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**“Liberal Democracy as a Kuhnian Paradigm: Applying a Model Confronted by
Irreconcilable Accumulated Anomaly as a Normative Prescription
for the Organisation of Global Society”**

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Political Science

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Public Policy and Public Administration) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

April 2001

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ABSTRACT

Liberal Democracy as a Kuhnian Paradigm: Applying a Model Confronted by Irreconcilable Accumulated Anomaly as a Normative Prescription for the Organisation of Global Society

Richard Bisailon

Thomas S. Kuhn has argued in "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" that progress in the natural sciences is not cumulatively incremental, but occurs in leaps following extended developmental periods that are governed by certain theoretical world views that limit and define understanding within any specific discipline in the sciences. Kuhn argues that these "paradigms" impose a certain organisational order that permits scientists to go about the work of explaining the operations of physical reality. The paradigm will continue in place until such time as it can no longer solve the "puzzles" associated with that discipline. The present thesis of this work is that Kuhn's model can be extended to the social sciences in such a way as to admit liberal democracy to qualify as a paradigm in social and political theory. The argument maintains that the problems of economic and social inequality under liberal democracy are threatening its continued role as a paradigm at the same time, after the failure of socialism, that it is being considered the only acceptable model for the organisation of advanced societies. The argument demonstrates how most social and political theorists are bound within the presumptions of liberalism in seeking solutions to the problems confronting the model. An examination of the similarities and differences between social and scientific revolutions is conducted. The thesis concludes by arguing that only those theorists whose arguments originate outside of liberalism, specifically those socialist theorists who retain the concept of class conflict, can offer a potential new paradigm that can solve the problems that have plagued all previous models up to and including liberal democracy.

Acknowledgements and Dedication

I wish to acknowledge the assistance and support that has enabled me to complete this work. Amongst those academic mentors, friends and colleagues who have given selflessly of their time, energy and sage advice, I must thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Reeta Tremblay who instinctively knew which directions to explore and sources to examine. Her constant support and uncompromising standards have done much to improve and polish the finished work. Dr. Everett Price has done much to help me improve my writing and to instil a love and respect for those Canadian authors both within the field of Political Science and generally who have opened my eyes to the distinct nature of Canadian political culture and identity. I owe him a profound gratitude for his wisdom and his valued friendship. Dr. Daniel Salée introduced me to the literature of citizenship and identity politics and helped me to bring these subjects back to class politics. His high level of scholarship sets a standard for all who are privileged to work with him. Dr. Brooke Jeffrey, graduate program director and valued member of my thesis committee engaged my critique of liberalism and pointed out further directions for the argument. What value may be found on the following pages is to a great degree due to the ministrations of these fine scholars; what flaws remain are my own.

I dedicate the work itself with the greatest love, admiration and respect to my true and constant partner, Joanne Bobby. Her unwavering belief and confidence in my own abilities gave strength when at my lowest ebb and tenacity in the face of adversity. Her intuitive understanding of the operation of hegemony within the very fabric of society is as profound as her love for friends and family; I have yet to see the limits of either. Whatever contribution this work may, in some small way, make to the unending struggle for economic and social justice is in no small way due to her delightfully practical political analysis. Few people see social reality with as clear an eye. Thank you my beloved.

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Chapter 1

Introduction - Thesis and Abstract

With the fall of the Soviet Union, and the declared defeat of communism, liberal democracy has presumed to become the successful model for human society. It has, in fact, been acknowledged the reigning paradigm of advanced social organisation, and any evaluation of the model, as such, must regard the whole system. The original Marxist criticism and those of subsequent social theorists remain a valid indictment of the excesses and shortcomings of free market capitalism; the political economy of liberal democracy: Similarly, many contemporary social movements have added to traditional class arguments, and their preoccupation with the *economic* inequities associated with the model, by including a criticism of liberalism's inability to satisfy demands for *social* equity, and the model is now challenged by the politics of identity, as well as by class.

Notwithstanding liberal democracy's apparent victory by default over socialism, and its acceptance as the prevailing social model, the increasing criticism associated with the underlying assumptions of liberalism, its capitalist economy and its democratic foundations show it to be far more threatened from within than it ever was from without. In its moment of victory, the model seems increasingly unable to hold as an example of a successful social paradigm. Social paradigms, unlike scientific ones, are never entirely defeated and the criticisms levelled against liberal democracy include many from a previous conservative model as well as those introduced above. Further, social models are less frequently displaced by subsequent criticism than they are tempered by it, and liberal democracy has demonstrated an elastic resiliency in the face of its critics. However, the unresolved and endemic problems of class inequality combined with more contemporary demands for social equality demonstrate that liberal democracy is a failing paradigm, structurally and ideologically unable to respond to the economic and social demands placed upon it in a

post-modern reality. It cannot respond, is unable to adapt and will increasingly crumble from within until displaced by a different model.

In arguing the thesis, we must first establish the parameters by which we will measure the success of liberalism as a paradigm. In so doing, we will adopt a Kuhnian model¹ that establishes certain criteria for the adoption, continuance and displacement of *scientific* paradigms and argue for their extension to the creation and acceptance of *social* paradigms. Further, having established the common points with Kuhn's model for scientific revolutions, we must also clearly identify those areas where the model will not hold. An extensive critical review of prior attempts at applying the Kuhnian model to the social sciences will be conducted. From those criticisms, it will be shown that the contemporary understanding and application of the term "paradigm" - again, in the sense that Kuhn intended it to be used - within the social sciences is seriously flawed. It will be argued that the revised model proposed here will demonstrate a superior understanding of Kuhn's model, insofar as the model can be extended to the single sub-discipline of political science within the greater range of the social sciences. As noted above, the contemporary understanding of social paradigms is far more fluid and forgiving of the foregoing models and never displaces them completely. Similarly, adapting to ongoing criticism rarely conflicts so totally with the premise of the paradigm as to demand its outright rejection. Yet, this compatibility between competing "paradigms" is inconsistent with Kuhn's model and forms part of the basis upon which we propose a new understanding of the model within the discipline of political science. In consideration of this proposed new standing for liberal democracy as a theoretical paradigm, we must examine the criticisms of liberal democracy from two important points of view. First, we must identify the specific target of the criticism within the structure and application of liberal democracy as a social model. Second, we must assign those

¹ Kuhn, Thomas S., "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions", Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996 (1962).

criticisms to positions either *external* to the model - be they prior, ongoing or subsequent to the establishment of liberal democracy as the prevailing paradigm - or *internal* to the social philosophy itself; for adherents to social paradigms are far more able to criticise from within than are those of scientific ones, though their criticisms are always enshrined within the presumptions of the model itself. Finally, in light of all the criticisms of liberal democracy, we must give a fair evaluation of the model's ability to respond to them, *in its present form*, before concluding that the model is no longer pertinent as a social paradigm. If the thesis holds, we may then consider the form of some alternative model. Given that social paradigms rarely show the radical breaks with the past that many scientific revolutions demonstrate, we might well expect that any alternative model would integrate, and respond to, both the criticisms of the previous paradigm as well as incorporating its strengths. But, in order to satisfy the criteria of being, in fact, a *new* paradigm, the proposed alternative must not continue to rest upon the pure principles of liberalism. Some new synthesis, or invention must serve as a foundation to the new paradigm in order to genuinely claim to be a revolution, again, in the Kuhnian sense.

The methodology proposed demands that we identify the targets of the criticisms levelled against the model as well as the sources from which they emanate. The first step is necessary because any evaluation of liberal democracy as a paradigm must wrestle with two important questions. First, is the political economy of free market capitalism - at least in its present form - inseparable from, and therefore integral to, liberal democracy as a social paradigm? Second, are the increasing criticisms levelled against the democratic process, especially within advanced liberal democracies, a valid indictment of the model itself, or of its application? Simply put: can democratic reform effectively respond to the major criticisms of the model and ensure the continuance of the paradigm? Ultimately, the most telling evaluation of the model will be made by those criticisms that are levelled against the premises of liberalism itself. If serious shortcomings and inadequacies are observed in the

basic ideological foundations of liberalism *per se*, then we may have valid grounds for establishing the greater thesis, and pronouncing liberal democracy to be a genuinely failed paradigm. This does not mean that the model must respond to all criticisms, only those that are genuinely associated with the establishment and continuance of a stable, functioning society. All social systems have their critics, the ultimate measure of any social paradigm must be the success of its exemplars. And liberal democracy has been remarkably successful as a social model in the past. What is argued here is that it is becoming less successful than it has been, and that the criticisms are so basic to the system that Liberal democracy now demonstrates all of the markings of a failing paradigm.

The sources of the criticisms must also be identified. If we do conclude that the current paradigm has failed, a genuine successor must demonstrate itself to be structurally and theoretically subsequent to all the previous models. A revived conservatism or strict application of socialism cannot constitute a genuinely *new* model. The former has previously failed, the latter has never completely succeeded; yet, both provide valid criticisms of the current model. Similarly, much of the politics of identity has arisen from the ideological left, but interior to the philosophy of liberal democracy itself. Indeed, many of the most powerful and significant movements associated with social identity have grown out of liberal democracies themselves, and it cannot be denied that it has been the very structure and premise of liberalism that has permitted these movements to flourish. Identity politics has demonstrated itself to be both a valid criticism, and a product of, liberal democracy itself. In response to criticism, proponents of liberalism have attempted to modify and improve the model. Some of these attempts from within, however, have proposed solutions that go to the

very premise of liberalism², and the question must be asked whether these proposed modifications do not actually point the model into a new direction, from which a different social paradigm may well be the result.

Here lies the ultimate difficulty in establishing the thesis: the edges of social paradigms are far softer than those between the scientific ones as argued by Kuhn. We may well discover that, having proclaimed liberal democracy a failed paradigm, all of the alternatives considered are so indebted to the previous model as to arguably be just variations on the theme. Our examination of much of the current literature - be it from within or without - will reveal that many of the solutions proposed are either aimed at reforming the current model, or seeking an acceptable location between all of the ideological alternatives that will satisfy the criticisms of the prevailing model. Reform cannot produce a *new* model, accommodation may well respond to criticism but remain within the ideological confines of liberalism. Notwithstanding, new social paradigms do incorporate the criticisms of previous and competing models, but the crux of the matter will be determined by the presence of a new theoretical premise; one different from liberalism and its critics, yet a cumulative synthesis of them all.

Nothing further can be said of the argument itself, or of the problems associated with it, without better understanding the terms employed. Our first obligation is to turn to a definition of social paradigms themselves and establish those conditions under which they arise, flourish and decline. We have chosen as a structural template the model of scientific

² In an example that we will return to later in the text, consider the recent proposition by Will Kymlicka that certain differential collective rights for cultural minorities are compatible with the premise of liberal democracy. Are we to judge this proposition as coming from within the model, and, if so, a qualification of the basic premise of individualism and equality or are we to assign the argument to an earlier, conservative tradition and, hence, exterior and previous to the model. See Kymlicka, Will, "Multicultural Citizenship", New York, Oxford UP, 1995.

revolutions and paradigm shift proposed by Thomas Kuhn, and it is to a consideration of his pivotal work, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" and of its application to our proposed thesis on liberal democracy as a social paradigm that we now must turn.

Chapter 2

Thomas S. Kuhn's model for Scientific Paradigms and its Application to Liberal Democracy as a Social Philosophy: Employing the Critical Literature to Build a New Model.

In his seminal work, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions", Thomas S. Kuhn has argued that scientific development is held within the parameters of specific world views, or "paradigms". Within each division in the scientific community, a paradigm will reign until it becomes increasingly unable to solve the problems associated with that specific area of inquiry. Kuhn's paradigms are effectively monolithic within each sub-discipline and may demonstrate an interesting dichotomous tendency: successive and superior paradigms can extend their influence into other, adjacent disciplines at the same time as scientific inquiry fragments into ever finer specialisation. This all encompassing world view provides a certain organising function in that it standardises the "puzzles"³ and their accepted proofs or solutions. This sets order out of the chaos of competing explanations for the operations of nature until such time as a cumulative series of anomalies show the paradigm increasingly unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for these phenomena. Anomaly alone is insufficient grounds for the rejection of a paradigm. There must be a series of consistent problems that undermine the basic presumptions of the paradigm. "To be accepted as a paradigm, a theory must seem better than its competitors, but it need not, and in fact never does, explain all the facts with which it can be confronted."⁴ What paradigms do is set a standardised series of permissible questions and accepted methodologies for the solution of same. This becomes the process of what Kuhn calls "normal science" and establishes - to adopt a term Kuhn himself offered in his later work as one better than "paradigm"-

³ Kuhn employs the term "puzzles", and the semantic hair splitting that has circumscribed the discussion on the "problems" or "puzzles" normal to inquiry in any chosen discipline will be dealt with later in the argument.

⁴ Op. Cit., Kuhn, pp. 17 - 18.

the parameters of the “disciplinary matrix.”⁵ This matrix is very much like an accepted map of the theoretical territory of the discipline itself.

The social sciences rapidly appropriated Kuhn’s model for the structure of scientific paradigms and revolutions. The application of the model has most usually been towards different schools of social theory. Hence, Marxism and the theory of class struggle and domination was located within the paradigm of Conflict Theory; Auguste Comte’s view that society progresses to ever higher stages of development is housed under the paradigm of Positivism. From Comte’s Positivism, it is but a small leap to the conception of society as an evolving structure, one evolving always for the better in Herbert Spencer’s view, and framed within the paradigm of Social Darwinism. An organic view of society as inextricably connected values and institutions became enshrined under the paradigm of Structural Functionalism, Simmel, Mead and Cooley who demonstrate a preoccupation with relations between individual members of society or of its sub-groups, might be assembled under the paradigm of Symbolic Interactionism, and so on. The logical extension of Kuhn’s model to theories on social interaction was a predictable response by social scientists. Further, given the multivalent ecumenism - the *acceptance* of diverse and competing theories explaining social phenomena - proposed by Talcott Parsons “general theory of action” in the decade previous to Kuhn’s groundbreaking work, it was in no way surprising that *competing* theories came to be viewed less as right or wrong than differing in perspective - a perspective framed, defined and *limited* by its paradigm. It is this view of *competing* paradigms within the social sciences that has been the subject of much criticism, and forms the basis of our argument that liberal democracy, *per se*, better qualifies for the appellation “paradigm” in the sense intended by Kuhn. Further, our model provides a response to the

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 182. In response to certain criticisms and as a way of qualifying his use of the term “paradigm”, Kuhn in his 1969 postscript to the original 1962 work, states: “I suggest ‘disciplinary matrix’: ‘disciplinary’ because it refers to the common possession of the practitioners of a particular discipline; ‘matrix’ because it is composed of ordered elements of various sorts, each requiring further specification.”

critics of the current use of the term in the social sciences. Admittedly, Kuhn himself seemed undecided as to the existence or acceptance of paradigms in this field, noting that "...it remains an open question what parts of social science have yet acquired such paradigms at all. History suggests that the road to a firm research consensus is extraordinarily arduous."⁶

The model proposed here is at once more dominant, and more clearly located than the ones usual to the application of Kuhn's model to social theory, and in some ways better demonstrates the monolithic consensus that Kuhn demanded of his paradigms. What is being argued here is that Liberal Democracy, as a social philosophy, in fact provides the underlying *theoretical* basis for the organisation of western society. Its values and premises are so embedded in the normative presumptions of our political culture as to provide a "cognitive map"⁷ for all that occurs within society. A similar proposition has already been offered by Sheldon S. Wollin⁸, but here we extend the range of the paradigmatic assumption. As the dominant paradigm in the first world, it becomes the normative prescription for admission and membership for all developing states in an increasingly global reality. The normative presumption that the model may well be an improvement upon those authoritarian regimes that it displaces may be valid. Such an evaluation is less than pertinent here, as we are arguing that Liberal Democracy is itself an increasingly flawed model; one arguably superior to those found in the third world, but increasingly inadequate to the demands of those western societies from which it has emerged.

If Liberal Democracy provides the *theoretical* basis for the organisation of advanced societies, then - as a theory - it must provide a superior understanding for the operations of

⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

⁷ The adoption of the term from Parsons, and its application in a similar analogy is indebted to Andrew C. Janos, in "Politics and Paradigms", Stamford, Stamford UP, 1986, p. 144.

⁸ Wollin, Sheldon S., "Paradigms and Political Theories", in Gutting, Gary, ed., "Paradigms and Revolutions: Appraisals and Applications of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science", University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1980.

society than that provided by competing models. This theoretical assumption is both descriptive and normative at the same time - advanced societies are *described* as demonstrating certain freedoms associated with the premise of liberalism, are organised democratically and supported by a capitalist economy; while admission to the global club of civilised states presumes the *normative* adherence to the standards of liberal democracy. This western model has moved, most evidently during the period subsequent to the fall of the soviet empire, from being the way *some* advanced societies are organised to the way *all* advanced societies *must* be organised. As with all paradigms, any questioning of the model is tantamount to heresy.

The apparent dichotomy between a normative and a descriptive presumption is evident within Kuhn's own argument and has been the subject of criticism. The essence of the criticism is that, having *described* the scientific process in the fashion that he has chosen, Kuhn has effectively made a *normative* prescription that this is how science should be conducted.

"Kuhn, then, is read as a moralist, and criticised for advocating the wrong things. Nor is this an altogether implausible reading. Being neither epistemologist nor sociologist Kuhn can and does allow himself the luxury of being both normative and descriptive simultaneously."⁹

In defence of Kuhn, it is this process of paradigmatic reinforcement that makes a particular world view so difficult to break out of in the first place. In proposing a paradigm for the explanation of scientific exploration, why should Kuhn depart from the very model he is proposing in framing his argument? The simple act of proposing a "paradigm" for scientific inquiry becomes normative by the suggestion that the model is, in fact, a paradigm. Kuhn's argument must be seen as audacious because the very paradigms he proposes are so powerfully omnipresent within a discipline as to make the reigning one, at least, nigh on invisible to most of the practitioners arranged under its aegis. Here we can see both how

⁹ Barnes, Barry, "T. S. Kuhn and Social Science", New York, Columbia UP, 1982, pp. 59 - 60.

Liberal Democracy can impose *and* maintain itself as a dominant model for social organisation and yet be so difficult to see as an actual *theory explaining* social organisation. It describes and explains advanced society and the corresponding relations between individuals and groups in terms of the premises of liberalism, organised along democratic lines and supported by capitalist modes of production and then presumes that any society not demonstrating these characteristics is not advanced. As an example of a genuinely Kuhnian paradigm, Liberal Democracy is far more appropriate than the examples of competing social theories offered earlier in this argument; true paradigms don't compete, save but under certain specific circumstances, they dominate and exclude all others until displaced. Sheldon S. Wollin, who subscribes to the rising dominance of Behaviourism amongst political paradigms in the social sciences, has clearly identified the difference between the perception of paradigm shift amongst political scientists and Kuhn's intended view.

"Most political scientists tend to assume that the decision to change paradigms is analogous to a fact-finding proceeding in which, *per curiam*, scientists review new "facts" and on the basis of logic, evidence and experiment solemnly decide that the old theory has been superseded, by a "higher" form of explanation. In Kuhn's description, a decision between paradigms appears more like an adversary proceeding, more competitive than deliberative. What is at issue are new cognitive and normative standards, not new facts."¹⁰

Perhaps as important as providing an understanding of the genuine antithesis between the dominant and contending paradigms intended by Kuhn, Wollin gives us an insight into the nature of competing paradigms themselves. Both the cognitive and normative aspects of true paradigms are the genuine differences between the old and the new.

To a great degree, the confusion over the exact meaning and application of the term "paradigm" is due to Kuhn's own lack of precision in using the term. "Even a sympathetic critic (Masterman, 1970) suggests that Kuhn uses the term in at least twenty-one different ways, but she also notes that the various usages fall into three main categories: metaphysical,

¹⁰ Op. Cit., Wollin, pp. 172 - 173

sociological and construct paradigms.”¹¹ The divisions in Kuhn’s usage, if not the specific appellation employed by Masterman, is further admitted by Eckberg and Hill who argue that the multiplicity of competing “paradigms” in the social sciences demonstrate that most theorists have not understood (or found a genuine application of) the larger concept of the metaphysical or “metaparadigm”. It is at this level that the current argument offers liberal democracy as an over-riding metaparadigm for western social organisation. The criticism of the current understanding amongst social scientists has been severe.

“[A] paradigm refers to that thing which allows scientists to go about solving the puzzles they continually generate. When used by sociologists, however, the term comes most often to mean no more than a general theoretical perspective, or even, as we shall see, a collection of elements from several more or less distinct perspectives. As such, the paradigms spoken of by sociologists are nebulous, shifting entities, indicating whatever one wishes them to indicate, and are limited only by the theorist’s imagination.”¹²

The current understanding and application of the term “paradigm” within the social sciences is flawed on a number of fronts. First, notwithstanding the multiplicity of contending paradigms, the adherents to any one theoretical point of view often claim an application of their model that transcends disciplines within the social sciences. This is contrary to Kuhn’s model where specific paradigms are hegemonic within a sub-discipline; may touch upon and affect adjacent areas of inquiry, but ultimately reside within a specific sub-discipline. Second, and subsequent to the above, a genuine metaparadigm cannot be subject to competition - save at periods of crisis or paradigm shift - within the sub-discipline. The current usage is at once too wide spread in its application and insufficiently dominant within any one area.

One social theorist, Robert W. Friedrichs, has adopted the Kuhnian model and tangentially approached an understanding of the genuine nature of the paradigm and its

¹¹ Eckberg, Douglas Lee, and Hill, JR., Lester, “The Paradigm Concept and Sociology: A Critical Review”, in *Ibid.*, p. 118. The authors quote Masterman, Margret, “The Nature of a Paradigm”, in Lakatos, Imre, and Musgrave, Allan, eds., “Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge”, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 59 - 90.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 122.

dominance within areas of the science. His error is in not understanding that paradigms may well reign supreme within a sub-discipline but may not transcend the borders into the entire science itself.

“Friedrichs’ basic contention is that in sociology there are two orders of paradigm. On one level are those paradigms which Friedrichs sees as much like those in natural science. Two of these are primary: (1) the system, or consensus paradigm (Friedrichs, 1970:25) and (2) the most popular contender, the conflict paradigm (Friedrichs, 1970:45). This type of paradigm is supposed to correspond to “the fundamental image that a discipline has of its subject matter” (Friedrichs, 1970:55, emphasis removed).”¹³

Here, we are arguing that liberal democracy is *the* paradigm within the *sub-discipline* of social and political theory within political science. No attempt is made at suggesting that it is the paradigm underlying political or social science as a whole; such a pretension would be both absurd and contrary to a genuine understanding of Kuhn’s model. Friedrichs is correct in identifying the requirement for a genuinely dominant paradigm; albeit within a discipline and not the science. He was further correct in arguing that the paradigm must be confronted with a “conflict paradigm”; one that stands outside the theoretical presumptions of the dominant paradigm and in opposition to it. Kuhn, however, maintains that there are only two conditions under which a competing paradigm may arise: in a pre-paradigmatic state where no dominant paradigm has ever reigned, or when the dominant paradigm is in such a state of crisis that it is no longer able to satisfactorily explain away cumulative anomaly. Of these two conditions, the former can be dealt with here. The latter condition, being critical to the current thesis, can only be addressed after examining the conditions that prevail when a paradigm is in crisis and must examine those activities normal to the application of the paradigm, and those hostile to it; those that demonstrate it to be in crisis.

¹³ Ibid., p. 123, the authors quote: Friedrich, Robert W., “A Sociology of Sociology”, New York, Free Press, 1970.

Kuhn notes, of the pre-paradigmatic state, that “In the absence of a paradigm, or some candidate for a paradigm, all of the facts that could possibly pertain to the development of a given science are likely to seem equally relevant.”¹⁴ Given the diversity of competing “paradigms” in the social sciences, this condition could be seen as prevailing at this time. In fact, some social scientists have argued that the science is, in fact, in a pre-paradigmatic state. Their error lies in the presumption that a paradigm must transcend the disciplines and dominate the science, this we have shown, is an inaccurate interpretation of the Kuhnian model. Eckberg and Hill demonstrate that some sociologists, notably R. Serge Denisov *et al* (1974) and Andrew Effrat (1972) argue against a true paradigm in sociology and for the science to be in a pre-paradigmatic state. Here, we should return briefly to the dichotomous nature of paradigms introduced earlier. Notwithstanding the fact that sociology remains a discipline within the larger understanding of social science itself, the breadth of the discipline and its fragmentation into sub-specialisation increasingly precludes the development of a paradigm in the sense argued by Kuhn. There may well be candidates for a Kuhnian paradigm within the sub-disciplines of sociology, there is less likelihood that such a “one right myth” will apply across sociology itself. To return to the original analogy to the natural sciences:

“Paradigms pertain to fields like the study of heat, optics, mechanics, etc.; *there are not and cannot be* paradigms of physics or chemistry. In other words, paradigms are not discipline wide but sub-disciplinary. Their span is likely to be coterminous with that of specialities: conversely, specialities will be paradigm-bonded social systems (Martins, 1972:19, emphasis added).”¹⁵

The social sciences are not in a pre-paradigmatic state. The multiplicity of proposed paradigms amply demonstrates this. Further, if our thesis holds, then liberal democracy

¹⁴Op. Cit., Kuhn, p. 15.

¹⁵Op. Cit., Eckberg and Hill, in Gutting, p. 130. The authors quote Martins, Herminio, “The Kuhnian ‘revolution’ and its implications for sociology”, in Nossiter, T. J., Hanson, A. H., and Rokkan, Stein, eds., “Imagination and Precision in the Social Sciences”, London, Faber and Faber, 1972, pp. 13 - 58.

would be seen as only the present paradigm in western political and social theory, not the first and we premise, not the last. If the greater thesis holds as well, then liberal democracy may be seen as the first genuinely pan-global paradigm for advanced social organisation. Under these circumstances alone could we argue that, prior to a genuinely global social reality, we were in a truly pre-paradigmatic state. The misconceptions under the contemporary understanding come from the consistent mis-application and misunderstanding of the term “paradigm” in the sense Kuhn intended. Many social scientists are looking for paradigms where none can ever be; across the social sciences themselves. Even our proposed paradigm of liberal democracy must reside under the specialisation of social and political theory itself and not across the wider discipline of political science *per se*. That it may be so specifically located does not, however, imply that the impact of its influence is not, nor may not become, universally applied.

**Extending the Analogy: Kuhn’s Concepts of “Normal” and
“Extraordinary” Science and their Relationship to Criticism Internal
and External to the Liberal Democratic Paradigm.**

Kuhn differentiates between the kind of activities conducted within a paradigm and those that occur during the period of transition. The former he dubs “normal science” and it tends, by its nature, to confirm the current paradigm.

“Normal science, the activity in which most scientists inevitably spend most of their time, is predicated on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like. Much of the success of the enterprise derives from the community’s willingness to defend that assumption, if necessary at considerable cost.”¹⁶

It is the task of normal science to solve those “puzzles” that are *normal to* and permissible within the reigning paradigm. Kuhn argues that the paradigm not only determines which problems are legitimate under the model, but also the manner in which they may be solved; both content and methodology are prescribed. This is analogous to the work of social

¹⁶ Ibid., Kuhn, p. 5.

theorists conducted from *within* the liberal democratic paradigm. To offer an example: universal suffrage is a “puzzle” *normal to* liberalism; it does not challenge the model, it only seeks to regularise its application. Class conflict, on the other hand, is foreign to the premises of liberal individualism and competition; liberalism permits conflicting interests but denies conflicting classes. This latter example attacks the paradigm from without and is incompatible with it.

Kuhn’s paradigm dictates content, because “normal” science may only acknowledge those problems *normal to* the model. All anomalous observations and phenomena are denied recognition. However, as no paradigm can ever demonstrate a perfect understanding - be it of the natural world, or of social phenomena - even the rigidly controlled process of “normal” science will accumulate anomalous observations over time. When the existing paradigm is confronted with a growing number of unexplainable phenomena; of increasing problems with the model rather than “puzzles” that it can solve, the paradigm is driven into crisis. It is only in this crisis state that the process of “extraordinary” science arises and competition for a new paradigm arises.

“When...an anomaly comes to seem more than just another puzzle of normal science, the transition to crisis and to extraordinary science has begun. The anomaly itself now comes to be more generally recognised as such by the profession. More and more attention is devoted to it by more and more of the profession’s eminent men. If it still continues to resist, and it usually does not, many of them may come to view its resolution as *the* subject matter of the discipline. For them the field will no longer look quite the same as it had earlier.”¹⁷

Crisis arises from repeated and consistent anomaly; a new paradigm emerges from its resolution. This does not imply that all of the problems associated with the old paradigm will be immediately solved by the new. Further, the new paradigm will come with problems of its own, and generate a whole new field of “normal” science.

Normal science, therefore, is conducted from within the theoretical presumptions of the model. Extraordinary science arises when normal science repeatedly fails when confronted

¹⁷ Ibid., and in passim, pp. 82 -83.

with problems that cannot be dealt with within the theoretical structure of the paradigm. Initial anomaly will be bent, twisted and pushed into whatever form normal science may require to make it fit within the prevailing paradigm. As noted in the preceding quote from Kuhn, many anomalies will *appear* to submit; both normal science and the strength of the paradigm will more often than not prevail. Those anomalies that cannot be made to fit, will often be denied. The paradigm will not grant legitimacy or recognition to anything hostile to its theoretical presumptions. Being effectively total in its world view, it is blind to unexplainable anomaly until such time as the cumulative inability of the paradigm to explain empirical reality so compromises the model as to leave it open to genuine competition by other models that *better* explain the problems. These competing proto-paradigms arise out of the practice of extraordinary science.

What marks the difference between extraordinary science and normal science is the breaking down of the theoretical presumptions of the reigning paradigm *and* the methodological procedures associated with “puzzle” solving. The former initiates the process of re-aligning the world view, while the latter permits a radically different approach to the process of solving the problems that have accrued. To extend Kuhn’s concepts of normal and extraordinary science to our proposed model of liberal democracy, we need to identify those “puzzles” and solutions that have arisen from the model itself, and constituted the equivalent of normal science conducted within the paradigm of liberal democracy, and those that have arisen as consequence of cumulative and persistent anomalies - problems unsolved and insoluble under the theoretical presumptions of the reigning model - and constitutive of the extraordinary science from which a new paradigm may develop.

We must turn briefly to the conflict between Kuhn’s view of scientific progress as a series of developmental stages framed within certain theoretical assumptions or paradigms and broken by periodic revolutions and those views arguing an incremental and cumulative scientific progress as put forward by theorists such as Karl Popper. The importance of this

debate lies less in the argued differences between two models of scientific progress than in the positions from which the debate takes place. Aant Elzinga has described the differing points of view as:

“the manifestation of a controversy between sociological and epistemological (rationalist) accounts of the growth of knowledge, at bottom a conflict between romantic and enlightenment (technocratic) images of science. The one emphasises tradition and personal acculturation as well as radical breaks in tradition and perception/cognition; the other focuses ...on the stepwise evolution and amelioration of objective knowledge.”¹⁸

Kuhn’s argument for the role and nature of paradigms in scientific development sits squarely upon the premise of individual and group acculturation; of the hegemonic practice of paradigmatic indoctrination for all legitimately acknowledged practitioners of science assembled under the aegis of the paradigm. Practitioners do not view themselves as conducting what Kuhn would call “normal” science because they are generally unaware that they are labouring and bound within the paradigm. Their appraisal of their own and other’s contributions to the field will naturally reflect a cumulative and progressive point-of-view. Only those who have experienced repeated and persistent problems; a series of empirical anomalies, will begin to see their way past the boundaries of the dominant paradigm, break the theoretical and methodological rules and proceed to the process of extraordinary science. It is precisely when the gap between “what should be” and “what is” widens into a chasm that we see the greatest differences between so called “normal” science and “extraordinary” science.

“In the domain of what Kuhn has called “normal science” we would expect theory-driven discovery to predominate. In the case of “revolutionary science”, data-driven discovery, especially when the data are difficult to reconcile with existing theoretical formulations, might be expected to play a larger role.”¹⁹

By way of extending our analogy, Kuhn’s model shows us why so much of our history of social theory during the reign of liberal democracy has been preoccupied and compatible

¹⁸ In Passim, Elzinga, Aant, “The Growth of Science: Romantic and Technocratic Images”, in Ganelius, Tord, ed., “Progress in Science and its Social Conditions: Proceedings of a Nobel Symposium”, Willowdale, Ontario, Pergamon Press, 1986, p. 40.

¹⁹ Simon, Herbert A., “Understanding the Processes of Science: The Psychology of Scientific Discovery”, in *Ibid.*, p. 166.

with the paradigm: they have originated within and continued to confirm the theoretical premises of liberalism, thereby extending the model through the process of “normal” science. Only those social theorists whose work has either questioned some basic theoretical premise of liberalism - such as Marx - or those who have questioned the methodology by which the paradigm has sought to maintain its hegemony - such as Gramsci - have in any way begun to break free of the paradigm and initiate the process of “extraordinary” science. Further, and by way of example, theorising the role of a minimal state as the arbiter of competing interests is completely normal to the premise of liberal democracy. Arguing that the role of the state is to effectively organise the interests of the hegemonic fraction of society, to the extent that divisions between the working classes should be encouraged as a means of ensuring continued hegemony, as did Nicos Poulantzas, is heretical to liberal democracy, could never be afforded recognition under the paradigm, and will continue to reside outside of the model unless or until the reigning model is displaced. These latter examples developed when social theorists observed an increasing gap between that which liberal democracy promised and that which it delivered; when the “puzzles” associated with refining and extending the paradigm became overshadowed by the problems made manifest by an increasing social and economic inequity under the model.

Having invoked, in passing, some of the social theorists and initiated some discussion on how they may reside either within or without the theoretical boundaries of liberal democracy, we must now consider one of the most important components of Kuhn’s model of scientific discovery and establish its relationship with our proposed model of liberal democracy as a social paradigm. Kuhn’s scientific community is comprised of those practitioners who, having been initiated and indoctrinated under the tutelage of the paradigm, are preoccupied with the confirmation and extension of the model, and from whom the proponents of a new paradigm must arise when the existing paradigm is no longer equal to theorising solutions to problems that accumulate. To further extend our analogy, we must

identify the contemporary community of social and political theorists and the targets of their criticism, then we must decide whether their theoretical position places them within or without the model. Only thus can we establish the thesis that the paradigm is in peril of collapse, and consider the theoretical framework that any competing model must demonstrate in providing a superior solution to the cumulative problems facing the old paradigm.

**The Community of Practitioners: Theory from Without and Within and
the Methodology of Paradigmatic Continuance.**

Social science differs from natural science in that the greater society is the ultimate laboratory for the “proof” of the theory. Thus, both theorists and the greater society as a whole constitute the genuine practitioners of the craft. Given that almost all of those who labour under the paradigm are conductors of “normal” science in a daily sense and are genuinely unaware of the paradigm itself, it may well be presumed that almost all of society and many social theorists are oblivious to, or subliminally take for granted, the parameters of the paradigm under which they operate. As the society is, in fact, the laboratory wherein the normal science of the paradigm is conducted, by analogy, only those “puzzles” normal to the paradigm will be acknowledged as legitimate social experiments and only those methodologies appropriate to the continuance of the paradigm will be prescribed.

“As the acknowledged arbiter of what constitutes significant scientific activity a paradigm guides the community in its choice of problems; the community, in turn, has as its task the solution of the puzzles set by the paradigm. Scientific progress consists in fulfilling the promise of the paradigm.”²⁰

²⁰ Op. Cit., Wollin, in Gutting, p. 167.

And, as to the social paradigm itself:

“My proposal is that we conceive of political society itself as a paradigm of an operative kind. From this viewpoint society would be envisaged as a coherent whole in the sense of its customary political practices, institutions, laws, structures of authority and citizenship, and operative beliefs being organised and interrelated. A politically organised society contains definite institutional arrangements, certain widely shared ideas regarding the location and use of political power, certain expectations about how authority ought to treat the members of society and about the claims that organised society can rightly make upon its members.”²¹

As introduced previously, Wollin has arrived at a similar conclusion regarding the paradigmatic nature of political society and its structure, albeit, he has not extended the argument to consider the paradigmatic aspirations of liberal democracy on a global scale. Yet, the assumptions he makes continue to hold in the larger application and, I argue, are perhaps most evident in the way liberal democratic normative standards have become part of the prescription for economic reform through institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Another extension that can be made from Wollin’s argument concerns the *methodology* that the paradigm employs in guiding the normal science conducted by the community.

The process wherein the experiment of liberal democracy is conducted, is through the political acculturation of society itself. This is the methodology which guides all “puzzle” solving that is deemed permissible and legitimate within the paradigm. As such, all members of the society arranged under the paradigm and most social theorists will be pre-conditioned to working within the strictures of the model. It is in this fashion that the paradigm both works through its “puzzles” and maintains its hegemony. In conducting a review of the contemporary literature, we must look at those who work within, straddle and reject the paradigm. Some theorists, such as John Rawls, openly and comfortably reside within the paradigm and respond to its critics from within the limits of liberalism. Others may acknowledge the paradigm but continue to borrow from either earlier models or

²¹ Ibid., p. 183.

contemporary alternatives seeking to respond to the problems that accrue, turning them instead into “puzzles” normal to the paradigm. Such diverse authors such as George Grant, Benjamin Barber and Will Kymlicka have all invoked a renewed communitarian preoccupation out of the ashes of an organic conservatism as a potential cure for some of the problems that have arisen from unbridled liberalism. Still others, following the tradition of Marx, have continued to theorise solutions from a location outside of the liberal democratic paradigm, insisting that the model itself is flawed and that its problems will remain unsolved until displaced. The authors of the left who continue to work predominantly outside the model must be considered as a species somewhat in decline; we offer Ellen Meiksins Wood as an example, along with James Laxer. Some, in a dispirited state of ideological bewilderment that has descended upon the left since the fall of the Soviet Union, have tried to bridge the remaining strengths of the paradigm with communitarian concerns shared by both conservatism and socialism along with some kind of democratic equivalency acknowledging the struggle of diverse social movements, among these we will list Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe as well as Charles Taylor. Some have addressed the issues of capitalist economy and/or post-modern identity seeking some reconciliation with the model in circumstances radically different than those that saw the model of liberal democracy arise, here we might consider authors - composite or otherwise - such as J. K. Gibson-Graham or Susan Strange. In seeking to understand both the nature of paradigm shift - social revolution as opposed to scientific ones - as well as those conditions which prevail while the paradigm still holds in the face of challenge, we must consider Barrington Moore JR..

Having suggested an extended, and admittedly selective, list of contemporary social theorists, we must give some structure to how we will proceed from this point. As a way of concluding our argument for the extension of Kuhn’s model to our own thesis, and as a way of linking to the theoretical arguments alluded to above, we will give some consideration to those conditions that prevail at the time of paradigm shift generally, and at times of social

revolution under our proposed analogy. Only after considering the change state at the interface between two social paradigms will we examine some of the current social theory and continue our argument for the projected demise of liberal democracy as a social paradigm.

Cumulative Unresolved Anomaly: Crisis State, Paradigm Shift and Social Revolution; Kuhn versus Moore

One of the few places that Thomas Kuhn makes direct analogy between the social and natural sciences is in the area of paradigm shift and social revolution. We have previously noted how a paradigm will prevail until such time as it is faced with repeated irreconcilable anomaly; a state where the normal puzzles are overshadowed by accumulated unresolved problems. Kuhn argues that this state in the sciences is analogous to political revolution.

“Why should a change of paradigm be called a revolution? In the face of the vast and essential differences between political and scientific development, what parallelism can justify the metaphor that finds revolutions in both?

One aspect of the parallelism must already be apparent. Political revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, often restricted to a segment of the political community, that existing institutions have ceased adequately to meet the problems posed by an environment that they have in part created. In much the same way, scientific revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, again often restricted to a narrow section of the scientific community, that an existing paradigm has ceased to function adequately in the exploration of an aspect of nature to which that paradigm itself had previously led the way. In both political and scientific development the sense of malfunction that can lead to crisis is prerequisite to revolution.”²²

Our review of the current literature may well reveal a “sense of malfunction that can lead to crisis”, but many of the anomalies associated with liberal democracy have been present for at least half the period of its dominance. Specifically, Marx’ critique has been, amongst many other things, a valid and unresolved indictment of the social effects of unbridled free market capitalism for over one hundred and fifty years, yet the failed experiment of communism and occasional dalliance with fascism aside, there has been no political revolution against liberal democracy. Further, in addition to the irreconcilable economic inequities under the

²² Op. Cit., Kuhn, p. 92.

paradigm, more recent struggles under the politics of identity have not attained genuine social equity for those aligned under the various movements. Why, given increased pressure on the paradigm has social revolution not occurred?

We must turn here to an extended examination of the phenomenon of revolution and social acceptance of the norm, or obedience, as directed by Barrington Moore JR.. In "Injustice: The Social Bases for Obedience and Revolt", Moore begins by asking not why we revolt, but why - under circumstances of extreme duress or social deprivation - we do not. Having observed that some societies have continued peacefully for extended periods under social conditions far more restrictive and exploitive than those in other societies that have resulted in revolution, Moore notes that neither the threshold of revolt nor the conditions that produce it are absolute. Notwithstanding the evident validity of Moore's initial observation, some critics are not prepared to accept the implied statement that a state of obedience is the genuine reciprocal of a state of revolution.

"The subject Moore has tried to consider is too amorphous to be treated without clearer limits and more sharply defined categories. Consider the terms in the subtitle, "obedience" and "revolt". They refer to quite different sorts of phenomena. Revolts, like wars come in a bewildering variety, but they do have certain structural similarities. Obedience, on the other hand, does not refer to a class of events at all. Like peace, it is a condition with a common negative characteristic (the absence of revolt or war) but without a common structure. Together, obedience and war do not represent two categories or classes of events, but refer to all human history."²³

Sheehan has evidently missed the point. In the absence of any relatively clear universal threshold; of any particular state or level of social inequality, what circumstances precipitate social revolution? The issue is not about reciprocal states of being, rather the understanding that the movement from one state to the other is not apparently predicated upon objective or absolute conditions but upon subjective ones. It is not Moore's intention to suggest that some soft moral relativism guides a society's decision to acquiesce in one circumstance and revolt in another. There are certain consistent conditions where revolt

²³ Sheehan, James J., "Barrington Moore on Obedience and Revolt", in "Theory and Society", 9 (1980), p. 732.

occurs, notwithstanding the level of human misery or dissatisfaction where actual revolt ignites. These are predicated upon some widely perceived violation of the accepted social norms. Societies break into a revolutionary state not because some objective threshold of inequality has been suddenly transcended, but because some group or groups within the social structure finds that their accepted rights and privileges within the existing social structure have been violated or are becoming increasingly threatened. Inequality or duress that is perceived as respecting the norm is accepted. Only when the accepted order is violated do societies break out into revolt.

"To overcome the moral authority of suffering and oppression means to persuade oneself and others that it is time to change the social contract... the main process of cultural transformation amounts to an understanding of the prevailing system of beliefs that confers legitimacy, or at least naturalness, and some degree of correspondence with ordinary expectations, upon the existing social order."²⁴

Moore argues for a subjective re-alignment within society that in many ways parallels the change state experienced by Kuhn's community of practitioners. Having been indoctrinated by and accepting the paradigm under which they labour and their relative positions within the disciplinary matrix, as well as the methodology permitted under the model, the community will flourish until such time as the cumulative anomalies - irreconcilable problems - demonstrate that the prevailing paradigm is no longer equal to the task of explaining objective reality. Further, a successful revolutionary alternative must solve the circumstances that brought about the oppression or suffering in the first place ; it must correct the perceived imbalance or "right the wrong". To do this the revolutionary alternative must morally condemn the order, or fraction thereof, that produced the injustice that sits at the heart of the social issue. Further, some social opportunity must present itself to act upon the perceived injustice.

²⁴ Moore JR., Barrington, "Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt", White Plains, New York, M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1978, in passim, p. 81 - 82.

“In what circumstances are tendencies favouring resistance to oppression generated within societies? According to Moore, the signs to look for are, first, a discovery and rejection of unhappiness leading to a willingness to act against its causes, second, socio-political conditions favouring such action. Each major form of social order provides tests by which its legitimacy claims may be assessed.”²⁵

Compare this last with Kuhn’s model which demands that the paradigm establish the standards against which evaluations are made. Moore’s social model remains stable until there has been some perceived violation of the established order, notwithstanding whatever social inequality may be built into the system itself. In either case, the paradigm holds until there has been some observed breach of the prescribed order of things. Kuhn’s new paradigm, like Moore’s social revolution, must “right the wrong”, it must provide some solution to those anomalies that brought about the crisis and decline of the prior paradigm. Further, like social revolutions and the new social order that they bring, Kuhn’s new paradigm is not without new “puzzles”, it only sets a new theoretical basis for the solution of the series of accumulated anomalies that beset the old model.

Moore’s case study illustrates how the initial circumstances that precipitated the revolution give way to new social challenges. He traces the German workers’ movement from 1848 to the beginning of the first world war in 1914. He examines how, in each succeeding period, there were social cleavages that ran along the lines of perceived injustice and violations of the accepted social order. He successfully identifies the issues, the responses of the working class and the failures that resulted from incomplete or short sighted responses. Sheehan’s summary of Moore is among the best.

“In 1848, most workers did not act politically and most of those who did had no desire to take over the state. By 1914, the number of politically active workers had grown immensely (although still a minority), but their frustrations and hostility were usually offset by patriotism and a devotion to private values and interests. For this reason, the Social Democratic leadership “with its cautious policies and occasional outburst of rhetorical anger” was “reasonably representative” of its constituency (217). Moore concludes his treatment of the prewar working class with one of the strongest chapters in the book, a comparison of miners and metal workers in the Ruhr. He shows how the miner’s traditions, social relationships, and institutional life enabled them to articulate and act upon their grievances in ways the more docile and unorganised metal workers could not emulate.”²⁶

²⁵ Smith, Dennis, “Barrington Moore Jr. A Critical Appraisal”, Armonk, New York, M. E. Sharpe, 1983, 138 - 139.

²⁶ Op. Cit., Sheehan, p. 729. Sheehan directly quotes Moore and cites the page number within his text.

Sheehan's last words are representative of the attitude towards the work generally expressed by most of Moore's critics: they alternately damn or praise him within the same critique. Most agree that this central section of "*Injustice*" demonstrates Moore at his best, and it is here that he provides the strongest proof for some of the most important aspects of his thesis. He convincingly demonstrates how the wholesale perception of social injustice alone - generally perceived as an inappropriate inequality of either or both *economic* and *social* condition - is not enough to effect revolution; socio-political conditions must be either present or produced in order to effect the change. His analysis is sophisticated, and he arrives at an understanding of the nature of the working classes - of the term 'proletariat' - that is superior to that of classic Marxism. First, Moore has transcended the usual accusation of economic reductionism that is levelled against the Marxists by illustrating that the nature of the dissatisfaction of the working classes was predicated upon issues of social recognition and respect as much upon economic inequality. In fact, as he has suggested in his opening arguments, oppression and inequality alone are insufficient grounds for social revolution, there must be some generally agreed upon and widely perceived violation of the essential 'rightness' of the inequality. Further, his examination of the difference in the reaction to social conditions by the miners and the metalworkers in the Ruhr shows that even the working classes that Marx himself was familiar with were far from monolithic in their interests and attitudes. Perhaps one of the strongest contributions "*Injustice*" has made to the literature of the left is its refinement of the concepts of class, class struggle and the causality involved in active social revolt. Moore's workers cannot be seen as constituting an appropriate "community of practitioners" in the sense that Kuhn employs for his scientific community. It would perhaps be more accurate to see their social leadership as being more akin to Kuhn's understanding. We can accept within that category those social theorists who were politically active in the time periods immediately prior, and during different phases of

the social transition illustrated by Moore's case study. Kuhn's community may well be divided by the crisis state and its questioning of the paradigm. Some will cross over to the new paradigm, others will staunchly stand by the old way of seeing. Moore's case study shows another potential outcome that Kuhn does not address: betrayal by the new leadership. Further, two other issues raised by Moore are difficult to locate within Kuhn's model for paradigmatic change. First, Moore, in addressing some of the moral issues leading to social choices, examines historical determinism in the light of free will and concludes that, while certain outcomes are to a degree predetermined, the choice between a number of potential outcomes can be influenced by choice. Kuhn never goes beyond a cursory examination of the change state where the community almost instinctively adopts the potential new paradigm that - amongst a number of candidates - *best* solves the crisis state that brought about the demise of the old paradigm. In a sense, Kuhn's model is far more deterministic than Moore's. Second, the final section of Moore's case analysis, that dedicated to an examination of the post-World War I rise of Nazism is somewhat problematic, insofar as he employs it as a preamble to his discussion of an inherent human morality. Again, his critics find that his preoccupation with social forces and political opportunity blinds him to socio-cultural factors. Specifically, regarding the decline and ultimate destruction of the far left of the German socialist movement and the ultimate betrayal and sacrifice of the hard line socialist leaders, Moore has been accused of underestimating the importance of anti-Semitism as a factor

" Moore has little if anything to say about the extent to which the leadership of the radical left was identified by an important segment of the German public as both Jewish and subversive of German national interests and aspirations. Rosa Luxemburg, the Spartacist leader, was a Polish Jew. The three successive leaders of the left regimes in Bavaria, Kurt Eisner, Ernst Toller, and Emanuel Levine (who was also Russian) were Jewish.The importance of anti-Semitism as an element in isolating and discrediting the radical left simply cannot be underestimated."²⁷

²⁷ Rubenstein, Richard L., "Moral Outrage as False Consciousness", in "Theory and Society", 9, (1980), p. 747.

It is the transition from Moore's analysis of the socio-political aspects of the rise of and the divisions within the German worker's movement to an examination of 'morality' in the chapters entitled "The suppression of Historical Alternatives" and "Repressive Aspects of Moral Outrage: The Nazi Example", that is problematic for many of Moore's critics. Indeed, Sheehan has observed that "The long historical essay which comprises Part II and the first two chapters of Part III are substantially more interesting than the theoretical discussions which frame them."²⁸

Moore raises two questions: first, "is the concept of moral responsibility in any way compatible with a belief in historical determinism" and second, "how were the repressive aspects of Nazism related to a reaction against the moral authority that preceded it"? In the former question, Moore suggests that historical determinism is never absolute and that certain choices, while historically determined, always exist at any nexus in time. He then proceeds to return to his case study and examine the alternatives that were present in the years between the end of the first World War and the final domination of German society by the Nazi regime. Moore believes that moral responsibility must be considered in light of the real alternatives that exist in any situation. Moore locates responsibility for those choices within the leadership and by so doing he both invites criticism of his preoccupation with the importance of intellectual and ideological factors in the causality of events and leaves us uninformed as to the moral responsibility of the masses themselves; for surely some accountability must fall upon the followers as well as the leaders.

"For Moore, however, it was the intellectuals who through the ages with varying degrees of success furnished the German workers with revolutionary perspectives, strategies, alternatives, value systems, and the certainty of happiness under a future just social order. He argues that the struggle of the workers for a new social order would have been inconceivable but for the influence of dissenting intellectuals; and, by extension, that "the existence of the SPD and even the unions is hard to imagine without the contribution of the intellectuals."²⁹

²⁸ Op. Cit., Sheehan, p. 730.

²⁹ Tenefelde, Klaus, "German Workers and the Incapacity for Revolution", in "Theory and Society", 9, (1980), p. 741.

An examination of alternatives must always remain an exercise in supposition, and Moore's chapter on "The Suppression Of Historical Alternatives" while demonstrating the circumstances wherein different choices could have conceivably resulted in avoiding the rise of a Nazi regime, does not convince us that the responsibility that does accrue from the choices that were made has been effectively assigned.

Wollin also addresses the issue of leadership when considering whether the failure of certain societies is due to the inherent problems of the paradigm itself or those who work within it. The question here is whether the paradigm has been genuinely confronted with anomaly or have the powers that be simply failed in "puzzle" solving?

"It is ...possible to think of a ...situation which would build on Kuhn's remark that some puzzles impugn the ability of the scientist rather than the paradigm (p. 80). The relative failure of liberal administrations to deal effectively with the condition of the American Negro, at least not until very recently, can be treated as an instance of Kuhn's point. The fault lay not with the democratic paradigm but with its "scientists"; the most embarrassing aspect of the Negro protest movement was its reminder that some of the basic elements of the paradigm, such as the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, were more consistent with the demands of the protestants than with the actions of the guardians of the paradigm."³⁰

While the argument may be valid, Wollin's conclusions are in error. In the example cited, the shortcoming does arise from the paradigmatic assumptions of liberalism, though less those of democracy. In fact, the extension of political equality to all members of the society is simply the logical extension of liberal democracy. It is true that the original framers of both the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence did not conceive of anyone not white and male as being the full beneficiaries of the freedoms and privileges guaranteed there under, but the full extension of these rights is but a normal consequence of individual equality under liberalism. The true failure of the paradigm is related to liberalism's inability to in any way acknowledge struggle for economic and social equity as well as political. Further, liberal democracy's inability to respond to identity movements in general will prove to be an even more serious indictment of the model in the wider application that we have

³⁰ Op. Cit. and in passim, Wollin, in Gutting, p. 185.

argued under our current thesis. The normative application of what remains a western social model to non-western societies will prove itself to be increasingly problematic in the face of a renewed movement for the assertion of local, non-western cultural identities. This specific argument will be returned to later in the review of the contemporary literature, but given Wollin's use of the example that he has chosen, we must comment here. The argument itself is valid and compliments Moore's understanding of both the importance of political and social leadership and the responsibility incumbent upon that leadership in making choices when transforming to a new paradigm and working within the one that currently prevails. Both authors reflect Kuhn's understanding that not all failures are directly attributable to the inability of the paradigm to deal with anomaly. Some scientists are better than others at "puzzle solving". Similarly, some leaders are more effective and imaginative in seeking solutions to social problems within the current prevailing model.

Kuhn's practitioners, though occasionally obdurate and sceptical in the face of repeated irreconcilable anomaly, are ultimately rational in the recognition for the need for a new paradigm. Admittedly, there are always a few from the old community who are too inflexible and hide-bound to acknowledge and work with the new paradigm, but their number dwindles rapidly as the old paradigm loses its ability to attract, convince and indoctrinate new members. A consistent rationality amongst political and social leaders may not be so easily presumed. Moore, states the factors that determine choice as follows:

"But the choice is not between anarchy and irrational obedience. It is between more and less rational forms of authority. There is nothing wrong in obeying an authority that pursues humane objectives and has special competence or skill relevant for the pursuit of these objectives. There are troubles enough for humanity without creating unnecessarily apocalyptic dilemmas. In the end, the choice between right or left is less meaningful than between more and less rational forms of authority."³¹

There is the obvious problem inherent in any theory that presumes an absolute *a priori* human morality at the same time as employing a *subjective* rationality for moral choice.

³¹ Op. Cit., Moore, p. 433.

And in separating the moral from the political, some of Moore's critics have noted the dilemma.

"But is it possible, I wonder, to define "rational authority" in an unpolitical way? Would not the definition of rationality always turn on the question of rationality for whom? And, it is, of course, precisely the "for whom" question that underlies the distinction between left and right."³²

Given the above, is it any surprise that Moore's next chapter deals with the issue of "Moral Relativism"?

Moore initially opens his discussion on moral relativism by noting that there are two aspects, the evaluative and the descriptive, and that they need not necessarily go together. There is no essential connection between the belief that there can be no agreed upon common morality - given diversity - or a purely objective observation of that diversity itself. He argues that modern attitudes of moral relativism are, in fact, a reaction against previous waves of moral absolutism; against a moral chauvinism that is inoperable in a post-modern world. Out of this Moore asks the following: "What observable agreement, if any, exists on the principles of social justice."³³ He argues fairly that any agreement would best be found among the dominated classes rather than the dominant. Here, Moore returns to the issue of rational authority and argues that the definition of rational can be made to transcend pure subjectivity by defining as rational:

"(A)ny form of activity for which a given state of knowledge there are good reasons to suppose that it will diminish human suffering or contribute to human happiness without making other human beings miserable. The last stipulation is necessary in order to exclude predatory forms of authority, which are often quite rational from the standpoint of those who profit from them, but not at all rational from the standpoint of the victims."³⁴

As a grand, sweeping statement, Moore's argument makes sense, but how do we evaluate those activities that may well, in the short run, demand suffering before salvation? And how do we evaluate the reactions of society to those conditions if, in that short run, they entail a revolt against the conventional moral authority? Further, any attack on the prevailing

³² Op. Cit., Sheehan, p. 731.

³³ Op. Cit., Moore, p. 437.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 440.

hegemony will be perceived as irrational just as any revolutionary action must, by Moore's own argument attack the rationality of the prevailing moral authority.

"Moore's observations on injustice, moral outrage, and pan-human morality may make sense when one considers the social arrangements governing human beings who regard themselves as belonging to the same community. They have little relevance to the ever-growing phenomenon of individuals and groups who have lost all sense of belonging to the same community and hence of being bound by minimal moral obligations to each other."³⁵

There is no simple way to reduce rationality to an *a priori* underlying human morality even if we presume some form of "Pareto optimal" kind of social reciprocity as Moore does, or a concept of 'justice as fairness' as argued by John Rawls. Were Moore to approach his thesis from the point of underlying human *rights* as opposed to *morality*, he would have had perhaps a greater success in seeking some essential and objective understanding. As it is, compounding morality, rationality, political and social context - all fraught with issues of subjectivity - produces less theoretical cohesion than chaos and introduces more rather than less uncertainty into Moore's argument just towards the end of the work where the reader would expect the argument to cohere under the proof of the case study. Moore's discussion of predatory authority again raises the issue of subjectivity and underscores another problem with the argument as a whole. For how are we to separate benign from predatory rule; short term sacrifice from long term improvement in the lot of man, without the benefit of historical hindsight? If each regime seeks to sustain or establish its legitimacy by claiming - be it falsely or truly - to act to the greater good of that society or humanity as a whole, how, but through retrospect, are we to determine the genuine rationality or morality of its rule? The backsliding of humanity into a number of less than progressive social paradigms illustrates another difference between Kuhn's scientific model and social reality.

Unlike the retrograde social experiments that Moore has chosen to illustrate part of his argument, Kuhn's scientific paradigms demonstrate a consistent Positivism absent in social history. Certainly, any challenge of the presumptions of the prevailing

³⁵ Op. Cit. Rubenstein, p. 749.

scientific paradigm would be perceived as initially “irrational”, but cumulative empirical observation becomes the ultimate arbiter of accuracy in paradigmatic understanding of reality. No such purely empirical basis of reality is ever present in human society, and if there were, no perfect objective perception of reality - natural or social - is shared between individuals or social groups. Kuhn, to his credit, seems aware of this, and after establishing that there must be a certain agreed upon exchange of values and understandings about reality within the community of practitioners, he admits that such universal agreement breaks down between groups themselves.

“To the extent, of course, that individuals belong to the same group and thus share education, language experience and culture, we have good reason to suppose that their sensations are the same. How else are we to understand the fulness of their communication and the communality of their behavioural responses to their environment? They must see things, process stimuli, in much the same ways. But where the differentiation and specialisation of groups begins, we have no similar evidence for the immutability of sensation. Mere parochialism, I suspect, makes us suppose that the route from stimuli to sensation is the same for the members of all groups.”³⁶

Here Kuhn has illustrated one of the important differences between a highly integrated, albeit often physically extended, scientific community and society in the larger sense. Even in the most homogeneous societies perception and experience are far more fragmented and inconsistent than in a highly defined intellectual community. The scientific community shares a clearer understanding and interpretation of the paradigm; share a private language of communication that must be standardised; share and reflect common, paradigmatically imposed values and, as a result, demonstrate a far keener perception of anomaly. Further, cumulative anomaly incrementally impedes further progress. Kuhn understands what Wollin does not: that the perception of reality changes from group to group, identity to identity. Paradigm failure or failed “puzzle” solving aside; there can be no objective measure of subjective reality.

³⁶ Op. Cit., Kuhn, p. 193.

If subjective perception of an unjust change of fortune by a major social group or groups marks the point where a social paradigm may be threatened, there must be something further that will permit the members of that society to believe that the injustice can be corrected in order to move social unrest into the stage of crisis that will force revolution and paradigm shift. Even where group inequality within a society is profound, nothing will move until the cyclically established order is disturbed, and the group or groups become further disadvantaged within the scheme of things.

“One of the fundamental techniques by which the members of a group, whether an entire culture or a specialists’ sub-community within it, learn to see the same things when confronted with the same stimuli is by being shown examples of situations that their predecessors in the group have already learned to see as like each other and different from other sorts of situations.”³⁷

If things remain the way they always have been before, then expectations are limited and defined by prior experience. If, however, change for the worse has occurred and the group’s expectation is that a return to the norm is not forthcoming, then further inequity will become unbearable and upheaval will result. It is the affront of a change in the established order that ignites the situation.

Moore returns to the question of the origins of moral outrage in the ultimate chapter of the work, save but a short epilogue on social reciprocity. In “Inevitability and the sense of injustice”, Moore argues that in order to save the sanity of the human psyche, that which is inevitable is perceived, even argued, as legitimate.

“People are evidently inclined to grant legitimacy to anything that is or seems inevitable no matter how painful it may be. Otherwise the pain might be intolerable. The conquest of this sense of inevitability is essential to the development of politically effective moral outrage. For this to happen, people must perceive and define their situation as the consequence of human injustice: a situation that they need not, cannot, and ought not to endure.”³⁸

He reiterates that this, alone, is not enough to guarantee social revolution but that no revolution can occur without it. Moore’s comments on the necessity of overthrowing the feeling of inevitability continue to strike a chord, there are echoes of that argument in more

³⁷ Ibid., p. 193 - 194.

³⁸ Op. Cit., Moore, p. 458.

contemporary works such as Linda McQuaig's "The Cult of Impotence". Similarly, Moore's call for the rejection of dependence in society; for an individual autonomy and responsibility that rejects paternalism, absolutism, capitalism and even state socialism, yet allies the dominated classes into "new forms of solidarity and new networks of cooperation."³⁹ anticipates the recent movement on the left to unify democratic struggles for economic *and* social equality; the merging of the politics of class and identity.

In seeking the social and economic conditions that would contribute to a challenging of the moral authority, Moore sides with the Marxists, with an important caveat; he rejects the single minded economic reductionism of classic Marxism. He notes that the ability to radically increase production coupled with the perception that the surplus thus produced is not being fairly distributed marks a nexus point where revolution *may* ignite. Yet, his denial of economic reductionism is emphatic.

"That changes in economic arrangements are a necessary condition for successful change in, say, law, morals, and religious beliefs is not the same thing as asserting that economic changes are always the causes of the latter. Universal propositions about the primacy of economic changes, even when qualified by the useful escape clause "in the long run", are to be rejected out of hand."⁴⁰

The given conditions of changes in what the classic Marxist would deem the 'mode of production' must be accompanied by an increase in what Moore calls 'suffering' for revolutionary sentiments to arise. What is more surprising than Moore's qualifications on the Marxist argument, is his adoption of a variation of the Elite theorist point of view on the role of elites in social change. Though in fact, he only acknowledges one by name, Gaetano Mosca, and then by way of noting the way revolutionary regimes can employ persecution towards the creation of martyrs and quickly discard the driving myth of their revolutionary ideology after gaining power. Still, it is very much like an Italian Elite theorist that Moore argues that a state of social disruption will translate into a genuine state of revolution only when "The disruption has spread to the dominant classes and split them in such a way that

³⁹ Ibid., p. 461.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 469.

alliances can be formed between elements in both the dominant and subordinate classes”⁴¹. Moore, now in retrospect, seems less of a Marxist than a new socialist; one who has taken the best of the theories of the left and forged an amalgam out of a literature that demonstrates its greatest strength by its dynamic ability to both explain and encompass change. And it is to explaining change rather than the origins of morality that Moore is at his best in *“Injustice”*, for it is his chronicle of social change within his case study that as much explains social evolution as does any action of underlying morality. It is more to a discussion of change than of morality that Moore turns himself in the end and perhaps this is best, for the work does as it should in returning to the real strengths of the author’s argument.

The quote immediately above is a natural conclusion that Moore has drawn subsequent to his earlier and far better work, “Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World”, where he examines the roles of the different social classes in effecting social revolution. Two important conclusions from that work have an important bearing upon both the success of our comparison between scientific and social revolutions and one of the important questions that we must answer in evaluating liberal democracy as a paradigm. First, Moore concludes that the nature and ultimate result that comes from social revolution is greatly affected by shifting alliances amongst the different social classes involved. Second, social revolutions usually come about at some economic nexus of change that re-aligns traditional roles, rights and privileges amongst the social classes. The first hypothesis is important because it demonstrates that, notwithstanding the events and social forces that may precipitate a social revolution and the shift to a new paradigm, the outcome and subsequent beneficiaries are not necessarily the ones whose shift in fortunes precipitated the events in the first place. In short, the cumulative problems that brought about the decline of the old paradigm may not be solved by the new, but only re-aligned. There may be paradigm shift but not necessarily in the positivist fashion as implied

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 471.

by Kuhn's model. The second hypothesis is important because the series of social revolutions chronicled by Moore are all inextricably tied up with the evolution from feudal to modern, capitalist modes of production and this brings us back to our question concerning the nature of capitalism and its relationship with liberal democracy. Our comparison between Kuhn and Moore has been an effective way to outline the points of comparison between social and scientific revolutions. We now take one further step by exploring that which has now been implied twice in the above examination: social revolutions do not necessarily replace old, failing paradigms with better more successful ones. The Positivist component in Kuhn's model and the assumption of evolutionary improvement does not necessarily carry forward into social models. The nature of class exploitation does not improve under subsequent paradigms; it only changes. Thus, if liberal democracy is to either respond to criticism and prevail or be displaced by a different paradigm, the relationship with capitalism must be considered. Under either condition, no successful response to the cumulative criticisms and problems associated with liberal democracy can be effected without correcting the problems associated with the division of labour under capitalism. To examine these problems, and as a means of stepping closer to an examination of some of the social theorists and their relation to the current paradigm of liberal democracy, we will further employ Moore's work as a way of extending our examination into the nature of social revolution.

Cui Bono: The Outcomes of Social Revolutions and their Relationship to the Underlying Problems with the Previous Models - Barrington Moore Jr. And "The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy".

Were social revolutions to prove to be exact analogies of scientific ones in the sense that Thomas Kuhn has described them, then each successive social paradigm would address and solve the accumulated anomalies that brought about the demise of the former paradigm. Unfortunately, the circumstances of a change in the established order to the detriment of some group or class and the impetus for change that may result in revolution is no guarantee

that the subsequent order will in any significant way improve the lot of the classes who revolted under the old one. Barrington Moore Jr. Has noted of all the social revolutions that have marked the transition to modernity in the west, all of them have heaped new inequities onto old. "Where the peasants have revolted, there are indications that new and capitalist methods of pumping the economic surplus out of the peasantry had been added while traditional ones lingered on or were intensified."⁴² Moore's general thesis argues that the way that the aristocracy and bourgeoisie engaged capitalism as a new mode of production was to dictate both the form and the outcome of the social revolution. He offers case studies of England, France and the United States in the west and China, Japan and India in the east. Moore implies that, while a change in the established order and a genuine questioning of the inevitability of that order may well be the touchstone to revolution, the actual result will be that the original pattern of class exploitation will simply be re-arranged under a different mode of production. In the Kuhnian sense there has been the displacement of one paradigm by another, and that displacement does effect a more efficient and advanced political economy - indeed, it is technological advancement that ultimately threatens and defeats the old paradigm - but the change in no way guarantees any genuine social advancement.

Moore's conclusion has serious implications for our argument that liberal democracy is a failing paradigm. Even if social as well as economic inequality is increasingly the critique levelled against the model, what hope is there for genuine paradigm shift in the absence of a new mode of production? And if there is an argument to be made for a new mode of production, what guarantees would such a new paradigm hold for correcting previous inequity? Perhaps some indication of the potential success of post-modern social revolutions can be obtained by what Moore notes of the differences between the earliest peasant revolutions and latter ones. "The process of modernisation begins with peasant revolutions

⁴² Moore, Barrington Jr., "The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World", Boston, Beacon Press, 1966, p. 473.

that fail. It culminates during the twentieth century with peasant revolutions that succeed."⁴³ The implication is that revolutions from below have been more successful than they have previously been. This admission arises out of the series of conclusions that Moore has drawn after examining the social revolutions listed above. Moore's essential argument is that the key classes in driving the revolutions were the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, in some combination of alliance or opposition depending on how each society embraced and applied the new mode of production; capitalism. The proletariat may have been effective in forcing the transition but in every example Moore notes that either the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie were the real drivers of the revolution. As such, the working classes became co-opted and benefited in no significant way from the new order. Moore's conclusion that the peasant revolutions of communist China and Russia were the first truly successful revolutions from below must now be tempered by the dissolution of the Soviet empire as a historical fact. The inevitable and - under the paradigm of liberal democracy - desirable capitulation of China is presumed to be the next logical step in the global hegemony of liberal democracy and capitalism. If such should come to pass then anyone subscribing to Moore's argument will have to confront the realisation that there would have been, in fact, no significant example of a successful proletarian revolution in the current historical record and we are left with the conclusion that any future social revolution may well be doomed to simply repeat the previous pattern; social change may well occur, but no real change in the ultimate relations of production will benefit the members who comprise the majority of any society. And here we find the nexus of the issue of whether liberal democracy can respond in any effective way to the current criticism laid upon it; criticism that is effectively cumulative throughout all prior modes of production and inherent within capitalism as well. Insofar as the division of labour under liberal democracy continues to see a small hegemonic minority benefit from the extracted labour performed by the majority, can an effective application of

⁴³ Ibid., p. 453.

democracy correct the economic inequities that have been inherent in this and all previous modes of production? Further, can capitalism be so modified as to permit liberal democracy to continue to prevail as the paradigm for the organisation of advanced societies? Our thesis assumes not.

Moore makes the argument that the three regime types identified in his case studies are effectively inter-related and subsequent to each other.

“Without the prior democratic modernisation of England, the reactionary methods adopted in Germany and Japan would scarcely have been possible. Without both the capitalist and reactionary experiences, the communist method would have been something entirely different, if it had come into existence at all.”⁴⁴

Moore continues to argue that the goal of democracy is to effectively replace arbitrary rule with rational, and secure a role in the decision-making process for the majority of the population. He offers us nothing on democracy as a mechanism for securing greater economic or social equity. In effect he is acknowledging (or more appropriately, anticipating) criticism of liberal democracy’s blindness to demands for economic and social equity, or its assumption that the guarantee of political equality somehow will make it possible to respond to these criticisms through the expression of the will of the majority. Such a view is consistent with the views of theorists like Ellen Meiksins Wood in “Democracy Against Capitalism”. Wood levels the specific accusation against *capitalism*, but we have yet to admit that capitalism can be effectively separated from liberalism itself. “It is capitalism that makes possible a form of democracy in which formal equality of political rights has a minimal effect on inequalities or relations of domination and exploitation in other spheres.”⁴⁵

Moore is far better at describing the conditions under which democracy may arise than he is at explaining the relationship between democracy and its potential for correcting social

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 414.

⁴⁵ Wood, Ellen Meiksins, “Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism”, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1995, p. 224.

or economic inequity. We can only surmise, given his observations on the concrete effects that subsequent social revolutions have had for the working classes, that demographic majority and democratic organisation notwithstanding, future social revolutions may well result in a different paradigm, but the end result may not see the accumulated anomaly - the repeated inability of liberal democracy and all previous models to assure economic and social equity - corrected, and the same exploitive division of labour repeated under yet another guise.

Moore's work does hold some further value for the thesis at hand. If, as argued here, liberal democracy is increasingly becoming the paradigm for the organisation of advanced societies and is actually becoming the normative prescription for assisted development in the third world, then what are the model's chances for success in these types of societies? Moore's argument may be both prophetic and less than encouraging. He maintains that for democracy to take hold, certain developmental and structural conditions must apply. These may be lacking in many non-western societies. He notes of certain regime types that "The persistence of Royal absolutism and of a preindustrial bureaucratic rule into modern times has created conditions unfavourable to democracy of the western variety."⁴⁶ Given Moore's previous observation that all prior social revolutions - or at least the six that he has investigated as case studies - have seen the ultimate outcome directed by and for the benefit of either the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie; the dominant classes of society, how are we to anticipate that the application of liberal democracy to non-western models will in any way benefit any class other than the current and perpetual hegemonic fraction of society? Why should the model demonstrate any different effect in a non-western setting. Further, if democracy is the only saving grace to liberalism under a capitalist mode of production, how can it survive in a social setting incompatible with it and as described by Moore? If the

⁴⁶ Op. Cit., Moore, p. 417.

preconditions leading to the three regime types summarised by Moore are accurate, then any attempt to impose liberal democracy on a society that has not developed the characteristics Moore requires for the success of the model is doomed to backslide into authoritarian or totalitarian parodies of liberal democracy. In any case, the resulting society is less than likely to develop a paradigm that will respond to the shortcomings of the previous ones.

Moore's five criteria relate most specifically to agrarian societies experiencing a social revolution into modernity. While that model can less often be applied today, it is still valid when considering the application of liberal democracy to developing third world nations. Consider the steps and their implications for the success of the model:⁴⁷

The development of a balance to avoid too strong a crown or too independent a landed aristocracy. If we accept the substitution or alternative of a strong autocratic ruler and powerful land owning class, both conditions are common to many developing nations. Democratic transition is not likely to displace the existing power structure, nor change the division of labour within the society.

A turn towards an appropriate form of commercial agriculture. While agrarian reform is a mark of many new social arrangements during the transition to modernity, global market demands often drive developing economies into mono-culture production that in no way benefits the classes working the fields and is usually dominated by the same land owning classes that controlled the means of production under the earlier paradigm.

The weakening of the landed aristocracy. Moore gives little indication of just how this is to be accomplished, short of violent revolution. The west is pressing the model as part of developmental assistance through the IMF and World Bank, and this is not likely to displace the current hegemonic fraction of society.

⁴⁷ Ibid., and in passim, the italicised text is directly quoted from Moore, pp. 430 - 431.

The prevention of an aristocratic-bourgeois coalition against the peasants and workers.

The prior objection holds here as well. Further, elite competition notwithstanding, Moore's own case studies show that the only time coalitions arise between classes other than the bourgeoisie and aristocracy, the result is violent social upheaval, and then rarely to the lasting benefit of the proletariat who have been co-opted into their continued exploitation under a different paradigm.

A revolutionary break with the past. Moore's last point confirms all the others. Though there must be a genuine revolution, there is still little to indicate that the resulting relations of production will see any substantial change.

There are no guarantees that any transition to a liberal democratic paradigm would significantly change the pattern of class exploitation that has marked all previous models. Further, the weak state of democracy in even the most effective transitions would not be a significant safeguard against the same old patterns of the defeated paradigm. Ultimately, free market capitalism has no genuine regard for liberal democracy over any other model. The market only seeks social stability; the method of obtaining it is not generally pertinent to the interests of the market.

In those non-western societies dominated by aristocratic elites under any guise - wealthy land owners, religious elites, etc. - there may be little genuine impetus towards modernisation at all. Global marketplace notwithstanding, some societies and their elites are genuinely aware of the potential threat to the established order that a rapid transition to modernity can bring.

“(But) Industrial capitalism has great difficulty establishing itself in the same area with a labour-repressive system. As part of the effort to hold down a subject population, the upper classes have to generate an antirationalist, antiurban, antimaterialist, and, more loosely, anti-bourgeois view of the world - one that excludes any conception of progress. And it is very difficult to see how industrialism can take firm hold without a push from people who hold a very materialist conception of progress that includes sooner or later concrete improvement in the situation of the lower classes.”⁴⁸

It remains to be seen whether the application of liberal democracy to regimes as described above by Moore would if fact through their failure, still generate sufficient social unrest through the process of modernisation to ignite a social revolution against the prevailing order. If such came to pass, it might very well be an example of obtaining through failure that which could not be accomplished through success.

Summary of the Argument: Is Liberal Democracy a Paradigm in the Kuhnian Sense?

Conceiving of liberal democracy as a paradigm does satisfy many of the criteria Kuhn demands of scientific paradigms. The model is dominant to the exclusion of all others and forms the cognitive framework or ideological matrix wherein all social organisation is conceived. The model is blind to or denies legitimacy to all anomalous conditions that are hostile to the model. The paradigm is increasingly monolithic within the conceptual and theoretical work of its “community of practitioners”. Finally, liberal democracy has been dominant throughout the plateau of the mode of production that is capitalism. It displaced the prior paradigm of organic feudalism and will eventually be displaced itself.

Conversely, the model does not exhibit some of the characteristics inherent in Kuhn’s scientific paradigms. There is no Positivist presumption that each successive paradigm has both solved the accumulated anomalies of the former one and demonstrated itself to be superior or more highly evolved than those that went before it. Further, the accumulated anomaly - the repeated problem of economic and social inequity - that marks the present

⁴⁸ Ibid., Moore offers as a possible exception, Japan, where thorough modernisation not only was accomplished under, but facilitated by, repressive labour relations.

paradigm has remained uncorrected throughout several successive social paradigms. From the point of view of “puzzle” solving, liberal democracy has been only marginally better than the models that have gone before.

Does liberal democracy operate as a paradigm within the sub-discipline of political and social theory? Clearly, one criticism of political science as a field of inquiry has been that it is western dominated as to theory and models. That liberal democracy has now transcended the descriptive into the normative only reinforces that criticism. But this considers only the normative application of the model by predominantly western first-world states onto developing nations. Can an argument be made for liberal democracy having become the normative presumption of contemporary political and social theorists? Are the criticisms and theories of this “community of practitioners” increasingly rooted in the assumptions of liberal thought? While it has been suggested previously that this is indeed the case, only an examination of some of the current trends in social theory can give some proof to the argument. Having also argued that the key to determining the conceptual roots of current criticism lies in the determination of whether the criticism and proposed response resides within the ideological and philosophical presumptions of liberalism or in some model foreign to the paradigm, we should start by dividing our investigation into these two roughly defined schools of thought. If, subsequent to our investigation, we can conclude that the model operates as a paradigm not only in the normative presumptions of western society, but as a conceptual base for western political and social theory, we will have established our argument that liberal democracy is, indeed, an appropriate and analogous model for a paradigm in the sense argued by Thomas Kuhn under his model for scientific paradigms. Further, if our examination of the criticisms demonstrate that liberal democracy is increasingly baffled and structurally impotent in the face of accumulated anomaly; effectively unable and ideologically disinclined towards either acknowledging the combined criticisms levelled against it or to remedy its problems, we may have finally substantiated

our argument that as a paradigm, it is failing. It is to an examination of some of the contemporary social and political theory as it relates to liberal democracy that we must now turn, in further establishing and proving the thesis.

Chapter 3

Working Within the Paradigm: How Both Critics and Proponents Subliminally Subscribe to the Limitations inherent in Liberal Democratic Thought

One very important difference between social paradigms and scientific ones is the presumed degree of freedom the former permits its practitioners. Indeed, in the present example, the freedom of thought and expression inherent in the liberal model assure that criticism of the paradigm will be given a voice. This does not necessarily imply that the model is indifferent towards any criticism that attacks the basic premise of liberal Democracy *or* capitalism. Social paradigms generally do not silence criticism, they deny it legitimacy. Political culture is self-replicating. This is the mechanism that the paradigm employs to assure its continued hegemony. The process is self-evident at the national level, the real leap here is seeing how liberal democracy will become self reinforcing on a global scale.

“Issues of class, industry and capital constantly destabilise the national project even in its non-colonial context. Gramsci, for example, in ‘Notes on Italian History’, discusses the problem of unification inherent in the formation of a nation-state in the European bourgeois context. Unificatory ideologies and institutions, emanating from the elite, posturing as a class-transcendent polity and implanted on top of a class society, reveal as much as they hide. These attempts at unification forge an identifiable ideological core, a national identity, around which other cultural elements may be arranged hierarchically.”⁴⁹

Liberalism would deny the argument because it assumes no difference between the rights of the dominant and dominated cultures; all *individuals* in a liberal democratic society are presumed equal. If fact does not ally with theory, then liberalism’s organising principle of democracy will ensure that the “will of the majority” prevails and competing interests are reconciled. To assert that differences are real and result in systemic prejudice is to risk being denied legitimacy under the paradigm, as such, most social theorists approaching the subject will attempt to house both their criticism and their proposed solutions within the language of

⁴⁹ Bannerji, Himani, **“On the dark side of the nation: Politics of Multiculturalism and the state of ‘Canada’”**, in **“Journal of Canadian Studies”**, vol. 31, no. 3 (Fall 1996). Bannerji notes what many ‘identity’ groups have observed about the hegemony of culture in states that purport to demonstrate a genuine multi-cultural society; the dominant culture employs divers methods in maintaining *de facto* hegemony.

liberalism. Consider the argument Will Kymlicka makes for collective rights *within* the scheme of liberal democracy.

“I believe it is legitimate, and indeed unavoidable, to supplement traditional human rights with minority rights. A comprehensive theory of justice in a multicultural state will include both universal rights, assigned to individuals regardless of group membership, and certain group-differentiated rights or ‘special status’ for minority cultures.”⁵⁰

Certainly Kymlicka’s motives are genuine, but take a step back and consider both the criticism and the source of the proposed solution. The author repeats an observation made repeatedly about multicultural societies: cultural minorities suffer from unjust discrimination. The criticism itself indicates that the presumption of equality under liberalism is not working for some citizens. The solution is to find some way to translate the presumption into fact. Both the criticism and the proposed correction are fully compatible with the presumption of liberalism and as such legitimate under the paradigm. Yet, consider what Kymlicka is proposing as a solution: the creation of special *collective rights* as a means of ensuring individual equality regardless of cultural origin. A preoccupation with collective rights is more akin with either the previous conservative paradigm or the socialist paradigm - both are foreign to the essential presumptions of liberalism. Kymlicka argues that his proposed solution is fully compatible with liberalism, as he must do if his argument is to be afforded a wider legitimacy under the political culture of liberal democracy. Because of the way he phrases his argument and proposes his solution, Kymlicka works within the paradigm; he admits as much. Yet, if similar representations were made either from the far right and under the guise of a renewed conservatism or from the far left, under an openly socialist stance it would be deemed far less legitimate and the product of either a retrograde anachronism or a radically impractical collectivism.

⁵⁰ Kymlicka, Will, “Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights”, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 6.

The tendency for theorists from the left to move towards the centre and away from the politics of class that is so anathema to liberalism has been noted by Ellen Meiksins Wood in "The Retreat from Class: A New 'True' Socialism". The irony is not lost on those who see that continued denied legitimacy can bring even the most prodigal of sons and daughters back into the fold.

"The supreme irony is that, while many on the left have been busy announcing the death of class politics and denying the 'privileged' position of the working class in the struggle for socialism, the Conservative government has been conducting a policy whose first - and last - premise is that an organised working class represents the greatest threat to capitalism"⁵¹

If the politics of class can be re-invented and presented in the language of competing interests that is both familiar and non-threatening to liberal democracy as a dominant paradigm then the argument will be granted a certain legitimacy. The fact, however, remains that those competing interests remain divided along class lines and separate the vast majority from their fair share of the fruits of their own labours. Wood is right to attack capitalism directly rather than the liberalism that both produced and continues to employ it because it is through capitalism that the inequalities of class and many of the inequalities related to discriminated identities are made manifest. Individual worth in a capitalist society is increasingly measured solely by material wealth and possession. Social worth for an under-employed worker or a single black mother is proven by economic deprivation. These representations, so stated, reside outside of the paradigm and are denied legitimacy. Yet, many of the strongest critiques of the model are still deemed to reside within the presumptions of liberalism.

Carl Schmitt is a strong critic of liberalism, and his work has been the subject of much discussion and renewed interest on the left. He argues for a concept of the political that acknowledges the adversarial nature inherent in all competing interests in society. As such, all aspects of society are touched by the political. The very nature of his adversarial view -

⁵¹ Wood, Ellen Meiksins, "The Retreat From Class", New York, Verso, 1986, p. 182.

indeed, the “other” is deemed the enemy in Schmitt’s words - is contrary to the liberal view of competing pluralist interests; Schmitt sees no de-politicised competition inherent in the political, only a state of war. In Schmitt’s view liberal individualism could never be the ideological basis of a genuine theory of politics. Liberalism may be a critique of politics, it can never be the basis of politics; it is, in fact, anti-political.

“The negation of the political, which is inherent in every consistent individualism, leads necessarily to a political practice of distrust toward all conceivable political forces and forms of state and government, but never produces on its own a positive theory of state, government and politics. As a result, there exists a liberal policy in the form of polemical antithesis against state, church and other institutions which restrict individual freedom. There exists a liberal policy of trade, church and education, but absolutely no liberal politics.”⁵²

In denying liberalism as a genuine theory of politics, Schmitt has not given any argument that would deny it as a paradigm. The fact is, Schmitt has identified the real preoccupation of liberalism as the unimpeded spread of free market capitalism. If Schmitt is correct, then the application of liberal democracy as a normative prescription for the organisation of advanced societies is only intended as a vehicle for the spread of capitalism itself. Capitalism is no longer simply the political economy of liberal democracy, more correctly stated, the reciprocal relationship is far more accurate: Liberal democracy is simply the organising principle behind the spread of capitalism. Give the vehemence of Schmitt’s condemnation of liberalism and his indictment of capitalism as the sole real preoccupation of the philosophy, we might normally situate the critique well outside the paradigm. Yet, some of Schmitt’s critics would argue differently.

“The approach taken by Strauss and Meier consists in arguing that Schmitt, while attempting a radical critique of liberalism, remains within the liberal framework. (Such an accusation is similar to the one Heidegger makes about Nietzsche as attempting a radical critique of Western metaphysics while remaining in the metaphysical framework.) The implication therefore is that the choices Schmitt makes are not excluded by the liberal framework. The question here becomes the manner in which one can mitigate the dangerous possibilities inherent in liberalism, since for the historical present and apparent future no alternative is available. The commitment to liberalism is thus instrumental.”⁵³

⁵² Schmitt, Carl, “The Concept of the Political”, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996 (1932), p. 70.

⁵³ Strong, Tracy B. in Forward to Ibid., p. xxv.

The paradigm thus permits a far greater range of criticism internal to the model than Kuhn's scientific paradigm, but is all the more monolithically dominant as a result.

The attraction of Schmitt's argument for the left is that it acknowledges the adversarial nature of class relations. Indeed, Schmitt may deny liberalism but he fully acknowledges Marx' as demonstrating a genuine understanding of the political. As important as acknowledging the traditional class argument and the ties between liberalism and capitalism, Schmitt presents an understanding of the "other" that makes him attractive to theorists of identity politics as well. It is at the juncture of the struggle for economic and social equity that some theorists of the left find the greatest potential for a renewed and unified democratic movement. The question of whether the politics of class struggle can be effectively subsumed within a greater alliance that remains conceived within the presumptions of liberal democracy is critical to our thesis. The argument would see one of the few critiques that genuinely resides outside the paradigm woven into a movement that would temper the model from within, thereby maintaining the paradigm itself. The implication for our thesis is profound, the paradigm would continue - albeit in a modified form - and thus nullify our thesis that liberal democracy is a failed paradigm. Such an effective counter-argument deserves extended consideration, and it is to an examination of the work of Chantal Mouffe as a strong proponent of such a movement of democratic equivalency that we now must turn.

Acute Pluralism in Modern Liberal Democratic Societies: Locating the Radical Democratic Project Between the Communitarian and Liberal Social Models

In a series of nine essays assembled over a period of five years, Chantal Mouffe has produced in "The Return of the Political" a critical examination of the premises of both the liberal and communitarian views of society. In so doing, she has sought to find a place between these two social philosophies where her project of Radical Democracy may be located. The project itself may be briefly, if somewhat incompletely, described as one of an

extreme pluralism that transcends such a traditional preoccupation as class and is capable of encompassing the particular interests of individual and collective identities in a post-modern society. She expressly acknowledges that her model is, in part, a response from the left; a political location that finds itself without foundation in a post soviet, if not entirely post communist, world. It is within the context of such a reality that she seeks a location for Radical Democracy not outside of but between the communitarian and the liberal social philosophies.

Her predominant critique is reserved for liberal rationalism, universalism and individualism. In conducting her critique, she must, by necessity address the communitarian view as well and it is within this discourse that she is enabled, by exhaustive examination of the writings of John Rawls and Carl Schmitt in particular, to locate her own project.

It is thus natural that, by way of an exposition and an introduction to her project, she argues for an "Agnostic Pluralism"; a diversity of interests and alternatives that is, in her view, constitutive of modern liberal democracy and demonstrates a greater significance for democracy than the consensus among these interests that liberalism seeks. Having identified what she believes to be the priority for democracy, that of acknowledging the value of pluralist conflict over the presumed resulting consensus, she argues that it is liberalism's great failure that, in an increasingly fragmented post-modern world it finds itself unable to deal with conflict yet incapable of finding any meaningful social consensus. Here, she first acknowledges Schmitt, in agreeing with him that there can be no concept of the political without an acknowledgement of conflict. Further, having admitted the failure of Marxism, she notes that the traditional polarities of conflict in contemporary western society - those of liberal democracy and Marxism - have been eradicated, leaving us awash in a sea of conflict that has arisen from identities other than the ideological. Subsequently, the party system built upon ideological differentiation is incapable of reconciling conflicts foreign to its nature and, for the purposes of many of society's conflicts, the political is no longer pertinent. Thus the

contemporary challenge to liberalism lies in its insistence on separating the private from the public, the personal from the political, in a world less divided by ideology than by identity.

In admitting the inevitability of conflict and the inability of contemporary liberal society to deal with it, Mouffe argues that the Hobbesian “state of nature” is only held back by a frail and susceptible democracy; one that is neither inevitable within the social evolution of the species nor permanent or immune from erosion. Ominously, she notes that:

“Democracy is in peril not only when there is insufficient consensus and allegiance to the values it embodies, but also when its agonistic dynamic is hindered by an apparent excess of consensus, which usually masks a disquieting apathy. It is also endangered by the growing marginalization of entire groups whose status as an ‘underclass’ practically puts them outside the political community.”⁵⁴

Significantly, the author having made an argument for a pluralism that transcends the simple economic interests of class to include a wider diversity of interests based upon complex personal identity, returns to the example of an “underclass” as a product of a challenged model of liberal democracy.

Chantal Mouffe offers us a passing caveat on the assumptions of the communitarian approach as well; the rejection of pluralism and the concept of a genuine common good that can apply to all. At the same time she argues that much of the liberal view must be rejected, maintaining that “we have to break with rationalism individualism and universalism”⁵⁵ if we are to permit a multiplicity of democratic struggles. This concept of democracy demonstrates a paradox, one admitted by the author. A concept of democracy that admits a constant and competing diversity can never be attained, but must always be changing. It is a dynamic model that implicitly is incompatible with both a terminal Marxist perfect society, a communitarian one that can conceive of a common good *and* a liberal one that presumes some absolute social consensus.

⁵⁴ Mouffe, Chantal, “The Return of the Political”, Verso, New York, 1993, p. 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

It is within her first essay that Mouffe initially attacks universalism and rationality while building the foundation for the translation of her model of radical pluralism into some comprehensible form of a social project. A brief consideration of the evolution of modernity is employed to demonstrate what the author considers the folly of universalism in a modern reality. She argues that the exchange of an absolute and traditional authority built upon God and the divine right of kings within an unequal and organic society for one founded upon rationality and the laws of man must lose any pretence to a genuine universalism. She argues that such an exchange is “doomed to failure from the start because of the radical indeterminacy that is characteristic of modern democracy.”⁵⁶ Yet, the rejection of universalism, rationalism and humanism does not imply the total rejection of liberalism. Here she would retain the characteristics of equality and freedom for all. Her greatest qualification is reserved for the understanding of the individual and the diversity of struggles associated within the modern context.

“To be capable of thinking politics today, and understanding the nature of these new struggles and the diversity of social relations that the democratic revolution has yet to encompass, it is indispensable to develop a theory of the subject as a decentred, detotalized agent, a subject constructed at the point of intersection of a multiplicity of subject positions between which there exists no a priori or necessary relation and whose articulation is the result of hegemonic practices. Consequently, no identity is ever definitively established, there is always a certain degree of openness and ambiguity in the way that the different subject positions are articulated.”⁵⁷

The very nature of the intense plurality of many of the democratic struggles in a modern world would seem to deny universalism. Yet, Mouffe argues that “Universalism is not denied, but particularized; what is needed is a new kind of articulation between the universal and the particular.”⁵⁸ Similarly, rationality itself becomes particularized and relative to subject position. Tradition becomes little more than the historical record of ongoing discourse and the sum of its resolutions and consensus at *those particular times and*

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

places; simply a point of departure for further discourse. Mouffe acknowledges that these previous discourses, the cumulative tradition of western society, form us and our particular points of view much in the way that Gramsci argued a hegemony of culture. The project of radical democracy seeks to displace existing hegemony and introduce one built upon “democratic rights”.

“If the task of radical democracy is indeed to deepen the democratic revolution and to link diverse democratic struggles, such a task requires the creation of new subject positions that would allow the common articulation, for example, of antiracism, antisexism and anticapitalism. These struggles do not spontaneously converge, and in order to establish democratic equivalences a new ‘common sense’ is necessary, which would transform the identity of different groups so that the demands of each group could be articulated with those of others according to the principle of democratic equivalence. For it is not a matter of establishing a mere alliance between given interests but of actually modifying the very identity of these forces.”⁹⁹

Out of a wild diversity the author must, of necessity, find some foundation for her greater collective identity; one beyond simple consensus and monolithic enough, if only fleetingly so, to displace existing hegemony and create a new one built upon radical democracy. Beyond the theoretical, however, little practical indication of how such a diversity of interests can be reconciled is offered. She does invoke the work of Machiavelli in showing how the impetus to return to the political is predicated upon a desire to avoid coercion through voluntary participation in civil society. And that model is an appropriate one for demonstrating how the diversity of democratic struggles may be motivated to engage the political, it is less effective in showing how they might forge a common identity based upon democracy. Chantal Mouffe’s radical democracy seeks a space between a static communitarian common good and a reformed liberal view of common democratic right and it is to that place that she directs the focus of her second essay.

In her essay “American Liberalism and its Communitarian Critics”, Chantal Mouffe argues that it is the very connection between democracy and liberalism - the point of focus

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 18 - 19.

for her project of radical democracy - that has become the preoccupation of the neo-conservative and neo-liberal critique.

“For both these groups, the target is in fact, the articulation between liberalism and democracy: the subversive potential of the democratic idea confronting the preservation of the dominant social relations. Recently a new voice has been making itself heard: it is no longer democracy that is the target of critique, but liberalism that is held responsible, because of its deep-seated individualism, for the destruction of community values and the progressive deterioration of public life.”⁶⁰

Mouffe assigns this tendency to the rediscovery of civic republicanism and traces its roots to pre-Revolutionary American traditions displaced by a liberal individualism subsequent to the adoption of the constitution. The author accepts the criticism of liberalism but this does not extend to an adoption of a communitarian model predicated upon the existence of a common good *in the moral sense*. She examines John Rawls work, “A Theory of Justice”, an acknowledged target of neo-conservative and communitarian alike, and concludes that the roots of the criticism from the right is focused on the seminal argument of the priority of the right over the good. Notwithstanding the elegance of Rawls’ theory, part of which demonstrates a Pareto optimal vision of individual liberty within society, it is the presumption of a pre-existing right of the individual that transcends any concept of the public good that is the target of the right. Mouffe argues that the very premise of liberalism denies the assumption of a *moral* good that limits the individual’s rights vis-a-vis personal lifestyle and liberty, but such a liberal presumption of the priority of individual rights over a moral good can only exist within certain kinds of society demonstrating specific institutions. She makes a distinction between the *moral* good denied by liberalism and the *political good* - as demonstrated by the liberal belief in liberty and equality - that is the foundation of the good within liberal democracies. It is upon the latter form that she would build the foundation of her project of radical democracy and discover the common preoccupation - that of democratic rights - that would unite her acute and emphatic pluralism.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 23 - 24.

“Therefore if a liberal democratic regime must be agnostic in terms of morality, it is not - and cannot be - agnostic concerning the political good since it affirms the political principles of liberty and equality. It is only within such a regime and as a function of the political good which defines it that the priority of rights with respect to the different conceptions of the moral good is possible.”⁶¹

A vision of the political predicated upon a common moral good must deny pluralism; this lies at the heart of the conservative and communitarian critique of liberalism. Yet, liberal democracy *is* the model for most of western society. Mouffe argues that such societies are, in fact blind to the political, having relegated it to a narrow instrumentalist activity. “It is thus that an entire series of questions which are incontestably of a political nature, such as the question of justice, have been relegated to the domain of morals,”⁶². Here Mouffe discovers an impediment to the realisation of her project, for it is only within a society that “makes room for the political dimension of human existence” that a tradition of radical democracy can be inculcated. Following Walzer, Mouffe argues that establishing a democratic equivalence for pluralist interests requires a political concept of justice that is both variable and contextual not rigid and absolute; it is relative to the political community from which it is derived. If her project is to survive, we must retrieve questions of justice from the realm of morality; we must return to the political and this inclines the author to re-examine the work of Rawls and it is to this task that she dedicates her third essay.

Chantal Mouffe criticises those who would combine and reject both liberal individualism and political liberalism. Similarly, she rejects any necessary association between what she refers to as “bourgeois economic relations” and liberalism. Yet, these are tied together by far more than a simple contemporaneous evolution: the foundations of market capitalism are to be found within liberal traditions of competition, minimal government, negative freedom *and* individualism. She must, of necessity divide political liberalism from those aspects that are either incompatible with or openly hostile to her

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 31 - 32.

⁶² Ibid., p. 32.

project of radical democracy. In "Rawls: Political Philosophy Without Politics", she offers her thesis: "(T)hat the acceptance of political liberalism does not require us to endorse either individualism or economic liberalism, nor does it commit us to a defence of universalism and rationalism."⁶³ In proving her argument, she returns to the work of John Rawls.

Mouffe finds Rawls increasing distance from a universalist stance on political justice to be compatible with her project of radical democracy. She notes that "Rawls has been moving away from a universalistic framework and is now stressing the 'situated' character of his theory of justice."⁶⁴ Rawls' theory admits a pluralist view of the good, yet one that is the product of a shared tradition and community ethos.

" '(W)hat justifies a conception of justice is not its being true to an order antecedent and given to us, but its congruence with a deeper understanding of ourselves and our aspirations, and our realization that, given our history and the tradition imbedded in our public life, it is the most reasonable doctrine for us."⁶⁵

No attempt is made to define that which is 'reasonable' in this context. Similarly, later reference is made to "certain fundamental intuitive ideas latent in its common sense and imbedded in all its institutions"⁶⁶ without any indication of how such 'common sense' is either demonstrated or identified. Mouffe does acknowledge these ambiguities. Further, she does admit that Rawls' conception of justice permits a multiplicity of goods that are permitted to arise among some, again undefined, primary ones that are shared within the society. Such a flexible concept would allow for the determination of a democratic equivalence among competing pluralist interests and satisfies the requirements of Mouffe's project of radical democracy. Further, once such a shared conception of a primary good that supersedes or, at the very least, qualifies individual concepts of the good has been established, it becomes evident that there can be no question of there being an absolute priority of the right over the good. But, as has been noted previously, liberal democracy has

⁶³ Ibid., p. 42.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 43.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

divided morality from politics and can demonstrate no *substantive* understanding of the common good, whether it be based upon common, rational self-interest or not. Here we discover Mouffe's critique of Rawls: "To think politics in terms of moral language, as Rawls does, necessarily leads to neglect of the role played by conflict, power and interest."⁶⁷ Mouffe denies Rawls' conception of his theory as *political* philosophy and relegates it instead to the world of *moral* philosophy. As such, while Rawls' theory demonstrates a diversity appropriate to the needs of Mouffe's project it is, in fact, incapable of bridging the gap between the liberal concept of the political and the diversity of social struggles that reside within the personal. Rawls' collective common sense is ultimately inadequate to the purposes of Mouffe's project of radical democracy. "Far from providing the final, rational solution to the problem of justice - which in a modern democracy is bound to remain a permanent, unresolved question - Justice as Fairness is only one among the possible interpretations of the political principles of liberty and equality."⁶⁸ Chantal Mouffe requires a theory of justice that transcends simple economic equality and is wide enough to entice the political participation of the *socially* disenfranchised. What she neglects to consider is how such attitudes as racism and sexism are made manifest in capitalist societies; the "other" is of a lesser "value" and this is often demonstrated by economic disadvantage. Still, Mouffe does understand that her greater plurality of combined democratic struggles requires a new concept of citizenship; one that "requires the creation of a chain of equivalence among democratic struggles, and therefore the creation of a common political identity among democratic subjects."⁶⁹ It is to the task of creating such a model that she turns in her fourth essay "Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community".

The project of radical democracy requires a concept of citizenship wide enough to engage all democratic struggles and precipitate a return to the political. In seeking such a

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 53.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 60.

definition Mouffe must, of necessity, locate her model of citizenship between the polarities of liberal individualism and the conservative and communitarian concept of the common good.

“(W)e need to conceive of a mode of political association which, although it does not postulate the existence of a substantive common good, nevertheless implies the idea of commonality, of an ethico-political bond that creates a linkage among the participants in the association, allowing us to speak of a political ‘community’ even if it is not in the strong sense.”⁷⁰

Mouffe employs Michael Oakeshott’s concept of *universitas* versus *societas*; that is an association of common purpose as opposed to one predicated upon common rules, to frame the kind of model her project of radical democracy requires. Specifically, she suggests that the kind of association implied by Oakeshott’s *societas* would be adequate to the needs of her definition of “political association under modern democratic conditions. Indeed, it is a mode of human association that recognises the disappearance of a single substantive idea of the common good and makes room for individual liberty.”⁷¹ What Mouffe is seeking are disinterested and morally neutral rules for civil discourse; a methodology for determining the democratic equivalence of acutely pluralist struggles within the *respublica* and founded upon a Hegelian dialectic that would acknowledge and reconcile the conflict inherent in competing interests. Mouffe suggests that Oakeshott’s model only lacks that antagonism that results from acknowledging the true nature of conflict and it is from Carl Schmitt that she adopts and introduces the missing component in Oakeshott’s model. “To introduce conflict and antagonism into Oakeshott’s model it is necessary to recognise that the *respublica* is the product of a given hegemony, the expression of power relations, and that it can be challenged.”⁷² And, it is thus that Mouffe both addresses Oakeshott’s conservatism by including Schmitt’s understanding of the adversarial nature of democratic struggle under hegemony. Further, Mouffe’s new understanding of the nature of citizenship transcends a

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 66.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 67.

⁷² Ibid., p. 69.

simple instrumentalist understanding of the legal definition of the term and now includes an understanding of citizenship as a collective identity predicated upon civic association and discourse even if that discourse might be perceived as somewhat less than “civil” in Oakeshott’s original terms. It is to an examination of one of the democratic struggles allied under her project of radical democracy that Chantal Mouffe turns in her fifth essay on “Feminism, Citizenship and Radical Democratic Politics”.

Chantal Mouffe argues that essentialism is incompatible with her project of radical democracy and impedes the construction of a new definition of citizenship that would assemble a diversity of democratic struggles. Specifically, there can be no essential understanding of any composite identity. Indeed, there is no identity so monolithic as to permit an essential understanding of its nature. She applies her argument to an understanding of feminism, and to those in the movement who would insist upon a coherent identity that defines, and by extension limits, the concept of “woman”. She proposes the following:

“(T)he deconstruction of essential identities should be seen as the necessary condition for an adequate understanding of the variety of social relations where the principles of liberty and equality should apply. It is only when we discard the view of the subject as an agent both rational and transparent to itself, and discard as well the supposed unity and homogeneity of the ensembles of its positions, that we are in a position to theorize the multiplicity of relations of subordination. A single individual can be the bearer of this multiplicity and be dominant in one relation while subordinate in another.”⁷³

Not only does Mouffe deny any essential identity, she further maintains that there is a constant struggle amongst aspects of the self for dominance. This does not imply that there is not a reciprocal tendency that seeks unity amongst competing aspects of feminist identity, only that the individual identity is, within any context and at any point in time, defined and determined by both centripetal and centrifugal forces. A non-essentialist concept of individual and collective identity where the individual is dominant within one context and submissive in another may more easily permit the determination of democratic equivalence

⁷³ Ibid., p. 76 - 77.

between diverse social struggles, but in many contexts and especially within a gendered one, it either ignores or denies the consistent “othering” of specific collectivities, be they essentially conceived or not. Admittedly, one *woman* may indeed be in a dominant position within one social context but *women* generally are often disadvantaged from the point of view of genuine equality. Further, the *presumption* of equality under law does not consistently translate into de facto equality in practice. And the manifestation of inequality is often *economic* in nature; women are still paid less for the same labour. Mouffe’s project of radical democracy may, for the practical purposes of establishing a democratic equivalence between social struggles, subsume traditional economic considerations of class conflict into the greater collectivity, but in so doing we lose or deny the role of economic domination in maintaining hegemony over a great many of the collectivities allied under her banner.

Chantal Mouffe employs her argument to deny the essentialist conceptions of womanhood found in the work of writers such as Carole Pateman, Sarah Ruddick and Jean Bethke Elshtain, and the sophistication of her argument gives us a more complete understanding of collective identity and how a truly radical democratic struggle must be *within* the greater collectivity of society, not only *against* the hegemony of any one fraction thereof. It is where she applies her argument to the work of Iris Marion Young and her “group differentiated” model of citizenship that Mouffe uncovers not only the incompleteness of Young’s argument but demonstrates some of the shortcomings of her own. Specifically, Mouffe correctly identifies Young’s concept of the group as far too monolithic and essential in identity for a great many of the collectivities struggling for recognition and redress within liberal democratic society. Significantly, both authors seem to ignore the kind of domination that occurs *within* these groups themselves. Robert Michel’s ‘iron law of oligarchy’ applies equally well within struggling collectivities as it does to the hegemonic fraction of society. Elites at every level of organisation tend to seek their own continuance and to organise the group to maintain hegemony. Indeed, if there is *any* essential

understanding of the nature of a collective identity, it may well be the one imposed through a hegemony of group culture. To the extent that Chantal Mouffe may acknowledge the remaining value of a socialist argument in a post-soviet reality and the role of concepts such as economic domination within her project of radical democracy, she considers that point wherein the liberal and socialist models may coincide in her sixth essay "Towards a Liberal Socialism".

Having acknowledged the failure of Marxism and the decline of the left in a post-soviet world, Chantal Mouffe seeks a place for the remnants of the socialist project within liberal democracy. She admits the importance of traditional class concerns for economic equality, yet goes no further in analysing the role of economic domination in maintaining hegemony. "Understood as a process of democratization of the economy, socialism is a necessary component of the project of radical and plural democracy".⁷⁴ The route that Mouffe chooses to arrive at a meeting point between two apparently hostile social philosophies entails a visitation of the works of Norberto Bobbio and Carl Schmitt. The investigation of Bobbio provides the standard understanding of the social requirements for effective democracy: freedom of speech, expression, opinion, assembly and association. She also obtains from Bobbio what he has identified as "the four enemies of democracy":

" '(T)he large scale of modern life; the increasing bureaucratization of the state apparatus; the growing technicality of the decisions it is necessary to make; and the trend of civil society towards becoming a mass society.' Seen from the point of view of unfulfilled promises, the shortcomings of democracy today are the survival of invisible power and of oligarchies, the demise of the individual as the protagonist of political life, the renewed vigour of particular interests, the limited scope for democratic participation, and the failure to create educated citizens."⁷⁵

Mouffe argues, again out of Bobbio, that as universal suffrage - *de jure* if not always *de facto* - now exists in virtually all liberal democracies, the next level for democratic struggle will be within the actual institutions and corporations that exist inside these societies. Here we find

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 90.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 93. Mouffe initially quotes Bobbio and adds her own understanding to his. Note that the quote Mouffe has chosen provides no comment on the role of market capitalism, nor does her own extrapolation explicitly acknowledge the relationship between liberalism, democracy and capitalism.

the location for Mouffe's expanded pluralist struggle and a means of carrying radical democracy to the exact point of conflict. Admittedly, this provides a level of sophistication to the understanding of both the sources of democratic conflict and to their resolution. But expanding democratic struggle beyond the traditional confines of simple class conflict or outside of the boundaries of society and a monolithically conceived 'state' does not change the nature of hegemony, it only better identifies the specific location of its application. Where Mouffe splits with Bobbio is in her understanding of the nature of individualism; for as much as Bobbio sees liberalism and democracy inextricably interconnected through individualism. Mouffe suggests that: "the compatibility of liberalism and democracy lies for him in the fact that both share a common starting point, the individual, and are therefore grounded in an individualistic conception of society".⁷⁶ Mouffe acknowledges the relationship but argues that individualism has now become an actual impediment to democratic struggle. Bobbio will only go so far as to admit that interests have displaced genuine representation - in a form that we must assume goes beyond simple authoritative representation - in modern liberal societies. It is here that Mouffe initially introduces Schmitt's argument: that modern parliamentary democracy has been rendered obsolete by the development of the interventionist state. Rampant competing individualistic interests have come to dominate liberal democracies; a far different kind of pluralism than that conceived within Mouffe's model of radical democracy. In Mouffe's model, the edges of individual identities touch each other, overlap and conflict in ways far more sophisticated than within the traditional understanding of competing interests under liberal pluralism.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

"It is necessary to theorize the individual, not as a monad, an 'unencumbered' self that exists prior to and independently of society, but rather as a site constituted by an ensemble of 'subject positions', inscribed in a multiplicity of social relations, the member of many communities and participant in a plurality of collective forms of identification. For that reason, both the issue of 'representation of interests' and that of 'rights' have to be posed in a wholly different way. The idea of social rights, for instance, needs to be understood in terms of 'collective rights' that are ascribed to specific communities."⁷⁷

Mouffe gives us a sophisticated and appropriate understanding of the nature of collective and individual identity in a post-modern world. At the same time, she does not address how many of the co-linear aspect identities that any one individual may either enjoy or suffer from can tend to cluster in such a way as to locate them within the traditional boundaries of class. Mouffe's concept of identity does provide us with the understanding that an individual may be dominant within one set of relations and submissive in others, but this must qualify, not deny, the general tendency. Not all blacks are poor in liberal societies. But compound race with other factors and we must admit that in contemporary North American society, a black woman who is both relatively uneducated and a single mother is more likely to be economically disadvantaged than an individual who demonstrates a composite identity that does not suffer from issues of gender, race, alternative social status or lower levels of education. Mouffe's composite identities run counter and co-linear to one and other but she does not provide a sufficient understanding of how aspects of identity can conspire to either relegate the individual to the underclass or the ruling class. Further, given the absence of such considerations, there can be no understanding of the causality involved in locating an individual's place within society; do factors of class affect identity or do aspects of individual identity determine class?

It is to the point where liberalism and democracy touch that Chantal Mouffe returns in her seventh essay titled "On the Articulation between Liberalism and Democracy". Again, Mouffe does not entirely deny the connection between liberalism, democracy and capitalism; she simply does not delve deeply enough into the relationship. She opens the discussion by

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

acknowledging the argument put forth by C. B. Macpherson that “we needed to elaborate a theory of democracy which would sever the links that had been established between the liberal ethical principle of human self realization and the capitalist market economy”.⁷⁸ Then she minimises the value of Macpherson’s argument by claiming he demonstrates too great a preoccupation with economic class relations. Mouffe argues, to some degree correctly, that simple economic determinism cannot comprehend or explain the full meaning of relations of domination within society. Yet, a reasonable critique of an argument based upon economic relations of domination neither need not nor should not completely deny the reciprocal effects of how economic domination may be both a *means* of domination and a *manifestation* of domination. Mouffe’s intention is to employ Macpherson’s arguments as a contrast to Bobbio’s in arriving at a model of democracy that includes both participatory and representational forms. She argues that the diversity of democratic struggles and the locations wherein they are conducted requires a diversity of responses by democracy. Returning to the idea of locating contemporary democratic struggles *within* society’s institutions and the corporate bodies of manifest capitalism she promotes an associational socialist model as appropriate to these kinds of venue; a partnership model in factories, hospitals schools and government institutions. Again, we are offered no indication of how changing or, more accurately, refining the locus of conflict will substantially affect the actual relations of domination.

In contrast to Bobbio’s argument that there is a necessary connection between liberalism and democracy, Mouffe examines the argument of Carl Schmitt who saw the two as mutually exclusive. Schmitt’s argument, as presented by Mouffe, states that:

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

“Democracy, declares Schmitt, is the principle that equals are to be treated equally; this necessarily implies that unequals will not be treated equally. According to him, democracy requires homogeneity, which only exists on the basis of the elimination of heterogeneity. Thus democracies have always excluded what threatened their homogeneity. He considers that the liberal idea of equality of all persons is foreign to democracy; it is an individualistic humanitarian ethic and not a possible form of political organization.”⁷⁹

Further, in Schmitt’s view parliamentary democracy was originally intended to maintain a political homogeneity by relegating issues like religion, morality and economics to the private sphere. Liberal pluralism has so pressured the state to intervene in such a diverse number of areas of society that parliamentary discourse, originally intended to maintain stability, has now become preoccupied with and appropriated by divisive pluralistic interests. The conclusion is simple in Schmitt’s eyes: parliamentary democracy is no longer politically pertinent. Between the argument that there is a necessary connection between liberalism and democracy and one that denies any such relationship, Chantal Mouffe typically argues for an indeterminate and dialectical relationship.

“We do not have to accept Schmitt’s thesis that there is an inescapable contradiction between liberalism and democracy; such a contradiction is only a result of his inability to grasp the specificity of modern democracy, between its two constitutive principles of liberty and equality. They can never be perfectly reconciled, but this is precisely what constitutes for me the principle value of liberal democracy. It is this aspect of nonachievement, incompleteness and openness that makes such a regime particularly suited to modern democratic politics.”⁸⁰

The problem, argues Mouffe, is not that liberalism is either incompatible with democracy or that pluralism denies homogeneity, indeed it must, but that liberalism cannot conceive of the formation of collective identities nor of how society is collectively constituted. If liberalism has relegated so many of the democratic struggles associated with Mouffe’s radical democratic project to the private realm; has increasingly excluded that which is genuinely political, then the solution is to return these struggles to the realm of the public and to “return to the political”. An incisive evaluation of the artificial divisions of liberalism, but when Mouffe further maintains that this requires bringing ethics back into politics, she falls

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 105 - 106.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 110.

into a semantic and philosophical trap. The determination of that which is ethical is both subjective and a function of how hegemony is maintained. What is ethical behaviour in seeking to overthrow hegemony? Mouffe may argue, along with writers such as Larry Diamond, that civility of public discourse is an indispensable characteristic of modern democracy, and it is, but the project of radical democracy that Mouffe puts forward must, by the nature of the diversity of struggles assembled under its aegis, confront and displace the existing hegemony and the determination of the limits of civility in public discourse is determined through and by that very same hegemonic fraction of society. Mouffe does acknowledge the difficulty of her semantic argument and maintains that ethics, which is part of the public sphere, must be understood as separate from morality, which is about individual action. The difference between the two remains semantically determined and imprecise. For Chantal Mouffe the ethical principles of liberal democracy are liberty and equality, and she admits that these terms are open to a diversity of interpretations and understanding. It is through an examination of how pluralism and democracy are articulated that she returns to the work of Carl Schmitt in her eighth essay: "Pluralism and Democracy: Around Carl Schmitt".

Chantal Mouffe maintains that in order to comprehend the full meaning of modern democracy,

"We must grasp the specificity of pluralist liberal democracy as a *political* form of society, as a new regime (*politeia*), the nature of which, far from consisting in the articulation of democracy and capitalism, as some claim, is to be sought exclusively on the level of the political."⁸¹

Mouffe again summarises Schmitt's argument and notes that the concept of diverse and radical pluralism that is her project within modern liberal democracy would be unthinkable to him. Further, she places Schmitt and much of the new left on the same side, arguing that both conceive of the institutions of liberalism "merely as a facade behind which the class

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 117.

divisions of capitalist society are concealed”⁸². Mouffe acknowledges the validity of Schmitt’s, and other, criticisms of individualism and rationality but would salvage pluralism and the institutions of political liberalism. Specifically, she would, along with Hans Blumenberg, separate rationalism from liberalism, claiming that it was the natural response to the decline of “theological absolutism”, not a necessary characteristic of modern liberal democracy. More particularly, modern rationality must lose the “absolutist” aspect that was inherent in the original form when rational absolutism displaced a theological absolutism.

“It is when it acknowledges its limitations, and when it completely comes to terms with pluralism and accepts the impossibility of total control and final harmony, that modern reason frees itself from its premodern heritage and the idea of cosmos. This is why, as liberals like Isaiah Berlin have understood, a coherent liberalism cannot but abandon rationalism.

We must, therefore, detach ethical pluralism and political liberalism from the discourse of rationalism in order to reformulate modernity’s ideal of ‘self assertion’ without what present themselves as the universal dictates of reason”⁸³

Significantly, Mouffe, having previously rejected individualism now asserts that we must retain ‘self-assertion’ as an important characteristic of a modern liberal democratic regime and we again return to what appears to be a semantic argument.

Chantal Mouffe also argues that “In order to bring out the ethico-political dimension of the liberal democratic form of government and provide it with principles of legitimacy, the liberal doctrine of the neutrality of the state must be revised”⁸⁴ She may well presume a *theoretical* neutrality inherent in a liberalism that has relegated much of the sources of social conflict to the realm of the private, but she does not address how the state, be it liberal or otherwise, may be employed to maintain hegemony. It has been argued by Nicos Poulantzas that the actual role of the state is to maintain such a hegemony. Further, Poulantzas has argued that the application of the state’s power is specifically at the point of conflict; the same locus that Mouffe would place much of the struggle within her radical democratic

⁸² Ibid., p. 122.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 124.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 124 - 125.

project. The concept, if not the position, is tangentially acknowledged when Mouffe addresses the work of Joseph Raz.

“Raz adopts a perfectionist point of view, since he believes that the state must take up a position as regards the various possible forms of life; it must promote some forms and forbid others. In his view, the state cannot therefore be neutral and must have the character of an ‘ethical state’.”⁸⁵

Mouffe’s argument demands that she return the ethical to the political without considering the semantic ambivalence of the term. Who determines the ethical? Chantal Mouffe does return to the issue of the presumed neutrality of the liberal state, albeit not in the fashion of Poulantzas and the Neo-Marxists. It is to a discussion of “Politics and the Limits of Liberalism” that she turns in her final essay.

Chantal Mouffe has noted that the response to the communitarian critique of liberalism concerning the absence of a concept of the common good by many liberals is to maintain that the liberal state is, in fact, neither neutral nor devoid of a concept of the good; one that demonstrates the principles of a “rationalist humanism” according to William Galston. Mouffe argues that “what is really at stake in the debate about neutrality is the nature of pluralism and its place in liberal democracy” and that “the fostering of pluralism cannot be theorized in terms of neutrality”⁸⁶. “Political Liberalism”, she allows, demonstrates a compatibility with pluralism that must admit some concept of the moral good, a minimalist concept of such that must be acceptable to a diversity of ideas of the “good life”. Again, Mouffe falls into a semantic trap that appears to be almost oxymoronic in the way she describes the relationship between political liberalism and ‘the good’. “In fact the ambition of “political liberalism” is to formulate a definitive list of rights, principles and institutional arrangements that are unassailable and will create the basis of a consensus that is both moral and neutral.”⁸⁷ This, while maintaining the division between the private and the

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

⁸⁶ Ibid. and in passim, p. 136 and 137.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 138.

political that relegates so many of our contemporary democratic struggles to the realm of the private. This denies the antagonistic and genuinely political nature of many of the power relations in these struggles. Here, Mouffe finally addresses the problem inherent in any theory of politics that must rely upon such imprecise terms as “rational dialogue”.

“In politics the very distinction between ‘reasonable’ and ‘unreasonable’ is already the drawing of a frontier; it has a political character and is always the expression of a given hegemony. What is at any given moment deemed ‘rational’ or ‘reasonable’ in a community is what corresponds to the dominant language games and the ‘common sense’ that they construe.”⁸⁸

Dialogue presumes rules of engagement that by their very nature deny the positions of those who either cannot or will not accept those rules. Based upon dialogue and a presumed consensus that may arise from it, liberalism cannot claim political neutrality. In fact, Mouffe clearly agrees with William Connolly when he argues that “ ‘the pretense to neutrality functions to maintain established settlements below the level of public discourse’ ”.⁸⁹ Consensus denies the indeterminacy inherent in the modern concept of democracy and, as Mouffe has suggested, “people committed to democracy should be wary of all projects that aspire to create unanimity”⁹⁰. It is the very irreconcilability of democracy and liberalism that both marks contemporary liberal society and is required by the project of radical democracy proposed by Chantal Mouffe. Conflict is not denied, it becomes inherent in the ordering of relations within such an arrangement. The goal of Mouffe’s project is laudable, the problem is to “establish the hegemony of democratic values and practices” and it remains effectively unaddressed.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 146, Mouffe quotes Connolly in “Identity/Difference. Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox”, Ithaca and London, 1991, p. 161.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

Some Conclusions on the Validity of the Project and the Structure and Location of the Argument

Chantal Mouffe's project of Radical Democracy may be placed along with others that have arisen from the left subsequent to the decline of a politics of class that has been overshadowed by the politics of identity. Her work seeks the creation or synthesis of a greater democratic struggle that would unite and reconcile both class and identity and in so doing, aligns itself with the arguments put forward by other authors whose writings range from the colloquial - such as James Laxer in "The Undeclared War: Class Conflict in the Age of Cyber Capitalism"- to the scholarly - with authors such as Ellen Meiksins Wood in "Democracy Against Capitalism" and "The Return From Class". Her understanding of the nature of collective identity and democratic struggle is amongst the most sophisticated to date and has made one of the most convincing arguments for a new movement for establishing a democratic equivalency among diverse social struggles. Her insistence on admitting the adversarial nature of social conflict is an indispensable part of any critique of liberalism.

At the same time, while she admits the pervasive nature of continuing hegemony, by whatever means it may be made manifest, she provides no indication of how it must be challenged. She correctly identifies the locus of conflict in a way that would have been agreeable to writers of the far left such as Poulantzas. She acknowledges the effects of a hegemony of culture that was initiated by Gramsci. Yet, she makes scant reference to the relationship between market capitalism and hegemony in liberal democratic regimes. Indeed, she specifically denies its greater importance and thereby eliminates any consideration of how economic relations both maintain hegemony and are the manifestation of hegemony. Economic disadvantage is an indication of assigning a lesser 'value' to those conceived as the "other".

Mouffe's argument often appears to be both tautological and semantic in nature. While each essay takes her argument to a level one step further than the previous, this entails a fair amount of repetition. At the same time, the necessary ambiguity between terms such as "individualism" and "self-assertion" and "ethics" and "morality", among other examples noted above, indicates the occasional philosophical splitting of hairs. Yet, it must be acknowledged that to try and locate the project of Radical Democracy between liberalism and communitarianism must, by necessity, include a discussion on the differences between the semantic understanding of concepts such as "right" and "good". Similarly, when the considerations of a socialist argument are integrated into such a narrow space as the one Mouffe has chosen, one wonders whether the author, upon further deliberation, must reconcile herself to dwelling in the interstices between these social philosophies or will ultimately strike out upon a new direction altogether. In the former case she may find herself constrained in such a way as to inhibit the further development of her argument, if the latter she may find herself at once both liberated and unanchored. Such is the nature of the difference between original thought and the critique and development of those of others.

The semantic splitting of meaning that Mouffe applies to the terms political liberalism and liberal individualism denies the essential presumptions of liberalism itself. Further, divorcing the two breaks the necessary connection between liberalism and its political economy; free market capitalism. Mouffe's goal is laudable and would do much to address the accumulated anomalies that threaten the paradigm. Unfortunately, the convolutions and semantic gymnastics the author must employ by working within the paradigm leave the argument flawed and incomplete. She simply does not effectively deal with how capitalism maintains the hegemony of the paradigm. Indeed, as argued earlier, some support can be demonstrated that it is capitalism itself that is operating as a paradigm and employing liberal democracy in an instrumental fashion.

By denying the important and necessary relationship between liberal democracy and capitalism, Mouffe misses how many struggles for social equality are related to economic disadvantage. Social *value* is made manifest by material possession. To argue that class struggle should be subsumed within a greater “democratic equivalency” is to manifestly miss the point of what class struggle seeks in the first place: equality of condition. Ultimately, Mouffe’s project must become an important part of any paradigm that would presume to both displace liberal democracy and respond to the accumulated anomalies within the current paradigm and all previous ones; the repeated and consistent translation of dominant relations and the imbalance between division of labour and division of resources. Unfortunately, located as it is within the paradigm, the argument has little chance of actually contributing to its displacement.

The Proof of Liberal Democracy as a Paradigm in the Kuhnian sense: How Normative Prescription and Mannheim’s Paradox Combine to Defend the Model.

That Liberal Democracy should be argued as the normative prescription for the organisation of advanced societies is a natural consequence of the political culture from which it arose. Political culture and the norms and values associated with it are the instruments of maintaining hegemony. Much of the criticism levelled at the Kuhnian model is that it sees the community of practitioners in a far too rational eye. All communities have specific culture and this includes scientific ones. The theorists that we have examined prior to and through the work of Chantal Mouffe are a fair indication of how much of the critical thought about liberalism is located within the paradigm; as indeed it must. The values and normative standards of liberalism dictate the parameters of legitimacy in critique and theory construction. This is unavoidable. “To the extent that political science cannot dispense with theory, with the search for a framework, to that extent it cannot stop developing

normative theory.”⁹¹ There may be as many varieties and interpretations of liberalism as there are authors and theorists arguing them but the paradigm must, through the cultural norms and values of the community and society wherein it dwells, maintain its hegemony by granting legitimacy only to those who work within the basic presumptions inherent in liberalism. Thus, in theorising about liberal democracy, we start from a point of view that originates within the presumptions of the model. It cannot be otherwise. All social scientists suffer from the effects of what is described as Mannheim’s Paradox. Briefly defined by William T Bluhm: “The paradox states that since social science has shown that social and political thought are always distorted by the special life situation of the thinker (by class status etc.) then the scientific thought of the social scientist about politics and society must be so distorted as well.”⁹² Once accepted that the normative is inherent in the descriptive, the only hope for avoiding accusations of pure parochialism is by admitting as universal a normative viewpoint as possible. However, insofar as many of the presumptions of liberal individualism are almost uniquely western, such a universalism cannot be argued when applying liberal democracy as the normative prescription in non-western societies. The seductive nature of the paradigm makes us blind to its limiting parameters even in determining what could constitute “universal” values. Consider the following quote from Gabriel Almond and the subsequent comment by Samuel M. Hines, Jr..

⁹¹ Taylor, Charles, “Neutrality in Political Science” in Laslett, Peter and Runciman, W. F., eds., “Philosophy, Politics and Society”, 3rd series, Oxford, Basil Blackwell and Mott Ltd., 1967, p. 57.

⁹² Bluhm, William T. ed., The Paradigm Problem in Political Science, Durham, North Carolina, Carolina Academic Press, 1982, p. 3.

"Natural law notions have little resonance in contemporary political theory and political science. And yet implied in the idea of a spreading "world culture" and "demonstration effect" is the proposition that confronted with similar stimuli and opportunities human beings seem to come up with very similar responses and solutions. ... Surely there is implied in the notion of modernization and development some teleological element, not that of divine purpose, but the pressure of human aspiration and choice toward a common set of goals employing similar instrumentalities. If this be teleology, then make the most of it."

"Making the most of it has meant, until very recently, infusing the norms of American liberal democracy to order (as a norm of potentiality) the otherwise unspecified purposes associated with development strategies."⁹³

Identifying the imperialist tendencies of *capitalism* is no recent observation. It is no great leap to see Liberal democracy as an example of ideological imperialism and an ever expanding and fiercely dominant paradigm. A "universalism" predicated upon western liberal values will only result in a universal liberalism. Yet, just as Chantal Mouffe has argued for a greater democratic equivalency amongst social struggles, Amy Gutmann has sought to find a universalist approach to social justice. Her model deserves some consideration here, as it proposes a solution to some of the challenges to liberalism that arise out of cultural diversity. Both class and identity are problematic to the liberal democratic paradigm.

⁹³ Hines, Samuel M, Jr., "Is Synthesis Philosophically Possible?", in *Ibid*, p. 52. Hines quotes Almond, Gabriel, "Political Development", in "Comparative Political Studies I", (1969), p. 459 Cf. Binder, Leonard, "Crises of Political Development" in Binder *et al*, "Crises and Sequences in Political Development", Princeton, Princeton UP, 1971 pp. 3 - 72.

Deliberative Universalism: The Limits of Discourse in Effecting Social Justice

In "The Challenge of Multiculturalism in Political Ethics", Amy Gutmann seeks to determine "How to discern standards of social justice in light of the apparently conflicting standards of different cultural groups"⁹⁴. She examines, and finds wanting, three responses to the challenge of multiculturalism to social justice and from these suggests an alternative response that is built upon concepts developed out of the rejected models.

Amy Gutmann first considers Cultural Relativism; social justice determined by cultural norms specific to individual societies where the distribution of social "goods" is determined by cultural meaning. Secondly, she examines how Political Relativism seeks to achieve social justice by providing "institutional mechanisms for expressing and adjudicating its (society's) internal disagreements over social meanings and institutes alternative distributions insofar as they are the outcome of those mechanisms"⁹⁵. Thirdly, she concludes that Comprehensive Universalism, which proposes a comprehensive set of moral principles that apply to all cultures, provides an inadequate response to the need for social justice in multicultural society.

Gutmann proposes that a Deliberative Universalism, one that contains a "core of universal (moral) principles" that are applied through "publicly accountable deliberation", can provide social justice and still regard the essential moral agreements between different cultures and societies.

The author proceeds with purpose in her examination of the three rejected models and retains aspects from each in constructing her own alternative. Her examination of Relativism suggests an essential commonality between basic moral and cultural standards that becomes the foundation of the comprehensive set of values within Comprehensive

⁹⁴ Gutmann, Amy, "The Challenge of Multiculturalism in Political Ethics", in "Philosophy and Public Affairs", p. 167.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

Universalism and the reduced set or “core of universal principles” employed within her own model.

In appropriating and developing components contained within the rejected models Gutmann suggests that her model addresses the shortcomings of the original three responses, and her model *is* superior in many ways. Yet the essential weakness of her argument is also contained within her examination of the rejected models. She has selected deliberative discourse as the vehicle for delivering moral consensus on social justice without examining whether that discourse would be either fully representative, genuinely effective or unbiased and uninfluenced by special interests within society. Further, she does not address how the dominant culture maintains its hegemony through the imposition of normative cultural standards and values. Her conditions for Deliberative Universalism acknowledge Cultural Relativism by including “a set of substantive principles of justice that are *unreasonable to reject* (my italics)”⁹⁶ without considering who determines what is reasonable. Gutmann’s model appropriates from Political Relativism the concept of “procedural principles” that must “support actual deliberation about fundamental moral conflicts, conflicts which reason cannot now resolve, and that provisionally justify *reasonable* outcomes of deliberative processes by *appropriately authorized and accountable decision makers* (again, my italics)”⁹⁷ without considering whether those decision makers are genuinely representative or how they may be authorised and made accountable.

An effective criticism of her thesis requires an extended examination of her argument. To Gutmann’s credit, she has acknowledged many of the counter arguments to her thesis within her examination of the original models, it is only suggested here that she has not extended these considerations to her suggested alternative. Both the strengths and the

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 200.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 200.

weaknesses of Deliberative Universalism are to be found within her examination of the rejected responses to the needs of social justice in a multicultural society.

Gutmann first examines the response of Cultural Relativism and asks the question, “What must modern cultures be like for the distributive principle of cultural relativism to work? Each culture must contain a set of social understandings that govern the goods for that culture”⁹⁸. She further concludes that such determinations are relative and change over time and acknowledges that even homogeneous societies demonstrate conflicting interpretations of “what is good”. Having argued the above, Gutmann then suggests that the determination “the good” may generally be conceded to the authoritative or dominant fraction of the culture. In admitting the hegemonic determination of “the good” within a culture, Gutmann provides us with the greatest criticism of her hybridised theory of Deliberative Universalism, for who but the elite within any, even a multicultural, society constitute the hegemonic fraction? Just as the application of liberal democracy as a normative standard presumes the adoption of what western societies conceive of as “the good”, specific societies show the application of the model in the very presumptions of liberalism inherent in the culture. She further admits that every culture “contains significant and systematic disparities of power by race, class, gender or ethnicity that influence whose or what understandings dominate”⁹⁹.

Perhaps even more significant to the ultimate criticism of her model of Deliberative Universalism is her admission that “the same problem applies to social understandings *that are not merely dominant but truly shared among all members of a culture*”¹⁰⁰ (my italics). In understanding the importance of the above it may be illuminating to consider the use of moral suasion within modern societies. C. Wright Mills has suggested some important differences between what he determines to be the “public” versus the “mass society”. The former constitute the free, informed and active participants within an open society; those

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 173.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 177.

who Gutmann conceivably admits as participants in the discourse so integral to her model. Mills suggests that in our modern societies the “public” have been in many ways transformed into the “mass society”; a demographic majority who, under the domination of an elite fraction of the society, are co-opted into their own exploitation through the manipulation of public opinion. Further, the attitudes are more than manipulated, they are in fact, manufactured. Mills determines the differences between “public” and “mass” societies to be dictated by four dimensions¹⁰¹:

1. The ratio between those who determine opinion and those who receive it; high in “mass” societies, low in “public” society.
2. The opportunity to respond without reprisal. Moral sanction and the withdrawal of social approval being effective sanctions for the free expression of non-conforming opinion
- 3 The relationship to the formation of opinion to its realisation in social action; how easily opinion shapes decision
4. The degree to which the “public” has genuine autonomy from instituted authority.

What must be considered in evaluating social mores that are not the product of the attitudes of the hegemonic fraction but are shared across the society is how these attitudes are determined. Are universal moral standards determined through “public” discourse or through the manipulation of “mass” opinion?

Similarly, Ralph Miliband has illustrated the potential for the manipulation and manufacturing of mass opinion through modern communications; newspapers, television and radio. He concurs with Mills in considering that the ratio between the “givers” of opinion and those who receive it is greatly diminished within modern society and that this demonstrates a greater potential for the manipulation of opinion by those who control the

¹⁰¹ I have summarised from Mills, C. Wright, “The Power Elite”, New York, Oxford UP, 1956, pp. 302 - 303.

methods of mass communication. Demonstrably, both the discourse implied within Gutmann's model *and* the "core of universal principles" are subject to definition and control by the hegemonic fraction of society.

Gutman proceeds with an evaluation of the response of Political Relativism to the challenge of social justice in a multicultural society. She differentiates the response of Political Relativism from Cultural Relativism in three important ways. First, Political Relativism "presupposes disagreement over the meaning of social goods in and among cultures"¹⁰². "Secondly, it specifies a political community, rather than a single culture, as the locus for determining social justice"¹⁰³. "Thirdly, political relativism justifies different distributive standards among polities"¹⁰⁴. She concludes by admitting that "The strength of political relativism lies in its recognition that disagreements over social meanings should be publicly discussed, negotiated and adjudicated, its weakness lies in its silence regarding standards, other than social agreement, by which to judge the justice of procedures or their results"¹⁰⁵. It is from this last conclusion that she obtains the structural and methodological component for her model of *Deliberative* Universalism.

Gutmann, in a sense, anticipates criticism of her model by making the argument that cultural identity is neither completely imposed nor chosen, but the result of what is given to us and what we choose. Having admitted within her examination of Cultural Relativism that moral standards are changeable, Gutmann proposes that individuals within a multicultural society also demonstrate a variety of cultural memberships; a diversity of identities. She implies a strong voluntary component both to cultural identification *and* to individual standards of justice. Again, however, she does not give extensive consideration to either how the cultural identification that we are given is determined nor to what, or who, sets the

¹⁰² Op. Cit., Gutmann, p. 178.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 182.

cultural parameters of the identifications we choose. Liberal Democracy actually forms the political culture of western society, and the paradigm permeates the values and attitudes of all our identities. Choice implies a set list of alternatives; defining the alternatives effectively determines the limits of choice. Within the context of a modern, multicultural society “who we are” is greatly determined by “who we are told we are”; mass communication defines mass culture. Gutmann acknowledges that “none of us can escape thinking about our identity except at the cost of accepting the one foisted upon us”¹⁰⁶. Somehow this seems to imply that the identity “foisted upon us” is more predefined than the ones we choose. Further, Gutmann suggests that the “argument, negotiation and adjudication” that is conducted within Political Relativism “presupposes that the parties to multicultural disputes hold *substantive ethical standards* (my italics), for which the procedural justice endorsed by political relativism is no substitute”¹⁰⁷. Structure is no compensation for integrity. Yet the author does not consider that “ethical standards” must also be defined. The ethical standards of gender dominated justice are not acceptable to a great number of feminists. How are we to assume that the ethical standards within Gutmann’s discourse would not be predetermined by the same hegemonic fraction that potentially has defined the social mores, institutional structures, methodologies and parameters of discourse as well?

Gutmann seeks an external objective definition of justice and suggests that a simple understanding that satisfies a number of classical models can be given in a few words: “practical reasonableness exercised by people who assess the moral understanding of the cultures and political communities with which they identify rather than accept them as morally binding or an unalterable aspect of their identity”¹⁰⁸. By what measure shall this assessment be conducted? Who shall assess the moral understanding? The author’s response to the first question is that “The criteria for assessing conflicts may come from within *shared*

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 188.

*social understandings*¹⁰⁹ (my italics). Gutmann is seeking to distil some basic common concepts of morality which have been internally derived from amongst a multiplicity of cultures. Yet we have demonstrated, and to a great extent Gutmann concurs, that to a substantial degree within each individual culture these concepts of morality have been determined by the hegemonic fraction. We may very well determine that there exists a “core of common principles” by which discourse may be guided but it must be conceded that this common understanding can be seen as the lowest common denominator of hegemonic agreement between cultures, and within that abbreviated list, we may not find a consensus on the value of liberal individualism. Similarly, Gutmann argues that “some ethical standards, like truth telling by governments and impartial law enforcement are universal in the sense that that apply to all human societies as we now know them”¹¹⁰. The author may presume that common ethical standards apply; it is a reality that they are not universally demonstrated. Neither in the definition of ethical standards nor in their application is there any assurance of impartiality.

Amy Gutmann suggests three requirements for “reasonableness” with regard to social justice. First, “Arguments must presuppose a moral perspective, rather than a prudential or self regarding point of view”¹¹¹. The moral perspective is demonstrably neither impartial nor absolute. Yet prudence in deliberation is well recommended by many traditions and reciprocal self-interest provides the foundation for some of our most basic social contracts. The simplicity of the “golden rule” that recommends doing unto others as you would have them do unto you is a basic concept of moral behaviour that is common to many cultures. Secondly, “relevant empirical claims must be open in principle to challenge by the most

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 189.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., Gutmann quotes Walzer, Michael, “Moral Minimalism”, in Shea, William R. and Spadafora, Antonio, eds., “From the Twilight of Probability: Ethics and Politics”, Canton, Mass., Science History Publications, 1992, p. 3.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 191.

adequate methods of inquiry”¹¹². Gutmann’s second criterion for ‘reasonableness’ might be well qualified by Mills’ understanding of the requirements for “public” discourse which demands both autonomy from authority and opportunity to respond to opinion without reprisal. Thirdly, “premises for which empirical evidence or logical inference are not appropriate should not be radically implausible”¹¹³. John Ralston Saul has argued that in many ways we are bound by the structures of the Age of Reason. Similarly he agrees with Gutmann in suggesting a more participatory public discourse within modern society. Gutmann’s final requirement provides for an alternative to rationality within her deliberative discourse and this is important when considering issues of morality which are not always subject to reasoned explanation. Having demonstrated a similar perspective on rationality as Ralston Saul in claiming that the bounds of rational discourse are overly restrictive, her recommendation that alternatives are “not to be radically implausible” begs the question: “to whom”?

It can be conceded that there is either a comprehensive or core set of universal moral principles of justice that, regardless of how they have been derived, can be applied to multicultural disagreements over issues of social justice. This commonality forms the basis of both Comprehensive Universalism and Gutmann’s hybrid model of Deliberative Universalism. That different cultures have been able to find some common moral ground for the settlement of disputes has been demonstrated throughout human history. Gutmann suggests that “The primary problem with comprehensive universalism is not that it imposes one set of substantive principles on all societies, but that it overlooks those cases of moral conflict where no substantive standard can legitimately claim a monopoly on reasonableness or justification”¹¹⁴. It is through the application of discourse that Gutmann’s model is demonstrably superior, for not only does she credibly suggest that deliberation may produce

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 194.

solutions to those problems overlooked through the absence of a common moral standard but also that “Deliberation (within the bounds of what is reasonable) *provisionally* (my italics) resolves fundamental moral conflicts here and now, but not necessarily once and for all”¹¹⁵. Gutmann’s Deliberative Universalism is, by the nature of its admitted pertinence to a potentially changing morality, a *relative* response to the challenge of multiculturalism to social justice. The dynamism inherent in the model provides a powerful response to the requirements for social justice in an ever changing human reality.

Gutmann lists the components of Deliberative Universalism as consisting of “(1) a set of substantive principles of justice that are unreasonable to reject or necessary for deliberation, and (2) a set of procedural principles that support actual deliberation about fundamental moral conflicts, conflicts which reason cannot now resolve, and that provisionally justify reasonable outcomes of deliberative processes *by appropriately authorized and accountable decision makers*”¹¹⁶ (again, my italics). It is difficult to elicit from the above whether Gutmann is implying that the *decision makers* are to be representative of the public or merely authorised. Joseph Schumpeter has argued that within democracies, representation cannot be assigned, only the right to decide may be so done. Gutmann goes to some length to demonstrate that democracy alone cannot suffice to decide the just outcome of multicultural conflicts. Consequently, and in consideration of her demand for substantive ethical standards among those who conduct social discourse, we can assume that, as with Schumpeter, Gutmann places the emphasis upon decision making and not representation when describing the criteria for Deliberative Universalism. She does not address either how these decision makers may be authorised nor how they be made accountable. Yet this and the aforementioned criticisms of the structures of her model should not be construed as a complete rejection of the merits of the proposed alternative. Her model

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

would assure that issues of social justice may be addressed through discourse supported by procedural principles and bounded by a common morality. Her analyses of Cultural Relativism, Political Relativism and Comprehensive Universalism provide both the components of her proposed alternative and the elements of its criticisms. She acknowledges the essential criticisms of hegemonic domination, manipulation of opinion and the limits of rationality. The author has not extended these criticisms to her own model, nor has she considered how identity, whether imposed or chosen, may be limited and defined by hegemony. By Gutmann's own admission "more needs to be said of deliberative universalism" and admittedly, her argument has served to "stimulate thought about a relatively neglected response to one challenge of multiculturalism".

Amy Gutman argues a normative and prescriptive solution to the challenge of multiculturalism to liberalism that is firmly within the model. The proposed solution, while admittedly superior to the three models that she has considered, rejected and adapted to form her own deliberative universalism acknowledges hegemonic practices but does not effectively respond to how culture is self-reinforcing under hegemony. Further, there is a semantic looseness about many of her presumptions that demonstrate far too great a trust in "appropriately authorised and accountable decision makers" who presumably base their decisions upon "principles of justice that are unreasonable to reject". Her theory misses an important presumption under liberalism that makes it impossible to effectively respond to the challenge of multiculturalism - or, indeed, any social movement founded upon identity - : liberal individualism denies collective rights that in any way differentiate or divide the society along the lines of any identity other than the greater one of politically equal citizens of the state. Liberal democracy ultimately cannot acknowledge either struggles for equality of class or identity. The only guarantee is a political equality that only arose slowly over an extended period of time and now results - even in the most egalitarian of societies - in a *theoretical* universal suffrage that is hampered by structural impediments to a truly

democratic process. It is liberal democracy's blindness to class and identity, combined with the unfulfilled promise of genuine democracy that marks it as a paradigm challenged by cumulative irreconcilable anomaly in the Kuhnian sense and places those advanced western societies under the paradigm in an increasingly acute state of crisis. This at a time when the paradigm is being normatively applied to cultures demonstrating values and social standards in many ways incompatible with the presumptions of liberalism.

The Challenge of Multiple and Unequal Identities: The Inevitable Inability of Liberal Democracy to respond to Culturally Diverse Post-Modern Society

Liberalism presumes two extremes: the unfettered individual and full and equal political franchise for the greater society. The only collectivity is the entire society and its only relevance is political. All other collectivities are relegated to the realm of the non-political; the private, and are governed by those freedoms of speech, association and assembly that guarantee the freedoms of the individual. Liberalism asserts a political universalism at the same time as denying social and class difference. As a social philosophy, liberalism grew out of far more monolithic and cohesive western societies than the model is being applied to today; even within some of the same societies wherein it originally dwelt. The evolution of liberalism was sufficiently challenged in those western societies from whence the model originated as to demand an incredible resilience in the application of the egalitarian presumptions of the model. Universal suffrage had to satisfy demands for political equality and expand the concept of the individual to include all members of the society. Yet, the extension of political equality to all members of society was entirely attainable under the presumptions of liberalism; the model itself was not challenged, only its application. The goal was in keeping with the two paradoxical extremes inherent in the model: make all *individuals* politically equal members of the greater social *collectivity*.

Today, liberalism is challenged by a diversity of collective identities in polyglot, multicultural, gender diverse and fragmented societies where many of these collective

identities clamour for social equality. The old western culture, with all of its initial prejudices and presumptions seeks to retain *de facto* hegemony while arguing a *de jure* political equality as an inadequate response to demands for social and economic equality. The one legitimate greater political collectivity is no longer equal to the task of social organisation in a post modern world.

“The whole story leads to an inevitable conclusion: the chasm between the universal and the particular is unbridgeable - which is the same as saying that the universal is no more than a particular which at some moment has become dominant, that there is no way of reaching a reconciled society. And, in actual fact, the spectacle of the social and political struggles in the 1990's seems to confront us ... with a proliferation of particularisms, while the point of view of universality is increasingly put aside as an old-fashioned totalitarian dream.”¹¹⁷

Contemporary liberalism is confronted with a social diversity that makes the sole collective identity consistent with the model inadequate and unresponsive to the demands placed upon it for greater social equality. At the same time the model is blind, in any way but the political, to the collective identities that multiply in a post-modern world. Such a view is far from unanimous amongst the community of practitioners that work within the liberal democratic paradigm. Notably both Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer would divide liberalism into two forms, reminiscent of the argument put forward by Mouffe that we have addressed earlier. Taylor specifically denies arguments such as those put forward by Foucault and Derrida¹¹⁸, that any normative judgement is effectively a reflection of the hegemonic fraction of society. Taylor argues not for a genuinely universal *liberalism*, but of a series of culturally specific *liberalisms* thereby offering a counter-argument that the specific society and culture make normative judgements on the application of liberalism according to the values of the society. Taylor is correct, insofar as each liberal society

¹¹⁷ Laclau, Ernesto, “Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity”, in Wilmsen, Edwin N. and McAllister, Patrick, eds., “The Politics of Difference”, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 50.

¹¹⁸ In Guttman, Amy, d., “Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition”, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1994, Taylor condemns such points of view with an uncharacteristic vehemence, stating that “In fact, half-baked, neo-Nietzschean theories are quite often invoked in this debate. Deriving frequently from Foucault and Derrida...”, p. 70. Taylor expresses similar thoughts in Taylor, Charles, “The Malaise of Modernity”, Toronto, Anansi, 1991, p. 60.

demonstrates a unique and specific hegemony that seeks to maintain its dominance through the process of political and social acculturation. Taylor admits that "Liberalism is not a possible meeting ground for all cultures, but is the political expression of one range of cultures, and quite incompatible with other ranges."¹¹⁹ Yet, liberal democracy in the western mould is rapidly becoming the normative prescription for global social organisation. If Taylor's argument holds true for specific societies, how can it be any less hegemonic in a global application? Liberal democracy as a paradigm will remain true to the principles of liberalism in the western sense and will seek to maintain the hegemony of the paradigm to the exclusion of all other models. Even in those western societies where the model was formed, post-modern diversity makes the paradigm increasingly difficult to hold. Taylor admits that "all societies are becoming increasingly multicultural, while at the same time becoming more porous."¹²⁰ The crisis of identity politics threatens the model from within those societies where it is already dominant and makes liberal democracy an increasingly inappropriate paradigm for non-western societies.

Taylor would solve the problems of liberalism by dividing it into two forms: the procedural and the substantive. The former type, Taylor argues, maintains a blind eye to social difference in seeking total political equality and is incompatible with differential rights for non-hegemonic cultures within a society. This view of liberalism is consistent with critics such as Meiksins Wood and others. The latter form, Taylor suggests, accepts the presumption of certain inalienable universal rights as outlined by procedural liberalism, but would add certain differential mechanisms guaranteeing cultural survival and "are grounded very much on judgements about what makes a good life - judgements in which the integrity of cultures has an important place."¹²¹ Those "judgements" are made within the culture itself and are marked by hegemonic relations. Even the case study that Taylor offers - that of

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 61.

Québec within Canada - demonstrates that the substantive form of liberalism would only exchange one form of hegemonic relations for another. For each culture afforded differential rights within the greater collectivity, in the sense Taylor argues in his case study, there is the risk of placing other cultural groups into a subordinate position within the sub-divided society¹²². Taylor's model would encourage the fragmentation of society while doing little to address the problem of power relations and cultural hegemony endemic in the paradigm. On the smaller scale, Taylor offers us little in the way of a specific methodology that would let non-hegemonic cultures enjoy genuine social equality within the greater society.

Taylor does seek to address the problem of power, albeit tangentially, in arguing that the problems inherent in liberalism are due to the individualistic excesses of "authenticity" and the inability to acknowledge that identity is not formed in isolation, but is formed discursively. Here we see how Taylor arrives at the common cultural values that he argues form the basis of specific liberal democratic societies: who we are is determined in concert with those around us and together we establish our values and beliefs. Again, we see the element of two kinds of liberalism: a "bad" form which focuses on the self, and a "good" kind that understands the shared nature of identity and establishes the normative parameters for a healthy society.

"The self-centred forms are deviant...in two respects. They tend to centre fulfilment on the individual, making his or her affiliations purely instrumental; they push, in other words, to a social *atomism*. And they tend to see fulfilment as just of the self, neglecting or deligitimating the demands that come from beyond our own desires or aspirations, be they from history, tradition, society, nature or God; they foster, in other words, a radical anthropocentrism."¹²³

It is difficult to reconcile Taylor's argument for an atomised society driven by the excesses of self-centred individualism with the phenomena of multiple and diverse collective identities under the current understanding of identity politics *per se*. It is the very fact that socially disadvantaged *individuals* have gathered together under collective and *shared*

¹²² See also Habermas, Jürgen, in *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹²³ Op. Cit., Taylor, "The Malaise of Modernity", p. 58. The italics are Taylor's.

identities to struggle for social equality and recognition under hegemonic cultural and political relations that so threatens the continued paradigm of liberal democracy itself. Taylor is seeking to explain the “malaise of modernity” in a post-modern world where individual members of society have reacted to the atomising forces Taylor describes by re-asserting their commonality; often under extreme social disadvantage. The problem is less one of atomising individualism than an inability of the paradigm to come to terms with a diversity of social identities that challenge the one greater collectivity that the paradigm of liberal democracy does permit: social citizenship.

Jürgen Habermas picks up on this issue of discursively formed identity and argues that this permits a politics of recognition that is fully compatible with the prevailing paradigm.

“Persons, and legal persons as well, become individualised only through a process of socialization. A correctly understood theory of rights requires a politics of recognition that protects the integrity of the individual in the life contexts in which his or her identity is formed. This does not require an alternative model that would correct the individualistic design of the system of rights through other normative perspectives. All that is required is a consistent actualization of the system of rights.”¹²⁴

Habermas sees an evolution in the application of procedural justice to protect both the private and public autonomy of the individual as an effective response to the challenge of disadvantaged groups to the liberal paradigm. Employing the feminist critique of liberalism, he argues that the differential needs of women as a collectivity has tempered the content and application of liberal justice. In other words, Habermas is arguing that identity politics has pushed the procedural towards becoming substantive in effect. Here, Habermas is arguing that democracy can correct the inequalities that persist under the paradigm. This may very well be so, and would render the paradigm able to respond to the cumulative and persistent anomalies that threaten its continued existence. Unfortunately, the same hegemonic factors that have produced social and economic inequalities under the paradigm increasingly

¹²⁴ Habermas, Jürgen, “Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State”, in Op. Cit., Gutmann, ed., “Multiculturalism”, p. 113.

limit the effect of democracy in modifying the model. Habermas' argument does much to erase the artificial division of liberalism into two forms that marks the work of both Taylor and Mouffe. Unfortunately, the effect is only rhetorical, as the theory does not readily translate into a tangible effect. Notwithstanding any presumed influence diverse social struggles have had upon the *de jure* form of liberal democracy, the reality is that any collective identity that is non-hegemonic remains demonstrably socially and economically unequal in fact.

**The Continuing Validity of the Class Argument:
The Response by Society, the Swing to the Right and the Splintering of the Left**

One of the consistent tenets of Marxist and neo-Marxist political theory is that the elite classes, the hegemonic fraction of society, are fully aware of their interests as a class. Having invoked, albeit briefly, the thoughts of Poulantzas on the role of the state in organising the interests of the dominant class, we might further comment that this action has been quite successful given the relative silence of society as a whole. Given the wholesale swing to the right that has marked the political cultures of western democracies since the early 1980's, the obvious question in seeking to explain the apparent complacency and, in some examples, the openly complicit participation of society in its own exploitation is: "what happened to the political left?"

The entire concept of social classes has always been more problematic when applied to North American society than to European societies. Notwithstanding the increasing absurdity of the myth that every boy - and now girls too - can become president/prime minister, the liberal belief in class permeability and upward mobility as a reward for hard work is an integral part of North American social philosophy. Where anyone can become a member of the elite, few would admit or settle for an identification with the working classes, and class as a collective identity is weakened as a result. Further, an emphasis on multiculturalism in

increasingly diverse western societies draws the focus of society away from class identity and issues. We see social disadvantage in a cultural context and are frequently blind to its manifestation through economic inequality.

Two current approaches to the problem of class, class struggle and identity can be illustrated as follows. The one school that, having admitted the changes to the very foundations of the definition of the working class in the contemporary example, sees a new composite working class comprised of components of those employed in the traditional means of production and those employed as salaried workers in the new technologies. The dividing line between the two important classes in the Marxian sense - those who exploit and those who are exploited - remains defined by the idea of pure capitalism; those who sell their labour for money to live and those who live by the investment of their capital. James Laxer gives his definition as follows.

“There is no need here to quarrel with everyday usage in identifying the class that has emerged from this process of change. I will call it the *working class/middle class* and I will show why industrial and service sector wage and salary earners actually belong to the one distinct social class. When I speak of the working class/middle class, I am including in it those people who work for a wage or salary in a non-managerial position. Defined this way the working class/middle class comprises about 70 percent of the labour force of the advanced industrialised countries. The other 30 percent includes the wealthy, the managerial elite, and highly affluent professionals - many doctors, lawyers and accountants - at one end of the scale and the working poor, underemployed and the non-working poor at the other end.”¹²⁵

Note how Laxer’s definition also creates an underclass both below and separate from the other two classes. Other authors see class more as a continuum than a bordered category.

“Along the axis between the bourgeoisie and the working class are many indeterminate locations, distinguished by degrees of economic ownership and of possession, from managing director to production supervisor to laborer. Along the axis from working class to petty bourgeoisie are workers with varying degrees of control over the labor process, from self-employed to semi-autonomous worker to laborer. And along the axis between the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie are those with greater or less control over the labor of others. The proliferation of intermediate class locations refines and complicates the concept of class.”¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Laxer, James, “The Undeclared War: Class Conflict in the Age of Cyber Capitalism”, Toronto, Penguin, 1999, p. 132.

¹²⁶ Gibson-Graham, J. K., “The End of Capitalism (as we knew it): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy”, Malden, Blackwell, 1996, p. 49 - 50. The authors summarise the refinement of traditional Marxian understandings of class using the work of Wright (1978) and Massey (1984).

Demonstrably the latter definition is both more dynamic and sophisticated though it does, by the authors' own admission "complicate the concept of class". What it does permit is a definition of class that is amenable to the admission of diverse social identities, and both definitions are far more appropriate to the contemporary understanding of the "working class" than the original and far more monolithic understanding initiated by Marx. This wider definition also permits us to understand that manifestations of worker discontent that range from the UPS strike of 1997 - a traditional "working class struggle" for improved working conditions for part-time workers - to the Ontario teachers Strike against the Harris government in the same year are, in fact, both examples of the current "working class" struggle. Complacency amongst the working class is easier to argue if manifestations of social discontent are perceived as unconnected and separate.

The second school of thought would simply explain away the need for the working classes at all in a socialist struggle. In fact, at its most extreme it argues for the elimination of class as a concept.

Ellen Meiksins Wood summarises the logic of the "New 'True' Socialism" as follows:

- "1) The working class has not, as Marx expected, produced a revolutionary movement. That is, its economic situation has not given rise to what was thought to be an appropriate corresponding political force.
- 2) This reflects the fact that there is no necessary correspondence between economics and politics in general. Any relation between class and politics is contingent. In other words, ideology and politics are (relatively? Absolutely?) autonomous from economic (class) relations; and there are no such things as 'economic' class interests that can be translated *a posteriori* into political terms.
- 3) More particularly, these propositions mean that there is no necessary or privileged relation between the working class and socialism, and indeed that the working class has no 'fundamental interest' in socialism.
- 4) Therefore, the formation of a socialist movement is in principle independent of class, and a socialist politics can be constructed that is more or less autonomous from economic (class) conditions."¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Op. Cit., Wood, "The Retreat From Class", p. 3 - 4. The author continues to spin out the argument of the NTS by explaining that the logic further permits political force to be manifest on an ideological plane that transcends class and demonstrates with human goals that are beyond the economic preoccupation of class politics alone.

This demonstrates an exercise in intellectual cogitation that exhibits an elegant if somewhat impractical application to the genuine needs of the greater portion of the population. One of the most powerful elements of a Marxist viewpoint is its stark and realistic portrait of the social forces and dominant relations within society. The rejection of class struggle by the New "True" Socialists demonstrates an anti-Marxist interpretation of social relations that provides cold comfort to all but the intellectual elite. In fact, a view of social relations that divorces economy from politics sounds more like a liberal democratic view of society than a socialist one, and demonstrates how the paradigm can respond to criticism that originally was hostile to the precepts of liberalism by "legitimising" a socialism that denies the concept of class. Further, any view of social relations that divorces economy from politics permits the existence of economic inequality while holding a separate model of presumed political equality. In reality, there can be no political or social equality of fact without a corresponding relative economic equality. Appropriate rewards and compensation notwithstanding, a cavernous gap between a small economic elite and an economically disadvantaged majority cannot be bridged by formal democracy alone

"In capitalist democracy, the separation between civic status and class position operates in both directions: socio-economic position does not determine the right to citizenship - and that is what is *democratic* in capitalist democracy - but, since the power of the capitalist to appropriate the surplus labour of workers is not dependent on a privileged juridical or civic status, civic equality does not directly affect or significantly modify class inequality - and that is what limits democracy in capitalism.....Capitalism, then made it possible to conceive of 'formal democracy', a form of civil equality which could coexist with social inequality and leave economic relations between 'elite' and 'labouring multitude in place.'"¹²⁸

Given the above, it should be noted that recent modifications in the Canadian immigration system that would give a privileged position to immigrants demonstrating substantial economic means actually implies that, for a portion of that society, economic position *will* greatly determine citizenship status. Here we find concrete proof that, in practice, the political is *not* divorced from the economic in liberal democracies. In fact, in some

¹²⁸ Op. Cit., Wood, "Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism", p. 213.

circumstances, economic privilege can translate into superior political position as the most effective voices in what liberalism would call a pluralist competition for the satisfaction and acknowledgement of interests are often those with the greatest economic resources behind them. Struggles for social equality have to be loud indeed to claim the same effective attention from the state as economic interests do. This concept can further be extended to the democratic process itself under western liberal democracy. Only those either possessing, or benefiting from, superior economic advantage can run for elective office. The theoretical presumption of political equality is limited in practice by economic privilege.

What is pertinent in the logic of the New "True" Socialists is the evaluation that, in contemporary western liberal democracies, the economic situation has *not* given rise to a manifestation of political force. But in an earlier period of the development of the Canadian liberal welfare state, there was a period when a genuine manifestation of the political power of the working classes could be found within the ranks of a powerful left under the CCF. Retaining a model that sees the economic as *inseparable* from the political and is built upon traditional Marxist class relations gives the greatest potential for the realisation of the greater interests of the majority portion of society. Further, the retreat of the liberal welfare state that has marked the ascendancy of the political right in the last two decades may yet result in a return to a genuine politics of class as the carefully constructed and hard fought for social safety net erodes leaving the working classes far more vulnerable to the whims of the market.

The fact is that many social struggles assembled under the politics of identity seek recognition that, in a capitalist economy where social value is made manifest through material advantage, social inequality is often demonstrated by economic inequality. Liberal democracy's accumulated irreconcilable anomalies may be greatly due to liberalism's blindness to social and economic struggles, but the manifestation of inequality is produced

by the inevitability of capitalist relations. Social movements based purely upon identity cannot change the essential nature of dominant relations under the paradigm.

“Non-class movements of social and political identity (defined, for example, by gender race or sexuality) may mobilize politically around their own concerns but the politics of identity cannot alter society’s fundamentally capitalist nature. Socially transformative politics is a politics of collectivity or coalition which is focused on stabilizing or ameliorating a capitalist economy or on constructing a socialist one (whatever that may mean) in the macrosocial space of the future.”¹²⁹

Theories of socialism that do not recognise class will be even less effective at social transformation than earlier, purer forms. The paradigm will only acknowledge and legitimise those social theories that do not threaten the premises both of liberalism *and* capitalism. Much of the focus on the politics of identity serves only to draw attention away from the continued validity of the class argument. Many, though admittedly not all, social struggles are, in fact, economic ones. Yet, the liberal democratic state can more easily acknowledge the politics of identity than that of class and, as the latter is an openly hostile challenge to the paradigm, may actually encourage identity politics.

“Identity politics offers great scope for manipulating the political agenda and seeking support through networks of patronage. For the political and bureaucratic classes the vision of a collection of disparate ethnic groups locked in a historic eternity of separation, sharing a vast continent while a benevolent government manages their common citizenship, has obvious attractions. It is much easier to manage an ethnically divided, patronage dependent population than to deal with a united citizenry with no doubt of their common identity.”¹³⁰

In this quote from Martin Loney, we see an example of what Nicos Poulantzas has argued: continued hegemony is best achieved when the dominated classes are kept in a state of competition and conflict. The necessary class cohesion required of genuine social revolution is avoided, and hegemony maintained.

The greatest error in Chantal Mouffe’s argument was in seeing class struggle as but one of many housed under a renewed democratic movement. In fact, rather than subsuming

¹²⁹ Op. Cit., Gibson-Graham, p. 156 - 157.

¹³⁰ Loney, Martin, “The Pursuit of Division: Race, Gender and Preferential Hiring in Canada”, Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen’s UP, 1998, p. xii. Loney concludes that “The dividing line in Canada and the United States, the country Canada most approximates in its pattern of gross income inequality and growing polarisation, is not between races or genders, but social classes.” P. 330.

class within the greater social movement of democratic equivalency, much of the politics of identity should be returned to, and housed within, the politics of class. It is this issue of class relations and dominance that is so hostile to the paradigm. As such, the only criticisms of liberal democracy that do not either reside within or are made compatible with the premises of liberalism remain those of a genuine politics of class. The paradigm senses this and seeks to either dilute or deny any critical theory not in keeping with the premise of the model. Ultimately, the only potential for a real paradigm shift still resides with those criticisms outside the model.

The Paradigm Proven and its Decline Established: What Shall rise from the Ashes?

Liberal Democracy demonstrates some of the most important characteristics of a paradigm in the sense understood by Thomas Kuhn. It is monolithic within the theoretical and conceptual operations of the majority of the community of practitioners. Only those who are genuinely aware of the failure of the paradigm are arguing for solutions outside of its parameters. Ironically, it is becoming the normative prescription for the organisation of global society at the same time that it appears to be crumbling from within; riven and shattered by splintering collective identities and interests. Its demise is only postponed by the inability of class and identity to ally; the same lack of cohesion that has plagued class struggle from the time Marx conceived and described the economic division of society along class lines. Like all paradigms, liberal democracy is blind to any anomaly inconsistent with its theoretical foundations and denies legitimacy to all arguments that operate outside of the paradigm itself. It powerfully organises its continued hegemony through the political economy of free market capitalism. Here we may find a clue to how the paradigm itself may be displaced, for as with all prior stages of social development and organisation, the paradigm will fall in coincidence with a genuine change in the mode of production. Where knowledge is rapidly displacing industry as the real commodity of the future, such a change

may be forthcoming. Yet, the real challenge will be to conceive of a new paradigm that does not repeat the same accumulated anomalies of the previous models and simply redraw the division of labour and the fruits thereof in the same unequal way. A new paradigm will retain the best of liberalism in such a way as to leave its structural and conceptual inadequacies behind. Liberal individualism will be tempered by collective interest in the same way that identity is formed in discourse. Where social inequality is made manifest through economic disadvantage, class struggle will remain pertinent and continue to critique the model. Where social identity is not marked by economic difference, radical difference and diversity will increasingly erase the hegemony that discriminates against the “other”. Post-modern reality demands no essential identity to the exclusion of “others”. Cultural, racial and gender hegemony are marks of monolithic cultures of the past and will disappear in a sea of polyglot, multicultural diversity. Yet, hegemony does not cede its place either willingly or quietly and Schmitt’s conception of the political as an adversarial field will become painfully manifest where hegemony meets genuine democracy. The period of greatest instability and opportunity is in that window between the decline of an old paradigm and the victory of a new one. As with all processes of birth and regeneration, the initial process will undoubtedly be a painful one. As with all social change the survivors will be numbered less amongst the defenders of the old or the proponents of the new than among the many who simply weather the oncoming storm. “Sweet are the uses of adversity”¹³¹.

¹³¹ Shakespeare, William, *“As You Like It”*, London, Collins, 1964, p. 260. The exiled Duke to his companions.

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