Italy, the theme of the rejection of the primacy of work was sounded by the Autonomes in France, and in this they reflected a broader cultural shift. Studies of attitudes to work among youth generally showed that although finding a job remained the chief concern of young people, paid employment was accorded a less pivotal place in their hierarchy of values and in their daily lives; it was considered more and more a means to other ends.<sup>271</sup> Some youths were deliberately choosing marginal activities. According to Rousselet, this growing indifference among young people to the content of work was spreading to other segments of the working population.<sup>272</sup> Gorz himself was particularly interested in the phenomenon of young first-generation workers from peasant and craft worker backgrounds in Italy and France who rebelled against the structures of work itself and for whom "the self-management of the factory seemed from a practical perspective a new trap that would consist in having them become the self-managers of their own prison..."<sup>273</sup>

One of the main reasons Rousselet cited for the changing attitudes to work, along with factors such as changes in family life, was that technological progress, in rendering the production process far more complex and demanding ever narrower specialization of both manual and mental operations, had drained much work of its meaning.<sup>274</sup> This premise was also critical to the evolution

of Gorz's conception of a new kind of revolutionary vanguard in the form of a non-class of non workers, as we shall see in the next chapter.

The notion that the newly excluded of the advanced industrial countries could be agents of deliberate social transformation was alluded to as early as 1973 by Ivan Illich, based on reasoning not dissimilar to that which led to Marcuse's faint hope in *One-Dimensional Man* that those who were less integrated into the system than the industrial working class might serve as a catalyst, though not the agent, of revolutionary change — a hope that had governed the practice of the first American New Left, which unlike the French and Italian New Left had no preconceived deference to the proletariat and no experience of working class militancy, and was consequently open earlier to the jettisoning of what C. Wright Mills called the labour metaphysic. Beginning with a critique of identity politics *avant la lettre*, Illich pointed out that minorities currently excluded from the benefits of industrial society — women, blacks, youth — who organize to obtain an equal share in consumption and control over existing institutions only reinforce and legitimate the existing hierarchical order: “Changes in management are not revolutions.”<sup>275</sup> However, a demand for inclusion in the system was not the only option. Industrial evolution had brought in its wake new classes of underconsumers and underemployed. “If one day they were to seek equal work rather than equal pay — equal inputs rather than equal outputs — they could be the pivots of social reconstruction.”<sup>276</sup> It was just such a new subject, excluded from the privileges of industrial society but wary of integration, whose genesis Gorz discerned in the growing class of young *emarginati*. It should be noted that Illich himself had in mind particularly the possible transformative role of a women's movement committed to recognizing and dignifying the autonomous mode of production, an idea which Gorz would also incorporate in the 1980s.

And what of the working class, the agent of social change privileged by Marxism, the French New Left and, in one form or another, by Gorz himself, at least since his *La morale de l'histoire*? For Gorz, on the eve of the 1980s, the working class was a force whose radical potential was spent; it was time to consign the task of social transformation to groups manifesting more radical impulses — an ambitious act of iconoclasm that he undertook in his most famous or infamous book, *Adieux au prolétariat*, the subject of our next chapter.

While, as we have tried to show, many of Gorz's ideas in the 1970s converged with those of the budding French political ecology movement, and served as a primary source of intellectual inspiration for that movement, Gorz did not consider himself an ecologist or, for that matter, an ecological theorist, either at the time or subsequently. In the coming decades, while his work continued to find an interested and often enthusiastic audience among ecology movements,<sup>277</sup> Gorz distanced himself from explicit connections with the Green social movement. This may have had something to do with wariness concerning the movement's institutionalization in France in the 1980s in the form of political parties, which unleashed the unavoidable dynamic of electoralism and parliamentary participation, as well as ushering in the dominance of Antoine Waechter's "neither left nor right" politically moderate faction. But Gorz was also critical of what he saw as the regressive nature of the utopia fashioned by elements of the German Green movement in particular, of attitudes which he regarded as dangerously romantic and anti-modern. What Gorz ultimately rejected was an anarcho-communist vision, to which he himself had at one time implicitly subscribed, which looked forward to the transcendence of the divide between individual and social being, society and State. Nevertheless, there is no question that Gorz/Bosquet made an indelible mark on Green thinking. Within France during the 80s, for instance, les Amis de la Terre espoused his dualist utopia, proposing to replace the emerging spatial dualization of the *société à deux vitesses* (the two-speed or two-tier society) with a temporal dualism in which individuals would move back and forth between the spheres of autonomy and heteronomy.<sup>278</sup> And as in the 60s, his influence extended far beyond France; he is cited, for example, as a key point of reference for ecology movements in both Germany and Greece in the late 70s and 80s.<sup>279</sup> Through his contributions to the critique of growth, productivism and the consumer society, his efforts to validate the possibilities of producing and consuming less while living better, and proposals for a dualist utopia based on the progressive reduction of working hours, Gorz earned enduring renown as one of the pioneers of political ecology.



## Notes

1. The admittedly overburdened word "crisis" refers, in the context of the 1970s, to a concatenation of interrelated problems including oil crises, rising inflation (inflation rose from 4.8 per cent per year in 1970 to 7.3 per cent in 1973) combined with rising unemployment (stagflation), decline of traditional industrial sectors, stagnating growth, deterioration in the balance of payments (from a surplus of \$112 million early in 1973 to a deficit of nearly \$6 billion the next year, and, eventually, shrinking real incomes, among other developments. The figures cited above are provided by George Ross in "The Perils of Politics: French Unions and the Crisis of the 1970s, in *Unions Change and Crisis: French and Italian Union Strategy and the Political Economy, 1945-1980*, ed. Peter Lange, George Ross and Maurizio Vannicelli (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982) pp. 35-36. For an analysis of the crisis in France from a Regulation School perspective, see Alain Lipietz, "Governing the Economy in the Face of International Challenge: From National Developmentalism to National Crisis," in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991) and for a broader account of the collapse of the post-war boom and its effects on the left, see George Ross and Jane Jenson, "Post-War Class Struggle and the Crisis of Left Politics," *Socialist Register* (1985/86), pp. 23-49.
2. Keith Reader's nonetheless insightful, readable and compendious survey of French intellectual history after May '68 is an example of this tendency, although he does devote some attention, for example, to a specific aspect of the work of Gorz and Touraine in the 1980s pertaining to the 'end' of socialism. [*Intellectuals and the Left in France Since 1968* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), and see also his " 'Que reste-t-il de nos amours?' Intellectuals and the Left in post-1968 France," in *Socialism in France: From Jaurès to Mitterand*, ed. Stuart Williams (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).] Diana Pinto also sees the post-'68 years as the (belated but welcome) undoing of the two-hundred year long marriage between French intellectuals and the left; her account assimilates, in too blanket a fashion, the theme of *autogestion* to the evolution towards political liberalism, which possesses a monopoly on "political maturity" in her reading. However in her examination of this trajectory she does make a point of distinguishing between the "higher intelligentsia" and the lesser lights who remained within the orbit of socialist politics in some form. The new social movements and their intellectuals are absent from her account. "The Left, The Intellectuals and Culture," in *The Mitterand Experiment: Continuity and Change in Modern France*, ed. George Ross, Stanley Hoffman and Sylvia Malzacher (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987).
3. Max Gallo, "Le silence des intellectuels de gauche," *Le Monde*, July 26, 1983.
4. Dick Howard conjectures that the origin of this widely used locution was a speech delivered by Michel Rocard at the 1977 Socialist Congress at Nantes in which Rocard identified two distinct cultures within French socialism: a centralist orientation in the Jacobin tradition and a 'second' self-management current. *Defining the Political* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 184, n.7.
5. For a highly useful if occasionally facile account of the *autogestionnaire* current, see Bernard E. Brown, *Socialism of a Different Kind: Reshaping the Left in France*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982).
6. "Dictionnaire d'une époque: Entrée et clés" in "Notre génération," *Le Débat* 50, special issue (May-August 1988), p. 191 (my translation).

7. The coinage of the term “post-industrial” is usually attributed incorrectly to Daniel Bell, However, Krishan Kumar points out that Bell actually borrowed it from the English Guild Socialist Arthur Penty, who had devised it circa 1917 to designate a desirable alternative to industrial society informed by William Morris's utopian socialist vision of a social order based on decentralized craft-based production. *Prophecy and Progress* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 314.
8. Kumar draws out some of the differences between Bell and Touraine in his indispensable critical discussion of the origins and development of the concept of post-industrial society in chapter 6 of *Prophecy and Progress*; see especially pp. 198-199.
9. There are of course numerous weaknesses in Touraine's interpretation, not least of which is the fact that class polarization was fairly intense in the 1970s. Alastair Cole indicates that class-based voting patterns actually reached new heights, although in the 1980s the patterns became more volatile, with older patterns of conflict persisting alongside new ones. [See chapter one in *French Political Parties in Transition* (Gower: Aldershot, 1989).] Touraine himself concluded in the 80s that his thesis did not stand up. For a critical exegesis of Touraine's shifting conception of post-industrial society, see Peter Kivisto, “Contemporary Social Movements in Advanced Industrial Societies and Sociological Intervention: An Appraisal of Alain Touraine's *Pratique*,” *Acta Sociologica* 27 (1984), pp. 355-366.
10. An interesting place to begin here is Lorna Weir's “Limitations of New Social Movement Analysis,” [*Studies in Political Economy* 40 (Spring 1993): 73-101], which raises questions about the validity and usefulness of the designation “new” in relation to contemporary social movements while reviewing some of the basic claims for these movements made by a number of the most influential movement theorists. Weir is particularly concerned with the absence of and hostility to class as an analytical category in much new social movement discourse. Another useful starting point is the article by Margit Mayer and Roland Roth which proposes a taxonomy of new social movement theory. The authors draw a major dividing line between the resource mobilization approach more common in North America, which views new social movements as arising due to the failure of existing political institutions to accommodate new concerns, and the more structural orientation of western European new social movement theory, which sees in the emergence of new social movements a reflection of and reaction to deep-rooted socio-economic and cultural shifts. [“New Social Movements and Post-Fordist Society,” in *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*, ed. Marcy Darnovsky, Barbara Epstein and Richard Flacks (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).] An invaluable collection of essays in new social movement theory is *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, ed. Russell J. Dalton and Manfred Kuechler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
11. For an excellent example of this style of interpretation, see Carl Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), especially pp. x-xi.
12. Although in his initial references to “post-industrial society” in the early 70s, he seems to have intended merely to indicate the growing importance of educated and skilled labour. This is the sense in which Gorz first uses the expression, set off in inverted commas, in the article where he distanced himself from the new working class thesis. There he observed that while education remained selective, the jobs requiring greater education were multiplying, and he reckoned that many educated young people were destined to become the low-grade labourers of ‘post-industrial society.’ “Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle,” in *The Division of Labour: The Labour Process and Class Struggle in Modern Capitalism*, ed. André Gorz (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1976), p. 81.

13. Arthur Hirsh, *The French Left: A History and Overview* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982), p. 227.
14. Bernard Charbonneau, et. al., *Les écologistes: présentés par eux mêmes* (Verviers, Belgium: Nouvelles éditions Marabout, 1977), p. 23 (my translation).
15. On this source of inspiration, as on much else informing the development of political ecology, see Dominique Allan Michaud, *L'avenir de la société alternative: Les idées 1968-1990* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), pp. 114-115.
16. Brendan Prendiville, *L'Écologie, La politique autrement?* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), p. 43.
17. Tony Chafer discusses the respective positions of the two main French unions in his "The Anti-Nuclear Movement and the Rise of Political Ecology," in *Social Movements and Protest in France*, ed. Philip G. Cerny (London: Frances Pinter, 1982).
18. As noted below Gorz signed his journalistic work during this period with the pseudonym Michel Bosquet.
19. However debatable the specific points Gorz makes in this context may be, it does not invalidate the broader thrust of his argument, that decisions presented as purely technical choices are often politically motivated.
20. Gorz, "From Nuclear Electricity to Electric Fascism," originally published in the French political ecology periodical *Le Sauvage* in 1975 and reprinted in *Gorz's Ecology as Politics*, trans. Patsy Vigderman and Jonathan Cloud (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), p. 109.
21. Cited in Tony Chafer, "The Anti-Nuclear Movement," p. 206 (his translation). According to Chafer, the CFDT was not opposed to nuclear power a priori in principle, but rather to the specific plans of the French government and its wholesale commitment to nuclear energy, p. 210 and passim.
22. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
23. Ibid.
24. Prendiville, *L'Écologie*, p. 29.
25. According to Bernard E. Brown, who relates the fascinating story of the Maoist arrogation of the Larzac cause in his *Socialism of a Different Kind*, the Maoists were initially extended a favourable reception because the Larzac peasants comprised a new breed of farmers, including elements of the back-to-the-land movement that emerged in France, as in other countries in the aftermath of the 60s, who were already politicized. However, they were eventually repelled by the violent tactics employed by the Maoists. See p. 115.
26. This book published by Éditions du Seuil was incorporated in his 1978 *Écologie et politique*.
27. We might also invoke the figure of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the media-appointed leader of May '68, head of the March 22 movement and student of the ideas of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, who became an ecologist in his native West Germany. He relates part of his post-'68 political trajectory

- in his autobiography *Le Grand bazar: Mai et après* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1975).
28. Michaud, *L'avenir*, pp. 81-82 and p. 85.
29. Michel Bosquet, "Ce qui nous manque pour être heureux." *Le Nouvel Observateur*, September 11, 1978, p. 30 (my translation).
30. The movement was, however, divided even over the question of electoral participation *tout court*. Some ecological activists favoured participation and others roundly opposed it. The candidacy in the 1974 presidential elections of agronomist René Dumont, who garnered just over one per cent of the vote, was essentially a symbolic affair intended to draw attention to the issues. But at that there were movement activists who declined to support the campaign. There were similar splits surrounding organizational questions: some ecological activists and groups opposed the first attempt to set up a national structure in the form of le Mouvement écologique in 1974. As the decade progressed, attitudes towards institutionalization and the goals of electoral participation began to shift, and political ecology ultimately gave birth to two competing political parties in the 1980s. The first national ecology party, les Verts cp, was formed in 1984 from a merger of two groups. See Guillaume Sainteny, "La question du pouvoir d'état chez les écologistes," in *Le Défi Écologiste*, ed. Marc Abélès (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1993).
31. Cited in Michaud, *L'avenir*, p. 60 (my translation).
32. Michel Bosquet, "A Life of Toil," chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis and Everyday Life*, trans. John Howe (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1977), p. 125.
33. Andrea Levy, "Progeny and Progress? Reflections on the Legacy of the New Left," *Our Generation 2* (1993-1994), pp. 1-38.
34. For an extended and illuminating treatment of the use of the concept of totalitarianism in France in the 1970s, see Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 123-134. A particularly interesting contribution of the book in general is the author's discussion of the ex-Maoists' appropriation of the concept of totalitarianism in relation to the simultaneous reinterpretation of the French Revolution. Disillusionment with revolutionary politics found an expression in the ever politically charged arena of the historiography of the French Revolution. (See especially pp. 156 -178.) By 1978, François Furet, aiming to establish a new dominant reading, tried to demonstrate that Terror was not the outcome of contingent circumstances but the inexorable terminus of any revolutionary politics.
35. Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, p. 125 and p. 130.
36. The lag in acknowledging the horrors of Stalinism between the French non-communist left-wing intellectuals and their counterparts elsewhere in the West has been scornfully remarked often enough. The persistent relative strength of the PCF in France as the party supported by a substantial segment of the working class goes a long way to explain why French left intellectuals, seeking to avoid an explicitly anti-Communist attitude, may have chosen to remain relatively quiet in face of earlier revelations about Soviet repression, beginning in 1956 with Khrushchev's secret speech.
37. Keith Reader offers an intriguing analytical portrait of the relationship between Maoism and the success of Lacanian philosophy, see *Intellectuals and the Left*, chapter 6 and especially p. 63.

38. The term was coined in June 1976 when *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* published a special feature edited by Bernard-Henri Lévy under the title “Les nouveaux philosophes.” (Hirsh, *The French Left*, p. 194; Reader, *Intellectuals and the Left*, p. 108.) Although the label was not accepted by all those to whom it was applied, the new philosophers are seen to include Lévy, André Glucksmann, a former member of the Gauche prolétarienne, Maurice Clavel, Michel LeBris, and Philippe Nemo, among others. One of the particularities of the new philosophers is that they did not see themselves as having effected a political right turn, even as they repeated some of the classic arguments of the right, with respect for instance to the intrinsically totalitarian implications of Marxism and revolution. On this point see Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, p. 134 and passim. For a succinct overview of the positions of the new philosophers, see Hirsh, pp. 193-201.

39. It should be noted here that Castoriadis himself dismissed the new philosophers, along with all the successive trends in the history of the French intellectual left — Sartre's existential Marxism, structuralism, Foucault, post-structuralism — as so many Parisian fads diverting attention from the real issues confronting French society. (See his article “The Diversionists” first published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* in June 1977 and translated by Dorothy Gehrke for publication in *Telos* 33 (Fall 1977), pp. 102-106.) His substantive objections to the new philosophers revolved around what Castoriadis regarded as their misconstrual and misappropriation of the critique of Marxism and totalitarianism that he had helped to elaborate, and their recasting of that critique in a nihilistic direction. New philosophy not only failed to grasp the relation between historical thought and historical reality, Castoriadis charged, but it also drew the absurd conclusion that “it is precisely *in so far* as he is revolutionary that Marx could have generated the gulag.” (p. 105, original emphasis) Incidentally, Gorz rebutted the section of the article attacking Sartre in a subsequent issue of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, and his defense of Sartre, “Sartre and the Deaf,” was also published in the Fall 1977 issue of *Telos*, along with a short rejoinder by Castoriadis.

40. A discussion of the roots and antecedents of the critique of totality is regrettably far beyond the scope of this essay. We may note briefly however that in his *The Poverty of Historicism* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), Popper condemned any project that takes society as a whole as its object as inherently totalitarian, leading inevitably to hypercentralization, authoritarianism and the elimination of individual differences. One of his principal arguments is that changing society presupposes changing human consciousness and behaviour, a goal he regarded as vain, perilous and ultimately vicious. (See especially chapter 3.) Not accidentally, Popper became one of the intellectual heroes of the French intellectual world in the 1980s. George Ross notes the “clamour” surrounding the translation into French in 1979 of Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. [“Where Have All the Sartres Gone?” in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 249 n.75.] Martin Jay has shown that, in developing the theme of the dialectic of Enlightenment, Adorno also linked totality of the prescriptive kind, which, in his analysis, presumed an ultimate overcoming of contradictions in the realization of organic wholeness, with totalitarianism and anti-semitism. *Adorno* (London: Fontana, 1984), pp. 18-20 and p. 100.

41. Martin Jay provides an excellent presentation and explication of the relationship of post-structuralism to totality in his Epilogue to *Marxism and Totality* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984). Another perspicacious commentator on post-structuralism's allergy to totality is Terry Eagleton; in a variety of books and articles he situates what he calls “holophobia,” along with many other post-structuralist themes, in the context of the pervasive sense of defeat arising after May '68 and the perceived imperviousness of the system. The essence of his argument is that having failed to change the system, a part of the progeny of May '68 contented

- themselves with proclaiming that the system did not exist. See for instance, *The Illusions of Post-Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996), pp. 5-12.
42. Reader, *Intellectuals and the Left*, p. 85; Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, pp. 520ff.
  43. Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, p. 128.
  44. Charbonneau, et. al., *Les écologistes*, pp. 93-94 (my translation).
  45. On this point see especially Michaud, *L'avenir*, p. 44.
  46. Dominique Simonnet, *L'Écologisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1979), p. 85 (my translation).
  47. On social experimentation, see Brown, *Socialism of a Different Kind*, especially pp. 55-58.
  48. Brice Lalonde, Serge Moscovici, and René Dumont, *Pourquoi les écologistes font-ils de la politique: entretiens avec Jean-Paul Ribes* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978) p. 25 (my translation).
  49. *Ibid*, p. 53.
  50. Alain Lipietz, "Choisir sa gauche," *Le Débat* 3 (May 1981), pp. 18-19.
  51. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 187 (my translation).
  52. Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Toronto: Little Brown and Company, 1973), p. 57. For a reading of the work of the early Frankfurt School as an incipient but short-circuited critique of anthropocentrism see Robyn Eckersley's *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach*, a survey of eco-political theory that is an exegetical *tour-de-force*, as well as an original contribution to the elaboration and defense of an ecocentric position (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), see especially pp. 100-106.
  53. Whether Marxism can be held complicit in the reigning destructive attitude towards nature is, of course, a subject of lively debate. In one article, John Bellamy Foster argues that Marx and Engels were themselves pioneers in ecological thinking. Invoking, among other carefully culled passages, Engels' oracular remark in *The Dialectics of Nature* about the "revenge of nature," that is, the unintended adverse consequences of the conquest of the natural world, he makes a case for keen awareness on Marx and Engels' part of the environmental destructiveness of capitalism and of the imperative to sustain the health of the natural conditions on which production relied. ["Marx and the Environment," *Monthly Review* 47 (July-August 1995), pp. 109-123.] To cite another example, David Pepper, drawing on the work of theorists such as R. Grundmann and A. Attfield, attempts to draw a meaningful distinction between the concepts of mastery and domination, whereby the former implies subjugation, and the latter, purportedly immanent in Marxism, signifies a form of conscious control akin to stewardship; and he endorses Grundmann's specious reasoning based on this semantic sleight of hand that the existence of ecological problems attests to the absence of domination. [*Eco-socialism: From Deep Ecology to Social Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 221.] More important, however, than 'what Marx really meant,' was the dominant understanding within the socialist tradition, and here Bellamy himself concedes that many self-proclaimed followers of Marx "treated nature as an object to be exploited and nothing more." A compelling

assessment of Marxism as ultimately incompatible with ecology due to its vision of man as *homo faber* and its view of freedom as achievable only at the expense of the non-human world is advanced by Robyn Eckersley in *Environmentalism and Political Theory*; we will also look at this argument in the next chapter in the context of her critique of Gorz.

Talmudic debates aside, it seems fair, at very least, to concur with Juan Martinez-Alier that Marxist economics have not been ecological in the sense of being concerned with the availability and intergenerational allocation of natural resources or with waste disposal. [Juan Martinez-Alier with Klaus Schlüpmann, *Ecological Economics: Energy, Environment and Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) p. 218.] This in spite of Bellamy Foster's success in tracking down at least one passage in *Capital* where Marx said that each generation must hand the earth down to the succeeding one in improved condition; his gloss on the paragraph as a plea for sustainable development rather strains credulity. Moreover, regardless of what prescient sensitivities Marx and Engels may have exhibited regarding ecological devastation, the domination of nature was by no means a central theme. The emphasis placed on this problem in the work of the Frankfurt School stands alone in the Marxist tradition at least until the 1960s. The affinities between the theory of the early Frankfurt School and ecological themes are elucidated by Andrew Dobson ["Critical Theory and Green Politics," in *The Politics of Nature*, ed. Andrew Dobson and Paul Lucardie (London: Routledge, 1993).] His basic contention is that Green thinking parallels critical theory in its understanding that the barbaric terminus of Enlightenment in the horrors of this century is rooted in the instrumental rationality that came to define the human relationship with the natural world. For Dobson, the relative strength of critical theory over much eco-political theory, lay in its analysis of instrumental rationality as the outcome of specific historical and material conditions. Eckersley also deals extensively with this question, drawing an important distinction between the first generation of critical theorists (Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse) and the revisionism of Habermas, whose work she sees as incompatible with ecology. See *Environmentalism and Political Theory*, pp. 97-117.

54. The context is his discussion of how, as a result of the destruction of the natural environment, more complex means are necessary to satisfy basic biological needs, such as the need for air and sunlight. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor: A Radical Proposal*, trans. Martin A. Nicolaus and Victoria Ortiz (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), pp. 89-90.

55. Gorz, "Unions and Politics," in his *Socialism and Revolution*, trans. Norman Denny (New York: Anchor Books, 1973), p. 81.

56. Gorz, *La morale de l'histoire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), p. 153, n.6.

57. Gorz, *Réforme et révolution* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), p. 14.

58. Mark Poster, *Sartre's Marxism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 75.

59. See Gorz, *La morale*, p., 157.

60. Gorz, "Ecology and Freedom," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 20.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid., p. 21.

63. Ibid.

64. This is of course a drastically condensed restatement of Dobson's (in many respects insightful and persuasive) position. [See Andrew Dobson, "Ecologism," in *Contemporary Political Ideologies*, ed. Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright (London: Pinter Publishers, 1993), 220-224 and *Green Political Thought*, second edition, (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 1-2 and chapter 2, "Philosophical Foundations."] Robyn Eckersley also sees the principal line dividing moderates and radicals as that separating an anthropocentric from what she calls an "ecocentric" approach. See her *Environmentalism and Political Theory*.
65. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
66. This is, in a phrase, Peter Singer's position. See his *Animal Liberation* (New York: Avon Books, 1975).
67. See Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), Chap. 2, "Nature and Revolution," pp. 59-68. For an elucidating discussion of Marcuse's thinking in this area, see Robyn Eckersley's *Environmentalism and Political Theory* (pp. 100-106) which situates Marcuse's work within the early Frankfurt School's exploration of the theme of a reconciliation with nature.
68. John Rodman, "Review of *Ecology as Politics* by André Gorz," *Human Ecology* 12 (1984), p. 321.
69. Robyn Eckersley identifies this tendency in *Environmentalism and Political Theory*, p. 18.
70. Bosquet, "Political Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis*, p. 183.
71. This is true as well of certain broad currents within the international ecology movement, including eco-socialism, with which Gorz is often associated, and social ecology as conceived by the American anarchist philosopher Murray Bookchin.
72. Gorz, "Political Ecology: Expertocracy versus Self-Limitation," trans. John Howe, *New Left Review* 200 (1993), pp. 57-58. Habermas's own understanding of the ecology movement, as of the new social movements generally, was that it was an instance of "resistance to tendencies to colonize the life-world." Jürgen Habermas, "New Social Movements," *Telos* 49 (Fall 1981), p. 33.
73. This was but one spectacular schism among multiple cleavages (no pun intended) in French feminism. See, for example Jane Jenson, who stresses the unusually sectarian character of French feminism, rent by questions such as essentialist versus social-constructionist readings of gender, the relations between gender and class and the issue of political participation. ["Ce n'est pas un hasard: The varieties of French feminism," in *Contemporary France*, Volume 3, ed. Jolyon Howorth and George Ross. (London: Pinter Publishers, 1989).] For a more detailed treatment of some of the currents, see Claire Duchén, *Feminism in France: From May '68 to Mitterand* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988).
74. Simonnet, *L'Écologisme*, p. 4 (my translation).
75. Claude Journès points out, for instance, that Les Amis de la Terre not only saw ecology as a political problem, but also regarded the ecology movement as the potential catalyst of a broad struggle against the existing order to be carried out in alliance with other social movements. ["Les idées politiques du mouvement écologique," *Revue Française de Science Politique* 29 (April 1979), p. 244.] And as they make clear in *Pourquoi les écologistes font-ils de la politique*, other leading



spokespersons for political ecology, such as Serge Moscovici and René Dumont, concurred with Brice Lalonde in considering movements such as feminism, regionalism, pacifism, and third-worldism as natural allies of the ecology movement.

76. Excerpted from a promotional insert included at the end of a book edited by Les Amis de la Terre entitled *Perdre sa vie à la gagner* (Paris: Éditions Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1977), p. 127 (my translation).

77. According to Peter Deli, few people were aware that the André Gorz of *Les Temps Modernes* and the Michel Bosquet of *Le Nouvel Observateur* were one and the same person. Deli, *De Budapest à Prague: les sursauts de la gauche française* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1981), p. 284.

78. While Gorz wrote for both these papers there were apparently discernible ideological differences between them. Brendan Prendiville sees *Le Sauvage* as a left response to the eco-anarchist *Gueule ouverte*. *L'Écologie*, p. 24.

79. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.

80. The figure is cited in Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France de l'affaire Dreyfus à nos jours*, second edition, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), p. 221. Although his resignation did not become effective for a long time, Gorz officially resigned from *Les Temps Modernes* in 1974, following a dispute within the editorial committee concerning plans to devote an issue to Lotta Continua. [Anna Boschetti, *Sartre et "Les Temps Modernes,"* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), p.305.] The break appears to have been long in the making. Dick Howard notes that at a *Telos* conference in 1971 Gorz was asked to represent *Les Temps Modernes* on a panel devoted to the role of left-wing journals. He declined on the grounds that *Les Temps Modernes* was no longer a radical journal but an institution. [*Defining the Political* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 147 n. 1.] Oddly, Gorz's name continued to appear on the list of the journal's editorial committee until October 1983.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

82. Ross, "Where Have All the Sartres Gone," p. 233. For a particularly harsh assessment marked by the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu concerning the ways in which intellectual capital is accumulated and deployed, see Louis Pinto's study *L'Intelligence en action: le Nouvel Observateur* (Paris: Éditions A.-M. Métailié, 1984). Pinto devotes a substantial section of his monograph to Gorz's work in the 1980s, and we shall have occasion to examine some of his remarks in the next chapter.

83. Drawn from his contributions to *Le Sauvage*, *Le Nouvel Observateur* and *Lumière et Vie*, some of the pieces in *Écologie et politique* had already been anthologized a year earlier in a collection entitled *Écologie et liberté*.

84. Antecedents can, of course, be detected in the Romantic movement's revulsion against industrialism, but more explicit forerunners can also be pinpointed. In scientific quarters, for example, there were economists such as Josef Popper-Lynkeus (1838-1921) who prefigured the arguments of contemporary Greens about both the limits to the carrying capacity of the earth and the socially equitable solutions envisioned to contend with those limits. (See Juan Martinez-Alier with Klaus Schlüpmann, *Ecological Economics*, chap. 13, "Ecological Utopianism.") Benjamin Hunnicutt traces the roots of the idea of a steady-state economy back to John Stuart Mill, who warned that humanity could remain on the path of industrial expansion only at its own and nature's

peril. [*Work Without End: Abandoning Shorter Hours for the Right to Work* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), pp. 32-33.]

In the realm of contemporary social theory, as we noted very briefly above, the Frankfurt School had criticized the Promethean impulse in Marxism itself in the course of their evolution towards a critique of the domination of nature. They also objected in this context to the Marxist fetishization of labour; Adorno, for example, told Martin Jay in 1969 that Marx wanted to turn the world into a giant workhouse. (*The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 69.) Marcuse's brand of critical theory, which became very popular in France after May 68, was explicitly anti-productivist, and resonated with the themes of political ecology. In one of his earliest books, *Eros and Civilization*, he cast Marx's venerated Prometheus as the Stakhanov of Greek mythology. But the basis of his critique of productivism at this stage was primarily social, rather than being premised on the identification of natural limits to growth. Advanced capitalism, he maintained in *One-Dimensional Man* and elsewhere, perpetuated production for its own sake to keep the system of domination operative. Contrary to popular misconception, Marcuse did not maintain that the problem of production had been solved for all time, making it possible to envision a socialism of limitless abundance; rather, he understood socialism in part as the quest for the redistribution of scarcity. Moreover at the end of his life Marcuse himself pinned his hopes for social change on the new social movements, particularly feminism and ecology. See the text of a lecture he gave near the end of his life published as "Ecology and the Critique of Modern Society," *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 3 (September 1992), pp. 29-38.

85. As did all ecologists of the day, Gorz often cited figures in his articles that eventually proved incorrect. Writing in 1972, he forecast that, at the then current rate of extraction, known reserves of mercury would be exhausted in 13 years, lead in 15 years, gold in 17 years, zinc in 18 years, silver and platinum in 20 years. ("Political Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis*, p. 176.) None of these predictions were even remotely accurate. Sounding an equally false alarm, René Dumont predicted in 1978 that the price of oil would reach \$50 or \$60 per barrel before the end of the century (Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p., 151); in fact, at the time of this writing, the price of oil hovers between \$16 and \$18 per barrel. As Andrew Dobson (along with many other commentators on the limits to growth thesis both hostile and sympathetic) has pointed out, the original *Limits to Growth* report underestimated undiscovered reserves and the adaptability and ingenuity of the system — its ability to compensate by producing synthetic substitutes (*Green Political Theory*, pp. 78-79). However, by itself this does not invalidate the fact of finitude, and the 1992 sequel to the MIT study reaffirmed the inexorability of limits (*Ibid.*, p. 16). It should also be noted that, even in the 70s, Gorz stressed the veracity of the principle over the precision of particular predictions: "Even if the figures in the Meadows report [*Limits to Growth*] are unreliable, the fundamental truth of its thesis remains unchanged. Physical growth has physical limits, and any attempt to push them back (by recycling and purification) only pushes the problem around." ("Socialism or Ecofascism," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 84.) Or again, "I admit that plenty of the assumptions on which these projections [of the toll of industrial growth on resource depletion] are based include a margin of error. But this does nothing to alter the nature of the problem." ("Political ecology," chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis*, p. 176.)

86. Sainteny, *Les Verts*, p. 51 (my translation).

87. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, pp. 62-63 (my translation).

88. Louise Beaulieu and Jonathan Cloud, "Political Ecology and the Limits of the Communist Vision," in *The Politics of Eurocommunism: Socialism in Transition*, ed. Carl Boggs and David Plotke (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), p. 240. For the Communist and much of the orthodox

- left, ecological concerns were a luxury of the middle-class; critics raised the bogey of neo-Malthusianism, falsely conflating the descriptive and the prescriptive by assimilating any conception of or concern with natural limits to Thomas Malthus' political program of hastening the nefarious effects of scarcity on the poor by withholding assistance.
89. Gorz, "Unions and Politics," chap. in *Socialism and Revolution*, trans. Norman Denny (New York: Anchor Books, 1973), p. 79.
90. Michaud, *L'avenir*, p. 82.
91. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
92. Gorz, "Political Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis*, p. 183.
93. Gorz, "La plus grande liberté possible," debate with Peter Glotz and Tilman Fichter, *Les Temps Modernes* 483 (October 1986), p. 67.
94. Gorz, "Introduction" in *Socialism and Revolution*, p. 6.
95. Gorz, "Ecology and Freedom," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 11.
96. Ibid.
97. Gorz, "Two Kinds of Ecology," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 7.
98. In his writings on ecological themes, Gorz tended to undecore the deliberate stimulation of consumer needs and appetites via such means as the advertising industry, but he never dispensed with the more structural type of explanation for why people are driven to particular patterns of consumption that we saw him offer in *Strategy for Labor*. However, he did shift the focus of the analysis. In the 70s, rather than stressing the ways in which the State organizes society on behalf of and in conformity with the interests of capital, he tended to emphasize the condition of dependency to which individuals are reduced in contemporary industrial societies as a result of the inescapable web of giant institutions, the origins of which he only tacitly links to the demands and requirements of oligopolistic industry. See "Ecology and Society," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, pp. 59-60. This in part reflects the influence of the institutional critique of Ivan Illich which we will look at below and which, although anti-capitalist, is not based on Marxist class analysis. Nevertheless, Gorz did not cease to discuss the vast powers wielded by big industry, as in his very laudatory article dealing with the work of Charles Levinson, then Canadian Secretary General of the International Chemical Federation, who wrote a book about the expanding powers of multinational corporations. See "Boundless Imperialism," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*.
99. "Labor and the 'Quality of Life,'" chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 133.
100. See, for example, Serge Moscovici in Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, pp. 64-65.
101. See, for example, Gorz's essay "Affluence Dooms Itself," in the chapter "Ecology and Society" in *Ecology as Politics*, pp. 64-69. Gorz had also read Dumont on colonialism in the 60s, and mentions him in his own discussion of colonialism in *Socialism and Revolution*.
102. See, for example, Gorz, "Boundless Imperialism," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*.

103. In a 1980 interview, Gorz replied to the accusation that his ideas about consuming less but living better ignored the problems facing the Third World. Invoking the authority of the American Marxist economist Paul Baran, Gorz pointed out very reasonably that the Third World is not poor because people in the West fail to work hard enough, but because resources are confiscated by multinationals or squandered on arms and luxuries by westernized national elites who are propped up to serve as convenient markets by western governments and international firms. He went on to affirm the need for an alternative model of development: "The best thing we can do for the Third World is to provide ideological, political and technical assistance to help it spare itself the kind of industrialization that we [in the West] are in the process of transcending." ["André Gorz," Interview by Michel Contat and François Georges (October 12, 1980) in *Entretiens avec Le Monde*, 6 vols. (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1985), vol. 6: *La Société*, p. 212.] This alternative model would entail the deployment of new high productivity decentralized technologies for non-market self-production on the scale of the village and the extended family. Gorz rightly pointed out that the left in the West often acts as if the western model ought to be copied by everyone else and that no viable alternatives exist, even as left intellectuals document and analyze the problems wrought by that model. Less persuasively, Gorz optimistically conjectured on the basis of certain (unspecified) events in India and Iran that the Third World might be able to move more quickly than the West to a more equitable and sustainable post-industrial, post-capitalist society. Neither he nor the interviewers address the point that one of the ways in which the West is moving beyond the nineteenth-century model of industrial development is precisely by exporting polluting industries to the Third World, which is not in a strong position to reject whatever development schemes are proposed by global corporations and financial institutions such as the IMF.

104. See, for example, Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, pp. 151-152.

105. Gorz, "Political Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis*, p. 177.

106. Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 347.

107. Charbonneau, et. al., *Les écologistes*, p. 88.

108. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 71 (my translation).

109. This is confirmed by Journès, "Les idées politiques," p. 232, among other students of the political ecology movement.

110. Gorz, "Ecology and Freedom," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, pp. 14-15, and 20-21.

111. Sainteny, *Les Verts*, p. 47. See also, for instance, the exchange between Charles Hernu from the Parti Socialiste and les Amis de la Terre and Gorz/Bosquet on whether ecology is reactionary, in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, October 4 and 11, 1976. The most sustained attack on ecology as a neo-fascist expression is the relatively recent vicious treatment by Luc Ferry, *Le nouvel ordre écologique* [translated by Carol Volk as *The New Ecological Order* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992)] in which the author conflates all radical ecological thinking with the strain of deep ecology which apotheosizes nature, a strain he in turn links to the fascist tradition. (In this at least, Gorz bears certain affinities with him, as evident from our earlier discussion of Gorz's dogmatic anthropocentrism). Ferry explicitly dismisses as noxious anti-humanism all arguments that accord moral standing to animals or take seriously the issue of animal suffering. Sharing with the post-structuralist tradition (which he otherwise also equates with anti-

humanism) an allergy to encompassing or “totalizing” social visions, Ferry also impugns the ecology movement for its grand political vision and champions reformist environmentalism. See also the excellent refutation by Jean-Paul Deléage, “L'Écologie, humanisme de notre temps,” *L'Écologie Politique* 5 (Winter 1993).

112. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 58 (my translation).

113. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

114. *Ibid.*, (my translation). And see also Charbonneau, et. al., *Les écologistes*, p. 17.

115. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

116. If one were needed, Sainteny offers a persuasive defense of political ecology against any charge of reactionary anti-modernism, arguing that it subscribes to values rooted in modern political philosophy, such as autonomy, equality, solidarity, democracy... but questions the extent to which modern social structures and institutions can embody those values. Political ecology thus represents a critique of the broken promises of modernity and of its unintended consequences. *Les Verts*, pp. 117-119. This is not to say that there were no elements of the international Green movement historically that might lend themselves to charges of anti-modernism or a misanthropy equatable with right-wing values. Gorz himself later accused the fundamentalist wing of die Grünen in Germany of a dangerous anti-modernism, although his reasoning is debatable, and may well indict any project of political decentralization, including his own utopia in the 1970s. Gorz, “Disorientations, Orientations,” chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 6-7. We will return to this point in subsequent chapters.

117. Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory*, pp. 21-22.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

119. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

120. Regrettably space does not permit consideration of all Gorz's positions on various political issues, and therefore his perspective on the question of nuclear disarmament can only be touched upon here very briefly. He intervened in the debate on disarmament in 1982 against the backdrop of deteriorating Soviet-U.S. relations attendant on the deployment of Soviet intermediate range SS20 missiles in Europe, as well as on Ronald Reagan's public commitment to “rolling back” communism and forcing a change in the Soviet block by bankrupting the USSR through an accelerated and intensified arms race. The U.S. shift away from traditional detente policies and the decision by NATO, under American pressure, to deploy matching intermediate range ballistic and cruise missiles in western Europe became the focal point of a new mobilisation of the peace movement in Europe, and in Germany in particular. Gorz was critical of what he saw as the peace movement's tendency to censure the West's role in the arms race while failing to pay due attention to what he considered the more serious danger posed by a militaristic and despotic Soviet Union to the cause of rights and freedoms in Europe. He refused the option of decoupling European from North American security as an outcome that would serve the retrograde strategic interests of the USSR, leading to the retreat of freedoms on the continent, and to mortgaging western Europe to Soviet interests. At the same time, he did not sanction the complete military subservience of western Europe to U.S. military and strategic interests, an option which he saw as deleterious to Europe insofar as it perpetuated a system of frozen bi-polar hegemony on the Continent, impeding the

- emergence of a multi-polar world system. It was this double rejection which grounded his “Eurohawkish” stand in favour of maintaining an independent European nuclear deterrence force aligned with, but not subservient to, U.S. military and strategic interests vis-à-vis the USSR. In this regard, Gorz was part of a geo-strategic consensus extending across the political spectrum in France, from de Gaulle to Mitterand. For further details, see Gorz, “What, Then, Is Freedom? Reply to Bahro,” trans. David Berger, *Telos* 51 (Spring 1982) and “Security: Against What? For What? With What?” trans. Dick Howard, *Telos* 58 (Winter 1983-1984).
121. For example, Journès, “Les idées politiques,” pp. 245-48; Guillaume Sainteny “La question du pouvoir,” p. 69.
122. Herbert Kitschelt, “La Gauche libérale et les écologistes français,” trans. Marie-Jeanne Rossignol, *Revue Française de Science Politique* 40 (June 1990), p. 340.
123. Murray Bookchin, “Review of *Ecology as Politics* by André Gorz,” *Telos* 46 (Winter 1980-1981). There was an unmistakable anarchist influence on political ecology, both in its intellectual genealogy and in its troops; the influence of Ivan Illich dealt with below is pertinent here, as is the revival of nineteenth-century anarchist thinkers in the early 70s concurrent with the beginnings of the crisis of Marxism [Peter Deli, *De Budapest à Prague: les sursauts de la gauche française* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1981), p. 262.] Dominique Michaud notes the influence of anarchism in winning ecology activists to the vision of small working communities and to an eco-management which would link consumers and neighbouring populations with workers in the organization of production units. (*L’Avenir*, p. 45.) Further, under a libertarian tag, French anarchists participated in the ecology movement from the outset, apparently reinvigorated by the events of May 68. See Laurent Greilsamer, “Les anars toujours hantés par le grand rêve,” *Le Monde*, April 20-21, 1980. On the influence of anarchist groups and thought on the May events themselves see Richard Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism*, trans. Michael K. Perl (Middlesex: Pelican, 1975), pp. 82-87.
124. See Michaud, *L’Avenir*, pp. 42-44.
125. Lipietz, “Choisir sa gauche,” p. 21.
126. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
127. Carl Boggs, “The Green Alternative and the struggle for a post-Marxist discourse,” *Theory and Society* 15 (1986), p. 871.
128. Quoted in Prendiville, *L’Écologie*, p. 34 (my translation).
129. Michaud, *L’Avenir*, p. 44 (my translation).
130. See for instance Patrick Petitjean “L’écologie c’est par où?” *Rouge et Vert*, February 5, 1993, p. 9. Arguing that the dominant currents within the French ecology movement essentially endorse an environmental reform of modern capitalism, he writes “If by ‘progressive alternative’ we mean a social and democratic, anticapitalist and libertarian ecology (in André Gorz’s sense), we cannot help but feel far removed from the political programs and practices of the two clans (that of Lalonde in Génération écologie and that of Waechter in les Verts...) around which ecology is structured in France today.” (my translation)

131. The theory here, as Gorz explains it, is that there has been a shift in the organic composition of capital, such that capital investment absorbs a relatively greater part of the costs of production. Consequently, more profit is needed for machine maintenance and renewal and to compensate for the outlay of investment capital. But there is a limit to the potential increase in profits, and eventually stagnation sets in and production declines. Gorz points out that the oil crisis aggravated, rather than caused, this economic crisis, since the physical limits of resources force capital to invest in the search for new sources or innovate to circumvent shortages, which in turn places further constraints on profit. Another dimension of the relation of the problem of overaccumulation to the ecological crisis is that in the effort to circumvent the falling rate of profit by selling more goods, production is rendered more wasteful through techniques such as stimulation of demand and planned obsolescence. "Ecology and Freedom," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, pp. 21-26.
132. Gorz, "Political Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis*, pp. 184-185.
133. *Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.
134. Gorz, "Ecology and Freedom," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 12.
135. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
136. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
137. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.
138. Bosquet, "Ce qui nous manque," p. 31.
139. Ory and Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels*, p. 220 (my translation). They note that the favourable reception began with *Libérer l'avenir* (the 1971 French translation of Illich's *Celebration of Awareness*). These authors see the Illich reception as part of the attraction exercised on the heirs of the libertarian current of May '68 by the California phenomenon. Enthusiasm for micro-enterprises and communes, spiritualist values and hedonism were all imbibed from the California counter-culture, which provides the context for Gorz's "Epilogue on America," in *Ecology as Politics*, discussed below.
140. Cited in Michaud, *L'Avenir*, p. 117 (my translation).
141. Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 10.
142. See for example Gorz's "What's Wrong with Cars?" and "'Socialism' and the Motor Car," in *Capitalism in Crisis*, and "The Social Ideology of the Motorcar," section 3 of "Ecology and Society," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*.
143. Patrice Leblanc elucidates the connection between these two master concepts in Illich's work in his essay, "La Convivialité revisitée: Ivan Illich," *Possibles* 18 (Spring 1994), pp. 66-67.
144. Illich, *Tools*, p. xi.
145. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
146. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

147. Ivan Illich, *Le chômage créateur* [French translation of *The Right to Useful Unemployment*], trans. Maud Sissung (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977), p. 64.
148. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
149. On this point see Jenson "Ce n'est pas un hasard," pp. 119-120.
150. Simonnet, *L'Écologisme*, p. 36.
151. Drawing on a distinction made by Michael Marien, Andrew Dobson observes that post-industrialism is subject to a variety of interpretations, and a common secondary meaning of post-industrialism is a projected decentralized society following in the wake of a failed industrialism. *Green Political Thought*, p. 8.
152. Illich, *Le chômage créateur*, p. 8.
153. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
154. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
155. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
156. See, for example, the pamphlet *Les écologistes présentés par eux-mêmes*, which was the collective work of a dozen or so thinkers and organizers in the French political ecology movement, and which reads in parts like a summary of the collected works of Ivan Illich.
157. Gorz, "Ecology and Freedom," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 19.
158. *Ibid.*, p. 40 and see pp. 32-34.
159. Illich, *Tools*, p. 4, and see also his contemptuous remarks about humanitarian liberals who desire to feed the world, pp.47-48.
160. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
161. *Ibid.*
162. *Ibid.*
163. *Ibid.*
164. *Ibid.*
165. The essay incorporates a number of shorter articles, pp. 149-195.
166. As with so many other topics, the interest in medicine did not originate with the political ecology movement, but was rather an extension of a critique initiated in the 1960s. Challenging traditional approaches to health care which called for more hospitals and medicine, student activists and New Left intellectuals sought to draw attention to the social causes of ill-health rooted in the capitalist system and work organization.



167. John Ardagh, *France in the 1980s* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1982), p. 446-447.
168. Simonnet, *L'Écologisme*, p. 27 (my translation).
169. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
170. Gorz, "Ecology and Society," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 60.
171. Ory and Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels*, p. 216.
172. Serge Moscovici, "Filiations intellectuelles et politiques," in *Le Défi écologiste*, ed. Marc Abélès (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), p. 22. Ory and Sirinelli lend credence to this assertion, noting that in the aftermath of May, Marxism continued to impregnate discourse, and that the May events appeared for a time to have constituted a springboard for a renewal of Marxism; but they hasten to add that the reality was quite different, as would become clear as the new decade wore on. *Les intellectuels*, p. 213.
173. Illich, "Foreword," in *Le chômage créateur*, p. 8 (my translation).
174. See, for instance, Illich's discussion of socialist planning in *Tools*, pp. 60-61.
175. Admittedly, the State contracted less in France than anywhere else in Europe precisely because of the strong Statist, *dirigiste* tradition which impeded the emergence of any real equivalent of the Thatcher/Reagan free-market right. French governments of the right continued to finance what remains one of the most extensive and generous systems of social security in the world, funded by a combination of contributions from salaries and government subsidies. By 1981, social welfare expenditures represented 31.4 per cent of the GDP as against 14 per cent in 1960. This figure is higher than in Germany, Britain or Italy. Nevertheless, when Raymond Barre assumed the position of Prime Minister in 1976, he anticipated the neo-liberal policies that would dominate the industrial world in the 80s by introducing an austerity program involving cuts in social spending, wage and price controls, as well as a break with the practices of *dirigisme* in favour of the free market.
176. Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, p. 135.
177. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
178. Charbonneau et. al., *Les écologistes*, p. 84.
179. Simonnet, *L'Écologisme*, p. 45 (my translation).
180. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, pp. 41-42 (my translation).
181. Michaud, *L'Avenir*, p. 81.
182. Gorz, "Ecology and Freedom," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, pp. 34-35.
183. *Ibid.*, p. 36, and see Michaud, *L'Avenir*, p. 46. On the definition of civil society Gorz cites the work of Pierre Rosanvallon, editor-in-chief of the CFDT's journal *CFDT Aujourd'hui* from 1973-1977, and one of the chief theoreticians of the *deuxième gauche*, who later moved towards a social-democratic-verging-on liberal orientation. Rosanvallon was a central figure in elaborating the theme

of the defense of civil society against the State, and a proponent of the idea of social experimentation as the means to reanimate the institutions of civil society. Bernard Brown summarizes Rosanvallon's project in the 70s in terms easily applicable to Gorz as we shall see: "Rosanvallon's goal is nothing less than to combine the Marxist critique of capitalism, the Proudhonian vision of decentralization, the liberal principle that the power of the state must be limited and that civil society is supreme, along with rigorous central planning and social appropriation of the means of production." *Socialism of a Different Kind*, p. 55.

184. Gorz, "Ecology and Freedom," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 38.

185. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 74 (my translation).

186. Noting the widespread tendency of New Left academics to regard welfare compromises dismissively as modes of capitalist reproduction, Rustin charges that, "The discrediting of welfare reformism, and the failure to maintain much belief in its further potential, has surely helped to clear the way for the attack on it from the right." ["The New Left and the Present Crisis," *New Left Review* 121 (May-June 1980), p. 71.] Rustin made the point specifically in the context of an analysis of the British New Left, but it is equally applicable to the New Left as a whole. His argument that the New Left wrongly took the hegemony of the centre for granted also ties in with a point raised in my discussion of Gorz's inclination in the 60s to see Swedish-style social-democracy as the worst default outcome of the stagnation of revolutionary forces in the West.

187. For a discussion of this point see Michaud, *L'Avenir*, p. 29, pp. 38-44 and 48-52, and see also the jaundiced commentary by Alain Lipietz in "Choisir sa gauche," pp. 20-22.

188. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 41.

189. Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory*, p. 24.

190. Charbonneau et. al., *Les écologistes*, p. 83.

191. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

192. In this connection, there is an interesting ongoing question raised by Andrew Dobson among others about whether there is any necessary link between an ecologically sound society and any particular form of government. Illich, for example, maintained that a convivial mode of production was not predicated on any particular form of government, although it can certainly be inferred that decentralization was the *conditio sine qua non* of convivial reconstruction. Most ecologists disagreed; they saw a necessary link between decentralized democracy and ecology. For some, as Dominique Simonnet points out, it was even rooted in nature: they saw the self-regulation of ecosystems as corresponding to *autogestion*. See Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, pp. 80-85 and Simonnet, *L'Écologisme*, p. 76.

193. Louise Beaulieu and Jonathan Cloud note that in French public law there is no such thing as local power, but only the power of the indivisible republic transmitted down through departments and prefectures. "Political Ecology and the Limits of the Communist Vision," p. 225.

194. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 152.

195. Simonnet, *L'Écologisme*, pp. 78-79.

196. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, p. 67.
197. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
198. Gorz, Preface to *The Division of Labour*, p. xi.
199. Gorz, "Socialism or Ecofascism," chap in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 90.
200. For example, Sainteny, *Les Verts*, p. 62; Michaud, *L'Avenir*, p. 42. Andrew Dobson attempts to address this question in *Green Political Thought*, pp. 120-121 and 178-180. The most extensive and probing reflections are those of Boris Frankel, whose critique of Gorz in his book *The Post-Industrial Utopians* we will examine in the next chapter.
201. Gorz, "Ecology and Freedom," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 19.
202. Hirsh, *The French Left*, p. 231.
203. Simonnet, *L'Écologisme*, pp. 78-79.
204. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 135 (my translation).
205. Simonnet, *L'Écologisme*, p. 58 (my translation).
206. Charbonneau, et. al., *Les écologistes*, pp. 61-62 (my translation).
207. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 72.
208. Journès, "Les idées politiques," p. 247 and *passim*.
209. Michael Rose, *Servants of Post-Industrial Power? Sociologie du Travail in Modern France* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1979), p. 39.
210. Michaud, *L'Avenir*, p. 81.
211. From an excerpt of the pamphlet translated and reproduced in *Writing on the Wall, France May 1968: A Documentary Anthology*, ed. Vladimir Fišera, trans. Nicholas Ainsworth et. al. (London: Alison & Busby, 1978), p. 61. A seminal document of May '68 in many respects, the full text of the pamphlet in the original French is included in René Viénet, *Enragés et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), pp. 219-243.
212. Richard Gombin, *Origins of Modern Leftism*, pp. 74-75.
213. Cited in Gianni Statera, *Death of a Utopia: The Development and Decline of Student Movements in Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 172.
214. See, for instance, Marcuse's 1967 lecture "The End of Utopia," in his *Five Lectures*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro and Shierry Weber (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).
215. His disaccumulation thesis is discussed by Fred Block in an introduction to articles by Block and Fred Hirschorn in *New Political Science* 2 (Fall 1981), pp. 5-6.

216. Journès, "Les idées politiques," p. 245.
217. Charbonneau et. al., *Les écologistes*, p. 68.
218. Bernard Cassen points this out in "Imperative transition vers une société du temps libéré," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1994, p. 25 n.21.
219. As previously noted, the 40-hour week was initially introduced in France by Léon Blum's Popular Front government in 1936, precisely as a means of reducing unemployment. At the time, the average workweek was 46 hours. The economic effects of the 40-hours law have been a subject of controversy, revolving particularly around the conclusions of economist Alfred Sauvy that the measure was economically detrimental, since, in Sauvy's analysis, the expense involved in hiring new workers could not be shouldered by industry and induced many firms to slow production, thus stifling a budding economic recovery. According to some critics, however, Sauvy's analysis did not consider the deliberate sabotage of the plan by employers. This was the argument put forward by Michel Rolant, National Secretary of the CFDT in "Refaisons donc le premier mai," an interview in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, December 4, 1978, p. 84. The 40-hours legislation was subsequently weakened and the average workweek rose, resting at somewhere between 42 and 45 hours in the 60s, when the 40-hour workweek once again became a union demand. It was only actually attained in practice in 1982 when Mitterand's Socialist government legislated the 39-hour week. By the late 70s the CFDT became one of a number of union federations throughout western Europe to begin pressing for the 35-hour week.
220. The demand for the eight-hour day dated from the 1860s and the First International; it was only achieved after the First World War.
221. On the history of French labour struggles for shorter hours, see Patrick Fridenson, "Le temps de travail, enjeu de luttes sociales," *Futuribles* (May-June 1992), pp. 19-28.
222. For an historical overview of the union movement's response to unemployment in the period which concerns us, see René Mouriaux, "Trade Unions, Unemployment, and Regulation: 1962-1989," trans. James Hollifield and George Ross in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991).
223. See Charbonneau et. al., *Les écologistes*, p. 70 and Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 113.
224. Extended vacation time was the main form of reducing working hours in France after World War Two: two weeks in 1946, three weeks in 1956, four weeks in 1969; a fifth week was added in 1982 under the Socialist government.
225. Gorz, "Political Ecology: Expertocracy versus Self-Limitation," p. 64 (original emphasis).
226. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 78 (my translation).
227. Amis de la Terre, *Perdre sa vie à la gagner* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1977), p. 12.
228. In his preface to Aznar's *Travailler moins pour travailler tous* (Paris: Syros 1993), p. 9, Gorz wrote that "For some time now, it hasn't been easy for us to distinguish our respective thinking. Rereading his first books I realize that he was the first to advance ideas that I believed to be my

- own. And he then attributed the paternity to me for having taken up and reworked those same ideas” (my translation).
229. Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 31 (my translation).
230. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
231. Michel Bosquet, “Quand les chômeurs seront heureux...” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, December 4, 1978, p. 85 (my translation).
232. Gorz, Preface to *The Division of Labour*, p. viii.
233. Gorz, “Ecology and Society,” chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 61.
234. Michaud, *L’Avenir*, pp. 118-119.
235. Herbert Marcuse, “Socialism in the Developed Countries,” *International Socialist Journal* 8 (April 1965), pp. 141-142.
236. *Ibid.*, p. 150. Marcuse developed this line of argument in “The End of Utopia.”
237. Tim Luke, “Informationalism and Ecology,” *Telos* 56 (Summer 1983), p. 68.
238. Bosquet, “Quand les chômeurs,” p. 85.
239. Gorz, “Ecology and Freedom, chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 19.
240. Cited by Gorz in *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, trans. Mike Sonenscher (London: Pluto Press, 1982), p. 88.
241. Dobson, *Green Political Theory*, pp. 90-92. Note that Dobson evinces the egalitarian distribution of wealth as a common approach to creating sustainable societies in a context of scarcity.
242. Gorz, “Two Kinds of Ecology,” chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 8 (original emphasis).
243. Quoted in Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (London: Sphere Books, 1980), p. 205 (original italics).
244. Gorz, “Political Ecology: Expertocracy versus Self-Limitation,” p. 65.
245. Rodman, “Review,” pp. 322-324.
246. Gorz, “Two Kinds of Ecology, chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 3.
247. *Ibid.* (original emphasis).
248. Gorz, “Ecology and Freedom,” chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 27.
249. Gorz, “Political Ecology,” chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis*, p. 182.

250. Ibid., p. 173.
251. Ibid., p. 184.
252. Gorz, "Ecology and Freedom," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 20.
253. Gorz, "Two Kinds of Ecology," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 4.
254. Gorz, "Ecology and Freedom," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 20.
255. Gorz, "Political Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis*, p. 186.
256. Gorz, "Which Way is Left?," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 94.
257. Gorz, "Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 34.
258. Boggs, "The Green Alternative," especially pp. 880-881, 887-888 and 897-898.
259. What Boggs is presumably referring to in this context is the projection by some ecologists onto human society of a biological model entailing some disputable ideas about natural order and natural equilibria. This was a current of thought which emerged in Green movements throughout the West. In a broad sense it was thought that the organization of society should take a leaf from the organization of nature (See Simonnet, *l'Écologisme*, pp. 75-76.) French ecologists often drew parallels, for example, between self-management and the self-regulation regarded as characteristic of all ecosystems. (See for example Brice Lalonde's comments in Lalonde, Moscovici, Dumont, *Pourquoi*, p. 22) This line of argument was regarded in liberal and conventional left quarters with a good deal of suspicion and sometimes criticized as fascistic on the grounds that, historically, attempts to relate the social order to a natural order have been associated with totalitarianism. But it was not, in any case, a prominent theme in French political ecology in the 70s. Serge Moscovici for instance distanced himself from those ecologists who believed in a ideal balance in either the natural or human world, maintaining that the stationary state does not exist, and that the reality of life is a sequence of disequilibria without beginning or end, in the absence of which there would be no development, no history.
260. Bosquet, "Quand les chomeurs," p. 85.
261. Rodman, Review of *Ecology as Politics*, p. 320.
262. His reading actually anticipates aspects of the account of Green philosophy by Fritjof Capra and Charlene Spretnak in *Green Politics* as described by Carl Boggs (Boggs, "The Green Alternative," p. 890.); Capra and Spretnak also saw as fertile soil for a new ecologically sensitive democratic culture the American traditions of civic participation, self-determination and decentralization in American society. But it is noteworthy that they represent a new age, neither left nor right essentially a-political tendency within the ecology movement.
263. Gorz, "Socialisme: thèmes pour demain," *Les Temps Modernes* 471 (October 1985), pp. 441-442 (original emphasis).
264. Riccardo Albione, "The Crisis of the Italian Revolutionary Left," *International Socialism* 6 (Autumn 1979), p. 140.

265. Lumley, *States of Emergency*, pp. 341-342.
266. *Ibid.*, p. 296.
267. Steve Wright, "Negri's Class Analysis: Italian Autonomist Theory in the Seventies," *Reconstruction* 8 (Winter/Spring 1996), available [journal online]: <[http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/~spoons/aut\\_html/opsoc.html#2](http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/~spoons/aut_html/opsoc.html#2)> [June 30, 1997].
268. Lumley, *States of Emergency*, p. 301.
269. Serge Bosc, *Stratification et transformations sociales: la société française en mutation* (Paris: Nathan, 1993), pp. 188-189.
270. Brown, *Socialism of a Different Kind*, pp. 37-38.
271. Jean Rousselet, *L'Allergie au travail* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974), pp. 13-14.
272. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
273. Gorz, "La plus grande liberté possible," pp. 69-70 (my translation).
274. Rousselet, *l'Allergie*, p. 108.
275. Illich, *Tools*, p. 77.
276. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
277. Two of the most penetrating critical commentaries on Gorz's work have been elaborated from within the framework of eco-political theory by Robyn Eckersley and Boris Frankel respectively; we will review aspects of both in the next chapter.
278. Michaud, *L'Avenir*, p. 47.
279. N.A., *A Brief History of Political Ecology in Greece*, available [online]: <<http://www.magnet.gr/views/green/greenpol>> [April 20, 1997]; Jürg Altwegg, *Querelles de français*, trans. Jeanne Etoré (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1986), p. 133n.

## Chapter Four The Revolutionary Subject Reconsidered

We should not expect productivity to offer us a fulfilling life; productivity will not sustain an enthusiastic collective response to economic demand. But what more is there to say knowing that work has taken on the status of a cult from Cuba to China, and that the homilies of Guizot would now be right at home in a May 1st speech.

Raoul Vaneigem  
*Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage  
des jeunes générations* (1967)

For workers, it is no longer a question of freeing themselves *within* work, putting themselves in control of work, or seizing power within the framework of their work. The point now is to free oneself *from* work by rejecting its nature, content, necessity and modalities.

André Gorz  
*Adieux au prolétariat* (1980)

Few books have more amply proven the value of a provocative title in the publishing industry than *Adieux au prolétariat*. The very ambiguity of the valediction — was Gorz merely bidding his own farewell to the proletariat or suggesting that the working class itself had exited the historical stage — or both? — inevitably elicited a reaction; at a time when so many luminaries of French intellectual life were making their exodus from the left, the title alone was bound to raise suspicions of political perfidy, as evidenced by Chris Gerry's remark that "...it can be interpreted either as an elegy to a spent political force or as a proclamation of a personal class trajectory." <sup>1</sup>

The book appeared in 1980, at the dawn of a new decade that would confirm and intensify the trend towards the disaffection of left-wing intellectuals inaugurated in the later 1970s. Of course, as has often been observed, this thermidor of the intellectuals paradoxically coincided with the most triumphant historic moment for the official left since the Liberation. However, among the *grands intellos*,<sup>2</sup> the politically ambiguous post-structuralism began to be supplanted in France, despite a successful migration and continuing ascension in the Anglo-American world, by the rediscovery of the traditions of liberal political philosophy.



The revelations, first about the Soviet Union and then about the barbarity of successive Third World revolutionary regimes, had resurrected the watchword of anti-totalitarianism, with attendant explorations of the ideas of Karl Popper, Friedrich Hayek and others. This ferment now issued, as George Ross among others has shown, in a virtual consensus around a new liberalism grounded in the rediscovery and reappropriation of the French liberal tradition, from Alexis de Tocqueville and Benjamin Constant to Raymond Aron, and finding expression in journals such as *Le Débat* (launched in 1980 by historian Pierre Nora), in weeklies like *Le Nouvel Observateur*, and in the offerings of key publishing houses such as du Seuil and Grasset.<sup>3</sup>

The revival of the liberal tradition in philosophy coincided and converged with the culmination of the protracted rise in France of a new individualism — a phenomenon referred to by the French media of the time as the *repli sur soi* (retreat into privacy).<sup>4</sup> There were multiple historic tendencies informing the growing preoccupation with the process and prospects of individual growth and self-realization, not the least significant of which was the cumulative effect of rising affluence during the *trente glorieuses*: the 30 years of prosperity had served to open up possibilities for greater individual choice — not only in the context of a culture of consumption, but also with respect to such life decisions as family size and, at least in the case of the middle and upper classes, career path. Another interesting factor fuelling this phenomenon of egocentrism was the disappointment experienced by activists and sympathizers of the revolt of May '68 at the failure of that momentous event to produce or induce any of the desired earth-shaking societal changes. As in many of the countries with dynamic student protest movements, the aftermath of the 60s and the demise of the New Left ushered in a new inwardness (often shading off into narcissism), a sense that if one could not change life at least one could work on changing oneself. Hence the popularity of new forms of spirituality and of psychoanalysis. In France, the new individualism was also expressed in a flourishing cult of individual performance and entrepreneurial spirit and a more popular anti-statism, conveniently well-suited to the austerity policies of the centre-right government.

The suspicions harboured by post-structuralism and “new philosophy” of grand social projects and utopian thinking as the gateway to totalitarianism kindled the conviction that any attempts to transcend capitalism were bound to be disastrous — capitalism became unsurpassable,

if in some estimates still reformable; revolution by any definition unthinkable. Growing anti-statism also fed a resurrection of liberal philosophy but, as George Ross observes, the new liberalism was less concerned than post-structuralism with identifying sources of oppression and promoting resistance.<sup>5</sup> Responding to such developments as the economic crisis after 1974 and the wave of anti-sovietism of the later 70s, the “second left” also changed course.<sup>6</sup> The neo-liberal potential latent in aspects of the anti-statist leanings of the second left began to predominate in many quarters. The concept of *autogestion* was diluted, paving the way for its displacement in the 1980s by less explicitly political terms such as *autonomie* and *alternative*. The trajectory of erstwhile PSU leader Michel Rocard is instructive here. Having championed *autogestion* in the PSU and then within the Parti Socialiste, Rocard redefined the concept in 1985 as giving “more *autonomy* to individuals and to all the ways of organizing social life in the future.”<sup>7</sup> This was a far cry from the once general understanding of *autogestion* as workers' self-management, an understanding which Rocard had shared, as his writings of the early 1970s attest. Rocard is credited by Bernard Brown with the definition of *autogestion* included in a 1972 PSU manifesto: “a society in which men and women are able to take their own affairs in hand, then themselves to make decisions concerning their work, their life environment, their training, their social relations, and all of their daily life.”<sup>8</sup>

The recasting of *autogestion* and the accent on new master concepts such as *autonomie* in the later 70s has been interpreted in various ways. For Sunil Khilnani, who traces the breakdown of the vocabulary of revolution among French left intellectuals, it signified a groping towards a conception of social democracy, an idea long held in contempt among French leftists.<sup>9</sup> In the more jaundiced (but not necessarily inconsistent) view of George Ross, it represented a complete decoupling of the concept from radicalism and the goal of transcending capitalism and the market; *autogestion* amounted simply to an appeal to destatize the left on the part of a *deuxième gauche* that in the end came to espouse a form of “neo-liberalism with a human face.”<sup>10</sup> “By the mid-1980s,” writes Ross, “the search was for the theoretical groundings of a policy where state power would be limited and circumscribed, allowing maximum space for democratic individualism while avoiding the undesirable atomizing aspects of Anglo-Saxon utilitarianism. It was a case of looking for America without Reagan and Adam Smith.”<sup>11</sup> Through whatever political lenses assessments of the

evolution of the second left are filtered, there is no discord concerning the judgement that it moved in a progressively more reformist direction.

It should not be inferred, however, that attention to the problem of individual autonomy is necessarily synonymous with either social-democratic reformism or liberalism: in Gorz's case, as we have shown, the quest for individual autonomy was central to his radical socialist project from the beginning. We will return to this question later on in this chapter, but it is worth pointing out here that Gorz's work in the 1980s is at variance with Ross's depiction of the fate of the category of sociological artisans, of which Gorz is in many respects representative.

We have already noted Ross's observation that elite intellectual debates and the discussions of artisan sociologists proceeded according to quite different logics until the late 1970s: until that time, concepts derived from Marxist political philosophy and sociology thrived among the artisans. Subsequently, however, "...there was a rapid deflation of artisanal confidence in neo-marxist stratification-based models of politics, such that, by the mid-1980s Marxist concepts had disappeared from the word processors and bookshelves of French social scientists."<sup>12</sup> On Ross's account, political sociology ceased to be "left" in the older French sense of the term, but no single alternative replaced the class analytical orthodoxy. There was instead a revival and reconsideration of nineteenth-century French liberal republican political culture, paralleling the developments in the highest echelons of the intelligentsia. While this is less applicable to Gorz, it is true, as Ross suggests, that by the mid to late 80s, the formerly divergent trajectories of high theory and middle-range left political sociology largely converged on the same terminus.<sup>13</sup> Notably, for Ross, a new scepticism united both categories in a rejection of theoretical perspectives that posited the scientific comprehensibility of the social world.

Ross makes a fruitful attempt to locate these developments in the shifting social and economic context. He points out that the social trends underpinning or correlated with the *gauchisation* of intellectuals in the 60s had all changed by the 80s. Rising unemployment did not spare the tertiary sector, where expansion levelled off. The growth of public sector and educational jobs stabilized after a long period of expansion. According to Ross, the deeper meaning of post-industrialization can be found in the change in class structure brought about by the expansion of

new middle strata, which made it difficult to look at French society plausibly using a traditional Marxist model of workers versus capital.

It is somewhat ironic that Gorz has often been held up by more orthodox Marxists as emblematic of this movement away from the left. And even for some sophisticated left critics such as George Ross and Jane Jenson he is illustrative of the move away from class analysis and towards the hegemony of liberalism.<sup>14</sup> But, to reiterate, this reading does not withstand scrutiny. On the contrary: in bidding farewell to the working class Gorz did not bid farewell to socialism; he explicitly called for going beyond socialism (the subtitle of the original French publication is *Au-delà du socialisme*) to embrace the communist project as the current political task.<sup>15</sup> And at a time when Marxist conceptual tools and categories of analysis were falling into desuetude even among what George Ross identifies as the formerly *marxisant* middle-range artisans of political sociology, Gorz reaffirmed the value of Marxist analysis.<sup>16</sup> The core of the controversy, however, hinged on what group was most willing and best able to assume the political task of realizing communist society, and here Gorz conspicuously parted company with orthodox Marxist class analysis.<sup>17</sup> In *Farewell to the Working Class* he explicitly and systematically eschewed the Marxist theory of agency in an ostensibly irrevocable way, pronouncing the working class structurally incapable of bringing about social change. Capitalist development, he declared, had produced a working class which is unable to take command of the means of production. Its “immediate interests are not consonant with a socialist rationality,” and its “interests, capacities and skills are functional to the existing productive forces, which themselves are functional solely to the rationality of capital.”<sup>18</sup> While the eschewal of the working class as an historically invariable revolutionary subject should not be construed necessarily as a repudiation of class analysis (in fact it is arguably a form of class analysis), Gorz’s argument certainly went incomparably farther than simply challenging the primacy of the industrial working class in any movement radically to transform society, a challenge already implicit or explicit in both new social movement theory and the Eurocommunist theory of the late 1970s.<sup>19</sup>

But the failure of the working class to rally to the cause of its own emancipation was clearly not an uncharted terrain of debate and commentary on the left. Herbert Marcuse, Alain Touraine and Rudolf Bahro had to a large extent dismissed the notion of the working class as vanguard of

revolution earlier than Gorz and with less fanfare. Marcuse had posited the structural integration of the working class in *One-Dimensional Man* in 1964. Since the late 60s, Alain Touraine had been arguing his thesis about the nature of post-industrial society, in which he cast the struggles and leadership of the working class as an expression of the particular and now obsolescent contradictions of industrial society; with the decline of this social form, he maintained, the working class was primarily concerned to prosecute its own particular interests.<sup>20</sup> And in the late 70s Rudolf Bahro elaborated his own version of the new working class thesis in which he explicitly rejected manual production workers as a viable agent due to their deficit of “surplus consciousness” (consciousness not oriented to the securing of material necessities) necessary to effect social transformation. As David Stark notes, for Bahro it was those furthest removed from direct material production, short of being part of the ruling elite, who were most likely to be bearers of the socialist alternative.<sup>21</sup> All these theorists anticipated to some degree what Ross and Jenson identify as a novel aspect of what they designate as the new “middle strata politics” of the late 1970s, namely that “[l]abour was not only not seen as the vanguard of progressive change, but in many if not most cases, was regarded as an *arrière* guard, a special interest standing obdurately in the way of needed social change.”<sup>22</sup>

It was arguably largely Gorz's style and his provocatively emphatic repudiation of the very possibility of working class agency that made his apostasy so memorable. In many ways what is remarkable about *Farewell*, however, is Gorz's commitment to the socialist project at a time when, to borrow George Ross's phrase, “neoliberalism with a human face” was becoming the philosophy of choice among French intellectuals. Of course, as we have already suggested, the liberalism that gained wide currency was not of a piece, but rather ranged from American-style economic and political liberalism of the free market and self-help variety to a politics resembling right-wing social democracy.<sup>23</sup> Still, it remains the case that independent left-wing socialism was largely eclipsed in this period.

Looked at in this light Gorz's work in the 80s commencing with *Farewell to the Working Class*, is mostly *unrepresentative*, attempting as it did to revamp the socialist project around a more detailed variant of the dualist utopia he had begun to outline in the late 1970s. A partial explanation for Gorz's fidelity to a socialist project, however reconfigured, was that, never having been a third

worldist, he was immunized from the crushing disappointment faced by those who looked to China and the newly decolonized nations as vanguards and models (although his embrace of marginals in the form of the non-class of non-workers has been seen by some as partaking of a logic similar to third worldism, a point which will be revisited below). Another reason was Gorz's cosmopolitanism; he remained in touch with the left traditions of Italian neo-Marxism and drew inspiration from the struggles of the German trade union movement and from German left thought, which in contrast with the crisis of French unionism and retreat of French left social thought, remained more fertile.

### **The dual society debate**

The themes and arguments of *Farewell* can be contextualized in part as an invitation to and intervention in a debate that took place in the late 1970s and early 80s in France around the concept of the dual society, which itself must be set against the background of continuing economic crisis and capitalist restructuring in the western economies during the 1970s: decentralization and globalization of production (relocation to sources of cheaper, less organized labour both within and outside the advanced industrial economies), a new international division of labour, “flexibilization” (increased use of temporary and contractual labour, lower wages, irregular hours), a retreat from expenditures on social benefits and social welfare — in short a comprehensive neo-liberal strategy. As Benjamin Coriat among others notes,<sup>24</sup> this strategy had as its main aim the goal of promoting capital accumulation and reducing the cost of reproducing the workforce — a cost that had continued to rise in France during the 60s and much of the 70s due to successful working class wage struggles. Much in the spotlight in this period was the Italian example, that is, the physical decentralization of production to areas with less labour militancy and the creation of a core/periphery model within the big firms, whereby a small number of specialized well-paid workers form the stable core of the firm's workforce while much of the work is contracted out to a periphery of temporary lower-wage workers. This new labour flexibility in Italy went hand in hand with a general moderation of labour demands and roll-back of social gains, but more promising developments also occurred such as the federation of subcontractors. The Italian example was lauded by some scholars (notably Michael Piore and Charles Sabel in essays and in the book *The*

*Second Industrial Divide* and by the German scholars Horst Kern and Michael Schumann) as the dawn of a new historical phase of capitalist economic organization and expansion that promised a renaissance of craft-type labour.

In France, the late 70s were the years of Raymond Barre's most determined austerity program. The second Barre plan was adopted in April 1977, and the defeat of the left in the 1978 legislative elections emboldened the government's commitment to its implementation. Barre's strategy was to increase exports and open up opportunities for the more robust fractions of private capital, while reversing the gains of labour with respect to wages and security.<sup>25</sup> A 1978 speech by Minister of the Economy René Monory sounded the death knell of *dirigisme*: the minister explained that while the government had been temporizing hitherto to keep businesses afloat, this practice was finished and it had become clear that whole segments of industry were no longer viable.<sup>26</sup> France's textile, steel and shipbuilding industries were particularly hard hit by the drive to strengthen France's economic competitiveness by favouring the more resilient and technologically advanced sectors of French industry. The government also cut back on subsidies to public services and thus prices rose. Moreover, after initially pursuing a policy of maintaining employment, the Barre administration then began to allow industry to lay off workers under the guise of "industrial redeployment," and consequently the crisis of unemployment that had already impressed itself on the French public as the most serious concern of the day grew more dire. Of course, France's mounting unemployment was not an isolated problem: in the countries of the European Economic Community the combined jobless figure totalled eight million, and everywhere long-term unemployment had increased. In France by 1980 there were nearly a million and a half unemployed, a figure that would double by the middle of the decade during the opening years of Socialist rule. Between 1974 and 1977 the number of unemployed youths tripled. Although part of Barre's aim was to control inflation this policy objective was unsuccessful, and by 1980 the government was encouraging industry to keep wage increases below the inflation rate, thus exerting downward pressure on real wages.<sup>27</sup> Barre was unmoved by the human cost of his policies and when queried by a journalist about the difficulties faced by unemployed workers was reported to have retorted, "Let them start their own businesses."<sup>28</sup> The less flippant response of the Giscard regime to the phenomenon of mounting

unemployment was to attribute it primarily to the demographic blip of the baby boom which was, in this view, producing a surfeit of workers which would subside by 1985.<sup>29</sup>

The dualism debate revolved around two very different conceptions of the desirable response to the economic crisis in France.<sup>30</sup> On one side of the divide figured an official report, *Vers une socio-économie duale*, published in 1980 by Christian Stoffaes (head of the Centre d'études et de prévisions) and J. Amado, on technology and employment in French society, produced with a view to preparing the Eighth Plan. In it the authors envisaged a social and economic dualism whereby one sector of society would be tied into the global economy, adapted to new technologies and highly competitive while the other sector would remain more traditional, convivial and less competitive, peopled by less technologically-savvy individuals earning lower incomes. As Dominique Michaud explains, the dual society is a system that depends on an articulation between a highly productive global economy, providing high income and job security for workers, and an informal economy engaged in sub-contracting, allowing the preservation or revival of certain traditional crafts and offering greater conviviality although less social protection to those who are voluntarily or involuntarily excluded from the other sector.<sup>31</sup> In fine, the authors valorized the advent of a two-tier society. As Guy Roustang describes it: "...the solution of the dualist economy is very attractive since it consists in telling that segment of the population which cannot be integrated into the official economy to fend for itself."<sup>32</sup> But the scheme's proponents couched the encouragement for the flourishing of a low wage informal sector in the acknowledgement that some citizens were seeking fulfillment and creativity in their work and rejected hierarchy and parcellization of tasks; in other words they used the rhetoric of conviviality in a bid to institutionalize the marginalization of growing numbers of people.<sup>33</sup> Gorz and other critics challenged this social and economic vision as the South-Africanization of society.<sup>34</sup> The counter-argument, as elaborated by intellectuals such as Gorz, Illich, and sociologist Pierre Rosanvallon, rejected this division of society into two distinct and unequal segments in favour of a dualist arrangement of a different kind, a temporal rather than a social dualism<sup>35</sup> whereby each individual would partake of both the high-tech productive and convivial spheres. As Guy Roustang points out, the motivations of the two sides were very different: the first was driven by the concern to make France more competitive in the global market in face of economic crisis; the second antedated the



crisis and was inspired by a vision of non-statist socialism, emphasizing the values of autonomy, responsibility and conviviality and putting forward a critique of the market-driven consumer society.

This debate formed part of the backdrop against which Gorz developed his vision in the early 1980s of the dualist utopia and for which he now laid more elaborate theoretical foundations than he had in the mid-70s. Unlike the dual society which institutionalizes the division of the population into privileged and marginal, his dualist society as we saw in the last chapter involves the division of society into two spheres, the sphere of heteronomy/necessity and the sphere of autonomy/freedom, between which people divide their time. It is unfortunate that he chose to retain the term, as the distinction between dual and dualist is not self-evident; on the other hand he defined it quite clearly on numerous occasions, as when he explained: "I've given the name 'dualist' to a society in which both spheres would be governed by differing forms of organization but where each belongs to both and draws advantage from precisely this double jurisdiction."<sup>36</sup>

Thus the historical development underpinning *Farewell* was a manifest and escalating social dualism, and particularly the dualization of the labour market into a diminishing number of stable well-paid jobs and a growing proportion of casual and poorly paid jobs. But a response to the growing two-tier society need not take the form of a threnody for the working class. It was the waning militancy and growing accommodationism of the labour movement itself that formed the canvass upon which Gorz sketched the demise of the working class as a force for social change.

### **The fracturing of the French labour movement**

To begin with, the working class was declining numerically in the latter half of the 70s, particularly unskilled and semiskilled workers — the much analyzed *ouvriers spécialisés* (OS). As elsewhere in Europe, economic crisis adversely affected French industry, with certain areas such as steel and textiles hit harder than others, and with concomitant devastation of certain local communities. Serge Bosc comments:

**The stratum of workers...lost the key categories that had structured it socially and symbolically: the decline of the miners began some time ago, and more recently steel workers, metal workers, and the shrinking ranks of auto workers have ceased**

to occupy the central place they held in the 1960s. ... This disaggregation has hastened the decline of the labour movement. The crisis of French unionism, which became acute in the 1980s, was only one aspect of it.<sup>37</sup>

The late 70s was not a stellar moment for labour or the trade union movement in France. In fact it brought to an end an extended period of militant struggles, ongoing gains, and inter-union collaboration and opened a phase of precipitous decline in overall union membership (already low by EEC standards) which would culminate, by the late 1980s, in the lowest rate of unionization in French history. From an average rate of unionization of 30 per cent in the period from the end of the 1950s to the mid seventies, membership plummeted thereafter to 11 per cent of the active population by 1988. Between 1977 and 1980 the CGT is estimated to have lost anywhere from one-quarter to one-third of its membership,<sup>38</sup> while CFDT membership stagnated and then began to decline, although not so dramatically. Beginning in 1980, the number of days lost to strikes fell off significantly (from 3,656 in 1979 to 1,674 in 1980) and showed a steady downward trend thereafter.<sup>39</sup>

Union divisiveness was also exacerbated in this period. Historically weak and divided by comparison with, say, the German or the British labour movement, French unions had actually experienced a moment of rising influence in the 60s, and the ten years from 1966-1977 had seen greater cooperation among the three biggest confederations — CGT, CFDT and FO — peaking with the protests against Raymond Barre's austerity program in 1976. Labour initially responded to the crisis with militant action, and centre-right governments had been reluctant up to that point to turn back the historic gains of labour for fear of suffering defeat at the polls; however, as noted above, the tides turned somewhat in the late 70s, as capital and the State acted more resolutely to impose a neo-liberal agenda. Moreover, with the collapse of the Common Program in 1977 and the defeat of the left in the 1978 legislative elections, divisions among the unions hardened once again.<sup>40</sup> Economic crisis and rising unemployment, combined with tougher austerity measures and official left political bungling, aggravated all the previous weaknesses in the union movement.<sup>41</sup> Having arrived at differing analyses of the nature and causes of the crisis, the CFDT, the CGT and the FO all pursued divergent policy options and strategies in face of the triple challenge of austerity, unemployment and a new employers' strategy.<sup>42</sup> They also expended considerable energy attacking each other on approaches to union action, as well as on domestic and foreign political questions: the

Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was one such divisive issue, but enmity between the CFDT, a supporter of the Polish Solidarity movement, and the CGT reached a peak in December 1981 when the CGT followed the PCF in condoning the introduction of martial law in Poland. (Gorz also took a stand harshly condemning the putsch in Poland, and he praised the CFDT for setting the tone for the non-communist left.<sup>43</sup>) In general, rather than mobilizing on the shop floor — a task that grew more and more difficult given the crisis, which weakened labour's bargaining position in relation to wages, working conditions and power over the production process — labour looked to the State to defend its interests and pinned its hopes on a left electoral victory, although even here the CGT supported the PCF, while the CFDT was inclined toward the PS.<sup>44</sup>

Most interesting for our purposes is the evolution of the CFDT, the union with which Gorz had cultivated significant ties. That Gorz continued to engage with the ideas and leadership of the CFDT in the latter half of the 1970s is evident in his work under the name of Michel Bosquet for the *Nouvel Observateur*. In 1977 he published a review of a CFDT publication, *Les dégâts du progrès* (included as an appendix to *Farewell*), in which he drew out those aspects of the book that corroborated the deskilling effects of automation. In pointing to how this dimmed the prospects for self-management, he foreshadowed a leitmotif of *Farewell*. He also included an interview with Michel Rolant, then national director of the CFDT, in his dossier on unemployment and work reduction published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* in 1978.<sup>45</sup>

As noted in the last chapter, the CFDT was a pillar of the *deuxième gauche*, having elaborated in its most militant phase in the early 1970s a *projet de socialisme autogestionnaire* based on a critique of the traditional model of development. While the CFDT continued through the crisis to pursue elements of this project, such as opposition to automobiles and nuclear power,<sup>46</sup> it also embarked on a marked change of strategic course. Following the breakdown of the Common Program in 1977 and the defeat of the left's electoral bid in 1978, the CFDT moved away from the alliance it had pursued with the CGT since the mid-60s in order to make compromises in face of a crisis it now viewed as inevitable. René Mouriaux explains that during the late 70s the CFDT followed the lead of another organized labour movement from which Gorz had drawn so much inspiration in the 60s: the Italian CGIL, and especially the FIOM.<sup>47</sup> In 1978, under the impetus of Secretary General Luciano Lama and Bruno Trentin, this formation adopted a policy of

“rebalancing demands,” including the acceptance of economic sacrifices by those with jobs to counter unemployment — essentially an austerity plan initiated by workers. It entailed making concessions with a view to controlling employer investment policies and work organization. This strategy was even referred to by some as revolutionary reformism. Directly influenced by the Italian experience, the CFDT introduced its own policy of *recentrage* in 1978. Having declared only a year earlier at its 37th convention that there could be no truce in the class struggle, the CFDT now sought to moderate its demands, accepting the practice of concession bargaining; it resolved henceforth to orient its actions less to bringing about a change of regime and more to shopfloor level mobilization and contractual negotiations.<sup>48</sup> Although its ideological significance is a matter of interpretation, as it had been among union members themselves at the time of the policy's formulation,<sup>49</sup> recentring has generally been seen as a less radical, more pragmatic strategy in comparison with the more militant, at least in discourse, propensities of the union since May '68. Promoted by Edmond Maire, who had taken the helm from Eugène Descamps in 1971, along with other members of the national leadership, recentring was not accepted by everyone. The CFDT harboured many contending currents, and the rank-and-file was not always at one with the national leadership.<sup>50</sup>

In short, as George Ross deftly illustrates, the divisions within and conflicts between the French trade union confederations, following upon a period of relative neglect of shopfloor mobilization in favour of partisan political struggles, left the entire union movement in a debilitated state at the outset of the 1980s, at just that moment when the deleterious impact of the economic crisis on labour was becoming more acute.

Against this backdrop of working class recomposition, *desyndicalisation* and an ostensible retreat of worker militancy, a number of prominent French sociologists and some union leaders began to arrive at a sceptical outlook on the nature of the contemporary working class and the future of the trade union movement.<sup>51</sup> Gorz was far from alone in registering the weakened position of the labour movement in face of capitalist restructuring, as he undoubtedly did in *Farewell to the Working Class*. And given Gorz's history of relative indifference to parliamentary politics, the evolution of the labour movement is likely to have been far more significant in his thinking than the electoral defeat of the left in 1978, which Richard Hyman has singled out as a formative influence.<sup>52</sup> Gorz never referred to the Parti Socialiste in his writings or interviews, and he held and continues to

hold a jaundiced view of social democracy. (He did cultivate some close ties within the German SPD in the 1980s, but, notwithstanding a laudatory article he went on to write in the 1990s about that party's program, he concurs with those who saw it as “an agonising and hopelessly immovable dinosaur” and considers social democracy in general to have “delegitimated itself.”<sup>53</sup>)

One subject close to Gorz's preoccupations did gain some ground in the French union movement, reflecting a more international trend. By the beginning of the new decade work reduction was being seriously discussed throughout Europe and not only by the ecology movement and various left intellectuals; the pan-European trade union organization uniting affiliates representing more than 40 million members called for a 10 per cent reduction in working time; the goal of the 35-hour week was endorsed by Helmut Schmidt.<sup>54</sup> Of course there were differences in approach; most French unions called for work reduction without any corresponding wage reduction. The CFDT was the exception. It distanced itself from the traditional union demand that no lay-offs be permitted without job replacement and retraining (the position that the CGT continued to maintain) and began to concentrate its energies on reducing the hours of work. It was alone among the three principal federations to be willing in principle and on the grounds of social solidarity to accept some loss of pay, staggered in relation to income level, in exchange for more free time. The CFDT's 1978 slogan was “*Travailler moins pour travailler tous — et vivre mieux.*” However, the strategy was controversial within the confederation's own ranks.<sup>55</sup> For their part, employers insisted that work reduction without corresponding wage reduction would undercut their competitiveness. (Employers have historically resisted demands for shorter hours, claiming, from the nineteenth century to the present, that the additional costs would undermine their competitive position; this was the very refrain heard during the struggle to abolish child labour in Britain.<sup>56</sup>) French employers tended to oppose work reduction altogether; for them the solution to unemployment lay in minimizing the burdens on them in the form of social security contributions, taxes and the wage bill.<sup>57</sup>

With respect to practical struggles on the issue, the French unions were far from the most militant in Europe; and in Gorz's estimation they missed the opportunity to make work reduction a popular demand supported by mass action.<sup>58</sup> Gorz was critical of their tendency to concentrate instead on protecting stable unionized jobs even if it meant accepting advancing dualization. He

was, however, more impressed by the West German unions, which placed work reduction at the centre of some pioneering struggles: in 1978-1979 IG-Metall, the most powerful union in the FRG, launched a six-week strike with the aim of diminishing working hours. Although this hard-fought struggle was lost in the face of unified employer resistance, the West German union movement concentrated its efforts on work reduction for the next ten years. This in turn induced Gorz to refocus his attention on some of the German union and left theoretical debates of the day; the early 1980s thus inaugurated a phase in his work during which he began to engage more intensely with certain German philosophers and social theorists, although this is not yet manifest in *Farewell*.

### **Bidding farewell to the theory of the proletariat**

In *Strategy for Labor* Gorz had avowed: "There is no crisis in the workers movement, but there is a crisis in the theory of the workers movement."<sup>59</sup> In an undoubtedly conscious allusion to this past pronouncement, he reversed that judgement in *Farewell*, asserting that "[t]here is a crisis in Marxist thinking because a crisis has developed within the labour movement."<sup>60</sup> But *Farewell* does not address the historical specificity of the conditions of organized labour in the countries of advanced capitalism; rather, the first third of the book is devoted to defrocking the Marxist elevation of the proletariat as the preordained agent of change and building a case for the structural incapacity of the working class to effect social transformation.

Very briefly, Gorz analyzes Marx's theory of the proletariat as a syncretism of the three major ideological currents that informed European thought during the age of the bourgeois revolution: Christianity, Hegelianism and scientism.<sup>61</sup> From this amalgam Marx brought forth a philosophy suffused with dogmatism and religiosity. Gorz stresses above all Marx's transpositions of Hegelian philosophy; in Marx's oeuvre, the dialectical unfolding of Spirit towards its necessary end is transfigured into the appropriation by the producing agent of the world created through human labour in the ineluctable historical movement towards communism. Gorz postulates that Marx's proletariat had nothing to do with the empirical reality of workers; rather, having taken over Hegel's eschatological view of history, Marx posited a proletarian revolutionary essence that would necessarily assert itself through a ruse of reason, that is behind the backs of the actors, in an eventual propitious historical conjuncture. Marx was untroubled by doubts as to whether the

proletariat would espouse its mission because for Marx the proletariat was its mission, rather than being the uncertain flesh and blood proletariat of human history.

For his part, Gorz firmly rejects the teleological conception which he sees as the mystical root of Marx's conception of the proletariat, the idea that "history has a meaning which is independent of the consciousness of individuals and realises *itself*, whatever they may think, in their actions. But this meaning, instead of 'walking on its head as spirit does in Hegel, is seen by Marx as marching on the feet of the proletariat."<sup>62</sup> He finds in this conviction the origins of some of the cardinal sins of revolutionary movements in history, such as substitutionism and vanguardism, since it encourages a tendency for groups of people to speak and act on behalf of the proletariat's revolutionary essence, beyond and even in contradiction with its empirically verifiable aspirations and comportment.<sup>63</sup> George Lukács' concept of the imputed consciousness of the proletariat is instructively illustrative of this operation.

Up to this point in Gorz's exegesis of Marx's theory of the proletariat he stresses, rather tendentiously, the mystical dimension at the expense of the more banal conclusions that Marx drew from historical observation that the proletariat was a social class which by virtue of its position in society at the bottom of the class hierarchy had an objective identifiable interest in bringing about the abolition of class society, and that its crucial role in production conferred upon it the power to accomplish that goal.<sup>64</sup> However, Gorz does then proceed to challenge this aspect of Marx's analysis as well, on the basis of the historical evolution of production and the proletariat's role, an account that ironically lends credence, at least to some degree, to the original empirical basis of the theory of the proletariat that Gorz had just categorically denied.

Gorz actually derives the bankruptcy of the working class as a revolutionary subject from the historical invalidation of new working class theory, a theory he retrospectively, and with scant supporting evidence, ascribes to Marx himself.<sup>65</sup> Marx's hopes for the development of proletarian consciousness had been based on an obsolete historical phenomenon: "The idea of a subject-class of united producers capable of seizing power had been specific to ... skilled workers proud of their trade. To them power was not something abstract but a matter of daily experience: on the factory floor power was theirs, they ruled over production."<sup>66</sup> Marx anticipated that the progressive development of the productive forces would replace the army of unskilled labour by a class of

polytechnic skilled workers who would possess comprehensive understanding of the whole production process.<sup>67</sup> Bosses would consequently come to be perceived as superfluous parasites. However, Gorz remarks, Marx was wrong, and he adds (in a rare acknowledgement of having held opinions in the past that he subsequently judged erroneous):

So too have been all those who have thought that the refinement and automation of production technology would lead to the elimination of unskilled work, leaving only a mass of relatively highly skilled technical workers, capable by their comprehensive understanding of technico-economic processes of taking production under their own control.<sup>68</sup>

He explicitly indicts Radovan Richta, Serge Mallet and himself. In fact, Gorz affirms, the opposite had occurred. And here he was consistent with the conclusion we saw him arrive at in the early 70s when he rejected new working class theory in essays such as “Technical Intelligence and the Capitalist Division of Labor” and “The Tyranny of the Factory.” Rather than resulting in the reconstitution of the polyvalent skilled worker, automation and computerization have brought about the atomization and deskilling of workers and the replacement of the skilled labour force by a new type of unskilled worker. But — and here another important shift may be registered in Gorz's thinking — in the process the potential for proletarian initiative has been rendered nugatory.

Capitalism has been so successful in destroying worker autonomy that those who were once called upon to take command of the machinery of production have been dominated by the work of domination which they were to accomplish. The technical capacities and power of the proletariat as a whole have increased but individual proletarians have become impotent. Taylorist methods have destroyed the proletariat's potential to become conscious of itself as the agent of production. Work itself has been denatured, and workers feel no connection with the task at hand, which has no meaning in and of itself. Workers don't work; they “lend their bodies and brains to a mechanized pre-set machine governed process.”<sup>69</sup> The corps of skilled workers who are in a position to take pride in their work has been reduced to a small minority.

Moreover, Gorz maintains, the very nature of contemporary capitalist production makes it impossible for workers to grasp the productive process as a whole. Actual production is dispersed, while coordination is centralized; the sites of production are not the sites of decision-making. “The final destination and even the very nature of what is produced remains unknown. Apart from



management, nobody knows exactly what the things being produced are for — and in any event nobody gives a toss.”<sup>70</sup> In this context, grass-roots workers' power is nothing less than a material impossibility. The only form of control that remains open to workers is the negative power of setting limits *within* the framework of capitalist productive relations, for example, regulating the conditions under which certain hazardous types of work are performed.

Again, there is a problem with the argument insofar as Gorz appears to argue what are ostensibly two contradictory points, namely that the whole theory of the proletariat was from the start a piece of mysticism devoid of empirical foundations *and* that the conditions of production have changed in such a way as to obviate the empirical basis the theory rested upon in an earlier era.

Gorz reaches the dramatic conclusion that, robbed of all autonomy, the working class has become irremediably integrated; that, to reiterate, its “interests, capacities and skills are functional to the existing productive forces, which themselves are functional solely to the rationality of capital.”<sup>71</sup> Unlike the conjunctural argument for the failure of working class agency that Gorz had advanced at one point in *La morale de l'histoire*, which turned on the temporary integration of the working class through a sharing out of the fruits of imperialism, this is a structural argument for an irreversible state of affairs: the permanent inability of the working class to take command.

He offers a harsh assessment of the state of working class consciousness that he regards as the inescapable outcome of these developments; lack of autonomy engenders dependency.

Rather than internalising their complete dispossession and setting out to construct the universal proletarian society on the ruins of the bourgeois order, proletarians have internalised their dispossession in order to affirm their complete dependence and their need to be taken charge of completely. Since everything has been wrested from them, everything should be given to them. Since they have no power, everything should be provided by those with power.<sup>72</sup>

According to Gorz, it is thus that working class demands remain focused on consumerism and on an effort to bring representatives of labour into government in order to expand the welfare state.

Moreover, the labour movement itself exacerbates the destruction of autonomous capacities because it regards the yearning for autonomy as an obstacle to the development of effective class struggle.

The theory of the proletariat demands that workers lose themselves as individuals in order to function as a unified class. Workers' organizations are governed by military virtues such as

discipline, self-sacrifice and loyalty to leadership. The leaders of these organizations typically presented themselves as functionaries of the proletariat and portrayed the proletariat as a mystical entity to which flesh and blood workers were expected to pay obeisance.<sup>73</sup>

In sum, Gorz sees the proletariat as having developed as a “negative imprint of the process of production,” a “replica of capital.” But even with all this Gorz has not completed his case for the impossibility of proletarian revolution as traditionally conceived in the classical socialist tradition. Besides concluding that the proletariat is not historically able to appropriate the productive forces, he argues that even if it had the capacity to do so this traditional goal of socialism is no longer tenable. Confirming his previous if ambiguous position on the non-neutrality of technology, Gorz reiterates his contention that “[t]he development of the productive forces is functional exclusively to the logic and needs of capital.”<sup>74</sup> The productive forces would have to be totally remoulded in accordance with socialist rationality.

He builds on his longstanding argument as to why a change in ownership will not bring about the social changes promised by socialism by presenting an analysis of the nature of power in industrialized societies and offering a novel analysis of the appeal of fascism by way of illustration. Power, he argues, has no subject.<sup>75</sup> It is an effect of the structure. Gorz distinguishes between personal and functional power. The latter, dominant in today's society and in the firm, is incarnate in the bureaucrat and is based not on the ability to command respect for one's superior qualities but on pre-defined hierarchies which confer on occupants of particular positions a certain authority. Power in society and in the firm is exercised by people who have no personal responsibility. (This accounts, in Gorz's view, for the mass appeal of fascism, which constituted a demand for personal power and personal accountability that took the form of the *Führer*.) The nature of power is exemplified by the figure of the anonymous bureaucrat. Even the members of the dominant class are dominated individually by the power the class exercises — everyone is impelled to serve the machinery of domination. “[A]ll that can be found — from the bottom right up to the top of an industrial or administrative hierarchy — are agents obeying the categorical imperatives and inertias of the material system they serve.”<sup>76</sup> Some critics have detected here the influence of Foucault,<sup>77</sup> but Gorz, the advocate of the potential of the autonomous subject, had an understandably dim view of the philosopher of the death of man.<sup>78</sup> Gorz's argument also recalls the Frankfurt School and

particularly the Marcusean concept of gentle totalitarianism — a concept Gorz had found congenial to his own thinking in *Strategy for Labor* and which signified an overarching system of non-terroristic domination rooted in the coordination of society through technology and the manipulation of needs, a world of total administration “which absorbs even the administrators.”<sup>79</sup> Richard Hyman actually locates the antecedents of the theory in *The Communist Manifesto*, where Marx asserted that “competition subordinates every individual capitalist to the immanent laws of capitalist production, as external and coercive laws.”<sup>80</sup> And this lineage is borne out by Gorz himself who notes that the distinction between personal and functional power “can be found already in Marx (the capitalist as functionary of capital) and in Weber’s theory of bureaucracy.”<sup>81</sup>

In any event, the point Gorz wishes to drive home is that seizing power can have no liberating effect. As long as the existing machinery of domination remains intact, it does not matter who the holders of power are: “It is the structure of the machinery which will determine the nature of power and mode of government, the relationship between civil society and the political society and between the political society and the state.”<sup>82</sup> If the working class were to take over the machinery of domination deployed by capital it would reproduce the same type of domination. “The notion that the domination of capital can be transferred to the proletariat and thereby ‘collectivised’ is as farcical as the ideal of making nuclear power stations ‘democratic’ by transferring their management to the control of the trade union hierarchies.”<sup>83</sup> Genuine revolution, therefore, must consist in the destruction of the machinery of domination. “It implies a form of collective practice capable of bypassing and superseding it through the development of an alternative network of relations.”<sup>84</sup>

Having marshalled all these arguments against any lingering faith on the left in the classical revolutionary socialist project with its concomitant reliance on the collective vocation of the working class, Gorz devoted the remainder of *Farewell* to the elaboration and refinement of his own alternative radical vision revolving around the minimization of the role of wage labour and the advent of the temporally dualist society. He pursues a number of central themes: the need to recognize and accept the inevitable persistence of alienation in socially necessary labour and in society; the “abolition of work” as the revolutionary reform most propitious to the dualist utopia; the subversive potential of the “non-class of non-workers”; the indispensability of the State to a

vibrant civil society. It is worth reviewing each of these themes in turn, although we shall take the liberty of disregarding the order in which Gorz treated them.

### **The inescapability of alienation**

As shown in the last chapter, by the latter half of the 70s Gorz had already arrived at the conclusion that the democratization of large-scale production was a chimera; barring a regression behind technology, control in complex industrial production must necessarily lie beyond the individual plant. Consequently, genuinely fulfilling, autonomous work can only be performed outside the sphere of industrial production. This was the logic that informed his proposal for two realms of production — heteronomous and autonomous. In *Farewell* he develops this line of analysis much further, concluding that any attempt to abolish the division of labour — the source of all evil in his philosophy for a decade — is misguided and dangerous.

Alienation, he argues, is inherent in the very socialization of the process of production, and not merely in the capitalist form of organization. Socialization and autonomy or total self-management are not reconcilable. Advanced industrial production requires a scale of operations and a detailed division of labour which preclude the existence of well-rounded trades in which craftsmen produce a product from beginning to end. As he formulated the same point a few years later, “the coordination of a vast number of specialized tasks demands pre-established rules and procedures, leaving *no room for individual improvisation or inventiveness*.”<sup>85</sup> The division of labour thus remains an important root of alienation, but also a necessary part of industrial society. De-alienation can occur only outside, not within, the production process.

What is particularly interesting in Gorz's development of this argument in *Farewell* is that he invokes the aid of an ostensibly unlikely source to buttress his argument for the creation of two separate social spheres: Karl Marx. Gorz transposes the opposition between heteronomous and autonomous production that he had previously taken over from Ivan Illich into Marxist terms, relying on Marx's own renowned assertion in the third volume of *Capital* that the realm of freedom could only flourish on top of the realm of necessity. This claim is often seen to have represented a shift in Marx's own position, compared with his early writings, which foresaw the transcendence of alienation within productive labour.<sup>86</sup> In *Capital* Marx anticipated that the development of the

productive forces and labour productivity would generate an ever greater amount of surplus labour which would make possible the reduction of working time. He argued, moreover, that this reduction was the basis of freedom itself: "...the realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production."<sup>87</sup> The realm of work, Marx imagined, could be transformed for the better into a socialized realm of control — "the associated producers rationally regulating their interchange with Nature" — involving the least expenditure of energy and performed in conditions worthy of human beings. But it would nevertheless remain a realm of necessity; only beyond that realm "begins the development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis."

Gorz reads this passage as recognition of the necessarily heteronomous character of socially necessary labour. He interprets Marx as maintaining that freedom in production cannot mean self-management but only "being able to work with as much dignity and efficiency as possible for as brief a time as possible."<sup>88</sup> And he takes this gloss in turn as evidence in Marx's writings of the imperative of a dualist arrangement to allow for a sphere of genuine autonomy. But he goes much further in insisting on the alienated character of social production and in repudiating any notion of overcoming the division of labour, tying it to a critique of the goal of transcending the tension between individual and social being, between individual activity and social production, which he regards as a central element of the Marxian vision of communism as the reconciliation of opposites. He links this caveat as well to a critique of the Green movement's advocacy of small-scale self-sufficient communities.

In some respects he simply draws out what was already implicit in his writings on political ecology concerning the necessity of the division of labour in complex industrial societies. He now affirms that "The division of labour and knowledge into fragmented but complementary technical skills is the only means by which it is possible to accumulate and put to work the huge stocks of knowledge embodied in machines, industrial systems, and processes of every scale and dimension."<sup>89</sup> But the assertion is sufficiently categorical that it resounds as a striking rupture with central tenets of his earlier thinking concerning the imperative of overcoming the division of labour

and the adverse effects of specialization. This is especially true insofar as he here concedes the technical necessity of the division of labour — an idea the dubiousness of which he had striven to demonstrate in the 1973 book he edited on the subject. He now contends that the only condition under which the division of labour in production could be transcended is through a return to pre-modern social arrangements such as the monastic community. But he warns that this carries with it its own alienations.

In assuming the ultimate coincidence of individuality and social being, the Marxian vision of communist society, he warns, leads to suffocating morality which negates the singularity and incommunicability of aspects of subjective experience.

Individual existence can never be entirely socialized. It involves areas of experience which, being essentially secret, intimate, unmediated and incapable of mediation, can never be had in common. There can be no socialisation of tenderness, love, creativity, aesthetic pleasure (or ecstasy), suffering, mourning or anguish...<sup>90</sup>

Referring to a passage in his early *Fondements pour une morale*, he argues that when such experiences are socialized it always takes the form of a ritual substitution for the depth of individual feeling. He invidiously contrasts the primacy of individual sovereignty in revolutionary bourgeois thought with the traditional socialist expectation that the individual “should find personal fulfillment in the appropriation of collective reality and the common production of the social whole.”<sup>91</sup> Thus, without invoking it explicitly, he revisits the early existential critique of Marxism and socialism as insufficiently attentive to individual and subjective experience. But he goes further in declaring the goal of dissolving the contradiction of individual and society nefarious. It is premised, he claims, on the supposition of abundance and, as Pierre Rosanvallon pointed out, on an unmediated family-like community embracing all of humanity.<sup>92</sup> It will lead to persecution: socialist morality has in common with fascism a “repressive, inquisitorial, normalising and conformist quality”<sup>93</sup> because it equates morality with obedience to rules. Although Gorz does not explicitly refer to Hegel here, his critique recalls the charge advanced against the Hegelian concept of freedom in necessity, the idea that each individual is free in conforming to rules that he, as part of the collectivity, has made.

For Gorz, the socialist dream of an unalienated society of associated producers is a chimera. He rejects the notion of the socialist plan as the faithful mirror and conjugation of individual aims,

the embodiment of some general will that leads to the democratic and dealienated organization of production, arguing that no matter how democratic the process of consultation the complex mediations it will entail ensure that the Plan can never be anything more than the practico-inert — something no one willed but that constrains everyone.<sup>94</sup> Is this simply a problem of scale? Can the self-managed society of associated producers that transcends the contradiction between individual and social being, autonomy and heteronomy, be realized in face-to-face communities governed by direct democracy? On the contrary, for Gorz, there is an inherent danger of prison-like conformity in the autarkic self-sufficient local communities envisioned by the small-is-beautiful current in Green philosophy, because they must rely on the internalization of external obligations, which is not the true exercise of individual autonomy. It is only in monastic communities, he maintains, that people internalize socially necessary work as a moral duty, a form of prayer. But this is not a true unity of material necessity and free will; it is merely a sublimation of the realm of necessity. “[External necessities and constraints] appear to be freely chosen only insofar as each individual member regards them as something other than they are: the most banal types of material production are seen as a form of spiritual exercise.”<sup>95</sup> Gorz for his part postulates that individual consciousness is the sole possible foundation of morality and always arises through an act of rebellion and refusal. Without debating either the philosophical merit or practical implications of such a premise, what is relevant here is Gorz’s belief that morality will only obtain in the realm of autonomy because that is the realm of individual sovereignty.

Thus Gorz’s key conclusion is that there is an irreducible alienation in the machine-like structure of complex industrial societies that it is not possible to dissolve and efforts to do so lead ineluctably to totalitarianism. Self-management, the liberation *of* work, the core of the Marxist utopia in its dominant expressions, was an illusion. “The beginning of wisdom,” Gorz concludes, “lies in the recognition that there are contradictions whose permanent tension has to be lived and which one should never try to resolve.”<sup>96</sup>

Gorz’s disavowal of *autogestion* resonated with and reflected, at least to some extent, the general fortune of the concept in the 1980s, when, as discussed earlier, from its status as a master concept it faded from the public discourse of those associated with the left. According to sociological artisan Pierre Rosanvallon, the authoritative author of an entry on the concept in a *Le*

*Débat* retrospective, in the end *autogestion* served as a bridge between the idea of socialism and the market, and between socialism and liberalism, by rehabilitating the individual around the related notion of autonomy.<sup>97</sup> This judgement echoes George Ross's previously mentioned assessment. In Gorz's case, however, the shift away from self-management did not betoken political or philosophical resignation; he neither embraced neo-liberalism and extolled the virtues of the market nor delved into the tradition of French republicanism, seeking a soft social-democratic alternative to the Reagan revolution. Rather, he continued to rework his emancipatory project in the form of the dualist utopia in opposition to the hegemony of capitalist market society; there is no sense in Gorz's writings in the early 80s of a turn towards a neo-liberal sanction of capitalism as the inescapable horizon of human achievement, and the emphasis on individual autonomy was present in his work from the start. Moreover, consumer capitalism remained in his thinking inimical to the pursuit and exercise of genuine individual autonomy. Still, his conception of the necessary tension — even antagonism — between the individual and the collectivity as it emerges in the pages of *Farewell* was one of the many contentious aspects of the book, as we shall see below when we examine the critical commentary it elicited. And it seems safe to say that there is at least a notable convergence between the particular manner of Gorz's emphasis on individual sovereignty and the much discussed *repli sur soi* that marked French society in the 80s.

### **The abolition of work**

Developing the theme of work reduction that he had already begun to probe in earlier writings as the path to a better quality of life, Gorz now announces the abolition of work — work being here defined as an activity carried out for someone else and in subordination to their aims and conditions in exchange for a wage — as the main goal of the left. In place of workers' self-management of production, the objective he defended in the 60s and early 70s and which he now concluded is impossible in a complex industrial society, what remained for Gorz of the vision of social transformation was the minimization of the obligation to purchase the right to live by performing socially necessary labour, as well as the liberation of time for the purpose of self-determined activity, namely activities that are ends in themselves, from love and artistic creation to the artisanal production of use-values. This is the main concern of the book's subtitle, *au delà du socialisme*.



In *Strategy for Labor* Gorz had touched briefly on Marx's prediction in *The Grundrisse* that automation could conceivably advance to the point that work would disappear. At the time, Gorz judged this eventuality to be too far in the future to warrant serious discussion. But as we have seen the intervening years lent the prospect greater currency for him. Unemployment statistics suggested that work was indeed being eliminated, and more and more observers agreed that thanks to technological innovation the pace of eliminating work would continue to outstrip any new job creation. The service sector, heralded as the job generator par excellence, was levelling off as a source of new employment, and it too was now being mechanized. The dualization of the working population into those occupying stable well-paid positions and less fortunate peripheral and part-time workers was likely to increase as a consequence, and with it the South-Africanization of society. Work, Gorz now contended, was being abolished in practice.

At the same time, the call of the orthodox left for a return to full employment was in his estimation neither possible nor desirable for two reasons: not possible, as we saw in the last chapter, because ecological considerations precluded a Keynesian productivist growth stimulus strategy; not desirable because of Gorz's conviction, given greater emphasis in *Farewell*, that socially necessary labour could never be freely determined activity but would remain alienated to some degree due to the technical and organizational requirements of modern industrial production.

For Gorz, however, the selfsame technical conditions enabling employers to shed labour could be seized as an historically unprecedented opportunity for human liberation. The development of the productive forces offered no better prospect than minimizing socially necessary labour. In *Farewell*, Gorz fully embraced Marcuse's end of utopia thesis (see chapter three, pp. 278-279); he believed that capitalism had in fact reached its culmination by making work, in the way it is usually understood, virtually superfluous. And he invoked Marcuse's own argument for why capital typically opposes work reduction: not because it is not feasible, but rather because of the performance principle, and because of capitalism's natural propensity towards expansion, which renders it antagonistic to any conception of sufficiency. Gorz also invoked the reigning confusion with respect to the ability to differentiate between the necessary and the superfluous.<sup>98</sup> (While in *Farewell* Gorz did not discuss in any depth the historical and philosophical problem of the self-limitation of needs, he did speculate in a Postscript about the possibility of achieving a social

consensus about the nature and level of consumption to which all members of society should be entitled, and made it clear that “the stabilisation of social production at a commonly acceptable level of *sufficiency*” is a precondition of post-industrial socialism.<sup>99</sup> Regrettably, he left the all-important question of the route by which such a consensus might be achieved largely uncommented.) At the same time, it should be noted that in *Farewell Gorz* himself did not labour to demonstrate in empirical detail the feasibility of a work reduction scheme; beyond mentioning German experiments in which workers choose their schedules and amount of work time, the feasibility is mostly taken for granted. He did however offer more concrete explanations of the possible mechanics of work reduction in related essays and interviews at the time and in subsequent publications such as *Les chemins du paradis (Paths to Paradise)*.

Where once Gorz conceived struggles at the point of production as the key to any social change, now he proclaims the displacement of work as the defining core of human existence and the key to radical consciousness. As noted in previous chapters, there were prefigurations on the left of a critique of the Marxist conception of work as the locus of all consciousness, for instance in the *sociologie du travail* tradition<sup>100</sup> and from those critics of new working class theory skeptical of conceptions that looked to the workplace to the exclusion of other dimensions of workers lives as the sole determinant of workers' attitudes.

In part, *Farewell* reflects the displacement of work as the central category of sociological analysis that occurred in the 80s even among left-wing sociologists with the rise of the new social movements and conflicts that were not focused on the opposition between labour and capital. As Claus Offe, among others, has indicated, this period marked the beginning of a break with a tradition embedded in both bourgeois political economy and Marxism of regarding work as the defining activity of human life, and as having “a relatively privileged power to determine social consciousness and action.”<sup>101</sup> As Offe suggests, this break had a basis in verifiable changes in the conditions of social life which rendered work less preponderant, including a noticeable decline of the work ethic due to factors which are similar in Offe's account to those argued by Gorz, particularly the vanishing autonomy of the worker within the labour process.<sup>102</sup>

In *Farewell* Gorz asserts that a momentous cultural mutation is occurring: work — or, more precisely, the work that is carried out for a third party for purposes which are not the worker's own,

in exchange for a wage and according to methods and a schedule determined by the employer<sup>103</sup> — is perceived by ever greater numbers of people as a disagreeable imposition, nothing more than a means to an end. Today's jobs, although they demand a larger component of intellectual work, offer no stimulation, no satisfaction. "Workers no longer 'produce' society through the mediation of relations of production; instead the machinery of production as a whole produces 'work' and imposes it in a random way upon random, interchangeable individuals."<sup>104</sup> Consequently, the rejection of work as the centre of life has become pervasive, embracing a real or potential majority of those in active employment.<sup>105</sup>

Linking his argument to the rejection of the coincidence of individual and social being, Gorz regards this non-identification with socially necessary heteronomous work as ultimately healthy, even in a genuine communist society. As we saw above, Gorz associates the complete identification with one's work, a premise of the classical Marxist view of liberation within work, with stultifying repressive forms of social organization. For Gorz, the path to real reconciliation of individuals and their work lies in recognizing that work is not and should not be the essence of life; it should be only one circumscribed dimension of life.

In light of his various arguments surrounding the category of work — the irreversibility of the technical displacement of work, the inescapability of alienation in the efficient production of socially necessary goods, the disaffection from work and the impossibility of transcending the boundaries between work and life — Gorz reiterates his case for the permanent separation of the spheres of heteronomy and autonomy in the form of a dualist society based on the progressive reduction of working hours that we looked at in the previous chapter.

Essentially Gorz presents work reduction as a feasible, realistic objective which nevertheless harbours subversive possibilities, that is, a *revolutionary reform*: "a reduction of the place and time which alienated work occupies in our lives is within our range; this objective can be a mobilizing and liberating one; and collective reflections and actions directed towards this end can permit the fundamental redefinition of the conditions, content and nature of work."<sup>106</sup>

It is vital to recall here that, for Gorz, the demand to work less is not a call to idleness but the validation of the various types of self-motivated, self-determined production and other forms of rewarding activity that Gorz had earlier promoted. Indeed, in *Farewell*, Gorz recalls elements of

Marx's own critique of the intellectual confections of Charles Fourier with respect to the potential transformation of work into play; for Gorz, as for Marx, self-determined activity involves conscious effort, voluntary cooperation and creativity; it is pleasurable but it entails exertion. "The demand to 'work less,'" he cautioned, "does not mean...the right to 'rest more' but the right to 'live more.'" <sup>107</sup> Free time is anything but the programmed leisure of consumer capitalism served up by what Gorz calls the "oblivion merchants."<sup>108</sup> It is, in the final analysis, work, but it is work done for one's own reasons, on one's own terms, at a pace determined by oneself, to enhance one's own life and the lives of one's friends and relations.

In Gorz's estimation, however, not all production can be of the autonomous variety for reasons previously noted, not least of which is that autonomous production requires complex tools and free time, which in turn requires that basic necessities be met with a minimum of toil. Moreover, if all production were autonomous production then it would constitute an obligation, which contradicts the essence of autonomous activity, namely that it is freely undertaken for its own sake. This brings us back to the importance of the dualist arrangement and the indispensability of the heteronomous realm of production as the basis of autonomy. This heteronomous realm must in turn be regulated:

If the time spent by individuals in producing necessities is to be reduced to a minimum, together with their dependence on the vagaries of local circumstance, then the socialisation of the production of necessities and centralised regulation of distribution and exchange will remain essential ...

The sphere of necessity, and with it the amount of time involved in socially necessary labour, can only be reduced to a minimum by the most efficient coordination and regulation of stocks and flows or, in other words, by finely geared planning.<sup>109</sup>

With this emphasis on the need for regulation we arrive at another distinctive feature of *Farewell*: Gorz's qualified defense of the institution of the State. In contrast with the thrust of much of his previous work, Gorz here develops a positive valuation of the State as the indispensable and permanent precondition of a thriving civil society. And he does so without recalling his own rather virulent anti-Statist inclinations as expressed notably in *Ecology as Politics*.

There is considerable paradox here insofar as Gorz set out to valorize the State, at least to some extent, at just the time when the majority of former left intellectuals were embracing various forms of liberalism and appeared united in their desire to minimize the role of the State, although as has been mentioned before, the State was never quite as reviled by most French intellectuals as it was in Anglo-American variants of neo-liberalism.

Nevertheless, in an interview with the journal *Telos* in 1983 Gorz remarked that the French left is unusually anti-statist, a phenomenon he linked with the historical specificity of the French State. He argued that the institution of the State in France has always crushed civil society, in contrast with the United States, Italy and Germany, where it is the lack of a State that has hindered the growth of civil society by permitting the power of princes to escape the rule of law.<sup>110</sup>

In *Farewell*, rather than prosecuting the claims of civil society *against* the State, Gorz theorizes the State as an institution within the realm of necessity that is permanently necessary to assure the basis upon which the autonomous realm of civil society may flourish. Just as the realm of heteronomous production provides the foundation of autonomous production by ensuring the efficient production of basic necessities and convivial tools, the efficient functioning of the complex economic apparatus comprising the sphere of heteronomous production requires a network of state services.

In keeping with his rejection of social theories that project the possible or eventual transcendence of the opposition between individual and social being, Gorz is sharply critical of conceptions of human-scale communities that would render the State unnecessary, such as those sketched in libertarian, communal and self-management theories. As in the case of monastic communities, the cohesion of self-sufficient local communities depends on the transformation of practical constraints into individual moral exigencies with suffocating consequences for individuality; revolt and disobedience cannot be tolerated; the duty to love the community (submission to necessity) is often mediated through obeisance to a personal charismatic leader. The point Gorz drives home here is that the State is necessary to avoid individuals having to internalize external necessities, a requirement which would contravene autonomy and morality ("morality knows no necessity and necessity no morality."<sup>111</sup> The State assures the rule of law so that each individual is spared the need to internalize an elaborate set of regulations. It is the sphere of

planning and functional power, essential to ensure the smooth and efficient functioning of the production of socially necessary goods.

In spite of this acknowledgement of the indispensable role of the State, Gorz has most assuredly not transmuted into an enthusiastic statist in the pages of *Farewell*. The type of State he proposes is one with powers that are rigidly delimited and has little in common with the current monopoly capitalist state that contrives with capital to destroy “every possibility of autonomous production, consumption and exchange, whether for individuals or communities.”<sup>112</sup> The scope of the State will have to be democratically determined, and this is the role of politics in Gorz's schema. He defines politics as the process of negotiating the respective scope and range of the sphere of autonomy and state-regulated necessities, a process that is without an end, but that aims to restrict the reach of the State by enlarging the sphere of autonomy.<sup>113</sup>

How can this containment of the State be accomplished? In keeping with his focus on the need for individuals to do things for themselves and their neighbours, and his concern with the crippling effects on the fabric of interpersonal relations of excessive dependency on state-delivered social services, Gorz ties the minimization of the role of the State to the reduction of working time. In one of several appendices to the main text dealing with the 1980 study “La révolution du temps choisi,” produced by the Échanges et projets group led by Jacques Delors, Gorz reiterates the point that the demand for and consequent dependence on institutionalized services is the product of not having sufficient time.<sup>114</sup> More free time will create the necessary preconditions for the efflorescence of autonomous activities, which in turn will allow a reduction of the State's role.

Thus in *Farewell* Gorz attempted to strike a compromise between a libertarian anti-statism and a concession to the abiding need in a complex industrial system for a degree of centralized regulation by state institutions. In doing so he distinguishes his own possible utopia from both Marxism and anarchism, which alike envision the ultimate abolition of the State, differing essentially on the time frame.

## **The non-class of non-workers**

As we have seen thus far, for Gorz the subordination of production to needs and the transformation of the State cannot come about through a seizure of power and equipment; it can only occur by means of collective practices that succeed in superseding and suppressing the machinery of domination of one class over another, and of the State over civil society. By whom, we may ask, is this task likely to be taken up?

Throughout the 60s and early 70s, in books such as *Strategy for Labor, Socialism and Revolution* and *The Division of Labour*, Gorz never departed from the classical Marxist precept that the struggle for social change must be anchored at the point of production. Now, however, having discarded the theory of the revolutionary subject and having painted a dismal portrait of the traditional working class as a relatively privileged minority capable only of defending its position against the threat of rationalization, Gorz vested his hopes for social change primarily in those groups most remote from material production. Only those who have experienced autonomy, he reasoned, can have a conception of non-alienated life, and this sense of freedom can be acquired only outside the realm of work. If the dualist utopia had a constituency it lay in the category of people he christened the “non-class of non-workers” or the “post-industrial proletariat.”

This non-class encompasses all those who have been expelled from production by the abolition of work, or whose capacities are under-employed as a result of the industrialisation (in this case the automation and computerisation) of intellectual work. It includes all the supernumeraries of present-day social production, who are potentially or actually unemployed, whether permanently or temporarily, partially or completely.<sup>115</sup>

Thus casting his net wide, Gorz indicates that the non-class is made up of people who are marginal socially but not numerically. In fact, he remarks at one point, they constitute a majority of the population.<sup>116</sup>

But they were not, in his view, akin to a new class; this disparate group had no class identity. What united these individuals was an inability to identify with the jobs they performed (for which they were often overqualified). It is among these people that the displacement of work as a central value is most evident. For them, “[w]ork no longer signifies an activity or even a major

occupation; it is merely a blank interval on the margins of life, to be endured in order to earn a little money.”<sup>117</sup> In contrast with the skilled vanguard of the industrial working class, it is precisely their non-involvement and indifference to the production process that unifies them and, in Gorz's view, affords them a critical distance, with the benefit of which they can cultivate an independence of mind and action. Where the traditional working class, bound as it is to the system, can be expected to struggle against the progressive abolition of work by automation, the non-class, free of the imprint of capitalist relations of production and antagonistic to a work ethic that demands the subordination of life to waged employment, has an interest in seeking to control and benefit from the process of work elimination. Thus the critical attitude towards the ultimate ends of production that Gorz had once claimed for the new working class, he now detected in those scarcely integrated in the world of work. Moreover, as an ever changing conglomeration of disparate individuals, the non-class embodies the goal of social pluralism: “the co-existence of various ways of working, producing and living” which the socialist movement failed to embrace to its own detriment.<sup>118</sup>

While his claims for this category of people are not free of confusion and contradictions, as we shall see, one point which has frequently met with distortion at the hands of detractors should be clarified from the outset: for Gorz, this neo-proletariat did not form a subject in the Marxist sense. Indeed Gorz rejects altogether that conception of preordained agency. The non-class has no mission bequeathed to it by history which it is obliged or destined to fulfill, and no reality other than that of the continuously changing individuals who compose it and who themselves have no sense of belonging to a class; this is why Gorz deems it a non-class.<sup>119</sup>

Moreover the non-class does not partake of the historical vocation of the proletarian revolutionary subject in the Marxist schema; it has neither the will nor the power to take over the machine-like structure defining contemporary society. What matters to it is “to appropriate areas of autonomy outside of, and in opposition to the logic of society, so as to allow the unobstructed realisation of individual development *alongside* and *over* that machine-like structure.”<sup>120</sup> Given these stipulations, Gorz's non-class cannot be depicted as a simple inversion of the Marxist position, as some commentators have hastily done.<sup>121</sup> On occasion, however, Gorz's allusions to the nature of the non-class certainly confer upon it an exclusive claim as an agent of transformation.



The realm of freedom can never arise out of material processes; it can only be established by a constitutive act which, aware of its free subjectivity, asserts itself as an absolute end in itself within each individual. Only the non-class of non-producers is capable of such an act. For it alone embodies what lies beyond productivism: the rejection of the accumulation ethic and the dissolution of all classes.<sup>122</sup>

The aspiration Gorz ascribes to the non-class of non-workers, to carve out a space of individual sovereignty disengaged from the logic of capitalism, corresponded in Gorz's view to the actual form that the yearning for freedom takes among the majority of people in the gentle totalitarian societies of advanced capitalism, the desire for a private niche protecting one's personal life against all pressures and external obligations: a garden, a boat, a cottage, family life. Insofar as these activities are ends in themselves unrelated to the pursuit of economic gain, they constitute spheres of sovereignty wrested from a world governed by the principles of productivity and competition.<sup>123</sup> According to Gorz, the yearning for a personal shelter from the exigencies of the market economy, whether it took the form of backyard gardening or dreams about retiring on a farm, tended to be dismissed in the labour movement as a remnant of petty-bourgeois individualism and a barrier to class consciousness.<sup>124</sup> This is more evidence in his judgement that autonomy is not a proletarian value but an existential demand.

Gorz thus discerns emancipatory potential in the longing consecrated in traditional bourgeois culture for a haven in a heartless world, finding in it glimmers of the existentialist quest for individual autonomy which animated his thinking all along, figuring as the ultimate goal of the revolutionary project. His attempt to probe the meaning and potential of the widespread quest for a private niche has been treated with considerable contempt by some critics, as we shall see below. However it is clear that what Gorz finds meaningful and promising in the desire to pursue such personal activities is not the asocial dimension of such endeavours but their distance from the logic of economic rationality; they are activities undertaken for their own sake: interpersonal communication, giving, creating, aesthetic enjoyment, the creation of shared goals or services that could not be produced as commodities because of their unprofitability. Thus the propensities of the non-class prefigure the sphere of autonomous production that Gorz introduced in his dualist utopia.

Paradoxically, for Gorz, the strengths of the non-class are also its weaknesses: playing only a marginal role or no part at all in the production of society, regarding work as at best a necessary

burden to further other personal aims, it has no objective power and no overall vision of a future society; it is a “non-force.” Lacking in social cohesion the non-class is “a vague area made up of constantly changing individuals.”<sup>125</sup>

Gorz's concept of the non-class of non-workers was less than analytically precise and, typically, he contradicted himself somewhat when asked to clarify. In *Farewell* Gorz suggests that the non-class is a social majority or on its way to becoming one by virtue of the exclusion of ever greater numbers of people from intense involvement with work and production. But in an interview with *Le Monde* Gorz denied that the post-industrial neo-proletariat consisted of socially marginalized individuals; he claimed that the category referred specifically not to those excluded from production but to those who cannot identify with their work and who do not want a “better” job but a life where self-determined activity occupies the greater part.<sup>126</sup> Contrary to the inclusive definition of the composition of the non-class offered in *Farewell*, he ostensibly narrowed the non-class down to those who are not only excluded from production but who desire to be excluded, who choose to limit their involvement in the world of wage labour, a world they enter for the sole purpose of earning money. But in this case Gorz can no longer claim to be referring to anything approaching a popular majority. It is closer to a minority in which he detected new and radical needs, as he once had in the case of the technical workers who made up the new working class.

Of course, Gorz was not the only commentator in this period to discern a new social stratum distinguished above all by its rejection of the traditional identification with and attitude towards work. This phenomenon, which struck Gorz as a significant harbinger, was sufficiently manifest to elicit a plethora of studies and discussion. In the last chapter we noted Rousselet's discovery of the allergy to work among young people. Such empirical studies spawned new social theory. For instance, French sociologist Guy Roustang, referred to the “new independents” — a term he borrowed from German sociologist Gerd Vonderach to designate a diverse and elusive category of people: a group comprising peasants, artisans, entrepreneurs, social service providers and so on — sometimes self-employed, sometimes salaried, sometimes unemployed, usually young, often well educated, urban of middle class origin. What united it? “... a rejection of a particular way of life and a critical attitude toward industrial society...” — “as much among those who have sometimes abandoned comfortable secure and well-paid employment as among those who refuse to

'enter the system,' or see no way of getting in..."<sup>127</sup> The people in question refuse above all to give up their lives to make a living. Many of the "new independents" preferred to work fewer hours at paid employment in order to engage in other activities. Many were prepared to trade a lower income for work they enjoyed. They tended to engage in mutual aid and exchange of non-market services. And they rejected dominant economic values and criteria of success. Roustang raised some interesting questions, however, about the novelty of the phenomenon and the extent to which these new independents can be distinguished in their values and practices from the old independents, artisans, small merchants and the like, and he also drew important distinctions between those who have consciously left the system and those who have been excluded by it.

But Gorz was unique in carrying his claims for this nascent phenomenon as far as conferring on the non-class a vanguard role of sorts, albeit a role it was not bound by historical necessity to assume. It is arguable that with his concept of the non-class Gorz returned to an earlier view of the propensity of socially marginalized individuals to embrace revolutionary attitudes that he had articulated in his first philosophical work, *Fondements pour une morale*, and that he subsequently repudiated in his critique during the 1960s of Marcuse's consideration of the subversive potential of those excluded from the system.

As noted in chapter one, Gorz maintained in *Fondements* that it was in particular those excluded in some sense from society who were more likely to choose freedom because "[they] can assert their humanity only by transcending [their] unacceptable situation towards another."<sup>128</sup> And indeed Gorz suggests in *Farewell* that the neo-proletariat was prefigured by groups such as the Black Panthers, who counterposed a revolutionary lumpenproletariat to the privileged reactionaries constituting the working class.<sup>129</sup> His selective reading of the Black Panther phenomenon notwithstanding, the point here is that in previous works, as we have seen, Gorz had disputed Marcuse's hopes for the excluded as outlined in *One-Dimensional Man*, objecting that the outcasts of society were too divided to organize themselves as a cohesive force. In *Farewell* however — and this stands out as a major weakness in the book — this capacity no longer appears as a relevant criterion; Gorz does not make a claim for the cohesion — organizational or otherwise — of the non-class. Nevertheless, we should also bear in mind Gorz's subsequent limitation of the non-class to those who to some degree voluntarily exclude themselves from dominant practices and values

rather than all those who are excluded regardless of their will. This qualification would suggest that Gorz was not unconcerned with the coherence of the category.

Subsequent to the publication of *Farewell* Gorz also qualified his ideas concerning the non-class in another far more surprising manner: in a 1980 interview with *Le Monde* he contended that any movement for social change continued to depend on the working class. Having ostensibly dismissed the working class as an historical protagonist, Gorz in passing returned it to centre stage:

If we try to imagine a non-capitalist outcome of [the current capitalist] crisis, and, more fundamentally, what possibilities this crisis harbours for building a different kind of society, we won't learn it from the organized labour movement — from its parties and unions. *Of course, nothing can be done without it*; however, it is no longer the privileged locus for the elaboration of post-capitalist thinking, practice and values.<sup>130</sup>

Interestingly, this also parallels Herbert Marcuse's conclusions, insofar as Marcuse too maintained that while the working class would not serve as a revolutionary catalyst, it remained pivotal given its central role in the productive process to the achievement of socialist transformation. Thus while Gorz moved closer to the position advanced sixteen years earlier by Marcuse in his estimation of the structural integration and nullified revolutionary potential of the working class, he ostensibly shared Marcuse's opinion that the traditional labour movement remained the *sine qua non* of any revolutionary project. Perhaps Gorz intended the word *Adieux* in his title synonymously with *Au Revoir*. But if so he demonstrated a vexing lack of consistency in this regard, and there is nothing in the text of *Farewell* to suggest that the organized working class occupied a singular station.

On the other hand, in *Farewell* Gorz did follow Marcuse, Illich and Touraine in identifying feminism as a force for radical change. This is an important point because Gorz has sometimes been portrayed as anti-feminist for his opposition to the marketization of activities which have traditionally fallen to women, such as care of the young and the infirm, and domestic chores. This question will be dealt with below when we examine the critical commentary. Suffice it to note here that in *Farewell* Gorz designated women as a potential vanguard for change because they are not as bound as men to a waged job. The women's movement, or at least parts of it, asserted the centrality of non-economic values.

Post-industrial socialism, i.e., communism, will be *feminine* or it will not be. It presupposes a cultural revolution, which at the level of both individual and social behavior, extinguishes the principle of efficiency, the ethic of competition, of accumulation, and the struggle for existence; in order to affirm the supremacy of the values of reciprocity, of tenderness, of the appreciation of love and life in all its forms.<sup>131</sup>

It is these allegedly feminine values that, as Gorz would have it, animate the non-class of non-workers.

What Gorz's qualifications concerning the exclusive capacity of the non-class to bring about a revolutionary change in the values and practices of contemporary society suggest is that his emphasis on the non-class was somewhat rhetorical and that having demystified what he saw as a theological conception of the role and destiny of the industrial proletariat in the socialist tradition he was moving towards a more plural conception of agency. Nevertheless, his emphasis on the non-class was a target of considerable and energetic debate in the extensive critical commentary that *Farewell to the Working Class* elicited and to which we now turn.

### The critical reception

If Gorz was widely known on the left in the 60s and 70s as a proponent of new working class theory, the publication of *Adieux au prolétariat* earned him (for better or worse depending on one's political perspective) wide renown as a pioneer of "post-Marxist" theory. In what does post-Marxist theory consist? The term fairly invites a lack of clarity, vaguely suggesting an ambiguous eclecticism; and indeed there is no consensus about its positive content. It is used by some as a disparaging epithet referring to the liberal epiphany of intellectuals (in the pages of the *Monthly Review*, for example), by others as a designation for a variety of theoretical efforts promising the renewal of radical left thought cleansed of the authoritarian taint and outdated myths of the socialist tradition. This second sense is close to the usage of Arthur Hirsh, one of the first commentators to thus classify Gorz. Hirsh proposed a viable definition of post-Marxism as a dialectical transcendence of Marxism through the pursuit of the egalitarian tradition in social thought beyond Marxist philosophy in such a way as to accommodate historical developments that have occurred since the industrial age in which Marxism was born; in sum a left social theory apposite to the

transition to a post-industrial era.<sup>132</sup> But here too “post-Marxism” is not associated with any particular set of analytical tools, doctrinal beliefs or political directives.

It is not surprising then that *Farewell* was lauded even in congenial quarters more for its challenge to certain Marxist precepts than for its imprecise prescriptive offerings. Of course, among more orthodox Marxists, the book elicited a number of angry rejoinders, some more useful and interesting than others. Limitations of space make it impossible to offer an exhaustive treatment of the book's critical reception in the community of left scholarship and activism in Europe and North America, however an attempt will be made to catalogue and comment on some of the main points of contention concerning the descriptive, predictive and prescriptive dimensions of *Farewell to the Working Class*. We will also briefly examine the critical response to Gorz's work in the 1970s and 80s from several ecologically-oriented scholars.

One of the key controversies stimulated by *Farewell* surrounds the vastly complex question of whether an historical rupture has occurred in industrial civilization. This question can be put in two related forms in connection with *Farewell*: first in the more limited sense of whether the abolition of work is a plausible premise, and second in the broader sense of whether we have entered a post-industrial era.

From the 1980s, proponents of work reduction were able to point to the historically novel phenomenon marking western industrial societies of economic expansion without simultaneous growth in employment (jobless growth), as well as to the increasing gap between the volume of production of goods and services and the number of workers engaged in the activity of production. It has been estimated that between 1970 and 1990 the volume of production doubled in Europe while the quantity of human labour employed, measured in time, diminished by one-third.<sup>133</sup>

The premise of Gorz's thinking in *Farewell* and in his subsequent writings is that we have reached an historically unprecedented stage where jobs will continue to be eliminated through a continuous process of technological displacement and that even if there are new growth cycles, technology has so revolutionized production and even the provision of many services that whatever job creation occurs will never compensate the rate of job elimination. As Gorz put it at the outset of *Farewell*, “[t]he choice is not between the abolition of work and the reestablishment of well-rounded trades in which everyone can find satisfaction. The choice is either a socially controlled,

emancipatory abolition of work *or* its oppressive anti-social abolition.”<sup>134</sup> This is the case not only because the ongoing abolition of work is irreversible but also because the social division of labour cannot be transcended unless we regress behind the socialisation of production. Hence, Gorz contends that there can never be a return to stable highly paid jobs for all.

This basic dimension of Gorz's analysis has had its share of detractors even on the left. First of all, the predictive or speculative dimension of *Farewell* has been questioned *per se*. Anthony Giddens points out that sociological observers have a poor track record in the domain of prognostication, and caution should be exercised in approaching Gorz's futurological pronouncements.<sup>135</sup> Here it may simply be said that while such caution is always advisable, the trends of the last 18 years since the book's publication do not invalidate or even contradict Gorz's case for the technological displacement of work occurring at a pace superior to job creation and for the growing disparity between the supply of and the demand for work on a global scale; on the contrary. But there is an admittedly vast debate over the nature of the phenomenon of unemployment in the contemporary world, with some scholars (in addition to Gorz: Guy Aznar, Guy Roustang, René Passet, Bernard Cassen and Jacques Robin, for example, and in the US, Jeremy Rifkin, Fred Block, Juliet Schor, Richard Barnet, among many others) lending credence to the scenario of irreversible technological elimination of work,<sup>136</sup> and others disputing the prognosis on a variety of grounds: for instance, that soaring unemployment is a reversible phenomenon tied to temporary economic contraction and attendant policy decisions or that the jobs lost in the information revolution will be compensated by the rise of new types of high-tech employment and the generation of work attendant upon the demand for new types of goods and services.

In a 1985 article Göran Therborn, for instance, specifically contested the idea that advanced capitalism had entered a new phase in which rapid technological change had rendered unemployment an inescapable structural condition, uttering a particularly reductionist and disparaging allusion to well-appointed ideologues who view the unemployed as “pioneers of a happy exodus” from the world of work. Therborn objected that unemployment rates vary significantly from country to country depending on their commitment to full employment; in other words, in his view, government fiscal and monetary policy largely determines the scale of joblessness.<sup>137</sup> Admittedly, government policy can either aggravate or stem the tide of

unemployment but this does not refute the likelihood of growing and permanent structural unemployment based on the technological displacement of jobs. And indeed, Therborn granted that where the resolve to combat unemployment had not prevailed — that is in the majority of countries — the trend towards “Brazilianization” was likely to intensify at the eventual expense of social stability. We should note too that his own advocacy of ‘expansive’ government policies to combat unemployment, including public works and expanding government funded public services, raises the question of whether, if indeed Keynesian solutions are effective, they are also desirable, given the problem of the ecological limits to growth raised in the previous chapter — an issue proponents of incessant stimulants to growth rarely address and which Therborn himself dismissed offhand as a false alarm.

The debate around the expectation of an unalterable trend of vanishing employment ties in closely with a broader debate that took shape beginning in the 70s and remains current about the extent to which industrial capitalism has undergone profound changes or even world-historical breaks since the crisis of the mid 70s. This was the issue at stake in the discussion around whether the West had indeed entered a post-industrial period, as elaborated in different ways in the work of Daniel Bell and Alain Touraine, which we mentioned in the last chapter, and which intensified with the elaboration of concepts such as “post-fordism” (a fertile theoretical construct contributed by the French Regulation School, a leading exponent of which is Alain Lipietz, an economist closely associated with the French ecology movement) and “flexible specialization,” a term that has become common currency to describe a dramatic shift in production processes and organization, particularly since the publication in 1984 of the previously mentioned work *The Second Industrial Divide* by Piore and Sabel.

Although as we noted in the last chapter Gorz tended to use the term post-industrial in a normative sense, in *Farewell* he also used the term descriptively to characterize an emerging social formation. While space does not permit detailed consideration of this multifaceted question,<sup>138</sup> a few brief remarks are in order.

As Jeff Manza points out, many left scholars initially resisted the idea that any kind of systemic change had occurred, insisting that what was different about the socio-economic character of industrial capitalism in the 70s and 80s was less significant than what remained the same.<sup>139</sup> In



his magisterial *Prophecy and Progress*, for instance, Krishan Kumar critically examined the proposition that western society has entered a post-industrial age, presenting a cogent counter-argument to the effect that the changes occurring in contemporary industrial capitalist society constitute the fulfillment of the logic of nineteenth century industrialism; also highly skeptical of notions of a significant break with the past is Ellen Meiksins Wood, who has argued that the real epochal shift is not in the nature of contemporary capitalism, which continues to seek the most efficient ways to extract value from wage labour, but rather the unprecedented universal extension of capitalism. However, Manza rightly observes that the sense that something fundamental has changed has become more pervasive or dominant among left social scientists since the 1980s, although there is little sense of the opportunities for progressive social change that these transformations open up.<sup>140</sup> Gorz's *Farewell to the Working Class* can certainly be seen as a seminal effort by a left social theorist to come to grips with the very real economic, social and cultural changes capitalism has undergone and continues to undergo in what has been described as the transition to post-fordism. This term, which Gorz later adopted in lieu of post-industrial society, is also fraught with controversy, but it has the advantage of clearly indicating what is being surpassed, at least within the advanced industrial capitalist societies: the social and economic system associated with standardized mass production.<sup>141</sup> Post-fordism is associated with the internationalization of the labour market owing to the disaggregation of production processes that enables companies to seek cheaper sources of labour further away from their original production base. This in turn is partly responsible for growing unemployment and the destabilization of labour in the advanced capitalist countries, and the concomitant retreat of the welfare state.

In *Farewell* Gorz tended to ascribe such momentous changes rather monocausally to technological advances. He has often been accused of technological determinism, particularly in connection with his conclusions concerning the nature and fate of the working class in the advanced capitalist societies. For instance it is arguable that Gorz overlooked the extent to which the changes in the productive system and the introduction of labour-saving, productivity-enhancing technology was a response to the successes of the labour movement in the post-war period, if only within the limited scope of economic aims.<sup>142</sup>

Gorz's exclusive emphasis on the massive deskilling that has occurred in the work force as sounding the death knell of the proletariat's revolutionary capacities has also been criticized for exaggerating the determining character of technology (just as new working class theory was challenged for a certain technological determinism insofar as it rested on changes in the techniques of production and their expected reskilling effects on the working class). Although it does not mention Gorz specifically, Antoine Prost's critical essay on French *sociologie du travail* censures those intellectual approaches which posit the technical factor as the major determinant of the composition, structures and practices of the working class for partaking of an historically dated Taylorist and/or Marxist paradigm.<sup>143</sup> Prost himself supports the argument that both reskilling and deskilling have occurred, depending on the economic and industrial sector. What he (with others) hastens to point out is that the evolution of technology is itself shaped by, among other things, working class initiatives which contest hierarchical forms of work organization, in short that "...technical facts are also social facts."<sup>144</sup> This dimension is absent from *Farewell*, although Gorz always acknowledged capital's deliberate efforts to escape from reliance on workers' skills. But in focusing on capital rather than labour Gorz has been accused of adopting a "capital-logic" approach which denies all initiative and innovative capacity to the working class while ascribing it to capital.<sup>145</sup> Byrne charges that Gorz was so intent on denying the transformational capacities of the working class that in his analysis of the crisis he failed to take into account the role of successful working class initiatives and struggles in provoking certain counterattacks on the part of capital. As Byrne sees it, the labour movement championed the construction of the welfare state, and the success of that struggle weakened capital, which in turn responded by endeavouring to terminate the post-war arrangements to its own advantage. This is, for Byrne, the meaning of capitalist restructuring, and it is at once a clear demonstration of proletarian agency.

Yet whatever the impetus behind the labour-displacing trends towards computerization and automation, this does not in any case invalidate Gorz's thesis about the final impact of technological innovations on the availability of work, and particularly stable well-paid full-time jobs. Moreover, the thrust of Antoine Prost's essay confirms the impression of a disaggregation of the working class to the point where the old categories of analysis have ceased to be applicable (for Prost himself the

very concept of a working class as traditionally conceived has appropriately been cast in doubt by current work in *sociologie du travail*).

Nevertheless some critics have charged that Gorz's portrait of and explanation for the changes in the sociology of the working class may be overly simplified. And for some Gorz's rejection of the theory of the preordained revolutionary role of the proletariat is tantamount to abandoning class analysis altogether. Ellen Meiksins Wood argues that Gorz's appraisal of the disintegration of the working class derives in part from a reductionist view of the class as consisting essentially of industrial manual workers — a deficiency which results from Gorz's tendency to fetishize the labour process, and to locate "...the essence of a mode of production in the technical processes of work rather than the relations of production, the specific mode of *exploitation*."<sup>146</sup> Similarly, for Meiksins Wood, Gorz's conception of the formation of working class consciousness is distorted by his technicist approach; he does not relate consciousness to class struggle. This accusation appears unjust, however, insofar as Gorz conceives of class struggle within the bounds of traditional working class organizations as having itself been reduced to an ongoing defense of the welfare state.

Again, these questions open onto an involved debate about the recomposition of the working class and the question of the enduring viability of the category itself. Labour historian Gérard Noiriel puts forward a very reasonable perspective that also lends some support to Gorz's thesis in *Farewell* when he suggests that the question of the nature of the working class in the 1980s turns on the definition of class: if we mean by the working class a mobilizable group with an identity and a definite social project, then the working class as it has been defined since the end of the nineteenth century no longer exists.<sup>147</sup> In preceding epochs the working class may have been ghettoized, but there was also a degree of security in community; by the 1980s, the sense of working class identity began breaking down, and, as Serge Bosc remarks,<sup>148</sup> there was an accelerated weakening of the sense of class appurtenance in face of the segmentation of the labour market. However, Noiriel cautions, the use of dramatic turns of phrase such as "the end of the working class" tends to miss the persistence of forms of working class hardship. Clearly, in his opposition to the dual society envisioned by some neo-liberals Gorz did not overlook this abiding alienation and adversity. But it is true that while he evolved towards a more inclusive position after

the publication of *Farewell*, in the text of the book he does consecrate the segmentation of the working class by positing an insuperable antagonism between the traditional skilled industrial working class that clings to privileges in defensive mode and the potentially radical non-class of non-workers.

Gorz's characterization of this non-class has also been the subject of some trenchant criticism. His interpretation of the indifferent or antagonistic relationship of this group, in its broad definition, to wage work is debatable; yet Gorz presents the rejection of work as if it were an established sociological fact rather than an inference from suggestive but inconclusive evidence. Some obvious objections have been raised in this connection to the effect that unemployment does not necessarily lead to a rejection of work on the part of the unemployed or to the development of autonomous capacities.<sup>149</sup> Indeed, as Olivier Corpet et. al. pointed out in conversation with Gorz, far from promoting a revolt against the work ethic, chronic unemployment might well stimulate a revival of traditional attitudes and expectations,<sup>150</sup> or as John Keane puts it, under the humiliating blow of unemployment, the unemployed often develop not an allergy, but a passion to engage in paid work.<sup>151</sup> In a similar vein, Francis Godard has charged that social theorists bent on evincing a universal disinvestment from work predicated on inexorable deskilling are deliberately blind to counter tendencies such as an eagerness for occupational training and stable employment which are manifest among the same individuals.<sup>152</sup> If Gorz overestimated the centrality of work for the determination of consciousness in his previous writings, then perhaps he was guilty of overcompensating in *Farewell* and subsequent writings by underestimating the significance of work in people's lives. At very least it may be objected that Gorz adduced insufficient empirical evidence for the rather sweeping conclusions he drew.

The notion of the radical promise of the non-class has also been challenged from a theoretical perspective as a recrudescence of the mistakes of third worldism in a new form. This was the opinion of Alberto Asor Rosa, a progenitor of *operaismo* and a leading figure in the PCI, who criticized the interpretation of social marginals as a dissident political force at the hands of certain Italian and French intellectuals in his 1977 book *Due Società*, one of the earliest discussions of the concept of the dual society.<sup>153</sup> Apart from the doubts concerning the validity of the non-class as a

sociological category, the strategic viability of this diffuse group was also impugned by critics, as we shall see below when we consider the critique of *Farewell's* prescriptive facet.

Pursuing the problems raised with respect to the book's descriptive and analytical dimensions, another key point of contention was Gorz's claim that in complex industrial societies alienation is inherent not only in capitalist social relations but in the very socialization of the production process, and that consequently self-management will not conquer alienation. Critics have challenged Gorz's conclusion that the necessary preeminence of technocratic reason in the heteronomous sphere of the State and economy, which assures efficiency in modern production and administration, leaves no hope of democratizing either the economic or political spheres. David Byrne, for instance, charges that Gorz exaggerates the machine-like character of the industrial system and in so doing underestimates the basis and potential for socialized production and workers' self-management.<sup>154</sup> He counters that even heteronomous work has not been stripped of every vestige of autonomy because the industrial system has to grant some autonomy to those doing the work. For Byrne this remains a basic contradiction of capitalism. This returns us to the question of Gorz's technological determinism. However plausible the conclusion, Gorz's argument in *Farewell* that the alienation of socialized work is insurmountable definitely conveyed an impression of technological development as an autonomous force beyond our control — an unstoppable juggernaut. He did not even admit of the possibility of human intervention in the deployment of technology. "Technological development," Gorz maintained "does not point towards a possible appropriation of social production by the producers. Instead it indicates further elimination of the social producer, and continuing marginalisation of socially necessary labour as a result of the computer revolution."<sup>155</sup> Occasionally he suggested that even if it were possible to slow down the technological displacement of work it would not be desirable because the more heteronomous work can be eliminated, the more the sphere of autonomy can expand; but his analysis does not appear to allow for the theoretical possibility of reshaping technology in accord with democratically determined collective priorities. At the same time, Gorz's view of technology arguably smuggles a Hegelian ruse of reason into his vision of historical evolution insofar as he clearly detects an emancipatory dialectic inscribed in current capitalist development: "[t]he abolition of waged work by automation undermines capitalist logic and even the market economy at its root. Non-market

production and the right to a social income regardless of whether one has paid employment become a necessity.”<sup>156</sup> This concession, in *Farewell* and other writings, to the Marxist idea that the development of the productive forces not only lays the ground for emancipation but propels advanced societies unwittingly in that direction is not consonant with the general thrust of Gorz’s critique of Marxism, particularly his rejection of the meaningful unfolding of history (and, as noted in the previous chapter, there are unresolvable contradictions here with his simultaneous insistence that the development of productive forces is functional to capital alone). Still Gorz was cautious not to slip into teleology: the logic of capital has brought us to the threshold of liberation, he contended, but only an act that is not inscribed in any logic of historical development — “a constitutive act which asserts itself as an absolute end in itself within each individual” — could realize the potential in germ.<sup>157</sup>

But how can such a constitutive act come about? This leads us to the prescriptive side of *Farewell* and to what is arguably the most damning of all the criticism: the irrefutable charge that Gorz tells us virtually nothing about how his dualist society is to be achieved. His strategic vision had already been blunted during his ecological turn in the 70s by comparison with his program of revolutionary reforms in *Strategy for Labor* in the early 60s or his efforts to sketch the contours of a new revolutionary party in the late 60s, and it was not honed in the writing of *Farewell*. Indeed, Gorz attached as an appendix to *Adieux au prolétariat* his earlier sketch of the dualist utopia, “Une utopie dualiste,” first published in 1977 in *Écologie et liberté*, in which citizens simply wake up one morning to find the government carrying out a series of suitable measures to bring about the desired state of affairs.

Ellen Meiksins Wood is particularly trenchant about what she regards as the strategic bankruptcy of a vision which vests its hope in the non-class of non-workers — a group which by Gorz’s own admission is scarcely even a movement; it is “fragmented and composite ... by its nature refractory towards organisation, programming, the delegation of functions”<sup>158</sup> and is possessed of no social power: as noted earlier, Gorz acknowledges in *Farewell* that while the industrial proletariat derived an objective power from its role in transforming matter, the neo-proletariat, playing no part in the production of society, is a non-force without objective social importance.<sup>159</sup>

Meiksins Wood sees *Farewell* as an exemplary expression of the countercultural notion of revolution by example. Richard Hyman, although generally more sympathetic to Gorz's project, similarly criticizes Gorz for implying that socialism can be achieved by spiritual conversion alone.<sup>160</sup> There is some merit in this charge. In *Farewell* Gorz does endorse a strategy reminiscent of the countercultural endeavour to create enclaves of alternative social and economic arrangements and which adumbrated the "exodus" strategy of creating economic and political spaces outside the sway of capitalist relations advocated by elements of the reconstituted Italian Autonomisti, as well as by Gorz himself, in the 1990s.<sup>161</sup> And Gorz goes on to develop the exodus concept more fully and explicitly in later work.

For Meiksins Wood the strategic impasse characterizing *Farewell* is a weakness emblematic of all left visions which have displaced working class agency.<sup>162</sup> Gorz is left with a vision of a transformed society without real hope for a process of transformation. Arguing from an orthodox Marxist perspective, she contends that only the working class has the interest and ultimately the power to destroy capitalism, particularly because its interest does not rest on oppressing other classes. As we have seen, however, Gorz maintained precisely that in the dual society a privileged segment of the working class does have an immediate interest in defending its position at the expense of other less secure workers. This tendency, dubbed the "new particularism" by George Ross,<sup>163</sup> was indeed evident among unionized workers in the late 1970s in France and Italy, and it marked Gorz deeply. In a discussion with Peter Glotz and Tilman Fichter, Gorz intimated that a turning point had been reached in Italian labour history with an incident that occurred at Fiat in the summer of 1980, when a significant minority of workers accepted the layoff of 14,000 other workers in the hope that this would render the remaining jobs more secure.<sup>164</sup>

In any event, Meiksins Wood's chief accusation is that Gorz wishes away the need to destroy capitalism — a need that would remain, she points out, even if the goal of revolution were the abolition of work rather than the abolition of exploitation. Now although Meiksins Wood does not herself explain what it means in practical terms to destroy capitalism, it is true that Gorz's dualist project must sooner or later run up against the limits of the existing order. This point is made over and over in the critical commentary. Johannes Berger and Norbert Kostede put it concisely when they observe:

If dual systems are not introduced merely to relieve pressure on the market economy and the state sector, without endangering their dominance [the allusion here is to the model of social dualism which Gorz's temporal dualist scheme is intended to counter]..., then they must at least be protected organizationally and financially. But such a protection will inevitably lead to a *permanent conflict* with the economic and political system's imperatives.<sup>165</sup>

More recently Daniel Singer, while concurring that the “end of work” is no longer a utopian aim, has objected that reducing working time does not dispose of the problem of overturning capitalist relations: if the reign of capital is perpetuated in the factories it will be perpetuated in the society at large.<sup>166</sup>

With weaknesses such as this in view, more than a few scholars have gone so far as to suggest that, whatever Gorz's good intentions, *Farewell* represents a kind of defeatism in face of the capitalist juggernaut. David Byrne, for instance, suggests that Gorz legitimated the consequences of capitalist crisis by conceding victory to capital. For Byrne, Gorz had “...abandoned the possibility of working-class collective autonomy...”; moreover, he “saw capital as determining the character of production, and had therefore retreated to the spheres of politics and civil society to mount a defensive action in terms of assertion of individual autonomy.”<sup>167</sup> In their *Le Monde* interview with Gorz, Michel Contat and François Georges also raise the objection that *Farewell* can be read as a justification for leaving the productive apparatus with all its attendant alienations intact, alongside a quietist appeal to cultivate one's own garden, one's hobby.<sup>168</sup> This type of criticism is magnified in the acerbic treatment of Gorz by Louis Pinto in his study of *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Pinto dismisses *Farewell* as a variation on *The God that Failed*, intimating that Marxism never represented much more for Gorz than a philosophical fashion which he was only too happy to shed with the changing historico-intellectual conjuncture. Pinto charges that with *Farewell* Gorz counsels acceptance of the world as it is and paints a picture of the end of history wherein reality is riven into a realm of inevitably dehumanizing socially necessary work, on the one hand, and, on the other, as Pinto casts it mordantly, a niche of private leisure, family life, individual home and garden scarcely distinguishable from the bourgeois weekend.<sup>169</sup>

This brings us back to the problem raised in the last chapter of Gorz's nebulous propositions concerning the organization of the sphere of heteronomy, and our contention that Gorz's dualist arrangement, which presupposes a sector assuring basic necessities that is centrally planned,



demands a larger social transformation of a more classical revolutionary type, involving as a necessary but not sufficient condition the seizure of the means of production. Gorz virtually admitted as much when he conceded that the weakness of the neo-proletarians of the non-class is that any spaces of autonomy they succeeded in wresting from the system will be “marginalized, subordinated or ghettoized by the dominant rationality unless there is a full transformation and reconstruction of society, its institutions and legal systems.”<sup>170</sup> Regrettably, Gorz evaded consideration of how the heteronomous sphere could be subordinated to the imperatives of the dualist vision. Is the heteronomous sphere to be dominated by the market and capitalist arrangements? If so, what ensures that it will be dedicated to the production of basic necessities? If not, why would capital accept state regulation in the interest of meeting needs? For that matter, why would capital accept the need for a redistribution of work through the reduction of working hours? And will reduced working hours be accompanied by a proportional loss of income? These issues are not made any clearer in *Farewell* than they were in his original outline of the dualist utopia in the latter half of the 70s.

Partly as a result of his having been insufficiently clear, Gorz’s conception of the heteronomous sphere has frequently been misread and misrepresented as a “hell” to which Gorz condemns us in at least part of our lives.<sup>171</sup> Only careless reading can account for this misapprehension, since Gorz is unequivocal in *Farewell* and in subsequent clarifications about both the need to humanize work in the sphere of heteronomy and the positive dimension of this sphere in a dualist society. Although in Gorz’s view alienation could not be eliminated in the sphere of heteronomous labour, and individuals would never attain complete fulfillment in most types of socially determined work, he certainly acknowledged the possibility of improving working conditions by, for example, enabling workers to regulate their own work rhythms; this is what Gorz referred to as “technical self-management.”<sup>172</sup> He returned to this subject in *Paths to Paradise*, undoubtedly responding to some of his less attentive readers when he explained that the heteronomous sphere should not be regarded as some sort of affliction; it does not necessarily imply oppression, domination, boredom and exploitation, although it does entail a degree of alienation insofar as it involves a lack of individual control over the type of skills that are required or the ultimate result of collective work.<sup>173</sup> Further, whatever burdens persist in the heteronomous sphere

would be greatly diminished because they would be equitably shared and would serve to produce things recognized as useful to the collectivity (recall that in *Strategy for Labor* Gorz suggested that mass production would be more rewarding if the ends were more manifestly useful in meeting needs).

In addition, the heteronomous sphere has an undeniably positive side in two distinct respects. The first, already noted, is that insofar as it allows each worker to put to work a huge quantity of materialized knowledge in the form of machinery, the heteronomous sphere efficiently supplies the basic necessities and convivial tools that allow the extension of the sphere of autonomy. For Gorz the second positive feature of the heteronomous sphere is that it serves as protection against the stultifying autarky of local self-sufficiency “by raising individuals above the narrow sphere of local community.”<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, Gorz affirms, even autonomous activity, when done to the exclusion of all else, can be impoverishing, while socially necessary labour need not be unremittingly onerous and monotonous — it can offer opportunities for festivity, pleasure and communication. These arguments for the legitimacy and positive value of the heteronomous sphere and the assumptions underpinning them about the continuing significance of socially necessary labour as a source of social integration and identity will also serve, as we shall see in the next chapter, as a point of departure for Gorz's critique of proposals for a universal citizens' allocation or basic income — a scheme that Gorz vehemently contested for two decades before unexpectedly espousing it in his most recent book, *Misères du présent, richesses du possible* (1997).

Finally and perhaps most intriguingly there is also a suggestion in *Farewell* that only people who are freer to exercise their autonomy will be more inclined and prepared to struggle for greater autonomy within work. On this reading, the extension of free time for autonomous activities becomes the condition of possibility for the amelioration of the sphere of heteronomous labour. “Growing personal fulfillment results in greater demands and growing combativeness rather than resigned indifference.”<sup>175</sup> While this promising idea remains underdeveloped in *Farewell*, Gorz would make it a leitmotif of his 1983 *Les chemins du paradis*, as we shall see. Even in *Farewell*, Gorz clearly saw work reduction as a revolutionary reform: one that could lead to a gradual transformation of consciousness that was itself the precondition of a desirable social transformation that would not reproduce the distortions of state socialism. In Gorz's scheme it was work reduction

and the extension of personal autonomy that squared the circle of the one-dimensional society, which affords no possibility of social change without a change in consciousness, but in which conditions of social and economic integration militate against any change in consciousness. In a sense, Gorz's work has a relevance prior to the issue of practical political strategies insofar as it conceives an opening for the creation of a constituency for change. This is an important proviso that must temper the harsher assessments of Gorz's feeble strategic thinking.

On the other hand, the extent to which the existing system could be expected to tolerate the efflorescence of new consciousness is an open question (even if, for the sake of social stability, some redistribution of work were to be accepted). In *Farewell*, as we have seen, Gorz acknowledged that spaces of autonomy reclaimed from the existing order would be marginalized and ghettoized failing a full reconstruction of society. In his 1980 interview with *Le Monde* he attempted to clarify his view of the problem of political power, affirming what he had said throughout his previous work: that no class — neither his non-class of non-workers nor the traditional working class — could ever prevail against the repressive counter-revolutionary capacity of the modern state to the point of seizing power. Power could never be taken at the level of the State. “The only possibility is first to short-circuit state power by extracting from it ever larger spaces of non-power which it can no longer penetrate.”<sup>176</sup> But when asked why the State would countenance the existence of such spaces Gorz could only respond by affirming the power of mass civil disobedience — an answer that rang a trifle hollow in light of his vehement assertion of the all-powerful repressive power of the State, which can prevail against all contenders. In the end, Gorz appears to have arrived at a position decidedly similar to that of Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man*, replete with a depiction of the traditional working class as wholly and irremediably integrated, a modicum of hope in the oppositional propensity of those excluded by the system, and a gamble on the Great Refusal.

This having been said, the sheer magnitude of the problem at hand should not be forgotten. More than a few critics who decry *Farewell's* strategic bankruptcy have little of interest to propose themselves. Moreover, and this is perhaps the most unassailable line of defense, Gorz himself saw the dualist utopia as a compass, a direction in which to move,<sup>177</sup> whereas his critics tended to read it more literally as a model. John Keane and John Owens are among the few commentators to

recognize the deliberately utopian technique deployed by Gorz, which entails “pointing to a future radically different from the present...by making *exaggerated* arguments which serve as standards against which present reality can be measured and judged as *inadequate*,” a technique which necessarily involves a “sketchy and inexact” representation of the good society.<sup>178</sup> Thus although *Farewell* offered little to indicate how and under what circumstances the heteronomous sphere was to be reconstructed as the socialized pole of the dualist society, it is not entirely fair to say that Gorz’s dualist utopia leaves the productive apparatus intact, or to pillory him for strategic deficiencies.

There is another sense, however, in which Gorz has been charged with resignation in face of the privations capitalism has imposed on ever greater numbers of people in the advanced capitalist societies since the mid-70s; this has to do with the conception of felicitous austerity underpinning Gorz’s vision of the dualist society. This was a contentious issue, especially among more orthodox Marxist and social-democratic critics inclined to dismiss the ecological perils of unrestrained economic growth as the mystifications of the “puritanical, near-exhaustion-of-the-resources-of-the-earth austerity prophets.”<sup>179</sup> The question here is whether in breaking with the cornucopian assumptions of the Marxist tradition Gorz unwittingly offered some justification for capitalist austerity discourse and programs.

Without entering into a debate about the depth of the ecological crisis and its implications for human comportment, a short negative answer is warranted first of all by the redistributive emphasis in Gorz’s dualist utopia — a scheme conceived precisely as a counter model, albeit a non-Keynesian one, to the emerging inequitable two-tier society. A more extended reflection on the problem can be found in an essay by Tim Luke. Writing in the United States in the early 1980s against a backdrop of deindustrialization attendant upon the information revolution, Luke wrestled with the question of whether the call for voluntary simplicity, while an ecological imperative, did not in some sense justify the material privations, however relative, being forced upon larger segments of the population as the result of capitalist austerity programs; he asked whether ecology’s happy austerity might be just what the system requires of those already or soon-to-be excluded from the consumerist orgy in the advanced industrial societies. “With scores of millions of outer-directed consumers losing their industrial or service jobs to informational technology, and only a few million

jobs being created in the new informational sphere of production, it becomes imperative for the system's continual functioning to legitimate this new materially-deprived era as a 'quality of life' revolution that is morally desirable."<sup>180</sup> A case in point here in the French context is the Illich-inspired critique of medical overdependence taken up by the French ecologists and by Gorz: it actually dovetailed with a campaign by Raymond Barre's government to contain healthcare costs; the government criticized French doctors for overprescribing and sought to pare down expenditures by, among other means, introducing a two-tier system that would allow those who could afford it greater access to the healthcare system.<sup>181</sup> From the perspective of a critique of the "medical nemesis" were these measures doing the poor a favour by weaning them from overmedicalization? This was the type of dilemma implicitly at issue in Luke's reflections.

Interestingly, although Luke did not refer to Gorz in his essay, he arrived at a position akin to Gorz's emphasis on the self-limitation of needs. Determining that frugality and autonomy need not shore up the growing inequalities of the new capitalism, Luke counterposed an "uncritically embraced austerity, which mystifies the falling rate of material satisfaction" to a "self-definition and self-realization of needs independent of corporate capitalism's 'coercive complexity.'" In an argument with which Gorz would undoubtedly have concurred, Luke maintained that although in the short run the enunciation of a philosophy of frugality and the development of alternative institutions, from neighbourhood councils to backyard gardening, might coincide with the interests of corporate capital and the State by compensating for vanishing consumer commodities and public goods, in the long run they "hold the potential for developing a more rational, equal and participatory society through self-reliance and communal interaction."<sup>182</sup> This is precisely the logic of Gorz's reframing of socialism as a mole-like process of extricating spaces of autonomy from the hegemonic economic rationality; the guiding idea of all his subsequent work, it bears a kinship with more general ecological and anarchist strategies of molecular change based on expanding pockets of resistance.

But such a conception did not have to preclude a more balanced treatment of the problem of the subject of this process by way of a more plural conception of agency. This was the objection of CFDT leader Edmond Maire to Gorz's apparent emphasis on the exclusive role of the non-class of non-workers. In a 1980 rejoinder in *Le Monde* to predictions of the demise of the working class

by scholars such as Touraine and Gorz, Maire acknowledged that the labour movement had been dilatory in responding to the economic crisis and in rising to the organizational challenges presented by the introduction of new technologies, globalization and rising social dualism.<sup>183</sup> Moreover, unlike some orthodox Marxist critics who defensively affirmed the cardinal role of the industrial working class and dismissed manifestations of dissent outside the confines of organized labour as subsidiary or expressions of middle class protest, Maire accepted the autonomy of new social movements and acknowledged their contributions to the renewal of left theory and practice. But why, he went on to ask, did the new movements have to displace the labour movement altogether in the analyses of Gorz and Touraine (which, Maire pointed out, differed in many other essentials). “Why must the emergence of new sites and modes of action mean that working class struggle has been emptied of meaning?”<sup>184</sup> From its longstanding position in left thought as the exclusive revolutionary agency, the working class had been too precipitously dismissed by Gorz as a non-actor, in favour of the sole claim for the non-class of non-workers. In contrast with what he saw as a kind of over-zealous inversion of a previous error, Maire himself advocated a more plural view of agency.

It is worth digressing slightly to note that although Maire's piece in *Le Monde* appears fairly even-handed, it was taken by Gorz as a personal attack and a sign that the CFDT leadership was moving in an undesirable direction. He viewed it as an offensive against the two intellectuals (Touraine and himself) who had “conferred intellectual legitimation upon the CFDT as a social and political movement.”<sup>185</sup> As Gorz saw it, “Maire's article was a political signal. I didn't care much to find out its exact meaning; I only understood that the man had different ambitions and wanted to be part of a Left state power rather than the intellectually alert and politically autonomous leader of a union.”<sup>186</sup> From that point Gorz's relations with the inner circle of the CFDT chilled, and Michel Rolant remained Gorz's only contact. Perhaps there were nuances in Maire's article which had special resonances for insiders and were calculated to offend, or perhaps Gorz felt that Maire had unfairly misinterpreted his insistence in *Farewell* on the inability of the traditional proletariat to carry out its historic role in bringing about social change as a cavalier dismissal of any role for the trade union movement.

In any event, Maire's was not the only plea for a more plural conception of agency that neither privileged nor underestimated the working class. It was also the tack taken by French Green economist Alain Lipietz. In an essay originally written in June 1980, Lipietz held the belief in the single unified revolutionary subject partially responsible for the breakdown of the left in the late 1970s. In his view, after May '68 an historic opportunity had been missed: the possibility to renew the left through a fusion of aspects of the libertarian and workerist currents in a counter-hegemonic bloc of all those whose needs and desires were oppressed by the existing order.<sup>187</sup> According to Lipietz, it was possible to detect the embryo of such a bloc in the period from '68-'73, but it was subsequently aborted. Analyzing the reasons for the failure, Lipietz invoked external factors, such as repression and the economic crisis, which provoked rearguard defensive responses, as well as the crumbling of socialist models; but he also identified as an important internal factor the attempt to knit all the forces together on the basis of a common indivisible interest. The idea of a single revolutionary subject led to false homogenization of the forces of dissent and to a rejection of certain issues as "secondary contradictions," to employ the Maoist terminology. For Lipietz, the gender issue in particular was the faultline along which the bloc split apart. Like Maire, he advocated pluralizing the idea of agency in the aim of forging a revolutionary counterculture in which diverse interests are reconciled.

And it was indeed in the direction of a more plural conception of the agency of social transformation — arguably one of the most useful legacies of the New Left to any project for reconstructing a post-Marxist left social movement — that Gorz himself moved following the publication of *Farewell*. His own very jaundiced view of the possibilities of working class opposition and of the role of organized labour was attenuated, as we shall see in the final chapter when we consider his very constructive discussion of the need for a new kind of trade unionism in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The title *Farewell to the Working Class* by itself guaranteed that the question of agency would be the most hotly debated point in the critical commentary. But among Gorz's critics were those for whom this did not stir the same passion. While controversy bubbled over Gorz's heterodoxy among more traditional leftists, *Farewell to the Working Class* enjoyed a less emotionally-charged reception in other quarters. As Gerard Strange comments:

[C]ritical labour movement responses to Gorz have never been universal. Others on the left have been much more appreciative of his work, recognising that it builds on alternative left traditions, mainly originating in continental and Mediterranean Europe, which have grown in popularity and relevance in recent years.<sup>188</sup>

Ecology-movement theorists such as Robyn Eckersley in Australia and Andrew Dobson in England were, for instance, not at all scandalized by Gorz's demotion of the working class from its rank as exclusive revolutionary subject. For Dobson, on the contrary, Gorz's attention to the radical potential of the non-class of non-workers is one of the most promising aspects of his contribution to social theory in the late 70s and early 80s, and he defends Gorz against various criticisms on this count.<sup>189</sup> It was not Gorz's distance from Marxism that some of Gorz's ecology-oriented critics found problematic, but rather his proximity to some of the fundamental premises of Marxist thought.

A case in point is the criticism advanced by Robyn Eckersley to the effect that the centrality in Gorz's thought of Marx's later dichotomous conception of freedom and necessity is intrinsically Promethean, partaking of the dominant tradition of modern thought that conceives non-human nature in a purely instrumental way which is antithetical to a genuine ecological transformation. We have already discussed Gorz's anthropocentrism and his narrow conception of the relations between humanity and nature. And it is primarily on this basis that Eckersley takes objection to his work, which she sees as representative to some degree of the post-Marxist eco-socialist current as a whole. Basing her argument on a reading of Marx's theories as resting upon an antagonistic dialectic of humanity and nature rooted in a primary conception of nature as a medium for human labour,<sup>190</sup> Eckersley argues that the distinction between freedom and necessity "serves to make the domination of the nonhuman world a requirement of human self-realization."<sup>191</sup>

Eckersley observes that Marx extolled the growing ability of humanity to conquer nature, which is manifested, for example, by the revolutionizing of production through technology under capitalism, and she argues that Marx "consistently saw human freedom as inversely related to humanity's dependence on nature."<sup>192</sup> She maintains that to be truly human and truly free meant, for Marx, maximizing what he believed made us different from the rest of nature, that is, our ability to transform the external world. And in Marx's mature work he conceived human freedom as beginning beyond the realm of necessity, that is, where labour ends. Freedom in Marx thus



corresponds to the mastery of social and natural constraints, while necessity consists in subservience to social and natural constraints. For Eckersley, however, Marx's notion of freedom as the overcoming of all constraints by subduing the external world through labour and its extension in the form of technology can be achieved only at the expense of the non-human world. In the Marxist utopia, freedom *is* alienation from non-human nature in the sense that freedom from necessity requires humans to be "insulated and removed from their biological roots."<sup>193</sup>

She maintains that theorists such as Gorz and Marcuse uncritically incorporate this dimension of Marxism; for them it is the mastery of necessity that will permit us to develop our individuality through creative leisure and convivial activity. Fundamental human activities geared towards the sustenance of life are downgraded in their thinking as lowly animal functions in contradistinction with 'higher' human activities. Eckersley maintains that Gorz carries this idea to extremes with his notion that any form of necessary labour is a lower type of endeavour than autonomous activity. She argues further that he makes the enjoyment of true freedom dependent on a high energy and material throughput in the heteronomous realm which assures the basic necessities and that in his proposed dualistic arrangement of society he assumes that the sphere of heteronomy would be ecologically benign.<sup>194</sup> Although Eckersley fails to consider Gorz's accent on the self-limitation of needs as a counterweight to what she regards as his ecologically-unfriendly conception of human freedom, her more general argument merits serious reflection.

The problem with this humanist eco-Marxist project of overcoming human alienation is that "true" human freedom and embeddedness in nature are posited as *inversely related*. That is, the kind of freedom pursued by humanist eco-Marxists necessarily requires the subjugation of external nature (through labour's extension, technology) so that humans may ultimately become fully sovereign and answerable only to themselves, as opposed to being dependent on, and "held down" by, the limitations and inconveniences of non-human nature. Non-human nature remains... "an external, threatening and constraining power...to be overcome in the course of a long drawn-out historical process of collective transformation."<sup>195</sup>

Eckersley contrasts this with an ecocentric perspective in which the goal is not to conquer nature or harmonize our relationship with it by humanizing what is other in it, but rather to recognize "the *relative autonomy* and unique mode of being of the myriad life forms that make up the nonhuman world."<sup>196</sup> Humans need to live and experience themselves as "but one component of...the basic

cycles and processes of nature rather than to seek to transcend the nonhuman world by removing all its inconveniences and thereby obliterating its 'otherness'."197 Any further discussion of the ecocentric position developed by Eckersley would take us too far afield from the subject at hand; suffice it to state, therefore, that in arguing an ecocentric perspective against the anthropocentrism pervasive in modern thought, Eckersley draws out the unbridgeable philosophical divide that separates radical ecologists from virtually all other schools of thought in contemporary society, a divide which Gorz himself has no desire to cross. On the contrary, as we saw in the previous chapter, he regarded the critique of humanism and anthropocentrism by definition as an invitation to totalitarianism.

While Eckersley focuses on particular aspects of Gorz's writings in the 1980s, it is the eco-socialist scholar Boris Frankel who provides one of the most sustained and even-handed critical treatments of Gorz's work in the period under scrutiny. Although he comes at the criticism from a different philosophical basis, he is more peremptory than Eckersley in dismissing Gorz's ecological credentials, declaring that "it is difficult to accept that Gorz's concern with ecological goals ... goes any deeper than a generalized moral critique of Western affluence and wasteful consumption."<sup>198</sup> But this is not the gravamen of his argument.

Frankel includes Gorz in a group of thinkers he classifies as "post-industrial utopians," a rubric which does service as the title of his probing book and under which he places Alvin Toffler, Rudolf Bahro, André Gorz and Barry Jones. In Frankel's analysis these social thinkers partake of an Enlightenment tradition insofar as they wish to "bring reason to bear on public and private life" and conceive their models as a means to "maximize democracy, freedom, tolerance, equality and other rationalist values"; in Frankel's estimation this demarcates them favourably from "the nihilism, relativism and loss of direction which characterizes much of post-structuralist and 'post-modern' thought."<sup>199</sup> On the whole he is not unsympathetic to their aims, but he is highly critical of the post-industrial utopians' inattention to the concrete possibilities and mechanics of realizing their ideas and of what he sees as their ill-conceived understanding of the political economy of existing welfare services and the role of state institutions.

He charges that in their concern to defend civil society from what they perceive as the withering effects of the juggernaut of the State, Gorz and other post-industrial utopians

misapprehend the relationship between civil society and the state, overdrawing the boundaries between them and positing an untenable theoretical dichotomy which is not borne out by the current reality of inextricably interlaced relations between the economy, state institutions and social life. Not only do post-industrial theorists neglect the degree to which state institutions form part of the economy — among other things by providing millions of jobs and a growing part of household income — but they underestimate their socio-cultural role. The post-industrial utopians' inadequate grasp of these dimensions, Frankel argues, stymies their ability to formulate plausible political strategies.

Frankel grants that, in contrast with the other subjects under his scrutiny, Gorz eschews the decentralist utopia of autarkic communities and more readily acknowledges a pivotal role for the central State; however, Frankel considers him “the most puzzling and paradoxical” of all the post-industrial utopians,<sup>200</sup> and there are few aspects of Gorz's work that escape Frankel's critical gaze. A complete discussion of the critique would require a separate essay, but to sum up briefly, Frankel finds Gorz's dualist utopia overly schematic and fraught with inconsistencies. He points, for example, to the contradictory character of Gorz's insistence that the complexity of the industrial system precludes central planning and his simultaneous assumption that the heteronomous sphere can be centrally planned to assure that basic needs are met. He also claims that Gorz fails to specify whether he believes in post-industrial socialist nation states or some other form of political/territorial arrangements (although in subsequent writings Gorz does ultimately make it clear that his scheme demands a transnational approach: there can be no post-industrial socialism in one country). Further, he condemns Gorz's nebulosity with respect to the role of trade unions, political parties and political representation in post-industrial society. He also offers an extensive and compelling critique of Gorz's defense of an independent nuclear force for Europe (see chapter three, note 120), arguing that it is untenable to isolate the non-aligned struggle against weapons of mass destruction from the development of alternative economic projects based on a non-aligned position; the perpetuation of the arms race implies the perpetuation of a military-industrial complex that is at odds with Gorz's own denunciation of nuclear energy as entailing the militarization of society.<sup>201</sup>

One of Frankel's chief criticisms of Gorz, as of the others, pertains to his silence on the practical problem of social welfare funding and organization. Frankel underscores the widespread belief, arising from the criticisms of the welfare state advanced by both right and left, that some form of non-bureaucratic delivery and provision of services must replace centralized bureaucratic welfare institutions.<sup>202</sup> He charges that the post-industrial utopians fail to explain how the decentralized, self-help services they advocate will be organized and delivered. "For theorists who devote so much space to criticizing the irrationality of existing 'welfare states,' it is incredible that so little space is allocated to analysing the institutional bases of post-industrial communal services."<sup>203</sup>

To glance ahead chronologically, Frankel also took issue with Gorz's efforts in the later 80s and 90s to flesh out some of the areas in which his ideas went undeveloped in *Farewell*. As we shall see in the next chapter, Gorz became one of the leading European exponents of a social wage and attempted to specify viable strategies for funding it, such as a proposal for value added taxes on labour-displacing technology and environmentally-noxious goods and services. But Frankel expresses great skepticism about the feasibility and efficacy of VAT taxes as a means of financing a guaranteed income. Moreover, he argues that a pure income redistribution scheme is inadequate to redress social problems of poverty and exploitation.

On balance, although Frankel is often stringent in his treatment, his criticisms are constructive to the extent that his principal aim is to clarify the nature, interrelationship, and organizational form of the institutions that could form the basis of a post-industrial socialist society and to address the crucial issue of "the transition." And unlike some critics Frankel does not shy away from putting forward his own alternative proposals in response to such fundamental questions, sketching out an original scheme for semi-autarkic communities operating within a framework of national state planning and some market activities. Of course, his own post-industrial semi-utopia is equally open to debate, but once again further discussion is beyond our purview.

Frankel does overlap with Gorz's more orthodox critics on a number of central points, including his reservations vis à vis Gorz's contentious vision of the relationship between individual and social being, and his conception of the autonomous individual. In *Farewell* the individual was given clear priority over social being; in that book and related writings and interviews, Gorz

disavowed the traditional socialist idea that in a society of socialized production there would be no conflict between the individual and social being. Socialized production would never prove a completely enriching personal activity. As we have seen, Gorz held up the longing for the private niche, a highly personal space removed from society, as the quintessence of the yearning for freedom. Richard Hyman was one of the few reviewers to read this aspect of Gorz's work favourably, arguing convincingly for the validity of Gorz's delineation of an unbridgeable space between individual and social being. But there are moments in *Farewell* where Gorz gave the definite impression not only of a necessary space but of an inescapable antagonism between the individual and society, redolent of the early existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre with its vision of the gloomy struggle of each individual with the Other and the impossibility of the We-Subject. And this is what was more typically seized upon in the commentary.

At times Gorz appeared to espouse a similar vision of the inimicality of the individual and society, one that was utterly foreign to the Marxist and socialist traditions. The affinity was most apparent in an interview he gave the journal *Autogestions* in the spring of 1982.<sup>204</sup> Here he went furthest in underscoring the ultimately insurmountable gulf between individual and social being. "In short 'social' existence inevitably entails some sort of alienation, because society is not, and cannot be, a product of each one of us, that we would recognize as a work we have all created in a free and willing togetherness."<sup>205</sup> The same opposition between individual and society figured at the heart of his explanation of the nature of autonomy, which he defined as follows:

A person is said to be autonomous, when he or she realizes a personal project, towards ends they have created, based on criteria of success that are not socially pre-determined. The term "autonomous" comes from the Greek expression: "he who gives himself his own law." The essence of autonomous behavior cannot be explained sociologically. Obviously this behavior is expressed within a determined social field, with socially preconstituted instruments. But the field and instruments are surpassed and bent to serve personal goals as well as to fulfill a sense of personal adventure.<sup>206</sup>

He went on to elaborate an avowedly asocial, arguably anti-social, conception of the autonomous individual as one who feels that he alone can judge in his soul and conscience what constitutes the Good and the True. Casting the blossoming of the individual as something that takes place apart from rather than within sociality, Gorz suggested that such autonomous individuals are more likely

to be found among those in whom, for a variety of possible reasons, the process of socialization failed.

Society, all societies are to them a contingency, somewhat haphazard and more or less absurd, from which they feel removed. They are forever conscious that the norms and laws of society do not correspond to the very needs, morality and aesthetics, of people and of relations between people.<sup>207</sup>

This reinforces the contention that in the early 80s Gorz returned to the position he subscribed to in *Fondements pour une morale*, namely, that marginality is conducive to social dissidence. However, what is at issue here is Gorz's particular asocial definition of individual autonomy, with its separation of the individual and society, which was bound to raise the hackles of scholars who remained closer to the Marxist tradition wherein any conception of the individual apart from society is an abstraction and the opposition of individual and society in liberal philosophy a false dichotomy.

In a germane discussion of what he perceived as creeping individualism on the left in Britain and elsewhere in the 1980s, Michael Rustin counterposed social forms of life against individual ones, arguing that socialists must by definition be concerned to give substance and priority to the former over the latter. Quality of life for socialists must entail, among other things, participation in public life, assuming roles of responsibility as active citizens, and contributing to a shared culture.<sup>208</sup> In his argument Rustin misleadingly reduced the notion of individual freedom to the freedom to choose between commodities or services. Now Gorz in no way associated the idea of individual autonomy with liberal capitalist notions of freedom of choice among commodities; quite the opposite. However, in outlining what constitutes the good life he clearly stressed the more asocial activities of individual creation, remaining silent on the pleasures of participation in public life that Rustin elevated as fundamental to the socialist idea of quality of life. And this is an aspect of his thinking in the 80s that frequently came under fire.

The orthodox Marxist critic David Byrne was particularly upset by what he considered Gorz's dismissal of the idea that "human purposes are to be fulfilled through participation in a collective social being," in favour of a conception of self-realization through individual autonomy. Not only, in Byrnes' view, is this based on a "speculative and specious" ethnography of contemporary life<sup>209</sup> (the quest for a private niche which Gorz saw as the expression of the desire

for individual sovereignty), it also partakes of classical liberal conceptions which necessarily go hand in hand with liberal political economy despite Gorz's endeavours to disengage them.<sup>210</sup> And it is probably not mere coincidence that *Farewell* was written during the period of the *repli sur soi* and at a time when post-Marxist left-leaning intellectuals were inclined to reconsider the merits of liberalism's attention to the individual.

Even some of Gorz's more sympathetic commentators have expressed uneasiness with Gorz's apparent distrust of all forms of collective organization and his ostensible limitation of the aim of liberation to the realm of the individual.<sup>211</sup> This is the main objection of Mitchell Cohen, who accused Gorz of taking to extremes the Sartrean project of restoring the individual to Marxism. Cohen himself proposed a persuasive refutation of Gorz's interpretation of the Marxian vision of the problem of the relationship of individual and social being. For Marx, "[t]he development and sense of self and individuality is achieved by differentiation from others and self-understanding in relation to them. This is an inherently social process, not just a confrontation with an opaque, mystical Other."<sup>212</sup> The view that Gorz's emphasis on individual subjectivity in *Farewell* is redolent of early existentialism was also advanced by Arthur Hirsh, who added correctly that his existentialism had been greatly enriched by the experience of the New Left and the new social movements.<sup>213</sup>

It might be suggested too that in his stress on individual subjectivity and creativity Gorz also paralleled a dominant motif of Situationist philosophy. Richard Gombin has made the claim that the incorporation of the subjective dimension into the revolutionary quest was an innovation of Situationism.<sup>214</sup> In the Situationist philosophy of the 1960s it was the realization of individual liberty that was to bring about collective liberty. Of course, the relevance and role of the subjective dimension in the revolutionary quest was also the distinguishing feature of existential Marxism. Significantly, however, as touched on in the last chapter, for the Situationists — and very much contrary to the dominant socialist tradition — the abolition of work was the key to liberation, both individual and collective. The quotation from Raoul Vaneigem included as an epigraph to this chapter is a good illustration of this viewpoint. In this respect, Gorz can be seen as coming to share more with the Situationists than with perhaps any other philosophical current. As Gombin has observed:

The assertion that productive labour is one of the devices used to ensure the maintenance of order, that the imperatives of productivity are nothing more than imperatives of survival is utterly foreign to the dominant version of socialism that emerged from the nineteenth century: to the Marxists, man creates himself through work, it is simply a matter of liberating him from exploitation; the anarchists retain a quasi-mystical equation of work with moral value, seeing labour as a purifying force...<sup>215</sup>

Now Gorz certainly did not concur with the Situationists in all respects; for instance while the latter espoused a vision of the “whole man” who was to be the product of a stage in history in which the contradiction between art and life would be resolved and each individual would live everyday life as a creative artist, Gorz eschewed such ideas of historical transcendence as conducive to totalitarianism, and accordingly rejected the Situationist conviction that the dividing line between socially necessary work and art or play could be erased. And as noted previously, even autonomous activity was not synonymous for Gorz with play or idleness. Nor at this stage did Gorz explicitly repudiate the Hegelian/Marxist conception of man creating himself above all through work. Nevertheless, the parallels between his ideas and some of the themes of Situationism remain noteworthy.

This brings us to a most interesting point on which this chapter will conclude: what precisely was Gorz's conception of individual liberation? In *Farewell* he stated that “...happiness, like morality, always consists in being able to realise freely chosen ends and to take as ends the action that one realises.”<sup>216</sup> But is there anything more, ultimately, to the philosophy of individual emancipation than being free to do as one pleases?

Marcuse was among the first to raise tough questions about the implications of the emancipation from work and in so doing threw into relief some of the shortcomings of left theorization of the ultimate goal of revolutionary transformation. In the mid-1960s Marcuse posed what he designated as “perhaps the gravest question of all” to arise from the tendencies of advanced industrial society:

[E]very one of us is attached to the ideas of the free development of personality, the plenitude of the individual, the transcendence of alienation, and so on; today we must ask ourselves: what does it all mean? What does it mean when in mass technological society, work time — socially necessary time — is reduced to a minimum and free time practically becomes full time? How do we set about things? We will not get very far with our well-worn notions of “creative work” and



“creative development.” What does it all mean? Does it mean that we are all to go out hunting and fishing, writing poetry, painting pictures and so on and so forth? ... We must get down to brass tacks, not go on talking airily about the flowering of the individual and disalienated creative work: what does it all mean?<sup>217</sup>

More specifically for our purposes, what does individual autonomy and self-realization mean for Gorz in concrete terms? We have seen that in Gorz's dualist scheme individual liberation entails disposing of ever greater free time to engage in activities that are ends in themselves, whether these are aesthetic or artisanal pursuits: these are “the well-worn notions of creative work” referred to by Marcuse. More originally and refreshingly, however, individual autonomy in Gorz's vision comes down in part to the rather more mundane notion of doing one's own chores — from dusting the furniture to caring for infirm relatives. And this has remained a central and constant theme in Gorz's writings to this day — one to which we will return when we discuss Gorz's critique of the new servant class in the next chapter.

We have seen that Gorz's quest for freedom is bound up with reappropriating control of day-to-day domestic life from the web of helping institutions and hired hands that have come to govern existence from cradle to grave. Accordingly, Gorz made it clear in *Farewell* that activities such as housework and raising children — “all the activities associated with the reproduction of life” — are individual responsibilities that should not be transferred to the realm of heteronomous labour to be carried out in exchange for wages. On the contrary, Gorz insisted, domestic work and the care of young and old should be removed from the sphere of market relations and subsumed under the category of autonomous activity performed for its own sake on a voluntary basis. He scorned as simplistic and regressive those segments of feminist opinion which, misled by the distorting logic of capital, had begun to advocate wages for housework.<sup>218</sup> The sphere of the household, Gorz argued, has always been beyond economic rationality because reproductive activities do not create a surplus that can be sold on the market. The demand that it be waged and hence brought into the market was neither practicable nor desirable. Gorz pointed to the economic unfeasibility of remunerating housework at the marginal price of an hourly wage, citing calculations to the effect that in the 1970s French women performed 40 billion hours of unpaid work. This was not the crux of his opposition, however. Gorz's general vision of the goal of a post-industrial left was clearly at odds with the proposition of bringing economic rationality into the home. In Gorz's

view, one of the most profound problems facing the advanced capitalist countries is the extension of market relations to ever more domains of human existence; to counter this unrelenting encroachment of the market he called precisely for the extension beyond the household of the spaces which are outside the compass of economic rationality. The further penetration of market relations into the realm of affective relations raised the disquieting spectre, for instance, of the industrialization of childcare, the remuneration of maternal love, an argument he develops brilliantly in later work such as *The Critique of Economic Reason and Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*.<sup>219</sup>

Not surprisingly, in formulating these ideas, Gorz ran afoul of elements of feminist thought. Scholars and activists within the French and international women's movement raised doubts about the implications of his dualist societal arrangements for the advancement of women's emancipation. They and others sensitive to women's issues have expressed strong reservations about Gorz's post-industrial socialist vision on the grounds that it consecrates traditional gender inequalities insofar as the caring activities which must remain voluntary labour in Gorz's scheme are typically performed by women. The danger in Gorz's prescriptions for enlarging the spaces of non-market activities was that "the humanization of the non-market sphere would depend on the efforts of women, while men would continue to control the market sphere, the sole source of power."<sup>220</sup>

If intentions are taken into account, however, Gorz was never culpable of endorsing a sexist view of social roles. On the contrary, he acknowledged that under the current sexual division of labour, housework is not self-determined activity for two reasons: because it is devalued and viewed as burdensome activity due to its degraded and servile status in a society which elevates wage earning to the centre of existence, and because it falls almost exclusively to women. For Gorz it is precisely the status and distribution of work in contemporary society that militates against more equitable domestic arrangements. Here again Gorz argued persuasively that the reduction of working time would be an effective strategy to resolve this injustice. If men work less, his logic ran, they would dispose of more time to shoulder a greater share of domestic responsibilities, and at the same time — and this is a less obvious conclusion — the displacement of heteronomous work from its preeminent place in the hierarchy of worthwhile pursuits would engender a reassessment of other activities such as housework, such that these would come to be valued for their own sake.<sup>221</sup>

Moreover, Gorz stressed that his own dualist scheme was intended precisely to counter the ongoing dualization of the labour market into a privileged elite and a precarious majority that was aggravating the existing sexual division of labour since it was often women, along with young people and ethnic minorities, who occupied the low-wage, unstable, temporary and part-time positions. The reduction of heteronomous work and a redistribution of time between the two spheres would give women greater access to interesting work while at the same time freeing men, at least theoretically, to share household tasks. Thus, in Gorz's conception, the goal of the women's movement should not be to integrate women into the system of all-consuming wage work but to subvert the division of labour and the values of virility that render domestic work the preserve of women.

To this general defense, some French feminists retorted that while this might be a valid goal for the future, women had to contend with present realities in which only waged work is recognized as work; hence, they maintained, the strategy of demanding wages for housework was the only means of compelling social recognition of domestic duties as legitimate work.<sup>222</sup> For Gorz, however, the gravest threat to the ideology of domination in all its guises is the questioning of the idea that wage work is the only activity capable of making existence meaningful. In advocating wages for housework the feminists were tacitly sanctioning the dominant capitalist ideology and missing an opportunity to open up real possibilities for the women's movement to end male domination.<sup>223</sup>

It may be objected, however, that the realm of reproduction cannot be separated from the realm of production quite so neatly as Gorz implies and that patriarchal values will continue to dominate the family so long as they dominate the workplace. This is the gravamen of the critique of dualist schemes advanced by Francis Godard in a probing essay entitled "How Do Ways of Life Change?"<sup>224</sup> Godard is particularly concerned with what she calls sociological neo-familism, which proposes "a familistic solution to the crisis of the Welfare state" wherein socialized and collective services become a domestic responsibility.<sup>225</sup> And the author sees this as the hallmark of French post-social democratic theory, of which she considers Gorz a leading representative. The author takes care to distinguish this neo-familism from classical familism insofar as the former does not advocate or imply a return to traditional family forms; yet it does conceive the domestic group as

the locus of autonomy and individual liberty.<sup>226</sup> In elaborating a critique of neo-familism and of Gorz's dualist scheme specifically, Godard raises profound questions about the nature of the relationship between the autonomous and heteronomous spheres and the extent to which they can realistically be conceived as separate from one another.

In a related vein it may be argued that the coherence of dualist schemes such as Gorz's is predicated on an implicit barrier between the spheres which makes possible the preservation of individual liberty in the autonomous sphere. But to what extent does such a barrier exist? This question goes largely unexamined and unanswered in Gorz's work; however it is by no means implausible to suggest that the spheres actually interpenetrate and mutually influence one another. Or, more radically still, that the spheres are indissociably linked such that liberation cannot be attained in the sphere of autonomy without dramatically transforming social relationships and technology in the sphere of heteronomy. It is unlikely that the social relations obtaining in the heteronomous sphere will fail to spill over into the autonomous sphere and perhaps even circumscribe the field of possibilities therein in ways that are not conducive to Gorz's optimistic vision of individual emancipation and the creation of more convivial forms of human existence. Thus, as some of Gorz's more orthodox Marxist critics would have it, it is conceivable that changes in the heteronomous sphere may ultimately be the key to achieving the very types of social transformation Gorz hopes for. As Francis Godard queries rhetorically, "Can we change ways of life without also changing the ways of producing and governing?"<sup>227</sup>

## Notes

1. Chris Gerry, "The Working Class and Small Enterprises in the UK Recession," in *Beyond Employment: Household, Gender and Subsistence*, ed. Nanette Redclift and Enzo Mingione (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 309.
2. Whose ranks were diminished inside a short period of time by the deaths of Jean-Paul Sartre, Raymond Aron, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault.
3. George Ross, "French Intellectuals from Sartre to Soft Ideology," in *Intellectuals and Politics*, ed. Charles C. Lemert (Newbury Park, California: SAGE Publications, 1991), pp. 51-52.
4. See Alain Ehrenberg, "L'institution de l'individu," in *Magazine littéraire*, special edition, Fall 1996; John Ardagh, *France in the 1980s* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1982), p. 20 and *passim*; Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 137-138.
5. George Ross, "Where Have All the Sartres Gone? The French Intelligentsia Born Again," in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 235.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
7. Cited in Dominique Allan Michaud, *L'avenir de la société alternative: Les idées 1968-1990* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), p. 29.
8. Bernard Brown, *Socialism of a Different Kind: Reshaping the Left in France* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 49.
9. Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, pp. 182-183.
10. Ross, "Intellectuals Against the Left: the Case of France," *Socialist Register* (1990), p. 209 and 218.
11. Ross, "Where Have All the Sartres Gone?", p. 235.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.
13. See especially Ross's essay "French Intellectuals from Sartre to Soft Ideology," the tenor of which is reinforced particularly by the epilogue to Sunil Khilnani's *Arguing Revolution*, pp. 180-185, and also by Keith Reader's *Intellectuals and the Left in France Since 1968* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).
14. George Ross and Jane Jenson, "Post-War Class Struggle and the Crisis of Left Politics," *Socialist Register* (1985/86), p. 38.
15. Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: an Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, trans. Michael Sonenscher (London: Pluto Press, 1982), p. 12 n.8.
16. *Ibid.*

17. At the risk of redundant explanation, it may be relevant to point out that, for some scholars and activists, rejecting the primacy of working-class agency by definition belies any veritable affiliation with socialism or the left. In a refined variant of this stance, Ellen Meiksins Woods argued the (scarcely disputable) proposition that the primacy of the working class is the *sine qua non* of Marxism and maintained that any attempt to dislodge the working class from its station implied a (undesirable) recasting of the emancipatory vision integral to the socialist project. See her "Marxism Without Class Struggle?" *Socialist Register* (1983). In this essay she was primarily concerned to demonstrate and challenge the displacement of the working class from the centre of Marxist theory as evidenced by the then current Eurocommunist-oriented writings of Nicos Poulantzas and Ernesto Laclau. More will be said below about her specific criticisms of Gorz.

18. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 15.

19. On Eurocommunist ideas and the promotion of the anti-monopoly bloc, see for instance George Ross and the unsympathetic critique by Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Marxism without Class Struggle?"

20. Touraine advanced this argument in, for example, *La Société post-industrielle* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1969), see for instance pp. 99-118. See also Tony Chafer's summary in "The Anti-Nuclear Movement and the Rise of Political Ecology, in *Social Movements and Protest in France*, ed. Philip G. Cerny (London: Frances Pinter, 1982). Peter Kivisto argues that Touraine was less categorical than Gorz in dismissing the role of the proletariat and that it is *possible* to read his work in the early 80s as validating the working class as a potential base of conflict. ["Contemporary Social Movements in Advanced Industrial Societies and Sociological Intervention: An Appraisal of Alain Touraine's *Pratique*," *Acta Sociologica* 27 (1984).] But this is a debatable interpretation not shared by scholars such as George Ross. For Keith Reader, by contrast, the political implication of Touraine's eclecticism was to leave relations of production intact, whereas Gorz was, in his estimation, far more aware of importance of relations of production and of the continuing need for the State to play a key role in many areas. [*Intellectuals and the Left in France Since 1968* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), pp. 119-120.] Moreover, while Gorz softened his position by the mid-1980s, at least with respect to the potential role of organized labour in developing a new kind of trade unionism, Touraine reemphasized the obsolescence of working-class struggles by the early 90s, in books such as *The Workers' Movement* (1991).

21. See the extensive critical review by David Stark "Consciousness in Command," *Socialist Review* 57 (May-June 1981), especially pp. 133-136.

22. Ross and Jenson, "Post-War Class Struggle," p. 38.

23. A good illustration of the capaciousness of the label in the French context is an essay entitled "Ecoliberalism Lives" co-authored by French ecologist and political aspirant Brice Lalonde. The essay rejects both standard economic liberalism and statism in the name of a liberal-libertarianism purported to be the true heir of May '68. [Claus Leggewie and Brice Lalonde, "Ecoliberalism Lives," trans. George E. Hearthway, *Telos* 61 (Fall 1984).] On the general topic see, for example, Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution* and Dominique Allan Michaud, *L'avenir de la société alternative: Les idées 1968-1990* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989). Dick Howard also stresses that the new French liberalism was not a simple option for free-market capitalism; see the essay "French Socialism and Modernisation" in his collection *Defining the Political* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 169.

24. Benjamin Coriat, "Labor and Capital in the Crisis: France, 1966-82," in *The French Workers' Movement: Economic Crisis and Political Change*, ed. Mark Kesselman and Guy Groulx, trans. Eduardo Diaz, Arthur Goldhammer, and Richard Shryock (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 45.
25. Good sources on the assault by government and employers on labour in the late 1970s and early 80s include the collection edited by Kesselman and Groulx cited above and George Ross, "The Perils of Politics: French Unions and the Crisis of the 1970s," in *Unions, Change and Crisis: French and Italian Union Strategy and the Political Economy, 1945-1980*, ed. Peter Lange, George Ross and Maurizio Vannicelli (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982).
26. Cited in Jacques Kergoat, "From Economic Crisis to Victory of the Left: Workers' Reactions and Union Policies," in *The French Workers' Movement*, p. 284.
27. Even under its austerity program the government had encouraged employers to grant price-indexed wage increases until 1980. Ardagh, *France in the 1980s*, p. 113.
28. This story is related by Ardagh, p. 41.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
30. On this debate see for instance Guy Roustang, *Le travail autrement* (Paris: Bordas, 1982), pp. 131-138, and Michel Schiray, "D'un dualisme à l'autre," *Autogestions* (Spring 1982), pp. 36-37.
31. Michaud, *L'avenir*, p. 47.
32. Roustang, *Le travail autrement*, p. 134 (my translation).
33. *Ibid.*
34. Gorz uses this term to characterize the Stoffaës and Amado proposal in "The American Model and the Future of the French Left," trans. Carl Hathwell, *Socialist Review* 15 (November-December 1985), p. 106.
35. This helpful terminological contrast originates with Olivier Corpet, J. Gaudin and M. Schiray. See Michel Schiray, "D'un dualisme à l'autre," p. 38 and p. 39 n.14. For another presentation of a similar idea see Joseph Huber, "Autogestion et économie duale," *Futuribles* 24 (June 1979).
36. Gorz, "The American Model," p. 106.
37. Serge Bosc, *Stratification et transformations sociales: la société française en mutation* (Paris: Nathan, 1993), p. 191 (my translation).
38. According to John Ardagh, CGT membership is estimated to have fallen by 30 per cent from 1978 to 1980, *France in the 1980s*, p. 110.
39. René Mouriaux "Trade Unions, Unemployment and Regulation: 1962-1989," trans. James F. Hollifield and George Ross, in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991), tables p. 184 and p. 186.

40. A good source here is Kergoat, "From Economic Crisis to Victory of the Left."

41. Beyond some irrefutable statistical evidence and a few broad generalizations, the question of French labour and trade union evolution in face of the harsher manifestations of the crisis and attendant political developments is fairly complex and subject to divergent interpretations. A single book of essays — *The French Workers' Movement: Economic Crisis and Political Change*, ed. Mark Kesselman and Guy Groulx — written from a broadly left perspective yields numerous controversies and disputes.

For instance, the general theme of working class decomposition and its implications for working class unity is disputed by Jean Lojkine, "The Decomposition and Recomposition of the Working Class." Lojkine argues on the one hand that the working class has always been differentiated and, consequently, current divisions must be relativized. He argues, on the other hand, that the sociology of the late 70s and early 80s had a proclivity to underscore working-class division over what Lojkine sees as objective tendencies of working-class unification manifest in a dual movement of increasing intellectual content in much manual work and proletarianization of much intellectual work.

The causes of the decline of working-class militancy are also disputed. For instance, contesting the standard arguments about workers' inability to withstand the assault of capital and about the demobilizing effects of left electoral defeat, Jacques Kergoat ("From Economic Crisis to Victory of the Left") warns against conflating the positions of union leaderships with the interests and aspirations of the rank and file. He suggests that in the late 1970s the leadership feared and sought to defuse the rank and file militancy that had built up steam during the crisis, and that the divisions among the unions were a principal factor in inducing a decline in working-class militancy. He stresses rank and file opposition to the moderation of union demands as indicative of a higher level of working-class consciousness than is often assumed.

Yet another important topic of controversy is the degree to which union rhetoric corresponded to practice. It is arguable that French trade unions were, on the whole, far more reformist in practice than their discourse allowed. This question is posed in an interesting way by Mark Kesselman in his "Introduction" to the anthology.

42. For an overview see René Mouriaux "Trade Unions, Unemployment and Regulation." For a more comprehensive account see the relevant essays in *The French Workers' Movement* and see also Ross, "The Perils of Politics."

43. Gorz mentions the CFDT having taken the lead in condemning the Polish putsch in an interview by Dieter Wild, Helmut Sorge and Gustave Stern (originally published in *Der Spiegel* and translated by Harry Hoffman as "On the German Non-Response to the Polish Crisis," *Telos* 51 (Spring 1982). Characteristically more critical of NATO and the U.S. than of the USSR in general, the peace movement and the German left in particular came under criticism from the second left in France for failure to denounce more vigorously the Soviet-inspired declaration of martial law in Poland in an effort to snuff out the growing agitation for democracy in that country around the leadership of the anti-communist Solidarity movement. Gorz's was one of the voices raised in France in criticism of the German left's perceived soft stand on what he regarded as the oppressive, despotic and reactionary role of the USSR in Eastern Europe, and towards what he saw as the incipient finlandization of western Europe. The German left, he charged, was too quick to place life ahead of freedom, an inclination he rather perversely likened to German support in the 30s for the National Socialists, a party which, he remarked, also glorified life at the expense of freedom. The interview sparked a controversy with Rudolf Bahro (also translated and published in the aforementioned issue of *Telos*). Consistent with a typical German sensitivity to the fact that Germany was a divided



nation whose destiny was considered at the time to be in the hands of an insecure and besieged Soviet Union, Bahro did not take kindly to Gorz's criticism.

44. George Ross and Jane Jenson, "The Tragedy of the French Left," *New Left Review* 171 (September/October 1988), p. 33, and Mark Kesselman, "Introduction: The French Workers' Movement at the Crossroads," in *The French Workers' Movement*, p. 12.

45. "Refaisons donc le premier mai," in "Quand les chômeurs seront heureux....," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, December 4, 1978.

46. See Michelle Durand and Yvette Harff, "Trade Unions, the Environment and the Quality of Life," in *The French Workers' Movement*.

47. René Mouriaux, *Le syndicalisme face à la crise* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1986), pp. 78-80.

48. René Mouriaux, "The CFDT: From the Union of Popular Forces to the Success of Social Change," in *The French Workers' Movement*, pp. 82ff.

49. On the reactions to *recentrage* within the CFDT, see Ross, "The Perils of Politics," pp. 58-60.

50. Until 1980, Gorz himself did not identify with any particular faction, but "picked up whatever was of interest" to him in the various documents they all produced (Gorz, unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998). However his amicable relationship with the CFDT leadership underwent a significant change following the publication of an article by Edmond Maire to which Gorz took umbrage. The incident is discussed below.

51. Jean Lojkin underscores this point in "The Decomposition and Recomposition of the Working Class," pp. 119-131. Lojkin notes the publication in 1979 of *Crise et avenir de la classe ouvrière*, which featured contributions by Alain Touraine, Pierre Rosanvallon, Edmond Maire and Bruno Trentin among others. Lojkin charges that their pessimistic conclusions about the fragmentation of the working class along a variety of different lines and workers' inability to play the role of a leading actor for social change led to a reformist union strategy. As noted earlier, Lojkin himself is concerned to refute their conclusions.

52. Richard Hyman, "André Gorz and his Disappearing Proletariat," *Socialist Register* (1983), p. 272.

53. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.

54. Françoise Chirof and Michel Jacques, "Le mythe des 35 heures," originally published May 12, 1979 and reprinted in "Le Dossier de l'Emploi 1964-1994," *Les Cahiers de l'Express*, January 1994, p. 53.

55. A majority of delegates to the CFDT's 1979 Convention opposed the idea of any reduction in working time that entailed a corresponding wage reduction. On this point see René Mouriaux, "The CFDT: From the Union of Popular Forces," p. 89.

56. See Patrick Fridenson, "Le temps de travail, enjeu de luttes sociales," *Futuribles* (May-June 1992). The point about child labour is illustrated by Andrew Feenberg in his *Critical Theory of*

- Technology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 129.
57. Mouriaux, *Syndicalisme*, p. 87.
58. Gorz, "La plus grande liberté possible," debate with Peter Glotz and Tilman Fichter, *Les Temps Modernes* 483 (October 1986), p. 70.
59. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor: A Radical Proposal*, trans. Martin A. Nicolaus and Victoria Ortiz (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 20.
60. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 14.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
64. Richard Hyman's commentary on this aspect of *Farewell* provides a useful qualification to Gorz's denial of any empirical basis to Marx's conferral of a privileged role upon the proletariat. While agreeing with aspects of Gorz's critique of Marx's conception of the proletariat's revolutionary vocation as an act of faith, Hyman also counters, among other things, that Marx and Engels were inclined to treat the historically exceptional militant socialist worker of the 1840s as prototypical "because the stereotype meshed so neatly with their unfolding world-historical analysis." See "André Gorz and his Disappearing Proletariat," pp. 283-284.
65. Again Richard Hyman is an important corrective to Gorz's exegetical enterprise. He points out that while one can conceivably tease such a reading from selected passages in *The Grundrisse*, the more common vision in Marx's writings is of an enslaved and degraded proletariat that will rise up because it can no longer abide the denial of its humanity. "André Gorz and his Disappearing Proletariat," pp. 284-285. This, it should be added, was precisely Gorz's own reading of Marx's view of the roots of proletarian revolt in *La morale de l'histoire*. Hyman adds however that this dominant account presents its own paradox overlooked by Marx himself, namely, that this "crippled monstrosity" engendered by capitalism seems singularly ill-equipped to take centre stage in the abolition of the old and the building of a new social order.
66. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 46.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

74. Ibid., p. 14.
75. For his analysis of the nature of power, see *ibid.*, pp. 52-65.
76. Ibid., p. 52.
77. Johannes Berger and Norbert Kostede, Review of *Abschied vom Proletariat: Jenseit des Sozialismus*, *Telos* 51 (Spring 1982), p. 232.
78. "For Foucault and his icy sardonic grin," Gorz avows, "I had a strong dislike." Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998. Gorz found antipathetic and philosophically untenable Foucault's theory that in both philosophy and in science "truth is defined by power so as to functionally serve domination." Ibid. "Here again we have a system whose author-inventor denies existing as the author (subject) of his pronouncements, thereby rejecting any possibility of critique and of self-criticism, self-questioning." Gorz adds that in the face of approaching death Foucault "radically changed his philosophy, discovering that he existed (as a subject)."
79. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 169.
80. Hyman, "André Gorz and his Disappearing Proletariat," p. 291. However, he takes issue with Gorz's development of the idea, as we shall see below.
81. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
82. Gorz, *Farewell*, pp. 63-64.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Gorz, *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work*, trans. Malcolm Imrie (Boston: South End Press, 1985), p. 50 (my emphasis).
86. For an interesting discussion of this point see Irving Fetscher, "Marx, Engels and the Future Society," in *The Future of Communist Society*, ed. Walter Laqueur and Leopold Labedz (New York: Praeger, 1962), pp. 106-108. See Krishan Kumar's comments on Marx's evolving ideas in his *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 56-59.
87. Karl Marx, *Capital*, ed. Friedrich Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, Vol. 3: *The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p. 820.
88. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 95. This is an important difference between Gorz and Marcuse. In the 60s, Marcuse explicitly challenged as obsolete Marx's conclusion that realm of freedom can exist only beyond the realm of necessity; he was convinced of the possibility of eliminating alienation within socially necessary labour, as well as of the desirability of reducing the time devoted to it to a minimum. "The End of Utopia," in *Five Lectures*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro and Shierry Weber (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

89. Ibid., p. 100.
90. Ibid., p. 90.
91. Ibid., p. 75.
92. Ibid., p. 94.
93. Ibid., p. 91.
94. Ibid., pp. 77-80.
95. Ibid., p. 109.
96. Ibid., p. 118.
97. Pierre Rosanvallon, Entry on *Autogestion*, "Dictionnaire d'une époque: entrées et clés," *Le Débat* 50, special edition, May-August 1988, pp. 191-192.
98. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 72.
99. Ibid., p. 123.
100. Pierre Rolle was a theorist who rejected the notion of work as the principal ontological datum. His position, which anticipates that of Gorz in several respects, for example, in his rejection of workers' self-management as collective mutual exploitation and his belief in the possibility and desirability of the suppression of work itself, is described in Michael Rose's *Servants of Post-Industrial Power? Sociologie du Travail in Modern France* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1979), pp. 77-80.
101. Claus Offe, "Work: The Key Sociological Category," in Claus Offe, *Disorganized Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), p. 133.
102. Ibid., p. 141.
103. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 1.
104. Ibid., p. 71.
105. Ibid., p. 7.
106. Gorz, "The Reconquest of Time," trans. David J. Parent, *Telos* 55 (Spring 1983), p. 213.
107. Gorz, *Farewell*, pp. 2-3.
108. Ibid., p. 87.
109. Ibid., p. 124.
110. "The Limits of Self-Determination and Self-Management: An Interview with André Gorz," trans. Michele Joseph, *Telos* 55 (Spring 1983), p. 223.

111. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 112.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
114. "Towards a Policy of Time," in *ibid.*, p. 142.
115. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 68.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
120. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
121. For example, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985), p. 169.
122. *Farewell*, pp. 73-74.
123. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
124. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
125. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75.
126. "André Gorz," interview with Michel Contat and François Georges (October 12, 1980) in *Entretiens avec Le Monde*, 6 vols (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1985), vol. 6: *La Société*, p. 210.
127. Roustang, *Le travail autrement*, p. 127 (my translation).
128. To cite the passage again in full: "There is no situation which compels the for-itself to choose its freedom; but there are situations which make this choice more likely because they render the flight of the self towards some 'human nature' or preconceived humanity impossible, because they are unbearable, unacceptable, rent by contradictions which I must assume and which propel me to protest; this is in particular the case of the half-breed, the member of a racial or religious minority, the bastard, the excluded, the persecuted, the oppressed. Unable by virtue of his very condition to integrate into any existing community or to assume for himself the being which is conferred upon him by others, but banished from empirical humanity, deprived of his status as an 'individual endowed with rights' and expelled from 'human nature,' he can assert his humanity only by transcending his unacceptable situation towards another, assuming himself as freedom: for him, man *remains to be invented* and his humanity resides solely in this undertaking. This is why man, or the possibility of humanity, is on the side of the oppressed..." Gorz, *Fondements pour une morale* (Paris: Galilée, 1977), p. 121 (my translation).
129. *Farewell*, p. 68.

130. Gorz, Interview with Contat and Georges, p. 203 (my emphasis, my translation).
131. Ibid., p. 85.
132. Arthur Hirsh, *The French Left: A History and Overview* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982), p. 238.
133. This is the calculation of Jacques Robin cited in "Un support théorique au coeur du projet Phoenix." Available [Online]: <<http://fph.fr/phoenix/texte1.html>> [September 10, 1997].
134. *Farewell*, p. 8.
135. Anthony Giddens, "The Perils of Punditry: Gorz and the End of the Working Class," in *Social Theory and Modern Sociology* (n.p.: Polity Press, 1987), p. 288.
136. See for instance Guy Aznar, *Travailler Moins Pour Travailler Tous*, with a preface by André Gorz (Paris: Syros, 1993); Richard Barnet, "The End of Jobs," *Harper's*, September 1993; Bernard Cassen, "Imperative transition vers une société du temps libéré," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1994; Fred Block, "The Political Perils of Full Employment," *Socialist Review* 75/76 (May-August 1984): 24-29; Jeremy Rifkin, *The End of Work* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995); Juliet B. Schor, *The Overworked American* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).
137. Göran Therborn, "The Two-Thirds, One-Third Society," in *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*, ed. Stewart Hall and Martin Jacques (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 104-111.
138. There are numerous valuable overviews and discussions of the many and varied controversies surrounding concepts such as post-industrialism, flexible specialization and post-fordism. See for instance Barry Smart, *Modern Conditions, Postmodern Controversies* (London: Routledge, 1992).
139. Jeff Manza, "Postindustrial Economics," review of Fred Block's *Postindustrial Possibilities*, *Socialist Review* 22 (January-March 1992), p. 108.
140. An interesting compendium of reflection and analysis that captures this critical engagement with the idea of a qualitatively new epoch in western capitalism is the collection of essays *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*, ed. Stewart Hall and Martin Jacques (London: Verso, 1990).
141. There is an enormous literature on this question; for an exceptionally compendious and lucid treatment of the terms and stakes of the debate, see Martha MacDonald, "Post-Fordism and the Flexibility Debate," *Studies in Political Economy* 36 (Autumn 1991), and see also Robin Murray, "Fordism and Post-Fordism," in *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*, ed. Stewart Hall and Martin Jacques (London: Verso, 1990).
142. Michael Rustin discusses the changes associated with post-fordism in light of labour's post-war victories against capital in "The Trouble with 'New Times,'" in *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*, ed. Stewart Hall and Martin Jacques (London: Verso, 1990), p. 308.
143. Antoine Prost, "Qu'est-il arrivé à la sociologie du travail française?" *Le Mouvement Social* 171 (April-June 1995), pp. 79 and 81. His main purpose in this essay is to show (approvingly) that in the late 70s, faced with the diversity of and complexity of working-class situations with respect to

downgrading and upgrading of skills, *sociologie du travail* abandoned efforts to find a single overarching explanation for new developments such as the advent of a core-periphery division within the working class (dualization), looking instead to a series of disparate factors. He is also concerned to argue that making this particular cleavage (whereby one privileged segment of the class benefits from the precariousness and exploitation of the other) the focus of analysis occults other equally important divisions.

144. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

145. David Byrne, "Just haad on a minute there: a rejection of André Gorz's *Farewell to the Working Class*," *Capital & Class* 24 (Winter 1985), pp. 77-78. Harry Braverman faced a similar charge, as noted by Chris Smith in his *Technical Workers: Class, Labour and Trade Unionism* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 37.

146. Meiksins Wood, "Marxism Without Class Struggle?" p. 243 (original emphasis).

147. Extract from a February 1990 interview with *Le Monde* included in Bosc, *Stratification*, p. 190.

148. Bosc, *Stratification*, p. 195.

149. Hyman, "André Gorz and his Disappearing Proletariat," p. 287.

150. Gorz, "La conquête de l'autonomie," interview with Olivier Corpet et. al. originally conducted in 1981 and published in *Autogestions* 8-9 (Spring 1982). The same interview was translated by Michele Joseph for publication in *Telos* under the title "The Limits of Self-Determination and Self-Management: An Interview with André Gorz," *Telos* 55 (Spring 1983). My reference is to the English translation, p. 221.

151. "A Land of Cockayne?" Interview with André Gorz by John Keane, *New Statesman and Society*, May 12, 1989, p. 30.

152. Francis Godard, "How Do Ways of Life Change?" trans. Howard Davis, in *Beyond Employment: Household, Gender and Subsistence*, ed. Nanneke Redclift and Enzo Mingione (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 323.

153. This is noted by Robert Lumley in *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 309.

154. Byrne, "Just haad on a minute," p. 91.

155. *Farewell*, p. 72.

156. Interview with Contat and Georges, p. 210 (my translation).

157. *Farewell*, p. 74.

158. *Farewell*, p. 11.

159. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

160. Hyman "André Gorz and his Disappearing Proletariat," p. 292.
161. On the renaissance of Autonomia see Steve Wright, "Confronting the crisis of 'fordism'; Italian debates around social transition," *Reconstruction* 6 (Summer 1995/1996). Available [online]: <<http://services.cst.it/~chaos/steve.html> [September 26, 1997].
162. Meiksins Wood, "Marxism Without Class Struggle?" 242-244.
163. Ross, "The Perils of Politics," p. 56.
164. Gorz, "La plus grande liberté possible," pp. 70-71.
165. Berger and Kostede, Review, p. 233.
166. Daniel Singer, "Europe's Crises." *Monthly Review* 46 (July-August 1994), p. 94.
167. Byrne, "Haad on a Minute," p. 81.
168. Gorz, Interview with Contat and Georges, p. 207.
169. Louis Pinto, *L'Intelligence en action: le Nouvel Observateur* (Paris: Éditions A.-M. Métailié, 1984), pp. 152-156.
170. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 11.
171. Berger and Kostede make this error in their review, p. 231. And it is often repeated among Gorz's critics.
172. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 98.
173. Gorz, *Paths*, pp. 50-52.
174. *Farewell*, p. 100. See also the interview with Contat and Georges, p. 208.
175. *Farewell*, p. 86.
176. Interview with Contat and Georges, p. 211 (my translation).
177. See for instance his comments in "The American Model," p. 107.
178. John Keane and John Owens, *After Full Employment* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), p. 162 (original emphasis).
179. Göran Therborn, "The Two-Thirds, One-Third Society," p. 114.
180. Tim Luke, "Informationalism and Ecology," *Telos* 56 (Summer 1983), p. 66.
181. Ardagh, *France in the 1980s*, pp. 447-448.
182. *Ibid.*, p. 72.



183. Edmond Maire, "Le mouvement ouvrier face aux idéologies de la crise," *Le Monde*, August 21, 1980.
184. *Ibid.*, (my translation). Maire also took issue with Gorz's conception of the sole aim of struggle as the emancipation from work; for Maire, work had not been displaced as the centre of life, and emancipation within work remained the essence of socialism. He also disagreed with Gorz that work had divested workers of all autonomy, an objection that, as we saw earlier, was also raised by David Byrne, among others.
185. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
186. *Ibid.*
187. Alain Lipietz, "Choisir sa gauche," *Le Débat* 3 (May 1981), p. 23.
188. Gerard Strange, "Which Path to Paradise? André Gorz, Political Ecology and the Green Movement," *Capital & Class* 59 (Summer 1996), p. 82.
189. Andrew Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, second edition, (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 158-164.
190. Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 77
191. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
192. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
193. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
194. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
195. *Ibid.*, p. 90 (original emphasis).
196. *Ibid.*, p. 91 (original emphasis).
197. *Ibid.*
198. Boris Frankel, *The Post-Industrial Utopians* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987), p. 138.
199. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
200. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
201. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-117 and *passim*.
202. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
203. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

204. "La conquête de l'autonomie," interview with Olivier Corpet et. al., *Autogestions* 8-9 (Spring 1982), translated as "The Limits of Self-Determination and Self-Management."
205. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
206. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
207. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
208. Rustin, "Trouble with 'New Times,'" p. 314.
209. Byrne, "Just haad on a minute," p. 83.
210. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
211. See, for example, Bengt Furåker, "Gorz's Farewell to the Working Class," *Acta Sociologica* 27 (1984), p. 368.
212. Mitchell Cohen, Review of *Farewell to the Working Class* by André Gorz, *New Political Science* 12 (Summer 1983), p. 111.
213. Hirsh, *French Left*, p. 242.
214. Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism*, trans. Michael K. Perl (Middlesex: Pelican, 1975), pp. 72-74.
215. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
216. Gorz, *Farewell*, pp. 118-119.
217. Marcuse, "Socialism in the Developed Countries," *International Socialist Journal* 8 (April 1965), pp. 149-150.
218. Gorz, *Farewell*, pp. 83-84.
219. See the essay "The Crisis of Work," *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 62-63.
220. This was the formulation of the interviewers of the French feminist organization GRIF in their interview with Gorz, "Crises de la société de travail: Questions à André Gorz (1985)," in *Les Cahiers du Grif, Le travail des femmes* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1994), p. 135 (my translation).
221. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 5.
222. GRIF, "Crises de la société de travail: Questions à André Gorz (1985)," in *Les Cahiers du Grif, Le travail des femmes* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1994), pp. 131-132.
223. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.
224. Godard, "How Do Ways of Life Change?" see especially pp. 321-322 and 332-335.

225. Ibid., p. 325.

226. Ibid., pp. 326-327.

227. Ibid., p. 335.

## Chapter Five Socialism for a New Millennium

...modern corporate societies that can wield a high technology are liable to an unique temptation: since they do not exploit common labor, they may tend to exclude the majority of human beings altogether, as useless for the needs of the system and therefore as not quite persons.

Paul Goodman  
*The Moral Ambiguity of America*  
Massey Lectures (1966)

The more activities of which we say: "This is not for sale, this is not on the market, this is not a commodity," the richer our individual and social lives will be.

André Gorz  
"A Land of Cockayne?"  
*New Statesman and Society* (May 12, 1989)

The troubled ruminations of French intellectuals on the past and future of socialism did not prevent the French nation, a goodly part of it weary of the austerity program of the centre-right, from bringing the Socialist Party to power on a dramatic promise of *rupture avec le capitalisme*. The paradox was, as *Libération* journalist Laurent Joffrin was among the first to observe, that after a few years in power the Mitterand regime looked rather more like a break with socialism. The party's initial experiments with implementing the Common Program of the 1970s were presided over in *dirigiste* fashion by prime minister Pierre Mauroy from 1981-1982; they revolved around a Keynesian program of public spending to stimulate demand, growth, and job creation, along with a traditional socialist commitment to nationalizing many major industrial concerns and banks. This gave way in 1982, however, to policies akin in most essentials to neo-liberal strategy. Having precipitated a panicked response from business with their initial measures, the Socialists faced capital flight and an investment strike, in addition to contending with a severe trade deficit. They shifted their emphasis from fighting unemployment to fighting inflation, correcting trade balances, and promoting private sector investment. As part of their program of *rigueur*, they undertook to deindex wages from inflation and reduce the share of wages in the national income.<sup>1</sup> Industry

restructuring began in 1984 and led to the sacrificing of old and failing industries along with the associated jobs. With a new focus on private sector investment, some of the industries nationalized during the early years of Socialist rule were privatized by the time of cohabitation in 1986-1988.<sup>2</sup>

According to many analysts, the failure of the social-democratic program was virtually inevitable in view of insurmountable external constraints, resulting in part from the international recession and from the policies associated with the movement towards European integration.<sup>3</sup> But whatever and however inescapable the obstacles to the original Socialist project, the policies implemented from 1983 onward did not look so very different from those of the Giscard-Barre administration. Most importantly for our purposes, the crisis of unemployment, still the single most pressing issue in the eyes of the French public, escalated under the Socialist government, exacerbating the polarization of French society into a working “elite” and a growing population of the casually employed and excluded. The Socialists' failure to remedy or even palliate mounting joblessness was largely responsible for their demise in 1993: 70 per cent of French voters cited unemployment as the reason for the Socialists' electoral defeat.<sup>4</sup>

In another paradoxical turn, the victory of the Socialists coincided with the nadir of the intellectual left in France. And the backtracking of the Socialist government in power could not have failed to precipitate further interrogations on the part of remaining left intellectuals about what socialism could mean in the 1980s, at a time when late capitalism, far from faltering into decline, appeared to be reinventing itself as the incipient stage of global capitalism, in which technology was making it possible to move money and even production facilities to almost any point on earth at record speed.

If a transition to a post-fordist system was occurring, as the French Regulation School maintained, what were the contours and consequences of the new order? What were the implications of post-fordism for the post-war employment society, especially in view of the ever growing divide between the production of wealth and the labour time invested? With the erosion, in face of global integration, of the power wielded by national states and their retreat from redistributive social policies, what would become of the welfare state? The actions of the Socialists planted serious doubts about the future of *l'état providence*, even among those remaining segments of social-democratic opinion clinging to the idea that a return to the Keynesian welfare state consensus of the

60s was possible. Partly because of the Socialists' turn to neo-liberalism in 1982, the period of Socialist rule in the 80s helped to demonstrate that, "[n]ot only are the necessary economic and social conditions provided by the 'long boom' and powerful supportive trade-union movements no longer in place, the ideological consensus that justified interventionist management of the economy in the name of social justice has been effectively ruptured."<sup>5</sup> A left theory apposite to the new times had to offer an alternative to both neo-liberalism and social democracy.

Building on the theoretical ideas elaborated since the mid-70s, Gorz's work in the 80s and early 90s addressed these questions through the lens of two principal themes: the crisis of work and the redefinition of socialism. Although the election of the Socialists intervened between the publication of *Farewell to the Working Class* and Gorz's subsequent work in the 1980s, it did not alter his thinking: always skeptical of the prospects of official left social democracy, if anything, the policy failures of the French left in power confirmed his orientations.

This final chapter will deal with these themes, drawing on a plethora of journal articles and four major works published by Gorz in the fifteen-odd years between 1983 and 1997: *Les chemins du paradis* (1983), translated in 1985 as *Paths to Paradise*; *Métamorphoses du travail, quête du sens* (1988), translated in 1989 as *The Critique of Economic Reason; Capitalisme, socialisme, écologie* (1992), translated in 1994 as *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*; and his most recent book *Misères du présent, richesse du possible* (1997), not yet available in translation. It is arguably in these his most mature works that Gorz makes the most distinctive, significant and enduring contribution to the history of left ideas. It is in these years that Gorz rather singularly charts a new course for the left adapted to the historical conjuncture of the advanced capitalist economies at the fin-de-siècle. The writings are, on the whole, more theoretical and reflective and less journalistic, but they remain accessible to an educated lay public. And in them Gorz tries once more, as he did in his earlier work in the 60s, to link up with practical possibilities for social change. Of course, the ideas he elaborated in the decades of the 80s and 90s are built on the foundation of his previous work, but there are also important refinements and some significant shifts — some of them very unexpected — in his thinking.

Exploring the salient themes of Gorz's mature work, this chapter will look in greater depth at his vision of the emancipation from work, and the social and economic context in which his

thinking on this question evolved. It will examine his longstanding critique of proposals for an unconditional basic income and his recent about-face on that point. It will consider his reframing of socialism as exodus or the emancipation of society from the economy. It will discuss his fears about the undesirable results of some of the remedies advocated for the persistent problem of joblessness in the form of the advent of a new servant class. And it will conclude by returning to one of the most intriguing and often perplexing problems in Gorz's *oeuvre*: his ever changing perspectives on the question of the agency of social transformation. Here we will look at Gorz's call for a new trade unionism, which entailed a more positive valuation of the labour movement than the death knell he had sounded in *Farewell*, and we will witness his final abdication of theoretical responsibility for identifying the possible subject(s) of his redefined socialism.

### **The crisis of work in France**

With structural unemployment not only persisting but becoming more severe throughout the 80s and early 90s, the question of reduced work time that had been broached in the later 70s continued to elicit singular attention in France. In the last 20 years, the French produced a spate of books and articles on the subject unparalleled in the Anglo-American world. Little wonder: the rising unemployment rates that had begun to alarm the French people in the 70s continued unabated, paralleling the trend in much of Europe (from four per cent in the 70s, the average rate of unemployment in OECD countries doubled during the 1980s). In France, joblessness had quadrupled during the period of Giscard d'Estaing's presidency (1974-1981). And the Socialist government's efforts failed to stem the tide. Having declared full employment a moral obligation,<sup>6</sup> Mitterand counselled Pierre Mauroy's government to make the fight against unemployment "the priority of priorities"<sup>7</sup> Although the government's goal was to contain the number of jobless so that it did not surpass the symbolic two million mark, that frontier was nevertheless crossed in February 1982. Part of the reason for this was the proliferation of temporary and part-time work, which tended to be performed predominantly by women and immigrants. As noted in the introduction, part-time workers made up only nine per cent of the labour force in 1982, rising to 16.7 per cent in 1997. But the new unemployment figures also included more long-term unemployment among adult males between the ages of 25 and 50. By 1991, Mitterand's technology advisor Jacques Attali

was asserting: “Machines are the new proletariat. The working class is being given its walking papers.”<sup>8</sup>

In spite of a battery of measures introduced by the Socialists, such as direct creation of public sector jobs, as well as aid to small and medium sized businesses identified as the motor of job creation, joblessness continued to mount. Further, although the Socialists originally rejected the strategy endorsed by the right of promoting the creation of *petits boulots* (low-wage, often temporary or part-time “McJobs”), this was essentially the thrust of the TUC program (*Travaux d'utilité collective*) implemented under Michel Rocard's government in September 1984; the TUC was a kind of national service for youth coordinated by local administrations; intended as a vast job-training program it often simply temporarily removed participants from the rolls of the Agence nationale pour l'emploi (ANPE), and was compared by some beneficiaries to a scheme for digging holes merely to fill them up again.

From one and a half million in 1980, unemployment actually doubled in the first half of the decade. By 1986 and the beginning of cohabitation it had reached two and a half million. And it continued to rise thereafter, with a brief respite in 1989-1991, to just over three million by the time of the Socialists' defeat in 1993. In the latter half of the 1990s unemployment has attained shocking proportions, affecting 12.4 per cent of the population, with no end of increase in sight. Again, these are official figures: according to René Passet, by 1995 the number of people “deprived of work” in France tallied five million, if we include people who took early retirement, people enrolled in work training and TUC programs, among other categories not factored into the official count.<sup>9</sup>

In this context, the goal of work reduction continued to gain ground in France after the 1970s, across the political spectrum. According to surveys, in 1978 roughly 39 per cent of the population preferred reduced working hours to an increase in wages/salaries, while by 1992 that preference was expressed by 47 per cent.<sup>10</sup> And very recently Jacques Robin observed in an article for *Le Monde Diplomatique* that, “Not a day goes by in France when the various forms of work time reduction do not make headlines.”<sup>11</sup> However, no consensus has been reached over the years as to the most effective strategy and mechanics for the reduction of working time, and there has continued to be ambivalence within the union movement and among employers. Upon coming to power, Mitterand's Socialist government espoused the principle of work time reduction and, in



accordance with the dominant union preferences on this score, proceeded with the lowering of the retirement age to 60, as well as adding a fifth week of paid vacation. It also expressed its concurrence in principle with the aim of instituting the 35-hour week with no loss of pay by 1985. But in practice its actions in this regard were timid. It legislated a one-hour reduction in the workweek (to 39 hours) without loss of pay commencing January 1982. However, proponents of work time reduction then and now agree that small reductions such as these only contribute to boosting productivity and fail to achieve the desired effects of generating employment.<sup>12</sup>

Part of the reason for the Socialists' temerity on work reduction was massive employer resistance to reducing hours without corresponding reductions in pay (to the consternation of French employers, the 35-hour week without loss of pay is now the promise of the current Socialist government led by Prime Minister Lionel Jospin<sup>13</sup>), while unions on the whole rejected any wage reductions in exchange for shorter hours.<sup>14</sup>

Examining the attitudes of French and other European unions to work reduction, Jacques Freyssinet observed that most unions in the 1980s, with the exception of German unions, regarded reductions in working hours that cut into wages in any way as an assault, as well as a renunciation of the goal of full employment, and instead favoured measures to delay the entry of young people into the workplace (extended training) or to keep people out altogether (early retirement).<sup>15</sup> As we saw in the last chapter, the French union movement was by no means in the forefront of the struggle for shorter hours. Although militancy in favour of the 35-hour week mounted in the 1980s and 1990s at least within the CFDT, the initiative on the question of work reduction tended to be taken by policymakers.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, the German labour movement was unified around the demand for a reduction in working hours and fought one of the fiercest struggles in its post-war history when it launched a series of strikes in 1984 with the aim of shortening the workweek.<sup>17</sup>

As one of the leading advocates of work time reduction for both philosophical and practical reasons, Gorz charged that those unions which used the commitment to full employment as a pretext to fight against various forms of redistributing work were politically right wing, in effect allied with employers in reinforcing social dualism.<sup>18</sup> And, indeed, partly because the union movement, divided as it was, failed to seize the upper hand on work reduction during the 1980s, fierce employer resistance carried the day and, at the employers' initiative, negotiations were

instituted instead around the flexibilization of work, which was designed primarily to lower labour costs: the prolongation of equipment use through shift work to avoid paying overtime, flex-time arranged on an individual basis, the introduction of more part-time and contractual work.<sup>19</sup>

As noted previously, even among those sympathetic to proposals for work reduction, the idea has been seen by many as a stop-gap measure intended to palliate the problem of unemployment until the eventual return of full employment. On the other hand, building on the work that began in the 70s among ecologists and some left intellectuals, there has also been a philosophical espousal of work reduction that, in the bleak context of the growing social dualism attendant upon joblessness, understands it as a positive step towards a better life. A fascinating and fruitful historicization and rethinking of the value and place of work in human life took place in France in the 1980s (with parallels in other western European countries). From the meditations of Jacques Godelier to the reflections of Dominique Méda, a group of French scholars working in different disciplines converged on the conclusion that work as it is widely understood today is an invention of the modern age.

The very word *travail*, it has often been noted, originated in the sixteenth century, derived from the Latin word *tripalium*— an instrument of torture. Largely associated with servitude and suffering from the time of the Greeks, it was only with the philosophy of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, as Max Weber was the first to show, that work began to be considered a gift to God.<sup>20</sup> With the onset of the industrial age, work was perceived as the source of production and value, and philosophers such as Hegel and Marx defined work as the very essence of man. “With industrialism, writes Krishan Kumar, “work is placed at the centre not just of man, but of history. Work is the means by which man makes himself.”<sup>21</sup> It was not earlier than the eighteenth century in western Europe that work took on the meaning it has for us today as an activity performed for remuneration, generally in exchange for a wage, within the system of industrial production of goods and services.

From this time on, “work” comes to have a special meaning. It ceases to mean (as it had done, say, in the vocabulary of old English) being engaged in any activity and effort, especially that aimed at satisfying the necessities of life... Work instead assumes a special and much more restricted meaning: paid employment. Work comes to mean “having a job.”<sup>22</sup>

It is thus only in the last two centuries that we have seen the establishment of the employment society, where the majority of people work full time for a salary, where holding this job is indissociably connected with one's place as a citizen and with the corresponding rights and obligations, and where paid work is celebrated not only as a means to an end but as a goal in and of itself.<sup>23</sup> In France in the 1930s, less than half the population depended on wages or salaries; by 1975, the proportion had risen to 83 per cent of the population.<sup>24</sup>

### **Towards a civilization of free time**

In that current of French thought devoted to a reconsideration of work and life, Gorz was a pivotal figure. The crisis of work continued to be the main focus of his attention through the 1980s and 1990s. In this, unlike so many intellectuals in the advanced capitalist countries, his preoccupations have coincided much more closely with those of the majority of the population. In brief, he built an elaborate philosophical, economic and sociological case for work reduction as the revolutionary reform of choice for the *fin-de-siècle*.

In lieu of piecemeal work reduction measures, Gorz argued vigorously for an overarching policy on work and time. In his estimation, it was only such a comprehensive policy that could counter the problem of dualization and open up possibilities for all individuals to work intermittently, devoting a continually decreasing amount of time to socially necessary labour and an expanding amount of time to micro-social and private activities. The reduction of working hours was not, in other words, a magic formula.

Reducing working hours will not have a liberating effect and will not change society, if it merely serves to redistribute work and reduce unemployment. The reduction of working hours is not merely a means of managing the system, it is also an end in itself in so far as it reduces the systemic constraints and alienations which participation in the social process of production imposes on individuals and in so far as, on the other hand, it expands the space for self-determined activities, both individual and collective. This development of free activities which are no longer *work* (in the sense the term has come to assume) obviously cannot be produced simply by reducing working hours. It requires a *politics of time* which embraces the reshaping of the urban and natural environment, cultural politics, education and training, and reshapes the social services and public amenities in such a way as to create more scope for self-managed activities, mutual aid, voluntary co-operation and production for one's own use.<sup>25</sup>

Indisputably a tall order. But, as Gorz stressed, it was not to be regarded as an immediately realizable goal, any more than the welfare state had been half a century earlier. To those who argued that a significant reduction in working time would have unintended economic consequences, Gorz granted that not every effect of limiting working hours could be forecast in advance and that societies would have to make the political decision to allow economies to adapt to the changes, just as they had adapted, in spite of protest from the capitalist class, to the eight-hour day.<sup>26</sup>

In accordance with his emphasis on the need to develop a politics of time, Gorz also devoted far more attention in the 80s and 90s to the form and mechanics of work reduction, especially as the public debate heated up and a variety of contending scenarios began to receive attention. He elaborated his own perspective in a wide variety of books and articles.<sup>27</sup>

In Gorz's view, the specific forms of work reduction would have to evolve through branch negotiations because no single scheme could accommodate the differing constraints and needs of the various sectors of production. However, a general legislative agreement would also be necessary to ensure against gross variations in labour time between sectors. He proposed that planning committees be set up to define productivity targets in each branch of industry and of the service sector. These targets would form the basis of negotiating sectorial agreements in which productivity growth, work organization and work time reduction would be thrashed out. It would be especially important, Gorz insisted, to plan in the long-term for a redistribution of workers from those sectors where productivity gains are high to those in which they are slower; and this in turn would depend on educational reforms to allow for polyvalent workers and an educational focus on distinctively human skills with which machines cannot compete — original thinking, artistic abilities and so on.

As for the central question of whether work reduction should be carried out with or without full maintenance of wages and salaries, Gorz has occupied a middle ground between those who advocate work reduction without any reduction of income and those who argue for a corresponding wage reduction. He has maintained that in order to make a significant dent in the existing scale of unemployment work reduction would have to be so considerable that some loss of income would be necessary if firms are to remain competitive; however, subsequent and steady reductions in working time, as part of an ongoing policy of managing the distribution of work, need not entail any diminution of purchasing power.<sup>28</sup> Wages and salaries need not fall, that is, if an effective means is

in place to redistribute equitably the fruits of any productivity gains realized by the introduction of labour-saving technology, the reduction in working time, and the corresponding reorganization of work that it entails. And so Gorz has also turned his attention to possible methods for financing permanent work reduction, a point to which we will return below.

Gorz's first book length essay devoted to the necessity and benefits of a progressive emancipation from work was *Les chemins du paradis* (1983), translated in 1985 as *Paths to Paradise*. In it, Gorz meditated on the causes of the economic and social crisis that emerged in the later 70s and elaborated upon many themes from his writings since *Ecology as Politics*, particularly, the need for greater self reliance in face of the overweening dependency on the welfare state and the culture of experts. He presented an eloquent defense of his countervailing vision of a culture of free time and chosen activities.

In a prescient manner, Gorz endeavoured to demonstrate in *Paths to Paradise* that the effects associated with the economic crisis of the late 70s were not ephemeral, as both right and left politicians suggested, but, rather, that the lineaments of a new system involving the continual displacement of stable work were being put into place. "The present crisis," he asserted, "is not a temporary interruption of economic growth, but a *consequence* of it."<sup>29</sup> He essentially explained the crisis as arising from the inability of capital to raise productivity fast enough to offset the decline in profitability resulting from the ongoing investment by capital in labour saving machinery (itself a response by capital to the successful labour struggles of the 60s). This was especially crucial at a time when markets for industrial consumer products had reached the point of saturation and the social cost of capitalist development had greatly increased with the expansion of the welfare state.

Returning to his longstanding analysis of how production drives consumption in contemporary capitalism and how the system must produce consumers of commodities to survive, Gorz observed that this process had been stymied by the rising cost of services associated with the "production of demand"<sup>30</sup> (education, healthcare, and so on). Capital, he argued, had sought to lower the costs of such services in order to launch a new cycle of accumulation. Information technology was crucial here, as it facilitates the self-production of consumers. Gorz speculated, again rather presciently, that information technology would allow the sphere of capitalist production to be extended into the realm of the reproduction of the labour force: it would make it possible, for

instance, for people to buy computer programs to prescribe health care and provide education and training. This would enable capital and the State to reduce the scope and cost of public services while selling more commodities. Individuals, he anticipated, would pay industry for the means (computer hardware and software) of auto-production, auto-integration and auto-surveillance. Lest this development be mistaken for a step towards greater autonomy, self-reliance and empowerment, as it has frequently been presented, Gorz warned that information technology has been preprogrammed to ensure conformity with established social norms. It is essentially a new form of consumerism securing a new market for capital. However, he maintained, this new market would not be sufficient to promote a new cycle of intensive accumulation as it entails too little capital and too little labour.

In short, as Gorz saw it, capital had come up against the problem of the structural limit to growth. In the West at least, markets had become saturated, while the cost of wages and benefits mounted. The result was overcapacity, declining profitability and unemployment. Those who expected growth to remedy this problem were missing the boat because growth was part of the problem: where once investment in industrial plant would have generated jobs, now the same investment had become destructive of employment. Means of payment had become necessary for people to be able to consume what capital needs to sell. Pursuing one of the central themes in his analysis of contemporary capitalism, Gorz explained that capitalism has reached a point where it must go to new lengths to produce consumers: even if that means paying people to consume. Or, to put it another way, the link between work and income would have to be broken.

As implausible as this might sound, Gorz showed that it was already happening, although it was not acknowledged as such. The decoupling of working time and income has already received de facto recognition in paying unemployed people a high percentage of their previous earnings and in the trend towards early retirement — by the 1990s, France had one of the lowest rates of employment in the industrialized world for people over 55 years of age<sup>31</sup> — as well as in extending high school leaving age, paid training schemes and higher education without career outlets. People were being paid not to work, or at least the traditional relationship between income and labour performed was in the process of being altered. (French economist René Passet has calculated that people's non-work related income in France currently amounts to nearly 40 per cent of GNP.<sup>32</sup>)

According to Gorz, the consumption of education and healthcare was being tacitly recognized as socially useful work; at this point it was clear that the capitalist system itself was in a process of transmutation, and only the semblance of capitalism would remain — what Gorz has called “living-dead capitalism.” In this system, the main goal of production is no longer accumulation; it is domination. And this is the underlying reason, in Gorz's estimation, that in spite of mounting dualization the governing powers resist implementing a policy of work reduction.

The ruling powers refuse to recognize the disengagement of work and income for political reasons; Gorz reiterated the ideas he had touched on in *Farewell*, that upholding the work ethic is vital to perpetuate the system of domination. Although employers officially oppose work reduction on the grounds that it is too costly, for Gorz, the cost argument is specious because the costs of unemployment to employers and society as a whole are higher, in his view, than the additional costs employers would sustain as the result of, say, a shorter workweek. (Most recently, the overall financial costs of unemployment to French society have been estimated by some economists at between 450-500 billion francs including estimated lost taxes.<sup>33</sup>) But, according to Gorz, regardless of potential economic benefits, employers instinctively perceive work reduction as a threat to their authority and the established order.<sup>34</sup>

While Gorz presented the notion of paying people to consume as part of the process of social dualization in a system of technocratic domination, he also discerned an emancipatory potential in the disengagement of working time and income. The upshot of *Paths to Paradise* was Gorz's by now familiar argument that since wages can no longer be linked to the amount of work performed, the right to a decent income should not depend on having a full time job. In other words, given a viable work reduction policy, the progressive diminution of the quantity of socially necessary labour can enable the majority of people to work less while living better, instead of engendering dualization.

It was actually in the early 70s that Gorz first began contemplating favourably the idea of severing work time and income. He initially mentioned it in passing in an approving article about a report written by Sicco Mansholt, then President of the EEC Commission, in connection with the publication of *Limits to Growth*.<sup>35</sup> And in *Farewell to the Working Class* he asserted that the reduction, owing to technology, in the number of hours required to produce the necessities of life

called for new mechanisms of the distribution of income independent of the laws of the market.<sup>36</sup> As Gorz often noted, the decoupling of the production of wealth from labour time had been anticipated by Marx in the *Grundrisse*:

...as heavy industry develops, the creation of wealth depends less on labour time and on the quantity of labour utilised than on the power of mechanical agents which are set in motion during labour time. The powerful effectiveness of these agents, in its turn, bears no relation to the immediate labour time that their production costs. It depends rather on the general state of science and on technological progress, or the application of this science to production... In this transformation, what appears as the mainstay of production and wealth is neither the immediate labour performed by the worker nor the time that he works...<sup>37</sup>

In later discussions of the subject, Gorz frequently referred to a concept broached by Marx in the essay quoted from above which also gained currency among the Italian *autonomia* movement: the ascendancy of general social knowledge — the “general intellect” — as a productive force. As Gorz explained in a recent interview with *Le Monde*:

With the advent of the Internet, cybernetics, computerization, the networking of all knowledge, it is easier to see how working time cannot be employed as the measure of work, nor can work be taken as the measure of the production of wealth, since direct work in the productive process is for the most part the material extension of immaterial work, intellectual work, reflection, cooperation, exchange of information...<sup>38</sup>

The logical conclusion — which Gorz was not alone in drawing from this evolution — was that the right to an income had to be dissociated from the right to a job. In *Paths to Paradise* he argued that since people's labour is ceasing to be the main source of wealth, their needs can only be met if the means of payment are unrelated to the amount of labour required by production; there had to be a means of distributing to everyone the wealth created by society's productive forces as a whole and not by the sum of individual labours.<sup>39</sup>

The linchpin of his own proposals, upon which he expanded at length throughout the 80s and the first half of the 90s, was a guaranteed income that would compensate individuals for the loss of income attached to shorter hours. Rather than having employers pay the same wage for fewer hours, Gorz advocated a universal allocation to be paid by the State. Essentially he proposed the implementation of a guaranteed income to be disbursed in exchange for a fixed number of hours



of heteronomous work to be performed by each able-bodied individual and calculated across a lifetime.

### **The basic income debate**

In raising the idea of a guaranteed income in this context, Gorz contributed to initiating the French-language component of an extensive ongoing pan-European debate on basic income. The proposal for a basic income (the French terms include *revenu d'existence*, *allocation universelle*, *revenu de citoyenneté*...) has many variants, all of which involve overturning the traditional relationship between work and income by entitling each citizen to a guaranteed income cumulable with earned income for the duration of their adult lives at least.

The idea of introducing some form of guaranteed income has been the object of discussion and controversy for many years.<sup>40</sup> The origins of the concept can actually be traced as far back as the early sixteenth century writings of Spanish-born scholar and friend of Thomas More, Juan Luis Vives, and the idea was subsequently entertained by Tom Paine, John Stuart Mill and Bertrand Russell, among others. In France, Jacques Duboin, founder of the distributist movement in the 1930s, was a proponent of the social income, which he saw as the just inheritance by each individual in society of the collective wealth accumulated through the efforts of previous generations.<sup>41</sup> In the 60s and 70s, the Italian far left also discussed the idea of a social wage.<sup>42</sup> Robert Theobald, the American liberal economist who headed up the Ad Hoc Committee on the Triple Revolution in 1964, endorsed the idea of a minimum guaranteed income on the grounds that “automation is rendering work for pay obsolete, and that government handouts are the only way to give the public the means to buy the immense bounty produced by automatons.”<sup>43</sup> Proposals for basic income have also been put forward by several Nobel laureates including the Dutch economist Jan Tinbergen and American economist James Tobin.

The philosophical justifications for a guaranteed income have been many and varied, as Europe's leading expert on the subject and one of Gorz's interlocutors, Philippe Van Parijs has shown.<sup>44</sup> And there are both left-wing and right-wing variants of the proposition. Particularly in North America, the idea of a guaranteed minimum income is also associated with right-wing schemes for a perpetually impoverished underclass. Milton Friedman, for example, proposed the

idea of a negative income tax which would provide a bare subsistence income for those currently on welfare, while eliminating all other forms of social security. In part, this scheme was intended to remove the disincentive to accepting low-wage jobs that is built into current welfare programs, insofar as any income earned by individuals receiving social assistance is deducted from their allocation. Under the negative income tax system, those earning an income above a certain predetermined level would pay taxes, while those below the cut-off would be paid a lump sum replacing all other transfers. In Germany, the neo-liberal thinker Wolfram Engels championed a similar scheme in the 1970s.<sup>45</sup> In the U.S., the idea of implementing a negative income tax to replace welfare was seriously discussed under the Nixon administration in the early 70s.<sup>46</sup>

In France, the idea of a minimum income was raised — and quickly rejected — in the 60s, in a report commissioned by de Gaulle and prepared by high-ranking civil servant Pierre Laroque.<sup>47</sup> Interest in the idea was revived in the context of a wide-ranging debate over the crisis, the relentless rise of unemployment and the future of the welfare state.<sup>48</sup> Ideas about basic income were given renewed attention particularly by elements of the left in France (and in other parts of Europe in the 1980s - the German Green party, for instance, subscribed to the principle of basic income) who were concerned with the ongoing technological displacement of work and inability of an already ailing and weakening welfare state to cope with the consequences of long-term structural employment. Several organizations were set up to promote the idea, including the Basic Income European Network, whose first chairman was German social scientist Claus Offe, and the Association pour l'Instauration d'un Revenu d'Existence (AIRE). The general principle has even garnered support within the official left including Jacques Rigaudiaut, who served as a top economic advisor to Michel Rocard. Proponents of basic income among French intellectuals in recent years include sociologist Alain Caillé, founder of the Mouvement anti-utilitariste dans les sciences sociales (MAUSS), economist Yoland Bresson, founder of the Association pour l'introduction d'un revenu d'existence (AIRE), Jean-Marc Ferry, the leading French exponent of the philosophy of the Frankfurt School, economist René Passet, philosopher and social policy specialist Chantal Euzéby, among many others.

Basic income proponents on the left were quick to emphasize that wealth had continued to expand as the volume of work contracted and while conventional means for distributing wealth

were clearly faltering. GDP increased by 60 per cent in France between 1975 and 1994, while unemployment tripled.<sup>49</sup> And the share of wages in the GDP diminished from 68.8 per cent to 59.7 per cent between 1982 and 1995.<sup>50</sup> According to another set of supporting calculations, GNP increased by 30 per cent between 1981 and 1993, while workers' average purchasing power increased by only five per cent.<sup>51</sup> The problem of growing social inequality, it was widely agreed, did not derive from a shrinking volume of resources, but from the distribution of those resources to the profit of the wealthy and at the expense of the excluded. Supporters of basic income put forward a wide variety of schemes — all more generous and egalitarian in thrust than variants of negative income tax, but divided over such issues as the amount of the allocation, the sources of funding and the obligation to work.<sup>52</sup>

There have also been practical experiments in France with forms of guaranteed minimum income, such as the Revenu minimum d'insertion (RMI) — although again the left proponents of basic income have disagreed about whether this constituted an encouraging first step or has actually contributed to perpetuating poverty and exclusion. On November 30, 1988, Michel Rocard's government instituted a new minimum income allowance, the RMI. It guaranteed a temporary minimum income to all individuals over the age of 25 whose resources fell below a poverty level set at 2,000 francs a month (\$365) for a person living alone.<sup>53</sup> The size of the grant increased according to family size. One of the avowed goals was to help beneficiaries to enter or re-enter the work force. The RMI affected nearly three per cent of the French population (including dependents) by the end of 1994. The number of beneficiaries rose from 400,000 in 1989 to over a million in 1996, and only lip-service was paid to the stipulation that recipients had to be prepared to work. Many of the beneficiaries are young people living alone — nearly half the recipients are under the age of 35, primarily underprivileged individuals from families with few resources. The average level of education is low: fewer than 10 per cent have a baccalaureate or advanced degree. While half the recipients have no other source of income and apply for welfare services, others receive some allowances (family, housing) or hold jobs providing them with a small income.

The institution and maintenance of the RMI has been viewed by some left intellectuals in France as an encouraging step in direction of a basic income that tacitly acknowledges the tenuous

relationship in advanced industrial societies between the production of wealth and labour time, and the need to find mechanisms outside wages for distributing wealth.

Although Gorz saw reason to welcome the decoupling of work and income, he was, up until very recently, a vocal critic of an unconditional citizens' income — an income awarded to all citizens on an individual basis, irrespective of income from other sources and free of any obligation to work. He was a leading protagonist in the contemporary French-language debate on the subject, inaugurated in earnest in 1985 in the pages of the Belgian journal *La Revue Nouvelle*. In the introduction to a special issue the previous year, that journal's editors remarked that Gorz had done more than anyone else in recent years to launch the debate in the French-speaking world on lifelong guaranteed income.<sup>54</sup> Further, according to Steve Wright, the debate in Italy over the issue since the mid-80s has largely revolved around Gorz's work.<sup>55</sup>

While Gorz did not elaborate at length on the subject of basic income in *Farewell to the Working Class*, he made it clear in his comments on the disengagement of work and income that he did not intend a defense of a universal allocation that would entitle people to an income in the absence of any contribution to socially necessary labour. In his view at the time, such a measure would further sap individual autonomy by exacerbating dependence on the central authority of the State. When he called for the acknowledgement of the uncoupling of working time and income, he meant that people should be able to work fewer hours without being docked in their wages. Indeed in *Farewell* Gorz rejected basic income as merely “a wage system without work.”<sup>56</sup>

He subsequently refined his position, contrasting the right-wing version of a basic income below the subsistence level which would compel people to take low-wage jobs and the left version of an unconditional and sufficient income. However, he continued to oppose the idea of basic income in his many substantive discussions of the subject throughout the 1980s and — until his recent remarkable turnaround — for the better part of the 90s, on the grounds that it constitutes a wage for social exclusion that consolidates dualization.<sup>57</sup> Not only would an unconditional basic income maximize the dependency of recipients on the State, but, Gorz warned, if it were pitched at any feasible level (calculations of feasible allocations ranged from 1250 to 2000 francs per month, often entailing the elimination of other benefits) an unconditional basic income would reinforce labour market dualism because the allocation would be too small to free people without good jobs

from the need to take any and all available wage work; in essence the proposed basic income would subsidize the growing low-wage, low-skill sector by giving greater latitude to employers to pay lower than subsistence wages (less than 10 francs per hour) for precarious work, since people would be willing to take work simply to supplement their basic income. The culmination would be a bargain-basement work force.

Basic income was tantamount, in Gorz's view, to a return to the spirit of the Speenhamland system and what has come to be known in North America as "workfare." It fell precisely within the logic of the dual labour market proposed by Amado and Stoffaes, of which Gorz's work provided a sustained critique. And he adduced some convincing evidence to support his case from various schemes being advanced in various countries. His argument was strong, for example, in relation to the proposals for a guaranteed minimum income put forward by the German neo-liberal economist Joachim Mitschke and included in the program of the FDP (Liberal party). Gorz was highly critical of Mitschke's *Bürgergeld*, which would allow only those people working below the minimum wage to add their earnings to the universal allocation.<sup>58</sup> There were certainly grounds here for Gorz's fear that the kind of job creation which such a scheme would favour was primarily in the realm of low-skill service jobs.

Variants of basic income were also promoted on the left of the political spectrum. Gorz saw both advantages and drawbacks in the principle of a *sufficient* basic income awarded unconditionally to all adults.<sup>59</sup> First of all, were the allocation to be insufficient for people to live on without working, it would also contribute to expanding the dual labour market. This was his criticism of the proposal by the German Greens to implement an unconditional citizen's income of 1,300 DM per adult,<sup>60</sup> and he also questioned the feasibility of schemes that proposed more generous allocations.

Apart from the issue of whether or not basic income was to be associated with an obligation to work, the means to finance any type of universal allocation proved a lively topic of discussion among participants in the debate, and a variety of proposals were advanced. Among the main sources of funding identified were the savings that would accrue from a reduction in unemployment insurance payments attendant upon a decrease in the numbers of jobless as the result of some form of work-sharing. In Gorz's own scheme, the social income was to be funded as well by a dedicated

tax on automated production in the form of a VAT on those goods and services, the prices of which tend to fall precipitously owing to the use of labour-saving technology.<sup>61</sup> In a striking illumination of the principle at issue here, Gorz referred to a proposal apparently put forward by Japanese employers in 1983 that robots be required to pay union dues.<sup>62</sup> As Gorz explained it, his VAT proposal differed little from the system of political pricing already in effect on goods such as gasoline, tobacco or alcohol; and he stressed that the highest taxes would be placed on those goods the consumption of which is least desirable from a social and environmental perspective. He suggested that the tax might be deducted from export prices to maintain international competitiveness.

But setting aside the question of economic feasibility, Gorz raised objections in principle to proposals for an unconditional income sufficient for individuals to live on without working for wages. He granted that a sufficient basic income would facilitate the displacement of waged work from its preeminent place in society as the activity that confers meaning and rights by tacitly valorizing socially useful activities currently not recognized as such because they are not remunerated. However, he also worried that such activities would consequently be assimilated to waged employment and that their specificity as autonomous activities would thus be evacuated. For reasons we will examine quite closely below, Gorz remained hostile until recently to proposals which dispensed with any obligation to work. For Gorz, a basic income had to be linked to the right to work — albeit not traditionally conceived as the right to a full-time job. He likened basic income independent of the right or duty to work to the current tendency of “living-dead capitalism” to pay people to consume. He believed such a scheme could easily be accommodated by an elitist technocracy without assuring the recipients a place as equal citizens.

By contrast, the idea Gorz long defended involved granting a social income in exchange for a steadily diminishing share of the socially necessary labour. A politically progressive version of basic income consisted, for Gorz, in the right of each citizen to receive, distributed throughout his or her life, the product of the minimum amount of socially necessary labour which he or she has to provide over a lifetime<sup>63</sup> — an amount of time which Gorz estimated at 20,000 hours per lifetime by the year 2000, or 1000 hours per year (roughly half the current average work year for full time workers). In this scheme, tied to the generalized reduction of working time, work in the

heteronomous sphere would cease to be the primary activity in most people's lives, but would remain "the economic basis for a limitless variety of possible activities without economic objectives."<sup>64</sup> This conditional basic income would enable people to work intermittently throughout their lives while receiving a continuous income. Gorz made it clear that he did not see this as an immediately realizable goal but pointed out that neither was the welfare state 50 years earlier.<sup>65</sup> He presented it as a guiding objective around which the left could be rebuilt.

Gorz's social income idea shares something with the conceptions of Swedish economist Gunnar Adler-Karlsson, to whom Gorz often referred, as well as with the proposals of Guy Aznar, a French sociologist whose ideas converged with those of Gorz on many points, including the rejection of an unconditional basic income.<sup>66</sup> Aznar put forward the idea of stimulating voluntary work-sharing by compensating any individual prepared to make the transition to part-time work for the loss of income incurred in the move to shorter hours with a "second cheque" issued by the State. The second cheque would be used to maintain the incomes of people who work less, and to offset the payroll costs of companies which agree to reduce hours and to lengthen the duration of equipment use by adding new shifts requiring new hires.<sup>67</sup> This would enable companies to remain globally competitive while ensuring that incomes remain stable. Aznar himself vehemently opposed the idea of detaching the receipt of an income from any obligation to work, and for many years he and Gorz were close intellectual allies in defense of what Aznar dubbed "guaranteed minimum employment" (*travail minimum garanti*) in contradistinction with guaranteed minimum income.

### **The dialectical unity of rights and duties**

In developing his arguments against an unconditional citizens' income Gorz seemed to slide towards a more positive perspective on work and participation in the social sphere than had been evident in *Farewell to the Working Class* (even correcting for the misreading by Gorz's critics of his valuation in that book of socially necessary heteronomous labour — see chapter four, pp. 366-367). In *Farewell*, heteronomous work appeared primarily as something imposed and performed solely as a means to the end of earning an income. However, in defending his view that people should not be spared this type of work altogether, Gorz offered a different take on waged work as the route via which we come to belong to the public sphere and acquire a social identity. He valorized

participation in the social process of production as the means through which people acquire rights and powers and claims on the State. In sharp contrast with a conception of heteronomous labour as incompatible with citizenship (the view that prevailed among the Ancient Greeks who took a dim view of other-directed work), Gorz argued that work in the social process of production in capitalist society situates the individual in the public sphere and affords social recognition indispensable to citizenship.<sup>68</sup>

Invoking the distinctions between different types of belonging that have been drawn in the sociological tradition by theorists such as Tönnies, Durkheim, and Habermas, Gorz contended that in modern societies individuals require two types of integration: they need to be integrated in the primary community, which mediates between individual private life and social life, and they also need to be integrated in the social system, which is so complex as to be beyond the comprehension of any single individual; this latter type of integration occurs by means of functional specialization (work in its prevailing connotation). He posited a dialectical relationship between the two types of belonging — concrete and abstract.

This corresponds, of course, to Gorz's own earlier arguments for a society in which individuals move back and forth between the spheres of autonomy and heteronomy, or, as he phrased the same idea in the 90s, the microsocial community (family, cooperatives, mutual aid networks informal relations based on reciprocity) and the macrosocial community (the larger complex social whole which is governed by formal commodity relations). As we have seen, Gorz did make a case in *Farewell* for the merit of heteronomous labour in providing a bulwark against the stultifying autarky of local self-sufficiency “by raising individuals above the narrow sphere of local community.”<sup>69</sup> Gorz returned to this point in his case against an unconditional basic income, arguing that heteronomous, or what he now called functional work, “liberates individuals from the particular ties of dependency and from reciprocal belonging that governs the microsocial and private sphere.”<sup>70</sup> More explicitly, he wrote:

...in a complex modern society, income and membership in a microsocial community are not enough to make you feel that you are a citizen, anyone else's equal, and “participating fully” in that society. To feel anyone's equal, you also need to feel that you are useful to that society as a whole, and that it needs whatever skills or capabilities you may have. In other words, you need a job and, what is



more, not any kind of casual job like walking someone's dog, shoe-shining, or selling flowers at street corners.<sup>71</sup>

It is worth digressing here to point out that Gorz seems to imply in this passage that, as long as they are not located in the realm of menial personal services, the jobs we do are useful to society. There is a potentially confusing tacit supposition in his arguments for the right to perform a minimum amount of functional work that the sphere of paid labour, which Gorz now considered a unique locus of social integration, would be consecrated to the production of necessities. It is true that in his own vision of the good society heteronomous work is to be devoted solely to the production of necessities while non essentials would become the preserve of autonomous production.<sup>72</sup>

Necessities, he tells us, will be defined by collective decisions, although he also defines them a priori as products that are functional, durable, repairable and economical in terms of labour and natural resources.<sup>73</sup> But once again it is never entirely clear how this sphere of paid work would be limited to the production of socially useful goods.

Even if we overlook the problem of defining the necessary, there remains the intractable problem that limiting social production to basic necessities presupposes far-reaching radical changes in the social organization of contemporary capitalist societies, as well as a high degree of planning. How will this come about? We are back to the problem raised in earlier chapters with regard to the organization of the heteronomous sphere. As we saw in *Farewell*, Gorz evaded consideration of how this sphere could be subordinated to the imperatives of the dualist vision. Is the heteronomous sphere to be dominated by the market and capitalist arrangements? *Farewell* offered little illumination.

Nor does the introduction of a third sphere in *Paths to Paradise* — the sphere of small-scale free enterprise, either cooperative or communal, to insure innovation and guard against the stagnation of institutional production — solve the problem of how the spheres will be organized and how they will interact, or the prior political question of how to get there from here.<sup>74</sup>

Even more problematically, Gorz seems to conflate the descriptive and the prescriptive in his writings in defense of the duty and right to work, so it is not always clear whether he is referring to the socially integrative role of the heteronomous sphere in his hypothetical dualist society or to the actual sphere of functional work in contemporary capitalist society, or both. More puzzling still,

in defending his conception of the importance for citizenship of participation in the sphere of functional work, Gorz remarks in his *Critique of Economic Reason*: “[t]he fact that an activity is the object of a commodity exchange *in the public sphere* immediately denotes it as being a socially useful activity...”<sup>75</sup>

Understandably this elicited confusion and objections, so that, for instance, Yvan Craipeau could charge in a 1990 essay that the logic of Gorz's argument implicitly valorizes the production of nuclear weapons or the sale of drugs as the type of socially useful work that gives the individual rights and duties within society.<sup>76</sup> Of course, this is not true to Gorz's thinking. He made it clear in interviews that the necessary fragmentation of work in complex societies made it possible for certain highly skilled, decently paid people to identify with their work even when the purpose of that work was the fabrication of weapons of mass destruction, and that it was precisely a reduction in working time that could give them the critical distance required to question and challenge the ends of their workplace activities. However, in the course of his clash with proponents of basic income, when Gorz defended the abstract idea of retaining a modicum of obligatory social labour as an essential means of achieving a sense of social belonging, this fundamental preoccupation with the ultimate ends of work became obscured.

But let us return to the main point, namely, Gorz's positive valuation of participation in the social process of production. Gorz insisted on the ineluctable relationship between partaking in social production and claiming the rights of citizenship, whereas most proponents of unconditional basic income wish precisely to disengage the two. In Gorz's view at the time, even if an individual had access to enough money to live on while engaging in activities solely in the realm of the micro-social community, this would not confer a legitimate claim to citizenship because these activities, performed for the sake of people with whom we have close personal ties or for our own sake, are not formal obligations, nor necessary to the whole of society and, therefore, not a source of legal and civil rights.<sup>77</sup> As we shall see further on, Gorz also used this distinction to discredit as the revival of servants' work the expansion of employment through the creation of jobs in the domain of personal services. Gorz regarded economic citizenship as stemming solely from activities we perform in the public sphere as citizens, that is for the benefit of others as citizens and not as private individuals. It is worth quoting his cogent argument at some length.

The work one exchanges not with society as a whole but with members of a particular community (one's family, habitat, village, district) remains particular work, subject to particular rules, which are themselves the result of a particular relation of forces, interests or particular bonds. Conversely work in an economic sense, socially determined and remunerated, is governed by universal rules and relations which liberate the individual from particular bonds of dependence and define him or her as a universal individual, that is, as a citizen: her or his paid activity is socially recognized as *work in general* having a *general social utility*. I can sell this work to an indefinite number of enterprises without having to form any personal or private relationship with those who are paying me. They pay me for the general social utility of my skills and not for the personal service I am rendering. They are, in a sense, merely the intermediaries between an *impersonal demand* on the part of society as a whole (whether it be expressed through the market, the plan or an order from a public body) and the work by which I can contribute to satisfying that demand.<sup>78</sup>

And a little later on:

Whatever the size of the guaranteed minimum [income], it can do nothing to alter the fact that society expects nothing of me, thus denies me a reality as a social individual in general. It pays me an allowance without asking anything of me, thus without *conferring any social rights upon me*. By this payment, it holds me in its power: what it grants me today, it can take away bit by bit, or altogether, tomorrow, since it has no need of me, but I have need of it.<sup>79</sup>

Thus Gorz's argument rests on the importance of being useful to society in the abstract, to the anonymous collectivity. In elaborating his conceptions, Gorz valorized an idea which originated with Hegel and was incorporated by Marx to the effect that labour is the means by which each individual achieves recognition by others; because we produce not only for ourselves but for others a universal dependence is created; social production presupposes the other and shapes us as universal social individuals.<sup>80</sup>

Gorz was quick to reassure his readers that he was not inspired by any religious morality or work ethic but by the need to maintain "the indispensable dialectical unity between rights and duties."<sup>81</sup> "My duty," he asserted, "is the basis of my rights and to relieve me of all duties is to deny me the status of a person having rights."<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, Gorz rejected the idea that some individuals might shift their rightful share of the burden of heteronomous work onto others,<sup>83</sup> a prospect opened up with an unconditional citizens' income (often referred to as the free-rider problem).

Although there is arguably a contradiction between Gorz's belief that employment should be and was being displaced as the paramount activity in human life and his conviction that participating in the social process of production was a *conditio sine qua non* of social being and citizenship, Gorz saw the two positions as compatible. He asserted that his argument for the importance of participating in the social process of production was by no means at odds with his efforts to demystify and undermine the ideology of work common to all currents of thought including socialism.

Gorz maintained that in its conception of work as creative activity socialist thought embodied a frozen historical moment in the industrial age during which artisans and skilled workers appeared. The notion of work as *poiesis* has its roots in this moment. Gorz affirmed, in keeping with the Marxist tradition, that work as *poiesis* is a basic need of individuals (“the need the individual feels to appropriate the surrounding world, to impress his or her stamp upon it, and by the objective transformations he or she effects upon it, to acquire a sense of him-or herself as an autonomous subject possessing practical freedom”<sup>84</sup>); however, he asserted, there is no connection between that idea and the majority of work that is performed today. According to Gorz, in the first decades of the twentieth century most workers were still engaged in “non-formalized activities in which individual know-how, physical strength and other personal qualities remained central.”<sup>85</sup> Gorz continued to argue, however, pursuing a theme raised in *Farewell*, that work today has largely lost its materiality and has been voided of meaning; those leftists who continue to vaunt work as self-creation are unwittingly reinforcing capitalist propaganda.

In continuing to apply the idea of work-as-*poiesis* to tasks which in industry, particularly in the service sector, no longer have anything in common with the activities of material transformation and creation carried on by the toolmakers, boilermakers, metal-turners, masons and rolling-mill workers of the nineteenth century, one runs the risk of demanding that today's workers or employees regard as their “means of personal fulfilment” precisely those tasks which prevent such self-fulfilment. The ideology of work, which argues that “work is life” and demands that it be taken seriously and treated as a vocation, and the attendant utopia of a society ruled by the associated producers, play right into the hands of the employers, consolidate capitalist relations of production and domination, and legitimate the privileges of a work elite which, despite the existence of millions of unemployed, views a reduction in working hours which could create extra jobs as incompatible with its professional pride and ethic of productivity.<sup>86</sup>

There is then a tension, though perhaps no necessary contradiction, running through Gorz's discussions of the nature of work. On the one hand, Gorz regards paid work as necessary to social integration and citizenship. On the other hand, he views the vast majority of work performed in the heteronomous sphere or the macrosocial community as devoid of creativity; the antithesis of work as *poiesis*, inimical to the formation of stable identities, and something from which people are increasingly disaffected. Is this coherent? Yes, insofar as the first argument pertains to work as instrumental activity, to its role in socialization and as justifying the right to make claims on the State in the political sphere. The latter argument deals with the entirely different issue of whether most of the tasks associated with employment in our time can provide a source of inner satisfaction or moral gratification.

The other key factor is time. For Gorz, as noted previously, heteronomous work is detrimental as an all-consuming activity: "...full-time, life-long work is the most vicious invention of capitalism."<sup>87</sup> It exacerbates a culture of dependence, expertocracy, and waste.

Full time work forces us to give to public or private services the activities which constitute our individual existence. Thus we leave the education of our children to the television or professional educators; rather than make music we buy cassettes; rather than repair things we throw them away to buy new ones; rather than seek advice from friends we join a therapeutic group; we leave the dying to the hospital where in fact — at least in the U.S. — we can purchase the services of professional mourners.<sup>88</sup>

If work absorbs all one's time and energy leaving no time for activities which are ends in themselves it is therefore a malediction. However, if it only occupies a small part of one's time, it is essential to counterbalance the stifling effects of too much autonomy that Gorz had alluded to in *Farewell*, and to establish one's claim as a full member of society. If it claims less than 1000 hours of a person's year, then even a simple and routine job is not an exhausting constraint that mutilates, deforms or brutalizes, but rather a welcome change of pace, bringing with it social contact, as well as a certain kind of rhythm and temporal structuring of one's life.<sup>89</sup>

## A dramatic about-face

In light of the viability and cogency of his position and the vehemence with which, in article after article, book after book, for the better part of 15 years, Gorz vigorously propounded his opposition to basic income detached from any obligation to work, it is all the more surprising that in his 1997 *Misères du présent, richesse du possible* he has abandoned his objections and embraced the concept of an unconditional and sufficient basic income.<sup>90</sup> Although he continues to reject the neo-liberal version of basic income which would exacerbate social dualism by subsidizing low-wage jobs, he has recanted his opposition to a basic income sufficient to meet basic needs. Claiming that his erstwhile insistence on a limited obligation to work, even spread out over a lifetime, was inconsistent with the perspectives opened up by post-fordism, he has endorsed “[t]he universal and unconditional allocation of a basic income cumulable with earned income” as “the best lever for redistributing as widely as possible both remunerated work and unpaid activities.”<sup>91</sup>

Could this radical shift have been anticipated? There were perhaps a few clues pointing in that direction. As noted above, Gorz had acknowledged a positive aspect of the idea of a *sufficient* basic income, to the extent that, by freeing people from any obligation to work while providing them with a decent standard of living, it could serve to undermine the ideology of work and foster the expansion of voluntary non-market activities. Gorz had granted that an unconditional and sufficient basic income might thus help to ensure a transition from a full-employment society to a full-activity society which recognizes the social importance of activities that have no market value but nevertheless create meaning, conviviality, social bonds. This concession was not sufficiently compelling, however, to outweigh what Gorz perceived as the drawbacks of the proposal, which we have now examined at length. A basic income would not secure for everyone the all-important sense of social belonging that derived, in Gorz's estimation, from participation in the production of society. It would disrupt the integral relationship of rights and duties. Further, as Gorz saw it, simply making waged work optional would not guarantee that a public space would be created for non-economic activities. On the contrary, the gap would likely grow between workers obsessed with productivity and those who are inactive. The idle would be marginalized in relation to the public sphere and relegated to what Gorz called “social nothingness.”

Gorz offers four different reasons for his change of heart.<sup>92</sup> First, he says that previously he had not taken sufficient account of the concept of general intellect — the idea that today it is increasingly knowledge that is the principal productive force. The paramount role of research, science, technology — ideas — in the creation of wealth is a fact often deployed in defense of basic income. As economist René Passet writes: “When the costs [of production] move upstream, it is integrated systems that produce, merging capital and labour such that it is impossible to distinguish the share attributable to each.”<sup>93</sup> And, he concludes, the basis upon which society distributes wealth must evolve accordingly from the principle of commutative justice to distributive justice.<sup>94</sup>

Although Gorz had used similar arguments, bolstered by prophetic citations from the *Grundrisse*, to shore up his case for decoupling labour time from the right to an income and in defense of his own proposals for a social income, he has now drawn some new conclusions from them about the increasing irrelevance of working hours as a measure and the consequent difficulty of determining the irreducible contribution in time to socially necessary labour that should be expected of each citizen of working age.

On the qualitative side, he claims that it is no longer possible to give a meaningful content to the obligation to perform a share of necessary labour as a condition of receiving a guaranteed income, especially as human labour constantly diminishes in importance as a factor in social production. Here Gorz expresses his discomfort with the proposals of some basic income proponents, such as Claus Offe and Jeremy Rifkin (and one might add the French theorists Jean-Marc Ferry and Roger Sue), who argue for attaching a minimum income allocation to participation in community service (for example, civic involvement, environmental protection) or caring activities (for example, assistance to the growing numbers of elderly citizens and childcare).<sup>95</sup> Such proposals are part of a flurry of ideas being advanced in Europe and North America for developing the social economy (also referred to as the *économie solidaire*, the sector of the economy between the private and the public sector, consisting of a variety of cooperatives, mutuals and non-profit associations) as a fount of new employment. This approach has also been endorsed for more opportunistic motives by governments of all stripes attempting to relieve unemployment while reducing the public service payroll and seeking to cut welfare state costs by transferring services from the public sector to the lower wage third sector.

We will deal later on in this chapter with Gorz's analysis of the advent of a new servant class in developed capitalist societies. For now it is important to note Gorz's fear that an obligation to engage in community service or to dispense care to those in need will amount to having people perform for wages work that had previously been done, and is more appropriately done, on a voluntary basis. For Gorz, to make voluntarism obligatory is to engender a paradox that vitiates the very meaning and value of voluntary activities. Granting a basic income to people in exchange for their undertaking activities such as raising their children, helping their elderly relatives, being active in community groups or artistic expression will turn those activities into so many ways of earning a living and incite people to choose them "not for their intrinsic value and meaning but as means to earn an income."<sup>96</sup> In a word, not every socially useful human activity should be performed for an exchange value and reduced to an abstract equivalent in money — even indirectly — because in that case they cannot but become instrumental activities, "voluntary substitutes for labour." Hence Gorz is now prepared not only to dissociate the basic allocation from participation in socially necessary production but also from any form of community service because, in his estimation, only a strictly unconditional basic income can guard against the encroachment of the market and economic rationality on activities that ought to be governed by another logic.<sup>97</sup>

A third reason he gives for his reversal on this issue is that in an "immaterial economy," where knowledge is the principal productive force and the role of direct labour is constantly diminishing, the level of skill and education required from workers is far higher than ever before. Labour power is no longer separable from the person of the worker. Consequently, people must spend a great deal of time prior to and during their working lives in developing their intellectual capacities. Basic income would open up the opportunity and the right for all citizens to pursue permanent education, rather than only the narrow continuous training that some firms offer their employees. An unconditional basic income would make the right to develop one's faculties an unconditional right to an autonomy above and beyond one's productive function — autonomy on the moral, cultural, political, and existential planes.<sup>98</sup> In response to the common objection that an unconditional and sufficient basic income would do nothing to prevent some recipients from sinking into idle dependency, Gorz also reiterates what he originally discerned as the potential benefit of the scheme, namely, by opening up the possibility for people to engage in activities that



are not profitable, it constitutes the ideal means to foster the efflorescence of non-market activities.<sup>99</sup>

Finally, in an argument closely related to his first point, Gorz concludes that if measuring the respective contributions of labour and capital to national wealth is no longer a viable basis upon which to allocate resources, then national wealth must be conceived as a veritable collective inheritance to which everyone has an equal claim. Unconditional basic income is the best practical means of satisfying this claim.<sup>100</sup>

In the end, the reasons Gorz submits for changing his position are not entirely compelling. In his espousal of unconditional basic income it is not clear, for instance, what happens to Gorz's coherently argued case for the necessity of abstract belonging, of the imperative to feel useful to society as a whole, which cannot be attained solely by participating in a micro-social community and is only achieved by participating in the social process of production. And what of the argument about the dialectical relationship of rights and duties and his previous insistence that the citizen's claim on the State derives from his contribution to the anonymous social whole? With his new position, Gorz seems to obviate his own dualist scheme wherein people achieve balance by partaking of activities in both the sphere of heteronomy and autonomy. All his arguments about the value of heteronomous work are abandoned without ado. In the unconditional basic income scheme, the rights associated with citizenship, which in Gorz's previous argument stemmed from participating in activities useful to society as a whole, become simply an entitlement of birth or residence.

There is also a question to be raised about his assumption that a sufficient basic income will lead to a flowering of autonomous activities. Gorz himself expressed concerns in the past that the allocation of a guaranteed income would not assure such an effect in the absence of a range of other measures, such as intense educational efforts and the setting up of public workshops. With his espousal of an unconditional and sufficient basic income he mutes this concern, but it remains very relevant, especially considering recent studies revealing that a great proportion of the increase in leisure time since the 1960s has been absorbed by what is generally acknowledged as the most passive and uncreative activity: watching television.<sup>101</sup> One very recent French survey shows that in

France, gains in free time have not tended to result in any increased participation in public or neighbourhood life among workers who were not previously involved in such activities.<sup>102</sup>

Further, there is a glaring problem with Gorz's position vis à vis the State. What Alain Lipietz saw as the irony of Gorz's proposals for a social income to be paid to each individual in exchange for a share of socially necessary labour is actually more apposite to his current embrace of an unconditional sufficient income, namely, that the radical critique of the welfare state winds up as a program for apogee of the welfare state.<sup>103</sup> Although by the time he wrote *Adieux au prolétariat* Gorz was presenting a more favourable view of the role of the State than he had in earlier work, he nevertheless remained determined to circumscribe its purview. The prospect of excessive reliance on the State was, we may recall, one of the reasons he gave for his original rejection of proposals for a guaranteed income without any obligation to work. Basic income, he maintained at the time, offered no assurance that people would care for each other more; it only meant that they would be taken care of more extensively by the State.<sup>104</sup> In his original social income scheme, moreover, the income individuals were to receive was not a mere entitlement, but a right earned in exchange for performing their share of socially necessary labour. With his espousal of a sufficient unconditional income, it is hard to see in what way the power of the State would be limited.

Another pertinent question is why Gorz expects the State to agree to compensate people for not working, when he himself acknowledges the continuing purchase of the ideology of work. Here too Gorz's arguments are not altogether convincing, although it is true, as he argues, that a considerable portion (more than one-third) of household income already derives from sources other than work (social allocations of one form or another).<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless the reason Gorz believes the State will be persuaded to accept the complete disengagement of work and income is that it will be compelled to do so in order to avoid civil war.<sup>106</sup> But there are certainly many countries in the world where, in spite of marked inequalities of income and even falling living standards for significant numbers of people (the former Soviet Union being a case in point), there is little that points to civil war on the horizon. The disparaging term "Brazilianization" would never have been coined had this country not shown staying power as a model of the coexistence of extremes of wealth and poverty.

More realistically and persuasively, Gorz suggests that while an unconditional and sufficient basic income is not a realizable aim, at least for the time being, the demand for it has a

heuristic value insofar as it propels us to question and rethink the relationship, in an immaterial economy, between work, wealth and income. For Gorz, the concept illuminates the direction in which civilization could move, if the political will existed, on the basis of the material conditions rendered possible by new technologies. And this understanding may serve in turn to shape political and social practices corresponding to the new possibilities for a transition from a full-employment society to a full-activity society. “Conversely,” Gorz writes:

...it throws into relief the absurdity of a system that economizes labour time on an unprecedented scale but turns the resulting free time into a calamity because it is able neither to distribute it, nor to distribute the wealth that is or can be produced, nor to recognize the intrinsic value of “leisure and time for higher activities” (Marx).<sup>107</sup>

Gorz claims that the demand for basic income brings the individual and collective appropriation of time to the fore as a major political issue. It is worth asking, however, whether an endorsement of an unconditional and sufficient basic income is necessarily the best way to achieve this end and whether Gorz’s former defense of a social income attached to a minimum obligation to work did not accomplish the same aim.

Of all the arguments Gorz presents in defense of an unconditional and sufficient basic income, one does stand out at least as an important caveat: that is, the danger of transforming voluntary activities into activities performed principally in the interest of receiving a wage. This argument is developed by Gorz in a compelling way in his writings on the inception of a new servant class.

### **The new servant class**

The standard response to the problem of how to distribute work and income in a situation of diminishing employment — a response common to both the right and the social-democratic left although with significant variations in approach — is job creation. Across the political spectrum, the prospect of continually identifying new needs in the domain of social and personal care opens the prospect of an infinitely elastic arena of economic activity — from homecare workers and park clean-up crews to dog walkers and personal shoppers. We have already alluded to Gorz’s vehement

opposition on political and philosophical grounds to the expansion of the social economy as a sphere of job creation. In a variety of articles, and in two books written after *Paths to Paradise — Métamorphoses du travail, quête du sens* (1988), translated in 1989 as *The Critique of Economic Reason* and *Capitalisme, socialisme, écologie* (1992), translated in 1994 as *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology* — Gorz expounded upon his belief in the importance for the social fabric of preserving certain activities as voluntary activities. Gorz issued his warnings about the imminent creation of a new caste of servants against the background of a battery of job creation measures being deployed in France, including the creation in the mid 1980s of a youth make-work program, the Stages d'Initiation à la Vie Professionnelle, which created jobs at sub-minimum wage levels, primarily in the service sector, for unemployed young people.

In Gorz's analysis, plans to extend commodity exchange to new fields of activity in order to replace the jobs being lost in industry and services were misguided and dangerous. Just as industry has limits to growth in the finite resources of the earth, the service sector finds its limits to growth in the danger of an overweening dependency of individuals upon professional or paid providers of personal care and domestic services, whether these be provided through the State or by an expanding cadre of employees of community organizations. "Convivial tasks such as caring for infants, helping the disabled, comforting the afflicted have nothing to do with economic rationality," Gorz writes. "Their productivity can't be measured. Their success depends much more upon human qualities and emotional investment than on professional qualifications certified by a diploma."<sup>108</sup> Echoes of Ivan Illich reverberate in Gorz's warnings against the monetarization and professionalization of activities previously outside the realm of contractual exchange; but Gorz's arguments are more extensive and refined.

In the 80s and 90s, he devoted great attention to a theme broached in the last chapter in the context of the discussion of Gorz's opposition to the demand by some feminists that housework be remunerated, namely, the importance of doing one's own chores. Gorz had made his view clear in *Farewell* that activities such as housework and raising children are individual responsibilities that should not be commodified but, on the contrary, removed from the sphere of market relations and performed for their own sake on a voluntary basis. In the same vein, he now criticized the professionalization of domestic work as a motor of job creation through the development of

housekeeping and other personal services. According to Gorz, the kind of personal services likely to be developed were not the socially useful services, such as assistance to poor mothers, often promoted by advocates of the social economy, simply because there was no effective economic demand for such services and they would have to be financed through taxation.<sup>109</sup> Rather, the service jobs already proliferating in the new economy were those that relieve a privileged minority of the work that each person ought to perform for himself. And Gorz perceived adverse effects for both those who are wealthy enough to be able to relegate domestic tasks to others, as well as those compelled to assume those tasks due to a lack of decent employment.

In his writings, he puts forward both an economic argument against the promotion of personal services as an employment outlet and a moral argument, which revolves around his distinction between two types of autonomous activity: genuinely autonomous activity, which has no other end but itself, and work-for-oneself or activity that “serves exclusively the maintenance of my own self and those with whom I form a life community.”<sup>110</sup>

To begin with the economic argument, Gorz develops an argument, which in the final analysis is somewhat hard to sustain, resting on the distinction between the professionalization of household chores in the contemporary economy and the “socialization” of household chores earlier in the century through the development of labour-saving devices or collective practices such as extensive day care in socialist societies. In the latter case, he argues, the socialization or collectivization of household chores liberated segments of the population from these tasks so that by working in the sector of efficient social production they ultimately saved time for society as a whole. By contrast, he maintains, the socializing of household tasks today no longer saves time for society as a whole, it is being done rather to occupy people. Therefore, it is economically unproductive.

The army of cleaners, waitresses, waiters, kitchen hands and delivery men and women called upon to do our housework, cooking and shopping and to deliver hot meals to our homes takes no less time (if we take into account the working hours accumulated in the installations and equipment involved) than we ourselves would if we were to do the things they do for us. The time they gain for us is not productive time, but time for consumption and comfort. They are not working to serve collective interests, but to serve us as individuals, and to give us private pleasure.<sup>111</sup>

In Gorz's estimation:

A paid job that does not valorize any capital, that serves particular individuals in their private lives, and whose professionalization does not increase its productivity, is a servant's job. Its function is to free a privileged stratum from a number of necessary or desirable tasks which they could easily perform themselves if they cared to, by transferring these tasks onto people who can find no socially useful or productive work.<sup>112</sup>

In these passages, Gorz makes much of the fact that personal services are performed for private individuals. But there are questions that can be raised about how relevant this point is, and whether Gorz is making some arbitrary distinctions. Why is working in a factory that produces luxury items which are accessible only to the very wealthy better than working in the service of a private person? This brings us back to the contradiction noted earlier with respect to Gorz's constant reference to a macrosocial sphere confined to socially useful work in the production of necessities.

Moreover, Gorz argues that when working in the service of private persons, pleasing one's employer personally affects one's position in terms of security,<sup>113</sup> but this is also true of many non-unionized jobs in the public sphere, and especially in small businesses; in fact, it is arguably the degree of unionization and protection of workers by formal rights that are the key distinctions to be made here, rather than whether one works for a private person or a corporation. Admittedly it is far more difficult to organize domestic labour, but this is not Gorz's specific objection.

These reservations notwithstanding, it is certainly true that the developed countries are witnessing a proliferation of personal services, giving credence to Gorz's alarm about an emerging servant class, harkening back to a bygone age when large numbers of domestics were employed to serve the needs of the wealthy. An excellent illustration was supplied by Prime Minister Edouard Balladur who offered as one solution to the unemployment problem a tax credit of 45,000 francs annually for those who hire domestic help.<sup>114</sup> Gorz likened such developments to the emergence in the metropolitan heartland of the colonial model,<sup>115</sup> a model that presupposes a group of people prepared to do other people's chores. Gorz points out that such people become available in conditions of a dearth of decent jobs and relative penury in which some individuals have no choice but to clean up other people's messes, and are so poorly paid that they cannot slough off their own chores onto others.

But, Gorz cautions, something is lost even for the people who can disburden themselves of their chores. And this brings us to his moral argument: Gorz seeks to persuade his readers that performing one's own chores is necessary and beneficial insofar as such tasks are all that is left in our society of "work-for-oneself," a kind of subcategory of autonomous activities that Gorz devises in his later writings. Work-for-oneself is not quite pure autonomous self-directed activity; it is work that is not exchanged on the market, and in contemporary capitalist society chores are all that remains of activity in this category. Work-for-oneself is not limited to what individuals do for themselves; it is part of what demarcates a private sphere. But the private sphere, for Gorz, extends beyond the individual's private corner to the household, the neighbourhood, the village — any space in which an individual has some direct say, in voluntary cooperation with others, over its development, organization and maintenance.<sup>116</sup> The private sphere thus opens onto a sphere of common sovereignty, and work for oneself extends naturally into "work for ourselves," that is mutual co-operation and reciprocal voluntary services, from community gardens to barter markets and consumer cooperatives.

Work-for-oneself, Gorz affirms, is the way people come to belong to themselves, to one another, to their families and communities, and it helps them "to become rooted in the sensible materiality of the world and to share that world with others."<sup>117</sup> Even personal objects, Gorz argues, only really belong to someone if that person cleans and tinkers with them him or herself. This is another reason the progressive transfer to the market sector of this work-for-oneself is detrimental: work-for-oneself is the way we appropriate our immediate environment, it is "what we have to do to take possession of ourselves and of that arrangement of objects which, as both an extension of ourselves and a mirror of our physical existence, forms our niche within the sensible world."<sup>118</sup>

Gorz was optimistically convinced that if people only had more time they would aspire to do their own domestic work. He points to the example of the Israeli kibbutz where, he claims, people began to want to assume individual responsibility for tasks previously collectivized: not only child care but household chores. There are a number of reasons this illustration is especially interesting; in *Strategy for Labor* Gorz had pressed for the collectivization of services as an antidote to the consumer society which individualizes chores in order to sell more commodities. Now, however, he approvingly invokes the movement on the kibbutzim toward the individualization of

domestic chores as a bid for “a greater degree of personal sovereignty...”<sup>119</sup> Further, he ascribes this tendency on the kibbutzim to greater affluence but he neglects to mention two key points: first, that kibbutz members may have disposed of greater wealth and free time because the industrial and agricultural work on the kibbutz was being transferred to some extent from members to imported exploited labour, both Jewish and Arab; second, that greater prosperity and leisure on the kibbutz have given rise to a privatization of certain activities, such as child-rearing, partly in reaction against the demands of communal life, and can be read as an erosion of the communitarian ideals of the kibbutz movement in favour of a more bourgeois liberal and consumerist outlook, or even, as in one analysis, a primarily feminine movement revolving around a revalorization of traditional feminine roles for complex motives.<sup>120</sup>

Notwithstanding some weaknesses in his arguments, Gorz is right in underscoring the absurdity and injustice of a division of labour in which some people are forced to do other people's chores, particularly when the reduction of working time for all would enable people to do their own chores. He is also correct in affirming that the issue here is ultimately a political one: it concerns a choice of society and the acceptance or resistance to the dualization and growing inequality brought about by the destabilization of work. And, finally, he offers some penetrating insights with respect to the absurdity and hazards of commodifying more and more work-for-oneself and caring activities. Perhaps more than any other social critic he has drawn attention to the perverse effects of a society in which acts of caring for others, sympathy, conviviality, solidarity with the weak are regarded as a mine of employment.

A civilization in which caring and social bonding become the preserve of certified professionals is also a civilization where learned and programmed behaviour will all the more quickly take the place of spontaneous acts of caring. No one will feel impelled to help a blind person across the street, for example, because “there are people who are paid to do that sort of thing.”<sup>121</sup>

This anxiety is really at the core of Gorz's philosophy, and is arguably the chief impetus for his espousal of a sufficient basic income that would inhibit the transformation of an ever greater range of activities into employment.

Although, as we have seen, Gorz's position on basic income underwent a dramatic change in the last 15 years, the more general thrust of his thinking on the objective of a radical politics for



our time did not. Both the social income and the sufficient basic income fundamentally challenge the existing “employment society” or “labour-based society” (*société salariale*). And Gorz intended his attack on the employment society as a fundamental challenge to the primacy of the economic, “...that sphere in which every action is solely determined by the principle of equal exchange, where nothing has its own value, nothing is an end in itself.”<sup>122</sup> In his view, the aim of the left must be a society of full activity in which more and more activities are removed from the realm of the market and economic rationality (without aspiring to a pre-modern or anti-modern society in which all dualisms are transcended) so that social and personal relations can once again be governed, as Gorz suggests they were in pre-capitalist societies, by “...solidarity and mutual aid, on the recognition of the other as another self.”<sup>123</sup> And it is this aim that, for Gorz, must inform the redefinition of socialism in our time.

### **Redefining socialism**

Gorz's concern to find ways of limiting the tentacular grip of the economy over society was in many ways the culmination of his thinking and the crux of his redefinition of socialism. The theme is developed most extensively in three books: *The Critique of Economic Reason; Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology* and *Misères du présent, richesses du possible*, as well as in a variety of articles and interviews.

*Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology* opens with a passage that casts Gorz as an enthusiastic pall bearer of a socialism doomed as a hopelessly anachronistic force:

As a system socialism is dead. As a movement and an organized political force, it is on its last legs. All the goals it once proclaimed are out of date. The social forces which bore it along are disappearing. It has lost its prophetic dimension, its material base, its “historical subject”; History and the technical changes that are leading to the extinction, if not of the proletariat, then at least of the working class, have shown its philosophy of work and history to be misconceived.<sup>124</sup>

For Gorz, history has nullified the traditional conception of socialism by, among other things, rendering the emancipation of the working class an elitist project: even if it could be realized, it would benefit only a small minority of skilled and protected workers. Moreover, as we have already seen, the old vision of a transparent socialist system in which there is an ultimate unity of work and

life, of the individual and society is, for Gorz, also unrealistic: there is an irreducible level of differentiation, specialization and alienation necessary in complex societies. The point bears repeating, as Gorz frequently did in the essays and books he published after *Farewell*.

The technical complexity of most end-products, the diversity of technologies combined in them, practically exclude the manufacture from A to Z of complete end-products by self-organized work collectives, freely determining their mode of cooperation, pace and hours of work, production objectives and relations with the end-users. Communities can exert only partial control over processes integrated and co-ordinated at the level of the total social system; they can at best expand the space accorded to their influence and initiative; but they cannot eliminate the inertia and rigidities of the system (what Sartre termed the “practico-inert”) and its machinery.<sup>125</sup>

In fact, during the 80s and early 90s, with the collapse of the state communist world, Gorz put forward an analysis of the failure of Soviet socialism as deriving from the inevitable development of an oppressive apparatus operating autonomously from society precisely due to the impossible goal of exerting conscious collective control over the social system *as a system*.<sup>126</sup>

The foregoing ostensibly fatal deficiencies would seem to call for nothing short of a repudiation of socialism. Yet Gorz is unwilling to bury the word or the concept — at least as he reworks it. As long as capitalism persists, Gorz affirms, socialism remains indispensable.

Abandoning the reference to socialism would lead also to abandoning any reference to a desirable “beyond capitalism,” would lead us to accept this latter as “natural” and unchangeable, and to speak with a naive idealism of democracy and justice whilst treating as a negligible quantity the economico-material matrix of capital...<sup>127</sup>

In light of this paradox of the simultaneous bankruptcy and necessity of socialism, in what way can socialism be recast to make it a viable worldview for our time? For Gorz, the issue at the heart of the socialist project is not ownership of the means of production, and it is no longer control over the productive process, at least not in the way he previously expressed that idea. It is, rather, a question of limiting the logic of profit and the reach of the market — that is, ending the domination of economic rationality.

In the later 80s and 90s, Gorz evolved a conception that owes much to the Frankfurt School critique of instrumental rationality. Economic rationality, Gorz explains, is resolutely instrumental.

It entails maximizing the efficiency with which factors of production are employed.<sup>128</sup> And efficiency, in the economic sense, is measured by the profit realized per quantum of living or dead labour (circulating or fixed capital) employed. This is well and good in business; indeed, Gorz proclaims (without a trace of nostalgia for the struggles over self-management he once applauded), “There is no other way of rationally running an enterprise than capitalist management...”<sup>129</sup> But the important question, for Gorz, is the extent to which economic rationality will prevail over other types of rationality within the enterprise and the national economy. The criteria of economic efficiency should apply to a highly circumscribed realm: productive activities in the Marxist sense. In Gorz’s view, economic rationality is properly applicable to activities which create use values for exchange as commodities in the public sphere, in a measurable amount of time and at as high a level of productivity as possible.<sup>130</sup> Why should it be thus contained? The economic logic of the market, Gorz asserts, is antithetical to the ecological imperative of conservation and the self-limitation of needs insofar as it depends on the constant expansion of wants and consumption. It is also antithetical to sustaining social ties.

Historically, Gorz argues, economic rationality was freed by the logic of the market from the religious and ethical precepts that previously served to restrict its scope.<sup>131</sup> It then extended itself to all areas of life and work. The expansion of the market, of competitive commodity relations, has led to social disintegration or the withering away of voluntary cooperation for the common good, which is the proper of the microsocial.<sup>132</sup> Adopting the terminology of Jürgen Habermas, whose writings exercised a significant influence on his thinking in the 80s,<sup>133</sup> Gorz invokes the concept of the “colonization of the lifeworld” by the “economic and administrative subsystems”:

...in periods of radical change and accelerated technical innovation, capitalism breaks down the social order, shatters cohesion and identities, sweeps away traditional norms and values, and dissolves those communities, allegiances and exchanges that were formally felt to be entirely natural by bringing them under a system of technical constraints and legal formalization.<sup>134</sup>

Gorz thus pinpoints a dominant and determining feature of advanced capitalist societies in the last quarter of the twentieth century: the pervasiveness of the market; its ever more tentacular grasp of all areas of life; and its corrosive and atomising effect on social relations. As Ignacio Ramonet has written:

Nowadays, the market has a tendency to flood all human activities and to bring them under its control. Once upon a time certain areas — culture, sport and religion — were still beyond its reach, but now the market has absorbed them. Governments increasingly turn to the market (through privatisation and the abandonment of state sectors). However the market is the enemy of social cohesion, because its logic demands that a society be divided into two groups: the solvent and the non-solvent. The latter are of no interest to it and as such can be jettisoned.<sup>135</sup>

Gorz had failed in *Farewell* to clarify the role of the market in the organization and functioning of the heteronomous sphere. In his writings in the later 80s and 90s, he explicitly holds that a complex society cannot exist without commodity relations and markets (this was implicit too in his earlier critique of face-to-face self-sufficient communities). But he also began to draw an important distinction between a market economy and market mechanisms: "...you can have commodity production and exchange, markets and market mechanisms without having a market economy. A market economy is one where prices are determined by the so-called law of supply and demand, both of which are supposed to adjust freely to each other."<sup>136</sup> However, Gorz argues, no such economy actually exists or can exist. In the developed world, prices are regulated by the State and vital needs such as housing and education are subsidized. But what is the relevance of this? Does Gorz simply mean to indicate the possibility of countering "the tendency towards an all-encompassing commodification and monetarization of everything we do and exchange"<sup>137</sup> through state-regulated capitalism?

In keeping with Gorz's earlier emphasis in *Farewell* on the indispensable role of the State, state restriction does appear in his subsequent writings as an important factor in hemming in the sphere of the market: "The more extensive the realm of market relations, the greater the necessity of state regulations. Market relations are essentially anti-social: they are relations between isolated individuals each pursuing his or her immediate individual advantage. Therefore you need state intervention."<sup>138</sup> In response to a question from John Keane about whether, in calling for social control of markets, Gorz had forsaken the idea of a planned public sector devoted to producing necessities, Gorz replied that it remains necessary to coordinate all sectoral plans in areas such as education, transportation and agricultural production and to continue to define priorities for the economy as a whole.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, since globalization renders it impossible for a single State acting alone to enact rules restricting the reach of the market, Gorz maintained that intervention must occur on a European-wide scale at least; there can be no redefined socialism in one country.<sup>140</sup> However,

while state intervention in the form, say, of the welfare state has certainly succeeded in the past in placing limits on the reach of the market, it has not restricted the scope of economic rationality in such a way as to achieve the goal of enhancing individual autonomy. Strengthening the powers of the State “has not given rise to a different public space, to other forms of sociality, other forms of life and work governed by an autonomous rationality and values.”<sup>141</sup> On the contrary, the web of bureaucratic regulations imposed by the welfare state has a suffocating effect on the lifeworld.

Echoing his own earlier sweeping critique of the welfare state, Gorz contends:

In so far as it is based on the consolidated *domination* of daily life by normalizing and formalistic administrative bodies, the welfare state is as far as it could possibly be from the libertarian aspirations for individual and collective liberation which are one of the founding dimensions of the Left. Instead of expanding the power social individuals have over their lives, over the modes and outcomes of their social cooperation, the welfare state, running parallel in this with capital, subjects them to its own power and deprives them of their space of autonomy in exchange for the forms of security they are guaranteed.<sup>142</sup>

Thus Gorz reiterates his caveat against a welfare state that exists to compensate for the decay of social cohesion and living communities brought about by the dominance of market relations.<sup>143</sup>

What then does it mean for Gorz, in practical terms, to circumscribe economic rationality in a liberating manner? Essentially what he had been arguing since the mid-1970s: the democratic reorientation of economic development, in part via a reduction of working hours and a concomitant extension of autonomous production aided by the creation of community facilities.<sup>144</sup> Consistent with the thrust of his earlier writings, Gorz’s goal is to “restrict the sphere of economic production and exchange, and to liberate and enlarge the sphere of non-economic, self-rewarding activities.”<sup>145</sup>

According to Gorz, this was in fact a large part of the original aim of the socialist project: the socialist movement grew out of the struggle to impose restrictions based on ethical demands on the sphere in which economic rationality may operate,<sup>146</sup> to subordinate economic rationality to social and cultural aims. Gorz maintains that the central conflict within capitalist societies from the outset has been between those who sought to extend and those who sought to restrict the fields in which economic rationality could express itself in an unfettered manner.<sup>147</sup> In fact, he goes so far as to make this struggle universal and transhistorical: “[t]he preponderance of non-economic activities in relation to economically necessary work has always been, in Plato as in Marx — and not only in

western civilizations — the goal of humanity.”<sup>148</sup> Capitalist society emerged, Gorz argues, as a result of the abolition of cultural, religious and social restrictions on economic rationality in earlier societies. Then, under pressure, capitalism had to reimpose certain limits, for example, the abolition of slavery and the shortening of the working day. According to Gorz, the struggles of the socialist labour movement in its inception entailed a critique not only of capitalist relations of production but of capitalist rationality itself, insofar as they eschewed the ruthless pursuit of maximizing productivity and counterposed the principle of solidarity to the competitive struggle among isolated individuals.<sup>149</sup>

However, Gorz affirms, the concrete historical contents of this struggle have since changed, along with the actors. The battle is no longer confined to the workplace. It must extend urgently to the cultural front. A socialist movement that does not focus on cultural, interpersonal and community life as intensively as on working life will not prevail against the capitalist culture industry. And the principal aim of the cultural struggle to be waged is the creation of ever wider spaces for “the development of a many-sided, communicative, everyday culture and everyday solidarity liberated from commodified relations of buying and selling.”<sup>150</sup> Thus, for Gorz, the main goal of socialism is and must be synonymous with the perspective he had been working out for the last quarter century: the imperative to expand the place and scope of non-economic autonomous activities.

We have already seen that in Gorz’s typology autonomous activities are ends in themselves — they are by definition “*optional, non-market, and non-economic*.”<sup>151</sup> But in elaborating this idea in the context of his arguments against the dual economy, he tends to narrow the definition so that it can seem a little rigid and arbitrary — although a motive can be discerned for his conceptual scheme. For Gorz, autonomous activities are of two broad types: cultural (artistic, educational, scientific, caring...) and material (production for one’s own use).<sup>152</sup> To qualify as autonomous, productive activities cannot be performed to produce things for exchange on the market. Thus the production by a self-managed bakery of organic bread is not autonomous activity. But Gorz also maintains that non-market subsistence production belongs to the sphere of heteronomy, although he notes that in pre-capitalist society, subsistence production in the form of craft production had an aesthetic and festive dimension, while remaining heteronomous. Pre-capitalist production was a

mode of production from which all non-economic values had not yet been eliminated.<sup>153</sup> Today, however, it is only when communities or neighbours *voluntarily* get together to bake bread in a wood oven they have built themselves for their own consumption in their free time that we may speak of genuinely autonomous production (although there is also the category of work-for-oneself which is primarily domestic and has its own properties, as discussed above). Autonomous activity, for Gorz, bears no constraint of necessity; the celebratory dimension takes precedence over the subsistence aspect of work: it is of a piece with the pleasure of living, doing and giving.<sup>154</sup>

One of the reasons that can be gleaned for Gorz's emphasis on the voluntary aspect of autonomous activities relates to a point raised in the previous chapter, about how some ideas concerning autonomy and the self-limitation of needs may play into the hands of the system by dovetailing with the retreat of the State and the consequent abandonment of ever more people to their own resources. This is a thorny problem for Gorz because he wishes to argue simultaneously for greater autonomy and against self-reliance being thrust upon people by virtue of the slashing of state services. This is one possible reason to confine genuinely autonomous activity to that which is performed in the absence of any external compulsion. In one essay Gorz stresses:

*...self-organized mutual cooperation must in no case be imposed by the State as a substitute for existing services. Governments of the right, and sometimes of the left, may attempt to impose that easy solution which proposes in the name of anti-statism to reduce the social expenses of the State by asking the unemployed, the ill, the aged, families (in reality, women) to aid themselves.... One must insist that self-production and mutual aid only bring increased autonomy when we are not forced to do so by external necessity. Self-production and mutual aid can only be free and liberating activities within the sphere of freedom if basic needs are assured to each person by the organization of society.<sup>155</sup>*

However stringent his criteria for autonomous activity, Gorz makes it clear that the expansion of this sphere is what will ensure — over and above state regulation with all its distortions — that economic rationality is kept in check. This is, for Gorz, what socialism is fundamentally about in our time. It is about ensuring the maintenance of the complex differentiation of spheres in modern society, such that no sphere dominates over the others and that economic rationality is confined within the “ontological and existential limits” proper to it.<sup>156</sup>

The response which will henceforth define the Left, and by which the Left will define itself as such, consists in viewing the savings of working time as a *liberation of time*, by virtue of which social individuals should be able to emancipate themselves from the constraints of economic rationality embodied in capital.... To emancipate themselves not by abolishing the sphere of economically rational commodity activities (as the communist or fundamentalist anti-moderns or pre-moderns imagine), but by assigning them a limited and subaltern function in the development of society.<sup>157</sup>

Gorz's recasting of the socialist project intentionally draws on Karl Polanyi's definition of socialism as the domination of society over the economy.<sup>158</sup> And defined in this way as the struggle to subordinate economic rationality, socialism is, for Gorz, "more relevant than ever."<sup>159</sup>

As he reframes the socialist project, Gorz also places a distinctly individualist spin on it. Ultimately socialism has a future only if it carries through on the emancipation of individuals begun by the bourgeois revolution, that is, if it serves "to realize that emancipation also in areas in which, under capitalism, individuals remain subordinated to systemic constraints, relations of dominance and alienation."<sup>160</sup> Yet the restoration of a sense of community rent asunder by the market and the State seems to recede altogether as a goal. In keeping with his understanding of the differentiation of spheres required by modernity, Gorz reaffirms his opposition to notions of the coincidence of individual and social being that he criticized in *Farewell to the Working Class* and related writings.

Individual and social being no longer coincide — and can no longer coincide — because this latter is no longer — and can no longer be — a belonging of the individual in his or her entirety to society and community — in work, lifestyle, ethics, milieu and position within the social totality — as was the case in a guild-based society or within the industrial working class, with its culture, solidarities, associations and counter-society. In complex modern society, the differentiation of spheres of activity brings with it a differentiation of the dimensions of existence, and prevents the subject from seeking his or her unity in any of them.<sup>161</sup>

What then can be the relationship between individual and social being? Can there no longer be any lived experience of belonging to a community today? Is the very notion of any kind of community a reactionary throwback to a premodern past? In his later writings, Gorz does not explicate the dynamic between individual and society except in a negative way (society and socialization as a stifling of inner experience, as alienation). In an interview originally conducted in 1983, Gorz confessed that "Personally I see myself — as do many others — as belonging to no society, group



or nation and always confront these collective creations as something accidental that never would have been wanted by all those produced by its actions”<sup>162</sup> And community has tended to be an elusive concept in his work, figuring either as an invitation to totalitarianism in the form of the unitary community of the original socialist utopia or as a more positive but nebulous allusion to the creation of voluntary relations based on mutual respect between autonomous individuals in the form, for instance, of the expansion of work-for-oneself to one's family and neighbours on a microsocial scale.

Gorz's consecration of an antagonism between individual and social being is even more pronounced in his latest writings. But in pursuing this path, he winds up on shaky ground, assuming an interiority that is prior to and inevitably in some degree of conflict with society, the origins of which remain rather obscure. The question of what Gorz calls “the prehistory of the individual” is the question he sees as being at the heart of philosophy since the Greeks.<sup>163</sup> He broaches it most recently in a commentary on the death of society at the conclusion of his 1997 *Misères du présent, richesse du possible*. Capping a longer discussion of the later work of Alain Touraine, Gorz suggests that there is ample room for individuality to flourish in the widening fissures of a society in decay, in which all social ties are being fractured, and above all those relations which bind individuals to work and the workplace: when we cease to define ourselves through what we do, we must define ourselves by what we are.<sup>164</sup> Invoking the keynote theme of existentialism, the idea that individuals today are condemned to be free and to choose who they are, Gorz warns that the choices made are liable to be trivial and conditioned by the seductions of the consumer society, unless the subject chooses to embrace autonomy and to refuse identification with any one social role or identity which the disintegration of society offers him.<sup>165</sup> The autonomous inner self thus figures as a process of ongoing self-creation which enjoys different conditions of possibility depending on the historical conjuncture. But there is no sense that social ties can themselves contribute in any positive way to the development of individuality or how new socialities, new permanent and sustaining relations, can develop among groups of what look to be, in Gorz's eyes, fundamentally a-social individuals. Ultimately, it may be that Gorz reads his own deeply rooted sense of estrangement, of permanent exile from all collective endeavours, into the ontology of human existence.

## Exodus

We noted in the last chapter that Gorz considered the goal of the non-class of non-workers to be the setting up autonomous spheres *alongside and outside* the social machinery rather than taking over the machinery itself. And in subsequent writings he fully endorses this as the true meaning of socialism for our time. His approach has some affinities with Italian and French autonomist themes of the late 70s, and the notion of widening the spaces within everyday life referred to in our account of political ecology. With the most recent formulation of his ideas in *Misères*, the link with the Italian autonomists becomes more explicit as Gorz adopts the biblical word “exodus” to characterize the strategy of opposing the dominance of economic rationality by withdrawing mentally and practically from the employment society and attempting to create new forms of sociality that are not based on market exchange or the sale of labour power.

The term “exodus” was used by the Italian autonomist group around the journal *Luogo Comune* to suggest “an escape to an alternative lifestyle outside the domain of capital.” Of course, in the hands of the ever fractious autonomists, the idea was interpreted in diverse ways.<sup>166</sup> But in the broadest sense it corresponded to Gorz’s understanding of it as an exit from capitalism, a bid “to enlarge to the greatest extent possible the spaces and means that make it possible to produce alternative socialities, modes of life, cooperation and activity removed from the power of capital and the State.”<sup>167</sup> Gorz also applies the notion of exodus to the successful efforts of capital beginning in the 1970s to liberate itself from the constraints imposed by nation-states and pursue its own expansion in an unfettered way without regard for concrete human needs.<sup>168</sup> In *Misères* Gorz dwells on the perverse effects wrought by globalization and particularly the international dominance of money; money has become parasitical, devouring society and pillaging the economy. And, lest he be charged with a technologically deterministic explanation of world economic developments, Gorz makes it clear that he attributes globalization and its attendant damage not to the computer revolution, but rather to the political response to what he views as a crisis of governability of economic and social institutions. According to Gorz, the welfare state’s displacement of civil society made it vulnerable to the attacks of critics from the private sector and government who sought to encourage market forces, at the same time as companies sought to introduce “flexibility” into their work forces and deregulate the labour market.

Following the logic of his earlier work, there is, for Gorz, only one viable response to this context of global multinational capitalism in which work is exported or eliminated by new technologies and the State is disengaging itself: exodus from the employment society. To illustrate what this means in practice, Gorz offers examples of small-scale experiments such as the Local Employment Trading System (LETSystem): non-profit associations of community businesses and individuals in which members exchange goods and services using local currencies. The first LETSystem was developed by Michael Linton in British Columbia in 1983; since the late 1980s, hundreds of LETSystems have sprung up in North America, Europe and Oceania. There are many variations on the system, but all involve some form of collective barter. For Gorz, the virtue of such cooperative projects is that they subvert the power of money and set economic exchange on a foundation other than the wage relation.<sup>169</sup> As he explains, the creation of a time currency or a work currency enables participants to surmount the limitations of one-to-one exchange inherent in a simple barter system, so that all manner of products and services may be exchanged among large groups of people. While this local currency has some of the properties of official money it is also different in fundamental ways: most notably, its use is confined to the issuing group; it loses its value if it is not “spent” within a specified time period; it cannot be invested to make a profit. Ultimately, it encourages the self-limitation of needs. “Because it links each acquisition, each act of consumption to an outlay of work and time, local money abolishes the fetishism of money (the illusion that anything an individual can do money can do better) and of merchandise, it encourages people to think about their real needs, and it creates a deterrent to waste.”<sup>170</sup> For Gorz, one of the virtues of the system is that it restores the relation between work and consumption that has been ruptured in the dominant society: the work one furnishes in the context of a LETSystem has a direct bearing on how much one can “purchase” in turn. As in the case of subsistence production, LETSystems are only viable, in Gorz’s view, as a voluntary practice in the context of a basic income allocation; otherwise, he argues, there is a risk that they will develop primarily as an alternative economy of the poor and unemployed.

Without prejudging the merits, shortcomings or potential of such local economic alternatives, it is germane at this point to ask what differentiates Gorz’s exodus strategy from various (largely unsuccessful) efforts in the 60s, 70s and 80s to develop alternative communities —

from neo-ruralist experiments in post-'68 France to the urban-based social experimentation of the vast German Alternative movement. Gorz maintains that these earlier efforts were an attempt to invent a countersociety, whereas the new practices constitute a rejection of the labour-based society by people who have themselves been rejected by that society, and to which they are of little use — although society seeks to enforce its domination by obliging them to compete for scarce and unrewarding jobs. In this context, exit is a “refusal to play [the] game by people well aware that there is no way that they could ‘fit in’, since there is nothing they could ‘fit into’ anyway.”<sup>171</sup> For these people, exit entails inventing creative ways to “fill the voids” which are viewed by the dominant social discourse in purely negative terms as “lack”: lack of work, resources, social ties. In Gorz's estimation:

The interesting and positive aspect of these new social practices is that they generate a cultural and psychological Exodus from the bankrupt “labour-based society” — which is of course the prerequisite for social and cultural change. They are not a social movement yet. Nor are they political. What I wrote in 1980 about the “non-class of non-workers” applies to them. Their importance is due to the fact that we have here the forerunners, so to say, of societies that cannot base themselves any longer on the sale of labour power, of time, and in which people are increasingly to become subjects, actors, of their life, activities and the meaning of their projects.<sup>172</sup>

This does not entirely answer the question of why communes in the 60s, with their focus on co-operative production and forging alternatives to the dominant economic and social relations, did not also prefigure the waning of the employment society, or why the new oppositional groupings should or can achieve greater success in extricating themselves from the logic of the dominant society than did their precursors. Boris Frankel argues, for instance, that current informal practices and cashless transactions cannot constitute the basis of a large-scale demarketized sector insofar as they are highly dependent, if only indirectly, on incomes derived from the market economy or the state sector.

And this last unresolved problem in turn raises the quintessential question: even if an exodus strategy succeeds in circumscribing economic rationality to some degree, at least in certain enclaves, does this spell the end of capitalism? In his later writings Gorz draws a subtle but ultimately rewarding distinction between the abolition of capitalism and its transcendence. In this

account, to begin with, socialism is not a fixed goal, but a moving target. It is an ongoing process, a “perpetual action of laying down orientations, of shaping and subjecting the system to a rationality which is not its own...”<sup>173</sup> It is a never-ending struggle.

Socialism cannot and must not be conceived as an alternative *System*; it is rather nothing other than the transcendence of capitalism which social movements open up when they fight for a development modelled on people's lived needs, a development which connects with their aspirations and interests. This battle is never definitively won or lost. It continues and will continue.<sup>174</sup>

Returning to a theme in his earliest work, it was particularly important for Gorz to demolish the idea of socialism as a system. In *La morale de l'histoire*, he had warned that “...communist revolution can not, must not, culminate by putting a communist *system* in place of the capitalist *system*; since whoever says system says alienation of free praxis in favour of the rigidity and anti-human inertia of structures and processes.”<sup>175</sup> In a similar vein, Gorz now seeks to reframe socialism as “the conscious practical project of abolishing everything that makes society a system...”<sup>176</sup> And again he regards this as completely consistent with the original thrust of communism which was expected to entail the abolition of commodity relations, wage labour and state administration. At the stage of communism, complex industrial societies were to be self-governing, like the kibbutzim. Of course, Gorz has already made it clear that complex industrial societies can never be transformed into transparent self-managed communities without a regression behind modernity and a likely lapse into totalitarianism. It is thus difficult to imagine how, in his view, a redefined socialism could abolish everything that makes society a system. And ultimately Gorz retreats from his somewhat hyperbolic statement, claiming that economic and administrative systems cannot be abolished but rather must be limited and bound, through a process of mediation, to the lifeworld.<sup>177</sup> Once again, he is presenting the aim as an ongoing process rather than a predetermined historical terminus.

As to the transcendence of capitalism, a society remains capitalist, for Gorz, so long as the relations shaped by economic rationality are preponderant and mould the lives and activities of individuals. When non-quantifiable criteria become dominant and when the logic of capital is used to obtain non-economic goals then capitalism becomes extinct.<sup>178</sup> What defines capitalism, Gorz declares, is “...*domination* by economic rationality, embodied in capital and its techno-bureaucratic apparatuses ... not the existence of an economic sphere governed by the logic of profitability and

competition.” Furthermore, “[i]t is the abolition of that domination, not the abolition of capital and the market, which will mark our passing beyond capitalism.<sup>179</sup> Or again:

A society becomes socialist when the social relations shaped by the economic rationality of capital come to occupy only a subordinate place in relation to non-quantifiable values and goals, and, in consequence, in the life of society and in each person's life, economically rational work is merely one activity among others of equal value.<sup>180</sup>

For some detractors, Gorz's reframing of socialism in this manner amounts to tepid reformism. Jean-Pierre Garnier and Louis Janover, for example, include Gorz as one of the spearheads in a movement of French intellectuals to embrace capitalism and the free market, albeit in a tempered form.<sup>181</sup> And Phil Shannon charges that “Gorz's ‘socialism’ fizzles into piecemeal change, which does nothing to challenge capitalist power.”<sup>182</sup> It is true that the idea of setting limits to the domination of the market is an ostensibly modest goal; but at the level of intentions at least Gorz remains far more radical than such critics would have it. Gorz's objective is to liberate society from the overweening dominance of market relations which act as a solvent of the conditions of human conviviality. This is a project intrinsically at odds with the imperatives of capital, unlike social democracy which, at its best, promotes greater equality and social security, but poses no fundamental challenge to the logic of the system.

Seen as an ongoing project, the movement to constrain the scope of the market is arguably consistent, as Gorz himself conceived it, with his theory of revolutionary reformism — the idea of developing intermediary objectives in everyday life which prefigure the alternative to capitalism in the present. Of course, in Gorz's original elaboration of the concept these objectives were supposed to be of such a type as to prepare the working class to rule. This is no longer the aim; class struggle per se seems to have disappeared from the road to socialism. On the other hand, the idea of creating a dual power that undermines and transforms the system from within is still relevant to the exodus strategy.

But even if it is granted that limiting the purview of the profit motive and economic rationality is a laudable objective that could form the basis of a viable recasting of the socialist project in our time, it is arguable that some of the policies Gorz proposes to achieve this, such as his recent espousal of an unconditional and generous basic income, presuppose an unprecedented

reordering of the status quo and in fact demand a transformation of society more along the lines of the traditional socialist project of gaining control over the entire system of production. In this context, exodus would prove ineffectual. This is a problem which we have encountered before in connection with the critique of *Farewell to the Working Class*. As Steve Wright puts it in paraphrasing Italian autonomist U. Plinsky's comment on the exodus theme "...any attempt to establish a genuinely social form of self-organisation dedicated to need over profit cannot postpone forever an encounter with the established order — an encounter which talk of "dropping out" from the capital relation seems designed to forestall."<sup>183</sup> A similar objection is raised by Yves Clot in a critique of Dominique Méda, a French philosopher of work who has been influenced by Gorz. The capitalist system, Clot argues, cannot be contained.<sup>184</sup>

For Gorz's part, confronted with the charge that his vision leads not to a revolutionary transformation but to a system in which private capital still plays a significant but reduced role, he contends that he would be satisfied with such an outcome.<sup>185</sup> He maintains, reasonably enough, that whether capital can be confined is a question that can be answered only in practice, but that, from an historical perspective, the welfare state is itself a precedent for capital accepting a certain degree of regulation. As to the question of capitalist resistance, Gorz concedes that it is not likely to be broken any time soon, but he sees a possibility of it weakening in face of growing public insight, shifting values and emerging coalitions.<sup>186</sup> In support of this proposition he cites the example of the retreat of the nuclear power industry. But his case remains weak insofar as the retreat of one industry, however powerful, can hardly be extrapolated to the scale of the system as a whole. In a rather strange afterthought, he also refers to the possibility of self-doubt arising among captains of industry faced with the implications of their activities in the form of environmental degradation; this may lead them, Gorz speculates, to be more cooperative about serving interests other than profit-maximization. But this is hardly consistent with his discussion in *Farewell* of the nature of functional power dominant in contemporary business organizations; the compulsion to serve the machinery of domination that Gorz identified in the dominant class would seem to preclude the exercise of this kind of individual responsibility.

The next crucial question, of course, is what group or groups are to lead the way in imposing constraints on the operation of economic rationality. Who will mount the struggle for all

the measures — the reduction of working time, basic income, alternative arrangements for exchanging goods and services — that will rein in the omnivorous capitalist market? The new social movements? The non-class of non-workers? Does Gorz have his sights on any vanguard for his redefined socialist project? But before turning to this pivotal question, there is another aspect of Gorz's reframing of socialism in the last two decades that invites consideration.

### **Adieu to ecology?**

In light of Gorz's prominent role in the development of political ecology in France, it is interesting to ask where ecology fits into his recasting of the socialist project. In the 70s, as we have seen, Gorz wrote extensively about ecological issues, albeit from the limited perspective of ecology as the judicious management of natural resources, with a radical political perspective postulated as a necessary adjunct to it. In the 80s and 90s, Gorz's ecological concerns are given expression more indirectly in two interrelated ways. First, in arguing for the progressive restriction of economic rationality, he maintains that it must be subordinated to what he variously calls ecological or eco-socialist rationality.

Gorz defines ecological rationality as “satisfying material needs in the best way possible with as small a quantity as possible of goods with a high use-value and durability, and ... doing so with a minimum of work, capital and natural resources.”<sup>187</sup> Ecological rationality conflicts with economic rationality and the quest for productivity, which entail selling at the highest profit possible the greatest possible quantity of goods produced with the maximum of efficiency. The only way to obtain a return on growing quantities of capital is the maximization of consumption and needs. In Gorz's view, the two rationalities can never be reconciled. And this contention is the basis of his critique of Green capitalism. According to Gorz, ecological rationalization (also referred to as ecological modernization) in the form of such activities as solar energy production cannot compensate for the decline of classical industries by employing in a Green economy the labour and capital that are saved elsewhere. Ecological conversion can be an engine of growth for a limited duration, but it is not sustainable. “Ecological modernization requires that investment no longer serve the growth of the economy but its contraction...”<sup>188</sup> Thus, in the long term, ecological modernization runs counter to economic interests (the interests of capital). But as far as Gorz is



concerned it simply has to be accepted that humanity cannot continue as in the past without incurring catastrophic consequences. So industry has to be made to accept ecological modernization not because it will promise a brighter future but only because it will avert a worse one.

Consequently, ecological modernization demands the contraction of the sphere governed by economic rationality.

“There can be no ecological modernization,” Gorz maintains, “without restricting the dynamic of capitalist accumulation and reducing consumption by self-imposed restraint. The exigencies of ecological modernization coincide with those of a transformed North-South relationship, and with the original aims of socialism.”<sup>189</sup> In a related vein, Gorz frequently reiterates his belief in the need to overcome the fetishism of growth through the self-limitation of needs, or what he prefers to call self-restraint.<sup>190</sup> This is to be facilitated by the expansion of the sphere of autonomous activities, which encourages the connecting back of economic decisions to felt aspirations.<sup>191</sup>

As we saw in the discussion of his contribution to political ecology, Gorz argues that capitalism succeeded in eroding and destroying common standards of sufficiency. To fuel the productive machine, the need to consume was continually stimulated through techniques such as advertising and marketing, to the point where people ceased to be able to ascertain their own felt needs. The consumer society derives from capitalism's drive to satisfy needs with the greatest possible flow of commodities and to give priority to those needs which are most profitably satisfied. At the same time, full-time work was an incentive to consumption as a form of compensation for alienation, an idea that, as we saw, Gorz had developed early in the 60s in *Strategy for Labor* and other writings. In Gorz's estimation, people do not work more to be able to consume more. On the contrary, full-time work fuels consumerism: “If we could all adjust the amount of work we put into the needs we really feel we want to satisfy, how much would we work? ... Since we have to waste our lives working full-time anyway, we at least want to buy some compensation with our money.”<sup>192</sup> And this brings us back to the politics of time. For Gorz, the reduction of working time is the key to the self-limitation of needs, in the sense that it frees us to ask ourselves what and how much we really need.<sup>193</sup> The generalized reduction of working time disrupts the engineering of needs; it liberates people to ponder what their felt needs are, to determine what and how much they need. This is the path, the revolutionary reform, via which the

perpetual expansion of the ecologically unsustainable consumer society will ultimately be curbed.<sup>194</sup> The self-limitation of needs is the only alternative, in Gorz's view, to eco-fascism — a technocratic *dirigisme* in the restructuring of the economy in accordance with the dictates of resource conservation. Recalling his own analysis in *Ecology As Politics* of the potentially authoritarian uses to which ecology was liable to be put by capital — “turning nature into business” as he puts it in a more recent essay<sup>195</sup> — Gorz now expresses equal wariness of the potential use of the ecological imperative as “an ideal base for global dictatorship by a self-appointed knowledge elite.”<sup>196</sup> “There are many many power hungry ecologists,” Gorz believes, “who want to dominate everyone in the name of survival.” “I'd rather be dead,” he avows, “than accept eco-fascism.”<sup>197</sup>

These are the basic contours of Gorz's thinking about ecology in recent decades. It has been suggested by at least one commentator, however, that in the 80s and 90s Gorz essentially relinquished an ecological vision. This is the critique advanced by Gerard Strange in a probing article entitled “Which Path to Paradise?” The author begins by paying homage to Gorz as a highly relevant social thinker whose work has been “significant in informing the theoretical and practical discourses of the Green movement and political ecology.”<sup>198</sup> He also argues that it is within political ecology that Gorz made his “most theoretically coherent and distinctive contributions” particularly in his elaboration of the conception of the self-limitation of needs. And indeed Gorz himself denies having moderated his ecological concerns, pointing precisely to those writings in the 80s and 90s in which he expounds on that concept. He affirms that after the 70s he redeveloped “the theme of the incompatibility of the capitalist logic with self-restraint, which, in my opinion, is or should be the central concern of political ecology: re-experiencing that ‘enough is as good as a feast.’”<sup>199</sup>

But in spite of this acknowledged emphasis in Gorz's thought, Strange charges that Gorz's later work, beginning in particular with his 1992 *Capitalisme, Socialisme, Écologie*, is marked by a lingering productivism. While granting that much of Gorz's work is explicitly anti-productivist, he notes that, at the same time, Gorz has continued to stress the progressive potential of technology, as is typical of the Marxist tradition. Strange remarks that for some Greens, such as Andrew Dobson, Gorz's rather uncritical attitude towards technology is antithetical to the tradition of ecological thinking.<sup>200</sup> This is certainly a debatable point especially since Gorz certainly never suggested that technological advances would automatically give rise to a better world: on the contrary, invoking

Illich's concept of counter-productivity, Gorz continued to warn: "...productivist industrial society can only continue by offering more and worse — more destruction, more waste, more repairs to destruction, more programming of the most intimate facets of individual life. 'Progress' has arrived at a threshold beyond which plus turns into minus."<sup>201</sup> And Strange himself discounts the criticism, charging that Dobson operates with too undifferentiated a view of technology and fails to recognize that technology can have radically different ecological consequences at different stages of historical development.<sup>202</sup> On the other hand, a case can be made that technology has always been a problematic issue in Gorz's thought; capitalist production technology and methods often appear in his work as if they are ethically and politically neutral, as if those methods can be deployed just as well to create the basis of a more egalitarian ecologically sound society. He seems mostly to have abandoned the stark conclusion he arrived at in the early 70s, that production technology would not merely have to be appropriated, but radically transformed by the direct producers for real social change to be achieved, that science and technology themselves would have to revolutionized.<sup>203</sup> But he does evince ambivalence on the subject. He heralds the micro-electronic revolution as engendering the conditions of possibility for the liberation of humanity, but at the same time he can pen dark passages about the degradation of humanity wrought by new technology:

Widespread computerization does not simply abolish work (in the sense of *poiesis*), the intelligence of the hands and the body. It abolishes the sensible world, it renders sensorial faculties idle, denies them the capacity to judge true from false, good from bad. It deskills the senses, deprives perception of its certainties, steals the ground out from under you.<sup>204</sup>

The question that arises here is whether technology with such nefarious effects can be used in a benign way to fashion a liberated world wherein those effects are contained. In any event, Gorz is clearly not uncritical of technology in the preceding passage. Perhaps it is fair to say that Gorz expresses ambivalence in relation to contemporary technology, which may well reflect the ambivalence that subsists at the heart of that technology.

To return to Strange's own critique, his problem is not with Gorz's technology-based utopia, but rather with the shift he discerns in Gorz's attitude towards growth. He discusses the various models of the transition from capitalism to post-industrial socialism that Gorz presents in his later writings, suggesting that Gorz favours a model that can be characterized as "humanist radical

productivism” in so far as it presupposes positive economic growth.<sup>205</sup> He suggests that Gorz has always advocated the reduction of working hours with no loss of pay, which would necessitate continued growth. However, Gorz was not quite as consistent as Strange makes out. As we saw earlier, he maintained in certain essays that to have any effect on employment work time reduction would have to be of such magnitude that some loss of pay would be necessary initially although not for any future progressive reductions. In spite of this imprecision on Strange's part, he is correct in observing that Gorz's scheme for the progressive reduction of working hours is predicated on continued economic growth. In one essay in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, for example, Gorz attacked the appeal for zero growth, arguing that such a policy would mean that the top third of wage earners would necessarily suffer a loss in purchasing power which would consequently deter the most culturally and politically influential segment of the population from supporting the reduction.<sup>206</sup> If the economy continued to grow a little, he maintained, there would be no reason for any loss in purchasing power.

It may be recalled that French ecologists had generally tended to advocate a slower rate of growth as opposed to zero growth. But, as we have also seen, Gorz devoted a great deal of attention to the perils of a growth-oriented approach and, in that context, penned phrases that would constitute an unqualified endorsement of zero growth. In *Ecology as Politics* he had stated clearly that the physical limits of growth had been reached and that a reorienting of growth towards intangible goods was imperative.<sup>207</sup> “We know that *our* world is ending;” he wrote ominously, “that if we go on as before, the oceans and rivers will be sterile, the soil infertile, the air unbreathable in the cities, and life a privilege reserved for the selected specimens of a new race of humans, adapted by chemical conditioning and genetic programming to survive...”<sup>208</sup> He had argued that merely stopping growth was not enough, at least with respect to the West's exploitation of non-renewable resources, that consumption would have to be reduced, not merely stabilized,<sup>209</sup> and he had called for a halt to industrial growth for the rich nations beginning in 1975.<sup>210</sup> And while, on the other hand, he had also argued that it was not so much growth itself that must be attacked, but the mystification it engenders of ever growing needs, competition, and an ideology of more is better,<sup>211</sup> there was certainly an apocalyptic sense of ecological urgency, a perception that growth-oriented civilization was on the precipice of disaster, which is muted in his writings in the 80s and 90s.

Rather than a retreat from ecology, it may be that this shift in emphasis paralleled a shift in the ecology movement itself away from what was deemed the “catastrophism” of the movement’s early days towards a more “constructive” and positive approach to the cause.

Strange contrasts Gorz with French Green economist Alain Lipietz, who argues that reduced working hours must necessarily involve some loss of purchasing power and that limitations on the rate of growth are desirable from an ecological perspective.<sup>212</sup> And he disputes as unduly pessimistic Gorz’s conviction that it is necessary to endorse a form of productivism as the only politically viable route to ecological sustainability. In response to Gorz’s contention that the well-off two-thirds of society would not accept a decline in purchasing power in the name of ecology, he maintains that Gorz has failed to contextualize the circumstances in which people make choices, arguing that the environment in which union bargaining is conducted is changing and that old premises are being undermined.<sup>213</sup> Strange intimates that it is becoming likelier that workers will accept wage reductions in exchange for reductions in working time. And it is true, of course, that in certain places, particularly Germany, workers have in practice accepted that type of trade-off. But Strange and Gorz may have different groups of people in mind; Strange does not mention non-unionized professionals for example. In any event, this entire argument is rather less crucial than the doubts Strange expresses about Gorz’s insistence that the ecological imperative must take precedence over other progressive demands — a position stemming from Gorz’s apprehensions about direct ecological regulation as a spawning ground for authoritarianism. As noted above, Gorz remains unwavering on a point made clear in his earlier writings: he is “not willing to save the planet at [the] price [of an authoritarian system]... You just can’t approve of any means as long as the goal is right.”<sup>214</sup> This confirms Strange’s point that the priority Gorz gives to self-limitation “requires the *subordination* of ecology — initially at least — to the more immediate objectives of the humanist-socialist project.”<sup>215</sup> For his part, Strange questions the “overriding importance Gorz attaches to self-limitation” as the only democratic route to an ecologically sustainable industrial civilization.<sup>216</sup> He sees it as a paradox since, in his own view, capitalism does not afford the conditions of possibility for the development of a culture of self-limitation; such a cultural change could emerge only once the foundations of a post-industrial, ecologically-sustainable society are in place. But there are even more compelling reservations. At what point, we might ask, does

regulation become authoritarian? Is it fascism when people are obliged by law to separate their garbage for recycling; when the dumping of toxic waste is made illegal, when the habitat of other species is protected? Where does the rule of law end and totalitarianism begin? Here, other than waving the flag of authoritarianism, Gorz has made no attempt to delineate the basis and limits of his argument.

In all, there is some basis to the charge, if not that Gorz retreated from an ecological perspective in the 80s and 90s, at least that ecological concerns were assigned less pressing consideration in his writing. In addition, Gorz deliberately distanced himself from the ecology movement, often tending to express a dim and undifferentiated view of radical Green aims as anti-modern in character, and comparing radical Greens to religious fundamentalists in what he alleges is their quasi-religious faith in the goodness of nature and their view of modernity as a sin against the natural order.<sup>217</sup> He appeared as well to adopt a more reserved stance toward the new social movements, as we shall see as we turn now to the question of the possible subject Gorz had in mind for the project of confining economic rationality.

#### **A project without a subject?**

After making a dramatic claim in *Farewell to the Working Class* for the vastly diminished role of the labour movement in effecting social change, Gorz modulated his position in the later 1980s, deflecting his emphasis on the non-class of non-workers to some extent, and putting forward what is probably his most reasonable and persuasive answer to the question of agency in his career: a proposed alliance between the neo-proletariat, the new social movements and the labour movement. In developing this more plural conception of the agency of social change, Gorz did not abandon his claims for the non-class of non-workers, as Sean Sayers has incorrectly suggested,<sup>218</sup> but, particularly with the publication of his *Critique of Economic Reason*, Gorz has accorded a more important place once again to the labour movement and to trade unionism — with the proviso that trade unionism itself must adapt to new social conditions; it cannot be the defense of the privileges of an elite group of skilled workers. He expresses a greater openness to the possibilities of developing a new type of trade unionism which would enable the labour movement to play a pivotal role in bringing about the types of measures that would ultimately undergird the unending process

of building socialism. In this evolution Gorz was undoubtedly influenced in some measure by political developments in France in the 1980s, and particularly by the decline, partly through institutionalization, of the new social movements, and he was also influenced, once again, by developments in the Italian labour movement.

The flowering period of the social movements was more short-lived in France than in other parts of Europe or in North America. As many commentators have pointed out, the French movements on the whole never attained a degree of strength comparable to their counterparts in other western European countries, mainly because the period in which they emerged in the 1970s was the very moment that the traditional institutional French left began to gather steam.<sup>219</sup> It is also true that the traditional social-democratic parties all over Europe, including the Parti Socialiste, co-opted Green themes, thus diluting the specificity of the appeal of Green movements; and governments of all stripes took measures which, however limited, made them appear to be responding to environmental concerns. In France, even Giscard d'Estaing had talked about "la croissance douce" (soft growth).<sup>220</sup> Certainly among the social movements that persisted there was a high degree of institutionalization. In France, the ecology movement had grown increasingly electoralist. By 1982, Les amis de la terre, led by Brice Lalonde, explicitly espoused the conquest of political power as an objective, although most members did not join any party and maintained a critical discourse on the goal of state power. In 1986, under the new leadership of Antoine Waechter, Les Verts entered a moderate phase, distancing themselves from post-'68 leftism and adopting the "neither left nor right" political line. By 1987, the basic goal of the party had evolved from electoral participation as an educational method and pressure tactic to electing representatives at the highest levels of state power.<sup>221</sup>

In this context, Gorz's enthusiasm for the new social movements seemed to wane and he distanced himself in particular from the ecology movement. In his writings he tended to reduce the ecology movement either to technocratic environmentalism or pre-modern romanticism, as in the case of the *Fundi* wing of the German Greens. And this was true in spite of the many affinities which existed between the program of Les Verts in France and Gorz's own ideas; as Gerard Strange points out, the party exemplified Gorz's concerns, promoting the theme of self-limitation, together with the strategies of work time reduction and basic income.<sup>222</sup>

Nevertheless, Gorz charged that the problem with the new social movements is that they did not intentionally and deliberately attack the domination of economic rationality embodied in capitalism; they are anti-technocratic but strike only at the cultural assumptions and social consequences of the relations of domination, not at their economic-material core.<sup>223</sup> To overcome this limitation it was imperative that the new social movements ally themselves with the post-industrial proletarians who, by virtue of their inability and unwillingness to identify with their place in the productive process, are subversive of the employment society and its assumptions. The alliance was not to end there, however. For Gorz, organized labour also had a critical role to play in bringing and holding together the forces of opposition to the domination of economic rationality.

This renewed interest in labour on Gorz's part is more difficult to explain in relation to the French political situation. The election of the Socialist government in 1981 did not alter the pattern of union decline noted in the previous chapter, although by the later 1980s, in the wake of cohabitation and a government bid to weaken labour laws, the labour movement did begin to show signs of stirring from torpor after a protracted period of relative quiescence.<sup>224</sup> But throughout the 80s, the CFDT, with which Gorz continued to maintain links in spite of his chilly relations with the leadership, moved in an increasingly conciliatory direction. Favouring negotiation as opposed to direct action, the union launched a new strategy in 1985 to obtain agreement on a social pact that would bring about an end to the longstanding war between unions and bosses.<sup>225</sup> Such was the state of the French union movement that by 1991, sociologist Michel Wieviorka could write:

The labour movement can no longer claim to be the salt of the earth. This major social force has undergone fragmentation and decomposition. It can only exert political pressure and engage in defensive, sectoral and corporatist struggles, as well as scattered acts of violent resistance, without being able to challenge the general shape of social life.<sup>226</sup>

Whatever inspiration Gorz drew on for his discussion of a new unionism came less from developments in the French labour movement than from the evolution of Italian and German trade union theory and practice. A key influence here is once again the thinking of Gorz's old mentor, CGIL general secretary Bruno Trentin — in spite of Trentin's own reservations about the strategy of work reduction and an unconditional basic income.<sup>227</sup> In 1980, in his *Il Sindacato dei Consigli*, Trentin called for a new conception of the role of the trade union which would involve union efforts



to reach out to and organize the marginalized. And indeed during the 1980s the Italian trade union movement experimented with moving into the neighbourhoods and organizing the precariously employed. Without entering into the context for the innovative initiatives of the Italian movement, we saw in the last chapter that the CGIL was particularly attentive to the need for solidarity with the excluded. By the same token, in Italy more than elsewhere in Europe the institutional left was not solely preoccupied with the interests of the traditional working class and tended to be more receptive to the new social movements. This was bound to impress Gorz, who had little use for unions which waged a corporatist struggle in defense of their own interests — to protect and preserve full-time, well-paid jobs — ignoring the plight of those excluded from the labour market. As we have seen, Gorz condemned such union behaviour as right wing insofar as it reinforced social dualism.<sup>228</sup>

Pursuing a theme at the heart of *Farewell to the Working Class*, Gorz continued to stress that, with the transformation in work, the shift away from craft work towards mechanization, automation, interchangeability and specialization, work has been largely drained of its erstwhile significance. Even today's highly skilled workers are specialized in a way that contradicts the socialist goal of the free all round unfolding of individuality; there is no "totality of skills commanding a totality of productive forces."<sup>229</sup> Identifying with one's position in the productive process does not lead to questioning the purposes of production; it is, rather, distance from work that precipitates such critical thinking. This is one of the intriguing ideas that Gorz presented in *Paths to Paradise*: the possibility that being more and more free of the surveillance and influence of bosses and patterns of subordination in the workplace, people will begin to question authority relations altogether. And this would seem to reinforce Gorz's argument for the non-class of non-workers as the privileged agent of social change via the struggle against the moribund strictures of the employment society. As Gorz states in an interview with John Keane: "...if people develop a distance to (sic) their job because working time does not fill their whole life, and they have various other interests and self-rewarding activities, then they are likely to ask questions about what, ultimately, they are doing on their job and what society should be like."<sup>230</sup> In his *Critique of Economic Reason*, Gorz reiterates the point that liberation *from* work is ultimately what will produce liberation *within* work.<sup>231</sup> But in a text appended to the same book, Gorz addresses himself

in particular to the labour movement, in a way he had not done since the 1960s and early 70s, singling it out as a potential linchpin in the broader struggle against the dualization of society and for social and economic emancipation.<sup>232</sup> And in so doing Gorz perhaps extends an olive branch by highlighting a point that was present in a muted way in his writings in the early 80s, but had largely been displaced by other new and provocative themes: the need to fight a battle on two fronts — for liberation within, as well as from, work; for the humanization and enrichment of tasks at work, and for the reduction of working time. Although on many occasions Gorz had suggested that unions were anachronistic and misguided in concentrating their efforts on emancipation within work, he now asserted that the goal of liberation from work should not be set against the traditional union goal of the liberation within work.<sup>233</sup>

The main point Gorz wishes to underscore, however, is that unions can play an indispensable role and avoid degenerating into a neo-corporatist and conservative force only by branching out and developing the self-understanding of union members as more than workers, by reflecting “the totality of human aspirations and interests, particularly in the social and cultural fields and not simply material interests.”<sup>234</sup> The class antagonism between labour and capital has not vanished, Gorz grants, but there are new, more pertinent antagonisms which go beyond workplace struggles and exploitation.

...[S]ocialist consciousness and the critique of capitalism do not usually have any direct connection with, or derive from, the lived experience of work. The “subject” of a socialist project of society therefore no longer develops in the capitalist relation of production as class consciousness of the worker as such, but rather in a worker who as citizen, for example, in his neighbourhood, is deprived of his social and natural lifeworld by the consequences of capitalist development, just as are most of the rest of his fellow human beings.<sup>235</sup>

For Gorz it is thus people's experience outside work, as citizens, residents, parents, teachers, students or as unemployed, that leads them to call capitalism into question. And this dictates a new approach by the trade unions.

...[T]he quality of people's lives and their allegiances may depend as much on environmental factors like less air, noise and water pollution, better housing urban planning etc., as on wages and conditions of employment. Why shouldn't trade unions move into the neighbourhoods, as they are already doing in Italy, and try to

organize the unemployed, the part-time employed and in the black labour market. Why shouldn't unions help people to take over — to “reappropriate” — the city or neighbourhood rather than keeping up the fiction that they can reappropriate the social means of production? <sup>236</sup>

In Gorz's estimation, the unions have a cultural and political responsibility to extend themselves beyond the confines of the workplace and participate in creating spaces for the “self-organization of social relations,” such as popular universities, community centres, workshops for autonomous production... In so doing the unions could play a crucial role in challenging the grip on consciousness of the culture industry, which seeks to absorb and profit from free time by transforming it into time for passive consumption. The success or failure of the other components of the social movement — the struggle of the non-class of non-workers against the employment society and of the new social movements against the colonization of the lifeworld — depended, as Gorz saw it in the *Critique of Economic Reason*, on the union movement.

While he set some store in the possibility of such a metamorphosis in the union movement, Gorz did not seem to regard labour as even a potential spearhead of the struggle for reduced working hours. And although at times he still seems to suggest that the growing mass of people excluded and disaffected from work — the group he once classified as the non-class of non-workers — prefigures the emergence of a new revolutionary collectivity, he remained consistent with his affirmation in *Farewell* that there can no longer be any unitary social subject or collective agent of the redefined socialist project of bridling economic rationality. “There is no ‘social subject’ culturally or politically capable of forcing through a redistribution of labour which would allow everyone to earn their living by working, yet allow them to work less and less and at the same time receive an increasing income representing their share of the increasing socially produced wealth.”<sup>237</sup> Moreover, Gorz was not necessarily optimistic about the prospects for the coalition of new social movements, labour, and the post-industrial proletariat which he regarded as imperative to the future of the left. And ultimately in his most recent work he has little to say on the subject of the agency of change: the theme that had exercised him for nearly half a century. To bring this chapter to a close on a note of hope deferred, Gorz now claims that it is not incumbent upon him to indicate the actor(s) who can bring about the revolution in attitudes and values that undergirds the prospects of

change: "Consciousness is the necessary condition for everything else, but I cannot supply everything else, nor the subject-actor of the revolution."<sup>238</sup>

Similarly, with respect to the various policies (reduction of working hours, basic income, facilities to encourage own-use production) which stand as necessary conditions of the socialist process as he redefines it, Gorz demurs: "Don't ask me who is to implement these policies. The most urgent and important step is to make a mental, cultural, emotional break with the system that is breaking down, to liberate imaginations and desires."<sup>239</sup> After decades of probing, in turn, the subversive possibilities of the working class, the new working class, the new social movements and the non-class of non-workers, Gorz even appears at one point to revert to a kind of left-wing version of the great man theory of historical change: "I think the motor of change does not lie with the big party and the union machines — which remain necessary though as instruments of power — but with people like Ralph Nader, whom I have always greatly admired, who catalyse movements by appealing both to our vital interests and our higher motives and sense of justice."<sup>240</sup> Ultimately, this unforeseeable conclusion about the preponderant role of lone champions of social justice is consistent with the trajectory of Gorz's thought which travelled steadily over the years away from the notion of any collective subject and in an increasingly individualist direction.

## Notes

1. George Ross, Introduction to *The Mitterand Experiment*, ed. George Ross, Stanley Hoffman and Sylvia Malzacher (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987), p. 12.
2. Still, the paring down of the public sector through privatization never occurred on the scale of some other European countries, and France's public sector remained the second largest in the European Community after Italy's. Serge Halimi, Jonathan Michie and Seumas Milne, "The Mitterand Experience," in *Unemployment in Europe*, ed. Jonathan Michie and John Grieve Smith (London: Academic Press, 1994), p. 111.
3. This type of argument is applicable beyond the particular context of the French Socialist experiment. Simon Gunn argues that in face of major capitalist restructuring and the erosion of the means to control increasingly volatile world money markets, the ability of all governments to carry out effective economic recovery plans was severely weakened by the mid-1970s, such that liberal and social-democratic administrations had to sacrifice neo-Keynesian policies. [*Revolution of the Right* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), pp. 15-17.] In Europe, moreover, the alignment of currencies on the deutschmark demanded that France, among other countries, implement austerity policies. The French Socialists had to contend in particular with the heritage of Giscard d'Estaing's policy of overvaluing the franc, which compromised the competitiveness of an already weak French industry. This is stressed as a key impediment to the success of the initial Socialist policies by, for example, Halimi, Michie and Milne in their "The Mitterand Experience," and by George Ross in a variety of essays, including his Introduction to *The Mitterand Experiment*.  
Halimi, Michie and Milne, contest to some degree the view that the Socialists were doomed to failure by external obstacles, arguing that the original 1981-1982 expansion and reflation policy was too timid, and the Socialists not sufficiently committed to seeing it through and coping with the consequences. "The Mitterand Experience," pp. 108-109 and 114-115.
4. Cited by Halimi, Michie and Milne in "The Mitterand Experience," p. 97.
5. Gunn, *Revolution of the Right*, p. 118. Gunn discusses the breakdown throughout western Europe of the post-war ideological consensus around social democracy. He argues that the right-wing turn that swept western Europe in the 80s reflected a general loss of faith in government (p. 65) and was less an expression of positive support for neo-liberal/neo-conservative values and policies than of disenchantment with key features of the post-war social-democratic compromise, and particularly the existing forms of state management of the economy (p. 72). The Socialists in power did not stem this tide of discontent: "In the year prior to the election of the Chirac administration, polls showed that 89 per cent of the French population was indifferent or actively opposed to further measures of liberal social reform" (p. 67). There was however widespread concern among the French to maintain their social safety net (p. 70).
6. Halimi, Michie and Milne, "The Mitterand Experience," p. 98.
7. Cited in Christian Fauvet, "Héritage inacceptable," originally published in *L'Express*, September 18, 1981, and reprinted in "Le Dossier de l'Emploi 1964-1994," *Les Cahiers de l'Express*, January 1994, pp. 64-67.
8. From Attali's book *Millennium: Winners and Losers in the Coming World Order*. Cited by Jeremy Rifkin in *The End of Work* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), p. 7.

9. René Passet, "Ces promesses des technologies de l'immatériel..." *Le Monde Diplomatique* (July 1997), p. 27.
10. Guy Aznar includes a table based on these survey results in *Travailler Moins Pour Travailler Tous*, with a Preface by André Gorz (Paris: Syros, 1993), p. 167.
11. Jacques Robin, "Repenser les activités humaines à l'échelle de la vie," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (March 1997), p. 4.
12. This was one reason for the meagre results of the move to the 39-hour week which in turn discouraged further legislated reductions in working time. Jean-Yves Boulin, "Les politiques du temps de travail en France: la perte du sens," *Futuribles* (May-June 1992), pp. 50-51. On the general question, see, for example, the interview with Michel Rocard entitled "Une réduction de 5% n'aura aucun effet sur l'emploi," *Libération*, December 23-24, 1995, p. 6.
13. The French parliament passed a law in 1998 making the reduction of the workweek to 35 hours without loss of pay legally obligatory in all workplaces with more than 10 employees as of January 1, 2000. This action precipitated the resignation of Jean Gandois, the president, at the time, of the powerful Conseil National du Patronat Français, who maintained that the organization had to be led by someone more combative than himself to force the government to retreat from the 35-hour plan. It is clear that Jospin is ill at ease with the commitment, but as of this writing has not backed down in the face of the employers' declaration of war on the initiative. And there are Socialists such as Michel Rocard who now advocate the 32-hour week, which is also the demand of the various French associations of the unemployed such as AC! (Agir contre le chômage) and the Mouvement national des chômeurs et précaires (MNCP). For an interesting discussion of recent developments see Greg Oxley, "The French 35-hour Workweek," *Timework Web*, October 26, 1997, [online]: <<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/timework/html>>. See also "Reduction in Working Hours: France Gives the Time," on the same site.
14. As we saw in the last chapter, the leadership of the CFDT was the exception to the position on reduction of working time without loss of pay; they tacitly conceded to the principle of work reduction *sans compensation intégrale*.
15. Jacques Freyssinet, "Méfiance des syndicats européens," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (March 1993), p. 15.
16. Jean-Yves Boulin, "Les politiques du temps de travail en France: la perte du sens." *Futuribles* (May-June 1992), pp. 41-63.
17. For an explanation of the reasons for greater German militancy on this issue, see Gerhard Bosch, "L'évolution du temps de travail en Allemagne," trans. Anne Berger, *Futuribles* (May-June 1992), pp. 85-97. The author views the ultimately successful German labour struggles — Germany achieved the shortest work time in Europe in the 1980s — as one of the rare successes of labour in Europe since the crisis, made possible in part by Germany's competitive strength in relation to other European countries in the 1980s and by the unity and single-mindedness of the German union movement.
18. See for instance the remarks on this subject in his comments in "Allocation universelle: version de droite et version de gauche," *La Revue Nouvelle* (July-August 1984), p. 421.

19. For the position of the *patronat* on flexibilization see, for example, the article by Jean-Claude Casanova in *L'Express* originally published on June 13, 1986 and reprinted in "Le Dossier de l'Emploi 1964-1994," *Les Cahiers de l'Express*, January 1994, p. 81, and Françoise Chirot and Michel Jacques, "Le myth des 35 heures," originally published in *L'Express*, May 12, 1979 and reprinted in the same collection, pp. 53-55. On the victory of the employers' position in France in the 80s in part due to the weakness of the unions on the issue of a policy on working time, see Jean-Yves Boulin, "Les politiques du temps de travail en France: la perte du sens," pp. 42-44, and see also Jacques Freyssinet's comments in "Méfiance des syndicats," p. 15.
20. The tradition of Christian thinking about work prior to the Reformation was of course marked by some ambiguity, embodying both negative and positive strains, as Krishan Kumar deftly illustrates in his "The Social Culture of Work," *New Universities Quarterly* 34 (Winter 1979/1980), pp. 10-13. Kumar's essay is one of a number of illuminating discussions of this point and of the general history of western attitudes to work. See also, for example, John Keane and John Owens, *After Full Employment* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), pp. 14-15; Catherine Dorison, *Le Travail* (Paris: Hatier, 1993), especially, p. 58; Walter F. Veit "A Genealogy of Work: Tracing the Past," in *Work of the Future*, ed. Paul James, Walter F. Veit and Steve Wright (St. Leonards NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1997), especially p. 34; see also Sebastian de Grazia's classic study *Of Time, Work and Leisure* (New York: Anchor Books, 1964).
21. Kumar, "The Social Culture of Work," p. 13.
22. Keane and Owens, *After Full Employment*, p. 13.
23. Ibid., pp. 11-15, and see Jacques Robin "Activité, travail, emploi," *Transversales Science Culture* 39 (May-June 1996), p. 13.
24. Robert Castel, *Les Métamorphoses de la question sociale* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), p. 352.
25. Gorz, "The Crisis of Work," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1994), p. 61 (original emphasis).
26. Gorz, "Shorter Hours, Same Pay," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 23
27. Among the numerous sources are: "La conquête de l'autonomie," an interview with Gorz by Olivier Corpet et. al. *Autogestions* 8-9 (Spring 1982), published in English translation as "The Limits of Self-Determination and Self-Management: An Interview with André Gorz," trans. Michele Joseph, *Telos* 55 (Spring 1983); "(S)He Who Doesn't Work Shall Eat All the Same," trans. Adrienne Foulke and André Gorz, *Dissent* (Spring 1987), especially pp. 184-185; *Critique of Economic Reason*, pp. 191-202; "Sortir de la société salariale," *Transversales Science Culture* 25 (January-February 1994); "Shorter Hours, Same Pay," in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*; "Which Way is Left? Social Change in the Post-industrial Age," interview by John Keane, also in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, pp. 90-92.
28. Gorz, "Sortir de la société salariale," *Transversales Science Culture* 25 (January-February 1994), p. 14.
29. Gorz, *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work*, trans. Malcolm Imrie (Boston: South End Press, 1985), p. 6.

30. Gorz notes that he has borrowed the apt expression from Jacques Attali. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
31. Jean-Louis Laville, "La crise de la condition salariale," *Le travail, quel avenir?* by Pierre Boisard, et. al. (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 51. Laville explains that employers in France have been amenable to this measure (which, as we have already noted, was also favoured by unions) because it enables them to cut down the size of their workforce with the assurance that the employees shed would be largely taken care of by the State.
32. The exact figure is 37 per cent. Cited in a summary of Passet's article "Production, emploi, revenu: le divorce," published in *Futuribles* in 1989. The Basic Income European Network website, available [online]: <<http://www.econ.ucl.ac.be/etes/bien/BasicIncomeFrench89.html>>.
33. René Passet, "Saisir le moment où tout peut basculer." *Le Monde Diplomatique* (September 1997), p. 23.
34. Gorz makes this point in an article entitled "Travailler moins, vivre mieux" included in the series of appendices to the main essay. The essay was originally published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* August 22 and 29, 1981. My reference here is to the original French edition *Les chemins du paradis: l'agonie du capital* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1983), pp. 220-222.
35. Michel Bosquet, "Political Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis and Everyday Life*, trans. John Howe (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1977), p. 175.
36. Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class*, trans. Michael Sonenscher (London: Pluto Press, 1982), p. 4.
37. Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*, ed. and trans. David McLellan (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 141-142. Gorz quotes this passage and many others from *The Grundrisse* in his writings throughout the 80s and 90s.
38. Gorz, "Nous allons sûrement vers l'entreprise sans salariés permanents et à plein temps," *Le Monde*, January 6, 1997.
39. Gorz, *Paths*, pp. 41-43.
40. A great deal of information on the history, philosophy and current discussions of basic income can be found on the exceptional website maintained by the Basic Income European network (BIEN), a pan-European organization devoted to promoting debate on the issue. The organization is headed by Philippe Van Parijs, the leading European scholar on the subject and proponent of an unconditional basic income. Available [online]: <<http://www.econ.ucl.ac.be/etes/bien/bien.html>>.
41. René Passet, "Jacques Duboin et le socialisme distributiste: une pensée prophétique," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (August 1998), p. 14.
42. Steve Wright, "Confronting the crisis of 'fordism'; Italian debates around social transition," first published in *Reconstruction* 6 (Summer 1995/1996), available [online]: <<http://services.cst.it/~chaos/steve.html>>.
43. Cited in *Basic Income* 29, Newsletter of the Basic Income European Network (Spring 1998) available [online]: <<http://www.econ.ucl.ac.be/etes/bien/bien.html>>.



44. Van Parijs, "Competing Justifications of Basic Income," in *Arguing for Basic Income*, ed. Philippe Van Parijs (London: Verso, 1992).
45. "L'allocation universelle, une idée pour vivre autrement," *La Revue Nouvelle* (April 1985). p. 345.
46. Nixon's defeated Family Assistance Plan projected a base grant of \$1600 for families of four with no other income, the grant would diminish in accordance with income procured from other sources with a cut off point of \$4000. Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), p. 269.
47. Douglas E. Ashford, "In Search of the Etat Providence," in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 161.
48. Alain Lipietz discusses the contours of this debate in France, along with his own position (which he presents as the authentic left approach in contrast with Gorz's "utopian" dualist proposals), in "Crise de l'état providence," *Les Temps Modernes* (November 1983).
49. Cited in *Futuribles*, special issue on the debate on minimum income (February 1994), p. 52.
50. Passet, "Ces promesses," p. 27.
51. Halimi, Michie and Milne, "The Mitterand Experience," p. 113.
52. A fairly comprehensive overview of the diverging positions can be obtained from the extensive synopses of the French literature posted on the BIEN website and from the February 1994 issue of *Futuribles* devoted to the debate on minimum income.
53. Much of the information about the RMI noted here is drawn from *Données sociales*, INSEE, 1996, posted on the website of the Ministère des affaires étrangères, April 1996. Available [online]: <<http://www.diplomatie.fr/france/societe/protsoc.gb.html>>.
54. "L'allocation universelle, une idée pour vivre autrement," *La Revue Nouvelle* (April 1985) p. 343.
55. Wright, "Confronting the crisis of 'fordism'," [online].
56. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 4.
57. See for instance: "Allocation universelle: version de droite et version de gauche," *La Revue Nouvelle* (July-August 1984); "(S)He Who Doesn't Work Shall Eat All the Same"; "On the Difference between Society and Community, and Why Basic Income Cannot by Itself Confer Full Membership of Either," in *Arguing for Basic Income*, ed. Philippe Van Parijs (London: Verso, 1992); "Revenu minimum et citoyenneté: droit au travail vs. droit au revenu," *Futuribles* (February 1994).
58. André Gorz, "Le RMG, version allemande," *Futuribles* (June 1994), pp. 61-66.
59. The most sustained discussion on this point is found in Gorz's "Revenu minimum et citoyenneté."

60. Gorz, "Le RMG, version allemande," p. 65.
61. See for example his presentation of the subject in "Allocation universelle."
62. Gorz, *Paths*, p. 44.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Gorz, "Allocation universelle: Version de droite et version de gauche," p. 423.
66. See Aznar's *Travailler Moins Pour Travailler Tous*, which includes a preface by Gorz (Paris: Syros, 1993).
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 100 ff.
68. Gorz's *Critique of Economic Reason*, trans. Gillian Handyside and Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1989), contains one of his most extensive discussions of this point; see pp. 139-140 and 205-208. And see also the essay "Revenu minimum et citoyenneté," pp. 57 ff.
69. Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 100.
70. Gorz, "Revenu minimum et citoyenneté," p. 60 (my translation).
71. Gorz, "On the Difference between Society and Community," p. 180.
72. He reiterates the point in *Paths*, p. 57.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
74. Philippe Van Parijs comments at some length on this matter in his review of *Les chemins du paradis (Paths to Paradise)*, "De la nature du paradis et du moyen d'y parvenir," *La Revue Nouvelle* (July-August 1984), pp. 72-73. He notes for instance that it remains unclear how work in the sphere of heteronomous production will be remunerated and whether the products will be sold or rationed.
75. Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, p. 139.
76. Yvan Craipeau, "La fin du travail salarié," *Les Temps Modernes* (March 1990), p. 77.
77. Gorz, "On the Difference Between Society and Community," p. 180.
78. Gorz, *Critique*, p. 206 (original emphasis).
79. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
80. See Schlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 87-92.
81. Gorz, *Critique*, p. 207.

82. Ibid.
83. Gorz, "Which Way is Left?" chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 97.
84. Gorz, "The Crisis of Work," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 55.
85. Gorz, "Old and New Actors in the Central Conflict," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 70.
86. Gorz, "The Crisis of Work," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 56.
87. Gorz, "A Land of Cockayne?" interview by John Keane, *New Statesman and Society*, May 12, 1989, p. 27.
88. Gorz, "The Socialism of Tomorrow" *Telos* 67 (Spring 1986), p. 203.
89. Gorz, *Paths*, pp. 53-54.
90. Gorz, *Misères du présent, richesse du possible* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1997). The subject of basic income is dealt with in chapter four. Excerpts from the book were featured several months in advance of its publication in *Transversales Science Culture*.
91. Gorz, *Misères*, pp. 140-141 (my translation).
92. Ibid., pp. 140-151.
93. Passet, "Ces promesses," p. 26.
94. In Aquinas's distinction commutative justice is concerned with exchange between individuals while distributive justice deals with the fair distribution of common goods.
95. See the interview with Jean-Marc Ferry in *Forum*, available [online]: [http://www.djfw.org/poitiers/readerpos5\(1\).html](http://www.djfw.org/poitiers/readerpos5(1).html), and see Bernard Cassen, Review of *La richesse des hommes* by Roger Sue, *Le Monde Diplomatique* (January 1998), p. 29.
96. Gorz, Letter to the author, January 7, 1998.
97. See *Misères*, pp. 141-144.
98. Ibid., pp. 144-145.
99. Ibid., pp. 161-162.
100. Ibid., pp. 145-148.
101. TV has consumed two-thirds of the increase in leisure time, to be precise. The figure and study are cited by Jean-Louis Laville in "La crise de la condition salariale," p. 43.
102. The study is cited by Marie-Pierre Subtil in "Réduire la durée de travail pour changer la vie?" *Le Monde*, April 15, 1998.

103. Lipietz, "Crise de l'état providence," p. 903.
104. Gorz, "On the Difference Between Society and Community," p. 180.
105. According to Jacques Robin, in 1959, 19 per cent of household incomes in France consisted of social benefits not contingent upon work. Today that figure is 34 per cent. "Mutation technologique, stagnation de la pensée," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (March 1993), p. 12.
106. Gorz, "Nous allons sûrement vers l'entreprise sans salariés permanents et à plein temps."
107. Gorz, *Misères*, p. 149 (my translation).
108. Gorz, "(S)He who doesn't work..." p. 183.
109. He makes this observation in the essay in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology* entitled "The New Servants," p. 51.
110. Gorz, "The Crisis of Work," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 61.
111. Gorz, "Making Space for Everyone," *New Statesman and Society*, November 25, 1988, p., 30.
112. Gorz, "(S)He Who Doesn't Work...", p. 187 n. 5.
113. Gorz, "On the Difference Between Society and Community," p. 181.
114. Bernard Cassen, "Imperative transition vers une société du temps libéré," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1994, p. 24.
115. Gorz, "Making Space," p. 30.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
117. *Ibid.*
118. *Ibid.*
119. *Ibid.*
120. See for instance M. Konopnick, E. Ben-Rafael, P. Rambaud, *Le Nouveau Kibboutz* (Brussels: Louis Musin, 1979), p. 90 and p. 113.
121. Gorz "Revenu minimum et citoyenneté," p. 56 (my translation).
122. Gorz, *Paths*, p. 48.
123. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
124. Gorz, "Introduction," *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. vii.
125. Gorz, "The Crisis of Work," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 60.

126. Unfortunately space does not permit a discussion of this interesting theme; see Gorz's essay "Disorientations, Orientations: In Defence of Modernity," *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, especially pp. 5-6 and *The Critique of Economic Reason*, pp. 39-44.
127. "Introduction," *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. ix, and see his similar statement in the note on p. 121 of Otto Kallscheuer's "Afterword" in the same volume.
128. Gorz, "Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 30.
129. Gorz, "A Land of Cockayne?" p. 31.
130. Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, pp. 138-139.
131. Gorz, "Redefining Socialism," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 39.
132. Gorz, "On the Difference Between Society and Community," pp. 178-179.
133. Although Gorz adopts the Habermasian terminology, he takes issue with Habermas' own conception of the lifeworld and his overly sociological approach to the individual, which, in Gorz's estimation, precludes individual autonomy by positing the individual as socially constituted. Gorz explains that his own definition of the lifeworld is closer to the idea of the individual's viscerally lived experience, which is irreducible to social being, whereas Habermas and sociologists employ the concept of the lifeworld to refer to a societal inheritance of largely pre-rational customs and traditions. Gorz elaborates on this distinction in Chapter 12 of his *Critique of Economic Reason*, "The Limits of Sociology and Socialization: a Digression on the Notion of the Lifeworld," pp. 173-180, and see also p. 85. Gorz's differences with Habermas on this score are also discussed by Robert Chevanier in his essay "André Gorz, une philosophie de l'orientation (et de la désorientation)," *Modern and Contemporary France* 4 (1994), p. 425.
134. Gorz, "A Left in Need of Redefinition," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 16.
135. Ignacio Ramonet, "A World Transformed," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, English edition, October 1997, available [journal on-line]: <<http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/md/en/1997/10/leader.html>>.
136. Gorz, "A Land of Cockayne?" p. 30.
137. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
138. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
139. Gorz, "Which Way is Left?" chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 85.
140. Gorz, "Disorientations," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 12.
141. Gorz, "A Left in Need of Redefinition," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology* p. 18.
142. *Ibid.*
143. See also Gorz's "Redefining Socialism," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, pp. 39-40.
144. See for instance Gorz's "Disorientations," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 12.

145. Gorz, "A Land of Cockayne?" p. 29.
146. Gorz, "Redefining Socialism," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 39.
147. Gorz, "Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 29.
148. Gorz, "La plus grande liberté possible," debate with Peter Glotz and Tilman Fichter, *Les Temps Modernes* (October 1986), p. 85.
149. Gorz, "Old and New Actors," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 68.
150. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
151. Gorz, "Allocation universelle: Version de droite, version de gauche," p. 424 (my translation, original emphasis).
152. The most comprehensive and focused presentation of Gorz's taxonomy of economic/heteronomous work, autonomous activities and work-for-oneself is found in *The Critique of Economic Reason*, chapter 11, "The Limits of Economic Rationality."
153. Gorz, "Allocation universelle: Version de droite, version de gauche," p. 425.
154. *Ibid.*, p. 424.
155. Gorz, "The Socialism of Tomorrow," p. 204 (original emphasis).
156. The identification of these limits is the task Gorz sets for himself in *The Critique of Economic Reason*.
157. Gorz, "A Left in Need of Redefinition," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 20.
158. Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, p. 130.
159. Gorz, "Old and New Actors," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 69.
160. Gorz, "Redefining Socialism," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, pp. 38-39.
161. Gorz, "A Left in Need of Redefinition," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 24.
162. Gorz, "Alienation, Freedom and Utopia," interview by Rainer Maischein and Martin Jander, trans. Warren L. Habib, *Telos* 70 (Winter 1986-1987), p. 141.
163. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
164. Gorz, *Misères*, p. 222.
165. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
166. Wright, "Confronting the crisis of 'fordism'" [online].
167. Gorz, *Misères*, pp. 132-133 (my translation).

168. Ibid., p. 17.
169. For Gorz's discussion of the LETSystem, see *ibid.*, pp. 165-174.
170. Ibid., p. 169 (my translation).
171. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
172. Ibid.
173. Gorz, "Disorientations," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 12.
174. Ibid.
175. Gorz, *La morale de l'histoire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), p. 176 (my translation, original emphasis).
176. Gorz, "Redefining Socialism," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 40.
177. Ibid., p. 41.
178. Gorz, "A Land of Cockayne?" p. 31.
179. Gorz, "A Left in Need of Redefinition," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 25.
180. Gorz, "Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, pp. 30-31.
181. Jean-Pierre Garnier and Louis Janover. *La pensée aveugle: Quand les intellectuels ont des visions* (Paris: Spengler, 1993), pp. 171-172.
182. Shannon, "As Tasty as Three-day old Bread" review of *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology* by André Gorz, Green Left Weekly Home Page, available [online]: <<http://www.peg.apc.org/~stan/261/261p28.html>> [accessed January 29, 1998].
183. Steve Wright, "Confronting the crisis of 'fordism'" [online].
184. "Le travail et l'homme: Débat entre Yves Clot et Dominique Méda, *Face à Face*, June 1995, available [online]: <<http://www.regards.fr/archives/95/9506/9506faf01.html>>
185. Gorz, "A Land of Cockayne?" p. 31.
186. Ibid.
187. Gorz, "Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 32.
188. Ibid., p. 33.
189. Ibid., p. 34.
190. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.

191. Gorz, "Disorientations," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 12.
192. Gorz, "A Land of Cockayne," p. 28.
193. Ibid., p. 29.
194. Gorz, "Disorientations," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, pp. 9-10.
195. Gorz, "Redefining socialism," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 43
196. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
197. Ibid.
198. Gerard Strange, "Which Path to Paradise? André Gorz, Political Ecology and the Green Movement," *Capital & Class* 59 (Summer 1996), pp. 59-60.
199. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
200. The allegation is made in Dobson's *Green Political Thought*, second edition, (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 96.
201. Gorz, "Old and New Actors," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 73.
202. Strange, "Which Path?" p. 90.
203. Gorz, Preface to *The Division of Labour*, ed. André Gorz (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1976), p. ix.
204. Gorz, *Misères*, pp. 180-181 (my translation).
205. Strange, "Which Path?" p. 92.
206. Gorz, "Shorter Hours, Same Pay," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 106.
207. Gorz, "Socialism or Eco-fascism" in *Ecology as Politics*, trans. Patsy Vigderman and Jonathan Cloud (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), p. 85.
208. Gorz, "Ecology and Freedom" chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 12 (original emphasis).
209. Gorz, "Political Ecology," chap. in *Ecology as Politics*, p. 177.
210. Ibid., p. 181.
211. Michel Bosquet, "Political Ecology," chap. in *Capitalism in Crisis and Everyday Life*, trans. John Howe (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1977), p. 191.
212. Strange, "Which Path?" p. 91. He also contrasts Lipietz's analysis of the nature of the fordist model with Gorz's but regrettably this fascinating discussion takes us too far afield from the main point. See pp. 95-97.



213. Ibid., pp. 98-99.
214. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
215. Strange "Which Path?" p. 93 (his emphasis).
216. Ibid., p. 93.
217. See for example Gorz's "Disorientations," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, pp. 6-7.
218. Sean Sayers, "Gorz on Work and Liberation," *Radical Philosophy* 58 (Summer 1991), p. 17.
219. George Ross, "Where Have All the Sartres Gone?" in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 231. New social movement scholar Herbert Kitschelt bears this out, noting that left libertarian voters in France were reluctant to give up support for the established left in the 1970s and 1980s. "La Gauche libertaire et les écologistes français," trans. by Marie-Jeanne Rossignol, *Revue Française de Science Politique* 40 (June 1990), p. 339.
220. "L'écologie: enjeu politique," *Le Monde*, Supplement to Dossiers et Documents (March 1978), p. 5
221. On these developments, see Guillaume Sainteny, "La question du pouvoir d'état chez les écologistes," in *Le Défi Écologiste*, ed. Marc Abélès. (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1993).
222. Strange, "Which Path?" p. 91.
223. Gorz, "Old and New Actors," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 72.
224. On this development see René Mouriaux, "Trade Unions, Unemployment and Regulation: 1962-1989," trans. James F. Hollifield and George Ross, in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 188.
225. René Mouriaux, *Le syndicalisme face à la crise* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1986), pp. 80-82.
226. Michel Wieviorka "La recomposition de la structure sociale," originally published in *Le Monde*, October 5, 1991 and reprinted in *Le Monde Dossiers & Documents*, June 1998, p. 1 (my translation).
227. Trentin's reservations are noted in a short book review posted on the website of the Basic Income European Network, available [online]:  
<<http://econ.ucl.ac.be/ETES/BIEN/BasicIncomeItaly/94.html>>.
228. See for example, Gorz's "Allocation universelle: Version de droite et version de gauche," pp. 420-421 and the *Critique of Economic Reason*, p. 227.
229. Gorz, "Old and New Actors," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 70.
230. Gorz, "A Land of Cockayne?" p. 28.

231. Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, p. 93.
232. Gorz, "Summary for Trade Unionists and Other Left Activists," appendix in *Critique of Economic Reason*, pp. 219-242.
233. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
234. Gorz, "La plus grande liberté possible," p. 72.
235. Gorz, "Old and New Actors," chap. in *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 71.
236. Gorz, "A Land of Cockayne?" p. 30.
237. Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, p. 92.
238. Gorz, "L'emploi du temps n'est plus le temps de l'emploi," interview by Robert Maggiori and Jean-Baptiste Marongiu, *Libération*, books supplement, September 24, 1997 (my translation).
239. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
240. Gorz, "A Land of Cockayne?" p. 31.

## Conclusion

Utopia confronts reality not with a measured assessment of the possibilities of change but with the demand for change. This is the way the world should be. It refuses to accept current definitions of the possible because it knows these to be part of the reality that it seeks to change.

Krishan Kumar  
*Utopianism* (1991)

I don't know if my perspective on liberating desires and unleashing imaginations has been the correct one, nor whether policies consonant with the orientations I have outlined will ever be implemented. To those who reject those orientations out of hand as "utopian," I say only that the role of utopia, in the sense the term was used by Ernst Bloch or Paul Ricoeur, is to give us the necessary distance from the existing state of affairs to enable us to consider what we do in light of what we could or should do.

André Gorz  
*Misères du présent, richesse du possible* (1997)

### The times they are a-changin'

For five decades, from the 1950s through the 1990s, André Gorz has wrestled with the problem of adapting a socialist project to the changing shape of contemporary industrial civilization. True to his convictions, Gorz did not build a system; his *oeuvre* has always been and remains a work in progress; it belongs as much to the present as to the past. In this sense, any summing up must be provisional. Gorz has first of all succeeded in defying conventional categorization: he has been classified, sometimes in mutually exclusive terms, as an existentialist, a Marxist, a neo-Marxist, a post-Marxist, an eco-socialist, an eco-anarchist, a post-industrial utopian, a liberal, a social democrat, and a neo-conservative, among other brands. The taxonomical difficulties are all the more acute considering that in the course of a lifetime on the left Gorz often changed his mind, as might reasonably be expected. The changing perspectives and occasional tergiversations that we have traced in the last five chapters lend Gorz's thinking, taken as a whole, an anfractuous quality. But his work has consistently entailed a serious effort to analyze and probe the emancipatory

possibilities of a world itself in flux, a world in which new economic and environmental constraints have arisen, in which new actors have appeared on the political stage, and in which new types of aspirations and demands have emerged.

Gorz might have been a little more provisional in his own conclusions at any given moment, and more forthcoming in elucidating his own intellectual transitions, as well as confronting his own contradictions. However, in his willingness to rethink past preconceptions and to challenge received wisdom on the left, without embracing the creeping Panglossianism surrounding the hegemony of early global capitalism, he has been creative and undogmatic, stimulating and provocative. And the essay form which Gorz has favoured is well suited to experimenting with ideas, trying them on for size as it were, with an inherent option to discard them once they have outlived their interest, relevance or usefulness. In the French tradition inaugurated by Montaigne's *Essais* (1580), the essay is an attempt; it is by definition tentative and unfinished.<sup>1</sup>

In his essays, Gorz probed the changing nature of social contradictions, adapting, innovating and renewing radical left thought through two distinct phases of capitalist development: the neo-capitalism of the 1950s and 1960s, marked by an historic compromise between labour and capital on the foundations of the consumer society, but also by the momentous revolt of May '68, and the subsequent crisis of the 1970s, characterized by intensified globalization, the breakdown of the fordist model and social polarization. The major modulations in Gorz's thinking over time reflect these tectonic shifts in the landscape of advanced capitalism. His theorization of the role of the new working class in the 60s and early 70s, for example, was grounded in capitalism's apparent ability to sustain a high level of material abundance for the majority of the population, while his emphasis on the prospects for the reduction of working time and the development of a sphere of autonomy outside the market is clearly informed by a new set of economic conditions in the contemporary western capitalist world, including the technological displacement of jobs.

Gorz never accounted for his own failure to anticipate the foundering of the neo-capitalism of the 60s and the retreat beginning in the mid-1970s of the welfare state under the assault of globalizing capital. In his writings in the 60s and even much of the 70s, he mistakenly assumed that social-democratic policies were a permanent feature, a structural necessity, of advanced industrial capitalism. However, from a tendency to normalize affluent capitalism in the 60s, he evolved,

against the background of economic crisis, towards a pessimistic and arguably more plausible vision of the actual and likely polarization of society into the privileged segment of the securely employed and the growing body of precarious workers excluded from many of the rewards of advanced capitalism and from participation as equal citizens. In this social portrait, the new working class of skilled technicians, which Gorz initially expected to become the majority and for which he had high hopes as a potential agent of social change driven by new qualitative needs for creative activity and autonomy, wound up a highly privileged minority which Gorz came to see as a reactionary force in its defense of the employment society.

He thus sought to draw political conclusions from what began as a crisis, announcing the end of the democratization of prosperity that characterized the three decades following the Second World War and appears to have terminated with the crystallization of a new two-tier system, the dual society, marked by ever higher unemployment and social exclusion. Faced with such dramatic changes in the conjuncture of the advanced capitalist world, the institutional left has largely clung to old formulae while seeking to manage the crisis. But at some point it has to be recognized that "the crisis" has transmuted into the prevailing state of affairs; as Gorz points out at the start of his most recent book, there is no more crisis; a new system has taken shape.<sup>2</sup> The proliferation of terms such as post-industrialism, post-fordism, post-modernism attests to a sense that something fundamental has changed and there is no road back.

In a related vein, Gorz's intellectual evolution can be fruitfully understood in relation to the vicissitudes of the labour movement in various European countries. Initially, during a period of relative labour quiescence in the 1950s, Gorz gave credence to the theory of the temporary integration of the proletariat consequent upon its obtaining a share in the benefits of imperialism; soon thereafter he drew hope for the negation of capitalism first from labour radicalism in Italy in the early 60s, then from the resurgence of labour militancy in France and throughout the West in the late 60s and early 70s. With the retreat of labour by the late 1970s into a politics of defensive corporatism in face of the intensified class struggle waged and won by capital, Gorz penned his infamous eulogy for the revolutionary potential of the working class and located the motor of change outside the workplace in the new social movements and in the inchoate figure of the non-class of non-workers excluded from and antagonistic towards the employment society as such. But

Gorz did not engage in a quest for revolutionary substitutes; rather he rejected any unitary conception of the agent of social transformation. Although he ultimately extended a hand to labour by reaffirming the central role of the trade unions in social struggles, he called for a new type of unionism that would bring together workers, in their larger capacity as citizens, with the unemployed and casually employed in a project to subvert the work-based society and pursue opportunities to create the civilization of free time that the micro-electronic revolution has rendered a realistic possibility.

In this progression, Gorz has sometimes been seen as exemplifying the history of the New Left generally, which has been divided, in an influential reading, into two separate but related phases tied to successive developments in the labour movement: the first was informed by a resurgence of labour militancy and involved a renewal of radicalism in the form of a movement beyond the politics of communism and social democracy alike; the second corresponded to a period of working class decline and was characterized by the retreat of intellectuals in particular from traditional ideas of agency and the primacy of class politics.<sup>3</sup>

In painting the history of the New Left in such broad strokes, however, there is a danger of glossing over important distinctions in the second phase, wherein, as the standard account has it, left intellectuals, confronted with what is perceived as an irremediable decline in the labour movement, beat a retreat from class politics and from received truths about the agencies of social change. At its crudest, this reading obliterates fundamental differences between those thinkers who question the preordained role of the working class and those who have abandoned any desire for change in an anti-capitalist direction. Notwithstanding the scorn Gorz elicited in more orthodox left quarters for his demotion of the working class to one among many potential constituencies for social change, he has never abandoned a libertarian left project of fighting capitalist exploitation and alienation, and pressing demands for qualitative change in everyday life in opposition to the culture of consumerism and the spectacle. In his attempt to recast the socialist project, Gorz stands apart from the defeatism and recantation that has marked a significant contingent of the French left in both its academic and institutional forms.

Reflecting some years ago on the twenty-fifth anniversary of May '68, Daniel Singer observed that the establishment had succeeded in persuading the public that “beyond the capitalist

horizon there is nothing but the gulag.”<sup>4</sup> And one of the chief instruments of persuasion was a considerable detachment of French intellectuals. In a review of a book on the drift of French intellectuals from their left moorings, the author portrays a chorus of conformism.

A delight in vacuousness is the spectre haunting postmodern times. Managerial pragmatism and the race to add one's voice to the consensus around the “Republic of the Centre” are becoming the preferred national sport of all “responsible” intellectuals. ... The intellectual *doxa* naturalizes the social order by proclaiming that the system cannot be transcended. Capitalist domination, modernized according to the standard of austerity cures and competitive deflation, is henceforth the only truly “indestructible” social vision. With so many misadventures marking the history of the twentieth century, wisdom dictates the definitive repudiation of the quest for social emancipation. *No exit*. Any who persevere are condemned to the sad fate of those “disappointed lovers of mummies” (Aragon). ... “Today in place of the committed intellectual we have intellectuals committed only to their paycheques.”<sup>5</sup>

While the portrait may be exaggeratedly grim, it is not unjustified.

Of course, there are those among more orthodox leftists who would include Gorz among the targets of this acrimonious indictment. But as this dissertation has sought to demonstrate, they do so based on negligent and tendentious readings.<sup>6</sup> In his radical rejection of the ascendance of capitalism over every facet of life, in his insistence on opposing the ubiquity of market relations and developing alternative ways of living, producing and exchanging that undermine consumerism by encouraging the self-limitation of needs, Gorz has remained a highly subversive thinker. In the 1970s, Serge Quadrupani complained of the inability of much of the left intelligentsia to imagine socialism without a model. By contrast, Gorz's early rejection of the models of actually existing socialism in the Eastern bloc and in the Third World spared him the crushing disillusion that ultimately alienated others from the idea of radical social change altogether. His work represents a singular alternative to the influential linguistic turn and the abandonment by many former New Left intellectuals of any attempt to analyze society as a whole, let alone elaborate any encompassing project of social transformation; from the perspective of the post-structuralist eschewal of totalizing discourse all such projects are dismissed as dangerously utopian.

## A self-avowed utopian

Gorz is a self-consciously utopian thinker. The utopian dimension in his thinking was present from the beginning of his journey as a left intellectual. He set the tone early on, in *La morale de l'histoire*, where he took issue with a thesis he ascribed to Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* to the effect that no matter how many times an idea is put forward it will have no issue if the conditions are not ripe for its enactment. Gorz countered persuasively that the continual dissemination of an idea is itself part of its conditions of possibility.<sup>7</sup> (In that context, he dishonourably went so far as to defend the demagoguery of left-wing leaders who lie to the masses about the rate and scope of the changes their political victory will engender because, he maintained at the time, if the opposition did not criticize the powers that be in the name of goals they know to be unfulfillable in the short term then they would never achieve power and the goals would remain permanently unfulfillable.) Gorz's reasonable argument was that critique, if rooted in positive action, in praxis, becomes an integral part of the objective conditions that render change possible. Critique cannot make everything possible, but it can push back the boundaries of the possible. He remained true to that idea. Moreover, he remained convinced of the vital importance of elaborating alternatives to the prevailing order, affirming the possibility that we can work less and live better by producing and consuming differently.

Like most utopian thinkers, Gorz was impossibly imprecise on the question of how to get there from here. As even his most sympathetic critics allow, he has been conspicuously evasive on the problem of political organization, particularly since his post '68 efforts to outline the nature of a new revolutionary party. This weakness undoubtedly speaks to the immense inherent difficulties attached to the problem of organizing effectively for social change. But it is also due in part to Gorz's own jaundiced view of organizations. While recognizing their irreplaceability as instruments of social, political and cultural change, Gorz always harboured a deep antipathy towards the intrinsic bureaucratic power-seeking dimension of political organizations. "I hate organizations," he admits, "and consider them machines in which the best people are destroyed and only those prevail whose goal is the conquest and exercise of state power."<sup>8</sup> He has generally acknowledged his own limitations with respect to the problem of political strategy, although sometimes in a backhanded way, as when he remarked in an exchange with Peter Glotz that, in his view, whether a strategy is



victorious or not is not what counts the most. “For me, politics is rarely the primary concern. What comes first is the question: what potential for liberation do current developments harbour? How does the dominant social order repress this liberation that it simultaneously renders possible?”<sup>9</sup>

Of course, his reading of the emancipatory potential inherent in current developments changed with the times. With the passing of the decades, a more chastened and frugal utopian vision emerged from Gorz's writings: chastened in what it concedes to the complexity of modernity — the impossibility of recapturing or achieving the unity of life and work, the social and the individual conceived in the original communist vision; frugal in what it concedes to the physical limits of the biosphere and the need for self-restraint. Although it differs from the ideal type of the ecotopia with its small-is-beautiful accent on decentralization and alternative technology,<sup>10</sup> it is a vision that nevertheless breaks with the utopia of progress and plenty which has dominated utopian thinking since the eighteenth century, and which, in its Marxist and social-democratic renditions, equated technological and social progress in the assumption that humanity was headed ineluctably towards a better world.

As we have seen, by the 1980s Gorz had already bleakly abjured the teleological conception of history that Marx had preserved from Hegel and reached the conclusion that the future promises nothing.

There is ... no point in wondering where we are going or in seeking to identify with laws immanent in historical development. We are not going anywhere: History has no meaning. There is nothing to be hoped from history and no reason to sacrifice anything to that idol. No longer can we give ourselves to a transcendent cause, expecting that it will repay our suffering and reward our sacrifice with interest.<sup>11</sup>

This denial of a transcendent meaning to history is consonant with the spirit of the times. It resonates with the post-structuralist questioning of metanarrative and with at least one liberal view of history as a tale of sound and fury, a succession of contingent events with no necessary coherence or ultimate significance. But whereas doubt about the direction of history can lead to radical relativism, a rejection of any overarching social project and even political nihilism, Gorz kept faith with Sartre's dictum that the problem is not to know history's objective but to give it one.<sup>12</sup>

The rejection of transcendent meaning served in Gorz's case mainly to support his abandonment of the labour metaphysic and as a tempering caveat in relation to the theory of the revolutionary subject. It did not deflect him from the pursuit of radical social change. Nor did this imply a complete repudiation of Marxism as a method of analysis. Gorz continued to value aspects of Marxism while rejecting large parts of the philosophical system.

There is no theory like Marxism for understanding the capitalist economy. At different points it is out of date or questionable, but you cannot manage without it if you want to understand the development, logic, contradictions and crisis of the capitalist world economy. Likewise the philosophical part of Marx remains fundamental: his understanding of humans as creators of themselves; his theory of alienation...; his philosophical anthropology, in which the fundamental "universal unfolding of the individual" is laid out — while political economy and economic values are bound to disappear.<sup>13</sup>

As this passage indicates, moreover, he was completely at odds with the influential post-structuralist proclamation of the death of the subject, with its grim implications for Gorz's belief in freedom as the essence of humanity, for his trust in people's ability and desire to engage deliberately in a democratic decision-making process and to shape their lives and their communities in such a way as to reduce inequality and maximize their free individual and collective development. In the utopian spirit, he harboured an unshakeable faith in the capacity of people to assert themselves as autonomous subjects.

This is reflected particularly in his conviction that, given the opportunity afforded by greater free time, people will surmount the deformations wrought by the consumer society and the welfare state, they will be inclined to engage in work-for-themselves and autonomous activities and will negotiate an agreement about the appropriate level of sufficiency. Gorz has never ceased to subscribe to the idea at the heart of Marxism that "man, when free is a natural artist."<sup>14</sup> Although Gorz has continued to stipulate that work reduction will not automatically lead to this state of affairs, he rarely raises the spectre of a Huxleyan scenario where a capitalist "leisure society" transforms people into happy robots — although in the later 70s and early 80s, when he began writing about work reduction he did occasionally warn of the dangers in leaving the organization of free time in the hands of the merchants of oblivion. But he has never sufficiently addressed the problem posed by the observation that the gains in leisure time realized in the last 20 years have

consistently failed to bring about an efflorescence of spontaneous individual creativity. On the contrary, never have there been so many passive consumers of packaged distractions. It is arguable that the hours of work are still so unduly long as to engender stultifying uses of leisure<sup>15</sup>; but given the historic reductions in working time and the fantastic commodification of leisure in the twentieth century, the contrary view must be entertained, namely that more leisure may result in more complete surrender to the siren calls of the culture industry. British writer Jeremy Seabrook issues a suggestive caveat concerning the vision put forward by Gorz and others of a civilization of free time in which people will purportedly avail themselves of the time liberated from work to reclaim and develop skills and relations that have vanished with generalized reliance on products and services delivered by market and State. Stressing the depth of the hegemony of the existing order, Seabrook remarks:

The element that is suppressed in these projections is the way in which the needs and values of industrial society work through our lives, as a profound and organic structure of belief, purpose and meaning... We are not dealing with something external, a "system," but with the way this works through living flesh and blood, leaves its impress on the very tissue and substance of our humanity, imposes itself upon the imagination and the emotions, traces itself into the lineaments of the heart and spirit.<sup>16</sup>

But from such a profound assimilation of prevailing values as Seabrook discerns there is no exit. From whence can resistance come? We will return to this dilemma below; however, as Gorz explained in an interview with Rainer Maischein and Martin Jander, he never agreed with the Marcusean view that alienation in neo-capitalism is so deep that people are no longer even conscious of it.<sup>17</sup>

There may be something of a paradox in Gorz's philosophy, whereby the desired outcome, the autonomous subject, must be presupposed as logically prior. Still, for Gorz, in keeping with the existentialist tradition, freedom is "the very tissue and substance of our humanity." The margin of personal freedom is never effaced. We are free to flee it but also to assume it. "Only a being that is free," Gorz affirms in language reminiscent of his earliest existentialist writings, "can and should become free."

Even an assembly line worker or a prisoner experiences himself as free and indeed as antithetical to that to which society would reduce him. He is not and cannot be what one has condemned him to, and this impossibility to accept such a role is his experience of freedom, which is frustrated and denied, but survives in consciousness as negation, no matter how adverse the circumstances.”<sup>18</sup>

From *The Traitor* onward, Gorz's view of the autonomous subject both as actuality and potentiality has been at once one of the most appealing and most problematic aspects of his thought. The goal of the free development of the individual has been at the core of the western philosophical tradition at least from the time of the Renaissance, when the concept found its quintessential expression in Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. With the Romantics, the archetype of the autonomous individual became the artist exercising his unique creative powers. Something of this model was incorporated into Millsian liberalism as well as into Marxism; the avowed aim in both philosophies is to create the conditions which will enhance the individual's ability to shape his or her life creatively, as the ultimate work of art. And of course, the radical and inalienable freedom of the individual is at the core of early Sartrean existentialism. The Old Left in both its communist and social-democratic guises buried the conception of the free development of the individual as the ultimate goal of socialism beneath a consuming concern with prosperity and security defined in material terms, but it resurfaced, not coincidentally at a time of relative affluence, with the New Left.

Although Gorz has always denied any notion of an intrinsic human nature, assumptions about the individual as potentially the architect of his own life through a process of creative self-development have pervaded his work from the outset, and are at the heart of his prescriptions for political action. He appears to harbour a leftist/humanist faith in the inherent dignity, creativity and perfectibility of human beings — at least as a necessary gamble. His short answer to the question of why he believes that autonomous subjects will wish to exercise their freedom constructively by honing their creative talents rather than giving rein to domineering impulses is that “If people are driven by the desire to dominate, there's no hope and nothing much to do; we'd better go fishing.”<sup>19</sup>

Without entering into a philosophical disquisition beyond the scope of this dissertation, it bears repeating that there are inescapable difficulties with Gorz's conception of the autonomous subject and particularly with his tendency, illustrated in previous chapters, to subscribe to a

romantic conception of the sovereign individual that takes on an anti-social hue which is peculiar in any theorist concerned to preserve an idea of socialism in any form. The social individual for Gorz appears to be unfree by definition: “[S]ocialisation, all socialisation, consists in hiding from ... subjects that they are the subjects of their actions...”<sup>20</sup> Is this a condition particular to capitalism? Gorz does not say. However, he does eschew, for persuasive reasons, the communist utopia in which individual and social needs are expected to coincide. But while Gorz may legitimately jettison the Marxist conception of the unity of the individual and society on the grounds of a necessary and irreducible distance between the two, his antipathy, particularly in more recent writings, toward the imposition of any external constraints on the exercise of individual autonomy — whether in the form of the social responsibility to make some contribution to community life in exchange for a citizens’ income or an injunction to refrain from certain ecologically unsound behaviours in the interest of future generations — can be seen as an ultra-libertarian position: an appeal for the liberation of the individual from society, a position that is as undialectical as collapsing the individual and society. Nor is this mitigated by Gorz’s insistence on reciprocity, the idea that one cannot want one’s own freedom without simultaneously acknowledging the freedom of others.<sup>21</sup> Such a conception can in principle point to nothing more cohesive than a collection of monads. This was clearly not Gorz’s intention, as can be understood from his insistence on the collective nature of the process of individual liberation, the centrality of voluntarism and mutual aid, and his critique of the solvent effect of the market on social ties. His goal is precisely to reconstitute cooperative relations and reestablish the dominance of society over economy.

But his fear that the individual may be subordinated to laws he does not give himself and goals he does not set himself often leads Gorz to formulations which suggest the questionable premise that individual fulfillment obtains primarily in the absence of any external constraint. This assumption has become more pronounced in Gorz’s writings since his embrace in the 1990s of the concept of an unconditional basic income and his abandonment of his previous position concerning the dialectical unity of rights and obligations. But it is also apparent in his conception of meaningful work or autonomous activity as self-determined activity; its nature and purpose is decided by the individual alone. This does not preclude cooperation, but it does make it difficult to imagine, from

Gorz's perspective, a collective endeavour in which the individual can derive genuine satisfaction in executing a task he or she has not personally planned and structured.

Whether the majority of individuals are really endowed even potentially with the resources to live the type of self-determined, self-motivated and creative lives Gorz deems worthy of human existence is, as suggested above, open to question. But, at the very least, it should be possible to imagine a philosophical position that is not as antagonistic as Gorz's to all forms of constraint or regulation without conjuring up Gorz's "Armageddon" (he uses this term), in which, in order to repress the proclivities of some individuals "an authoritarian order [must be] installed, defined and administered by an elite holding absolute power."<sup>22</sup> In its uncompromising commitment to individual self-regulation, Gorz's utopia approaches a form of libertarianism that does not mesh easily with his simultaneous valorization of the role of the State as a necessary facilitator of new social and cultural practices through its provision of a basic income that shelters people from destitution when they are excluded from or exit the employment society.

Another central aspect of Gorz's utopianism is his conviction that the civilization of free time is a concrete utopia insofar as new technology can assure the necessary material basis by eliminating crushing physical need. As we have seen, there is considerable ambivalence about the role of technology in Gorz's writings. Gorz certainly eschewed any automatic equation of technological and social progress. However, partly for fear of romanticizing the artisan era and the corresponding communist utopia, Gorz has tended implicitly to celebrate technological progress or more particularly the potential of contemporary technology to liberate people from work by ensuring that output grows even as the contribution of human labour shrinks - this despite his past insistence that capitalist technology is functional to capitalism alone, designed to optimize control over the labour process by degrading and deskilling work. At least with respect to microelectronics Gorz appears to cast this technological advance as socially neutral, unrelated to the social outcome, which can take either the oppressive form of the marginalization of superfluous labour or the form of the progressive reduction of working time for all. In this respect, Gorz assimilated the technological optimism at the heart of the classical Marxist tradition, failing to engage with the rich line of criticism, running from the English artist William Morris to the American social critic Lewis

Mumford and the French philosopher Jacques Ellul, that has called into question the paramountcy of machines in work and life.

Lewis Mumford, for example, also affirmed the promise that automation holds out for a liberation from forced toil and external slavery; the promise that life will no longer be dominated by work but that work may be integrated into a richer, fuller life; Mumford too looked forward to a time in the not unimaginable future when the institutions of the market would be revamped and production geared to need, and *paideia* (the Greek term for education conceived in the broadest holistic sense as the lifelong building of the personality) would be the main business of life; outside the domain of automation work would become an educative and creative process.<sup>23</sup> There are certain obvious similarities between Gorz's utopia and Mumford's. However, among other salient differences, Mumford probed deeper in his social analysis into the possible perils of unexamined and unrestricted technological development. While in the last quarter century Gorz welcomed automation as laying the foundation for a civilization of free time, and, while, in his efforts to identify the sphere of human activity legitimately subject to the logic of economic reason, he validated the ascendance of economic rationality in the sphere of social production, Mumford, by contrast, warned that the criteria of technical success — including multiplication, speed, profit and turnover — governing the prevailing development and invention of technology poses dangers for all organic systems — human, plant and animal.<sup>24</sup> He was critical of the Marxist tradition for imagining that the proletariat could simply take up capitalist production at the point where capitalism left off, without engaging in a social critique of machine production per se and all its entails. “Too easily,” Mumford charged, “did Marx and his followers accept the machine as an absolute: too subserviently did they believe that the replacement of craftsmanship by automation was an inescapable if not always a benign process.”<sup>25</sup> In contrast with William Morris who valorized the craft tradition, Marx's philosophy “rested on the conception of the continued expansion of the machine, a pushing forward of all those processes that had regimented and enslaved mankind, and yet out of this he expected not only a liberation from the existing dilemmas of society but a final cessation of the struggle.”<sup>26</sup> For Mumford, automation was a double-edged sword: while it indeed heralded the end of human toil and made it possible to liberate people for the exercise of the “higher functions,” it also carried the immanent danger of making humanity feel impotent to control

the operation and ends of technology itself.<sup>27</sup> Likening modern-day technological development to Goethe's fable of the Sorcerer's Apprentice, Mumford warns that "we have lost the Master Magician's spell for altering the tempo of this process, or halting it when it ceases to serve human functions and purposes..."<sup>28</sup>

This is not the place to delve into Mumford's own theory of technology;<sup>29</sup> what is contended here is not the veracity of Mumford's view but the existence of a lacuna in Gorz's. Although Gorz acknowledged that by displacing human beings from the labour process, automation, under the prevailing social arrangements, was ushering in an increasingly polarized two-tier society, he did not engage in any sustained meditation on the nature of automation itself. Gorz's response to Mumford's concern might well be that so long as automation and cybernation are confined to one limited sphere of human existence — the sphere of producing basic necessities as set out in his dualist utopia — then the danger Mumford points to does not obtain. But can production really be governed by a wholly different logic than the rest of human activity? What is the implication for the goal of human beings controlling their individual and collective destinies, of shaping the world they live in according to their felt needs, when technology acquires its own inexorable logic, when what is technically feasible is executed without much regard to the more remote moral and social consequences? Moreover, can the technology of micro-electronics developed within a capitalist framework and governed by the economic rationality of extracting the most from the least provide the basis of a just and ecologically sustainable civilization? In his writings Gorz devoted insufficient consideration to the problematic of technology, the character of a society driven by automated and computerized production and, in particular, the question of whether current high technology, while continuing to serve the ends of commodity production under capitalism, can be enlisted for the purposes of creating a society in which economic rationality is held in check. Gorz emphasizes principally the bright side of the equation: the emancipatory potential attached to the capacity of contemporary technology to enable societies to increase their productive capacity even as the need for human labour diminishes.

Notwithstanding the caution that must greet Gorz's utopia and utopian visions of all kinds, it remains that his presentation of the dualist society of free time represents a stimulating and intelligent effort to adapt and reshape utopia to suit the perceived possibilities and prospects of the



day. And this is of the utmost relevance. The dearth of utopian social thinking in our time has egregious implications. Even if Gorz is wrong that the conditions of possibility exist for what Herbert Marcuse called the “end of utopia” by means of its realization, utopia plays a fundamental role as a critical mirror, a means of illuminating what is wrong with the prevailing order of things by teasing from current realities a figure of the world as it could or ought to be. As the utopian Marxist Ernst Bloch affirmed, alienation, the conversion of human beings into things, the bureaucratization of existence, could not be perceived let alone condemned if there were no measure for its contrary in the form of an intimation of an alternative.<sup>30</sup> John Keane and John Owens have offered a similarly favourable assessment of Gorz as a utopian thinker for our time, judging that, for all the gaps and questionable claims inherent in his vision, Gorz makes an invaluable contribution in putting forward audacious political claims that underscore the failure of imagination evident in present-day political policies for dealing with social and economic problems.<sup>31</sup>

One of the historical strengths of the left was its capacity to inspire by projecting a vision of another way of being. Once the left has lost its ability to fulfill that necessary role, then the left is lost as anything but an alternative manager of the multifarious crises of capitalism. At a time when the institutional left holds parliamentary power throughout Europe, with an agenda that more explicitly than ever disavows anything but recipes to mitigate the most intolerable effects of capitalism in its current post-fordist globalized incarnation, Gorz's contributions to social thought are an indispensable corrective, a vital reminder that socialism once sought, and might yet again seek, to change the world in the direction of greater justice and greater freedom. With the demise, moreover, of actually existing socialism in Eastern Europe in the last years of the twentieth century, the infelicitous association between utopian aspirations and the failed authoritarian social experiment that was the USSR recedes, representing an opportunity for the independent left to reaffirm utopian thinking.

If posterity is to single out one aspect of Gorz's *oeuvre* as the paramount import of his contribution to contemporary social thought, it may well be his perpetuation and nurturing of the utopian tradition, especially at a time when that tradition is in eclipse on the left. As Krishan Kumar has convincingly argued, utopias do not have to be treated as though they should be realizable in

practice, in that form or to that extent; they have a multiplicity of critical functions, among which is the creation of a heightened sense of social possibilities.<sup>32</sup>

### **Gorz and the legacy of the New Left**

In his utopianism Gorz has kept faith with the spirit of the New Left. One of the distinguishing features demarcating the New Left from both the old Communist and social-democratic lefts that preceded it and the academic postmodern left that succeeded it was its insistence on encompassing change — economic, social, cultural, qualitative, global. The New Left ethos was unabashedly, unrepentantly utopian, from the Port Huron Statement in the U.S. to May '68 with its injunction to be realistic and demand the impossible, to the anti-authoritarian German student movement inspired in particular by Herbert Marcuse, perhaps the quintessential utopian thinker of the 60s, his pessimistic *One-Dimensional Man* notwithstanding. It is indeed many of the defining themes of the New Left — themes which Gorz contributed to shaping, developing and disseminating — that impart to Gorz's social thought from the 60s to the present a strong measure of continuity, which is visible even through the sometimes dramatic shifts in his thinking that we have explored in these pages. Gorz's evolving theoretical response to the economic and social developments of the later 1970s through the 1990s was itself an extension of the New Left imperative of analyzing the structural transformations of capitalism and on that basis developing new strategies for socialist praxis.

Looking back on his own work from the vantage point of the mid-1980s, Gorz remarked that at the beginning of the 1960s he arrived at the conclusion that:

...the elimination of poverty and want had become materially possible but...the capitalist growth model perpetuated them in a quasi-structural way. Unsatisfied needs and destitution were no longer due to a penury of resources and productive forces but to the capitalist model of consumption and development. Consequently, the possibilities for liberation no longer depended on continual growth but on a transformation of society, of development policies and even of our way of life.<sup>33</sup>

In spite of the economic crisis of the mid-1970s and the “end of affluence,” Gorz did not revise this conclusion. The problem of poverty, at least in the West, remained a problem of the structural

(mis)shaping of needs by the consumer society, the inability of people whose autonomy has been vitiated by indoctrination and the narrowing of existential possibilities to determine their own needs, their equation of more with better. The root cause of this situation was not simply manipulation by the dreamweavers of the advertising industry; “it was and remains the parcellization of work that mutilates and brutalizes people, destroys their sense of autonomy and renders them susceptible to manipulation as atomized individuals: as consumers.”<sup>34</sup> Alienated as producers in a system geared to limitless material growth, people sought comfort in “compensatory needs,” a phrase coined by Rudolf Bahro to designate a concept that Gorz himself had elaborated already in the early 1960s.

As Gorz rightly claims, many of the themes that were identified with ecology were already contained in the critique he advanced of the capitalist model of growth. His opposition to productivism anticipated the discourse of the Greens in France and internationally. As early on as in *Strategy for Labor* he stressed the imperative to subordinate production to human needs and he saw this imperative expressing itself in discontent and revolt within the work place. “Why live only in order to produce?” he asked rhetorically. “Why produce if the things produced and the manner in which they are produced do not produce men and a life which are ends unto themselves?”<sup>35</sup>

Since the 70s, with mounting evidence of the limits of the earth's carrying capacity and resources and the fragility of eco-systems, an unbridgeable divide has emerged between those on the left who continue to genuflect before the idol of perpetual growth and production and those for whom the growth imperative is an integral part of the problem of industrial capitalist civilization.<sup>36</sup> In spite of the important reservations raised by Gerard Strange concerning Gorz's backtracking on the issue of the limits to growth discussed in the last chapter, Gorz remained a vigorous critic of capitalist productivism and consumerism, and displayed a relatively developed sensitivity to the environmental plight, particularly in his reflections on the need for human society to recover a sense of sufficiency. As Daniel Singer observed earlier in this decade, the questions raised about growth in the 60s and 70s by a left in ferment have gained in relevance as the century's end approaches, despite the slowing of rates of growth: growth to what end, in whose benefit, for whose profit?<sup>37</sup> In continuing to ask these questions throughout the 70s, 80s, and 90s, Gorz has incarnated, perhaps more than any other living French intellectual, the legacy of the New Left.

Another preeminent New Left theme pursued by Gorz through the decades was the problem of the agency of social transformation. Questions about the historic mission of the working class and the fitness of the existing working class to carry out that mission exercised the New Left from the start. Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*, the *locus classicus* of the dilemma of agency in the 60s, adduced an impasse in the countries of advanced capitalism, a situation in which the working class had been integrated into a system capable of delivering the goods, a system which had all but abolished critical thought and with it the possibility of revolutionary consciousness. In Gianni Statera's incisive phrasing, one of the urgent questions facing the New Left was:

How are the huge walls of false consciousness to be broken? How is liberation to be achieved in a system in which the mechanisms allegedly make for the irretrievable manipulation of consciousness, the superimposition of "false" and deceiving needs, the internalization of values which are functional to the system itself? ...[O]n the one hand, the irreparably manipulated man must liberate himself in order to become capable of making revolution; on the other hand, however, the removal of repressive mechanisms seems to be necessary to make liberation possible. Stated in another way, liberation seems to be a prerequisite for revolution, but, at the same time, no liberation seems to be attainable without a previous revolutionary process.<sup>38</sup>

There is a tendency among writers on what remains of the orthodox left, as well as among many former New Leftists in the post-structuralist camp, to treat with unmeasured contempt the quest in the 1960s for agencies of social transformation, or "revolutionary subjects," in the parlance of the period. In the first case, this dismissive attitude betrays a tendency to take for granted, regardless of historical circumstances, that the working class is endowed with a special vocation, which in turn rests on a failure to question the notion of an agency inscribed in objective conditions; in the second case, it results from a complete rejection of the notion that any particular group may be more likely or able than another to effect far-reaching social change and, more fundamentally still, from an aversion to any totalizing project to transcend existing reality. The New Left's attempt to come to grips with the problem of agency, even if it often resulted in misguided or mistaken conclusions, such as the romanticization of peasant revolutions in the Third World or hope for a new working class motivated by qualitative needs, deserves to be considered with more respect. It was not frivolous — at least not from the perspective of those who may still harbour hopes for transcending existing reality; it was a necessary rethinking of an idea long taken for granted on the left, an idea

that may well have been doubtful in its origins and most certainly appeared more untenable in the early 1960s: the idea of a unitary revolutionary subject in the guise of the industrial proletariat.

From the 1950s Gorz wrestled with the problem of the potential source of radical opposition at a time in history when society no longer carried its own indictment in the form of appalling social conditions, when “the need to secure a better way of life cease[d] to call for revolutionary change.”<sup>39</sup> In *La morale de l'histoire*, Gorz was concerned to show that revolutionary aspirations had not been nullified in a world where workers' lives were being freed of crushing misery and constraint. Gorz continued to try to find fissures in what often looked and looks still to be a closed circle of consciousness. Although his faith in the potential of the working class to effect social change dimmed, his ultimate answer to the problem of agency then as now is that the will to freedom can only truly express itself when people are freed to the greatest degree from misery and constraint. This is key to Gorz's contentious assumption that under the right conditions having less heteronomous work will enable people to cultivate aspirations for greater control over their own lives and give free rein to their propensity to engage in creative autonomous activities: a taste of freedom will trigger a desire for more freedom.

Looking back upon the major shifts in Gorz's thinking about agency, it is tempting to conclude that he came full circle on this question in the five decades of his intellectual odyssey. In the 1950s Gorz moved from an existentialist to a Marxist humanist position, a transition that was reflected in a shift in his conception of agency, from his accent in *Fondements pour une morale* on the propensity to revolt among the outcasts of society to his embrace, in however heterodox a manner, of the working class. With the rise of the new social movements in the later 1970s which, like the New Left itself, registered a marked shift in the locus of the struggle for qualitative change to groups outside the traditional sphere of the labour movement, Gorz came to identify the likely source of contestation of the existing order in forces beyond the point of production. By the 1980s, he appeared to return to his earlier emphasis on the origins of the spirit of rebellion in the failure of socialization, often evident among the marginal and the excluded. This philosophical predisposition is not difficult to explain. Gorz's worldview was deeply marked by two experiences: feeling that he did not fit into the society of his childhood and adolescence and the experience of exile. His recollections of his early adulthood in exile are telling: “I was a half-Jew born in Austria who had

lost his motherland: who was neither German nor Jewish, nor anything else — who had no identity by birth, whose mother was in conflict with his father... Who was living in a third country, Switzerland, where he certainly didn't fit in.”<sup>40</sup> It was in part through these existential experiences that Gorz came to regard those individuals who have been less socialized, those in society and yet not of it, as most inclined and likely to rebel. This notion parallels in some respects that of Isaac Deutscher, who also made a compelling argument about how living on the margins of society affords a critical distance, propelling some people to rise above their time and place.<sup>41</sup> And of course, the marginals and excluded were those to whom Marcuse looked most hopefully in his generally despondent *One-Dimensional Man* as the groups most likely to escape, however involuntarily, the integrating tendencies of neo-capitalism.

Such ideas shaped Gorz's view of the revolutionary subject at the beginning of his intellectual career, and he returned to it in his mature work with his original and provocative category of the non-class of non-workers — those for whom society has increasingly little place and who, at the same time, reject the rules and expectations of the employment society. His most recent formulation of the strategy of exodus is also an expression of this idea, and relies on the diffuse energies and desires of disparate individuals and groups.

In some respects, Gorz's evolving views on the forces inclined or able to bring about social change, his eschewal of the very idea of a single group with a preordained revolutionary vocation, is consonant with a general evolution of the independent left towards a more plural conception of agency. This went hand in hand with a more diffuse conception of revolution itself; among those leftists today who still believe in the possibility and desirability of far-reaching transformation, there are few anywhere in the West who subscribe to the once dominant notion of the *grand soir*, the cataclysmic revolutionary rupture with the present order. The 1960s represented a turning point on the left as a whole in which Gramscian ideas about the war of position ultimately won out and revolutionary change began to be widely conceived, as Gorz himself envisions it, as a molecular process, a long process of social and cultural transformation in which a variety of oppositional practices contribute to reshaping consciousness. And since the 1970s there is for Gorz one cultural change in particular that must underpin any viable counterhegemonic project: the revolt against the

employment society, against an obsolescent work ethic that serves to kindle a consuming struggle for scarce jobs.

## Work

This brings us, finally, to the theme that has absorbed Gorz above all for the better part of three decades and is one of the main reasons for the renewed attention to him as a social thinker: the issue of work and its due place in contemporary society. Gorz has played a pioneering and seminal role in contemplating at great length one of the foremost problems facing advanced industrial nations and ultimately human society as a whole at the turn of the millennium: the apparent inability of the global economy to create jobs at a rate that can absorb the growing number of job seekers. As we have seen Gorz argue since the 1970s, this is resulting in a growing dualization throughout the West between those “privileged” enough to hold secure well-paid jobs and the expanding ranks of the unemployed, underemployed and casually employed. The condition Gorz depicts differs from the reserve labour army Marx identified in the nineteenth century, in that modern technology rules out a resurgence of labour intensive activity, and the promotion of growth at any cost is in any case increasingly hazardous from an environmental perspective.

Of course, the future is hard to read and Gorz has often been reproached for futurological speculation. But if time is the acid test of prophecy, time has been on Gorz's side in the last two decades. The dual society is more twain than ever, and unemployment shows no sign of redress, at least in western Europe (and, if anything, the problem is attaining ever more global proportions<sup>42</sup>). In France, beyond official unemployment statistics, it has been estimated that no less than 46.9 per cent of the active population finds itself in precarious economic and social situations to varying degrees.<sup>43</sup>

Addressing this pressing social and economic problem, Gorz took a leaf from his work in the 60s and theorized work reduction as a revolutionary reform, a reform with the potential to lead to structural transformation by redistributing work and liberating people to a greater extent than ever before from the constraints of heteronomous labour. Gorz's vision of the emancipation from work was also predicated in part on a fundamental change in his thinking about what kind of socialism might be feasible in modern society. Gorz underwent something of a sea change sometime in the

mid to late 1970s when he moved from regarding the division of labour — the root of alienation in Marxist social theory — as an historically necessary evil to be surmounted with the end of capitalism to accepting the division of labour and the concomitant alienation within work as an ineradicable feature of any complex modern society. This had vast implications for his own utopian vision. In the Marxist tradition, the transcendence of the division of labour was the route to overcoming alienation and to creating the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the polyvalent whole individual. Once this is rejected the only way to ensure that people escape narrow specialization and become well-rounded is to reduce the amount of time spent at work so that they have the time to stretch their abilities and cultivate other interests, pursuits and dimensions of their being. This is surely one key reason that work reduction has been at the crux of Gorz's thinking for the last three decades.

The portrait that Gorz has painted of the disappearance and degradation of work in contemporary capitalist society and the accompanying disaffection from work may admittedly suffer from a degree of exaggeration. Following his rejection in the early 1970s of the theory which held that new technologies were complexifying work and transforming ever larger segments of the working class into highly skilled technicians with radical potential, Gorz moved in the opposite direction, overstating the deskilling effects of new technology and the barren and unsatisfying character of most waged work. As Gorz himself acknowledges, the satisfactions people derive from work are complex and varied. But when researchers report that most people like their jobs, it is important, Gorz points out, to clarify what aspect of the job they are referring to: “The status and social identity it confers? The income it procures? The contact with others? The goals it serves? The personal faculties it develops? The respect and self-respect it brings?”<sup>44</sup> According to Jeremy Seabrook, “For most of us, the actual work we do provides little sense of function and significance. (All the research suggests that the greatest satisfactions gained at work are by means of the relationships and contact with fellow workers; our ostensible reason for our attendance there is secondary.)”<sup>45</sup> Gorz is certainly not alone in detecting a distinct shift in attitudes towards work and a weakening, among young people in particular, of the tendency to identify with a job. As he argues, “‘work’ in the sense of self-realization by the creation of ‘non-alienated objects,’ is most often an extra-curricular occupation unrelated to the work at which individuals ‘earn their living.’”<sup>46</sup>



Moreover, Gorz correctly points to the meagre number of stimulating high-tech jobs and the explosion of low-skill, unstable service sector jobs devoted to what he classifies as the reproduction tasks of servant and house work — cleaning, private security, personal nursing care, fast food, and so on. And precariousness is not limited to low-skill jobs. Highly qualified aspirants to a secure place in the knowledge economy are increasingly disappointed as stable jobs give way to contractual work. The university sector is a case in point, at least in North America where non-tenured and part-time faculty shoulder ever more of the teaching load with few of the benefits and none of the security.

Beyond these contemporary realities, there is an element of long overdue realism in concluding that industrial work cannot be emancipated in the manner envisioned by classical Marxist theory. Marx's analysis of alienated labour was fixated on the labour process at the expense of the nature and purpose of work. It is doubtful that collective control over the process of producing widgets could transform the dull and oppressive work into a creative and fulfilling experience. It may be rendered more spiritually rewarding, but as Gorz suggests it will never lose the element of compulsion, however much satisfaction may be procured by producing something necessary to society. This is true as well of many jobs in the service industry. If there is buying and selling, society may need cashiers (although they are well on the way to extinction through automation) but this work is not intrinsically interesting or creative.

But whether worker self-management could in theory eliminate alienation in the Marxist sense of the term is not the main issue for Gorz. His argument is that a technologically and economically complex society renders worker self-management chimerical. Donald Sassoon reaches a similar judgement in his comprehensive survey of a hundred years of socialism; of all the objects of socialist struggle the one which has proved the most refractory, Sassoon observes, is control over the conditions of work. "It may well be," he concludes with a nod to Gorz, "that the only way back to the Garden of Eden, towards freedom and individual autonomy, would be to eliminate work or, at least, to work as little as possible."<sup>47</sup>

A viable progressive vision for our time must encompass a political and philosophical response to the fact that the vast majority of the world's population in both developed and developing countries are not employed in stimulating work. Even in what are classified as highly

skilled jobs — technicians, research assistants, dentists — many people are engaged day in day out in standardized repetitive tasks requiring little initiative or creative thinking except within the most circumscribed limits. The ideology of work is obsolete; it is bound up with a productivist Promethean ethos that is ecologically perilous; and with the return of mass unemployment its preservation serves to impugn those who, through no fault of their own, have become superfluous to the labour force, and to silence those who might be so impudent as to express discontent with their jobs (“be thankful you have one”). It assumes and encourages a false coincidence between an individual's identity and his occupation. It rests on the questionable assumption that work in the economic sense is the essence of humanity and must remain the defining force in human lives. However, as Guy Aznar observes, the taboos surrounding the question of work seem as potent as religious dogma and the resistance to change “as intense as an old neurosis that reigns in the unconscious.”<sup>48</sup>

Today, when technology has placed the concrete possibility of working less on the horizon, the traditional left has proven, on the whole, singularly unimaginative; it has dehistoricized the definition of full employment and considered the historical aim of shorter hours only reluctantly, as a stop-gap measure to stem the tide of joblessness. The principal response to unemployment of the main political parties across the political spectrum has been to call for more training and the transformation of more activities into paid employment. There is an idea that goes largely unquestioned in contemporary society and is shared by liberals, conservatives, and social democrats: that human fulfillment lies in having a steady job for life, a job that, regardless of its intrinsic interest, occupies us for half our waking hours, defines our identity and secures us the means to buy all the goods and services we desire, and that it is normal for us to be so busy working at this job that we have neither the time nor the energy to perform simple tasks for ourselves, our loved ones and our communities. Granted, the social-democratic left has called for better protection for the unemployed and better paid McJobs with more benefits. But the voices have been few which have sought to rethink socialist attitudes towards work, even though the guiding goal of the left historically had been to liberate people from wasting the better part of their lives in wage slavery. The New Left and the ecology movements have been exceptional in their challenges to the reigning consensus. The original Marxist goal of abolishing the working class got recast in the political

theory and practice of the communist and socialist left as a glorification of work and workers, an affirmation of the Protestant equation of work and moral virtue. In the post-war period the official left in the West took on board the capitalist equation of quality of life and limitless consumption, which implied expanding earning power and thus working more rather than less.

It is in this context that Gorz's reflections and exhortations are so refreshing and stimulating. This applies to his elaboration of a typology of work (economic work, autonomous activity, work-for-oneself), his analysis of the new servant class and the dangers of commodifying new areas of activity, his discussions of basic income, and his rethinking of the role of trade unionism and the dangers of corporatism in a context of waning work. Gorz has contributed immeasurably to rethinking the premises, so long taken for granted, on which the work ethic and the employment society rest. And ultimately this fuelling of reflection and debate is precisely the role of the intellectual as Gorz himself defines it. "Intellectuals cannot do more than nourish the discussion and join in it. The insights which they take pains to mediate, will lead to political action if the pressure of events forces an immediate decision and carries the problem to extremes. If there are a sufficient number of conscious, politically active and determined people, something will happen."<sup>49</sup>

That is a big if, of course. The prospects for socialist renewal could not appear much bleaker than they do now, on the eve of the twenty-first century, when the hegemony of capitalism and the ideology of the free market are more powerful than ever before in history, and when, amid the prevailing pragmatism, utopia is, as it were, nowhere to be found. "So hard-headed and 'realist' have we become," observes Krishan Kumar, "so anxious not to be thought 'utopian,' that ... [w]e have all become converts to 'piecemeal engineering,' without bothering ourselves too much with the final shape of the structure we are so busily piecing together. The result is not surprisingly often a monstrosity, or a wilderness without meaning or purpose."<sup>50</sup> But the intellectual odyssey of André Gorz, culminating in his efforts to recast the socialist project in terms relevant to the end of our own century and the dawn of a new millennium, is a testimony to the possibility of discerning in every era trends and tendencies that glimmer with the hope of change. To borrow a leaf from W.H. Auden, in times beleaguered by negation and despair, Gorz bears an affirming flame.

## Notes

1. M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, third edition, (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 54-55.
2. Gorz, *Misères du présent, richesse du possible* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1997), p. 11.
3. This conventional interpretive scheme is presented by Ellen Meiksins Wood in "A Chronology of the New Left and its Successors, or: Who's Old-fashioned Now?" *Socialist Register* (1995), pp. 22-23 and 26-28. Meiksins Woods herself offers an alternative account of New Left history from a fairly orthodox Marxist perspective; while she does not gainsay the pertinence of the ebb and flow of labour militancy to the evolving positions of the New Left, she maintains (with respect to the British New Left specifically, but in an argument that she extrapolates to encompass the western New Left more broadly) that there is no simple correspondence between labour militancy and what she clearly regards as wholesale apostasy on the part of left intellectuals. In short, she argues that the divergence from class politics had been set in train prior to the decisive downturn in working class militancy. In her view, there was more continuity between the two phases of the New Left than is commonly argued; from the start there was a (misguided and fateful) conception of revolution as cultural transformation and a concomitant belief in the autonomy of ideological struggles and the primacy of intellectuals. And she sees this as having been especially true on the European continent.
4. Daniel Singer, "Letter from Europe: Ghosts of May," *The Nation*, May 31, 1993.
5. Michel Vakaloulis, Review of *La pensée aveugle* by Jean-Pierre Garnier and Louis Janover, *L'Homme et la Société* 109 (July-September 1993), p. 127 (my translation).
6. For a recent energetic refutation of a plethora of interpretive errors made by several of Gorz's detractors, see Finn Bowring, "Misreading Gorz," *New Left Review* 217 (May/June 1996), pp. 102-122. Adopting a thematic and non-chronological approach in his excellent defense of Gorz, Bowring tends to collapse different phases of Gorz's work, thus glossing over some of the important historical shifts in his perspective.
7. Gorz, *La morale de l'histoire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), pp. 37-38.
8. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
9. Gorz, "La plus grande liberté possible," debate with Peter Glotz and Tilman Fichter, *Les Temps Modernes* 483 (October 1986), p. 66 (my translation).
10. For a discussion of the rise of ecotopia see Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 405-414.
11. Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: an Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, trans. Michael Sonenscher (London: Pluto Press, 1982), pp. 73-74.
12. Sartre makes the remark in his "Reply to Albert Camus," *Situations*, trans. Benita Eisler (New York: Fawcett, 1966), p. 77.
13. Gorz, "Alienation, Freedom and Utopia," interview by Rainer Maischein and Martin Jander, trans. Warren L. Habib, *Telos* 70 (Winter 1986-1987), pp. 141-142.

14. This apt characterization is offered by Krishan Kumar in his discussion of the Marxist utopia in *Utopia and Anti-Utopia*, p. 56.
15. The correspondence between long hours of dull work and passive leisure time is noted by Krishan Kumar in a stimulating essay on the history, meaning and future of work: "The Social Culture of Work: Work, Employment and Unemployment as Ways of Life," *New Universities Quarterly* 34 (Winter 1979/1980), p. 17.
16. Jeremy Seabrook, *The Leisure Society* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 42.
17. Gorz, "Alienation, Freedom and Utopia," p. 145.
18. Ibid.
19. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
20. Gorz, Interview by Jeremy Tatman in *André Gorz: A Critical Introduction* by Conrad Lodziak and Jeremy Tatman. (London: Pluto Press, 1997), p. 119.
21. Gorz, "Alienation, Freedom and Utopia," p. 144.
22. Ibid.
23. See for instance, Lewis Mumford, "World Culture" in his *Interpretations and Forecasts, 1922-1972* (New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1979), pp. 455-457 and "Technics and the Future" in the same collection, pp. 287-288.
24. Mumford, "The Flowering of Plants and Men" in *Interpretations and Forecasts*.
25. Mumford, "Marx: Dialectic of Revolution" in *Interpretations and Forecasts*, p. 205.
26. Ibid., p. 206.
27. Mumford, "Technics and the Future," pp. 287-288.
28. Mumford, *The Pentagon of Power*, vol.2 of *The Myth of the Machine* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970), p. 180.
29. See the aforementioned work for one of his most comprehensive late treatments of the subject.
30. Ernst Bloch, *A Philosophy of the Future*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).
31. John Keane and John Owens, *After Full Employment* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), p. 170.
32. Krishan Kumar, *Utopianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 95-99.
33. Gorz, "La plus grande liberté possible," p. 66 (my translation).
34. Ibid., p. 67 (my translation).

35. Gorz, *Strategy for Labor*, trans. Martin A. Nicolaus and Victoria Ortiz (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 102.
36. For an extended discussion of the fateful failure of the majority of the left to take seriously the concerns of radical ecology, see Tim Luke, "Radical Ecology and the Crisis of Political Economy," *Telos* 46 (Winter 1980-1981), pp. 97-101..
37. Daniel Singer, "Letter from Europe: Ghosts of May," *The Nation*, May 31, 1993.
38. Gianni Statera, *Death of a Utopia: The Development and Decline of Student Movements in Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 187-188.
39. Gorz, "Unions and Politics," chap. in *Socialism and Revolution*, trans. Norman Denny (New York: Anchor Books, 1973), p. 83.
40. Gorz, Interview with Jeremy Tatman, p. 117.
41. Deutscher makes this observation in an attempt to explain the "non-Jewish Jew," the tradition of Jewish heretics. As Jews living on the borderlines of various civilizations, Deutscher argued, figures such as Marx, Trotsky and Freud were encouraged to "conceive reality as being dynamic not static" and to "comprehend more clearly the great movement and the great contradictoriness of nature and society." *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*, ed. Tamara Deutscher (London: Merlin Press, 1981), p. 35.
42. See Richard Barnet, "The End of Jobs," *Harper's*, September 1993.
43. Cited by Valérie Devillechabrolle from a study conducted by the Centre d'étude des revenus, "Près de 50% des actifs en situation fragile," *Le Monde*, February 26, 1994.
44. Gorz, Unpublished interview with the author, January 7, 1998.
45. Seabrook, *The Leisure Society*, p.5.
46. Gorz, "The Crisis of Work," in his *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1994), p. 57.
47. Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*. (London: Fontana, 1996), p. 758.
48. Guy Aznar, *Travailler Moins Pour Travailler Tous*, with a preface by André Gorz (Paris: Syros, 1993), p. 5.
49. Gorz, "Alienation, Freedom and Utopia," p. 152.
50. Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia*, p. 423.

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