

**Georg Lukács and
Organizing Class
Consciousness**

Georg Lukács and Organizing Class Consciousness

by Robert Lanning

MEP Publications

MEP Publications
University of Minnesota
116 Church Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0112

Copyright © 2009 by Robert Lanning
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lanning, Robert.
Georg Lukács and organizing class consciousness / by Robert Lanning.
p. cm.
Includes index.
ISBN 978-0-930656-77-5
1. Lukács, György, 1885-1971--Criticism and interpretation. 2.
Philosophy, Marxist. 3. Social conflict. 4. Class consciousness. I.
Title.
B4815.L84L36 2009
335.4'11 -- dc22

2009015114

CONTENTS

Chapter One	Class Consciousness and Reification	1
Chapter Two	Historical Necessity as Self-Activity	31
Chapter Three	The Concept of Imputed Class Consciousness	55
Chapter Four	Common Sense and Market Rationality in Sociological Studies of Class	77
Chapter Five	Being Determines Consciousness	109
Chapter Six	Consciousness Overemphasized?	125
Chapter Seven	Class Experience, “Substitution,” and False Consciousness	143
Chapter Eight	Imputed Class Consciousness in the Development of the Individual	165
Conclusion		193
<i>Reference List</i>		197
<i>Index</i>		205

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank David S. Pena for his thorough editing of the manuscript, and Erwin and Doris Grieser Marquit for seeing this project through its stages of development. I would also like to acknowledge Erwin's editing of twenty volumes of *Nature, Society, and Thought* (1987–2007), a journal that exhibited an important balance between politics and scholarship.

Chapter One

Class Consciousness and Reification

To be scientific, sociologists must ask not merely what some member of a social group thinks today about refrigerators and gadgets or about marriage and sexual life, but what is the field of consciousness within which some group can vary its ways of thinking about all these problems.

—Lucien Goldmann

This study is concerned with class consciousness and is undertaken primarily through the work of Georg Lukács. Mention of Lukács generally brings to mind his major concept of reification. Reification is the antithesis of class consciousness, of consciousness able to engage in the making of a socialist revolution. Discussions of reification and class consciousness may be carried out with relative ease at some levels of academic exchange, but the conversation may alter course significantly with the introduction of another of Lukács's concepts that is the mediating element between reification and class consciousness: *imputed class consciousness*. Without this mediating element, reification and class consciousness remain a comfortable dichotomy worthy of perpetual discussion that is unable to dissolve the distance between the two concepts and incapable of resolving the contradiction between given reality and future possibility.

The mediating of imputed class consciousness, however, carries with it the sense that the consciousness of people in a class, the working class, has undergone some organization through processes of socialization, education, or other forms of

politicization of their interests, behaviors, and aspirations. This organization of consciousness as an intervention in the lives of people is seen to be antithetical to an ideological perspective satisfied that the discussion of this contradiction is an adequate means of addressing problems the two terms might suggest. This is relatively safe ground from which to sustain the dichotomy as a buttress against another problem raised by discussions of Lukács and his work: communism and its possible influence on the organization of social movements and on consciousness itself.

To argue, as Lukács did, that the development of class consciousness must begin before the working class can reasonably expect to attain power, means that this goal cannot be left to evolutionary development, or to the period of socialism itself, nor can it be developed by osmosis from mere descriptions of oppression nor from analyses of class cultures when the latter, for the most part, are formed from the demands and needs of capitalism. The post-Soviet period, especially, provides secure ground for some analysts of class to promote working-class consciousness as the mere awareness by workers of their subordination to a more powerful class while possessing sufficient common sense to survive a manageable tension and develop a culture distinguishable from the capitalist mainstream, while still existing in the concrete reality of capitalism. This approach is necessarily limited by its accompanying features: a significant measure of anticommunism; the “culturation” of Marxism that separates such analyses from the taint of the more committed, orthodox perspective; assessments of the deficiencies of working-class movements; and claims that working people have made similar judgments and found the old partisan politics wanting. Informing this cultural approach to the working class is a celebration of the quiet, calculative pragmatism that is claimed to be the sufficient common sense of the worker in the late-modern period.

Let us consider, however, the case of the 1992 methane gas explosion at the Westray Mine in Plymouth, Nova Scotia, in which twenty-six miners died. By their own account, the coal miners believed conditions of work in the Westray mine were abysmal and life threatening. They knew that neither the managers of the

company nor the provincial mining inspectors and politicians in the government of Nova Scotia were concerned about adherence to the regulations set out in the Coal Mines Regulation Act of Canada and the provincial Health and Safety Act. Both of these acts were established, ostensibly, to protect the lives and livelihoods of workers. Neglecting the provisions of such legislation endangered the life of each member of the underground crews.

The conditions of work in the Westray mine are now a matter of public record. The public inquiry into the explosion at Westray heard testimony that miner Stephen Lilley refused one day to remain underground while acetylene torches were being used, a practice that, according to the testimony of several miners, was common (Westray 1995–96, 3948, 3967, 4623–24). The volatility of methane gas in the presence of a single spark is instantly and extensively destructive. Lilley's mining knowledge made him an example of skill and responsibility among his fellow workers, but his refusal to work in unsafe conditions resulted in his suspension for several days. Lilley walked out of the mine knowing his co-workers were aware of such unsafe practices and apparently knowing that refusal of unsafe work was protected by provisions of the Nova Scotia's Occupational Health and Safety Act. When he returned to work after his suspension, apparently neither he nor anyone else was prepared to take up a longer struggle over the unsafe conditions of the mine. Lilley's suspension, however, was not lost on his co-workers, but the lesson the miners drew from it did not acknowledge the history of struggles to establish such state protection and the likelihood of safer conditions had the mine been organized by a trade union. Rather, according to miner Wayne Cheverie, the lesson learned was, "If you refused unsafe work, you were threatened with your job or intimidated into submission" (Richard 1997, 149). When Stephen Lilley was suspended, he left the mine alone, perhaps hoping to make a point or to rally others to collective action in exercising their right to protect themselves and others. When he returned to work, nothing had changed, and when he began that shift, it was also the last day of his life and that of twenty-five others who died in a methane explosion.

The Westray tragedy is the late-modern archetype of reification. It has been analyzed in many ways: as another example of criminal disregard of workers' lives and their families by corporations (Jobb 1994; McCormick 1999), as a problem of media reportage (McMullan 2005), and as a problem of family dynamics in literary representations (McKay 2003; O'Neill and Schwartz 2004). Glasbeek and Tucker (1992) come closest to the complexity of the problem in their brief analysis of it. I will not offer a complete analysis of the events at Westray here, but the focus on a specific theoretical and political perspective is relevant to understanding some factors in selected sociological analyses of class that contribute, if only indirectly, to the occurrence of such disasters and similar social problems: the condition of reification, the absence of class consciousness, and the enormous failure of a form of class analysis that rests on the sanctity of subjectivities, thereby avoiding the necessary relationship between reification and class consciousness and the indispensable mediating element in this relation.

Class as a quantitative measure, or as the "lived experience" of culture, has fairly recently become the antidote to what is seen as an imposition of politically motivated ideology on working people who are merely struggling to survive and who, when social resources are more equally distributed, will be able to achieve more comfort in their class milieu or move beyond it. But this approach and the accompanying claims of failed philosophical and political ideals, seem designed to suffocate exploration and discovery of meaningful alternatives to the present social system and its alienating effects.

The more appropriate response, I argue here, is that questions about the actions and development of the working class demand concentrated organization of consciousness that leads to effective resistance to capitalism and to explorations of alternatives to it. But such organization cannot be well founded without addressing the problem presented by the formation of what Lukács called the "inward barrier" that resists the development of consciousness. Questions not asked of the Westray miners, or of the participants in the studies of class discussed here, are those that take seriously

the level of knowledge that members of a particular social group such as a class possess, and the limitations of that knowledge given the structure of the group in question. This is what Lucien Goldmann referred to as the maximum potential consciousness of a social group which, when reached, establishes the basis for a possible transformation of the group in question. But the process of this transformation is mediated by Lukács's concept of imputed class consciousness, which is intended to undermine the barrier created by reification. Of importance in what follows is the awareness that the inward barrier operates as much at the higher levels of socioeconomic status, for example, among academics who produce analyses of class, as it does among those at the lower end of the division of labor.

Workers' solidarity built on the ground of class consciousness is the central means for addressing political questions such as those that emerge from the Westray tragedy. A further issue that must be dealt with if theoretical questions about class consciousness and reification are to have any meaning relevant to human betterment is whether the content of class consciousness can and should be imputed to people who do not at a particular moment possess it, but whose social relations and individual development might benefit from it. These issues require an exploration of class and class consciousness based on the view that Marx's work contains orthodoxy worth preserving in the contemporary period (cf. Tumino 2001). Concrete changes in the structure of capitalist societies since Marx's day require evaluation of his work and developments of it by others. But periodic evaluations need not result in the diminution of its central elements. The orthodox perspective begins with consciousness of the "forms of being, conditions of existence," that are, according to Marx, the economic relations of human labor and the source of value, and through which development of the knowledge of totality is mediated. How this mediation takes place (through what agency) is a central issue here. An orthodox or classical use of class and class consciousness is a matter not only of attending to the complex of Marx's original meaning and its development by others but also of asserting an essential element of that orthodoxy—political organization

to achieve the specified goal of socialism. Perhaps the most problematic reevaluation of Marxism in this period seems to be the abandonment of this goal, legitimized through a predominantly nonrevolutionary view of class and consciousness.

Sociological studies of class and the integrally related issue of consciousness have come to occupy a significant portion of the mainstream of that discipline. Culturally oriented studies have broadened the range of interest in how “class” affects multiple aspects of everyday life, although much of this has discarded the essential economic relations through which classes are formed and sustained in capitalist societies. Class has become, instead, a term of convenience, somewhat expectedly and perhaps unavoidably in some respects, but its convenient use in academic studies has become excessive and unreflective. It has become a term that can be used to acknowledge experiences of inequality and oppression without any requirement to explore meaningful solutions to such problems. When referring to differences traceable to the social structure and the material resources possessed by or accessible to individuals, families, and communities, sociologists employ a depoliticized concept of class at the same time they use the concept of “socioeconomic status” to indicate the correlation of income, type of occupation, and level of education. In this sense, class instrumentally demarcates upper from lower, more from less, powerful from powerless, with a range of conditions between these extremes. We can confirm that jobs, income, education, and culture are important, as these all rest on the fundamental economic relations of capitalism, without reifying those relations and without requiring a dependence of superstructural phenomena on economic foundations alone. The difficulty is that sociologists tend to favor the political neutrality of socioeconomic status as an instrument of measurement, and they extend that sense of neutrality to the concept of class.

In discussions of class, culture has become important as an object of description and analysis for bringing increased visibility to speech, ideas, feelings, aspirations, and the symbolic or material manifestations of class in homes, schools, workplaces, and leisure activities. But, as Markels (2005) has noted, in many

such studies class has been conceptualized as an “identity site” that purports to substitute subjective experience for a more politically charged conception of class and the collective consciousness of it. A description of experience, or a way of life depicted as a manifestation of oppression, is often accepted as an adequate representation of class without a corresponding interest in the concrete possibilities that have been and continue to be available for reflection and opposition. Awareness of an identity largely drawn from socioeconomic locations is affirmed, even celebrated, as the product of rather static circumstances of subjective experiences.

Applying such meanings to class allows a concept as standard to Marx’s work as false consciousness to be rejected, as we will show in selected academic studies discussed here. Secombe and Livingstone (2000), for example, consider the concept of false consciousness to be one of Marxism’s “more fundamental problems.” The sociological analyses discussed here give priority to subjective impressions and to common sense as adequate expressions of class identity and “resistance,” and to calculative rationality as a legitimation of workers’ self-restraint against the power of capitalism. The rejection of false consciousness is intended to discount the idea that people may have underdeveloped and erroneous knowledge of the world around them, not only because the availability of knowledge may be constrained but because pragmatic calculation deters them from a more comprehensive and critical assessment of the social order. Further, such deterrence by way of rational calculation is given a degree of legitimacy in terms of the perceived needs of the class itself. The rationale for this rejection seems to be that the allegation of false consciousness is an attack on the individual’s pattern of thinking, an assault on the individual’s subjectivity. In short, this perspective extends to a politically ineffective and protectionist view of workers’ experience as given. The rejection of the concept of false consciousness has made Marxism more academically palatable by effectively displacing the historical materialist meaning of class consciousness as specifically related to human development and politically motivated action, dislodging consciousness from the specific context of capitalism as the essential structure through which classes

are formed, and rejecting any overt or indirectly partisan influence as the imposition of an authoritarian ideology.

Analyzed from this perspective, the working class ceases to possess a dialectical relation to either its own end or a goal beyond its existence, that is, a relation to its own historically and socially necessary dissolution. Approaches such as these suffer from the same problem Lukács noted with regard to the bourgeois class and left sects in the early twentieth century, that they separate the historical development of class, in this case primarily as socio-economic status, from the development of consciousness (1971a, 321–22). Class consciousness, like the development of classes themselves, is a process, not a permanent state. Taking a point from Lukács's discussion of Hegel's dialectical logic, "just as repose is only a borderline case of movement," a dialectical approach will understand that potentiality lies in both false consciousness as well as genuine class consciousness, the former indicating a need for systematic development of the potentiality that lies in the complex of social phenomena, while the latter indicates an effort to break through the inner barrier of reification (1975c, 442). But each should be understood as a process that acknowledges the mediated development of consciousness by forces internal and external to a particular individual and to the class of which he or she is a part, with the proviso that the root meaning of false consciousness, notwithstanding the possibility of development from it, is that intervention in reality is stalled or claimed to be unfeasible. Reification is both a cause and a manifestation of false consciousness; it has no meaning without its relation to false consciousness, for under conditions of reification the individual, and the class as a whole, fail in the face of objective possibility to pursue the available prospects for a more equitable, democratic, and socialist future.

The focus of this study is consistent with the quotation from Goldmann that opened this chapter. The emphasis is on consciousness of the social conditions and relations in which people find themselves, and which they create and develop through their self-activity. Thus the Marxist understanding of class and class consciousness is that it exists in a complex of relations; it is not simply designation of place or position in economic production.

This approach stipulates: a) that classes cannot be known dialectically without knowing their essential precondition: the needs of capitalism; b) that no lasting understanding of a class is possible without knowing that its coming into being, its meaning, and its purpose are integrally connected to contestations between classes founded on the need to create subordinate others to serve the purposes of the dominant class; c) that no meaningful discussion of class is possible unless consciousness is understood to be a decisive means by which class develops and by which it is defined through the self-activity of its members. This is essentially the condition Marx described as a class-in-itself (1976a, 211). But the dialectical completion of this process, becoming a class-for-itself, is that the stipulations above are not possible without some active, reflective, organized, and continuous assessment of what is needed to raise the consciousness of people in ways that advance the struggle for human betterment. This is imputed class consciousness. Inherent in its comprehension and development is the consideration of who or what does the imputing to whom or to what, and in what ways this brings into focus the choice for socialism.

In this discussion, two concepts will be continually evident. One is the necessity of organizing consciousness; that is, some consciously and rationally arranged premises by which a present condition of society can be thoroughly known, and from which deliberate planning for a future condition emerges. I explain this further below. A second background emphasis is on the individual as one of the major sources of social change. This seems increasingly important in a period of heightened individuation that at the same time is a period of relatively free accessibility of comprehensive knowledge of the social structure and the history and significance of collective struggle.

In undertaking to critique selected sociological analyses of the working class, the present study intends to show the way in which these effectively affirm and rationalize the less than complete development of class consciousness among some working people, and the ways in which these studies are essentially paternalistic and condescending toward the working class. These sociological studies explain away the Marxist view of class in at least two ways:

1) that the orthodox Marxist perspective of class is outmoded, having been undermined by a determinist or functionalist grounding; and 2) that the experience of life within a particular socioeconomic frame of labor and culture is sufficient to engender adequate social knowledge at the level of class identity. In both ways this perspective denies or ignores the integral relation of class to consciousness and to the contradictions between classes understood through their economic and political characteristics and conflicts.

Why Lukács? Why now?

Georg Lukács provided an approach to Marxism that asserted its originality, its correctness as an analysis of capitalism, and its openness to advancement. Relevant to this study, his position can be summed up as follows. Orthodox Marxism is the employment of historical materialist dialectics as the means of developing consciousness; part of this process is the masses' grasping of theory, as Marx noted, in a way that makes it a concrete force for shaping their development and for elevating theory and practice to comprehensive knowledge of what must become a matter of historical necessity for the working class: moving from immediate facts to the complex reality of historical development and future orientation (Lukács 1971a, 2; 2000, 92; Marx 1975b, 182).

The varied reception of Lukács's work by intellectuals and activists poses a series of problems for applying it in the contemporary period. Morris Watnick articulated something of the dilemma of dealing with Lukács and aspects of his work, as well as what has been the source of attraction to him: "Those who see much of the pathos of history lodged in its ironies could hardly find a better personification of that dialectic than in the career of the Hungarian philosopher-critic, Georg Lukacs—nor one so symptomatic of the perplexities of intellectual commitment in the Communist world" (1962, 142).

Interrogating his political choices, his self-criticisms, and his compromises with Stalinism has often been the basis for calling into question the value of his theoretical work. These political choices were also ethical ones and included the self-criticism he regarded as his "entry-ticket" to continued involvement in the

Communist movement, his Hegelian “accommodation to reality,” and his belief in the possibility of socialism in one country, the Soviet Union, a basic tenet of Stalin’s political and strategic perspective. It should not be forgotten that Lukács was, from practically the moment of his Marxist transformation through the period of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, not only a committed intellectual but a political activist and official within the Communist political structure—a position he assumed again in the mid-1950s—who sought to retain his membership in the Hungarian Communist Party. Toward the end of his life, Lukács summed up his essential choice: “I have always thought that the worst form of socialism was better to live in than the best form of capitalism” (1983, 181).

Indeed, some of his choices are problematic in light of our present historical knowledge and the unfolding of world events. Such statements, decisions, and official positions have been the sharp dividing line that for some creates an unavoidable dichotomy between intellectual and activist and in many cases a superficial distinction between correct and erroneous political decisions. The distinguishing point of attraction to Lukács’s work, or repulsion from it, has been his attempts to make his theoretical perspective a practical force, whether in politics or art. That he chose commitment to a political cause has for some negated any relevance or validity of his ethical perspective and tainted his literary criticism, however much it has been acclaimed by those who separate it from his politics.

After *History and Class Consciousness* was published in German in 1968 (with a new preface by its author), and its subsequent publication in English, a number of studies of Lukács emerged, some of them appreciative, yet critical. In Lukács’s emphasis on consciousness and reification, Arato and Brienes (1979) found the origins of “Western Marxism,” distinguishing it and the work of some of his contemporaries and successors from the Soviet interpretation and use of Marx’s work. Michael Lowy’s 1979 study is among the most interesting for attempting to make sense of the continuities and discontinuities in Lukács’s work throughout his life. While a critical study, it is also premised on an

appreciation of the complexities of history and Lukács's sincerity in attempting to intervene politically and culturally. Many of Lukács's political and philosophical positions were disagreeable to the literary critic George Steiner, but he considered Lukács's moral courage and political commitment worthy of recognition. Somewhat outside the context of Lukács's life, but reflecting some of Steiner's own experience as an intellectual during the Cold War period, he said of Lukács:

He felt surrounded by people whose civil courage was minus, minus zero infinite and who, because they might lose a job during the McCarthy period, . . . crawled, crawled, who would go around hysterically in fear of political correctness because they were afraid the Dean would call them in if they dared to teach the truth. No, thank you. This was a man, who with a small physique, with frequent grave illnesses, a Jew, a Jew around whom everybody had been gassed or massacred, this man lived his convictions, with which one need not agree, to know that he is what the Greek word 'martyros' originally means, which does not mean 'martyr' but 'witness.' (Steiner, qu. in Corredor 1997, 70)

The approach Congdon assumed in *The Young Lukács* (1983) exemplifies the claim of a necessary dichotomy of intellectual and activist. His study ends at the moment of Lukács's transformation from romantic anticapitalist to Communist intellectual and activist, the moment, according to Congdon, when Lukács began writing his "blueprint for tyranny," *History and Class Consciousness* (1983, 186). Breuer (1982) discussed this turn in his study of Lukács's and Weber's use of rationalization but emphasized Lukács's dialectical approach to historical contradictions and the development of the proletariat. Similar to Congdon's dichotomous approach, though more malevolent in tone, is Vazsonyi's (1997) argument that Lukács's interpretation of Goethe became his self-justification for assenting to "indiscriminate murder" in the Stalin era. As we will see in a later chapter, Lukács's onetime colleague, Istvan Mészáros (1995), who was critically supportive in earlier writings, has found Lukács's emphasis on reification, alienation, and consciousness to be a general failure.

Much criticism has been made of Lukács's work, especially in the early period in which he produced, among other things, *History and Class Consciousness*. Aspects of that criticism include his placing the motive force of revolution into the hands and minds of class-conscious, messianic volunteerists. Lukács criticized himself on this account, but the problem he identified in his own work should not overshadow its intent: the concentration on the necessity of developing class consciousness that focused the attention of political organizations on the individual as precisely the means by which the movement toward socialism could be developed and sustained. Michael Lowy has pointed out that at the end of his life Lukács further developed his perspective on political organization and the individual, in part revivifying the enthusiasm he asserted at the beginning of his Communist period in his support, for example, of the "Communist Saturdays that consisted of self-activity, freely chosen in service to the community" (Lowy 1979, 210), and his support for the "Workers' Soviets of 1871, 1905 and 1917, as it once existed in the socialist countries, and in which form it must be re-animated" (Lukács, qu. in Lowy 1979, 211).

In *The Process of Democratization*, Lukács reemphasized the educability of consciousness as a "vital, new generative contradiction of the economic" (1991, 98). In these last efforts Lukács was restating his critique of the bureaucratization of the Stalin period and reasserting the focal point of his early writing as a Communist: the need to address the ideological issues that constrained the potential development of the individual's consciousness and the contribution of those issues to the struggle for socialism. This individual component of the complex of revolutionary organizing and commitment may be the necessary buttress against a repeat of bureaucratization.

In short, the answer to the question, Why Lukács? is his consistent commitment to the full development of the human being that begins within the contradictions, exploitation, and alienation of capitalism, and the possibility of the full fruition of human development in socialism. Considering his intellectual development and transformation, the philosophical missteps and political quandaries that were part of the experience of many

others as well, and his commitment to Marxism and socialism, his work has exhibited a complex of intellectual pursuit and self-consciousness combined with a sustained interest in the necessity of concrete organization and intervention in existing reality.

Lukács's central concept: Reification

Central to Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, the concept of reification attempted to develop Marx's analysis of capitalism, especially the characteristics of commodity fetishism as one of capitalism's fundamental and alienating conditions (Marx 1967, 72; Lukács 1971a, 86). The concept of reification identified the gradual obscuring of the actual basis of productive and social relations: relations between people become relations between things which, in turn, fulfill a basic need of capitalism, to commodify all things and freeze all social relations to better serve the instrumentality of capitalist production. Lukács wrote that the "reified mind" accepted the immediately visible and experienced forms of economic relations and social activity to be those that genuinely represented human relations and human possibility (1971a, 93). The reified mind accepts the normative, surface perception of reality as a condition that, however problematic, cannot feasibly be transformed. The reified mind believes this even while it is aware of unequal relations and the diminished control over conditions of living. It is a backward-looking perspective. The reified individual is one whose ability and interest in conceiving a complex and meaningful future vision have been set aside, undeveloped; the absence of knowledge and critique legitimizes what exists at a given moment in its unanalyzed form and sets out the mental and practical conditions for its reproduction. All this gives the impression that reification is an unavoidable condition, akin to Max Weber's iron cage of modern life. The reified mind might be aware of an alternative set of relations or way of life but considers these in terms of pragmatic probabilities, unattainable because of the degree to which its immediate desires and needs can be satisfied even while they may be little examined or largely misunderstood.

Reification is an attitude that projects a barrier onto immediate conditions, and projects forward the relative permanency of that

barrier in relation to social change, in effect negating the necessity and the value of a forward-looking consciousness. A reified outlook exists when there is no interest in an alternative way of thinking or alternative practice under the given set of conditions, including possibilities of social change that exist undeveloped in the reality of social life at any moment. This is the condition of which Lukács wrote: “the barrier imposed by immediacy has become an inward barrier” (1971a, 164). It can exist in the intellectual as well as the industrial worker; it is a social condition, manifested in the limited self- and social consciousness of the individual. It is that condition of one-dimensionality with which Herbert Marcuse (1964) characterized advanced industrial society in which the absence of opposition has become normative. But neither reification nor one-dimensionality should be viewed as permanent or inevitable conditions. From the viewpoint of historical materialism, alternatives to such perceptions and beliefs may not be obvious, but they can be discovered.

Any social order has a structural imperative, such as that in which the Westray miners lived, that human needs must be satisfied within a particular, limited framework of action. A person is not permitted to steal to satisfy the need for money, but he or she can be the victim, effectively, of theft, since the mining corporation executive and the owner of the local donut shop practice the most efficient, yet legitimate, exploitation of labor, time, and the economic security of their employees within the accepted framework of “free labor.” The experience of a competitive environment indicates to the subject the importance of satisfying immediate needs before one’s competitors (including fellow wage earners) make it more difficult or impossible to do. This is a basic condition of capitalism that “makes every man see in other men not the *realization* of his own freedom, but the *barrier* to it” (Marx 1975c, 163). The ideology that helps to sustain capitalism does not require individuals to be fully conscious of the relation between their actions and the concrete, objective possibilities of individual and social development. But it is of central importance to any set of propositions designed for the radical socialization of individuals that economic and cultural

development should come to be known as a “synthesis of individual acts” that at once “determines the manner, direction, tempo, etc., of the social development” and exposes individuals to the revolutionary possibilities that the consciousness of such syntheses uncover (Lukács 1978, 81, 89, 149; 1975a, 76–77; 1991, 78). Notwithstanding the limits of individual action, it is a necessary precondition for collective action and organization that makes social change possible. The barrier established via reification excludes this consideration, or frames it as unrealistic and therefore not achievable.

Lukács defined reification in terms developed in part from Weber’s analysis of modern capitalism, the rationalization of work, technology, law, and the principle of rational calculation in the economy and by the individuals within it. “In consequence of the rationalization of the work-process,” Lukács wrote, “the human qualities and idiosyncrasies of the worker appear increasingly as *mere sources of error* when contrasted with these abstract special laws functioning according to rational predictions” (1971a, 89). The rationalization of production and of the individual’s function within the structure constitutes “a perfectly closed system” in which the subject becomes less active and more contemplative, thus transforming “the basic categories of man’s immediate attitude to the world” (1971a, 89). Before Weber, Marx demonstrated the essence of rational calculation “in which men are effaced by their labor; in which the pendulum of the clock has become as accurate a measure of the relative activity of two workers as it is of the speed of two locomotives” (1976a, 127). The individual worker is subsumed by the machinations of the capitalist’s time-piece governing the volume and rate of profit. Lukács cited this as an expression of reification (1971a, 89). But the equally problematic if not more dangerous aspect of reification is when individuals come to believe that they are the accurate measure not only of their own work within the system of production, but the accurate measure—in interests, abilities and desires—of the individual as such in capitalist society. This is the concrete manifestation of rational calculation within capitalism in two ways: first, in the sense that the “capitalist process of reification both over-individualizes man

and objectifies him mechanically . . . it makes automata of [people] and turns them into slaves of routine” (Lukács 1971a, 335). Secondly, it is an ideological position that affirms the rule and role of capital in the identification of the individual’s place within the system as the competitive measure to be imposed on one’s own actions and those of others. In this way bourgeois individualism is heightened as the core of a way of thinking, and the possibility of meaningful collective action is diminished.

The present argument is intended to sustain Lukács’s solution to the problem of reification: imputed class consciousness. This will be more fully discussed later. This more comprehensive form of consciousness was intended to overcome the limits of what Lukács called “psychological consciousness” and what Lucien Goldmann referred to as “real consciousness.” Both of these are underdeveloped forms of consciousness; they are derived from and are satisfied with the immediate and momentary in the social environment and are oriented to a pragmatic interaction with the political and cultural forces encountered in everyday life. As we will see in the discussion that follows, these expressions of consciousness fit well with culturally oriented, sociological analyses of class. In such analyses “real” or “psychological” consciousness is what is observed and recorded and becomes the object of analysis. Narrow, pragmatic perspectives, as well as the claim of ethical neutrality, inhibit the sociologist from developing a program for raising consciousness that goes beyond the calculative immediacy that constrains human development.

Thus the problem of reification is not confined to working people exploited by and subordinated to the demands of the economic system; this is not a condition that finds fertile ground only in those at the lower end of the division of labor. Reification in capitalist society also affects those who claim some awareness of the structure and internal workings of capitalism through their relatively autonomous position in, for example, social research and communication. The sociological analyses discussed here have jettisoned the economic basis of class, discarded as deterministic or outdated the goal of radical change that is central to Marxism, and have reduced the significance of consciousness to calculative

rationality. As a consequence, the disciplinary and institutional legitimation of affirmative, value-neutral, pragmatic approaches to class, even if indirect, serves to dissuade working people from the need to develop more critical and comprehensive knowledge of the functions and purpose of capitalism, and the possibility of alternatives to it.

In discussing Lukács's work, I have been selective. I am concerned with those aspects of his work that provide theoretical support and further insight into the possibility of renewing the emphasis on consciousness as an essential means of developing an ethico-revolutionary approach to the part played by individuals in the progress of social movements, political activity, and their own development. In examining the work of Lukács and others, I emphasize what can be developed from his perspective to contribute to these purposes.

Neither Lukács nor Marx demanded such inflexible adherence to their theoretical positions or their practical, concrete strategies as to proscribe development in the face of new material conditions. At the same time, such openness to development has never required a negation of the fundamental theoretical or methodological foundations that initiated the organized political movement toward socialism.

Organizing consciousness

Inherent in the development of Marxism and the pursuit of socialism is the principle that a sound theoretical perspective results in, and also requires, an organized means of simultaneously overcoming reification and developing class consciousness. By this is meant something concrete and intentional. Counterexamples to the tragedy at Westray may be useful here. Long before that mine was developed, and during a period of social and economic conditions far less favorable to working people, miners in Nova Scotia built a reputation for militant trade unionism, class solidarity, and radical political action (Foner 1991, 230–44; Frank 1999). Miners in the Cape Breton region of the province were among the earliest to organize a trade union and proved to be the most militant among the United Mine Workers in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Between 1917 and 1926, for example, there were sixty-four strikes in the Cape Breton mines. Dangerous working conditions, wages (which in the early 1920s were 70 percent lower than for miners in Western Canada), and arbitrary dismissal of workers were among the issues that led to work stoppages. In 1924, for example, one part of the Princess mine was struck because two miners did not receive lamps prior to going underground. Such shortcomings in safety provisions were common at Westray but never challenged. The number of work stoppages, slowdowns, and generally successful efforts to overcome interunion rivalry prior to 1920 speaks to the solidarity of workers in the Cape Breton mines in recognizing themselves as part of a class. But so too does their effort to conceptualize the problems they faced in the deeps as more than workplace issues. Public ownership of the collieries, an analysis in 1922 of the overcapacity of North American coal mining and its likely effect on jobs and income, direct confrontation with government militia, a declaration to “overthrow the capitalist system and the capitalist state,” and the open membership of key leaders in the Workers’ Party (the forerunner of the Communist Party of Canada) attest to workers’ strength and their knowledge of the importance of the potential power collective interests could have beyond the coalface and surface work.

Similarly, Robin D. G. Kelley’s (1990) history of the Share Croppers’ Union and industrial labor in Alabama in the 1930s and James S. Allen’s (2000) memoir of the same period in Alabama and elsewhere in the American South discuss racism and the extreme exploitation of working people in the United States during this period. These studies show that neither the struggles against racist oppression and the arbitrary use of corporate or police powers, nor the development of trade unions benefited from a structure of law or government legislation comparable to the late twentieth century. Unions were built a few members at a time and at considerable risk to many who joined. When the unions were beaten back, their members arrested or run out of state, homes burned, and unionists and their supporters murdered, people once again organized from what remained.

A host of other examples could be cited. But at least one decisive difference that exists between Westray and these examples

is the effort to organize consciousness. To organize the working class can include the formal grouping of workers into a trade union or a political party, both referring to different levels of political motivation underlying the organization and different meanings given to what would seem to be the essential purpose—putting class issues in the forefront of any such effort. The immediacy of economic issues and, as we will see, subjective, cultural orientations often interfere with larger goals. However, in the historical events cited above, organization stands out as the means by which diverse sectors of the working class recognized their common interests, made significant efforts to overcome traditional attitudes regarding race and social authority, and set goals that would substantially improve the lives of working people. Of necessity this meant that trade union and political party leaderships had to ascribe courses of action and a body of knowledge with which to ensure the success of these struggles. In other words, they had to organize the consciousness of members of unions, political parties, and interested others. Sharecroppers, miners, and other workers achieved some of what they set out to do, but if they were less successful than they had hoped, they nevertheless demonstrated a critical awareness of their existing circumstances and future possibilities. The political form of organization that set them on this route was developed in part from the people most immediately victimized by exploitation and racism. But in each case, other motivations, new ideas, and different people came from outside the immediate experience of life in these conditions, with the intention of developing these organizations under the assumption that, despite the difficulties, people would be more interested in the possibility of change than the high probability of long-term entrenchment in their current problems. It is in this sense that one begins to understand the viability of one of Lukács's basic premises: "Organization is the form of mediation between theory and practice" (1971a, 299).

The specific form and content of political organizations is important. The Communist parties in both Canada and the United States were major catalysts for class and social achievements in a variety of areas. Any discussion of class, class consciousness,

and class struggle risks remaining abstract and fundamentally meaningless without a grounding in the objective history of the Communist movement and without attempting some practical connection between working-class struggles and their mediation by partisan political organizations. That history should be recognized as residual in the objective conditions of the present moment.

Organizing consciousness is one component of deliberate action on the part of formal or quasi-formal organizations. Thus, to regard the problem of class consciousness as an organizational problem refers to two interrelated meanings. First, there is the practical, instrumental organization of people into trade unions, social movements, and political parties that deliberately and continually develop premises by which their projected goals can be conceptualized and eventually attained. In the present discussion, organization does not exclusively refer to a particular form of political party or social movement, although my preference, strongly implied here, is for a democratic, relatively open political organization grounded in Leninist principles. Lukács regarded the “organizational forms of the proletariat, in first rank the party, [as the] real *forms of mediation* in which and through which develops and *is* developed the consciousness that corresponds to the social being of the proletariat” (2000, 78).

Secondly, while the first meaning above gives priority to the political form of organization, wider cultural and historical meanings are consistent with the deliberateness and intentionality relevant to the practical forms of organization. If the party is in “the first rank,” then other senses of organization also serve as forms of mediation with which to organize consciousness. This permits, as Lukács’s work demonstrated, an indirect contribution to the development of consciousness and active participation of working people that should include such things as progressive and oppositional forms of literature as well as political organizations as such (cf. Lanning 2002). Raymond Williams, for example, wrote of art as an “organizing principle,” a conscious organization of experience out of which emerges a comprehensive view of the historical transformation of society and the individual orientation

of its members (1961, 9, 31). In a different context, the purposefulness inherent in the concept of the organization of consciousness comes through in Primo Levi's experience of the concentration camps in which "to organize" the scraps of a meal or a pair of shoes was a conscious form of resistance and of the intention to survive (Levi 1965, 27, 157; 2000, 293–94). We could provide a number of different examples, but at its basis the organization of consciousness is the cognition of reality and the intentional mediation of concrete action.

A schema of the organization of consciousness would include the following, not necessarily in order of priority. There must be some recognition of the necessity of increasing knowledge, raising consciousness of the immediate and distant problems of everyday life, and the conviction that this effort is one of the essential means by which a resolution of such problems can be achieved, while accepting that such resolution will be partial at different stages or steps of the process. Further, there must be some guiding principles for developing consciousness on the levels of theory, politics, and ethics. As to the latter, earlier in his career as a Marxist, Lukács formulated a basic ethical perspective: a) that people must decide to take action for the cause of socialism or for reaction; b) that there is no space for neutrality or impartiality; and c) that the individual in conjunction with others must seek to learn what can be known about immediate and historical circumstances in order to evaluate the possible achievements and consequences of their actions (1975b, 8–11). Historical materialism provides the theoretical basis for the organization of consciousness because, as noted above, it necessitates mediation with practice that, in the first instance, is organization itself, as a deliberate and purposeful activity, the chief means to move consciousness from an elementary to a higher level. As Lukács argued, this was the "novel" element in the formation of the Communist parties, "between spontaneous action and conscious, theoretical *foresight*" that gave an entirely new meaning to the immediate conditions experienced by the working class (1971a, 317, emphasis added). Dialectically, "imputed class consciousness" is the key aspect of this "novel" element and is the

most historically effective means by which the here and now of experience becomes revolutionary foresight.

In contrast to this approach to developing consciousness are the counterproductive, regressive analyses (explored later) that effectively disorganize the consciousness of the working class and the means by which class consciousness is developed.

Sociological concepts of class

Sociological analyses of class that purport to expose the oppressive conditions of capitalist society refuse, partly in the name of ethical neutrality, to take the next, dialectically logical step. Exposure of oppressive conditions is crucial to developing knowledge about them and for moving people toward the discovery of alternatives. The former is readily evident in sociological studies of class; the latter is a direction not often posed or suggested by academic researchers. Lukács's controversial statement at the beginning of his critique of irrationalism in bourgeois philosophy applies to the social sciences as well: "In philosophy as outside of it, votes are not cast for attitudes but for deeds—for the objective expression of ideas and for its historically necessary influence. In this sense, every thinker is responsible to history for the objective substance of his philosophizing" (1980a, 4). It is in this way that we need to acknowledge the indirect relationship, at least, between a reductionist view of class and class consciousness and tragedies such as that at Westray, just as it needs to be repeatedly affirmed that the view of class and politics that motivated earlier miners in Nova Scotia, sharecroppers in Alabama, and people in a multitude of other situations has had both direct and indirect consequences for improving the lives of working people.

In *The Destruction of Reason*, a significant aspect of Lukács's critique of Weber, Simmel, and Mannheim was their rejection of class struggle and by extension their rejection of any meaningful revolutionary conception of class and class consciousness (1980a, 603). This is evident in much of Weber's work, which has been the dominant approach to analyses of class and social stratification, especially in North America. From this perspective, class

is something to be understood through the operationalizing of occupation, income, and education, as has been previously noted. Although he did not define class precisely in this way, Weber initiated this orientation in his discussion of “class situation” and “class types,” essentially concepts denoting probabilities in terms of life chances (1978, 302–7). Weber offered sociologists a way of using class in their analyses without the economic fundamentals upon which Marx based his approach, namely, surplus labor and surplus value. Contrary to Weber’s intentions, including these fundamentals in studies of class would make capitalist society as a whole the object of analysis. In his view, understanding class required only a descriptive approach, one concerned with tracing the probabilities for social mobility or elevated status without drawing the sociologist into the economic antagonisms that Marx cited as the genesis of classes. Weber argued that differences between classes need not result in open struggle or a change in the structure of the economic system, and that classes of substantial property and status differences could coexist without conflict, especially if, together, they constituted a united front against an oppressed class.

In the few pages of *Economy and Society* cited above, Weber does offer a perspective on class consciousness. It succeeds most easily, he argues, where “large numbers of persons are in the same class situation,” where it is “technically easy to organize them,” where the object of their struggle is immediate rather than distant, and “if they are led toward readily understood goals, which are imposed and interpreted by men outside their class (intelligentsia)” (1978, 305). The last point alludes to the space Weber acknowledges for the development of potential consciousness. But given his orientation toward academic and political neutrality, Weber could not develop this idea beyond its relevance as an encyclopedia description; nor could he develop it beyond the ideal type that restricted analysis to immediately calculable conditions—the time and space of social action—although this might have been affirmative of his point about the immediacy of the object of class struggle. Instrumentally, if income, occupation, and education are operationalized, a tightly defined ideal type as a measure of

socioeconomic status is created. In doing so, researchers become aware of what kinds of people are doing what kinds of work, for how much remuneration, with what credentials, and so on according to specific criteria established for a particular research project. A variety of measures, correlations, and comparisons may follow, but these are measures of socioeconomic status, not class as a site of consciousness and struggle.

As we will see in the discussion of objective possibility in chapter 3, Weber presented a concept that could be taken in two distinct directions—one direction heavily weighted toward description and probability, which he developed only logically through the category of objective possibility. Descriptive methods, however, have a tendency to remove or reduce the historical element. The second direction involved searching for the options made available through a dialectical development of objective possibility. What Lukács found in Weber's work, and differently in Marx and Engels's early historical materialism, moved him toward the recognition of the potential to be developed in the synthesizing of "individual movement and the overall [social and economic] process that they constitute," recognizing that these syntheses had causal value for social action (Lukács 1978, 89). Weber's "readily understood goals . . . imposed and interpreted" (Weber 1978, 305) may have shaped the alternative approach taken by Lukács, Goldman, and other Marxists.

The problem discussed later in the critique of studies of class may have arisen around Weber's initial sociological definitions, but it has been sustained in the operationalized use of "socioeconomic status" as a synonym for class. The descriptive features and probabilities within the concept of socioeconomic status have been reified and have taken on a life of their own. The fact of a class-status position in this sense only becomes significant when it is understood as a value relation to other status positions, whether simply comparative or an antagonistic relation between the interests of clusters of status positions as different classes. Any attempt to discuss or designate class fails without recognition of the intentionality of these relations, for it provides us with only a fragmented and instrumental application of a sociological category,

but is of little significance in political organization and concrete class struggle. Probabilities are relative positions within the social system. Treatment of occupational or class locations on this basis is theoretically and practically limited.

Weber's approach to class and to social action led to the sociological reduction of class to social stratification. Perhaps the standard approach to stratification was the structural-functionalism of Davis and Moore (1945). While the criticism directed at these sociologists was justified (cf. Tumin 1953), their portrayal of stratification was nevertheless an accurate description of the division of society under capitalist conditions and the negative effects of differences encountered on the various levels of the division of labor. Description for Davis and Moore, who did not see it as problematic, was the beginning and end of their sociological task. Their analysis provided a picture of the structure of probabilities of social mobility and achievement, and the social valuing of the time and resources required to attain status of greater value in the upper levels of the occupational structure. Their typology of stratification reflected the needs of a system that became more successful the more its inequalities and limitations were presented as stabilizing needs of the system, something easily rationalized and marketed in the postwar period as a significant buttress to reification as an equally relevant need of the social system.

Discussion of the division of labor remains important, as does the articulation of distinctions in socioeconomic status; however, the central elements of Marx's understanding of class seem to be overshadowed by such techniques. Aspects of E. O. Wright's initial examination of class (1978) were relevant to Marx's own, such as the issue of labor power and exploitation. Wright arrived at three basic classes and several contradictory class locations. His later work (1985) was more concerned with understanding the complexities of exploitation in a system of stratification, and attempted to measure the probabilities more efficiently with a social division of far more than the basic number of classes. The central meaning of class—its reasons for existence in capitalism—are lost on such excessive distinctions and fragmentation in the categorization of

what is, again, socioeconomic status, not class as it is dialectically completed in an organized consciousness and action.

Much has changed in sociology since these analyses, including a widespread interest in class issues within the discipline and a more comprehensive recognition of the forces and relations of production in social life. But much of the descriptive analysis governed by probabilities and locations remains. In both written material and the classroom lecture, *class* as a term of convenience in the mainstream of the discipline has also become a façade for radical discourse, and in many cases, an example of the commodification of critique.¹ One of the major differences in class analysis in the contemporary period is the shift away from the priority of industrial production to a so-called “postindustrial” phase of capitalism. We will return to this point at the end of chapter 2, but it does lead us to ask two essential questions: who comprises the contemporary working class, and to what extent is the “post-industrial” change relevant to class as conceived by Marx and propagated by others?

A summary view of the problem can be stated at this point using one of Marx’s basic definitions of class found in his discussion of class and the peasantry in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*:

Insofar as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class. (1979, 187)

Thus there are two categories of class: first, “economic conditions of existence,” and, secondly, the combination of “community,” “national bond,” and “political organization.” The first category represents the objective basis for Marx’s view of the necessity of the creation of separate classes. In the hands of some sociological investigators, it is the rational basis for the analysis of class. But the second category has become an equally

instrumental framework for analysis in sociological and cultural studies of class. Marx clearly intended community, national bond, and political organization to extend the meaning of class beyond instrumental or rationally calculated measures. But the last of the three elements in the second category, political organization, is least developed, even dismissed, by such studies. What is often left out is Marx's proviso that without political organization, working people would remain "incapable of enforcing their class interests in their own name" (1979, 187).

Addressing this comprehensively requires a clear understanding of class interests as well as a reasonably firm idea of the quality and character of working-class organizations that are necessary to represent and develop those interests and the class as a whole for those interests. Arguably many sociological studies do not go beyond the instrumental integration of Marx's two categories. In such cases, analyses are only adequate representations of the "real," "psychological" consciousness of those who are said to be working class. This approach is sustained by reifying the class as such and erecting a barrier between the class and the necessity of political organization that develops class interests and experiences toward a specific goal.

The central place of class struggle is one continuing absence in studies that purport to be studies of class. In the studies discussed in chapter 4, it is evident that attenuation of conflict is a dominant focus, a kind of sociological apologetics. Of course we get a much different understanding of class when the revolutionary or partisan interests are clear and developed with an intention to direct conscious action toward a specific end, whether it is fully achieved or not. Appropriate definitions and accurate reading are important for indicating how one approaches the classics of Marxism and their later development, but so, too, is the attitude toward the goal: a commitment to social change, human development, and socialism. Lukács, Goldmann, and others' perspectives take us beyond the immediacy of everyday conditions of class and direct us toward political organization. Their perspectives affirm the importance of not limiting the question of class to the types of persons, occupations, etc., that purport to make up the class, but

going beyond those operational concepts to consciousness of the complexity of those relations. It is this matter of consciousness that permits, and in the contemporary context of economic changes necessitates, consideration of groups beyond instrumentally defined class.

A discussion of Marx's conception of class and historical necessity is taken up in the following chapter. Chapter 3 introduces the concept of "imputed class consciousness" and discusses aspects of its roots in Max Weber's view of "objective possibility." Chapter 4 is a critique of three sociological studies of class, followed in chapter 5 by a discussion of Marx's key concept, "being determines consciousness," which I regard as incompletely understood by the sociologists discussed in chapter 4. Chapter 6 examines Istvan Mészáros's criticisms of Lukács's early work and chapter 7, aspects of E. P. Thompson's view of the working class that are in opposition to the perspective taken in this study. Chapter 8 offers a more complete discussion of Lukács's concept of imputed class consciousness.

NOTE

1. This is a seemingly bottomless field of academic production occupied by many, but Peter McLaren (e.g. 1995, 2000) and Henry Giroux (e.g. 2001, 2004) are two who have sustained this approach in North America.

Chapter Two

Historical Necessity as Self-Activity

In general . . . this alliance between interest and such an idea [of the dissolution of capitalist society] was absolutely not doubted by Marx, or even seen as a problem; that it seems possible at all is obviously based on this: that the human Will to happiness has not been completely corrupted, that the Will as revolutionary class interest is morally already more easily defined, or at least becomes definable, through the simple fact of the commonality of willing.

—Ernst Bloch

Marx's basic division of capitalist society into two classes is based on the conditions and resources of each class: the bourgeois class as owners of the means of production, for whom such resources extract surplus value from the labor of others, and the working class that sells its labor power as a means of survival and under some circumstances as a means of prospering relative to those above them in the division of labor. The organization of modern capitalist societies may not be so clearly divided into these two class domains, and this has led to complications in the field of sociology in addressing class at both the level of structure and with respect to consciousness. A Marxist analysis of class is an analysis of the social order as a whole. Societies in which the resources of capitalism are diffused to some extent across social strata, or where portions of the working class tend toward upward social mobility, retain the essential characteristics of capitalist

society discussed by Marx. As Ollman has pointed out, the economic and social conditions of a class also imply boundaries between itself and another class (1971, 121). Within and across those boundaries, social and economic conditions determine the likelihood of satisfying needs and the means by which this can be done, the content and arrangement of culture with respect to the interests of particular classes, and the general character of individuals within it.

Emphasizing the basic division helps to avoid the quagmire that engulfs much sociological research on class. There is no avoiding the objective reality that the working class did not create itself but that capitalism as a social system required a subordinate and exploitable class to sustain and develop itself, and that this necessity for the capitalist class has not altered fundamentally, although the character of the relationship has. In contrast to other classes, the working class, properly conceived, is “based exclusively on [its] role in the capitalist system of production” (Lukács 1971a, 59). Class is based on, but not limited to, this direct economic relation. Certainly it is evident that as nonowners of the means of production the working class exhibits a range of lifestyles and quality of living conditions from the very poorest to relatively well-off and secure. Although it is recognized that gradations of consciousness exist, like differences in conditions, it cannot be rationally argued that such gradations correspond to multiple demarcations of socioeconomic status. Such an approach would deter the Marxist trajectory of class consciousness from the discovery of its historical necessity and offer credibility to the calculative rationality that is claimed to govern class interests and actions. A study concerned with a complex system of stratification that purports to be about multiple classes would be an empirical description of socioeconomic strata at these different levels and would diminish the substantive economic and political causes of class formation. Since our interest here is to demonstrate the inseparability of class from consciousness and from the struggle with the opposing class, a further division of society into additional classes is counterproductive. While recognizing intraclass differences, we will refrain from such sociological descriptions of

the strata within the working class (or society as a whole) and the probabilities for the upward mobility of some of its members. In Lukács's analysis, as in Marx's, what is crucial is not the differences of status or position as such within a class, although these do carry a measure of analytical importance, but the ontological status of those differences "within the totality of the socio-historical process" (Lukács 1971a, 324).

Beyond its actuality as a class, the working class, properly conceived, remains most significant because of the historical efforts and concrete achievements of its organized sectors. Such achievements have become part of the objective knowledge of social life as it is, as it has been changed, and through which, for generations, a socialist future has been envisioned. Thus Marx held that any society founded on class differences, and on the assumption that those differences are antagonistic, requires an "oppressed class" as a "vital condition," he further contended that, "The emancipation of the oppressed class thus implies necessarily the creation of a new society" (1976a, 211). If this basic orientation of Marx's is not continually reaffirmed, the terms "class" and "working class" are only terms of sociological convenience.

Intraclass distinctions, class culture, and social mobility, among other possible considerations, indicate the broadening of a definition of class beyond the differences between owners and nonowners of the means of production, or levels of socioeconomic status in the division of labor. Marx's comments on community, nation, and political organization (noted in the previous chapter) are indications of the possible development of a cultural analysis of class. However, if a conception of class is not firmly grounded in Marx's basic criteria and in the historical achievements of politically organized working classes since Marx's time, the other considerations may run too far afield, thus losing connection with the essence of capitalism itself.

It must be emphasized, however, that Marx's concept of class is not a rigid base-superstructure model. Effectively, everything that may be conceived as "working class culture" is a product of its relation to a dominant class and the system of production relations. Such a culture is subject to change when economic

conditions commanded by its opposing class are modified. More importantly in terms of an organized response to such power, such a conception of class culture is subject to radical change when the working class achieves consciousness of itself and pursues a path of deliberate self-destruction as a class of subordinate people. If the working class, in Marx's conception, develops interests and consciousness essential to undoing itself as a class and sets the stage for the creation of a new society based on universal human interest, it speaks and acts simultaneously for its own sake and for others outside its class boundaries. In expressing this duality of interests it opens itself as a class to all those who share the interests that the working class develops on the basis of its comprehensive understanding of oppression, disadvantage, exploitation, and alienation in capitalist society, as well as its future vision for humanity as a whole. This is as relevant in the contemporary period as it was in Marx's day.

Thus the orthodox Marxist conceptualization of the working class includes its symbolic and factual history. While the future role ascribed to the working class is the "means by which humanity liberates itself" (Lukács 1975b, 6), the purpose ascribed to it theoretically must be a purpose it consciously ascribes to itself when its members are able and interested in doing so.

The discussion of consciousness should recognize the distinction but should avoid a false dichotomy between class and trade-union consciousness. It has been rightly assumed in the history of Marxism (particularly Lenin's position, discussed below) that trade-union consciousness is narrower and more instrumentally oriented to immediate goals, but it is a form of consciousness that taps into the spontaneous reaction of the working class to its conditions of existence. While trade-union consciousness has also been seen as a step in the direction of a more comprehensive stage of consciousness, it is not a step that is necessary to achieve the fully developed conception of class for itself.

Historical necessity and class consciousness

In *The Holy Family*, Marx and Engels conceived of the proletariat as a class capable of doing what "in accordance with [its]

being, it will historically be compelled to do”: to revolutionize society and to establish conditions to abolish itself as a class (1975a, 37). Istvan Mészáros considers their statement alongside remarks by Antonio Gramsci, who emphasized the development of “social forces” (i.e., the working class in Gramsci’s cryptic language) as an objective development and as a “force of will” that is “permanently organized and pre-ordered over a long period, which can be advanced when one judges the situation is favourable (and it is *favourable only to the extent to which such a force exists and is full of fighting ardour*)” (Gramsci, qu. in Mészáros 1971, 85).¹ Gramsci’s statement qualifies “historical necessity,” but not differently than Marx and Engels, who assert that the historical action of the proletariat is contingent on its “life situation,” and that the direction of the proletariat’s action and its consciousness is developed within specific historical and social conditions. The quality and character of the proletariat’s life situation is contingent not only on the resources found and developed within those material social conditions, but on the substance of consciousness developed within the working class itself.

It is crucial to point out the structure of Marx and Engels’s statement above. It is not what the proletariat is compelled to do, but what it *will be* compelled to do. The structure of the sentence is future oriented and contingent; something, it is implied, will occur to bring forward a realization that a specific course of action must be undertaken to achieve a particular goal. That something must be discovered, learned, and developed.

From his objective idealist perspective, Hegel argued that what actually exists contains an essential unity of necessity, contingency, and possibility. Discussing this position, Marcuse stated that “it is the essence of the actual to be *more and other* than what it is at any point” (1987, 96). Actuality, therefore, is always moving toward the realization of the potential of a social phenomenon and what is possible for the future becoming. From a historical materialist perspective, in other words, elements of the future condition are contained, undeveloped, in the concrete reality of the moment. Thus, necessity, the realization of possibility, comes about, in part, through the myriad of contingent relations encountered and how

those relations are mediated. From a non-Marxist perspective, Brown (1988) points out that necessity should be understood in terms of available resources, conditions, and information. Putting the issue in terms of the individual's cognitive processes, Brown writes, "the existence of a necessary tie between the available information and a rationally acceptable result allows us to understand *why* all rational individuals who start at the same point must arrive at the same conclusion" (1988, 14–15).

Contingency, possibility within actuality, and "available information," are merely mechanical senses of necessity if two further conditions are not fully considered. First, if there were not a variety of possible contingent relations in reality, the movement of history would be rather unproblematic, a matter of mere description rather than of critical assessment of these factors and an emphasis—a relatively autonomous choice—on the value of one or some factors and alternatives over others. The second consideration is what mediates intentionality. While Brown's logic is fundamentally correct, economic conditions, reification, and the existence of a viable political force are factors that explain, from a Marxist perspective, why all individuals do not proceed from the same starting position and why they may not arrive at the same conclusions. Thus the Hegelian concept of mediation is an essential consideration: "To this extent the *means* [mediation] is *superior* to the *finite* ends of *external* purposiveness: the *plough* is more honorable than are the immediate enjoyments procured by it and which are ends. The *tool* lasts while the immediate enjoyments pass away and are forgotten" (Hegel, qu. in Anderson 1995, 69; cf. Parkinson 1970, 127; Hegel 1931, 436–37). The mediating element, such as a political party, a social movement, or a conscious minority, may be the means by which people become aware of their unequal positions as well as the means by which the differences might be diminished.

The concrete actions of the European working class were evidence of contingent events and conditions mediating the recognition and realization of historical necessity. Following their fundamental passage quoted above, Marx and Engels write, "There is no need here to show that a large part of the English

and French proletariat is already *conscious* of its historic task and is consciously working to develop that consciousness into complete clarity” (1975a, 37). This is evidence that “historical necessity” is not predetermined, that it does not simply emerge from the agglomeration or evolution of historical events, but must be actively developed by historical subjects. Bertell Ollman remarks that the development of class consciousness is a potential “rooted in a situation unfolding before our eyes, long before the understanding of real people catches up with it” (1993, 157). This does not refer to history operating by itself, as its own motive force, but refers to the existence of resources available by which consciousness can be developed, and these are resources previously developed by human beings in their various forms of social interaction. Historical necessity acquires its status as a historical law only through this kind of conscious action developed as it is in the context of objective social conditions. One such objective condition, as Gramsci argued, is economic crisis, which “can only create a more favorable ground for the propagation of certain ways of thinking, of posing and solving questions” (Mészáros 1971, 85).² Conscious action, i.e., the development of consciousness, is as much an element of orthodox Marxism as the formation of classes through economic relations. Historical necessity is immanent in the complex of social and historical conditions in which the proletariat finds itself, so long as it becomes conscious of itself and the necessary mediation of the potential within that complex.

Mészáros uses the passages from Gramsci and from Marx and Engels to illustrate the distinction and dialectical relationship between contingent and necessary class consciousness. Contingent class consciousness, Mészáros argues, is more limited; it is concerned with contradictions of the system but at a local or immediate level relevant to the particular conditions of a specific class. But such local or immediate conditions are the springboards that serve to motivate a positive orientation toward understanding necessary consciousness. Necessary class consciousness is an expression of the development of consciousness based on knowledge of the “objective contradictions of the socio-economic system” (Mészáros 1971, 120). This level of consciousness is more

than an awareness of problems inherent in this kind of society; necessary consciousness comes about only upon an awareness of the possibility of an alternative and the deliberate pursuit of that alternative. This form of consciousness denotes a process of development with visible resources and programmatic organization, and as such is a choice between alternatives. There is no genetically driven development of it in the brain, no supernatural power that discloses essential knowledge on its own terms, no historical process that guarantees its development. Thus Mészáros argues that the idea of “imputed class consciousness,” which is central to Lukács’s Marxism, is already contained in Marx and Engels’s early formulation of the proletariat’s historical necessity. What the proletariat will be “compelled” to do will develop through a progressively more comprehensive consciousness and an expanding range of self-activity; these constitute the dialectical completion of historical necessity. A key point here is that necessary class consciousness is at once a cognitive and ethical development; it may be influenced by, but is not entirely subject to, what develops out of contingent class consciousness.

The historically necessary goals of the proletariat (its pursuit of socialism and the negation of itself as a class) require mediating elements integral to other historically appropriate concrete conditions for emergence. The working class does not know intuitively what it will be compelled to do, for intuition contains no mediating element (Lukács 1980b, 34). Rather, the knowledge of the working class comes about through its intentional self-activity in working through and reasoning about the contradictions of capitalist relations of production and the historical development of itself as a class in capitalism and in engagement with mediating elements in the struggle. This is the class-specific form of the generalized self-activity that, even from Hegel’s objective idealist perspective, produces and has the potential to fully develop human beings (Lukács 1975c, 432, 538). Marx and Engels emphasize the potential that can be developed by the class as a collective and driving force for social change; but that is a force of an actively developing class consciousness focused primarily on the necessity of class struggle. Thus attention should be drawn to the dialectical

foundation of their statement, comparable to Marx's discussion of labor time in the *Grundrisse*; that is, evidence of mediation as a rational, objective activity diffused throughout social reality (1986–87, 107–9).

The proletariat's compulsion, to which Marx and Engels refer, is relevant, first, in the context of their argument that the proletariat as a class is "the abstraction of all humanity," in the sense that "the conditions of life of the proletariat sum up all the conditions of life of society today in their most inhuman form," and that consciousness of these conditions requires overcoming them in an organized effort that will culminate in the negation of the class itself as well as the economic and social order responsible for the creation of that class. The proletariat advances only by becoming conscious of itself and the necessity of its own negation. Its termination as a class is the height of its consciousness in bourgeois society. Marx and Engels argued that this principle holds regardless of "what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment *regards* as its aim." But once the idea of historical necessity, understood as a choice between alternatives, becomes a fact of consciousness and a value judgment on capitalist society, it takes the status of a material force of self-activity for at least some portion of the class. At that juncture, what "this or that proletarian" thinks or does with objective historical conditions, in conjunction with other proletarians, acquires a dialectical and organizational priority. In the face of poverty, exploitation, or racism, it is precisely the decisions "this or that proletarian" will take that contribute to making the difference for developing and sustaining a social movement to ameliorate those social conditions (Marx and Engels 1975a, 36–37).

In other words, what the proletariat will be compelled to do out of historical necessity becomes meaningful and possible if some proletarians deliberately develop a level of consciousness beyond that which is instrumentally useful in their immediate circumstances and instead take a course of action designed systematically to address the problems of which they have become conscious. The knowledge and consciousness of the working class contribute to the formation of the objective possibilities in society

and to the class struggle of the proletariat. Thus what the individual proletarian thinks or does is relevant dialectically in the sense of the universality of historical necessity and the particular individual determinants of conscious action. Historical necessity cannot be realized through this process alone; it becomes meaningful through the development of individual consciousness and the “maturation of . . . *objective* conditions,” a process that can only take place by way of political organization, institutional arrangements, and social movements that mediate what the individual thinks or does in the objective social conditions (Mészáros 1971, 93).

A worker’s thoughts are subjective when they are oriented only toward their immediate needs. Thoughts exist as such until they take an objective form in which they are expressed externally and organized, when they are mediated through some element of objective reality in a way that extends thought and consequent action beyond the thinker or speaker. The process of mediation is not merely to draw out the subjective and situate it in a more collaborative environment, but to subject it to the influence of objective reality as history, as a programmatic political movement, and as self-conscious reflection. The comment regarding what “this or that proletarian” thinks or does serves to acknowledge that the immediate level of consciousness of individual workers may be underdeveloped and conflicted by the nature of their class existence. This is what Goldmann referred to as “real consciousness,” i.e., what people actually think at a given point in time in a specific set of circumstances (1977a, 32). The concept corresponds with Lukács’s “psychological consciousness”; both are expressions of limited, underdeveloped consciousness.

Arato and Brienens (1979, 132–33) point out that Lukács’s apparent working out of his different solutions to the problem of the self-abolition of the proletariat occurred much earlier in his career, in two chapters of *History and Class Consciousness* written two years apart. In the essay, “Class Consciousness,” Lukács stresses objective historical laws of social and revolutionary development. In “Reification and Class Consciousness” the emphasis on the dissolution of the class lies in the self-consciousness of

the proletariat itself (see, especially, Lukács 1971a, 180–81). But in other contexts (1980b, 120–23), he addressed the problem of necessity by developing a materialist principle from Hegel. Necessity is a causal process that is open to mastery once the objectivity of “lawfulness” becomes conscious in human beings and cognitive intervention is consciously undertaken. As Somerville (1974, 277–78) argued, when Marx implied or suggested inevitability, the goal he asserted could be realized only if a specified program of preparation and action was followed. From a dialectical perspective, historical necessity has an element of an “if . . . then” philosophical relation. As we will see below, this requires a certain orientation to “objective possibility” and, more specifically, the action implied in Lukács’s concept of imputed class consciousness, an idea already contained in Marx’s comments on the Communards’ conscious action and development. However, as discussed in the following section, Lukács further developed an understanding of the revolutionary import of tensions and contradictions between the individual and the economic system.

Another example from Marx’s writings helps to clarify the concept of historical necessity. He wrote about what “the workers know” regarding the importance for their struggle of the ascent to power of the bourgeoisie over feudal monarchies (1976b, 332–33). Although revolutionary interest was stirring in 1847 when Marx first wrote about this, the statement was largely theoretical; that is, it anticipated the development of proletarian consciousness based upon his assessment of its objective possibility. When he returned to a discussion of “what the workers know” in 1871, while writing the first draft of *The Civil War in France*, it was in reference to what the Parisian proletariat had come to know concretely through their struggles to establish the Commune; namely, that they could “not expect miracles from the Commune,” that the struggle would necessarily take place over a period of time “through a series of historical processes . . . against capital and landed property,” and through the “development of new conditions.” At that historical juncture the workers knew both concretely and theoretically “that great strides may be taken at once through the Communal form of political organization and that the time has come to begin that

movement for themselves and mankind.” The action of the working class of Paris did not emerge as a compulsion of unknown origins, but as a political and ethical choice of which the proletariat had become conscious through their experience of capitalism, their struggle with an opposing class, and their exposure to and appropriation of a different way of comprehending and addressing their problems as a class (Marx 1986, 335, 491–92).

This meaning of the individual component of working class organization was taken up by Lenin in one of his earliest polemics, “What the ‘Friends of the People’ Are and How They Fight the Social Democrats” ([1894] 1960). He dealt with the issue of the individual in history and more immediately in the organization of the social-democratic movement. His primary target in this polemic was the Narodnik, N. K. Mikailovsky, who argued for the recognition of historical necessity as an immanent driving force that subordinates, and even negates, the significance of individual action. The idea that individuals are activated and manipulated by historical necessity undermines the notion of an idealistic voluntarism of the individual as the great shaper of social transformation. Individual will and historical necessity, in Mikailovsky’s view, appeared to be two extreme points of a worldview that avoided the more important discussion of the relationship between individual action and the historical laws of movement and change. Lenin, substituting “determinist” for historical necessity, argued that it is “only the determinist view [that] makes a strict and correct appraisal possible instead of attributing everything you please to free will” ([1894] 1961, 59). He was referring to the necessity of discovering the conditions under which historical events occur, a meaning that heightens the feasibility of individual action in this discovery and the range of options available while acting on them. “Similarly the idea of historical necessity does not in the least undermine the role of the individual in history: all history is made up of the actions of individuals, who are undoubtedly active figures. The real question that arises in appraising the social activity of an individual is: *what conditions ensure the success of his actions, what guarantee is there that these actions will not remain an isolated act lost in a welter of contradictory acts?*”

(159; emphasis added). Thus the subjective factor is already a feature of Lenin's revolutionary theory and is sustained dialectically by the form of organization he developed.

The tension between the objective and subjective at both the theoretical and the rhetorical levels is a continuous presence and problem in Marxist theory. This is evident in Lukács's early and late writings. His identification of subject and object in the proletariat was in part grounded in the belief that in liberating itself the proletariat would liberate humanity because it was the only class not interested in its own continuation, but this implied an inherent relationship between the proletariat's liberation and human freedom. Goldmann referred to this "exceptional perspective" of the proletariat as "the weakest part of the Lukácsian analysis" (1977b, 61). In this sense, Marx's statements on historical necessity are sometimes taken up, or appear to be so rhetorically, in an undialectical manner that sets up the historical subject, the proletariat, for a role without agency in a context of action without mediation.

In summary, what the proletariat "will be compelled to do" rests on a consciousness of the contradictions of capitalism and the consciousness of a possible alternative; that is, when the working class possesses a consciousness of itself within a complex of the immediate conditions of society and production relations, and a consciousness of the historical development of these conditions. This consciousness is the dialectical completion of the knowledge of historical necessity that develops from self-activity and therefore requires mediation. Commenting on the development of characters in literature—but equally relevant to other aspects of reality—Lukács recognized that so much of that development has to do with a "decision which has altered the direction of [an individual's] life" (1963, 23).

Knowledge, value, and consciousness

Ollman's approach to class can be seen as a development of Marx and Engels's original propositions. He proposes an orientation to class that requires inclusion of consciousness and class struggle and is, therefore, essentially political. He argues that class consciousness is a process of becoming, the development

of potential or “future class consciousness.” He writes, “studying workers’ class consciousness . . . is looking for what is not there, not yet present in the thinking of real workers, as well as for what is” (1993, 155, 160). What is there is some evidence of what Goldmann and Lukács, respectively, say is “real” or “psychological” consciousness. But while class consciousness is something “waiting to happen,” as Ollman says, it is, in effect, actually awaiting mediated development.

He suggests six points for developing and assessing the existence of class consciousness: 1) subjective and objective identity and interests of membership in a class; 2) some knowledge of the dynamics of capitalism, “at least enough to grasp [its] objective interests”; 3) the “broad outlines of class struggle and where one fits into it”; 4) some sense of solidarity with other class members, suggesting the importance of being similarly situated; 5) a “rational hostility toward opposition classes” which he states is distinguished from “feelings of mutual indifference and inner-class competition that accompany alienation”; and 6) a “vision of a more democratic and egalitarian society that is not only possible but is a condition individuals can help bring about.” The last point should include something of how such a vision may be generated and what sort of people is needed to do so, a vision that retains the necessary connection between the present and the future so that such a perspective avoids utopianism (155).

With regard to interests (Ollman’s first point), no group of people can begin to cohere if there are no recognized common interests among them. Marx’s basic statement on what constitutes a class (in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, already quoted) includes common interests as well as antagonistic relations with another class. The conditions of which he wrote were the objective consequences of capitalist production relations. From the point of view of the working class, these are interests generated and further developed from a consciousness of common conditions: interest in common human conditions, the possibility of realizing individual and collective aspirations, and the possibility of a common response to them. For Marx and Engels, collective interests of the class are those that will be generally represented in the society

they control if the class succeeds to power (1976, 47). The common interests of everyday life include, among other things; a sense of security of person (health and psychological well-being); decent housing and food; provision for educational opportunities; and meaningful, nonexploitative, nonalienating work. But there are also political interests developed initially, at least by a minority of the class whose consciousness provides a basis for classwide knowledge of capitalism; that is, an understanding of the relation of people to the system as a whole, who are not deterred from feelings of hostility toward the opposing class, and who possess a vision of a future society. In other words, some degree of each of Ollman's six points must be evident in the maturation of class consciousness as a means of developing the class itself. Some interests of this more advanced fragment of the class will include a greater degree of relative autonomy of the individual, sufficient consciousness to make ethical choices, and some understanding of the need for collective organization.

These interests are framed overall by discoverable knowledge in historically necessary actions. This conception of interests differs considerably from Weber's standard sociological perspective that reduces the potential of collective interests to reified relations between purely economic actors. One focus of Lukács's critique of Weber was the latter's "ascribing to ideological phenomena an 'immanent' development arising out of the phenomena themselves" (Lukács 1980a, 604) by which could be understood that "interests . . . *directly* govern the actions of men" (Weber qu. in Lukács 1980a, 605, emphasis added). Weber's concern to define action predominantly within the framework of normative interests and social expectation (1978, 30–31; 1375–80) centered on instrumentally rational actions governed, moreover, by self-interest with socially normative expectations. Custom and behavior that has been designated as normative is based "entirely on the fact that the corresponding type of social action is . . . best adapted to the normal interests of the actors as they themselves are aware of them." Further, that interests are seen by Weber to directly govern actions is indicated by the anticipation that the conditions of people's interests are the basis for treating "the corresponding typical

expectations as to the prospective behavior of others” (Weber 1978, 30; cf. 1375–80).³

Individual and group interests are significant influences on choices and courses of action, but Lukács’s point is that Weber’s conception of normative interests obscures the contradictions of historical relations in capitalist production. Bourgeois class interests condition capitalist production more or less directly on the terrain on which profit is made. Labor power is bought and sold and individual actions are shaped, but the bourgeoisie do not govern absolutely. The logic of Weber’s conception of interests produces a reified view of reality. That is, working people expressing their self-interests in the marketplace may perceive their interests as governing their own and others’ actions. However, as we will see below in the critique of Seccombe and Livingstone’s study, such an orientation merely supports the ideological perspective that the best interests of working people are served when they exercise an appropriate level of calculative rationality.

Knowing something of how capitalism works requires some basic knowledge of the meaning of value. From Lukács’s perspective, such knowledge must bridge the objective interests of production and profit-making on the one hand and ethics on the other. Lukács addresses the relationship between objective social conditions, individual and class interests, and the possible initiatives emerging from this complex in which social being develops. In a discussion of economic values, he makes a connection between social being and value judgments current in specific social contexts that are relevant to Ollman’s second criterion for class consciousness: some knowledge of the dynamics of capitalism; namely, consciousness of such relationships and processes that effect the value of the producer and those who are supported through the producer’s labor power (1978, 75ff.; 1975a, 75–77). The essence of Lukács’s argument, derived from Marx, lies in his “resolution” of the problem of objective structures (conditions) and subjective or individual intentions. As the quantity of values produced in society increases, socially necessary labor time decreases; the exchange value of the labor of individuals and social classes diminishes under this basic principle of capitalist

production. Individuals produce economic value by working inside the system of production. But the structure of the relations of production operates independently of the people who produce those values. However, because it is they who expend the labor power to produce commodities and who engage in consumption in the marketplace, this is a relative rather than absolute independence. This fundamental contradiction of capitalism denotes a concrete set of circumstances more easily recognized in times of economic downturn—that the economic and social value of the individuals who produce less diminishes more. There is an objective reduction in labor time to produce the same volume of products and, therefore, a diminished amount of labor power required. This in turn diminishes the value of each individual sum of labor power, and by extension reduces the number of workers engaged in productive, remunerative work. The social and economic value of each worker is generally subject to diminution in this way. Workers might be shifted to another sector of production, but such shifting or jettisoning of labor, along with the possible reduction of living standards, is itself an expression of the variable value of the laborers as a human quantity of productive power. All this is less obvious in periods of relative economic stability or growth. But the fact that it is less obvious during such times is attributable to the power of reification, the belief that a period of relatively good times diminishes the existence of the fundamental and enduring contradictions of capitalism that devalue human life in good and bad times alike.

Lukács argues that “all these objective relationships, process, etc., although they maintain themselves and operate independent of the intentions of the individual human acts in which they are embodied, nevertheless only arise as the realization of these [individual] intentions, and can only develop further [i.e. the objective relationships, process, etc.] by way of their reaction back on further individual human acts” (1978, 76). He insists on the relationship that continually illuminates the interaction between the individual and the social structure. The distinguishing feature of his discussion is its emphasis on the subjective factor in initiating an intentional reasoning about such relationships, and the way in

which this leads to a weakening of the barriers formed by reification. This passage also emphasizes the embodiment of objective economic relations in the actions of individuals, indicating the integral connection between objective conditions and individual human actions. This is intended to draw attention to the importance of knowing this relationship as a means of diminishing the distance between the relations of production experienced in everyday life as work and the potential impact on those productive relations that can be brought about by a developed consciousness of them and action against them.

The reified mind sees objective relations such as those of production as merely a normative characteristic of economic relations as such. The Marxist perspective understands this, from the point of view of capitalism, as an intentional and necessary devaluation of human capacities and interests, shaping them to serve the most banal interests of profitable commodity production. As Lukács points out, the objectivity of the economic system in producing economic values nevertheless exists alongside a subjective factor, the value “judgments that men make of it from the most varied standpoints and the most varied motives” (1978, 75). Thus, it is a value judgment on the part of those who own the means of production and manage the economy to treat people, via the exploitation of their labor power, as more or less valuable commodities, an evaluation that can fluctuate throughout the economic cycle. The active or passive acceptance of that value judgment is an expression of the consensual element in hegemony. But such consensus is established often with the recognition that the problem rests in a known, albeit underdeveloped and unanalyzed relation between capital and labor. Consequently, alternative value judgments are in order. Marcuse argued that “any critical theory of society . . . confronted with the problem of historical objectivity” must address two central points that imply value judgments: “the judgment that human life is worth living, or rather can be and ought to be made worth living” and “the judgment that, in a given society, specific possibilities exist for the amelioration of human life and specific ways and means of realizing these possibilities” (1964, x).

To return to the point of inevitability noted above, many working people accept their life-trajectory simply as an aspect of the system working as it is intended. This is implied in the studies discussed in chapter 4. They are aware of their subordination but are either not knowledgeable of its specific origins and processes or uncertain of considering an alternative set of relations; but they are aware, at the level of appearance at least, of subordination as an expression of their value as individual producers in capitalist society. Do they understand this value to be diminished with respect to the independent action of the structure of economic relations or with respect to society as a whole? Do they understand that it is possible and necessary to make an alternative value judgment as a result of their awareness?

In terms of the way economic and social value is created, the mechanics of capitalism indicates something of, in Ollman's terms, the "broad outlines of class struggle and where one fits into it." The workings of the system are subject to change through their integral relation with liberal democratic political structures, by the variable probabilities of social mobility, and by periodic advancement or setbacks in contractual relations. Immediate conflicts between labor and capital (strikes, repressive labor legislation, etc.) may not be understood by some workers as class-relevant knowledge indicating systemic contradictions. Thus it is important to consider whether such conflicts are expected by individuals to be fundamentally based on the exploitation of themselves and like-situated others; that is, that the historical basis of the conflict between classes is the power to either improve or further devalue their labor, their production, and their social being.

The problem must be seen as economic, political, and ethical, and therefore awareness of it may of necessity be generated from outside the class as much or more than from within the class. One object of open and immediate conflict between labor and capital is that knowledge of the conditions of production and exploitation is based on the exposure of contradictions within the socioeconomic system as a whole. Without this, the contradiction itself will not be developed nor will the significance of the contradiction serve as a springboard for organized action. Lack of such knowledge is

one of the conditions that allow the “inward barrier” to develop against consciousness.

Given the impact of reifying influences, “rational hostility” toward the property-owning class, as an organized, comprehensive response to common conditions, is not inherent in the relations of production, although a spontaneous and momentary hostility might be. Rather, a rational hostility, if it is to mean anything, must develop and endure over some period of time and through changing circumstances. Such a rational and sustained reaction needs to be based at minimum on an awareness of the deliberate intention underlying the exploitative character of capitalist relations, and awareness that the relative inflexibility of capital in the face of challenges from below is sustained by a range of institutionally based powers. This is the only way Ollman’s distinction between “feelings of mutual indifference and inner-class competition” makes sense.

Ollman addresses the last issue in his study of alienation, which includes an important chapter on class as a value relation (1971, 205–14). Mutual indifference and intraclass competition reflect social values people adopt in part because of their awareness of how capitalism works—its need for a competitive environment in which the exploited compete to be exploited regardless of the similarity of their circumstances.

Mészáros’s conception of class supports Ollman’s. Mészáros argues a) that a forward looking conception of class cannot exist without class consciousness; b) that class consciousness cannot exist without an understanding of the necessary struggle with another class; and c) that an intentional effort to locate and develop the kind of knowledge that will produce a consciousness of class is an intentional process that distinguishes class consciousness as a higher level of existence. Despite his later criticism of Lukács’s view of consciousness (discussed here in chapter 6) Mészáros writes: “Proletarian class consciousness is, therefore, *the worker’s consciousness of his social being as embedded in the necessary structural antagonism of capitalist society, in contrast to the contingency of group consciousness which perceives only a more or less limited part of the global confrontation*” (1971, 101).

There is a simple, common element in the discussion of class thus far: learning. None of the scholars noted, beginning with Marx and Engels, take either class or class consciousness for granted. Class and class consciousness are developed through exposure to aspects of reality, such as work, poverty, and exploitation, but also to a frame of reference through which such experiences can be reasoned into concrete analysis. This cannot come about simply as an act of will on the part of the individual, but rather as an act of collective effort, notwithstanding the fact that initial interest may be attributed to the individual. The process requires concrete elements including information, objective knowledge, and a clearly defined theoretical perspective.

But ultimately, Marxists have concentrated on what is considered necessary to be learned in order to develop consciousness and to act upon it. This seems to have been more or less continually criticized as an inappropriate vehicle of class development. Other aspects of this issue will be discussed later, but Robert Mayer's (1997) concern over the "obvious authoritarian implications" of Lenin's bringing of socialist ideas to the working class from outside, and Thompson's concern (discussed in chapter 7) about the "substitution" of party for class, are examples of this view. At issue is Lenin's central principle of the development of proletarian consciousness: "that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness" (1961, 375). Marx asserted essentially the same in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, as noted above. But Lenin advocated an approach quite the opposite of either authoritarianism or of mere substitution. One aspect of his argument was that those who would bring this knowledge to workers from outside their immediate class boundaries were "educated representatives of the propertied classes" (1961, 375). Educated is the key word here; he does not say that these representatives are inherently knowledgeable about socialism, Marxism, or anything else. The reference is to members of a class with more resources, privileges, and opportunities who are exposed to philosophical, scientific, socialist, and other knowledge generally not available to a large portion of the working class, except through the vehicle Lenin proposes: study circles of

students and workers alike. He further distinguishes his argument from one that assumes a capacity for knowledge that is inherent in one class but not the other by advocating that Marxism must be brought to all classes. "The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of *all* classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between *all* classes" (1961, 422). The issue is not, for Lenin, simply knowledge of one class brought to another class; rather, he anticipates that the distinctions between classes engaged in preparing revolutionary activity will be overcome in the revolutionary organization itself, in the equalization of knowledge among previously separated "workers and intellectuals" (1961, 452, 464). We will return to these points below.

There is a basic question that needs to be addressed: Who comprises the working class? Marx's basic division, noted earlier in this chapter, can be stated essentially as a difference between those who must sell their labor power to survive and those who need not do so. This complicates a clear political division of society into classes. If, as is argued here, class is not defined by education, occupation, or income, then membership in a class cannot be categorically obvious using these criteria. If, on the other hand, class is conceptualized in terms of the recognition of the problems of capitalism and an awareness of the necessity for social change, then membership in the working class is broadened beyond specific, limiting kinds of work and wages to include people engaged in labor possessing a cognitive element that is the underlying capacity to develop interests and, therefore, consciousness. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels alluded to this opening of the occupational boundaries of the working class when they wrote of the possibility of a fraction of the ruling class breaking off to join the ranks of the working class. This did not refer to downward mobility but to the expansion of consciousness in relation to the proletariat's interest in developing itself into a universal class. Thus, since Marx's conception of class was intended to encompass more than the industrial production of material goods, class consciousness is not a probability limited to particular categories of labor activity.

“Postindustrial” capitalism is the context in which this has been most clearly manifested.

Two elements of labor are common to both industrial and postindustrial capitalism: abstract labor and the sale of labor power. Regarding the first, as Sayers (2007) has shown, there is no necessary, exclusionary difference in production in either of these historical contexts. The production of information, communicative activity, and so on, as objectified phenomena, are products of human labor. Creation of a separate category of labor dubbed “bio-power” (Foucault 1980; Hardt and Negri 2000) is counterproductive to Marx’s more comprehensive, single category of labor production. His basic argument regarding abstract labor illustrates this comprehensiveness in that labor of different kinds, producing different types of objects, nevertheless produces value. Equally, labor power contained in all objects of production, is bought and sold in the market regardless of the worker’s location in the system of production, whether at the secretary’s desk, the auto production line, or behind the lectern. While Marx and others after him gave priority to industrial workers, this does not preclude inclusion of nonindustrial workers in the class of those who understand the problems experienced by producers of knowledge, information, syntheses of physical and chemical interactions, and so on. These factors, theoretically, make the boundaries of class permeable and illuminate the potentially unbounded nature of consciousness. We return to this point later.

To summarize, the actions of the working class are not evolutionary or in any way automatic simply because the class can possess the theoretical key for unlocking the forces of social change and the eventual realization of socialist society. Nothing compels this but the self-activity of the class itself and the mediating influences it finds or creates within the environment of capitalist society and class conflict. Neither Ollman’s paradigm of class consciousness nor that of Mészáros can be understood outside of this conscious, deliberate activity. It is developed by a fragment of the working class, and it is bolstered, challenged, and revised by the class itself and by interested others from outside its immediate boundaries. It is a process of collective, tension-filled

human action that has rarely traveled along a smooth trajectory. The development of class consciousness is a jerky, discontinuous journey with many successes to propel it forward and setbacks that generate rethinking and reorganization.

NOTES

1. Cf. Gramsci (1971, 185), for a slightly different translation.

2. Cf. Gramsci (1971, 184), for a slightly different translation.

3. It is evident that Weber's approach to interests carries with it something of his methodological interest in "objective possibility." One can see, however, that this approach is limited by Weber's logic in contrast to a dialectical perspective. This is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

The Concept of Imputed Class Consciousness

One property of consciousness is that it is educable.

—Georg Lukács

It has been argued in the previous chapter that Marx and Engels's concept of "historical necessity" should be understood as a material force in class struggle that emerges through the self-activity and consequent development of consciousness among members of the working class, a material force that is created only through deliberate choices to direct the class toward specific goals. As pointed out in that chapter, Mészáros has asserted that the concept of historical necessity as described in *The Holy Family* was the first instance in historical materialism where Marx and Engels ascribed to the working class the means of determining its future; that is, imputing the substance of consciousness to the working class as a tool of self-activity. From Marx and Engels's original discussion (and from others as we will see) Lukács derived his concept of "imputed class consciousness." As he put it in *History and Class Consciousness* (1971a, 7) and *A Defence of History and Class Consciousness* (2000, 74), imputed class consciousness is "*the sense, become conscious, of the historical role of the class.*" Historical necessity, therefore, is not fulfilled, but rather attained or realized through a conscious choice of action for a classless society and for socialism. As a practical social and political process, the initial function of imputed class consciousness is the weakening of the inward barrier of resistance to the working class's historical role. Imputed class consciousness is not an autonomously

operating social force. It is the substance or content of consciousness mediated by a social movement, a political organization or party, or the leading sector of a class. This chapter will introduce Lukács's concept; the final chapter will develop the concept further.

The inward barrier of reification is fundamentally a social product and a problem of capitalism. It is manifested in an immediate sense as an individual, subjective problem. When assessed from outside, the reified mind becomes evident as an objective classwide problem when the inward barriers of multiple individuals constitute a socially objective constraint against the relatively autonomous development of the class, its individual members, and their possible political action. The reification of reality requires no specifically deliberate coordination to be effective and to become an objective phenomenon, for its strength lies in the accumulated inward barriers operating in tacit synchronization to attenuate the conflict inherent in class relations. It is a perception of reality that identifies the immediate, pragmatic determination and satisfaction of needs with the perceived absence of potentiality in either the social environment as a whole or the individuals who populate it. The Westray miners are an example of this process. The result is the formation of an atmosphere in which opposition to existing hegemonic forces is either refused or engaged instrumentally to secure immediate goals. In the case of a mass of individuals in whom the inward barrier of reification is established, their subjectively grounded actions become a regressive social force.

All individual inward barriers arise within the context of social structural and institutional constraints on the access to and development of knowledge that hinders the political maturation of class consciousness, although modern society does not wholly close off the working class from the resources for improving formal and informal knowledge that can contribute to this maturation. Formally organized knowledge of society, economics, and politics exists in much greater volume and is more accessible than at any other time in modern history. It contracts and expands and contracts again under the influence of capitalist growth and retrenchment, and when organized working-class action is

counterposed to capitalism's self-interests expressed in economic and social policies. Even if they are marginal components of the curriculum or poorly taught, alternative and oppositional political and social movements are now legitimate subjects of learning in postsecondary institutions at least, and combined with the sources in communities and on the Internet provide a substantial body of knowledge of existing conditions and possible alternatives. Thus it cannot be argued that reification is a condition that is absolute and insurmountable.

The development and progressive dissemination of critical knowledge represents an objective mediating force through which a more independent course of action could take place. The formal development and propagation of knowledge, even in its predominantly hegemonic form, have opened possibilities for its seizure and use by subordinated social groups. At the same time, the historical experience of the organized working class has projected onto society its demands for change and led to the development of a generalizable critical knowledge. It was from this basis of actually existing knowledge and its potential development that Lukács formed his concept of imputed class consciousness, placing greater emphasis on individual responsibility for the quality and character of knowledge that would be capable of penetrating the enduring effects of capitalism's domination. Imputed class consciousness is significant not merely for the historical expansion of relative freedom for the working class, but as an organizational principle in which imputing knowledge becomes a necessary objective factor in the struggle for human betterment.

For Lukács, imputed class consciousness is grounded in cognition of concrete reality, the rational evaluation of action through the analysis of objective social phenomena. However, the precondition for this concept lies in his statements on ethics in 1919, articulated as a contribution to the formation of political cadre, and to address his own and others' apprehensions about the moral problem of "revolutionary terror."¹ Aspects of the essay, "Tactics and Ethics," are considered among his most sectarian, but the essay also contains ethical premises that can be extended beyond the historical context of Lukács's writing,² influenced as it

was by his own messianic and sectarian politics of the years prior to this period. We have noted these in the introductory chapter: commitment to the goal of socialism, the inadmissibility of neutral positions in the pursuit of that goal, and the individual's obligation to search for knowledge. Lukács's ethical premises focus on the individual in relation to a practical organization of collective interest and action. From his perspective, ethics is grounded in conscience and responsibility deliberately adopted by the individual. These are judgments of value that require historical knowledge of immediate conditions and circumstances with a view to assessing the objective possibility for action toward the goal of socialism. The development of such knowledge, as we have seen in the previous chapter, culminates in the consciousness of "what the proletariat will be compelled to do" and, therefore, the ethics of such a level of consciousness allows for no neutrality with regard to the goal or its pursuit (Lukács, 1975b, 8–11). The conscience and responsibility that grounded Lukács's ethical statements centered on the struggle against the reduction of the human personality to quantifiable relations between things, and against the subordination of the person to the bureaucratic manipulations that structure the immediate conditions of reified consciousness (1971a, 89–90, 99). Making a "socially correct decision in a meaningful alternative" (1980b, 93) would not result in the working class in general, or any sector of it, being catapulted out of its everyday existence of subordination and exploitation into a new status as unchallenged masters of their social world. Rather, such decisions potentially lead to knowledge of the historical circumstances determining their social existence as a first instrument against those conditions.

In order to fully consider Lukács's work on consciousness, Max Weber's concept of "objective possibility" will be discussed along with some aspects of Marx and Engels's work relevant to the concept, followed by a brief examination of Lucien Goldmann's perspective.

Sources of the concept in Weber, Marx, and Engels

Parkinson suggests that Lukács's conception of class consciousness was formed as a Weberian ideal type (1977, 53), and Arato and Brienes suggest that Weber's "objective possibility" was a basis for

Lukács's approach to class consciousness (1979, 87). Weber argued that the scientific study of history could be made available to the historian because of an *a posteriori* advantage, whether the historian's appraisal "of the given external conditions corresponded in fact with the knowledge and expectation which the acting person developed" (1949, 165). He argued that both the historical personality and the historian have access to a certain quantity and quality of knowledge (although the aforementioned advantage of the historian exists) and that the historian's work was to assess how well a historical figure used the knowledge available to make decisions. Implied in this was the extent to which the historical figure sought an appropriate level of knowledge about existing conditions and the possible decisions to be made on those conditions. Thus it was not only what the historical figure knew, but the logical connection between knowledge, action, and outcome.

Weber, as would Lukács, cited the roots of the concept of objective possibility in jurisprudence. The development of bourgeois legal theory was reflected in the law's interest in the subjective factor of intent, particularly the "*subjectively* conditioned capacity of foresight into the effects" of an action which could alter the purely causal connection between act and effect (Weber 1949, 169). Thus there were two interrelated components to Weber's view. One was what a social actor intended to do; the other was what the actor, at the time of his action, knew would or might occur as a result of the action. In this context, Weber was less concerned with the subjective intent of a social actor and more interested in the "consequences" of an act for "world history" (1949, 170). In a discussion of Weber's method, Turner and Factor emphasize that "a judgment of intent depends in part on whether the actor did in fact foresee a particular consequence," stressing the objective character of logical connections in this foresight (1981, 8). The historian, according to Weber, develops an analysis of the significance of an action in terms of the possibility of likely consequences resulting from it.

Much like Weber's argument that "interests" are secured by the normative expectations of social actors, his historical method is limited by its logical structure, its attempt to recreate the methods of natural science in the social sciences. The method does articulate

the interconnection of “economic, social, and psychological” knowledge, but it does so only in the form of rules of experience; that is, of what is already known and what can be logically inferred from that knowledge. Horkheimer remarked that Weber’s method is no advance on traditional theory due to its reliance on “conditional propositions”; the method does not rely “on the fullest possible enumeration of all pertinent circumstances but on the establishment of a connection between those elements of an event which are significant for historical continuity, and particular determinative actions” (1982, 193–94). The knowledge of possibilities is not confined to experience simply as past practice, but rather to the experience of the rules in action as knowledge of their logical, dependable relations. Thus it can be argued that what Weber uncovered was the significance of the “real” (Goldmann) or “psychological” (Lukács) level of consciousness that equates with his overall concern with understanding social phenomena that may lead to a useful knowledge of objectively possible but logical occurrences. Weber’s concept of understanding is a comparatively static appropriation of social phenomena that relies on the atomization of reality. The consideration and development of intervening, mediating factors in social life is not pursued. In other words, Weber’s sociological method, and those who later followed his direction, relied on the known or experienced outcome of normatively interconnecting phenomena while limiting the objectivity of such phenomena.

The point of Weber’s argument that Lukács apparently picked up and developed is the insistence that “possibility” is not an expression of chance occurrence, nor is it a loosely formed expectation of this or that event that depends on this or that vaguely understood factor. Rather, possibility, asserted by the historian, is a concept clearly expressing what can be known about a particular historical situation and “certain known empirical rules particularly those relating to the ways in which human beings are prone to react under given situations (‘nomological knowledge’)” (Weber 1949, 174). For Lukács, it was a matter of considering what mediating factors might be developed or imputed to break the instrumental logic of Weber’s method. From Weber’s statement that the “category of possibility signifies here the reference to a positive knowledge of the

‘laws of events’ ” (1949, 173–74), Lukács made a leap to a standpoint that imputed responsibility of foresight to the social actor beyond the logical outcome discovered by Weber’s historian. The imperative to investigate and to exercise ethical premises is stronger in Lukács’s perspective and is consistent especially with his imperative that the individual is responsible for seeking the acquisition of further, concrete knowledge. The revolutionary aspect of this leap is Lukács’s ascription to workers, peasants, and others, of a range and substance of knowledge that can be acquired and developed for historical discontinuity. It is a theoretical leap of a different kind; it transforms the lessons of history, law, and knowledge into organizing criteria. Developing revolutionary cadre, transforming workers’ subjective and immediate experience into objective consciousness is the historical-materialist development of Weber’s method. Lukács could still argue for the ethical component of action in the sense that people can know, and should be held responsible for knowing, the possible types of action that could be taken in knowable sociohistorical circumstances. What is lacking in Weber’s view is a mediating element between the knowing actor and the knowable possibilities of objective reality.

One example of such a mediating influence can be found in Marx and Engels’s discussion in *The German Ideology* of the possibilities of social action and further development that emerge from active engagement with historical conditions. They discuss the development of commerce that occurs, in part, by the travel of merchants from sites of production to sites of trade. Increased trade and production developed as a component of the overall social division of labor—the “separation of production and intercourse” (1976a, 66). The existence of this separation results in the possibility of other developments, complementary or contradictory, historically continuous or discontinuous. This is not a natural or evolutionary sequence of events or, entirely, events and developments based on prior knowledge social actors have of the possibilities within “empirical rules” (Weber, 1949, 174). It is also based on the possibility of other events and processes occurring, such as the development of large-scale manufacturing that becomes possible with specific inventions: “The possibility,

indeed the absolute necessity, of the invention lay in the empirical conditions” (Marx and Engels 1976a, 303). Again, this is not an evolutionary sequence of probabilities, but the deliberate development of known concrete conditions from the intention to increase production, trade, and profit, deliberately seeking out resources and other potential in existing concrete social relations, economic and otherwise, and the extent to which those might be stretched to explore or secure the projected goals.

The dialectical relation between empirical knowledge and the intention to develop it is decisive. For Marx and Engels, the intervention of objective class-based interests was focused on the development of capitalism, but specifically the system of production and class relations that emerged from capitalist economic activity. This perspective was a theoretical point of historical materialism that could be applied to the practice of developing knowledge of reality and the implications of that knowledge for the conscious development of revolutionary action.

In these empirically based discussions Lukács could find a point of development between Weber and historical materialism by making a connection with Marx and Engels’s own discussion of intentionality in economic and social development. Early in *The German Ideology* they initiated a discussion of the division of labor that would be elaborated later in the text. They argued that the division of labor “only becomes truly” a division of labor when a deliberate separation occurs, that between manual and mental labor. Increased production, profitability, exploitation, imperialism, etc., become possible because of this basic socially constructed division fundamental to capitalism. Equally important was the range of possible developments of consciousness, such as “theology, philosophy, morality, etc.,” that were freed from purely natural relations. The freeing of consciousness was the central point, because it was consciousness of objective conditions and the possibilities for action and development that opened these new conditions and relations, including the negation of bourgeois-dominated consciousness (“theology, philosophy, morality, etc.”). The dialectical relation of intention and consciousness is heightened with the knowledge that the socially constructed “division

of labour implies the possibility, nay, the fact, that intellectual and material activity, that enjoyment and labour, production and consumption, devolve on different individuals, and that the only possibility of their not coming into contradiction lies in negating in its turn the division of labour” (1976a, 45). The realization of objectively possible outcomes rests in the conscious search for and development of knowledge of existing objective conditions and the transformation of them.

One aspect of Marx and Engels’s polemic against Max Stirner concerned the control of desire by external forces, in Stirner’s case, Christianity. Here they referred to a dialectical relation of the subjective factor to objective possibility. “Whether a desire becomes fixed or not,” whether a subjective interest “obtains exclusive [power over us]” or the “totality of desires” as a material and emotional complex, depends on material circumstances that provide a range of possibilities for the “development of all our potentialities” (1976a, 255). They go beyond objective conditions external to the individual and allude to the way human beings can exercise control of the self, in part by contextualizing particular desires in a knowable context of possible desires and their likely effects or consequences on human development.

The problem Marx and Engels identified in Stirner’s thinking was his concentration on the individual’s capacity to reflect on his or her circumstances as a means of understanding and possibly transcending such circumstances. When such reflection is not connected with material conditions it will manifest itself as the one-sided development of the individual at the expense of other undeveloped and unanalyzed aspects of individuality that offer the potential for a different direction. The latter may occur because of the restricted development of social reality itself. Marx and Engels argue for a clear connection between the consciousness of an individual’s “empirical needs” which under “favourable circumstances” will allow the individual to transcend one-sided development and “local narrow-mindedness” (1976a, 258–64).

This is an important development in the area of social psychology and self-formation as it acknowledges the capabilities of the individual’s imagination and powers of reflection. But Marx

and Engels argue that these are meaningful to individual development only when these qualities are developed out of concrete social relations. In contrast to Stirner's view, they require a conceptual shift of focus: the "fixation of interests through the division of labor and class relations is far more obvious than the fixation of 'desires' and 'thoughts'" (1976a, 259). Thus, returning to points made above, the division of labor remains the empirical basis of individual and social development, containing as it does both the constraints on development and possibilities for it. But the existence of desire, the use of imagination in human cognition, suggests not only the possibility of conscious transcendence of the limits of immediate empirical relations and the potential contradiction between the point of production in the division of labor, but an imperative to explore the options available within that objective reality.

Weber argued for historical understanding and knowledge through the exploration of objectively logical occurrences and the consequences flowing from them. Lukács argued for a similar approach, although he wished to demonstrate how it could be possible to draw dialectical inferences from particular situations that could be connected to or made relevant for knowledge of the complex of social relations for the purposes of developing class consciousness and facilitating revolution. But it is also evident that Lukács's perspective on objective possibility was partially drawn from Marx and Engels's dialectical discussion of historical and economic development in *The German Ideology*, which is itself a development of their argument in *The Holy Family* concerning what the proletariat will be compelled to do—the first instance of the concept of imputed class consciousness.

Lukács's concept of imputed class consciousness

Formulated when Lukács was writing *History and Class Consciousness*, the concept of imputed class consciousness does not appear again in explicit form after the point of Lukács's political retreat at the end of the 1920s. In *A Defence of History and Class Consciousness* (2000), his response to critics of the earlier work (written in 1925 or 1926 but first published in Hungary in

1996) explains imputed class consciousness differently. In part, Lukács demonstrates the significance of the concept by using its juridical meaning, as did Weber in his discussion of objective possibility. Thus Lukács's use of the concept begins with the knowledge that is objectively available in society at any given historical moment and the consciousness capable of being developed from it. He explains it with an example of objective and logical events and their projected consequences. "For example, an object falls out of a window and kills a passerby on the street below. From a juristic perspective, who caused the death, and *what* did those concerned do wrong? In the first instance, what is important is not what the person concerned thought or intended, but whether he *could* or *should* have known that his action or failure to act in a normal way *would* have led to these consequences" (2000, 64). Thus to *impute* means, literally and practically in relation to this example, to be conscious of objective reality as having a specific knowability, a content of thought that has a consequence for action. That is, the circumstances of an event or condition can be shown to be historical in origin, outside and independent of the existence of the subject, but not beyond the subject's comprehension, and not sequestered from influence by social agents.

It must at least be noted here that the availability of the necessary knowledge of society, its economic development, etc., is precisely the premise of Marx's method of political economy developed in his economic manuscripts of 1857–58. Each step of the method, illustrated through his example of population, is both a guideline and imperative to discover the material of comprehensive historical knowledge. It is not discovered independently or as naturally occurring phenomena, but mediated through the historical-materialist method.

Engels pointed to the same principle in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, where he contrasted the existing legal determination of murder—"when the assailant knew in advance that the injury would be fatal"—with what ought to be included in the category of murder: the deliberate construction by ruling powers of conditions that lead members of the working class to "a too early and unnatural death" (1975, 393–94). As Lukács argues,

such definitions “are meant to help reconstruct from the facts the *objectively* essential elements of a legal situation, in order to work out the *objectively* typical elements in such a case” (2000, 64). The basics here are from Weber’s argument. But Lukács’s definition is not locked into a logic as Weber’s was, but assumes some relatively free access to the knowledge necessary in more complex situations and some interpretation or explanation of it in the case of persons less familiar with the issues; in other words, some practical and theoretical mediation of the knowledge.

Thus, objective conditions that were not immediately conducive to political action need not serve as a barrier to a political party or social movement, or a constraint on the development of an individual committed to such action. “[A] mere analysis of the objective economic situation, even if theoretically correct, is not enough. The correct *guidelines for action* must be developed out of the analysis. If . . . the objective economic situation is not immediately apparent in its *objective* correctness, then the guidelines, and the slogans that follow from them, must be *found* deliberately” (Lukács 2000, 71). Immediate concrete reality is one source within which these “guidelines” can be found. Neither the attitude of reification nor the objective conditions were accepted as insurmountable barriers to correct analysis or the availability of sound guidelines. The other source was the conscious development of the class, and the self-development of its individual members, from inside and outside its immediate reality.

Lukács assumes quite rightly in his or any other historical context that workers will have to acquire specific knowledge as to what is possible in a given situation, or if they possess sufficient knowledge they will need to organize it to achieve results that will lead to classwide consciousness and the basis for the dissolution of the class itself. Learning, therefore, will take place on their own initiative and through working-class institutions such as trade unions or political parties that are broader than the working class as traditionally defined. Imputed class consciousness consists of the ideas and knowledge that can be discovered or created by people “if they [are] *able* to assess” their particular historically produced circumstances “and the interests arising from [these

circumstances] in their impact on the immediate action and the whole structure of society” (Lukács 1971a, 51). Dual emphases of the concept were its practical value in the preparation for class struggle and its substantive value in the general development of human capacity. Hence spontaneity, rejected as an unacceptable strategy by itself, was nevertheless understood to be logically anticipated in the struggles of the working class against oppressive conditions. What needed to be done was to capture spontaneous anger and organize it into a sustainable and successful strategy of change to the structure of society. From Lukács’s point of view, it was the workers’ party that could achieve the appropriate “interaction of spontaneity and conscious control” (1971a, 317) because the party and/or advanced sectors of the working class could derive from reality an objectively possible course of action. Lenin’s orientation to the limits of working-class consciousness and spontaneity are evident here. In both Lenin and Lukács, the organization of knowledge is intentional, purposeful, and discovered to be historically necessary.

Notwithstanding the importance of objective conditions facing workers, Lukács’s emphasis was on the available knowledge and social movements that were able to weaken or transcend the constraints of social structural and productive conditions. Because he was concerned with consciousness as a political necessity in the face of such conditions, he brought the issue back to the problem of reification, the acquiescence by workers and others to the inner “barrier imposed by immediacy” (1971a, 164). The context in which he makes this statement is a methodological and organizational one meant to negate bourgeois methodology that “arises directly from . . . social existence” such as Weber’s notion of interest directly governing action, as noted in the previous chapter. Such a methodological orientation adopted by the working class was a point of view suitable only to its immediate interests; if immediate interests remained dominant they would be antithetical to what the working class will historically be “compelled to do” upon attaining the appropriate level of class consciousness. Thus historical subjects must first understand that the immediate moment is an historical product and that the multiple

historical determinants it contains must be subjected to analysis as the means of fully developing the potential therein.

Lukács rejected the reductionist approach of Lazslo Rudas, a critic of *History and Class Consciousness*, who asserted that imputed class consciousness was an indication of the “functional dependency” (2000, 63) of the working class on the Communist Party, which imputed or ascribed the knowledge or content of the consciousness of the proletariat. Such an interpretation suggests that the actions taken by the proletariat would be based on a prescription laid out by instrumental or self-serving interests of the party organizing the working class; “functional dependency” would, therefore, imply a degree of passivity, even lack of capability on the part of members of the working class. Such a mechanical relationship between party and class would produce the “substitution” Thompson and others attributed to Leninism, as we will discuss in chapter 7.

But Lukács did not give to imputed class consciousness such a meaning, although it is clear and unavoidable that he meant this concept to be sustained by the organized, programmatic guidance of leading sections of the working class and the party. While his immediate concrete reference in the *Defence* was to the Hungarian Communist Party and the failure of the 1919 revolution, the concept can be far more generalized to communist parties and to institutions and activities (education and literature, for example) that are involved in the development of consciousness and socialist politics.

The Communist Party, in Lukács’s argument, was a historically specific reference to the primary working-class political organization of the period of the Russian and Hungarian revolutions. While this need not be taken to mean that the Communist Party was or is the only vehicle for the development of class consciousness, he was nevertheless accurate with regard to the organizational ability and commitment of the communist parties in question to develop and pursue a specific course of action with respect to the working class. On the other hand, the importance of communist parties is not confined to these particular historical moments of significant achievement. The contribution

of communist parties, for Lukács, was the development of a “new relation between spontaneous action and conscious theoretical foresight. . . . This altered relationship has its origin in the *objective possibility* available to the class consciousness of the proletariat.” Most importantly, and contrary to the role Weber asserted, the working class was no longer positioned simply to see its situation as “*post festum* in character” but to see it as something objectively posited, possible, and achievable (Lukács 1971a, 317). One is drawn repeatedly to examples of communist party activity such as that discussed by Kelley (1990), noted in chapter 1, in which the organization of desire and objective social conditions was centered on the deliberate search for guidelines to action.

Notwithstanding his emphasis on the role of the party, Lukács’s argument was and should continue to be focused on the development of the individual capacity for consciousness in the context of the class situation as a whole in its coexistence with political parties and social movements. This implies a cognitive (individual) effort as well as an organized (collective) program. After all, if Lukács is correct that, “*The objective theory of class consciousness is the theory of its objective possibility*” (1971a, 79), then once such a discovery is made it becomes a matter of choosing between alternative courses of action and is placed squarely at the point of understanding the significance of what “this or that individual proletarian” does with the knowledge acquired to help bring about the appropriate objective conditions for success in the class struggle. The strongest element of Lukács’s early discussion is the objective possibility derived from the proletariat’s attainable knowledge and the knowledge obtained from other classes that contribute to the struggles and development of the working class. In both cases the strategy, tactics, and philosophical outlook may indeed be developed from within the working class, or else brought to it in part by those better able to access and understand the total social circumstances of a particular period. But mediation of the development of knowledge and consciousness may take varied forms depending on the state of a movement’s development and the conditions and potential of the historical period. The “guidelines for action” may be brought forward and further

developed by a political party or trade union and may even be found in the potentiality contained within bourgeois institutions.

Goldmann's sociological contribution

As we will note in the following chapter, some sociologists focus on communication as a vehicle for increasing awareness of class, particularly referring to "horizontal communication," presumably within the class itself. Notwithstanding the importance of that form of communication among similarly situated people, the choice of this term is implicitly a rejection of knowledge imputed to the class from elsewhere than within the group itself. It is useful to point out an approach to communication and analysis of social groups that provides both a theoretical and methodological correction to the focus on horizontal communication that at the same time provides support for Lukács's concept of imputed class consciousness.

The place of *History and Class Consciousness* in the work of Lucien Goldmann has been acknowledged by many, especially by Goldmann himself. His disagreements with Lukács's later work in literary criticism and politics aside, Goldmann was deeply committed to the ideas and motivation of Lukács's early writing (including that from his pre-Communist period), using it to develop the methodology of his own sociological approach to issues of class and consciousness. In part, Goldmann sought a way of conceptualizing the development of consciousness in different conditions of communication on the premise that social groups are structured by the way people react to their social world and the problems that arise from their actions or participation. The problems that arise for a social group, arise due to its "function within a larger social structure" (Goldmann 1969, 14). Social groups will express and receive communication, will develop and propagate knowledge on the basis of this complex of structure and function. The group carries out this process as collective subjects ("transindividual subjects") by which the "historical world at a given moment is materially and intellectually constituted" (1977b, 35). Whereas the actions of a social group are performed collectively, the group acts through its individual members, who must be construed not as isolated individuals, but with the recognition that the "group is not above the individuals

who constitute it by their actions, common or otherwise” (1977b, 85; cf. Goldmann 1974, 1). None of this, however, constitutes fixed, permanent relations, for a different response to social problems or a different response to the group’s awareness of its function can result in the transformation of its structure.

Goldmann began his discussion of this relationship with the passage from Marx and Engels’s *The Holy Family*, already discussed in chapter 2, concerning the limits of what this or that proletarian thinks. His concern was to show that the highest, most sociological level of “information transmission” cannot be reduced to “horizontal communication between peers.” Every social group, Goldmann argues, “tends to have an adequate knowledge of reality; but its knowledge can extend only to a maximum horizon compatible with its existence” as a particular group formed out of specific sociohistorical conditions and based on its “nature,” its given structure, its “intellectual categories, the specific aspect of the concepts of space, time, good, evil, history, causality, and so forth which structure its consciousness.” The group’s knowledge of itself, its future prospects, and the limits to its consciousness are shaped by these characteristics, although neither the development of consciousness within the group, nor the structure of the group itself is permanently fixed by these conditions. These elements are the proper subject matter for sociologists, according to Goldmann (1977a, 34–35).

In the case of socially subordinated groups such as a class, race, or gender, this must include their structure or pattern of relations as formed or conditioned by more powerful groups. Goldmann does not mean that women, racial minorities, and workers are only capable of a limited quantity or quality of knowledge, but that their knowledge is constrained by the group’s structure and substance grounded in its particular sociohistorical relations. The group and its members reach their “maximum potential consciousness” only in the context of such limiting conditions. His remarks on the limitations of consciousness focused on consciousness structured by the historical conditions in which a social group develops. Members of a social group can discover the maximum level of consciousness of their group and, therefore, their corresponding

individual maximum level of consciousness as conditioned, but not finalized, by relations within the group as well as the group's location in the social structure.

Given the strength of these elements in a social group, receiving new information, by which Goldmann means qualitatively new knowledge, will be effective for that group if its members treat it in a way that requires the deliberate disappearance of the group or its transformation "to the point of losing its essential social characteristics" (1977a, 34). By "essential social characteristics" Goldmann meant those that constitute its function in society but constrain or obscure the group's potential development of necessary knowledge of reality; in the case of the working class, its subordination to the interests of another class.

That is, its members must become conscious of the characteristics that make the group what it is to another social group: dominant or subordinate, exploiter or exploited. For a subordinate group, its members must and can become sufficiently dissatisfied at the individual and group level with those characteristics that make it subordinate to another group and exploited by it. That includes becoming dissatisfied—personally, socially—with the "maximum potential consciousness" obtainable as a subordinate and exploited group. The group's transformation and that of its members take place when, in the case of the working class, it comes to know something about capitalist economic and social relations, when the class has developed, among other things, a "rational hostility" to the class that is exploiting it, and has developed a "vision of a more democratic and egalitarian society" (Ollman 1993, 155). But it must also come to know that its own "common sense," the sense of immediacy, negates further development of its potential if the class and its members are satisfied with their existing level of consciousness and their place in the scheme of capitalist relations of production. But once oppositional knowledge and consciousness are acquired by way of what is developed or imputed by its own most advanced section and a political organization, the working class (or any other group) theoretically and practically is no longer the same subordinated and exploited class. Rather, its subordination and exploitation

are mediated by the more comprehensive knowledge held by an advanced fragment of the class. Subordination and exploitation are then experienced in a context of more intense and self-active struggle against its oppressor and also against itself, to the extent that the group retains its once-essential characteristics of subordination and exploitation. It is this stage of the development of consciousness that Goldman considers to be the object of genuine sociological analysis.

The “essential social characteristics” of the working class are the conditions of its place in the system of capitalist relations of production: labor, its subjection to exploitation and subordinate status within the social whole, and its alienation from the liberating self-activity that can make its members fully human. These are features of the lives of members of the working class that are knowable when they fully and critically assess the reality of capitalist society. For Goldman, these essential characteristics are what must be transformed to the extent that the class itself disappears at a future point in history once the conditions of the nature of class existence have been overcome.

Two points should be noted. First, Goldman does not argue that the social group disappears merely because of its heightened consciousness of problematic conditions of existence. Rather, the implication is that each of the essential conditions of its existence becomes an object of knowledge and a site of struggle. As the contradictions are transformed, the social group and its members become something else: more autonomous, more self-active, more human. With regard to class, it becomes something other than the working class was intended to be in relation to its creator, the capitalist class. Second, Goldman notes conditions under which such transformation will *not* take place; that is, what he considered the nonsociological stages of conscious development. The first stage Goldman notes is one in which the communication of possible alternatives to a specific level of consciousness is not viable due to a problem of “reception” because the group has no prior information with which to assess new knowledge about its circumstances. A second stage of analysis focuses on the individual members of a group, namely problems found in individual biographies

(personality problems) that disallow or discourage consideration of new knowledge. Neither of these stages is sociological from Goldmann's point of view (1977a, 33–34).

A third stage that Goldmann regards as peripheral to proper sociological analysis is an active resistance to new knowledge because of the “real consciousness” of a particular group, the problem of reification. They may become aware of new, transformative knowledge and even adopt possible alternatives for their group. But because of the superficiality of their consciousness, whatever transformation may occur will “not place the group's existence in question” (1977a, 34). That is, the group will still see as legitimate or insurmountable the subordination of its own consciousness and its concrete relations as these have been structured by another social group. Such a level of consciousness will be sustained as long as the group does not fully understand that its present structure is a product of its function required by the larger structure of the society of which it is a part. In terms of the working class, this lower level of consciousness will be sustained if members of the class do not consider their function to be an expression of class conflict and the reification that characterizes class relations of domination and subordination. Thus the working class can alter its conditions of existence only if its members engage in collective self-assessment of their conditions of subordination.

Considering these different levels of reception—the conditions of communicative interaction, and his belief that Lukács's orientation to consciousness required the direct connection of thought to action—illuminates Goldmann's contention that there can be no distinction between a conservative or a dialectical sociology except as a false dichotomy. For Goldmann, sociology can only be legitimately developed as a “consciousness of class” or of particular social groups in terms of both their structured limitations and the possibilities of their transformation (1969, 44). The concern with class transformation, which is also a concern for potential consciousness, is in Goldmann's view “the fundamental concept in the historical and social sciences” (1969, 112). Further, the maximum potential consciousness of a social group possesses an additional and crucial quality, that of mediation. According to

Goldmann, there are two levels of knowledge in the natural sciences: the applicability of the theoretical to the empirical, and the actual level of learning (the state of knowledge) in existence at the moment of research (1969, 118). In history and sociology there is a third, mediating level of knowledge—maximum potential consciousness itself. The unavoidable question is who—what group, by what means, etc.—inside or outside the social group or class, will develop this mediating element in order to raise the level of consciousness and knowledge?

Goldmann's sociological perspective on the development of class consciousness is clearly different from the views we will encounter in the following chapter. His perspective can be connected to Marx's historical necessity, Lenin's solution to the constraints on conscious development faced by the working class, and Lukács's concept of imputed class consciousness. Together these constitute a systematic theoretical perspective and the basis of an organizational program. It is also evident that Goldmann does not accept the claim that Marx and Engels's assertion about what the proletariat will be compelled to do is anything like historical inevitability.

Finally, notwithstanding differences between "social group" and "class" in Goldmann's work (Evans 1981, 29), his use of the term "social group" is significant for the argument here although Goldmann acknowledges the "privileged" position of class—the proletariat—in Lukács's work and in his own (Goldmann 1969, 101, 128; 1974, 4; 1977b, 49, 61). However, his insights into the structuring of behavior, ideas, and action in social groups other than classes do at least two things. First, they affirm that class formation is a dynamic process, shaped initially by the dominant economic, political, and cultural forces in society, but the transformation of classes occurs through a variety of internal and external influences, reactions, and counterpressures. Second, in social groups other than classes, we see many of the same forces at work, but we see them as affirmations of the first point. We also see the potential within a greater variety of groups to discover the same determinants that are so crucial to forming a specific class to serve the interests of capitalism. Such determinants of exploitation, subordination, alienation, and so on, are manifested and reacted to differently with more or

less intensity and over greater or lesser amounts of time. The task for advocates of working-class action cannot be to dismiss the importance of these other components of history; it is to combine with them as a means of developing a level of consciousness that affirms that in creating and reproducing the working class, capitalism has created the collective body that cuts across the boundaries of all other social groups—gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.—and gives notice to those groups of the power evident in capital’s most important object of reification.

In the following chapter we will examine three sociological studies that assign to the working class a more pragmatic, less developed, less autonomous, and less confrontational role. These analyses offer working people the opportunity of sheltering their subjectivities from the historical influence of working-class achievements and prospects. These perspectives expect less from the contemporary worker and justify diminished expectations as empathy for the conditions under which they live and labor.

Working-class organizers, whether trade unionists or members of radical political parties, expect difficulties as a result of the integrative pressures in capitalist society. What makes this work more difficult is not the introduction of partisan political arguments into workers’ everyday lives and cultural institutions, but the academic legitimization of a less than historically necessary attitude among working people toward their own experience and its future possibilities.

NOTES

1. Lukács’s use of the term terror is in no way related to the contemporary phenomena of airline sabotage and suicide bombing. In 1940 Lukács offered a clarification in reference to a passage from Lenin: terror is a spontaneous manifestation of “the passionate indignation of intellectuals, who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working class movement into an integral whole” (1981, 207).

2. It is worth noting that Lukács never rejected these ethical principles, although he regretted their bureaucratic, “cynical degeneration” (156–57).

Chapter Four

Common Sense and Market Rationality in Sociological Studies of Class

You cannot just sample Marxism.

—Georg Lukács

Restating the themes from the previous chapters, the major emphases have been that class is meaningful only when it coexists with consciousness and struggle with an opposing class, and that consciousness of this complex is directed toward the historically necessary actions of the working class. Sociological analyses of class are contrary to this perspective, where they concentrate on recording discourse, attitudes, and political ideas as if working people were overwhelmingly determined by capitalist relations, and where politically partisan orientations to class are deemed to be intrusions into the everyday lives of workers. The latter claim represents the sociologists' need for neutrality in research and interpretation of results, their "group myth" as Alvin Gouldner called it. Such neutrality is not universal in sociological studies, as readers can often detect the interest researchers take in their working-class subjects, such as Sennett and Cobb's concern for the "hidden injuries" of class (1973) and the "worlds of pain" of Lillian Rubin's research (1976), although such implicit empathy does not extend to the revolutionary potential of the working class, nor is it expected that a thorough comprehension of the tension between fact and value in research should become standard sociological practice (cf. Goldman 1980, 57–59). The approach to class that ignores or rejects fundamental Marxist criteria of

class such as surplus labor and surplus value, and the rejection of strategies or programs of action that might bring about a radical consciousness has at its core a concern for conflict attenuation. In such studies, class has become largely a description of social divisions by way of occupational stratification, and a term of culture in which the multifaceted everyday lives of working people are the objects of exploration, each component equal to all others. This orientation has roots in E. P. Thompson's historical research, which has encouraged the inclusion of varied features and experiences of everyday life in rough equality to one another, although it has demonstrated that class is more than economic relations. While this has been an important development it is nevertheless an approach that has, in recent studies especially, caused class analysis to be distanced from political activity and purpose either in terms of its origins in the economic structure or the struggle Marx saw as necessary to achieve socialism. Ethnographies of working-class children and youth offer an understanding of the means by which the system of stratification is reproduced through geographic and cultural segregation in schooling, the institutional preparation of youth for working-class jobs, the effect of limits on mobility and self-esteem, and differences in patterns of childrearing (e.g., Brantlinger 2003; Lareau 2003; Willis 1977). Such work provides important insights, but the focus has been on the problems of stratification and social mobility framed and confined by the largely subjectivist and apolitical criticism of hegemonic relations, the primary focus of which is said to illuminate the experience of being working class. Thus, the empathetic approach evident in some sociological studies may be regarded as a kind of interested neutrality in the presence of their self-imposed disciplinary limitations: interest in what are perceived to be the immediate problems of working people while taking an essentially neutral position on the way in which those problems may be addressed.

Three studies of class will be examined to illustrate their differences from the Marxist perspective discussed in the previous chapters. We will be able to show that the conception of the working class that may be drawn from such studies by workers or

academics is severely limited with regard to the potential development of class consciousness and political action.

“Them” and “us”

Thomas J. Gorman’s study of working- and middle-class families represents one example of this approach. For Gorman, class is defined by occupation; class membership is divided along lines of blue collar/white collar, level of skill, professional, semiprofessional, business, and so on (2000a, 100; 2000b, 699). He employs aspects of E. O. Wright’s work (1978) that distinguished classes by such factors as economic ownership and the amount of control over the physical means of production and the labor power of others. This brings Gorman’s criteria within range of Marx’s basic conception of class, but it is a course he does not pursue. His discussion concerns the perceptions of class in two basic categories: subjective attitudes and experience with institutional arrangements such as education. Gorman’s interview questions use occupational and status divisions to draw out the attitudes of his participants toward members of other classes. He notes that few of his interviewees used the term “class” in response to questions, but that 65 percent of the working-class participants self-identified with their class (a smaller proportion than for his middle-class subjects), a figure that confirmed for Gorman what he considered to be some degree of class consciousness. Their self-identification was based on occupation, the level of education required for particular jobs, physical appearance in terms of occupationally-related apparel (the presence or absence of a suit, for example), and hard, physical work. These rather simplistic identifiers suggest to Gorman that members of the working class understand their “position in the social class structure” and can distinguish it from that of others (2000a, 109). People who live in poverty or wealth or somewhere in the broad space between may understand their position in a stratified society in this sense, but this is not the same as understanding class as an intentional component of the capitalist relations of production, and as an intentional placement of individuals and groups in the context of those means and relations of production. Comparisons of paychecks and the assumption of physical

labor being honest work were criteria his subjects used (and which Gorman affirmed) to indicate they were working class.

Such formalization of characteristics intended to delineate class lines allowed for the reduction of the differences between working and middle class to “them” and “us.” Cultural capital was significant as well in delineating class boundaries; language, disposition, and behavior were useful for differentiating the middle- and working-class viewpoints among Gorman’s respondents. Opinions about people belonging to a class by those of another class were subjective, often ill-thought remarks using superficial or stereotypical criteria that revealed no critical awareness of the conditions others of a different class might experience and their response to those conditions. The entire exercise seems to be another form of operationalism in which the immediate identification of class lies in the tools used to measure it—in this case appearance and attitude.

Gorman argues that postsecondary education is the core of the dominant ideology in contemporary American society and serves as a distinguishing feature of working- and middle-class life. One “working-class” woman remarks, for example, “I have a niece who’s gone through 8 years of college for an MA in art and now she’s a waitress. I baby-sit for professional people [a child psychologist] which think I have no common sense. They drive me crazy. They’re book smart and life stupid” (Gorman 2000a, 103). A “middle-class” woman counters with the following: “If you’re asking whether I categorize people, I definitely do. If someone doesn’t have a college education, I definitely view them differently, which is bad. I see them as a little bit less sophisticated. I see their views as a little narrower” (2000a, 107). Gorman and his research subjects understand that there are informal barriers, forms of subtle and obvious discouragement and bias, that shape people’s aspirations and achievements. Formal education and the acquisition of credentials is seen as a means of social mobility, an individual resource by which people may overcome the problems posed by an economic system that increasingly requires specialized skills with no guarantee of employment security. The subjective focus in these responses is central to Gorman’s argument.

While it could serve as the basis for a more substantive analysis, he chooses to offer only simplistic quantification as an objective measure of the subjectivism of his research participants. Quoting Rubin's *Worlds of Pain*, Gorman notes that when working-class subjects reflected on school experiences, they "were reminded of 'all they didn't learn' [Rubin 1976, 127], making them feel inadequate and deficient. Working-class respondents in research recall four times as many negative accounts of schooling as compared to the middle class respondents" (Gorman 2000b, 704).

An important absence in Gorman's discussion is the economic and political purposes that formal education serves. Education as a means of social mobility brings with it the potential for the mobility of interest and, therefore, a different content of consciousness, neither of which require a denigration of the working class. It is instructive in this regard to find interviews with working-class people without the pretense that it is the interviewer's value neutrality that assures a candid expression of the experience of class divisions. Ike Mazo, a Chicago steelworker interviewed by Studs Terkel (1988, 172), considered education differently: "I would want my children to go to college. But I never shared the idea that you strive and work and struggle so your children can rise above your class, which is the working class". In other words, higher education itself does not catapult people from their class roots. Sennett and Cobb explored something of this problem in *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. They suggested that working-class people they interviewed saw education as a "cover term . . . for a whole range of experiences and feelings that may in fact have little to do with formal education." For them, education was a means of acquiring certification for purposes of social mobility and they felt quite accurately that there was unequal access to such credentials that were not only an indication of skill and knowledge but something of one's self as well. Sennett and Cobb ask rhetorically on behalf of their interviewees, "Why should one class of human beings get a chance to develop the weapons of self more than another?" (1973, 24, 25). What was at stake for the participants in their study was the loss of potential, the structural discouragement or barriers that inhibit

the realization of aspirations, whether these were known at the time or not yet discovered.

Unlike Gorman, Ike Mazo does not sense that education produces an irreconcilable dichotomy of “them” and “us.” His awareness of his working-class position is discussed in terms of what he and his co-workers have achieved as well as the constraints on their efforts. There is a strong sense of self-awareness and objective knowledge of what drives the social system. “I went to the Marine Corps at seventeen. . . . I was pro-Vietnam, I was one hundred percent. It was really funny because I came home and my father [also a steelworker] was involved in anti-Vietnam demonstrations. . . . I started readin’ and readin’ in depth . . . the news more than the sportspage. You gradually start to change. Plus there was a great deal of influence out there.” Mazo also understood the workings of the economic system, barring older workers from jobs, removing benefits instead of increasing them, using low wages to drive a wedge between workers. “I’ve heard it many a time. Them people don’t wanna work. There’s jobs out there for six dollars an hour and they won’t take ‘em. When I was in high school, they told you: Go out, work hard, make something of your life. Now they tell you you’re not a good citizen if you’re not willing to accept less. . . . It’s an attack on the living standards of workers” (Terkel 1988, 171, 173).

Gorman affirms the impressionistic view of class expressed by his participants, accepting their reduction of class structure and differences to stereotypical characterizations of appearance and educational levels. We get a sociological description that uncritically views clothing or everyday conversations as formal sociological categories. As a sociology “interested only in what people actually think” (Goldmann 1977a, 32), Gorman’s interviewees indicate how some people view themselves as working or middle class in terms of apparent opportunities and assumptions about resources and actual life opportunities. What we do not get in Gorman’s study is any substantive appreciation of whether his participants have an interest in acquiring more comprehensive and more critical knowledge of the system in which they live, a sense of why class divisions must exist in capitalism and what these

may mean for raising awareness of the intentionality underlying class formation, differences, and antagonism.

Of course, this is not to suggest that Gorman's interviewees are not capable of acquiring such knowledge. Rather, the issue is whether Gorman is interested in exploring and explaining class in terms that go beyond the simple categorizing of impressions.

“Common sense” as class resistance

More problematic issues of class and consciousness are raised in Thomas Dunk's ethnography of working-class men in Thunder Bay, Ontario (1991). Dunk draws his understanding of class from multiple sources. Like Gorman, he is influenced by Wright's criteria: control over the physical means of production, over the labor power of others, and over investment and accumulation. In addition, Dunk notes Marx's analysis of social relations between classes generated and sustained by the production and appropriation of surplus value (1991, 5–6). He also remarks on the limits of a purely economic formulation of class, arguing for an approach that considers multiple aspects of culture without being “overly culturalistic.” The latter approach is one in which the relative affluence of sectors of the working class contribute to the cultural convergence of classes, a perspective that sees all as middle class and promotes the ideological claim of classlessness (1991, 31).¹

Developing his approach further from Thompson's work, Dunk argues for the inclusion of everyday experience of working people, such as language and beliefs. This is necessary, he argues, to understand how they live, how they think, and what is important to them. Two aspects of working-class lives evident among Dunk's research participants are their racist and sexist language and attitudes. His findings and argument in this regard are similar to Paul Willis's study of English working-class lads, the Hammertown Boys (1977). In the ethnographic method used by Willis and Dunk, all aspects of the lives of people are equally and rather uncritically viewed as representations of “class.” Ethnographic studies rest largely on observations that are confined to the visible and spoken moment. This means that “class” in Dunk's and Willis's studies is devoid of any substantive sense

of the historical structuring of relations, conditions and expectations. The racism and sexism of their working-class subjects is understood as a form of “resistance” to the dominance of the capitalist social order and the cultural hegemony of middle-class and bourgeois values in dress, language, education, and other matters.

For example, Dunk’s “Boys” (actually adult workers) regard Indians in a stereotypical manner. The Boys assume that the vandals who trashed cars in a local dealer’s lot were Aboriginal, because “lots of Indians live around here.” Although they have no evidence, they assume Aboriginal people were also responsible for destroying the baseball diamond on which the Boys play ball (107–8). Dunk relates an incident in which an Aboriginal youth and his grandfather appear at a ball game to watch the youth’s mother play. They stand momentarily beside Dunk and some of the Boys. When the pair moves off to the bleachers “one of the Boys beside [Dunk] took off his baseball cap and rubbed his hair. ‘Just checking to see if it’s all still there’” (83). Stereotypical attitudes toward women and the cultural legitimacy of male dominance were also evident among the Boys, as they were with Willis’s Lads.

Dunk’s work, like Gorman’s and much other sociological and anthropological research of this kind, seems little more than journalistic reportage. What is difficult to accept is an analysis in which the Boys’ attitudes are not seen as problems, not only for women and Aboriginal people who are the objects of the Boys’ regressive attitudes, but for any present or future collective interests of working people. In fact, it is the persistence of such attitudes and the use of degrading language that inhibits the unity and collaboration of individuals and different ethnic groups within the working class. Like Willis, these attitudes are explained as resistance to dominant, middle-class culture, and resistance to the impositions of a social and economic system that has placed the Boys in positions subordinate to others. To explain this, Dunk explores the common sense used by the Boys in his study. He argues that they use common sense to make clear their superior understanding of how the world works in contrast to the inferior thinking of more educated people (133–35). The dichotomy created by separating the working class from the “educated” serves at least two purposes: it sustains the

simplistic “them” and “us” dichotomy adopted by Gorman, and it avoids (for both authors) the problem of working-class individuals (regardless of education) who are politically aware and active, and who resist in ways that are more problematic for capitalism and, apparently, too risky for some academics. This dichotomy might be shaken by the appearance on the baseball diamond of someone like Ike Mazo or a host of other working-class activists who have overcome, or who never accepted, the negative attitudes of the Boys toward women and visible minorities. Dunk acknowledges that common sense corresponds to anti-intellectualism among his subjects; that is, a rejection of, or at least reluctance to develop, more comprehensive and critical perspectives on their own and others’ experience. Surprisingly, yet consistent with a subjectivist analysis, Dunk defines anti-intellectualism as “a powerful element of working class culture . . . a set of cultural practices and beliefs, and which is formed in opposition to the perceived characteristics of other cultural practices associated with those deemed by society for various reasons to have intellectual skills” (136).

The logic is unavoidable: working-class men employ common sense as their means of understanding the world they live in; common sense rejects comprehensive, historical knowledge presumed to be held by persons who are more educated and outside the working class. Common sense and its equivalent, anti-intellectualism, therefore comprise the content of working-class opposition to the dominance of other ways of thinking or the substance of more developed consciousness. In other words, from Dunk’s point of view, working-class culture requires anti-intellectualism in order to sustain its cultural and intellectual distinction from the middle class. Anti-intellectualism, Dunk argues, “is a way of thinking about the world and what really matters in it, a mode of approaching problems and issues that favors certain kinds of interpretations over others” (136).

The racist and sexist attitudes held by the Boys along with the anti-intellectualism that explains “what really matters” about the world, are expressions of their alienation from the commonalities of interest that could develop from a more just and collaborative relationship with those who are also targets of the dominant social

forces Dunk claims they are resisting. The methodological and theoretical orientation Dunk employs, both the ethnography and the social-scientific neutrality, requires constructing a “working-class culture” that the researcher (and reader) seem only able to uncritically affirm. Dunk presents no argument about social structural or institutional barriers to the acquisition of knowledge that might explain why such regressive attitudes can be said to be among “the things [the Boys] most often have to think about [that] are not valued by the dominant culture” (136). He does acknowledge that common sense is “a means by which the status quo is preserved” but affirms the use of common sense as a preferred way of thinking for the working class because it is a “reaction to the unequal way different kinds of knowledge are validated in society” (151).

Although the section of Dunk’s study in which he takes up the issue of common sense is most concerned with the division between manual and mental labor, he uses that division to explain problematic expressions of his subjects that may serve to represent something of the “worlds of pain” subjectivism of Rubin’s studies. Like Gorman, however, his approach does not attempt to address this essential division within capitalism except as one in which some people acquire social status from which they derive self-esteem, and others do not. What is absent is an analysis of the capitalist division of labor and its consequences beyond their immediate and subjective impact. There is a glaring absence of even the standard sociological premise popularized by C. Wright Mills (1959) that people should become sufficiently aware of their world to move out of their “private orbit” in order to understand how their personal troubles relate to broader public issues. Even a liberal historian provides a more critical understanding of anti-intellectualism as an aspect of culture than does Dunk. Richard Hofstadter wrote, “The common strain that binds together the attitude and ideas which I call anti-intellectualism is a resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind and of those who are considered to represent it; and a disposition constantly to minimize the value of that life” (1966, 7). Hofstadter’s view is evident when the Boys question Dunk’s need for more comprehensive explanations.

“When I suggested,” Dunk writes, “that it was possible that someone other than Indians may have been responsible [for the destruction of the ball diamond], they did not understand why I needed to invent a more complex theory about the episode. Indeed, they feel that anyone who will not accept the ‘obvious’ explanation is either emotionally weak and not able to face reality, or lacking in intelligence” (134–35). Given what Dunk had written earlier, this is a narrow expression of “what really matters” in the world?

It is not the discoveries made in the research itself but the analysis that does a disservice to the object of research by cutting off a more politically charged perspective on class. Not surprisingly, in order to affirm the working-class culture he observes and to sanctify the subjective, Dunk finds it necessary to reject an important element of Lukács’s work—imputed class consciousness. Essentially, Dunk argues for the legitimacy of his own method and analysis due to its resting on a refusal to consider Lukács’s perspective, for that would violate the imperative of neutral description that avoids confronting the experience of the participants in his study. This methodological and ethical neutrality requires, by its very nature, a denial of any perspective that appears to suggest that a group of people could or should adopt a particular point of view. The rather commonly accepted but erroneous view of Lukács’s position is summarized by Dunk. “Thus, Lukacs is concerned primarily with what the consciousness of the working class ought to be according to Marxist theory, rather than with the actual thoughts and practices of workers. Actual beliefs are either ignored or encapsulated in the catch-all notion of false consciousness” (25). We will explore Marx’s perspective on “the actual thoughts and practices of workers” in the next chapter. But as we have seen in the previous chapter, and will develop further later, Dunk’s view of Lukács reflects either a lack of understanding or a deliberate distortion of his perspective. True, Lukács did not survey or interview even small numbers of workers to obtain their thoughts on even a limited range of issues; and, therefore, he did not offer a descriptive account of their attitudes. True, he was, like Goldmann, critical of what some workers actually thought. He was, however, particularly interested in what working people

thought and did because it represented reification, the central problem of his research.

Equally problematic is Dunk's appeal to Gramsci to support his cultural analysis and to legitimize the Boys' anti-intellectualism. At the beginning of his study, Dunk sees affinities with Gramsci's "spontaneous philosophy" related to common sense (26), and he returns to this toward the end of the book, suggesting that common sense is nowadays "used in everyday speech to refer to down-to-earth thinking as opposed to theory" (134). He then quotes Gramsci on the "merit" of common sense. But the passages Dunk cites do not wholly represent the meaning Gramsci gave to the concept. Dunk fails to include crucial passages in which Gramsci writes of common sense as fragmentary, incoherent, embryonic, and chaotic, especially as common sense relates to an underdeveloped conception of the world. Furthermore, Gramsci argues that "the philosophy of common sense . . . is the 'philosophy of non-philosophers', or in other words the conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man is developed" (Gramsci 1971, 419–20). Unlike philosophy, Gramsci argued, neither common sense nor religion constitutes an "intellectual order" (1971, 325). He also writes that beyond the notion that "everyone is a philosopher" lies a "second level" of philosophy of "awareness and criticism. That is to say, one proceeds to the question—is it better to 'think', without having a critical awareness" or "is it better to work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world and thus . . . take an active part in the creation of the history of the world" (1971, 323).

When Gramsci wrote of the formation of a "conception of the world" he recognized that it could be merely one of conformism with regard to the dominant mode of thinking, with no critical approach on the part of the subject. Gramsci's preference, of course, was a critical approach in relation to "the most advanced thought in the world," the only way such a conception could become coherent. The self-critical approach is based, in part, on knowledge of oneself "as a product of the historical process," and a result of becoming aware of "specific problems posed by reality" (1971, 324).

Ignoring this more comprehensive and critical discussion of philosophy and common sense while rejecting imputed class consciousness, allows Dunk to cloak his subjects in a protective shield against expectations of a more self-critical appraisal of working-class life and for greater self-activity in the development of knowledge and consciousness. Needless to say, Dunk is one of many academics who are pleased to appeal, even inaccurately, to the radical Gramsci while apparently feeling obligated to remove Gramsci's writing from its historical context of class struggle and, above all, his commitment and activism as a Communist.²

Cultural divisions are real and effective, but they do not fully explain the intentionality within the structure of capitalist productive and social relations that sustain the system as a whole. The solutions that cultural explanations propose are fundamentally individual. Gorman (2000a), for example, affirms his subjects' emphasis on postsecondary education as the most important means of social mobility; that is, moving out of the occupational strata that are identified with the working class. Other academics employ the culturalist perspective to lament being "educated out" of the working class as if the acquisition of comprehensive formal education unavoidably results in a devaluation of one's class origins (Lacey 2000, 41). The "resistance" of Willis's lads or the sense of victimization and passivity of Dunk's Boys have no connection to a collective sense of being or responding to the world in which they live. Adoption of such a perspective would be the beginning of an approach to a critical comprehension of class and capitalism.

While Dunk avoids the issue of class consciousness as it has been posed by others examined here, he nevertheless asserts that the Boys are "working class." Considering the perspective discussed in the previous chapters, the more sustainable view of class is that which consists of a necessary body of knowledge and intentionality, consistent with the capacities Marx insisted distinguished human beings from animals, especially the capacity for critical self-activity. Given a commitment to that perspective, questions must be posed about the viability of the cultural analysis practiced by Dunk. For example, what purpose is served by uncritically

articulating sexist and racist attitudes of the Boys? What is even more puzzling is why a researcher would create an analysis that is satisfied with what amounts to a loss or refusal of the relative autonomy of his research subjects and their adoption of regressive language, ideas, and values, while justifying such attitudes as if working people had no alternative. At the core of this problem is an assumption that the subjectivities of the Boys are sanctified by the interested neutrality of the researcher. In one of Lukács's discussions of realism in literature, he makes a point relevant to this social-scientific attempt to heighten the significance, in isolation, of subjectivity: "by exalting man's subjectivity, at the expense of the objective reality of his environment, man's subjectivity itself is impoverished" (1963, 24).

Dunk criticizes Lukács for wanting to ascribe the content of working-class consciousness, and for the assertion that there could be such a thing as false consciousness. But Dunk accepts as "resistance" the ill-thought and reactionary views of the participants in his study. Class, in his view, while claiming to be based on occupational position is obviously more than that; for the Boys it is a social position from which consensus regarding the established social order of capitalism is affirmed and reproduced, if only because a critical approach to its actual substance and structure does not enter their consciousness. Naming the Boys as victims of capitalist culture without an adequate critique of their attitudes or of the economic foundations of the culture that develops from capitalism is to affirm that liberal social science is complicit in the process of its social reproduction. Furthermore, this approach affirms that the static description, reportage, and affirmation of regressive attitudes is itself a degradation of the people Dunk studies because it legitimizes their removal from conceptions of class and consciousness that have the potential to provide the means of liberating them and those they demean.

There is no space in Dunk's discussion in which the Boys might learn a different conception of the world. Dunk validates the anti-intellectualism of his subjects, shielding them from intellectual intrusion by Lukács, as well as Dunk's favored though misrepresented theorist, Gramsci. Dunk's picking and choosing

from the latter implicitly confirms his paternalistic approach to workers. Like Lukács, Gramsci was clear that if the organization of workers was important, it could not be achieved without intellectuals. That cannot be scoffed at as simply another imposition given Gramsci's well-known advocacy of developing new, organic intellectuals from the working class (Gramsci 1971, 5–16, 334).

As we will see further in the critique of Secombe and Livingstone's work below, Dunk's approach amounts to a refusal to accept the necessity of progressive intellectual development or political engagement. There is no inherent barrier to Dunk's Boys (as with Willis's Lads) offering either active or indirect support to a right-wing or neofascist political movement willing to affirm their subjectivist view of the world, just as there is no certainty that they will align with a political organization that challenges their attitudes and opposes those beliefs. In fact, Dunk sets up the Boys for the former political turn when he asserts that "Marxism as a formal political doctrine is a bourgeois intellectual product. As such, it is not, and never will be, popular among people like the Boys, at least not in its academic formal version" (159). While the "academic formal version" is never discussed, this approach gives credence to the Boys' own view of "what counts as knowledge" and acknowledges the limits to developing "a full and systematic critique of the system." It serves moreover to affirm that behind the guise of the researcher's empathy and interest lies a paternalism and condescension toward working people that in turn serves the most convenient of sociological concepts in this context: the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Class and workers' "market rationale"

Secombe and Livingstone (2000) introduce their concept of class noting that it was confirmed by listening "closely to Hamilton steelworkers and their spouses who offered us their analysis of the world today" (7). The authors have intentionally limited their analysis of class consciousness to the responses of their research participants, workers at the Stelco plant in Hamilton, Ontario. Here we have another study of class that goes little beyond the affirmation of what people say, rather than a comprehensive and critical

analysis of their views in relation to a systematic theory. The authors argue that “personal experience ought still to be accorded a general priority in the formation of social consciousness” (2000, 43). Their emphasis on workers’ pragmatic approach to their social circumstances is consistent with Dunk’s; both acquiesce to the reifying conditions of capitalism, an explicit purpose of which is to get beyond the purported limits of orthodox Marxism. Along with Gorman, they are concerned to preserve workers’ subjectivist assessments of their place in capitalism.

Secombe and Livingstone differ in one respect from the other two authors in that they directly confront Marxism. They argue for a “provisional alternative” to be developed by “progressive social theorists” in order to recover class from the assault by postmodernists, counteract a general decline of interest in sociological analyses of class, and call for a revitalizing of class that is necessary to save it from the “well-worn ruts of Marxist fundamentalism” (2000, 7). In their reworking of Marxism, they argue for “a multilateral conception of social interest; [and] a culturally immersed understanding of group identity” (7). Their attempt to save class from reductionism or “Marxist fundamentalism,” however, has its own reductionist motivations and outcome. A reconstructed theory of group identity, they argue, should include “an episodic account of people’s propensity to engage in collective struggle that relies more upon their sense of the prospects for success, fluctuating as the situation changes, than on the cumulative impact of deprivation and grievance which lays the emotional groundwork for rebellion” (7–8). Indeed, caution is warranted in all tactical decisions and strategic planning and, thankfully, political theory and the history of class struggle are full of examples of well-organized attention to such caution. But here the authors’ solution to the problem of conscious development and agency is more of acquiescence to the conditions of a period of relative decline in trade-union power and what they see as the diminished viability of left-wing political parties. Their solution rests on the claim that workers are instinctively inclined to pragmatic action. The authors do not critique the pragmatic urge, but affirm it as legitimate and sufficient. Their attempt at revitalizing

or reconstructing the concept of class largely settles on a claim that workers know what they are doing, even if their outlook is contradicted as a consequence of the varied stresses of social life in capitalism, even if the urge to cooperate and compromise with their bosses weakens the cohesion of their “group,” and most of all, even if workers’ political and historical perspective is underdeveloped, fragmented, and a counter influence to an organized political program in opposition to the very effects of capital the authors find problematic.

Secombe and Livingstone claim that their work is based on the historical-materialist premise that being determines consciousness. They even quote (albeit in a footnote) that famous passage from Marx: “The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness” (Marx 1970, 20–21, qu. in Secombe and Livingstone 2000, 116, n. 13). Nevertheless, they seek to “amend” this “classical materialist thesis,” an undertaking that might be of importance if the project was intended to elaborate accurately on the original idea and develop it dialectically with regard to changed historical conditions. Their emphasis, rather, is to get beyond a view of class that is purportedly grounded only in productive relations to one that rests on the pluralism and fragmentation of culture. Their commentary on Marxism, as well as their amendments, leads to a reductionist analysis of class and of historical materialism.

Their revision of Marxism centers on an elaboration of three aspects of their view of the assertion that social being determines consciousness. The first concerns how people perceive or understand social phenomena when their social location is equated their position in the process of production. “People’s locations in a communication field determine the information they routinely receive” (Secombe and Livingstone 2000, 21). But if we extend that “communication field” to the field of production relations and then to contexts outside the immediate arena of economic production, can it be maintained that one’s position in the production process limits what information one receives? No, the contexts inside

and outside the relations of production are too complex. They are often open and fluid, thus allowing more than one perspective to be voiced and heard. "Position" and "received information" cannot be equated.

The second aspect of their approach denotes the limitation of options for action by "the routine responsibilities . . . the performance of . . . duties" that are "imposed on" people. "Pragmatic knowledge of this sort is intimately related to viewpoint"; namely, the individual's position in the relations of production. Thirdly, "People typically seek to justify their actions, to themselves and to others, by reference to the responsibilities of their position." The overwhelming implication is that people *are* their social position and that social position's role as the determinant of consciousness is affirmed by those who populate such positions. Their perspective "assumes the normal operation of self-interest and the propensity to project one's own interests onto the community-at-large" (21–22). This is an expression of Weber's view of interests directly governing behavior, noted in chapter 2. They impute a literal and mechanistic interpretation to the Marxist principle of being determining consciousness: being is equated with a spatial location that contains either limiting or liberating conditions depending on its place in the relations of the capitalist economy and production. Presumably, a person working in the depths of a coal mine under oppressive management that restricts efforts to organize a trade union, or to establish the most basic conditions for health and safety, will develop a consciousness as constrained and constraining as the workplace. This would have been a curious notion to the hundreds of class-conscious miners in Cape Breton at the beginning of the twentieth century (noted in chapter 1). On the other hand, by this logic a university professor is higher on the socioeconomic ladder, possesses more autonomy of action on and off the job, and has access to varied and wide-ranging resources. Therefore, the professor should develop a level of consciousness consistent with this social position and as a result will have a better comprehension of the social whole. There is no question that social structural conditions constrain the development of some and provide more freely accessible and varied opportunities for

others. But, for Seccombe and Livingstone's assertions to be true, one would have to ignore the facts of global working-class history in which trade union and political action was initiated and developed in the midst of the most oppressive conditions.

Seccombe and Livingstone briefly qualify Marx's premise that being determines consciousness in what they call a "defensible version" of it: "*that the context-specific views of most people who come to occupy similar positions in an organization will tend to converge over time*" (23). The ultimate expression of this convergence is articulated later: the pragmatic necessity of cooperation between labor and management. The authors do not develop an analysis of different degrees of power within groups of people or within specific organizational or institutional contexts. Thus, curiously, in apparent contradiction with their interest in a cultural analysis, the authors qualify this convergence. "We do not say all views, but simply those *directly related to the institutional context* in which people find themselves. The effect of their association on other matters will be more diffuse, their views more likely to remain divergent" (23). How can this analysis be consistent if consciousness is considered broader than consciousness at (or of) the site of production, as the authors imply with their appeal to a broadly based cultural analysis? If this perspective is sustained, one can only conclude that there is a distinct consciousness for the site of production and another for each of the other social sites, such as family and leisure, in which individuals participate. Such analysis leads to the conclusion, for example, that trade-union consciousness on the shop floor is not only distinguished but distanced from some notion of "cultural consciousness" outside the workplace. Such fragmentation is a constraint on development, precisely one of Marx's criticisms of capitalism from which he fashioned his concept of alienation, and Lukács his concept of reification. Real human beings in concrete circumstances, about whom Seccombe and Livingstone claim they are writing, cannot be treated as isolated from relations pertinent to productive or other contexts, even if those appear to have only indirect and momentary influence. If the authors are to be successful with the inclusion of culture, it is difficult to imagine how such

an argument can be conducted on the basis of a consciousness determined by a being grounded in social relations only “directly related to the institutional context.” Thus, they argue for both the inclusiveness and separation of such sites as labor, leisure, and other social activities.

This indicates something of the central difficulty of their interpretation: its unabashed relativism. Seccombe and Livingstone suggest that their understanding of “being determines consciousness” “offers a compelling account of many persistent aspects of consciousness” (22). An example they offer concerns the difference between politicians’ campaign promises and how they “change their tune” after being elected, which they consider to be “weak accountability in our electoral form of government and the image-driven nature of contemporary politics.” Their emphasis lies in a “materialist analysis” that explains politicians’ “evolving consciousness as their objective position changes” (23). The views people hold are not static or innate; views do change, but from the account these authors give, the revision of perspective is governed solely by one’s social location. Apparently, people are drawn along the current of scripted responses to whatever they encounter through their social or occupational positions. While this interpretation may not suggest that the precondition for a point of view is an innate characteristic in the individual, it nevertheless suggests—equally problematically—that a point of view, a perspective or basis for interpretation, is inherent in particular social and/or economic positions.

Whether or not Seccombe and Livingstone have consciously adopted aspects of Karl Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, that fragmentary and relativist outlook appears particularly evident in their work. Both affirming and contradicting the significance of totality in social theory, Mannheim’s theory of ideology held that ideas were nothing more than a function of social position (1971, 70). Aware of the philosophical and practical problems of relativism, he renamed his perspective “relationism,” explicitly retaining its connection to pragmatism. Despite the metamorphosis, Lukács regarded it as nothing other than “the night of thorough-going relativism, in which all cats looked grey and

all perceptions relative” (1980a, 634). Concerning the problem of truth in relation to ideologies, Lukács pointed out Mannheim’s pragmatic assertion, one closely aligned with Seccombe and Livingstone’s evident view that “standpoint provides the biggest chances of an optimum of truth” (1980a, 634; cf. Watnick 1962, 156). Mannheim’s system of positions in relation to knowledge is an apt expression of a functionalist perspective and the problem of reification.

Seccombe and Livingstone’s discussion of what they consider to be Marxist materialism deepens the problem. Rejecting class reductionism, they nevertheless offer a reductionist approach to the absence of knowledge about capitalism that justifies workers’ confusion and false impressions. They insist, correctly, that “being determines consciousness” is only a starting point, that “social being is multi-sided,” and that “people’s interests are multi-lateral and often conflicted.” They qualify their view, however: “As materialists, we insist that these conflicts are objectively given; they do not stem from confusion, misperception or ambivalence” (36). That is (as they proceed to argue), workers may be confused and ambivalent, but this is a product of their place in the system and relations of production. Surely, this is little more than a reduction of human beings to persons thoroughly determined by the economic positions they occupy, whose potential consciousness has yet to be tested because it is deemed unavoidably restricted by economic conditions. The authors’ empathy for workers serves as cover for an outright appeal to subjectivism and relativism. Their revision of the fundamental premise of Marx’s historical materialism is clearly devoid of both the self-active quality in Marx’s work and any mediating elements to be found in society that might facilitate a more comprehensive and critical view of workers’ social and productive contexts.

With this perspective on class consciousness, a crucial question is brought to the fore: is there a place, as Marx argued, for the expansion of consciousness through workers’ relatively autonomous self-activity? Seccombe and Livingstone imply that there is, but in doing so they illustrate the confusion of a Mannheimian description of socioeconomic status with a Marxist discussion of

class. They offer as an example a Black woman who rises to the level of a supervisor in a factory: “she hikes her income, enhances her corporate authority, and improves her class location” (32). We are not told what that class location is. Has she moved to the top rank of the working class? Is she now lower middle class, however either of these class locations might be defined? Her improvements are to income and occupation, there is no discussion about how this improved position contributes or relates to class consciousness, except for the implied premise that class consciousness is enhanced by the inherent qualities of her new location in the workplace and its differences relative to other positions.

What is discussed here is a change in socioeconomic status; it is clearly not class with the necessary criteria and relationships discussed in chapter 2. To the extent that occupational position contributes to the shaping of a point of view, it would be appropriate to ask how particular individuals understand the construction of class within capitalist society, whether they regard other classes with hostility, and how their improved circumstances relate to the other components outlined by Ollman. With some evident differences, Seccombe and Livingstone’s analysis is similar to Gorman’s in the sense that both studies are shaped by a kind of formal sociological categorization. Gorman is content to accept that workers wear clothing style A and educated others wear clothing style B. Seccombe and Livingstone are satisfied that the being of position C necessarily produces different knowledge and consciousness than does the being of position D. The experience of mobility is important subjectively, but it is important objectively as well, because it indicates that once-rigid boundaries between levels of socioeconomic status are now penetrable. And we would be eager to cite the organized working-class struggles that have been the chief means by which that change has occurred. But the scenario offered by Seccombe and Livingstone suggests little in terms of class consciousness as a comprehension of the social and economic structure as a whole. Above all, the analysis offers no recognition of the need for radical, socialist organization of working people in order to secure their historical and individual achievements. Rather, Seccombe and Livingstone’s example and

their confirmation of the material benefits of improved social status merely sets the stage for their belief that views relevant to specific positions within the division of labor eventually converge.

We will return to this topic later, but here we can emphasize that differences in the relation between class consciousness and position cannot “be referred back to socio-economic causes” (Lukács 1971a, 79), but can only be understood in terms of the objective possibility of developing degrees of consciousness with respect to those positions within the society as a whole. Examining one essentially functionalist perspective that reflects the position of Seccombe and Livingstone, Mészáros makes the point that class consciousness is not a “*by-product*’ of the capitalist economy,” and cannot be understood as a “one-sided mechanical model of determination” (1971, 86).

These sociologists might be interested in a project that Lukács suggested: the production of “a typology of the various strata,” which would likely result in an assessment of the “actual” or “psychological” levels of consciousness among those working within the various strata. But if such a project were conducted we would still be faced, Lukács argues, “with the problem of whether it is actually possible to make the objective possibility of class consciousness into a reality” on the basis of psychological consciousness alone. Lukács’s solution, of course, was “the inner transformation of the proletariat” (Lukács 1971a, 79). The major distinction between his view and that of Seccombe and Livingstone and others, is that one’s social or economic position cannot be fragmented from the totality of relations in society, including the system of production.

Lukács’s perspective attempts to avoid the fragmentation of production into separable “roles.” We have already noted the evident connection between Seccombe and Livingstone’s approach to workers’ supposed pragmatic impulse and Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge. It is perhaps helpful to note a passage from Mannheim that Lukács cited in his critique of irrationalism, for it indicates how easily Mannheim could slip into a conservative structural functionalism. Mannheim’s “situation-bound” epistemology affirmed for Lukács a fragmentary and pragmatic outlook:

“There is no ‘thinking in general’,” Mannheim wrote, “on the contrary a living being of a specific type thinks in a world of a specific type in order to fulfill a specified function in life” (qu. in Lukács 1980a, 634).

It is useful to return to a point from Lenin, discussed in chapter 2, concerning the introduction of class consciousness “from outside the economic struggle.” It is essential that one aspect of the interpretation of this view is that the introduction of “outside perspectives” is *outside* the immediacy of any position in the system of production. For Lenin, it was crucial to break the internal logic of such relations, to break through the immediate relevance for the worker of his or her contractual relation with the boss, which served to provide food, some form of shelter, and a measure of security.

Secombe and Livingstone ask their readers to understand the perspective of workers. They do not ask readers to follow as they critically analyze workers’ views, demonstrating how certain views may have been constrained by objective social forces, or how the process of reification has limited the consideration of other options. Rather, they ask their readers and working people in general to accept subjective interests and interpretations as confirmation of the pragmatic orientation. From Secombe and Livingstone’s viewpoint, pragmatism is the only source of redress for the difficulties workers face. This is the subject of one of their “six friendly amendments to the being-determines-consciousness thesis” (25–26). One aspect of these amendments contradicts their argument about positions within the production system since it rejects “the assumption that material circumstances dictate specific courses of action” and asserts that it is “a mistake to *separate out* the material and the ideological dimensions of social structure.” The first point implies that Marx’s perspective is grounded in determinism, while the second actually sustains the false dichotomy between objective and subjective factors, although Secombe and Livingstone claim to reject this view. The amendment begins with the statement: “Working class people are renowned pragmatists” (25), but this does not imply, they argue, that there is a “universal common sense” among working people, but that people’s

“calculative rationality” is based in the “culture-specific” norms that produce standardized responses and make alternatives seem infeasible. This is, again, the essence of Weber’s argument concerning interests. Like Weber, these authors do not see that calculative rationality based on existing normative expectations of interaction (economic and otherwise) in which the appearance and instrumentality of rational relations is appropriated for its immediate and superficial value, was precisely evidence of reification.

“Calculative rationality” is equally evident in what the authors say about workers’ erroneous ideas and impressions of others. Rather than explore the manner in which reification dominates or influences people’s consciousness, Seccombe and Livingstone proceed to naturalize reification. “In our view, the big problem with the orthodox Marxist conception of class consciousness is that people’s material interests are typically conflicted in *all* class, race and gender positions” (28). This is an appeal to a pluralism of social life that merely acknowledges the existence of conflicting ideas, loyalties, and interests among individuals and within social groups. There is no question that this occurs. But, implicitly in support of the pragmatism at the core of their perspective, the authors attempt to further their rationale regarding consciousness. Discussing conservative views on race and affirmative action, they maintain that the reason why working people appropriate such views is not that they “cannot think for themselves” but because the “market rationale” they have adopted “is well-suited to the defense of their interests as they construe them along race, gender and class-sectional lines” (71–72). This is a clear expression of false consciousness as Marx and others understood it, and which we will discuss in the following chapter. But it cannot be named as such, apparently, because it might offend the subjectivities of the interviewees’ “perfectly understandable” “market rationale.” It is, rather, a case of the researchers *imputing* to workers’ cognitive capacities the lack of relative autonomy in thought and action necessary for organized class action.

The more pragmatic approach, for which working people are said to be renowned, indicates the appropriate course of action

through their “market rationale.” “Workers have an interest in fighting capital to improve their wages and working conditions; they also have an interest in cooperating with their employers in order to protect their jobs” (28). While the authors acknowledge the problems of capitalist and globalizing pressures on basic industries like steel, their statement is curious given that only fifteen pages into their book, they provide figures that show a 60 percent reduction in the labor force at Stelco in Hamilton between 1980 and 1996. It begs the question: what kind of cooperation was practiced while so many jobs disappeared?

Their perspective raises a major point: that working people in the most oppressive circumstances have managed to organize an oppositional response to their oppressors without assessing their plans in relation to the dominant “market rationale.” While Secombe and Livingstone argue for a stronger working-class movement in this regard, they very clearly reject a Marxist-inspired movement for social change because it would, presumably, undermine the pragmatic cooperation between labor and capital (101).

It is essential to advocate a development of consciousness that contributes decisively to the understanding of the source of such conflicts, whether of direct or indirect influence. This is essential if the dialectical resolution of conflicts is considered necessary, whether that determination is motivated initially by objectively social, or subjective, psychological discovery. This Secombe and Livingstone cannot do because of their narrow selection of Marxist theory and practice. While they offer affirmation for various courses of action workers may take, their premise is limiting: “reasonable people, acting rationally, normally have several possible ways to interpret their situation and to advance their interests” (28–29). The rational actions of people in this regard are, however, based on the normative expectations of interaction that formed the core of Weber’s instrumental conception of interests. These are important to acknowledge, but in themselves only exhibit workers “renowned” calculative rationality, not a systematic, organized, and sustainable confrontation with social and individual problems. For these authors, workers’ choices are centered

on cost-benefit analyses: “When people are ambivalent—torn between a conservative risk-aversion response and a grievance-identified course of action—the decisive variable is often how they see the future unfolding” (30). How the future unfolds is, of course, not a matter of speculation or simply based on an empirical tracking of the probabilities of economic fluctuations, public opinion, or life chances.

What social forces mediate the “unfolding” of the future? This is a conundrum that has historically plagued the lives and strategies of working people throughout the period of capitalism. The problem is well described early in Seccombe and Livingstone’s work, in a brief history of the Hilton works at Stelco covering a period when the availability of cheaper steel worldwide and new technology provoked labor action because of its effect on the reduction of the workforce. “Customary family subsistence strategies were disrupted . . . ‘fear of falling’ became palpable” (14–15). Apprehension among working people occurred not only because of the possibility of layoffs but also because most workers at the time had low levels of education and job-specific skills, conditions not favorable to transfer to other kinds of employment. In this regard, Stelco workers are much like any other group of workers in their concerns about personal and familial security. Under such circumstances, one course of action is obviously to protect whatever income and job security remains. This pragmatic “choice” may have been tactically necessary under the circumstances. However, the authors do not even consider the need to critique this choice in light of the likely scenario awaiting these workers, i.e., continued assaults on their income and job security in the interests of corporate profitability. Nor is there an attempt to point out the problematic relation between this choice and the response of some workers to socioeconomic problems. For example, citing voting patterns, the authors point out that the steelworkers’ “fierce devotion to staving off insecurity is often accompanied by fear and resentment of the poor, who appear from their vantage point, to lead dissolute, disordered lives, depending on the state for handouts. The message of neoliberal parties vowing to cut income taxes while reducing welfare payments often finds a receptive

audience among the upper layers of the industrial working class.” (16). This comment suggests something of the regressive political content of the workers’ pragmatic choice, but it is not fully articulated or critiqued.

United Steelworkers, Local 1005 (the union at Stelco) has a long history of militant action, including strikes against the employer. But the question that emerges from the social and structural effects of global competition and the consequent changes to lifestyle is to what extent these and other workers consider their present or future dilemma to be a class problem, rather than something “*directly related to the institutional context* in which people find themselves” (23) or, indeed, the fault of the poor.

Secombe and Livingstone discuss the relative autonomy of action which their subjects exercise at the point of production; they also discuss the extent of community involvement of many of the steelworkers. But the “market rationale” approach they have taken toward workers’ confusion and troubled states of mind is ultimately paternalistic and condescending. Thus, the authors ask, “how is collective action possible?” (29). Their answer is multifold; it concerns trust, solidarity, anger, the size of the movement, and other matters. But the possibility of collective action seems to be grounded in workers’ perceptions of its probability of success or failure prior to their involvement in such actions. If success seems a real (pragmatic?) probability, workers will throw their energy into collective action. If a movement or issue does not appear to be achievable, then workers will withhold their support. One might say the same about the influence on workers’ choices of different “sizes” of social movements. Unfortunately, this is a failure to acknowledge both the history of class struggles, successful or incomplete, and the forms of organization that have carried out such actions. Recall Gramsci’s comment near the beginning of chapter 2, that the working class weighs situations as “favourable” or not, but it does so as an organized social force and as a “force of will.” In other words, the calculation of the likelihood of success is made as a coherent social group, after people have made the initial choice of forming themselves into a body for collective action. But, in this case, it is as if the researchers operate outside

the history of working-class organization and action in Canada and elsewhere. It is as if the relative autonomy of action of which the authors write is important to cite as long as it is detached from the actual history of class struggle, and especially the political interests that have guided many of those efforts. In Seccombe and Livingstone's approach, there is an absence of any mediating element in the relations between social structure and working people.

Beyond the matter of accuracy with regard to Marx's ideas, the implications of their argument are not only relativist; they are also paternalistic. "They [working people, the dislocated, etc.] don't need left-wing analysts to tell them there is no invisible hand benevolently guiding the tiller of the world economy" (101). Here the authors' anti-intellectualism is evident. Might not working people and others need left-wing analysts, especially those with a concrete political strategy in mind, to help organize collective action on the basis of that everyday knowledge? A more comprehensive development of knowledge has already been rejected by these researchers: workers do not need a scholarly treatise on the labor theory of value; that is, they do not, by implication, need to know how capitalism works, how economists, politicians, and academics rationalize the mechanisms of capitalist exploitation and subordination under the guise of an unavoidable cooperation with their corporate masters. Rather, it is sufficient, the authors argue, that workers come to know of this theory simply "as an instinctive feeling of being 'ripped off'" (78). What shallow interests they impute to working people! It is an argument clearly inconsistent with the views expressed in previous chapters.

Seccombe and Livingstone let their interpretation of Marxism rest on their guarded selection from Marx and Engels's work without drawing into their analysis some of the voluminous output of those who have explicitly considered and developed Marxism. Marx seems only to serve as a straw man for their pragmatist and relativist orientation, an approach that suggests an affirmation of such recent apologetics as Giddens's new form of politics (1994) and O'Neill's civic capitalism (2004). The claims they make about Marxism seem intended to ensure its rejection. There is no attempt to recognize Marxism's relevance to the areas they

regard as important. They note several aspects of Marx's work that have proven to be incomplete or bound to a particular historical moment. They are able to do this by being selective, by ignoring certain aspects of Marx's work as well as developments of it by intellectuals and activists alike. They regard as "wishful thinking" Marx's arguments about the unity of the proletariat as a class and the possibility of international solidarity among the working classes of various nations (34). Instead, they offer a fragmented working class engaged in intraclass conflict between "the upper layers of the regularly employed labor force, overwhelmingly white men" and racial and ethnic minorities and women who constitute the marginalized sectors of the working class. Such intraclass divisions are indeed evident, but with apparently no prospects for solidarity in service to a political objective (apparently "wishful thinking"), their argument serves to negate any search for other, more critical actions of workers' and socialist movements throughout the world.

Secombe and Livingstone's strategy is ultimately anti-Marxist, rather than concerned to "amend" and update. Their argument is a slight against socialism and other movements that have historically shaped the relationship between workers and their bosses, and which have also been largely responsible for the improvement of conditions in the lives of working people. Their argument should not be treated as simply objective sociological analysis, but as an active counterpressure against the relatively autonomous development of the politically driven organization of collective interests that will contribute to still viable and growing social movements against capitalism. Their prioritizing of experience diminishes the theoretical principle of the possibility of something existing beyond itself, the consciousness of relations in their totality, which establishes both knowledge of existing relations and a basis upon which the class, the subject, and the existing relations as such, can be dissolved in order to realize a qualitatively different set of relations.

Among other problems of Marxist analyses, according to Secombe and Livingstone, is "that they [Marxists] typically equated the trade union movement with the working class";

another is that class is given priority over other forms of social subordination; and a third is that Marxists ignore social sites outside the point of production (36). This is either narrow scholarship or simple deception. One is struck by the claim that Marxism has not taken seriously the complexity of working-class experience in what might be considered its own class culture or the broader culture. The authors might have referenced even a few of the numerous developments of Marxism in this direction: the wider range of understanding of everyday life in English history by members of the British Communist Party's Historians Group; the Frankfurt School's concerns with the unconscious, racism, and anti-Semitism, and the consumer culture of capitalist society; Wilhelm Reich's concern with sexuality; Agnes Heller's development (in her Marxist writings) of Marx's concept of need and her treatise on emotions; and the extraordinary devotion of time and creative energy to literature and literary criticism in communist and left-wing journals worldwide since the mid-nineteenth century. Dialogue about and criticism of these efforts may well be considered, but the point remains that the studies discussed in this chapter conveniently ignore developments in the theory they criticize, and they ignore the history of organized working-class activism. Apparently, these absences occur in the name of academic objectivity, or in the name of a more pragmatic—and safe—approach for the working class to meet their perceived needs. Perhaps the underlying problem for these academics is that many of these sources in the development and propagation of Marxism have been politically motivated by socialist and communist activists and scholars who intentionally developed their analyses with a view to encouraging movements devoted explicitly to socialism.

To summarize, like Dunk's Boys, the common sense of what is important in the world—the pragmatic choice—gives priority to immediate, simplistic explanations of the social world. The concentration on and legitimation of immediacy as an orientation to thinking and analysis limits the development of class consciousness from both inside and outside the class. Two points of Ollman's paradigm are illuminated by their absence in workers' attitudes discussed by the authors under consideration in this

chapter: “something of the dynamic of capitalism uncovered by Marx . . . [and] the broad outlines of class struggle and where one fits into it” (Ollman 1993, 155).

Finally, it must be concluded that aspects of these studies are grounded in an irrationalist perspective. The appeal to common sense and to market rationality suggest that only a limited knowledge of reality is available; it also implies a refusal to view social problems as solvable. The authors advocate instead a paternalistic assessment of social conditions that requires accommodation. A remark by Lukács is relevant here: “If we take the broad perspective of centuries, it almost seems unbelievable how important thinkers have halted at the threshold of a problem nearly resolved, and indeed have turned round and fled in the opposite direction” (1980a, 100).

NOTES

1. The “myth of classlessness” has been described by Porter (1965) and Lanning (1996) in their studies of class in Canada. A variant of this—the historical perception that America has no classes, yet everyone is “middle class”—has been analyzed by Blumin (1989).

2. This sanitizing of Gramsci is widespread. For example, in Mayo (1999), Golding (1992), and many of the authors in Borg et al. (2002), Gramsci’s activism in and leadership of the Italian Communist Party is virtually absent or treated as marginal. Well before Gramsci became popular among the academic Left, Louis Marks (1957) introduced the first English translation of selections from Gramsci’s work by placing him squarely in the heat of political and theoretical battle as a Communist. Boggs (1976) also retains this connection.

Chapter Five

Being Determines Consciousness

The “being” of any class is the comprehensive synthesis of all factors which are at work in society.

—Istvan Mészáros

Secombe and Livingstone’s interpretation of the principle that being determines consciousness may fit well with the objectives of their research, but it fails to contribute to an analysis of class consciousness that is more than a functional reading of the manner in which capitalism manifests itself in the personal outlooks of its subjects. Their analysis fails because its claims lock us into a reception of workers’ views as valid simply because of their position in the relations of production and their relation to the sources of managerial and capitalist power, even while these authors note problems with their subjects’ thinking on some issues. In their view, the productive position of the steelworkers they interviewed provides in itself the basis of legitimacy for their worldviews. This interpretation fails more significantly in that the authors do not see the necessity of even alluding to an avenue through which a sense of collective interests as well as individual consciousness might be developed. There is little appreciation of the possibilities that might be developed given the resources available (including knowledge of the history of the organized working class) within the existing social environment.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, objections raised to imputing class consciousness are framed, in part, by the claim that false consciousness is a concept that impugns the subjectivities

of the working class and is, therefore, unacceptable to social scientific analyses. That approach expresses the late-modern notion that class has ceased to have, or perhaps never had, the meaning attributed to it by Marx and the scholars and activists who developed the historical materialist perspective. Rather, rejecting the concepts of false and imputed class consciousness is an ideologically motivated dismissal of historical materialism not only as a theoretical perspective, but also its methodology as a pedagogical tool. At the heart of the rejection is the specific point of class consciousness defined in this study: the necessity for an organized political and ethical response to the injustices of capitalism. That is the sense in which we can state the indirect connection between the forms of analysis discussed in chapter 4 and the tragedies that have befallen the working class, such as Westray.

Left academics who take this position have a seemingly visceral reaction to the idea that working people can and should be educated, socialized, and pressured through awareness of social conditions and group interests to adopt a perspective that is fundamentally different than the commonsensical, pragmatic, market rationale promoted by that sector of academia. One of the obvious contradictions in taking such a negative attitude with regard to class is that quite the opposite response has been taken toward issues of injustice facing other social groups. For example, the history of the women's movement from the late 1960s at least has, as much or more than anything else, been about raising women's consciousness about their historically subordinated position. Women organized themselves to actively negate the cultural and political bases of that subordination. This has taken many forms and varied somewhat in women's groups with different political orientations. The women's movement has had its leadership and its rank and file, categories of participants that have often been defined by differences in socioeconomic status and ideological views. But some women, a progressive fragment of the population as a whole, organized groups and developed principles of a new social movement, planned strategy, and achieved many of their goals by deliberately educating other women about the sources of gender inequality and training them for activism designed to

address these problems. For the success of their movement they insisted on the obligation of others to become conscious of historical injustices, to form collective organizations, and to explore possible solutions. Surely the idea of the subordinated housewife who is satisfied with bearing and raising children and supporting her husband unconditionally, who is uninterested in higher education, and who takes a job merely to provide extra financial support to the family is parallel to the false consciousness associated with class, notwithstanding basic differences between women as a social group and the working class. It is false consciousness in the sense that some women's everyday practice legitimizes these activities as rationalizations of their subordination. Secombe and Livingstone are aware of this phenomenon: "When feminists formed consciousness-raising groups in the 1970s, they found that many women were radicalized by the experience of confiding in one another, 'breaking the silence' and discussing the remarkable similarities in their intimate partnerships with men" (82). If imputing content for feminist consciousness is acceptable, then why not imputing the content of class consciousness?

Even completely uninformed or zealous racists would never argue that the comparatively few instances of revolt among African Americans prior to the 1950s was merely an expression of the common sense of the race as a whole calculating the chances for survival in a racist society. Would Dunk or Secombe and Livingstone argue that the actions of leaders of the civil rights movement in the United States—Black and white alike—in organizing study groups, bus boycotts, and Freedom Schools were merely imposing on African Americans attitudes and actions in service to a distant ideology? Would Gorman be inclined to cease his analysis at the recording of racial attitudes that distinguished "them" from "us"?

The civil rights, women's, and other social movements were organized from the roots within local communities in many cases. Others were developed by people outside the immediate environment and/or outside the group in whose interests the movement was directed; that is, by conscience constituents, as they have been termed by some theorists of social movements (cf. McCarthy and

Zald 1977). Such movements developed principles of organization and standards of behavior, in fact often demanding the latter, and ascribed to their members and to the public at large guidelines for achieving what was deemed necessary to attempt to resolve the social injustices with which they were concerned, as well as the consequences that would likely result from action or passivity. That is, each of these social movements recognized what constituted the “maximum potential consciousness” of the social group in question and imputed a level of knowledge and content of consciousness to those they hoped would benefit and those who might also become part of the movement. Without question, people in these movements set out ideas and expectations for action, often not without challenges and later revisions, but always with specific, practical goals in mind. It is not hard to imagine what North American society would be like today without the partisan leadership of such social movements and the insistence on an appropriate level of consciousness as an essential tool in righting historic wrongs affecting women, and racial and ethnic minorities. The academics discussed in the previous chapter, I believe, would agree with this last statement. But again, if it is applicable to women’s and antiracist movements, then why not to class? The most ready answer is that the demands of women and racial minorities are compatible with left liberalism if such demands do not exceed the boundaries of that frame of analysis that appears to guide so many studies of class.

The differences in the views of class between the sociologists discussed in the previous chapter and Marx, Ollman, and others are ideological in character. Perhaps that difference is best and most simply distinguished by Mészáros’s characterization of ideology: “the imperative to become *practically conscious* of the fundamental social conflict” in capitalist society (1989, 13–15). He delineates three ideological positions from which that conflict is viewed. The first position gives uncritical support to the existing social order; those who take the second position are concerned with exposing the “irrationalities of the *specific form* of a rather anachronistic class society” without proposing significant social change. (In Goldman’s terms, this may be the reception

of information and the development of ideas that do not change the structure of the group and do not reach the maximum level of consciousness possible for any particular social group.) The third ideological position is more clearly Marxist in orientation; it questions the need for class society and anticipates “the supersession of all forms of class antagonism” (Mészáros 1989, 13–15). Of these three ideological positions, the first two are perspectives that avoid or ignore the fundamental intentionality of capitalist relations and are, therefore, expressions of false consciousness. I would argue that the sociological approaches discussed in the previous chapter are based on Mészáros’s second ideological position. As forms of false consciousness, they refuse to view the development of class consciousness as an ethical necessity, and they reject the view that the exploitative and dehumanizing effects of capitalism are changeable beyond liberal finessing; in other words, radical social change is not feasible but it is pragmatic.

The researchers discussed previously have taken a rather static approach toward one of the fundamental principles of historical materialism, i.e., that being determines consciousness, as if consciousness were fully and irrevocably shaped by the dominant economic and political forces of society, contrary to Mészáros’s third ideological position. The essential difference between the two perspectives is the attitude toward class division and class conflict as inherently problematic elements of capitalism and the necessity to transcend this condition permanently. The authors of these sociological studies might well have researched the statements of Marx, Engels, and others in order to accurately represent the meaning of “being determines consciousness” that is essential for such analyses.

The foundation of historical materialism

Since Secombe and Livingstone are interested in amending Marxism, it might be helpful to return to the source they wish to revise. Even a cursory examination may reveal that it needs no revision at all. The key statement in *The German Ideology* is, “It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness” (Marx and Engels 1976, 37). Two more precise

dialectical statements are relevant to this fundamental one. First, “Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence”; that is, when they discover or create the means by which to consciously mediate between the constraints of their natural existence and their need for social and human development (Marx and Engels 1976, 37). Secondly, “As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, *coincides* with their production” (Marx and Engels 1976, 31, my emphasis). Thus, patterns of existence, behavior, aspirations, and ideology are highly correlated with production; but because they are not absolutely determined by production relations, self-activity and mediation are the strongest implications of these statements. In the *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx wrote that when a being is conscious of owing “his *existence* to himself” then he may be considered “independent” (1975b, 304). His idea of independence is neither that of an isolated individual nor that of the voluntarist whose mere assertion of independence is sufficient to make it real. Through the combination of self-activity and the mediating action of collective organizations that bring about liberation from constraining or oppressive conditions, independent human beings discover that they can only become fully independent beings through their relations with other beings (Marx 1975b, 336–37).

This is taken up again in *The German Ideology*, where the concrete existence of human beings is grounded in the complex of their total relations. Hence, “We set out from real active men, and on the basis of their real life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process” (Marx and Engels 1976, 36). “Life process” must be understood to include—as Secombe and Livingstone would likely agree—the relations of production and cultural relations, the latter of which are distinguishable but not separable from production due to the direct and indirect influence exerted upon them by the relations of production. Starting out with real, active people is only the basis on which the historical materialist learns what people think, their

attitudes, and their appropriation of ideologies; this is the source of Lukács's "psychological" and Goldmann's "real" consciousness. Further, it is the ground to which both theorists and activists return in anticipation that the people have engaged in reflective self-activity, have increased their awareness of the complex world in which they live, and have altered, or are preparing to alter, their living conditions as a result of their developing consciousness. To the extent that their self-activity includes deliberate organization in opposition to the constraints on their development, their being and consciousness will begin to develop in specific political and cultural directions that transcend the narrow boundaries of their immediate experience. Being is not static; if being determines consciousness, then a being transformed by changing conditions of existence can develop the consciousness and praxis that reflects on those altered conditions and defines a potential direction for further development of objective conditions.

This means workers' views of their actions, their consciousness within the context of the steel plant, the coal mine, or the office, will be the initial empirical focus. But the Marxist view also requires that this ground on which consciousness may initially develop is understood as a dynamic component of a much broader and more complex totality. Setting out on an analysis grounded in real, active people can be misleading if: a) the location is constrained because the complexity of existing relations is reduced to production relations alone; b) the ideological reflexes are not adequately accounted for; and c) the statements and views of the subjects are not the object of an historical critique. It is essential to consider Marx and Engels's real, active people in relation to other complexes of social life, a point Secombe and Livingstone begin with but seem to abandon upon their "amending" of Marx's premise. For in thinking about people in the complexity of their relations, one has to consider not only how they contribute to their own development and history, but how they may occasionally or continuously affirm bourgeois ideology and thereby find some immediately satisfying rationale for their reified relations, even if they are not aware that their social relations of being are reified. This is precisely Lenin's concern about the tendency of the

working class to be subjugated by bourgeois ideology if left to spontaneous actions (1961, 386).

Indeed, Marx and Engels qualify their statement about setting “out from real active men.” They write, “That is to say, not of setting out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh” (Marx and Engels 1976, 36). Historical materialism sets out on the course of analysis from basic premises in material relations, an analysis of concrete social and historical conditions. Marx and Engels do not reject “what men say, imagine, conceive” or conceptions of people “as narrated, thought of, imagined” in terms of the ideological constructs of “[m]orality, religion, metaphysics” (1976, 36). This is, rather, “the *material* of genuine historical analysis” (Lukács 1971a, 51). In fact, Marx and Engels reject a methodology that gives priority to these real or psychological expressions of consciousness because they understand that there is something very much obscured by the appearance of the world to human beings in the capitalist epoch. An implied historical-materialist principle is that we not be satisfied with “what men say, imagine, conceive.” Instead, priority must be given to the argument that reification (commodity fetishism in Marx’s terms) distorts what people think about their own lives as well as their subjective understanding of social and productive relations based in part on their immediate interests and pragmatic projections. This must be considered at some point in any comprehensive analysis that moves beyond common sense and immediate experience. If historical materialists begin with a method and a set of principles that include the “empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions” (Marx and Engels 1976, 37), attention will be required to the factors that mediate the development beyond the group’s maximum potential consciousness as the springboard for later transformation. This can occur only by imputing to the class, knowledge that makes the transformation feasible. The process of imputing must facilitate the development of such knowledge from within the class itself, whether the imperative to discover it originates inside or outside the class.

Marx and Engels's refusal to begin from particularistic and isolated points of view was a refusal to take superficial explanations of human conditions and action as their primary object. To do so would have indicated a passive acceptance of a fragmented and distorted view of reality and the periodic but momentary satisfaction of spontaneous, short-lived rebellions. Rather, theirs was a claim that a more organized approach was necessary for the development of knowledge about social relations of all kinds by which their vision could be realized. The reductionism of Seccombe and Livingstone comes from having missed or willfully excluded the essential purpose of historical materialism: the development of a form of analysis that will become a tool of mediated self-activity in the development of the working class, the object of which is socialist transformation and general human development. If any of these components are removed from Marxism, it becomes deceptive to argue for amendments to premises designed to achieve a goal that revisionists refuse to consider.

Discussing the matter of being in relation to consciousness in the introduction to his work on aesthetics, Lukács pointed out that the priority of being was only "the establishment of a fact;" namely, that being exists without consciousness but not consciousness without being. In asserting this clarification of the historical-materialist principle, Lukács argued most significantly that priority does not entail a value hierarchy of being and consciousness. "On the contrary, only this priority [the material priority of being] and its concrete theoretical and practical recognition by consciousness create the possibility of a real conquest of being through consciousness" (1979, 411; 1978, 31–32). That is, material conditions are the ground upon which social being arises and develops; no consciousness is possible, quite obviously, if being as a physiological entity does not exist. As material conditions develop, consciousness acquires an altered basis upon which to expand qualitatively. Lukács cites labor as the simplest example of this relationship: the use of material resources, the recognition of need, and the complex of thought and action that results in the actualization of the goal. A relation of priority between two phenomena does not require a stratification of value. Asserting

priority of being does not limit consciousness to economic activity or location within the system of production. Rather, the relationship of activity and location is the place from which consciousness of totality develops, a phenomenon (consciousness) that in turn has an influence on being.

By extension, the meaning that Marx and Engels accorded to “being determines consciousness” must involve a concept of determination that reflects a dialectical understanding of reality, especially in the sense that determination of consciousness by being is by no means a natural relation or mechanical outcome of the experience of social life. Raymond Williams’s definition of “determine” seems appropriate here: to “set certain limits or exert certain pressures.” This may be what Seccombe and Livingstone have in mind, but their sense of being determining consciousness seems to work only one way, from top downward. Williams further qualifies the term in its Marxist usage: “a sense of certain determinants within which or in relation to which . . . men act to make their own history” (1976, 101). These are the “real life processes” of which Marx and Engels wrote.

Equally important is John Somerville’s discussion of determinism in contrast to fatalism, the latter term generally denoting the power of social structural forces not only to shape life but to undermine any relatively autonomous movement toward opposition to prevailing conditions. Somerville’s emphasis is consistent with the stress thus far on consciousness as a developmental process in the context of necessity. “This is determinism,” Somerville writes, “in the sense of a rationally understandable causation, in light of the fact that man has needs and capacities, the interaction of which makes it necessary for him to do certain predictable things when he is faced with certain situations” (1999, 101). The nonreified meaning of being determines consciousness implies the possibility of discovery and development of knowledge on the basis of a dialectical comprehension of the complex of relations. If necessary (and it is necessary in a world characterized by reification), some of that knowledge or the motivation to discover it may well have to be imputed by others, either within or from outside the working class.

Part of the “real conquest of being,” to which Lukács refers, is the recognition, first, of its dynamic character, its transformation in relation to the movement of concrete social conditions. Secondly, it concerns the mental activities with which people “organize [the] actions and reactions of the external world . . . in some kind of way that will enable them to protect and develop their own existence” (Lukács 1975a, 14).

The trap lying at the core of pragmatic thinking is found in Seccombe and Livingstone’s remark, already quoted but worth repeating: “Workers have an interest in fighting capital to improve their wages and working conditions; they also have an interest in cooperating with their employers in order to protect their jobs” (2000, 28). Marx and Engels recognized that consciousness is initially located in “the *immediate* sensuous environment and . . . limited connection with other persons and things” (1976a, 44), but they were also cognizant that development from this basic level of consciousness required association with others in complexes of relations both inside and outside the immediate arena of production.

Being, consciousness, and objective conditions

Consciousness is developed out of the objective conditions in which the social being is grounded. In the sociological studies examined earlier, however, objective conditions constitute a permanent barrier to striving for a level of class consciousness that Marx and others viewed as historically necessary. Objective conditions are at base the forces and relations of capitalist production that underlie the complexities of everyday life. Institutional relations of politics, law, economics, etc., that are socially constructed to pursue specific goals that sustain capitalist society, are the kinds of concrete, material conditions upon which life is built and lived. Objective elements of everyday life include those that are symbolic such as language, ideas, and beliefs. Such elements are objectified and routinized in institutional settings, but they still possess the capacity to change the future.

The objective conditions of society at any moment are a present, often taken-for-granted backdrop to everyday life that shapes

the course of social and individual action. At the same time it is to objective conditions that individuals and social groups must direct their affirmation or discontent in order to realize their interests and aspirations. Like all contradictions, those found within objective social conditions can be undeveloped, or volatile and antagonistic. Such contradictions can either be ignored or confronted. Once contradictions become apparent and subjected to scrutiny, they are revealed as sources of knowledge potentially of much greater import than its immediate appearance would suggest. Specific conditions are necessary for any historical dynamic to develop fully, but what conditions are sufficient to move toward the consciousness of what is historically necessary?

There is an assumption that the correct objective conditions are essential for the development and success of working-class movements that lead to the prospect of socialism. Seccombe and Livingstone, for example, proposed their pragmatic and culturalist orientation toward workers' consciousness as a necessary measure at a time when, from their perspective, ideal objective conditions for attaining that end do not exist. This might be a supportable objection to the approach to class consciousness advocated here, but only under two conditions: 1) if correct objective conditions are seen to be a product of an inevitable, evolutionary development within society; and 2) under the assumption that the presence of the most favorable set of objective conditions for social change will immediately catapult the right people with correct political and ethical interests to their appropriate places in the movement. But neither of these conditions holds.

In contrast to this view, one of the major lessons of the Cuban revolution for Ernesto "Ché" Guevara (1998, 7) was the possibility of an insurrectionary movement creating favorable opportunities rather than waiting in "neo-Kautskian passivity" (Lowy 1973, 92) for more favorable conditions to evolve. Lenin's periodic return in speeches and writings to the need to draw from the masses more and better revolutionaries to compose a vanguard of the class struggle is a touchstone of communist history. Further, objective conditions are not merely social locations in which development and consciousness occur. In their response to criticisms of

the socialist movement in late nineteenth century Europe, Marx and Engels refused to defend inaction rationalized by the relativist claim that a person is only “a child of [one’s] time.” If so, they argued, “all controversy, all struggle on our part ceases; we accept quietly all the kicks our adversaries give us because we, who are so wise, know that these adversaries are [also] ‘only children of their time’ and cannot do otherwise” (1975b, 305). If they had written a hundred years after this (1879), they might have alluded to the subjectivist tendencies in some academic analyses that fit their analogy perfectly.

Lenin, like Ché Guevara, insisted on creating the conditions that would bring to the surface imperatives for revolutionary action or other social agitation to occur. Writing of the early efforts to produce a social-democratic newspaper in the mid-1890s, Lenin discussed the project’s failure owing to a police raid on the home of one of the revolutionaries, the seizure of the paper, and the arrest of at least one member of the group. The objective social conditions faced by these revolutionaries included the Czarist dictatorship, its repressive police and military power, and the absence of a mass-based political movement. Lenin did not suggest waiting for more favorable conditions, instead he noted which subjective and objective conditions might be changed, conditions over which a revolutionary organization could have some control. “The failure of the enterprise merely showed that the Social-Democrats of that period were unable to meet the immediate requirements of the time owing to their lack of revolutionary experience and practical training” (Lenin 1961, 377). He went on to commend his predecessors for attempting to seize a moment in which the objective conditions for revolution were not present but might be advanced by taking an action that appealed directly to the need to develop the subjective factor in revolution—revolutionaries themselves. Similarly, Lukács cites Marx’s criticisms of the working-class forces in England where “all the necessary material preconditions for social revolution” existed except for “a sense of generalisation and passion” (qu. in Lukács 2000, 67). The absence of the subjective passion of leaders and workers was itself an aspect of the objective problem faced by the First International, one into

which workers' political organizations would have to intervene in order to bring working-class consciousness forward to complete the complex of "material preconditions."

These and other examples demonstrate the viability of Lenin's concentrated efforts to promote a core of professional revolutionaries. This centered on two elements. One was the necessity of training cadre and developing their experience based on the principle that revolutionary practice and the skills of leadership can be learned by anyone. "Theoretical knowledge, political experience and organizational ability are things that can be acquired. If only the desire exists to study and acquire these qualities" (Lenin 1961, 317; cf. 377-78, 422). This pedagogical principle was augmented by an organizational principle, that capable revolutionary leaders teach new cadre who in turn are expected to teach others in study circles of workers and students (Lenin 1961, 422-23, 441-43, 450-51). In less difficult circumstances of contemporary North American liberal democracy, one might expect the same from trade-union leaders and leaders of other social movements. Lukács thus noted Lenin's approval of "conscious intervention into reality" when it was not ready-made for economic development after 1917, but could be made so by the introduction of certain economic policies (1991, 100).

The requirement of correct objective conditions for political action is an important concern, but it should always be considered a constraint with malleable boundaries. An initial question, of course, concerns the objective conditions faced by the working-class movement, including the economy and institutional structures of the state and government such as the legal, military, and political systems. Each of these components must be considered and confronted in the formation of oppositional movements. The durability of capitalism may be partially accounted for by the power of the objective social structures and institutional arrangements that attempt to sustain the productive power of capitalism and regulate multiple aspects of people's lives. Seeking out the correct objective conditions for the success of a workers' movement necessitates appropriate interventions into objective reality in order to make it more receptive to change. But if objective

conditions are a manifestation of historical reality, the history of oppositional interventions must be considered to comprise one crucial component of objective historical conditions. The objective historical condition of the Bolshevik revolution shaped emergent oppositions elsewhere in the world. The development of radical, democratic, Communist-led trade unions in North America was an objective condition that fueled the progress of working-class action. These were also objective facts faced by the capitalist state in its continued effort to legitimize a secure and profitable environment for capitalist enterprise. Thus, beyond the basic problem of identifying the objective social conditions faced by the working class and the socialist movement is the issue of how these affect the individuals who develop social movements and engage in revolutionary action. The objective reality of such movements includes not only conflicts with the state and employers, but confrontations with ideologies that constrain efforts toward social change, including the “reified mind” found among less class-conscious members of the working class.

Lukács understood that the social structure and the arrangement of institutional power were meaningless without the recognition of the part played by human intervention in the formation of these objective conditions. In his early writings as a Communist, he sought to give rightful place to objective forces; that is, in dialectical relation to the desire for freedom “as one of the driving forces” in the transition to socialism (1972, 66). The demand for freedom is initially a subjective recognition, a need; only “through the faithful discovery of” its relation to “objective reality” could the need be satisfied (1972, 55; 1979, 415). Freedom is an objective necessity for human society; the demand for freedom becomes an objective condition when the demand becomes a component of the political force of a mass movement. The other side of this is that reification also becomes an objective problem, an inhibiting and regressive force, when it becomes a mass experience within the class.

Thus, the objective conditions of the economy and of various aspects of culture determine the ideas, language, morality, etc., of members of particular societies. They also determine

those who make up both loosely organized and coherent political movements, thus shaping the social being. Once objectified on the terrain of political activity through the efforts to organize it, consciousness acts not only in dialectical relation to the objective conditions of being, it also acts relatively autonomously with regard to the *subjective* conditions of being. This is the point of efforts such as Lenin's, Ché Guevara's, and others.

It may be useful to return to a point made in the first chapter, i.e., Marx's assertion that specific contexts of the social environment already contain not only its historical determinants but resources for its future development as well. Social being, because of the necessary relation to totality, also contains such determinants. This is the basis of the lesson Guevara learned in Cuba. The way this becomes problematic for some is when, as noted earlier, objective conditions are seen to be fully determining of both being and consciousness. Perhaps the sociologists discussed earlier rest their understanding of Marx's dictum that humankind only sets itself tasks that it can solve on the material conditions "already present or at least in the course of formation" (Marx 1970, 21). But they do not accept that one component of those material conditions is the level of consciousness that can be developed, and that can intervene in the very conditions that are "in the course of formation." In other words, the resources necessary for solving the problem of consciousness and reification are ready to be developed from existing conditions. I return to this point in the following chapter.

Chapter Six

Consciousness Overemphasized?

But the existence of objective conditions, of possibilities or of freedom is not yet enough: it is necessary to “know” them and to know how to use them.

—Antonio Gramsci

The perspective on objective conditions in relation to social being and consciousness presented in the last chapter is consistent with the founders of historical materialism and many of their supporters over the long history of Marxism. It is somewhat surprising, then, to find criticism of Lukács’s work among one of his usual supporters, especially when the criticism is directed at the issue of consciousness. While István Mészáros’s work cannot be lumped together with the sociologists discussed in chapter 4, his criticisms are a matter of concern, for they may indirectly and unintentionally provide fodder for arguments such as those of Gorman, Dunk, and Seccombe and Livingstone.

A major focus of Mészáros’s *Beyond Capital* (1995), is what he refers to as the insurmountable power of capital. Part of this text is devoted to criticisms of Lukács’s “overemphasis” on the ideological crisis of the proletariat and his argument for the development of consciousness as a partial solution. From Mészáros’s viewpoint this is a misdirected concentration; nothing but a complete revolution offers the necessary conditions to change capitalist society, for any change that occurs through reform has limited significance due to the very nature of capitalism. To Lukács, capitalism’s damage to the individual psyche, its repression of

collective efforts of the working class, and its offences against human dignity were paramount in his commitment to resolving the problems created by this exploitative system and fundamental to his demand for its overthrow. To Mészáros, Lukács's work fails to provide sufficient prospects for the negation of capital's driving force. He argues that Lukács was ineffective because the enemy, the system of capitalist production, was simply too powerful to be deterred from dominating every aspect of social and personal life. While Mészáros rightly criticizes those whose slogan has become "there is no alternative" (1995, xiii) much of his critique of Lukács might be taken as an unintended affirmation of that claim.

Mészáros's argument certainly points to the difficult objective conditions that capitalism has produced and sustained and which inhibit the development of consciousness and social change. While the perceived and actual strength of the objective conditions of capitalism is important for any discussion of class consciousness, it is possible to overstate the case for the power of capital on the grounds Mészáros suggests. His position implies that the objective conditions of capitalism are always sufficient to suppress the emergence of circumstances objectively favorable for the struggle for socialism, for trade-union demands, and for racial and gender equality. This position withholds the actuality of correct objective conditions for such struggles until a point in time at which the struggle itself becomes qualitatively different as a struggle to consolidate socialism.

The ideological crisis to which Lukács referred is one in which the majority of the proletariat do not take up Mészáros's third ideological position, that of overcoming all class antagonism, but rather the first or second position of acquiescence or reform resulting in nonstructural change. Those who adopt the first or second position form a subjective barrier to, and often an objective rationale against, the feasibility of radical social change.¹ As these individuals express their subjective acceptance of this position in a variety of everyday contexts, their actions and attitudes constitute objective conditions against which progressive and socialist forces must struggle as they also struggle against the structural conditions created by capitalism. As it has been argued here, these

ideological adaptations may also have been brought about by the absence of sufficient knowledge with which to develop such consciousness, or the refusal to appropriate such knowledge. Thus, overdependence on the expectation of correct objective conditions assumes that these will somehow emerge in sufficient quantity and character to propel a movement forward. Such overdependence also assumes that objective conditions are unidirectional agents of political socialization and training.

Following Marx, Mészáros focuses on the nature of capital, its fundamental structure that sets the conditions for maximum expropriation of surplus labor and the creation of ever more surplus value. The nature of capital refers to its “unalterable” character, by which Mészáros means “its objective structural determination” (1995, 112–13). No amount of reform can reconstruct this intentionality, which is essential to capitalism’s inherent form and content. From its earliest stages of development to the present, the capitalist system has exercised its greatest energies toward maximizing profits and power, and while reforms in the policy and practice of capitalism have occurred, the system as a whole has resisted any reforms that might diminish its capacity to achieve its fundamental goals. Its exercise of power involves the organized and increasingly entrenched capitalist mode of production, the institutional complexes designed to support these structures, and the individuals for whom the continuation of the system provides the resources of economic, political, and cultural power. Among other things, these are components of the “nature of capital [that] remains the same in its developed as in its undeveloped form” (Marx 1967, 272 n. 3; Mészáros 1995, 112). There is a dialectical principle in Mészáros’s focus. Marx argued that the proletariat must cease to be what it is as created by its opposing class. The proletariat, as has been discussed in chapter 2, must develop its consciousness and create a movement that will abolish itself as a class. But, by abolishing itself, the proletariat also abolishes capitalism. The proletariat negates, by revolutionary means, the nature of capitalism’s structure and the class, economic, and cultural relations that emerge from it. The major point to be taken from Mészáros is this: eradicate capitalism and there will be no more

Westrays, and in its place will come a flowering of consciousness and socialism. The problem remains how to get there from here, and how long must organized political progress and elevated forms of consciousness wait before the moment of socialism negates the nature of capital.

The emphasis must be on the process of social change, individual development undertaken over time, and the complex of dialectical interactions that contribute to the eventuality of socialism. Such a process consists of a series of moments, points at which choices are made, new information received, and more comprehensive knowledge developed that informs the future of the process. In dialectical terms, a “moment,” writes Lukács, is a “situation whose duration may be longer or shorter, but which is distinguished from the process that leads up to it in that it forces together the essential tendencies of that process, and demands that a decision be taken over the future of the process” (2000, 55). Such moments may be comprised of merely reformist measures, but they may also consist of meaningful, organized advancements over existing disadvantageous conditions. Forcing “together the essential tendencies” requires an awareness of the historical development of that moment and evaluating its components to draw out the successes for a political movement and discover the cues demanding different directions in strategy and tactics.

Because of his concentration on the “insurmountable” nature of capitalism, Mészáros appears to be focused on the moments of limited reform measures and less interested in them as processes of alternative or oppositional activities. He centers his argument on the objective conditions of capitalism that empower existing structural forces and shape the organization of society at any given historical moment. Emphasizing the “unalterable” character of capital is implicitly a critique of the reformist impulse in late modern society such as the proponents of a third way for capitalist society. Consider the point Mészáros makes about capitalism’s ideological claim of formal equality against the struggles for substantive equality at all levels of everyday life (1995, 187ff.). As one of capitalism’s integral legitimizing components, liberal democratic political systems have largely conceded to demands

for formal equality by establishing state constitutions and acquiescing to court decisions enforcing civil equality and individual rights. Every statement at local, national, and international levels on human rights is a communication of capitalism's willingness to grant equality at the formal level. Most such measures have been brought about by agitation and protest by groups that find themselves subordinated to the power of capitalism. While these formal measures are yet to be completed historically, they nevertheless remain an important basis for the betterment of present conditions and future development. And it is important to note that the organized Left has provided some of the major pressure to achieve formal equality with regard to race and ethnicity, for example. The relative success of the women's movement has been facilitated in Europe and North America by provisions made in legislation that has been brought about in large part by women's politically driven organizations. This is one indication of the significance of overcoming the ideological problems of patriarchal relations, even if it is only a partial and reformist achievement; that is, even if proponents only take up Mészáros's second ideological position, which recognizes the contradictions of capitalism without advocating structural change. Educational and occupational opportunity, income, and control over one's body, among other things, are policy initiatives that have affirmed the principle of gender equality. Much the same can be said for provisions of formal equality for racial and ethnic minorities. Mészáros demands, quite rightly, a recognition of the limitations of such measures, limitations that are due to the nature of capital, which includes limited flexibility of its boundaries and tolerance for change. Thus, while women have increasingly broken through barriers in the marketplace, their entry has had the effect of reducing wage levels for both men and women. The reduction of household spending power since the 1980s, despite the increase of two-earner families, is one manifestation of the opening up of virtually all occupations to women. Mészáros cites several studies indicating this downward trend (cf. 1995, 192 and sources in endnote 249; see also Eisenstein 2005). Similarly, fears of the effects of lower-paid African American industrial workers in the twentieth century became the rationale

for some trade unions to restrict actively the integration of their ranks in order to protect the wage levels and racial status of their predominantly white workforce (Foner 1991; Solomon 1998; Stephan-Norris and Zeitlin 2003). These are, Mészáros notes, manifestations of the structural limitations to realizing the promise of genuine equality and social mobility for the “small minority of cases” who move out of the lower class “only as isolated individuals” (1995, 116).

It is true that alternative developments intended to reform the effects of capitalism do not have sufficient power to cause radical change in the system as a whole; that is, in themselves these measures cannot change the nature of capital (Mészáros 1995, 189). Mészáros is correct to point this out so long as the argument is directed against reforms as ends in themselves. The objective facts of the limits to mobility must be considered alongside the political reasoning of individuals and social groups seeking to maximize the level of equality possible in liberal democracy in light of the existence of intentionally constructed inequitable conditions within capitalism. Tensions among the promises of the system, the possibility of social mobility and reform, and the true nature of capitalism must be acknowledged; they cannot be ignored without falling into the quagmire of supporting subjectivist and limited interests. Neither individual social mobility nor wide-ranging social reform provides *sustained* advancement over the original conditions. But the promises of the system and individual motives and desires expressed in social movements are nevertheless objective conditions that arise over time through interests and actions of particular groups of people applying pressure (in varying degrees) on capitalism’s structure and content. Such counterpressures become material conditions of the environment of capitalism even as its nature remains unchanged. Such interests, of course, only make sense and are only viable to the extent they are consciously assessed and related to the objective possibilities uncovered by movements of organized consciousness.

Mészáros’s argument focuses on what he calls the first-order mediations of capital, those “between human beings and the vital conditions of their reproductive nature.” Capital is bolstered in

its reproductive capacity by a range of second-order mediations, among which are the family, “fetishistic production objectives” and their operation through an alienated labor force, the absence of control on the part of labor, and the “varieties of capital’s state formation” (1995, 108–9). Each of these relations operates on an internal logic by which individuals function to survive and reproduce themselves in everyday life framed by the demands of capitalism.

Primary and second-order mediations combine to produce the instrumentality Mészáros identifies in the structure of capitalism and relations among people and classes within this system. He is correct in his assertions that achievements in the area of social equality and mobility “over centuries, did not alter in the slightest the exploitative surplus-labor-extracting *command structure of capital*” (1995, 116). The formal equality afforded to women permitted entry into sectors of the labor force from which they had previously been excluded or their participation restricted. “But under no circumstances,” Mészáros writes, “can they be allowed to question the established division of labor and their own role in the inherited family structure” (1995, 209). It is statements such as these that emphasize the limits of reforming the nature of capitalism, but in making them he risks undermining the actual challenges to capitalism that might emerge from efforts of social movements that may or may not have goals beyond reform of immediate conditions; in other words, movements that may be guided by the second position in his scheme of ideological alternatives. Remarks about women not being allowed to question the fundamentals of capitalism may reflect something of the frustrations of political activism inside or outside of the academy, but they are also patently untrue and have the potential to portray erroneously social reality as an inflexible structure which imposes circumstances that are able to suppress or repel every attempt at progressive change in modern society. His position also tends to ignore the significant gains of particular historical moments of women’s movements. Advancements in formal equality have set the basis for further organized protest that has resulted in some improvement in the lives of many, but that in itself is not an argument for seeking liberal reforms before radical

change is possible. In North America, for example, racial and ethnic minorities can be subordinated or provided opportunities for more equitable access to education, occupations, and other social resources. When pressured, the structure of capitalism has often allowed for the development of such opportunities while retaining the power to revoke or restructure its earlier measures. Capitalism can facilitate advancements without losing its grip on power, as the current neoliberal economic and cultural environment shows. If such mobility is permitted, even encouraged, one outcome is certain: the stratification within the ranks of subordinated groups will change without altering the fundamental structure that produced the inequality. But one element of that unchanging nature—not its resistance to change, but what capitalism produces to resist change—is reification. Capitalism has had such power in full measure, but organized political action forced it to relinquish or renegotiate some of it in order for capitalism to retain a much needed stability. It is through such processes, limited though they are, that participants in radical and reform movements can learn something of both the nature of capitalism and the potential of their own power. Thus, the nature of class conflict and class consciousness must be stressed just as much as Mészáros stresses the power inherent in the nature of capital.

While making this claim, Mészáros is aware of a principle that is fundamental to Marxism: “History, it goes without saying even if it is often tendentiously ignored, does not deserve its name unless it is conceived as open-ended in both directions, towards the past no less than towards the future” (1995, 112). But he comes close to nullifying Lukács’s analytical and organizational advances because he chooses not to consider fully the role of consciousness, interest, and the political commitment of those who have kept history open by confronting what to Mészáros are the “insurmountable” problems presented by capitalism. Those who have committed themselves in this way have demonstrated that some problems produced by capitalism can be confronted with sufficient and sustained force to result in important change.

“What is really at stake in these matters,” he writes, “is the *nature of capital*, and not the actual or fictitious characteristics

of ‘human nature’”(1995, 112). While Mészáros correctly draws attention to the “fictitious” character of “human nature,” one wonders why the actual criteria of human nature are not articulated if we assume that by “actual” Mészáros is referring to “the ensemble of human relations” by which Marx basically defined it. Ignoring the opportunity for a comparison suggests that the question of human nature is best left to the period in which socialism is actively being constructed. This is a missed opportunity to emphasize and develop an aspect of Marx’s materialist method founded on the concrete basis of the intentionally constructed environment of human existence.

Alongside the issue of human nature is one of ethics, especially as it relates to activism. This is evident in Mészáros’s discussion of social policies in contemporary Britain regarding the extent of medical treatment required by the elderly. He cites examples of policies and practices restricting life-saving surgery and dialysis, as well as the reduction of welfare support for the poor. He also cites the decision to withhold flu vaccine from the elderly, a practice that resulted in a number of deaths and, no doubt, much unnecessary distress for the aged and their families. Mészáros cites one health official who argued that, “once you legitimise the idea that you can withhold treatment on the grounds that someone’s quality of life is not worth a £5 vaccination you are on a dangerous path. It’s doctors playing God.” Mészáros’s response to this comment is troublesome: “in reality the responsibility for ‘playing God’ lies with the government; doctors only obey its guidelines” (1995, 213–14). The capitalist state thus imposes upon the elderly a decision that could kill them; but can one really accept Mészáros’s claim that medical doctors, whose years of education, training, and experience also include training in ethical standards for treatment, have no choice but to obey the state? By attributing such exaggerated power to the state, Mészáros abdicates his ethical responsibility as an intellectual to provide criticism of any such rationale professionals might hold as a measure against the ideological crisis that characterizes the relation of public medicine to the demands of capitalism and its state. Is it acceptable that the state’s guidelines are viewed by the medical profession

as the market rationale for their professional survival? This does not leave much room for political or professional mobilization to change such circumstances, even if only as a reformist measure.

The crucial absence, again, is the process by which we move from social movements or political interests that are more or less immediately concerned with reformist measures to revolutionary practice. Even though realistically this can only be an outline of strategy and theoretical analysis, at some point it must be designed to shape a broadly based social movement. Mészáros's approach unintentionally leads to a denial of a dynamic and dialectical understanding of history and to an unjustified downgrading of the potential effectiveness of human agency in the face of state policies and the power of capital. It allows a criticism of capitalism to flourish without paying sufficient attention to how people have responded to capitalism or how they should respond in the future. This approach seems to settle for the affirmation of the reifying powers of capitalism's second-order mediations.

If we were to follow the implications of Mészáros's critique, we would find ourselves trapped by the same dichotomous relationship that apparently cannot be resolved; namely, viewing the problems of capitalism and the necessary solutions to be at such a distance from each other that prospects for mobilizing for the resolution of the contradictions could be quickly calculated and dismissed. That is, it appears that the health of the elderly and their doctors' apparent autonomy, the oppressive conditions of work imposed by mining corporations, and other examples, must await the establishment of socialism before an attempt is made to resolve these issues. However, if the choice is to move toward socialism, the matter of how historical subjects can develop the knowledge necessary to do so cannot be left to the moment of transition to socialism or to its period of development. Unavoidably, the transition from capitalism to socialism is arrived at through the "one-step-forward-two-step-back" experiences of political struggle. But for Mészáros, the historical moment of complete destruction of capitalism seems to be the starting point for significant social change. Perhaps this is why his focus on ideological struggle, including reification, is a central element in his criticism

of Lukács. Ideological struggle is primarily a long-term process for addressing the problems presented by capitalism, a process that necessarily begins with individuals and social groups rather than the structure of society as a whole.

For Lukács, the dialectical relation between individuals and social groups, and the objective conditions of their society, was part of the ideological struggle to educate, to socialize, and to move people toward a comprehensive understanding of the relations of capital and the possibility of socialism. Mészáros derides Lukács's efforts to focus revolutionary organization on these problems, citing the latter's emphasis on educating the working class and his stress on class consciousness as "the 'ethics' of the proletariat." We have noted this already in chapter 3 as the precondition for the formulation of the concept of imputed class consciousness.

Mészáros does acknowledge the important distinction between Lukács's dialectical approach to the formation of class consciousness, which informed his educational orientation toward the working class, and Bernstein's Kantian perspective on knowledge (1989, 301). Lukács made it clear in his response to the critics of *History and Class Consciousness* that "educational work" is insufficient, and that the struggle for consciousness of the proletariat and the peasantry involved the entire work of the Party, including the formation of alliances (2000, 85–86). This by no means negates the importance of educating people about the actual conditions of their existence and about alternatives to such conditions; rather, it points to the necessity of expanding the complex of revolutionary organization. Mészáros criticizes the "individualistic/educational" remedy of developing consciousness as one of the "illusions of the Enlightenment" (1989, 386). Quoting from *History and Class Consciousness*, he writes, "For, according to Lukacs 'it is an *ideological crisis* which must be solved *before* a practical solution to the world's economic crisis can be found'" (1989, 314). Mészáros had made the same point in an earlier work (1989, 300–301), referring to Lukács's perspective as "a misdiagnosis" of the historical situation after the revolutionary period of 1917–19. He criticized Lukács for failing to apply dialectical principles in his argument by defining the problem in terms of

“before” and “after” and failing to provide a means of solving the problem (1995, 313–14). However, Mészáros imposes a meaning on Lukács’s statement that was not necessarily intended, for it is Mészáros who puts the word “before” in italics (cf. Lukács 1971a, 79), thus reconstructing the statement as a dichotomy of “before” and “after.” Indeed, Lukács could have avoided phrasing the issue as the development of consciousness “before” anything else could be done; he could have chosen phrases such as “along with” or “simultaneously” or “as a component of the dialectical process” that would be more consistent with a historical-materialist approach. He also could have put the point in terms of the practical reality of revolutionary movements: the more or less simultaneous, sometimes contradictory ebb and flow of concrete revolutionary activity.

However, it must be said that in one of his last works Lukács did articulate a sequence in the development of consciousness that implies a problematic “before and after.” As Bhaskar has pointed out, Lukács was not always clear in his use of objectivity in historical materialism between a sense of objectivity as externality and objectivity as the production of the subject (1983, 325). He sometimes reduced objective external social forces to immutable and impenetrable laws even as he argued for the necessity and possibility of intervention and transcendence of them. Lukács characterized the relation between individual and society as the “complementary poles of a unified social process” (1991, 124) and argued for the objectivity of the social structures as external to human beings in the same sense in which Marx discussed externality in the introduction to the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1986–87, 17–18). However, Lukács also asserted that these “social structures are the inherent processes of society that develop in accordance with deterministic laws and lie beyond human control” (1991, 125). Without explicitly correcting this overemphasis, he argued that socialist democracy was the means by which “blind objectivity” could be overcome “without violating the inherent law of objectivity,” although objectivity itself becomes “a tool in the teleological designs of conscious active men” (1991, 125). The difficulty lies in the particular structuring of the complex

of individual, society, capitalism, and socialism. If the objectivity of capitalism is external to the subject, it is nevertheless the set of material conditions that produce the historical subject as an alienated subject. But that alienated subject at the same time can reason under constraints, has the potential for higher levels of consciousness and therefore can organize opposition to that alienating social system. Particularly problematic for Lukács, as an advocate of imputed class consciousness, is the suggestion that the problem lies in the stages implied in these statements. Indeed, *socialist democracy* will allow for “the conquest of consciousness and self-determination over blind objectivity” (Lukács 1991, 125). However, it is within capitalism that the oppositional fragment against alienation and exploitation develops. Even within oppressive conditions, reification is neither an absolute nor a static state. What must be qualified is the notion that the actuality of socialism alone produces this “active creature, which is the true nature of [the] human species” (Lukács 1991, 125). In its moment, socialism will do this, but so too does capitalism construct, unintentionally in terms of its own interests, the conditions in which opposition to oppression develops. Marx could never have advocated revolution if such unintentional conditions did not exist. That is, socialist democracy secures the conditions for the species as a whole to develop its freedom, but the conscious imperative for such development arises amidst the contradictions, exploitation, and alienation of capitalism. That conscious imperative materializes in the “formation of a conscious minority [as] the precondition of a mass movement” (Lukács 1975a, 68). This remark was made in a discussion of literature and consciousness that Lukács referred to in an earlier writing as a means of understanding and developing potentiality, that which “is richer than actual life” and already existent in objective reality (1963, 21; cf. Hegel 1931, 105).

Returning to Mészáros’s criticisms, we note that he is not correct when he argues that Lukács offers no precise solution to a practical problem, for his criticism avoids Lukács’s statement regarding class consciousness in terms of “objective possibility” and the “inner transformation of the proletariat.” These

are clearly terms and phrases of process, rather than closure as Mészáros implies. Mészáros also avoids the substantial discussion of the role of the Communist Party in the final chapter of *History and Class Consciousness*. The point of Lukács's statement about solving the ideological crisis should be that education and the development of consciousness are essential not only for finding a solution to crises, but for establishing the preconditions of the solution: developing a firm basis in the individuals comprising a political movement.

Mészáros also disregards an important dialectical statement Lukács made toward the end of *History and Class Consciousness*. Quoting from Engels's discussion of the transition in human society under socialism as a "leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom," Lukács points out that any "leap" is "in essence a process" (1971a, 312). A leap is never just a sudden break from prevailing social relations of a specific moment, just as the realm of freedom is not a static condition. Lukács is referring to the rather lengthy, sometimes circuitous route of social change that requires many steps, including the process of organizing the consciousness of the most advanced and the most retrograde sectors of the class. Thus, Lukács comments on the relationship of necessity to freedom: "The only problem is to determine the *starting-point* of the process" (1971a, 312). One can argue that this is hardly the only problem, but it is certainly a central problem of the preparation and carrying out of revolutionary organizing.

In his own defense, here quoting affirmatively G. Y. Zinoviev, Lukács argued that the "communist vanguard of the working class struggles against social democracy (labour aristocracy, petit bourgeois fellow travelers) *for the working class*. The working class at whose head stands the Communist Party, struggles with the bourgeois *for the peasantry*" (2000, 85). Perhaps it is the communist movement that Mészáros really objects to, and in this way interprets the intervention of the Communist Party as a problem of substitution (which will be more thoroughly explored in the following chapter). After quoting Zinoviev, the question Lukács asks one of his critics might well be asked of Mészáros, Dunk, or Secombe and Livingstone: "Does Comrade Rudas think that this

is not a struggle of consciousness?” Put differently, do such critics of the struggle against the ideological crisis not think that is the work of communist parties.

Having rejected Lukács’s argument on the necessity of an ethical component in revolutionary theory and practice, it becomes easier for Mészáros to set aside Lukács’s main point—giving priority to finding a solution to the ideological problem of the reification of the proletariat. Further, this allows Mészáros to focus his argument on the “insurmountable” problems in the unchanging nature of capitalism and the problems of the historical experiences of postcapitalist societies. Thus, while Mészáros argues that Lukács had created an idealized conception of working-class consciousness in his identification of party and class, the alleged error is extended by Mészáros to creation of a dichotomy of “before” and “after” that reifies the necessary processes of the development of working-class consciousness. That process enlarges over time within the context of more or less favorable economic, political, and other objective conditions that mediate the struggle between classes, as does the developing awareness of concrete conditions and alternatives by members of the working class as it is more or less continuously objectified in their movement.

Knowledge of economic conditions and the struggle against them is a crucial component in the development of consciousness, as Ollman has argued, and in the movement toward socialism. Lukács treated this set of problems with less vigor than the problem of ideology and consciousness, but he correctly recognized the latter as “the struggle of the proletariat against itself” (1971a, 80). Further, “*The proletariat only perfects itself by annihilating and transcending itself, by creating the classless society through the successful conclusion of its own class struggle*” (Lukács 1971a, 80). Notice that the proletariat does not *begin to develop itself* in a classless society, it *begins to perfect itself during* the struggle with the opposing class in the social, economic, and political context created and sustained by the opposing class. The question is how the class moves toward that state of “perfection,” including the transcendence of the inner barrier of reification which initiates its dialectical negation as a class. Lukács avoided imposing a closed

meaning on his statements, a matter that is as important organizationally as it is methodologically.

A further point needs to be made, though it should be obvious given the connection of Lukács's statement above with the position Marx took on the proletariat, discussed in chapter 2. Stephan Breuer, arguing that Lukács succumbs to the "illusion of politics," claims that this is manifested in his insistence on the "self-elimination of the proletariat." Breuer puts this in terms of sacrifice, the "earnestness of death" (1982, 76–77). This is an inaccurate portrayal of Lukács's position, and of Marx's. There is nothing sacrificial about raising the level of consciousness among members of a social group to the point at which they become aware of their subordinated condition and discover the theoretical principles, the "guidelines for action," that redefine and reconstruct their circumstances. Consistent with Goldmann's argument, discussed in chapter 3, this is evidence that the group has gone beyond the maximum level of consciousness possible as a subordinated group and has begun to change its structure by way of a rational, dialectical reorganization of the group itself.

This problem of "before" and "after" is highlighted in Willis Truitt's recent discussion of Marxist ethics in which tactics in the period of revolutionary struggle are given priority over the "ethics of duty" in the period of building socialism (2005, 84–85).² For Truitt, tactics in the period of revolutionary struggle may "determine the continuing conditions of life, and in many instances, the very survival of humanity" (71). He cites a passage from a version of Lukács's "Tactics and Ethics" in which "correct tactics" are categorically ethical; that is, revolutionary tactics and ethics are identical. This misconstrues Lukács's argument, the context of which was the preparation of revolutionary cadre. His emphasis on knowledge and conduct as the core of a revolutionary ethics is important in establishing a process obscured by his own problematic assumption of the identity of tactics and ethics in the statement quoted. Lukács's definition of ethics has already been cited: knowledge of one's position within existing historical conditions, the consciousness of the necessity to challenge the power of capital and a means to achieve it, the necessity of commitment

(non-neutrality), and the belief that one's individual actions can make a meaningful difference in the struggle for socialism. But he notes that the ethical relations of conscience and responsibility involve a "purely formal and ethical definition of individual action" that moves forward into "a special level of action, that of politics" when the individual "makes an ethical decision within himself," a decision derived from the consciousness of common interests, goals, and objective possibility (Lukács 1975b, 8–9). Mészáros's third ideological position thus begs several questions: If the recognition of the necessity of a classless society constitutes an ideological position, at what point in the process does that recognition occur in the concrete form of an active social movement to achieve this end? To use the two categories suggested in Truitt's argument, does this position develop during the course of revolutionary struggle, or in the period of building socialism, as an "ethics of duty"? At what point are Mészáros's first and second forms of ideology recognized as supports of capitalism, and therefore as hindrances to the development of consciousness that facilitates the kind of knowledge and commitment necessary to take up the third position and its projected goal? Thus, the ideological crisis needs to be addressed prior to attaining anything like a socialist society, for it is the overcoming of the inner barrier of reification in, at least, a conscious minority that is the precondition for that achievement.

In other words, there must be an "ethics of duty" relevant to the period of struggle, ethics that can be developed and distinguished, for analytical and organizational purposes, from tactics for organizing trade unions, on-the-job safety, struggles against racism, and so on. Such ethics may be distinguishable from, but cannot be fundamentally different than those that motivate people to build and consolidate socialism in a postrevolutionary period. The relation between tactics and ethics is clarified by the requirements of action at this "special level." The point here is that the ethical decision of the individual may occur with or without the influence of the movement—the Communist Party in Lukács's case—but the movement must present a clear ethical standpoint as a motivation and common frame of reference for newly committed

individuals. The identification of ethics with tactics in a period in which tactics are said to take priority has certain organizational risks. These were experienced in the history of the Communist movement when certain “necessities” of the struggle were sometimes considered exempt from ethical consideration. Examples cited in this study of politically motivated action by working people, show the beginnings of the formation of a sense of ethical duty under the immediate conditions of capitalism, even though the immediate effects of these struggles have greater implications for reform than for revolution.

Mészáros throws up his own barriers to the possibility of an alternative to capitalism and the formation of oppositional movements necessary for working toward this end. His “insurmountable nature” of capitalism becomes a rationale against the ideological struggle to overcome reification and develop class consciousness as the central means of advancing a movement toward socialism at the present historical juncture. Perhaps the collapse of Soviet socialism, having resurrected the “god-that-failed” argument, has overtaken Mészáros’s interest in how to achieve a socialist future. In many respects there are similarities with the attitude taken by Gorman, Dunk, and Seccombe and Livingstone. A disturbing aspect of this is the passivity engendered by the approaches these authors take and the sense of futility with regard to participating in social movements, especially those based on the systematic historical analysis of Marxism, and more specifically the movements for socialism.

NOTES

1. These ideological positions were noted at the beginning of chapter 5.
2. See my review of Truitt (Lanning 2005).

Chapter Seven

Class Experience, “Substitution,” and False Consciousness

These people who cannot pronounce the word “theoretician” without a sneer, who describe their genuflections to a common lack of training and backwardness as a “sense for the realities of life,” reveal in practice a failure to understand our most imperative practical tasks.

—V. I. Lenin

E. P. Thompson’s approach to class and class consciousness has been important for its emphasis on the cultural life of the working class as it was developed in the context of emerging capitalism. One of his primary concerns is to avoid a concept of class that is frozen into “structure” or “category”; in general, he rejects the characterization of social phenomena as static. Class defined as a “thing” invites its transformation into a mathematical construct, such as the operationalizing of socioeconomic status we have already noted (cf. Giddens 1987, 209). Mészáros’s rejection of class as an ideal type is important in this context as well; in this he is consistent with Thompson, who was concerned to avoid a sociological reification of class. However, some limitations imposed by Thompson on intervention from outside class boundaries need to be addressed.

The context of Thompson’s major study (1968) is the developing English working class from the late eighteenth century. That period was characterized by the expansion of industrial capitalism

and migration of the populace from rural areas to growing urban centers. Birth into a class was the chief determinant of class location and of exclusion from other classes. The creation of the working class was a result of specific economic and technological relations “imposed, not upon raw material, but upon the free-born Englishman” (1968, 213). The “free-born Englishman” was founded on bourgeois rights (85ff.) for which working people agitated from the late eighteenth century but which were increasingly understood to affect different classes in different ways. When class consciousness takes shape, it does so out of the experience of such framing of degrees of freedom and, consequently, the self-activity of the working class as it struggles to accommodate or command the effects of these new relations. For Thompson, class is not a “structure” or a “category” but “something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships” (1968, 8). Although Thompson does understand class in economic terms, his notion of class as a “happening” is problematic. If class is conceptualized in this way, “class consciousness and political action” (Mészáros, 1971, 101) would be arbitrary or spontaneous developments. Class as something that “happens” is a theme that is carried through Thompson’s work; it denotes processes of development of the class that are basically internal, although he considers class to be “largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born—or enter involuntarily” (Thompson 1968, 9). Class consciousness, too, appears to be an intraclass phenomenon centered on “the way these experiences [of production relations] are handled in cultural terms” (1968, 9). Class, in this view, is a set of relationships that people are part of because they have a familial or generational connection to specific sectors of economic production, or a set of relationships into which they have been economically coerced. In other words, one component of a proper definition of class, as we have noted, is that it is an expression of consciousness developed out of the awareness of the contradictions of capitalism and the interests of its bourgeois class which necessitate the creation of a subordinate class in the first instance. It is this inescapable relation of capitalism that establishes the ground upon which individuals and

groups experience class. The internal cultural development of the class cannot separate it from that essential relation.

Reflecting Ollman's fifth point, that class consciousness requires a "rational hostility toward opposing classes," Thompson acknowledges that it is not possible to conceive of a class adequately without also accepting that another class exists whose interests are to some degree antagonistic to it (1968, 8–9). Class and class consciousness are developed, therefore, on some understanding of the structure of the system of production and of differences in economic and political resources possessed by members of divergent classes. People are members of a class because they are born into it or enter it through economic coercion. The development of knowledge of the relations that govern the whole system says much for the capacity of working people to observe, to analyze, and to clarify why they live and work as they do and, presumably, in what ways they might begin to ameliorate their life conditions. This is what Thompson means by considering people to be "creators" of their class, not "vectors," or mere carriers of class characteristics (1978a, 46). Entry into a class by birth or economic coercion occurs because of the preexistence of determining economic relations. How strong these determining conditions are and how people respond to the experience of these relations—activism, indifference, or acquiescence—are important considerations. Productive relations are a precondition, not the point from which complete identification with a class is secured. Whatever the response to them, class cannot be reduced to productive relations alone, especially as we move forward from the eighteenth century with the development of a more complex division of labor and cultural systems that create more complex mediations between class and the formation of the conscious individual.

For Thompson culture is central to defining class. His discussion of working-class culture suggests it is independent of the culture created by and for service and support of capitalism as a social system. But since such a working-class culture is not and cannot be a socialist culture within capitalism, and since it contains no structures that in themselves create socialism, one must ask to what extent such a view of working-class culture includes

a commitment to the dissolution of the class. G. M. Tamás (2005) has argued that Thompson's view is derived from Rousseau rather than Marx, in part because Thompson, like Rousseau, elevates "the people" above society, giving to the people a quality of intuition that permitted them to assess their culture as superior to more sophisticated ones. Tamás argues that Rousseau's conception of socialism, reflected in Thompson's view of class, partially consisted of "unmask[ing] the high-falutin pretensions of ruling class doctrine" and in doing so Rousseau treated "the 'demotic' as 'natural'" (4, 7). In other words, the culture of the people was one that reflected the internal logic of the masses, a culture not without development but doing so on its own terms.

But for others such as Mészáros, the cultural aspects of class are housed in capitalism's "second order mediations," the family and the state, for example (1995, 399ff.). This brings us back to the point of acknowledging that the working class is created out of necessity by the bourgeois class and that its consciousness develops within the social system in which its creator dominates, thereby conditioning the relations the working class has with other classes. The "objective reality of social existence," Lukács argued, "is *in its immediacy* 'the same' for both proletariat and bourgeoisie" (1971a, 150). Immediacy is the key point, for it is in the context of capitalist relations that the working class exists as a subordinate class, but also where the relatively autonomous working-class opposition develops. The major distinction between Thompson's view and Marx's, suggests Tamás, is the latter's insistence on the development of the working class toward its abolition, rather than its glorification (2005, 20).

A serious limitation of Thompson's argument arises in his discussion of static models of class. Lenin's concept of the vanguard party, of bringing consciousness from outside the working class, is placed in the category of static sociological approaches. Thompson writes, "In one common (usually Leninist) form this provides a ready 'substitution': i.e. the vanguard which knows better than the class itself what its true interests (and consciousness) ought to be" (1978b, 148). In other words, in the Leninist view according to Thompson, the working class possesses false

consciousness, and its success in class formation and struggle lies in the party's exclusive guidance of that class, and the party's demand that the working class acquiesce to this outside force. For Thompson this is an unacceptable encroachment into the experience of the working class; experience is its motor of development. Secombe and Livingstone take Thompson's view a step further in simplistic analysis: "As it turned out," they write, "Lenin's conception of class political knowledge, disseminated *by the party* from outside the workers' sphere, played a fateful role in the authoritarian development of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and around the world" (2000, 110).

But this is contrary to both Marx's and Lenin's views. Marx argued that a class can find the resources for revolution "directly in its own situation," as he remarked about the French working class in 1848. However, the French working class made "no theoretical inquiries into its own task. The French working class had not attained this level; it was still incapable of accomplishing its own revolution" (Marx 1978, 56). Because there was no adequate development of a programmatic and organizational base for revolution, including a broadly based program for developing class consciousness centered in a workers' party (arguably of the character of a Leninist organization), the actions of the French workers remained largely a matter of internally motivated spontaneous class action. Presumably in this situation as well, Thompson would argue against "imposition" of the theoretical guidelines and practical direction from outside that were deemed necessary for the class to possess in order to conceptualize its goals and to achieve them. In his opinion, a Leninist insistence on bringing consciousness to the working class from outside is not an intervention characterized by solidarity of purpose but something that serves the party's authoritarian political agenda and is inconsistent with the internally defined, popular interests of the working class.

Thompson is attempting to avoid the problem of false consciousness. His elevation of the intuitiveness of the people is an attempt to cancel out the need for extraclass influence. Secombe and Livingstone share this view, and it is worth briefly exploring this aspect of their argument before returning to Thompson's. They

explain false consciousness in a least two ways. First, they recognize that people may have “false ideas about their situation . . . But far from *preventing* them from recognizing and acting upon their true interests (as the standard notion of false consciousness implies), these barriers often make it *easier* to act in self-serving ways in so far as they permit them to believe that their actions are based on higher, more honourable, motives” (2000, 27). In other analyses, “true interests” might well be class-conscious interests, but to Seccombe and Livingstone these are revealed as “self-serving” interests. An attempt to explain this is their example of job competitions in which white applicants who are hired for a position tell themselves they have succeeded on their merits, rather than because of discrimination by the employer.

What then are “true interests”? It appears that these are the interests individuals have and want satisfied for their own purposes. One would expect Seccombe and Livingstone’s argument to proceed as a critique of that individualist notion. But they do not explore the reified thoughts that produce self-serving actions. Rather, while such self-serving interests “mean that more inclusive reasoning . . . is often difficult to sustain because it rubs against the grain of our own narrow and immediate interests in looking out for Number One,” the authors argue with regard to a component of their job competition example that such self-serving interests are “perfectly understandable” (2000, 27–28). Is not the false consciousness that Marxists refer to, among other things, the failure to see the critical value of that “inclusive reasoning” that consciousness of the commonality of interests among working people is the objectively favorable perspective for improving their condition? The true interests to which Seccombe and Livingstone refer seem to be those interests that are not interrupted by external influences contrary to self-serving, comfortable purposes. In another rather convoluted effort to dismiss Marxism, they argue that Marxists believe that a universal working-class consciousness exists, period, and that instances in which it can be shown to be absent prove the inadequacy of Marx’s theory! As their argument proceeds, another conception of true interests arises to dismiss the likelihood of a mass, progressive, collective consciousness.

Here they cite Wilhelm Reich's critique of authoritarian child-rearing and Lenin's concern over the absence of class consciousness among the labor aristocracy of the early twentieth century (2000, 28). But the Marxist position is not seriously considered, for what is dangerous in Marx's approach is not the claim (never made by Marx) that class consciousness is an immanent quality of the working class, but that the capacity to discover and develop collective interests is a power residing in the class through its members.

The second way false consciousness is explained by Seccombe and Livingstone is in terms of the source of contradictory interests. As noted earlier, these lie in "conflicts [that] are objectively given; they do not stem from confusion, misperception or ambivalence" although such conflicts do "*give rise to* troubling states of mind" (Seccombe and Livingstone 2000, 36, my emphasis). While workers rationalize their relationship or degree of adaptation to objectively given conflicts, "they may simplify their position and distort the situation of others, rendering themselves susceptible to demagogic appeals and hostile projections upon vulnerable populations" (2000, 36–37). But this does not appear to be initiated by workers' own underdevelopment; rather it is distorted and false ideas that are imposed upon workers by their positions in the system of production.

In sum, Seccombe and Livingstone see false consciousness as the Marxist claim of a "unilateral conception of self-interest, positing a true interest shared by people in a common condition. Members of the group in question who were not inclined to see it the same way were held to be victims of false consciousness" (2000, 27). The authors go beyond class, broadening social sites of the problems they suggest are associated with false consciousness, such as feminists' characterizations of other women as "backward, male-identified" (27). The charge of false consciousness, then, could conceivably be used by any group that advocates a form of analysis and a course of action to others who are not yet convinced of a need for such a perspective. Thus, like Mayer (1997), the focus is on the presumed authoritarianism of any sector of a group, class, or movement that is advanced in theory and practice

beyond the average of the group or class. Imputing knowledge deemed to be outside the immediate interests of members of the group is therefore viewed as authoritarian by nature. This suggests that the group cannot advance unless and until it does so as a whole, that it possesses a natural resistance to being pulled into a further stage of qualitative development via education or political socialization.

The rejection of false consciousness in this and other cases is an attempt to achieve two things indicative of the problems of descriptive sociological approaches and cultural orientations to class. First, the implication of this rejection is that no correct understanding and analysis is possible in social theory or a political program except as it is found ready-made in the social group under investigation. Secondly, the rejection of false consciousness protects the subjectivities of research participants because it implies that their attitudes and beliefs are, in the researchers' perspective, a legitimate, unavoidable product of experience. Both of these positions exhibit a certain condescension that we have seen in all the sociological studies discussed in chapter 4.

What these authors fail to consider is an implicit link to the issue of false consciousness in a seemingly unrelated passage in Marx's *Capital*. He writes, "By labour power or capacity for labour is to be understood the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description" (1967, 164). Skill, knowledge related to manufacturing processes, and effective interpersonal communication, among other things, are the objects of Marx's statement. But one must also consider that among the most efficient skills useful for production and among the most socially stabilizing elements of capitalism is a diminished quality of consciousness in the individual and among the class as a whole, a consciousness that does not or chooses not to comprehend fully the character of capitalist relations, that is content with the immediate satisfactions provided by work and its remuneration, and which accepts that radical, long-term social change is not feasible. This diminished quality of consciousness is the essential meaning of false consciousness as it works in the

interests of the opposing class. False consciousness, as a mental component of labor power, is as vital to capitalism as any muscle or brain power, or any specialized knowledge of machinery and technology. In this regard, false consciousness may be immediately expressed by workers, but is also implicit in the failure of apologists to acknowledge an ideological position that falls short of the necessary consciousness of the fundamentals of capitalist relations. Once again, it is worth noting that intellectuals are just as susceptible to false consciousness as working people are (cf. Eyerman 1981).

Of course, some things people believe to be true are, in fact, not true; recognizing this is, at base, a matter of cognitive and social maturity. This is why Lukács argues that any notion of false consciousness must necessarily be investigated to find its origin in historical development. That social classes are major expressions of social development requires us to see erroneous, incomplete, and unsubstantiated views of social relations "as class-conditioned" (Lukács 1971a, 52). False consciousness is not a permanent state but a discoverable condition that can be altered. Alternatively, we may see aspects of social reality reflecting accurate and complete understanding of the organization of society, at least with respect to objective historical developments. Thus, to argue that a viewpoint is an expression of false consciousness is not simply a claim that another view is correct, but must include a demonstration of the error by an explicit and systematic method of analysis that can be repeatedly applied in different contexts to establish its veracity. In a letter to Franz Mehring, Engels argued against the judgments of certain ideologists who based their claims on thinking and reasoning alone, without an apparent willingness to comprehend in concrete reality the material source of their knowledge—a key reason for its falseness (Marx and Engels 1975b, 434). But he was not willing to simply exchange the theoretical for the concrete and experiential. Of necessity, the two remain dialectically related.

This is what is missed by Seccombe and Livingstone, and arguably by Thompson. If the origins of all consciousness, whether true or false, are grounded in the objective historical development of economic and other relations, then it is not an assault on the

working class to say that a worker has an erroneous or incomplete understanding of reality. Rather, to make such an assertion should be an impetus for investigating why a person possesses certain beliefs and attitudes. Lukács did not wish to legitimize false ideas, but he did discuss the historical origin of some, noting how even false ideas did not, in particular historical situations, preclude the development of practice that might alter those ideas. The “stubborn linking of such concepts [generalizations of historical processes, etc.]” he wrote, “with magical and mythical ideas, which stretches far into historical time, shows how purposive and necessary action, its correct mental preparation and accomplishment, can mingle in human consciousness with false ideas of non-existent things as the true and final basis, yet still giving rise to higher forms of practice” (1980b, 51). But this can only be understood if premised on a future orientation inherent in the practice of labor and the capacity of such practice to expose the objective conditions of its relation to the historical subject, and to the capitalist system that manipulates, exploits, and demeans human practice. False consciousness, expressed in a historical context in which its opposite is available, is an assertion that the alternative perspective that better represents social reality has not been pursued or its possibility has been blindly or willfully ignored.

False consciousness is not just about having different or non-normative ideas, or ideas in opposition to a political platform. It is false in relation to some other conception of consciousness that can be shown to be necessary in a given sociohistorical context. From a historical materialist perspective false consciousness has to do specifically with a demonstration of the objective relations of capitalism. If one’s depth of understanding is limited due to systemic structural constraints, and/or limited access to the knowledge base of particular institutions, then the person may be said to possess false consciousness because of the immediate objective conditions she encounters. Under such circumstances, the focus should be on the identifiable structural barriers and obstacles within an individual’s thinking that restrict or prevent discovery of more comprehensive knowledge and development of a higher degree of consciousness. At first this might consist merely of speculation

about how these barriers might be broken down or made more permeable in order to allow access to the requisite knowledge. This assumes, however, that a person is interested in doing so. That is, the individual factor must still be considered, specifically, the interest and willingness of the individual to develop knowledge in opposition to that which is prescribed as normative and pragmatic by dominant social forces. Reification must be recognized as an objective problem of society that is manifested concretely in the lives of individuals as false consciousness.

Thompson's concern about a Leninist substitution of party for class is an attempt to avoid the unavoidable issue that confronts a class in the process of developing its consciousness and formulating the strategy and tactics of its struggle against conditions imposed by another class. At some point in the process some people begin to discover and organize what needs to be known about the conditions of the class and its possible future, recognizing that the people who would benefit from this consciousness may not have fully developed it through their own resources. Thompson is certainly aware of this process, although he seems to de-emphasize it when making the point about substitution. In discussing working-class activities and the institutions created out of those actions, he notes that one central achievement for the class was literacy and the ability to understand and engage in increasingly abstract and comprehensive argument. This ability—a political and organizational skill—"was by no means inborn; it had to be discovered against almost overwhelming difficulties" (1968, 783). This emerged within the working class, motivated by identified interests of the class when it reflected on its circumstances within a wider field of economic and other activities. That literacy was a normative bourgeois acquisition for purposes of economic and personal development, as well as a tool for the social control of others, did not make it any less valuable as a means of promoting greater autonomy and political organization for working people even though it was brought from outside the working class.

In contrast to Thompson's assertions about substitution, Lukács argued that the "organizational separation [of the Party] from the class does not mean . . . that it [the Party] wishes to do

battle for its interests *on its behalf and in its place*" (1971a, 326). When the party does intervene "in the course of revolution," it is "an attempt to advance or accelerate the development of class consciousness" (1971a, 326). This is done by ascribing to the condition of the working class a direction, a course of action. Marx and Lenin, for example, ascribed a course which they believed would ameliorate the circumstances and altogether negate the disadvantageous conditions of the working class. It is an unreservedly partisan position.

It is unclear, then, how Lenin's position on class is assumed by Thompson to be static, unless Lenin's approach of bringing class consciousness from the outside is seen to be simply replacing an organically driven class development with a bureaucratically frozen prescription. Arguably, the latter position was not Lenin's. We have already noted the latter's expectation that the differences between class origins could be dissolved within the movement. Taking Thompson's perspective on substitution as valid could also be derived from or could lead to an erroneous assumption that ascribed or imputed consciousness is necessary from the point of view of the party because the working class is incapable of organizing its own development. And this is equally unsupportable if implied as a position of Lenin's. Thompson's argument seems to mean that class formation and the direction of development has been usurped by the Leninist party in the name of, instead of in conjunction with, the working class. His argument does not leave room for a more complex perspective that includes organized programmatic action beyond any conceivable organic interests; nor does it necessarily open the working class to the influence of contributions by other classes to its development and struggle.

Thompson ignores a rather crucial point in Lenin's discussion in which he emphasizes the dialectical development within the working class. Lenin writes, "Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the *only* choice is—either bourgeois or socialist ideology." But he adds a caveat by way of a footnote. "This does not mean, of course, that the workers have no part in creating such an ideology. They take part, however,

not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians, as Proudhons and Weitlings; in other words, they take part only when they are able, and to the extent that they are able, more or less to acquire the knowledge of their age and develop that knowledge" (1961, 384). He was acknowledging the fact of workers' subordination within capitalism's division of labor, that the economic position of workers is a constraint on their development as human beings and as a class, but it is a position that nevertheless holds the potential for liberation if workers acquire the necessary knowledge available to them. This passage of Lenin's may offend Thompson because of a presumed imposition of direction for class action. But such a perception is ill-founded and a poor reading of *What is to be Done?* Lenin's remarks clearly relate to a process of conscious development, a new cognitive level from which workers participate and lead in the movement for social change. Perhaps more importantly, Lenin's remarks point to the possibility of individual workers developing theoretical knowledge—"the knowledge of their age"—organized around a particular program of action. As will be discussed in the following chapter, Lenin is alluding to the development of the typical individual, which is defined, in part, by an extension of the concept of historical necessity.

We return to the issue of substitution. If class formation comes about through sociohistorical processes, then one such process must surely be action initiated by forces external to the class, or corresponding and compatible actions of sectors of the class with those who initiate actions from outside it. This is a dialectically logical question to which Thompson seems to provide only a negative response. In his own research on the English working class, its members are shown to have understood capitalist relations of production, the reason for their exploitation as laborers, and for the poor quality of their lives and prospects for the future. But a dominant implication is that such understanding occurred by way of internal mechanisms and experiences of the working class alone. Thompson, then, introduces his own element of stasis in his model of class formation; his internally driven model is carried across time and space to exclude strategic interactions with progressive sectors of other classes. This is especially important

in light of the possibility Marx and Engels saw for that fragment of the bourgeoisie that breaks off from its own class to serve the interests of the proletariat, as cited in *The Communist Manifesto*. Thompson's writing on this point concerned the English working class of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Yet, in discussing the formation of the working class in that historical period, he draws from Lenin's communist arguments of the early twentieth century. Thompson consciously attempts to undermine the theoretical and organizational import of Lenin's work for the period Thompson himself was studying, by rejecting the idea of imputed class consciousness. This is done despite the fact that the English working class, in the period Thompson was analyzing, was still in its formative stages and there had yet to develop the kind of philosophical and political approaches to capitalism and class conflict that Marx introduced in the midnineteenth century; nor had an organizational approach such as Lenin's been developed. Although he does not fully explore the limitations of Thompson's argument, Camfield (2004, 430–32, 437) notes the importance Gramsci placed on political parties in the formation of class which, given the latter's view of the contribution of intellectuals, must be recognized as an influence from outside the immediate boundaries of the working class.

Thus, one problem with Thompson's view of class is the straw man argument he sets up by drawing from the future (Lenin's work) to solidify the historical boundaries of English class formation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and its internally driven development. A second problem is his trust in working class experience, which reinforces the historical boundaries against outside influence. Class, he argues, arises from the recognition of common interests and circumstances, from struggle, and from the impetus gained through shaping institutions to meet people's needs and to entrench new levels of power derived from ongoing struggles for the development of consciousness. In his view of organic experience, class is something "men and women make out of their own experience," a meaning intended to counter any historical or sociological conception of class as a "static category . . . of which men are not the makers but the

vectors." Further, "Class formations . . . arise at the intersection of determination and self-activity: the working class 'made itself as much as it was made'" (1978a, 46). Class is not something a person merely carries through life. It is actively and continuously created and recreated; it is not static, but rather a process of "becoming over time" (1978a, 106). Thus, self-activity and consciousness of common interests are central to the meaning of class, and in this respect Thompson's view is consistent with that of Marx and Engels, Lenin, and others. However, Anthony Giddens has pointed out that Thompson's overemphasis on experience does not necessarily translate into knowledge of the reasons history happens as it does. Experience, as it affects class struggle, is based more on will than on reasoning (Giddens 1987, 210–11). While will, especially collective will as Gramsci saw it (1971, 170–71, 409–10; cf. Golding 1992, 68–87), and which we have emphasized in chapter 2, is crucial for initiating social movements, Thompson seems to presume that volition internal to the class is sufficient for class formation as well as a proper buttress against imposition of external ideas and direction. Giddens also argues that defining class as something "that happens" prevents class from being "defined in an objective fashion, such that it does not necessarily correspond to consciousness of class membership" (1987, 213). For Giddens, an objective conception of class is the only way variations in experience and purpose can be analyzed. An objective and presumably universalizable definition of class, such as that drawn from Ollman and Mészáros through Marx, would not obscure the particular contexts, conditions, and histories of confrontations; on the contrary, they are the concrete bases of experience upon which knowledge of class is developed, although the specifics of the development of particular classes vary with historical conditions and circumstances. Giddens was correct to argue for an objective definition of class, but such a definition is weakened if it does not include consciousness as both subjective appropriation of the concrete knowledge of capitalist relations and as an objective force developed out of the collective analysis that forms the core of the working class's pursuit of its own progress toward dissolution.

Thompson's emphasis on class rested on uncovering and understanding the significance of self-activity that is crucial to Marx's perspective. But Thompson's emphasis sometimes excludes objective historical processes in his preferred definition of class: "Class is defined by men as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition" (1968, 10). Thompson's method is heuristic, a discovery of the empirical evidence and the ways people identified problems such as exploitation, discovered similarities, and engaged in efforts to better their life conditions. His definition is ostensibly open-ended in that class arises "from processes which can only be studied as they work themselves out over a considerable historical period" (1968, 11).

But in some respects he treats the definition and analysis as a method that rests on the moment of class formation alone, rather than on the mediating factors that support and facilitate such formation and transitions. Two processes of this perspective for Thompson are a) that people must "have repeatedly behaved in class ways," and out of such behavior class-based cultural institutions became identifiable, and b) that class struggle will have preceded the actual formation of a class (1978b, 147). Given particular historical circumstances, processes of class formation can occur over a considerable period of time, and once such processes are underway there will be various points at which one or another group of people can be said to have formed a class or some degree of consciousness of class. In Thompson's notion that people in a class behave in "class ways," we see a representation of Ollman's first and fourth points—subjective and objective identity and interests of membership in a class, and some sense of solidarity with other class members, suggesting the importance of being similarly situated—but these criteria are implied more than explicitly articulated. Thompson's notion that struggle precedes the formation of class offers a representation of Ollman's fourth and fifth points (the latter being a "rational hostility" toward opposing classes). But Thompson's formulation points to the very root of the problem in two ways. First, one would have to be cautious that "precedes" does not preclude class formation occurring concurrently with the struggle against another class and is not merely a

result of such a struggle. Secondly, and more importantly, it seems that struggle occurs first, and then a class is formed. Since, like Rousseau, the people constitute a superior culture, Thompson's theory of class formation alludes to the possible separation of the working class within capitalism. While Ollman's sixth point—a vision of a more democratic and egalitarian society—is evident in Thompson's work, it seems to suggest that these characteristics may be sufficient to the extent they are found in working-class culture.

A vision of a future society for Thompson will no doubt be found in those class ways and the mature formation of class-based institutions. However, it seems that if such a vision arises only by internal processes and is sufficient for an existence separate from capitalist culture, the working class will be stymied by its own underdevelopment, its marginal autonomy, and internal barriers erected by reification, unless there arises a significant fraction of the class that has elevated its consciousness sufficiently to lead the remainder of the class to a heightened opposition to and conflict with the opposing class. This fraction will have searched both inside and outside its class boundaries for modes of analysis and strategies of action.

Thus, there are limitations to applying Thompson's perspective to other contexts, primarily because imposing Lenin on the eighteenth-century English working class-in-formation does not serve as a principal element of analysis, but as a warning for class development and action after the historical period of Thompson's research. The problem is that experience must always be assessed over time in the increasingly complex social milieu and never assumed to be sufficient in itself as the basis for class development or its analysis. Given what has occurred since the initial formation of the English working class, it must be a principle of class analysis and political strategy that the development of any working class over a period in which capitalism has gradually encompassed the globe, will occur in relation to, and to a lesser or greater extent in conjunction with, working classes of other nations, each of which will carry its own experience of development as well as the knowledge gained from its interaction with other classes.

Those who draw a model of working-class formation and struggle from Thompson must be cautious not to absorb what may be a reification of self-activity that restrains the creative and cognitive interests that have moved classes forward over time and through varied struggles. One of the inherent problems with developing a cultural analysis of class is that the level of analysis is concerned primarily with the local and the particular. These sites and analyses are important for understanding a specific national or class culture, but there is a certain relativist drive toward affirmation of the developmental influence of local histories and circumstances. As we have noted already, this is one way in which, as Markels has argued, class analysis has become an ethnography of location, an identity site (2003, 29; 2005).

The formation of the English working class through the initial period of industrialization and urbanization, along with the experiences of succeeding generations of English and European workers during the nineteenth century, created an international arena in which conditions of life and struggle were communicated in a far less speedy and efficient way than is the case today. Inspiration and practical guidance for working people throughout the Western world at this time proved significant for the development of trade unions and cultural institutions by workers across many borders and oceans. This, after all, is what Marx, Engels, and others wanted to foster with the formation of the First International. Hence, an overemphasis on class formation as an organic process is historically and politically limiting. What were the emerging organized peasantry and working classes of Africa, and the Americas to do with the knowledge of the organizing tactics and successes they derived from their direct or indirect contact with the English and European working classes? Such knowledge, increasingly communicated in more effective and technically sophisticated ways, must surely be seen as a form of influence from outside the experience of indigenous classes that does not negate but contributes to their own experiences. Thompson's work exhibits the formation of the English working class "as they live their own history," but the history of the English working class becomes relevant to, and therefore a source of knowledge for, the emerging working classes

of other nations as they, too, live their own history, a history complicated by imperialist intrusions and technological development. No historical moment after the endpoint of Thompson's history can be adequately understood without noticing the concrete impact—cultural, political, and otherwise—of the working-class movements growing in nations across Europe, just as no moment in international history after the Bolshevik Revolution is free from their influence, whether we consider the Cuban countryside or urban centers such as Toronto or New York City. After a certain point in the development of complex means of communication, external influences on class formation and class struggle are unavoidable. Therefore, class formation as people "live their own history" is not negated, but includes the influence, directly or indirectly, of other working classes, political movements, and progressive fractions from other classes.

It is worth returning to Goldmann's stages of analysis, discussed in chapter 3, in which he defined nonsociological, peripheral, and genuinely sociological approaches. When referring to sections of a class or to the relations of classes across national borders, the following questions must be asked: Is there information and knowledge to be communicated? Are there constraints in the "psychic structures" of different classes that hinder communication? Is there active resistance to what is being communicated? Can communication and interaction among classes in different economic and cultural contexts assist each in reaching its maximum potential consciousness? Does the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and strategy lead a class to alter its structure and its function radically in relation to its opposing class?

Nothing in the present argument suggests the inability of working people to comprehend their collective position in capitalist society; but, as Giddens argues in his discussion of agency and class, "purposive collective action which seeks to actively alter existing social relationships . . . [is] associated with modernity, with the idea that understanding history is the basis for controlling it" (1987, 210). It may be important, therefore, to the development of class consciousness and class struggle to preserve an opening for external interests to interact with indigenous class interests in

the process of class formation. This is why we have noted the importance of learning, the development of practical knowledge as inseparable from class consciousness. Knowledge is coexistent with consciousness, and the activist's search for knowledge presumes an intentionality behind the effort to discover the how and why of particular circumstances and forms of existence of a social group.

Mészáros considers it a task of the proletariat to bridge the gap between the immediate level of consciousness and experience of groups of workers and the "global consciousness of their social being" (1971, 101). That is, the gap can be bridged with the development of knowledge about this and other contradictions. The only way that one can move between these two levels of consciousness is by grasping, for example, the contradiction between the being and existence of labor "constitutive of the structural antagonism of capitalism . . . (i.e. the contradiction inherent in labour existing as *wage-labour*)" (Mészáros 1971, 100). It is the pursuit, comprehension, and resolution of contradictions of which people become aware that produces knowledge. This is the basis upon which revolution grows, not spontaneously, but "through the workers becoming conscious of the social and historical preconditions of their activity, the objective tendencies of economic development" (Lukács 2000, 129). But the acquisition of such knowledge by individual class members makes all the difference, not only to the struggle and its end result, but also regarding the reasons why class as a category of being should have meaning for social change.

The way "theory . . . becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses" (Marx 1975a, 182) can hardly be repeated enough, but it grips the masses after it has taken root in a conscious minority of the class. The empirical actuality and the theoretical value of Marx's assertion can be found in hundreds of examples. Since the following chapter will be concerned with the place of the individual, it may be useful to conclude this chapter with an allusion to one who developed the material force of theory out of concrete experience, his own and that of the class as a whole.

Local 600 of the United Auto Workers at Ford's River Rouge Plant was the largest trade-union local in the world in the 1940s,

with some 87,000 members in 1941 (Stephan-Norris and Zeitlin 2003, 95–96). Among this mass of industrial laborers were many who devoted their time and energy to organizing a democratic union led by rank and file members. One of these key organizers was Bill McKie, who immigrated from England and began working at Ford in 1927. From 1935 he was also a member of the Communist Party. McKie seemed never to take for granted the “inevitability” of socialism and certainly not the success of unionism at Ford. Nor did he, as a self-educated man, take for granted that his personal experience provided sufficient knowledge for his work as an organizer. Mark Twain might have been casual reading for McKie, but his reading of socialist economics, trade-union histories, the Webbs’ study of the Soviet Union, and Labriola’s essays on historical materialism were conscious efforts to go beyond the immediate, daily requirements of trade-union organizing (Bonosky 2000, 41–42).

McKie and thousands like him should remain a constant backdrop to theoretical discussions, but so too should another reality of the working class in the contemporary period. Notwithstanding the continuous efforts of trade unions and politically driven social movements, the working class is in a large measure reluctant to accept and perhaps does not understand the theoretical premises and the practical possibilities of the arguments cited here. The opportunities that capitalism offers for wide-ranging consumption, necessary and frivolous, have laid a basis for the integration of the working class into the dominant ideology of capitalism. The extent to which such an integration has occurred is perhaps less important than recognizing the social and economic environment that encourages it. The illusion of security and the distractions of capitalist culture are means of insulating people from its conflictual character. If we recognize the existence of passivity or apathy in the working class, do we necessarily take this to be its natural level of consciousness or a satisfactory expression of its interests? Herbert Marcuse, who supposedly jettisoned the working class as a revolutionary force, was quite clear that the working class has retained its historical position as the agent of revolution at the same time that it has acquiesced to the stabilizing function of

contemporary capitalism (1969, 16, 54–55). But because of the environment of heightened opportunities, constrained though they are, and the availability of consumer goods, “the driving revolutionary force” may not be generated by poverty and misery but precisely by the higher expectations that come with better living conditions, and by the developed consciousness of highly qualified and educated workers: precursors of a new working class or a new part of the old working class” (Marcuse 1970, 96). In other words, the driving revolutionary force of the future will be built on the ground established by the likes of Bill McKie, the Alabama sharecroppers, and others.

Chapter Eight

Consciousness in the Development of the Individual

Even the most objective discovery is the product of great and original subjective endeavours, while subjectivity can only become diverse and profound, full and productive, through the faithful discovery of objective reality.

—Georg Lukács

A principle that Ché Guevara derived from his reflections on the Cuban revolution was that individuals were the building blocks of revolutionary movements. He argued that the security of the revolution and its reproduction over generations could be mediated by “the masses [who] now make history as a conscious aggregate of individuals who struggle for the same cause” (1968, 393, 399). He stressed the importance of building revolutionary consciousness and doing so using the successes of committed individuals as a basis. By contrast, ignoring or diminishing the role of individuals in revolutionary planning suggests that a mass movement to carry social change forward is merely an objective condition that arrives on its own time, ready-made, and filled with an indistinguishable collective of men and women fully conscious of the same goals and the means to achieve them (cf. Lowy 1973, 20, 92).

This chapter is concerned with the place of the individual as a central feature of Lukács’s work in relation to developing class consciousness. We begin with a further review of the original problem posed at the beginning of this study.

Considering the concepts of real or psychological consciousness, we can speculate on the structure of the group of miners at Westray using their testimony about that disaster. In reading the hundreds of pages of the Westray Public Inquiry, one senses a fatalism that is integrally related to the problem of reification. This fatalism is an experience drawn from the immediate experience of economic conditions generally and in particular the unmediated experience of working in the mine. Most certainly, the corporation that owned Westray exploited the miners' need for employment and relied on the social atmosphere of competitive individualism and the retreat from political engagement to ensure that workers fulfilled that need regardless of the conditions of labor. It appears that for many miners this diminished the value of even the most basic, practical knowledge related to their personal survival and human dignity. It has been noted already that no trade union had been established at the mine; the United Mine Workers attempt had failed and the United Steelworkers had only begun a union drive after the explosion. Both unions had legal representatives at the Inquiry, but neither attempted to draw out a sense of workers' solidarity or the need for it in their cross-examination of miners. Journalist Tom McDougall wrote that there was "a certain mystique about [mining]—a soldier-like pride in sticking with a job that would scare lesser folk witless. There is also a spirit of brotherhood—part old-time camaraderie and small-town solidarity" (qu. in Glasbeek and Tucker 1992, 19). In Goldmann's terms, the group of miners was structured by conditions of production determined by the corporation, its neglect of safety and pursuit of profit, and the absence of any meaningful oversight by provincial politicians and safety inspectors. In a study commissioned by the Public Inquiry, Gerald Wilde outlined thirteen reasons why miners accepted the risks of remaining at Westray (Richard 1997, 170).¹ These reasons included the need for work, the absence of alternative employment in the area and the anticipation of job security that the mine was supposed to offer. Perhaps such reasons were the main factors that encouraged miners to tolerate intimidation and reprisal, the feeling of powerlessness, and the groundless hope that things would eventually improve. But it is difficult to

understand how “feeling loyal to colleagues working under dangerous conditions,” as Wilde (1997) reported, can be a reason for staying on at the mine without also taking action to ensure the well-being of one’s colleagues.

A few examples of miners’ attitudes are relevant. Electronic methane gas detectors have replaced the caged canary. Some of this technology is embedded in computerized monitoring systems, some are hand-held models, and others are built into machinery operating at the coal face. Westray miners testified that they notified supervisors but rarely recorded malfunctions of equipment in their safety reports. Miner Wayne Cheverie explained why his safety report of May 8, the day before the explosion, failed to mention that the continuous miner, the piece of machinery chewing away at the coal face, did not have a methane detector. “I believe I stated before,” he said, “that writing things about safety on reports would only bring undue hardships to you . . . I always reported things to my first line or second line supervisor, but I made a rule not to write safety concerns on my report” (Richard 1997, 77). Besides faulty methanometers, the use of open propane torches and nonfireproof machinery, such as ordinary farm tractors, containers of diesel fuel lying about the mine, the absence of adequate stone dusting to prevent the combustion of coal dust, and much else were worrisome features of working at Westray, but all were accepted by miners in order to avoid reprimand, suspension, or firing. Experienced miners, many of whom had worked in the comparatively safer hard-rock sector, were astonished by conditions at Westray, and many left the mine over safety concerns (Richard 1997, 96, 98 n. 23, 105, 109–10, 174; Jobb 1994, 9, 22, 40–41). Other conditions underground were equally dangerous, such as the absence of a tag-in/tag-out system on the surface to show which workers were in the mine and where they were working (Richard 1997, 106, 144–46).² Some conditions were illegal.³ Still others were so ridiculous that tolerance of them should have been an embarrassment to workers, whether organized or not. No sanitary facilities were available underground, and a trip to the surface for such purposes was forbidden. Miners were told to defecate on a rag, roll it up, and toss it on the belt with coal going out of the

mine. Miners accepted this practice, though somewhat reluctantly. Cap lamps that are standard equipment for underground workers were powered by a battery pack intended for use on 8-hour shifts, meaning that miners would sometimes work the last hours of their 12-hour shift with the aid of someone else's lamp or the headlight of a piece of machinery. Judge Richard summarized the experience of miner Tom MacKay: "one was not always assured of receiving the same lamp each shift. There were times when MacKay would just make it underground and his light would go out" (Richard 1997, 166). Miners admitted not taking breaks or lunch periods on some shifts but "grab[bing] lunch whenever it was possible, that is, whenever it would not hold up production" (Richard 1997, 144). The sound of approaching footsteps would sometimes put an end to lunchtime or breaks out of fear that Roger Parry, one of the managers considered unreasonable and a bully, was coming into the area. Shaun Comish testified that lunching miners "would all just scramble like rats, go back to work," to avoid being cursed at and threatened by Parry. It goes without saying that lunch and rest breaks are legislated entitlements for Canadian workers, coal miners included, whether unionized or not.

Having "mining in the blood," a common expression among communities of miners who can trace several generations back to the deeps, is clearly insufficient as a class outlook or an ethical code. Thus, an inescapable issue is how the apparent fatalism among the Westray miners is to be treated by trade unions, radical political parties, and by left academics.

These attitudes attest to the fact that the miners had not reached their maximum potential consciousness as a group. They were constrained by the conditions of employment and the poor representation of their interests and needs by their elected politicians. In Goldmann's view, at both the psychological and collective levels there was resistance to information, to knowledge that could assist the group in attaining a superior level of awareness, although it would be insufficient to provoke a significant change in the structure of the group (1977a, 33–34). The miners' attitudes are clearly manifestations of reification, especially given the existence of relevant legislation and the availability of information

about safety, labor representation, and other matters. In effect, there was an absence of sufficient consciousness beyond immediate and limited needs to threaten the group's essential function socially and economically. There had been no attempt to organize their consciousness and establish guidelines for action, no attempt to impute from inside or outside a level of consciousness of their circumstances as problems more or less generalized throughout the working class, and therefore no attempt to address those problems. Individuals such as Stephen Lilley, whose refusal we noted in chapter 1, had evidently transcended the psychological barriers sufficiently to understanding the need for a more substantive connection between the general structure of the group and the transformative social resources available to them, incomplete and constrained as these were.

The individual and class consciousness

The present is a unique period in the history of organizing class struggle against capitalism in that never before has such a high degree of individuation existed. Lukács regarded the “complex of the individual person . . . [as] an indissoluble minimal unity” within the social totality that contains all the determinants and alternatives of individual development (1975a, 135). But he also noted that this development does not occur in a linear fashion as a progressive accumulation of the elements of freedom. Rather, the unevenness of social development carries with it the possibility that the greater the development of humanization and humanity's decreased dependence on nature will bring about greater inhumanity. Both the complex of social totality and the complex individual are only moments within their respective but interdependent processes of development (cf. Marx 1975b, 299).

The development of class consciousness involves lengthy and complex processes of personal and historical development. Exposure to specific social conditions, opportunities to explore alternatives, and decisions taken on the basis of ethical choices, among other things, combine to contribute to the conscious formation of a class perspective. The working class may well expand its knowledge within bourgeois institutions such as colleges and

universities, or it may use the trade union as a source of formal or informal education. But neither the institutions of education—no matter how radical or comprehensive—nor trade unions can provide the appropriate practical and theoretical mediation if radical social change, the pursuit of socialism, is not taken to be a necessity. Historically, political parties have provided the organizational means, the forum for debate, and the development of a strategy for action. Essential to such development is the attitude taken toward the individual as a major contributor to socialist movements. Lukács did not argue that the actions of single individuals transform social conditions outright and move history forward independently of other forces or social groups; nor was his understanding of social change grounded in an evolutionary process. From his perspective, the individual who becomes a revolutionary, even a revolutionary leader, is not an exemplary person, not a leader in a voluntaristic sense, but an individual carrying out the expected development of his or her capacities as a human being in the interests of the class (1971a, 318).

Individuals who are not engaged in this process are more vulnerable to the forces of reification. The power of reification in capitalism is the essential cause of their acquiescence to the powers of capital, their lack of interest in conscious development, and their lack of exposure or access to knowledge about alternatives. To place emphasis on the individual is to illuminate both those who are involved in the process of conscious development and those who are not. Ollman cites a passage of Marx's in which he argued that the loss of a few individuals to the genuine interests of the class "has little effect upon the class struggle" (Ollman 1971, 126). Class struggle is seen as a mass action, and consequently must be developed as thoroughly as possible through a mass movement, although modern revolutions have been initiated by fractions of the working class or the peasantry. The general tasks of every revolutionary organization are to expand its mass force, to achieve power, and to sustain that power and ensure the successful transformation of the entire society. But these two tasks are eventualities dependent, in part, on the long process of developing the quantity and quality of the mass force over time. Ollman

argues that those individuals who do not comprise the revolutionary movement “are not the people it is most essential to know about in order to comprehend Marxism” (1971, 126). However, those who do not participate in class actions must also become known by those who take part in or lead the political movement, because it is the hesitation, the psychological barriers, and the lack of commitment of those outside the movement that provide evidence of the powers of reification to which any organization must attend. Lukács was clear that in order for the working-class party to avoid sectarianism and isolation from the masses, it must always concern itself with the thinking and action of the “most retrograde” sections of the class (1971a, 327). This is a restatement, I would suggest, of the problem of “what this or that proletarian thinks or does” that Marx and Engels referred to in *The Holy Family*.

Like Lukács and Goldmann, Ollman considers actual consciousness to be a reflection of what workers say in response to specific queries, but this is different from “analyzing their objective interests as a group of people” (1993, 157). And there is no avoiding the fact that such analysis results in outlining what are deemed to be necessary debates and actions in the future of a class, whether the experience of most members of the class leads in that direction or not. Not recognizing this difference is one of the significant failures of the sociological studies discussed earlier. But the distinction between degrees of consciousness must be made on more than what “an individual understands and does as a member of a class and not his private reflections and intimate behavior” (Ollman 1993, 156–57). However, while individuation as a characteristic of modern society is intended to secure the private and intimate aspects of life, it is precisely these subjective elements that may be given priority by the individual, and by the prevailing ideology of the society, thereby radically restricting individual and collective consciousness.

It is not possible to consider the collective sense of class consciousness or of class-in-itself without consideration of how the individual’s knowledge begins to develop and progress over time, not toward class consciousness as an already established

objectivity but as an integral part of the thought and action for its eventual attainment, as an accumulation of individual development, and a contribution to the class in its active opposition to another class. For example, in the middle of his history of Communist work in Depression-era Alabama, Robin D. G. Kelley discusses the way “a Marxist *pedagogy* . . . altered Black working people’s self-definition and pre-existing worldview” (1990, 93, emphasis added). In a social and historical context in which many working people, especially African Americans, were illiterate, without access to formal education and other sources of information such as radio, the Communist Party found ways to assist them in learning about Marxism, trade-union organizing, voting rights, and other crucial issues. Party and other newspapers, books, and pamphlets were the resources used in study groups and Party training schools. Travel also helped propagate the Party’s views and served as educational exposure to other regions, people, issues, and cultures. “Marxist education,” in these and other ways, writes Kelley, “taught poor Blacks to connect their own lives to struggles throughout the world” (94). It is not difficult to imagine how poor Black and white industrial workers and sharecroppers would have fared in this period without the intervention—from the outside—of the Communist Party. Throughout his study, Kelley shows how Party-affiliated organizations and local progressive institutions pushed the struggle forward for unionism, an end to discrimination, and related issues. As the Party did so, it helped to develop local leaders from both races. Allen (2000) and Solomon (1998) are also clear about the efforts of the Communist Party to educate workers to take leadership positions in the immediate struggles of their respective localities and beyond.

Harris (1993) has discussed the use of psychology in the curricula of alternative educational projects developed by the Left in the first half of the twentieth century. Gettleman’s study of the American Communist Party’s Jefferson School shows a curriculum developed around Marxist and other orientations that was intended to help students connect with social and political issues of the day as well as develop knowledge of art, literature, music, and the sciences (2002). Mishler’s (1999) study of Communist-organized

summer camps illustrates the importance of a broader environment of collective relations and concrete knowledge relevant to political issues as these were experienced by children, youth, and their families. Many of the autobiographical reflections in Kaplan and Shapiro (1998) illustrate the influence of family choices and political socialization on life trajectories.

These are examples of purposeful and often successful attempts to develop class consciousness from below but with initiative and direction provided by a political organization, intellectual workers, and sympathizers from other classes. In contrast to Thompson, and in support of the perspective taken by Lenin, Lukács, and others, the history of class consciousness shows that some people, because of their partisan interests and their belief in the possibility of a better society, took it upon themselves to set out guidelines, provide reading material, and initiate discussions and debates; in short, they ascribed or imputed to others a character and quality of knowledge important for their immediate struggles and long-term goals and awakened a demand for further knowledge, education, and training. That they organized this intervention through an existing and developing political party was the dialectical extension of their partisanship and the search for the actualization of objective possibilities. Respect for local cultures is evident in these and other actions except where such conditions constituted a barrier to the development of the movement and the elimination of disadvantage. It is also evident that the attitude among Party members and leaders toward the individual as such and toward subjective beliefs and experiences was not to view them as something sacred and beyond criticism or to be protected from influence by or pressure from a partisan perspective. The kind of pedagogical and other actions described in these studies are clearly forms of political engagement, not only against the forces of capitalist oppression but in solidarity with working people themselves, with a view to transformation, not affirmation, of existing conditions and states of mind.

Nevertheless, such educational efforts cannot be described simply as instrumental measures to serve the Communist Party or other organizations, although such efforts clearly and intentionally

did that. Given the living and working conditions, the racism and violence experienced by people described in some of these studies, any other position taken by the Communist Party or those outside of it would have been irresponsible and unethical. The workers discussed by these authors did not achieve socialism, but they did develop consciousness of trade-union organization, of race and class solidarity based on the orthodox Marxist meaning of class. The political content and the intention of the background organization in these struggles moved action, consciousness, and social conditions toward a particular goal. Of significance was the development, varied though it was, of individual as well as collective interests in these goals as means of addressing social problems.

Were the objective conditions better in Alabama in the 1930s compared with the provinces of Nova Scotia (Westray) and Ontario (Dunk, Seccombe and Livingstone) in the 1990s? Clearly the social conditions of economic depression, violence, and the disadvantages of being working class and/or African American were more obvious and problematic in the earlier period than at any other time in North American history. But, as has been noted earlier, the major difference was the existence of an organized mass movement of opposition, a political party, deliberately organizing ideas and actions and imputing to working people varied means by which to improve their immediate circumstances and develop class power. This difference is of enormous importance for the organization of consciousness in that it can contribute to the transcendence of the boundary between times of disadvantage and times of greater equality and justice.

The attention focused on the learning of class consciousness has already been alluded to, but it is worth noting further that Lenin, from the beginning of his writing on developing professional revolutionaries, stressed the importance of ordinary working-class individuals developing both the quality of their knowledge and the mastery of self required to take on that role. His emphasis centered on two elements. One was the necessity of training cadre and developing their immediate experiences on the principle that revolutionary practice and the skills of leadership

can be learned by anyone. "Theoretical knowledge, political experience and organizing ability are things that can be acquired. If only the desire exists to study and acquire these qualities." This pedagogical principle was augmented by an organizational principle, that capable revolutionary leaders teach others in study circles of workers, students, and peasants (Lenin 1961, 317; cf. 1961, 377–78, 422–23, 441–43, 450–51).

Lenin's emphasis is consistent with Engels's discussion of freedom and necessity, which draws from Hegel the principle of self- and scientific discovery of knowledge that, in Engels's view, gradually creates in human beings the consciousness that theirs is not an inalterably determined life. According to Engels, freedom of will is based on the search for knowledge and the subsequent decision to make use of that knowledge. In this he sustains the humanist foundation of historical materialism, that freedom is intended to apply a counterweight to the irrational, mystical power of idealism that diminishes the possibility of human agency. "Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature, a control founded on the knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development" (Engels 1987, 106).

Lukács adopted this perspective but with an emphasis intended to advance both Hegel's and Engels's duality of freedom and necessity. Parkinson summarizes Lukács's concept of freedom as "power over things other than oneself, and power over oneself, i.e. self-mastery" (1977, 158). While these must be dialectically, not sequentially, developed forms of freedom, self-mastery is clearly necessary in some measure before external, objective relations can be fully addressed. More clearly related to political action, and therefore of organizational value, Lukács sees the fully developing person as one in pursuit of the knowledge necessary to understand existing conditions and historical precedents and to create alternatives to the prevailing social order. But progress toward self-mastery is a difficult passage; under conditions of reification and oppression it can place the individual in direct confrontation with the most violent reactions of capitalist domination. At the level of the consciousness of the necessity of undertaking this

confrontation, as a single action or a sustained effort, individuals need to begin distancing themselves from the belief that existing social conditions represents the triumph of oppressive social forces (Lukács 1980b, 34). That is, individuals must first decide to know and to exercise their capacity for critical self-reflection, and then they can begin to comprehend the substance and possible consequences of their choices. Lukács emphasizes the point that struggle for self-mastery through elementary, progressive acts of freedom is a movement toward the general social condition of freedom; that is, the possibility of relatively free action as a subjective expression of opposition to the power of existing objective forces (1980b, 135).

Certainly an important point of distinction between Engels's use of this meaning of freedom and its development by Lukács, is that the complexity of the constraints on and opportunities for freedom have increased over time. Engels was cognizant of the still-emerging processes of individuation in capitalist society. But while his emphasis remained on the struggle between classes as the primary site for the amelioration of those conditions and the realization of freedom, he also did much to bring forward the agenda of revolutionary activism by expanding the meaning of class struggle. For example, in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Engels's concept of class struggle includes such problems as unhealthy living and employment conditions and the lack of education. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, relations between men and women, parents and children were examined as manifestations and consequences of capitalist development. At the very least these were the initial steps of orthodox Marxism toward inclusion of cultural issues.

Engels emphasized the developing individuation in relation to the growth of capitalist society, stressing the multiple influences on the formation of the class struggle, "especially the reflections of all these real struggles in the brains of the participants." His explanation of this in his letter to Joseph Bloch (1890) highlights the shaping of history through many conflicting individual wills. Engels stresses the innumerable "intersecting forces" that shape an "historical event" that may "be regarded as the product of a

power which operates as a whole *unconsciously* and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one intended.” The result “that no one intended,” however, must be taken to mean no one singular will. Engels places the individual will in the context of complex historical forces and collective action, but he does not negate it. That is why, in concluding the paragraph, he notes that all those individual wills should not be regarded, in sum, as “equal to zero. On the contrary, each contributes to the resultant and is to this extent included in it.” This is the proper stressing of an important theoretical and organizational point. Engels recognized that individual contributions are constrained or enabled by the individual’s “physical constitution and external, in the last resort economic, circumstances (either his own personal circumstances or those of society in general)” (Marx and Engels 1975b, 395–96).

Lukács stressed this duality as well (as discussed in chapter 2): the duality of the objective relationship of economic conditions and individual contributions and responses to them. He argued in *History and Class Consciousness* and clarified in the *Defence* that class consciousness and the class struggles that mediate its development must be understood as real and possible only with the guiding content proposed and advocated by individuals with a developed knowledge of objective revolutionary possibility, his “conscious minority.” This is not confined to a vanguard of either the working class or a group from outside it, although that may be its initial and most viable location for long-term class actions. Lukács makes this point in the *Defence* against the criticisms of Rudas and Deborin, but the principle is equally relevant in our own period. The task of a political party or other social movement is not simply to impute correct strategy or ideas, but to unearth actively and programmatically the appropriate resources from the existing social terrain, which includes educational institutions; alternative community resources; crises of poverty, racism, ecology; and so on. But a political party necessarily imputes those guidelines for action that transcend the limited focus of these resources. Class consciousness is not imposed on the working class or, for that matter, on party members, but is something that

“takes place inside party members’ heads,” not passively, not by imposition, but by development and analysis of concrete possibilities (Lukács 2000, 74, 76–77). Quite obviously and unavoidably, this requires direction, pressure, critique of less viable perspectives, and rejection of regressive strategies; no doubt this produces tension between the immediate reality of experience and the expectations of learning. This is where the Alabama sharecroppers differ from, for example, Dunk’s Boys in Northern Ontario who resist an oppression they do not understand by asserting common sense as the sufficient content of knowledge.

Our consideration of working-class struggles that were developed and mediated by socialist and communist organizations, shows that people were encouraged, pushed, prodded, and pressured to take up political positions and to develop their capacities for action and growth. Such pressure and prodding has not been the exclusive province of leftist political parties, but given the injustices that social movements strive to overcome, what other process is viable for such purposes? Thus, it is not only a question of what knowledge is necessary or how it should be communicated; it is also important to promote the correct attitude toward the idea that knowledge essential to the goals of social change can be legitimately imputed to draw people toward a specific kind of development and type of action. Lukács’s basic outline of ethics, noted earlier, was evidently linked to his concept of imputed class consciousness, for it emphasized what individuals must know about their present and historical context as a means of determining a strategic direction and anticipating the consequences of their actions. In other words, Lukács clearly proposed an ethical basis for knowledge as a formative process of the individual concerned with and/or involved in political activity. His practical orientation to knowledge answered questions about what it could do and its relation to the individual’s subjective experience. “On the one hand, knowledge is by no means to be taken as total understanding of the actual political situation and all its possible consequences; nor, on the other hand, can it be regarded as the result of purely subjective deliberations, where, that is, the individual concerned acts ‘to the best of his ability and in good faith.’ If the former were

the case, every human action would be impossible from the outset; if the latter, the way would be clear for extreme levity and frivolity and every moral standard would become illusory” (Lukács 1975b, 9). The category of objective possibility itself was a “historico-philosophical” matter made possible by those whose work toward socialism was a political and moral act. Imputation of class consciousness was to provide a systematic means of socializing and educating a specific type of person: a communist, an organizer, and a class-conscious worker.

The “typical” in imputed class consciousness

Lukács’s use of the terms type and typical is varied in his work, but my emphasis rests ultimately on a meaning consistent with the recognition of the transformative capacities, the potential of the individual inherent in Marx’s concept of species-being. For Lukács, the type or typical generally refers to the anticipated attitude, behavior, and world outlook of individual characters in literature, or the person in the system of production in a given historical and social context, which includes the economic system, the complexity of production, and the corresponding culture. The concept is grounded in a historical-materialist analysis of a given society. For example, as is evident in the discussion below, Lukács recognized the variety of types of productive activity in the capitalist economic structure, while in another context he referred to two essential types of individuals in the revolutionary movement in Russia, the tribune and the bureaucrat (1981, 199), and in another context he referred to the “multiplicity of typical phenomena” that are required in art and literature (1963, 124). His multiple and varied references to the type or the typical are not contradictions; they indicate distinctive moments or components of a system or social order. While each of these examples is important in terms of understanding the typical in Lukács’s work as a whole, my emphasis lies in the meaning associated with Marx’s concept of species being. The typical is a sociohistorical product that serves as a tool of historical-materialist analysis. In Ralph Fox’s interpretation of the concept, each person has “a dual history . . . a type, a man with a social history, and an individual . . . with a personal

history” (1945, 27; cf. Lukács 1963, 43). I would not adopt a strict dichotomy drawn from this formulation, but the distinction is important as an expression of the way the relation between the individual as such and the social individual is normally posed. The task for historical materialism, for organizing consciousness, is to demonstrate the dialectical relation between the two, in which the personal history is retained as it is embellished and grounded in a longer, more complex, more comprehensive social history.

As discussed earlier, Lukács’s insistence in his *Ontology* (1980b) on the dialectical relation between objective conditions and individual human acts was concentrated on the relation between the individual and the productive system. The completion of the dialectic, it seems, is the intentionality that is discoverable in this relationship and its ongoing reciprocal actions. This is evident in his earlier writing: “By relating consciousness to the whole of society it becomes possible to infer the thoughts and feelings which men would have in particular situations if they were able to assess it and the interests arising from it in their impact on immediate action and on the whole structure of society” (1971a, 51). Thus, the lower level of consciousness, the “psychological,” is insufficient but is nevertheless a basis for its development. If psychological consciousness is an expression of reification, or what this or that proletarian thinks or does, it is not completely determined by particular circumstances. But the difficult tension remains. “Now class consciousness consists in fact of the appropriate and rational reactions ‘imputed’ to a typical position in the process of production. This consciousness is, therefore, neither the sum nor the average of what is thought or felt by the single individuals who make up the class. And yet the historically significant actions of the class as a whole are determined in the last resort by this consciousness and not by the thought of the individual—and these actions can be understood only by reference to this consciousness” (1971a, 51). At the same time and somewhat in contradiction to this basic position, reflecting Mannheim’s influence, Lukács argues that the character and quality of imputed consciousness, or what can be known of reality, is understood partially through those “whose characteristics

are determined by the types of position available in the process of production” and which by implication afford greater or lesser access to knowledge because of their proximity to the economic motor of capitalism (1971a, 51). Notwithstanding this contradiction, from an organizational perspective the concentration should be on the “characteristics . . . determined by the types of position” that are components of the objective conditions that contribute to the shaping of the individual consciousness. The act of imputing knowledge and the content of consciousness of such positions as suggested in the first quotation illustrates the intention of the party or social movement to shape the consciousness of individuals in and outside of their labor, and in that way contribute to the shaping of the class as a whole in relation to social totality.

The problem lies with Lukács’s suggestion that “the appropriate and rational actions ‘imputed’ to a particular position” in itself is sufficient to indicate or produce the content or quality of consciousness (1971a, 51). This is especially problematic in the fragmented environment of capitalist production. Responsibility for knowledge and consciousness cannot be confined to sites of economic production, for this would imply that participation in the structure of labor itself spontaneously develops class consciousness. Nor does one’s position in the system of production need to be the predominant means by which knowledge about the total system is made possible. Mészáros argues that “class consciousness, according to Marx, is inseparable from the recognition—in the form of ‘true’ or ‘false’ consciousness—of class interest based on the *objective social position of different classes* in the established structure of society” (1971, 95). Thus, both true and false consciousness lies in these basic conditions and relations, the most fundamental of which is the relation of labor to capital, in which the latter purchases, objectively, all of a worker’s labor for a day and objectively pays for only part of it. Contrary to the Mannheimian perspective of Seccombe and Livingstone, the position at issue here is a position that belongs objectively to one or another class; it only belongs, however, as a result of historical-materialist analysis of the complex of productive and social relations. Although the individual’s position in the

system of production is not rendered unimportant, a component of developing class consciousness is to become knowledgeable of positions in the system of production that must come to be understood as objective economic positions and as class relations.

The objective situations to which Lukács referred cover both individual circumstances and the sociohistorical position of the working class. In other words, his approach was to point out the significance of the particular thoughts and feelings that it was possible for individuals to hold in specific circumstances within the system of production. Those particulars were then used to develop a clearer understanding of what class consciousness would consist if this same dialectically logical inference were applied to the class as a whole and to the totality of society. While specific individuals will fill particular positions and take on their typical characteristics, the proviso that the number of types is limited suggests that Lukács did not excessively fragment the different categories of production or work, nor did he create an excessive number of ideal types. In other words, the assembler on the auto line is no different, in terms of type or position, than the person monitoring the computerized assembly of electronic equipment; but both are highly dissimilar to the teacher who labors in a primary classroom, and different still from the manager of a coal mine. But each of these positions, Lukács argues, can be a vantage point from which the totality of society can be known and intentionally discovered, and a platform for the organization of class action. He attempts to address the problem at the end of the essay, "Class Consciousness," by recognizing its complexity beyond the point of production. He discusses the "gradations within the class consciousness of workers in the same strata" and while "a typology of the various strata" might be useful, such differences "can no longer be referred back to socio-economic causes" (1971a, 78–79). He at once points out the possible differences in individuals' "psychological class consciousness" and rejects what amounts to an instrumental and descriptive sociology of these differences. Thus, the notion of "types of position . . . in the process of production" actually breaks down as a schema for determining the degree of consciousness that can be drawn from any such position

or through any type associated with it. Lukács questions his own correspondence of knowledge and position in the relations of production when he asks, “How far is it *in fact* possible to discern the whole economy of a society from inside it?” (1971a, 52). The answer is that it is not altogether possible to do so without a mediating element in the relation of individual labor to social totality. The meaning of “psychological” or “real” empirically evident consciousness is significant in this process, but it remains only superficial, although it is an important basis for further development. The psychological consciousness that Lukács—and Marx and Engels—rejected as an invalid theoretical perspective that is insufficient for class struggle is in fact the “sum” or the “average of what is thought and felt by the single individuals who make up the class” (Lukács 1971a, 51). Therefore, in relation to the concept of the typical, the sum or average actually references only the atypical individual. We may go further and suggest that psychological, i.e., real and immediate consciousness and this average of thought corresponds with Lenin’s principle that consciousness developed spontaneously and without further political development remains only at the level of trade-union consciousness.

Individuals remain important because class consciousness consists of imputing “appropriate and rational” reactions to “typical positions,” which are in practical terms occupied by particular individuals. The primary reference is not to particular individuals in specific positions, but to the class-relevant knowledge and its orientation to the struggle for socialism, which can be developed from each position, provided the individual worker becomes conscious of that position within the broader interrelations that form the system of production and the social system as a whole—totality. The imputing of criteria for class consciousness to these typical positions implies a mediating force that is political in character. That is, the individual does not acquire knowledge by osmosis through the position the person holds in the system of production (this would be more like Mannheim’s perspective); rather, the potentiality of the knowledge available in that position is developed by the individual along with a third force—organized political consciousness in the form of a political party, a social

movement, or a conscious minority. Since it is “neither the sum nor the average of what is thought or felt,” the content of that which is imputed indicates that there is a strategy for overcoming the inhibiting effects of reification. One aspect of the analysis of the relation between position and totality is the requirement to assess the “*practical* significance of the different possible relations between the objective economic totality, the imputed class consciousness and the real psychological thoughts of men about their lives” (1971a, 51). It is, in other words, to explore the resources and make available important information to develop fully the possibilities within concrete reality.

Secombe and Livingstone’s mere identification of location in the productive system with a specific content of consciousness is nullified by Lukács’s argument. It is his underlying emphasis on totality that disallows specific positions within the system of production from standing alone more than momentarily, in a dialectical sense, and which, therefore, begs the questions: To what is each position connected? To what is it related dialectically? To what mediating factor is it related? His point is that each position cannot be separated from the historical-materialist expectations of individuals’ capacities to see broader and deeper than the instrumental boundaries of their positions. Here again, conscious deliberation is the basis for and precursor to action, and the ethical component serves as the grounding orientation. The political organization provides the practical means of integrating these and moving toward the goal.

In the contemporary period especially, it is increasingly possible to generalize a level of consciousness that is based upon the growth of both institutionally based knowledge and knowledge derived through experience in social movements. Development of this level of consciousness is based on the masses’ access to both forms of knowledge. But there is no guarantee that such consciousness and action will come about even if proper, comprehensive knowledge is ascribed either from outside the working class or by the most advanced sector within the class. Lukács’s notion of the point of production is relevant only if understood as an expression of the consciousness possible in a particular location

and its relation to the social totality. This means that the point of production is no longer a limited and isolated place; rather, it is a place known to hold determinants of generalizable conditions and tendencies. The phrase “if they were able,” in Lukács’s discussion of the concept, not only references actually existing barriers to that knowledge, it also illuminates the necessity for a decision of the historical subject to pursue the discovery and communication of such knowledge, whether barriers exist or not. As noted earlier, as an objective historical-materialist position, class consciousness is the means by which to move the proletariat toward the realization of socialist goals (what it “will be historically compelled to do”), but class consciousness develops through the proletariat’s self-active reflection on its capacity to explore and know its own potential, the realization of which always requires some form of mediation.

Thus, while the main point of the concept of imputed class consciousness is “the question of inner transformation of the proletariat, and of its development to the stage of its own objective historical mission” (Lukács 1971a, 79), it cannot be strategically useful without understanding that the concept requires a cognitive process and an organizational forum in order to be realized. Methodologically, this means going beyond “what men *in fact* thought, felt and wanted” as “merely the *material* of genuine historical analysis,” to a projection of the concept that “is supposed to aid the singling out of the objectively decisive, causal context from the confusion of superficial connections and subjective psychological conditions” (Lukács 2000, 63–64). This is not without potential problems; it requires consideration and caution regarding the tension between party and class on the one hand, and on the other, the need to avoid projecting voluntarism as the solution to the problem. Lukács does not provide a detailed discussion of the process a party might take in the development of consciousness. What he does say, implicitly more often than explicitly, is that this process is based on a cognitive element, exercised and developed in the context of the needs and goals of the class conscious of itself, specifically the tasks that need to be undertaken “in order to obtain and organize power” (1971a, 53). This approach is no

different from what we have said about Lenin, Goldmann, and others: it is a process of learning. Lukács offers an example from Marx's *Wages, Prices and Profit* on the illusion in capitalism that the price paid for labor equals its full value, and he responds with a methodological statement: "Now it requires the most painstaking historical analysis to use the category of objective possibility so as to isolate the conditions in which this illusion can be exposed and a real connection with the totality be established" (1971a, 52). Again, it is worth citing Marx's basic method of political economy as a pedagogical guide for how such discoveries can be made.

In *History and Class Consciousness* the problem is not fully worked out. What is needed is a more precise conception of the individual—the type or the typical—that Lukács develops later in his literary work. However, this conception is not confined to literature, it exists as well in science (Parkinson 1977, 139), and, most importantly, these contexts take us beyond the typical where it is merely an expression of positions within the relations of production. It is possible and necessary to argue for a further extension of the type as a characterization that fits the class-conscious worker, the ethical human being, the communist. The type is the "central category and criterion of realist literature"; it is not an average of human beings, for the "'average' is a dead synthesis of the process of social development" (Lukács 1971b, 164). The typical is the completion of the dialectical relation between the individual and his or her specific sociohistorical location in which there is an active emphasis on its history as development. This is evident in politics—consider Lenin's comment to the effect that "war is the typical product of imperialism" (qu. in Lukács 1963, 123)—in that the violence of imperialist states was a synthesis of all the features of that age of intense competition and conflict over exploitable resources and labor.

A typical character in literature or in concrete reality is one who consciously recognizes that his or her "innermost being is determined by objective forces at work in society" (Lukács 1963, 122). The notion that a character's innermost being is determined is qualified by the insistence that the type in realist literature exhibits a synthesis of character and the particular historical situation

in which he or she acts; in other words, the situation in which the character becomes progressively conscious of his or her place in the social totality. In this respect, the typical is someone who has gone beyond the lower, psychological level of consciousness. The type is generalized beyond literature to represent a dialectical relation of the general and the particular of historical development (Lukács 1964, 6; Parkinson, 1970, 133; 1977, 137–39). Goldmann's perspective also includes such an essential, indeed necessary, relationship between society, history, and literature (cf. Goldmann 1980, 60; Boelhower 1980, 8; Evans 1981, 42).

For the individual, the communist, the organizer, or the class conscious worker, the synthesis of person and historical situation does not produce an exceptional individual as the singular person who stands above others in his or her social category, as Foley interprets the typical (1993, 297–98, 321). Lukács's focus was not on "extraordinary individuals" (1971a, 79). Rather, he considered the development of knowledge and self-activity in determining the appropriate direction of the movement to be a task for the whole class. Like Lenin, Lukács assumed that it is possible for each individual within the class to achieve the necessary level of consciousness. It is the knowledge by which the typical proletarian becomes a leader, advanced in thinking and organization at both the individual and the collective levels. It is this knowledge that will at some future time become the knowledge, the ethical orientation, and the course of action of the class as a whole. Thus, in understanding Lukács's meaning it is more helpful to employ the word exemplar, a synonym of type, so long as the chosen connotation of this term is that of an example of a species. The typical, then, represents the essential qualities of a species. In this way, the particular social location of the individual is retained, but so too is the generalizable reference to the whole of the social category (class) and species (humanity). As with the literary type as exemplary character, individuals in concrete reality can be typical in a way that implies that their ideas and actions are not singularly different from those that other individuals may also develop through a proper analysis of the same circumstances. This is what should be understood as a bridge between the literary

representation of reality and the concrete conditions in which the potential for revolution lies, although it is not, I would argue, a substitution of the literary for the revolutionary as suggested by Feher (cf. Livingstone 1981).

In taking this approach, we extend the concept of the typical to one who is conscious of the forces that determine the individual's life, one who exhibits a relative mastery over the complex of social conditions, personality, and the structure of choice; one who is, therefore, typical of the human species under conditions in which progress toward full development and freedom is underway. This approach takes us directly back to Marx's conception of the proletariat as a class that will be compelled to take its role in history, but only because the compulsion is grounded in the very consciousness developed with and from self-activity. Lukács argued that this form of consciousness was essential to portray in the literary type that comprised the "conscious minority [who are] the precondition of the mass movement" (1975a, 68); and Marx argued that this self-activity was the way revolutionaries learned to take their place in history. The development of such individuals in literature or in the politics outside it rests on the searching out of objective possibilities for transformation. It is this conception of the typical that is the central point in understanding imputed class consciousness.

Thus, the proper conception of the typical asserts a more general development of Lukács's discussion of imputed class consciousness in *History and Class Consciousness*. The typical relates to the essence of the human being in terms of its capacities to be developed. It is self-mastery of the processes of development of the typical that is at once both the human essence and the outcome of development, so that the fundamental character of the human being becomes the total personality of the individual.

This meaning of the typical is essentially the same as Marx's concept of species-being, which was introduced in his 1844 Paris manuscripts. There Marx argued that humanity, as a species, is capable of taking itself and all other species as its object, and that this occurs as human beings produce and develop themselves in relation to nature. His concept of alienation refers to the

conditions under which this capacity is diminished or removed from human beings, thus rendering them less than genuine representatives of the species-being with which they are inherently endowed (1975b, 275–77). Marx's concept of alienation is often deemed the concept that most adequately describes human beings amidst capitalist social and economic relations. True enough; but it is important to note that the concept that was given priority in his discussion of alienation is species-being, or in terms used above, individuals who exhibit the qualities of being typical in the sense of possessing the essential capabilities of human beings as a universalizing species. Being typical is a self-conscious act, an act of a self-conscious species; such acts are based on capacities inherent in human beings but which must be recognized first for their potentiality and then consciously developed. Marcuse makes a point of this by emphasizing Marx's comment on human capacities. The human being "can exploit, alter mould, treat and take further ('pro-duce') any being according to its 'inherent standard'," thus emphasizing the Latin root of the term: *producere*—to bring out or bring forward the potential inherent in a thing (Marcuse 1972, 16; cf. Marx 1975b, 275).

The immediate conditions and relations of labor produce skills and knowledge in the worker that are reified by the acquiescence to the demands of that part of the productive process in which the worker is employed, and of the worker's everyday life and development. Reification occurs as long as the worker sees this fragment as the adequate representation of the whole or does not recognize its necessary relation to social totality. The alternative to this is ontological and dialectical; it is driven by the inescapable fact of human potentiality. Lukács notes, for example, that the interrelation of speech and conceptual thought mediated by labor becomes a source of development of each component. Related to particular and interconnected acts of labor, what is learned is developmental and cumulative in a way that establishes the potential ground for ever-increasing comprehensiveness in the combined acts of labor that lend themselves, as a complex, not only to knowledge of the system as a whole, but alternatives to it. This process contains a future, oppositional orientation. "Since experience gained in one

concrete labor can be used in another, this experience gradually becomes relatively autonomous, i.e., certain observations are generalized and fixed so that they are no longer exclusively related directly to one particular performance, but acquire a certain universal character as observations about natural process in general” (Lukács 1980b, 51). Lukács relates this to the sciences, which at their inception contain the elements of their future development, regardless of whether people are immediately conscious of that fact. The same applies to individual development, for it “shows how consciousness of tasks, of the world, and of the subject itself grows out of the reproduction of his own existence . . . as its indispensable instrument” (Lukács 1980b, 51). Working at conscious development reveals the necessary relation of existing resources to the make-up of the social world and to subjects themselves; it is a cognitive act, an act of will embedded in objective, concrete reality, an act that is framed by a commitment to radical social change and human betterment.

While false consciousness and reification are ideological problems that the working-class movement must address, they are often mixed with genuine consciousness or the seed of its development, and it is such a tension that can lead to the appropriate questions and the relevant answers to social problems (cf. Lukács 1971a, 70; 1981, 204–6). With every connection between acts of labor in a particular position in the field of production, the worker has an increasing potential to see the totality of the system. As the individual becomes increasingly aware of the complexes revealed through these interconnections, he or she edges consciously closer to being typical. Thus, the other side of “if they were *able*” is “if they are *willing*” to fully comprehend reality and explore options in order to make choices that may lead toward an alternative to capitalism. This is not a voluntaristic argument. Rather, the argument recognizes the concrete pressure of objective conditions as a constraint on willingness and ability. It also recognizes, however, that the argument that individual will and action are negated by the apparent reasonableness of adopting a market rationale is, in fact, an argument that claims that the choice to take an oppositional course of action is unnecessary. On the other hand, while it is not a

voluntaristic argument, the task of making the necessary connections, becoming able to comprehend fully reality indeed requires interest and will on the part of the individual. But it also requires access to that precondition of Lukács's that we have referred to more than once here: a conscious minority prepared, as a means of changing the world, to impute to others the range and substance of knowledge required for the full comprehension of reality, a conscious minority as the mediating factor in human advancement.

In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács used imputed class consciousness as an organizational principle for the development of political cadre. The concept remains as important now as then because of the implications it has for the attitude required to assert a strategy of human progress. Attitude, in this instance, refers to both an organizational and individual recognition and commitment to specific social and political ends. The Communist Party was the form of the "class consciousness of the proletariat" (Lukács 1971a, 41). The class consciousness that it "ascribed" to the working class was the party's active stressing of its rational political knowledge and the strategy developed from it, grounded in an understanding of a deliberately plotted historical direction that could be known and understood by anyone. It is the programmatic organization of that knowledge out of what was grasped as objectively possible.

NOTES

1. These are excerpted from Wilde (1997).

2. Jobb noted that several wives were awakened by telephone calls immediately after the explosion, with an unidentified voice asking if their husbands were at home. With no tag board, mine managers had no accurate list of who was on shift (1994, 45–48).

3. For example, the 12-hour shifts violated Section 128 (1) of the *Coal Mines Regulation Act*; see Richard 1997, 143–44.

Conclusion

Organizing consciousness has been a chief concern in examining the work of Lukács and others, and in the critique of selected contemporary studies of the working class. From that examination a central point of the argument as a whole can be taken, that intervention in reality is a political and ethical necessity. What stands in the way of this intervention?

Especially during the post–World War II period in North America, the relatively stable dominance of capitalism has allowed the politics of gradualism to obtain a solid hold on the underdeveloped consciousness of significant proportions of working people and intellectuals alike. In terms of making fundamental choices regarding class politics, Raymond Williams pointed out the significance of the gradualist perspective as a problem in the late modern period. He characterized gradualism as an ideological position that acts as a barrier to the pursuit of a resolution to the fundamental contradictions of capitalism. Williams’s essay, “You’re a Marxist Aren’t You?” argued that the politics of gradualism “really assumed . . . there was not an enemy, there was only something out of date,” such as policies or legislation or perhaps attitudes that at some point would be modernized, thereby reducing the impact of capitalist hegemony (1989, 69). He was calling attention to the absence of consciousness, the absence of knowledge about the class character of capitalist society, the failure to know capitalism as a social order founded on an inherent opposition between two social classes. The social system that this produces, he argued, included more than an accidental disjuncture between work and sufficient remuneration, and more than

a rational power arrangement understood simply as two social groups appropriately served by differences in the will and merit of their respective members. The proof of the imperative to recognize the existence of a class enemy in capitalism lay in the efforts of the system itself and its ruling class to resist comprehensive changes. If one doubts the existence of a tangible enemy, Williams advised, try organizing for extensive and lasting social change, and the enemy will reveal itself quite readily (1989, 71–72). Hence the importance of building a collective, organized perspective on the conditions of capitalist society and the prospects of change by developing the meaning and practical import of class is an imperative that emerges from recognizing the actuality of class conflict.

Acquiescence to this gradualist approach is mediated by immediate economic interests as well as by fearful attitudes toward class action itself. There is an increasingly broad awareness of the many injustices worldwide in the contemporary period, an awareness that is the result of voluminous academic research, journalistic investigation, and political activism. Nevertheless, meaningful, radical, and sustainable social change is suffocated by the refusal to develop and organize that knowledge by ascribing to the mass of human beings guidelines for action that can transform them from objects of repressive social forces to historical agents of change. Where class is seen to be simply a site of identity rather than a source of agency, where the attribution of false consciousness is seen to be an assault on the subjectivity of working-class individuals, and where imputing the knowability of socially and personally transforming knowledge is seen to be an imposition, the possibility of social change becomes a matter of pragmatic calculation, the result of which will always be negative. In that case, the values of revolutionary experience are rejected because accepting them means discarding the notion that socioeconomic status as well as the attitudes, language, and thought processes of particular social groups, can no longer be simply objects of sociological observation. One consequence of such pragmatic calculation is that consciousness organized and developed around partisan positions with expectations for participants, principles of human betterment, and objectives of self-development must be set

aside or rejected outright as intrusions into the protected space of the subjective. Sociological analyses that exemplify this approach adopt a paternalistic attitude toward the working class, demeaning the objective possibility of its development and its capacity to transform the conditions of capitalist society, despite the increasingly well-documented historical evidence of the efforts and successes of working-class parties that have advocated for people's control of the economy, culture, and politics.

The sociological studies of the working class discussed here do not regard reification as a central problem. To do so, the authors of these studies suggest, would require a critical assessment of working-class experience from which, it is argued, adequate knowledge of reality emerges from its own common sense. In doing so, such approaches expunge the tension and contradictions inherent in class-based societies through their concentration on the self-legitimizing culture of the class. These studies reject the main elements of a Marxist analysis and the historical practice of communist and socialist movements.

The argument made here, by contrast, has been to emphasize the significance of class development and action that attends to the problems of reification imposed by the structure and relations of capitalism, and to critique the subjectivist acquiescence to those forces at the level of the individual and academic analyses. This argument has been premised on the idea that the class-conscious individual can systematically discover the objective possibilities in social reality, and this premise is in turn based on the belief in the general accessibility of knowledge for the development of that consciousness. This approach is fundamentally an affirmation of the self-activity and future orientation of which human beings are capable. But self-activity cannot be taken as a capability that is, by itself, sufficient for developing consciousness. Rather, self-activity and the consciousness developed from it must be organized deliberately.

While it is possible to organize consciousness outside the framework of a political organization—and here the capability of individuals must again be acknowledged—the beginnings of mass movements historically have been initiated by an organized,

conscious minority. At the juncture of potentiality that exists in the transformative capacity of human beings intersecting with the objective possibilities in the social and historical context of their development, a political movement must recognize not only its stated goal for the future—socialism—but also practical guidelines such as Lukács's ethical conduct, which is a major foundation of the consciousness and responsibility of the individual who is in turn the irreducible unit of collective political activity. It is upon such development of consciousness that the success of a political organization rests.

REFERENCE LIST

- MECW refers to *Collected Works* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 50 vols. New York: International Publishers, 1995–2004.
- Allen, James S. 2000. *Organizing in the Depression South: A Communist's Memoir*. Minneapolis: MEP Publications. Also special issue of *Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Jan. 2000).
- Anderson, Kevin. 1995. *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism: A Critical Study*. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press.
- Arato, Andrew, and Paul Brienens. 1979. *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Bhaskar, Roy. 1983. s.v. "Materialism." *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, edited by Tom Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V.G. Kiernan, and Ralph Miliband, 324–29. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.
- Bloch, Ernst. 2000. *The Spirit of Utopia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press.
- Blumin, Stuart. 1989. *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Boelhower, William Q. 1980. Introduction to Goldmann 1980.
- Boggs, Carl. 1976. *Gramsci's Marxism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Bonosky, Phillip. 2000. *Brother Bill McKie*. New York: International Publishers.
- Borg, Carmel, Joseph Buttigieg, and Peter Mayo, eds. 2002. *Gramsci and Education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Brantlinger, Ellen A. 2003. *Dividing Classes*. New York: Routledge.
- Breuer, Stefan. 1982. The Illusion of Politics: Politics and Rationalization in Max Weber and Georg Lukács. *New German Critique*, No. 26:55–79.
- Brown, Harold I. 1988. *Rationality*. London: Routledge.
- Camfield, David. 2004. Re-Orienting Class Analysis: Working Classes as Historical Formations. *Science & Society* 68:421–46.
- Congdon, Lee. 1983. *The Young Lukács*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press.
- Corredor, Eva L. 1997. *Lukács after Communism: Interviews with Contemporary Intellectuals*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press.
- Davis, Kingsley, and Wilbert Moore. 1945. Some Principles of Stratification. *American Sociological Review* 10:242–49.

-
- Dunk, Thomas. 1991. *It's a Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press.
- Eisenstein, Hester. 2005. A Dangerous Liaison? Feminism and Corporate Globalization. *Science & Society* 69:487–518.
- Engels, Frederick. 1975. *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. In vol. 4 of *MECW*, 295–583.
- . 1987. *Anti-Dühring* [Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science]. In vol. 25 of *MECW*, 1–309.
- Evans, Mary. 1981. *Lucien Goldmann: An Introduction*. Sussex UK: Harvester Press.
- Eyerman, Ron. 1981. False Consciousness and Ideology in Marxist Theory. *Acta Sociologica* 24:43–56.
- Foley, Barbara. 1993. *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929–1941*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press.
- Foner, Philip S. 1991. *The History of the Labor Movement in the United States*. Vol. 9. *The T.U.E.L. to the End of the Gompers Era*. New York: International Publishers.
- Foucault, Michel. 1980. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1. New York: Vintage Books.
- Fox, Ralph. 1945. *The Novel and the People*. New York: International Publishers.
- Frank, David. 1999. *J. B. McLachlan: A Biography*. Toronto: James Lorimer.
- Gettleman, Marvin. 2002. “No Varsity Teams”: New York's Jefferson School of Social Science, 1943–1956. *Science & Society* 66:336–59.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1987. *Social Theory and Sociology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press.
- . 1994. *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press.
- Giroux, Henry A. 2001. *Public Spaces, Private Lives: Beyond the Culture of Cynicism*. Lanham, UK: Roman & Littlefield.
- . 2004. *The Terror of Neo-liberalism*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- Glasbeek, Harry, and Eric Tucker. 1992. *Death by Consensus: The Westray Story*. North York, Ontario: Centre for Research on Work and Society.
- Golding, Sue. 1992. *Gramsci's Democratic Theory*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press.
- Goldmann, Lucien. 1969. *The Human Sciences and Philosophy*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- . 1974. *Power and Humanism*. Nottingham, UK: Spokesman Books.
- . 1977a. *Cultural Creation in Modern Society*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- . 1977b. *Lukács and Heidegger: Towards a New Philosophy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- . 1980. *Essays on Method in the Sociology of Literature*. St. Louis: Telos Press.
- Gorman, Thomas J. 2000a. Cross-Class Perceptions of Social Class. *Sociological Spectrum* 20:93–120.

- . 2000b. Reconsidering Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working Class(es). *Sociological Forum* 15:693–717.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.
- . 2000. Red Sunday. In *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916–1935*, edited by David Forgacs, 96–100. New York: New York Univ. Press.
- Guevara, Ernesto “Ché”. 1968. Man and Socialism in Cuba. In *Venceremos: The Speeches and Writings of Ernesto “Ché” Guevara*, edited by John Gerass. 387–400. New York: Macmillan.
- . 1998. *Guerrilla Warfare*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.
- Harris, Benjamin. 1993. “Don’t Be Unconscious; Join Our Ranks”: Psychology, Politics and Communist Education. *Rethinking Marxism* 6:44–76.
- Hegel, G. W. F. 1931. *The Phenomenology of Mind*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hofstadter, Richard. 1966. *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Horkheimer, Max. 1982. *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. New York: Continuum.
- Jobb, Dean. 1994. *Calculated Risk: Greed, Politics and the Westray Tragedy*. Halifax: Nimbus.
- Kaplan, Judy, and Linn Shapiro. 1998. *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Kelley, Robin D. G. 1990. *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press.
- Kiralyfalvi, Bela. 1975. *The Aesthetics of György Lukács*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Lacey, Joanne. 2000. Discursive Mothers and Academic Fandom: Class, Generation and the Production of Theory. In *Cultural Studies and the Working Class: Subject to Change*, edited by Sally Munt. 40–61. London: Cassell.
- Lanning, Robert. 1996. *The National Album: Collective Biography and the Formation of the Canadian Middle Class*. Ottawa: Carleton Univ. Press.
- . 2002. Lukács’s Concept of *Imputed Consciousness* in Realist Literature. *Nature, Society, and Thought* 15:133–55.
- . 2005. Review of, *Marxist Ethics: A Short Exposition*, by Willis Truitt. *Nature, Society, and Thought* 18:563–71.
- Lareau, Annette. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Lenin, V. I. [1894] 1960. What the “Friends of the People” Are and How They Fight the Social Democrats. In vol. 1 of *Collected Works*, by V. I. Lenin, 129–332. Moscow: Progress Publishers. Reprint 1972..
- . 1961. *What is to be Done?* In vol. 5 of *Collected Works*, by V. I. Lenin, 347–527. Moscow: Progress Publishers. Reprint 1973
- Levi, Primo. 1965. *The Reawakening*. New York: Macmillan.
- . 2000. *If Not Now, When?* London: Penguin.
- Livingstone, Rodney. 1981. Introduction to Lukács 1981.

-
- Lowy, Michael. 1973. *The Marxism of Che Guevara: Philosophy, Economics and Revolutionary Warfare*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- . 1979. *Georg Lukács: From Romanticism to Bolshevism*. London: New Left Books.
- Lukács, Georg. 1963. *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*. London: Merlin Press.
- . 1964. *Studies in European Realism*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.
- . 1971a. *History and Class Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- . 1971b. *Writer and Critic*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.
- . 1972. Art and Society. *New Hungarian Quarterly* 13, No. 47:44–56.
- . 1975a. *Conversations with Lukács*, edited by Theo Pinkus. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- . 1975b. *Tactics and Ethics: Political Essays, 1919–1929*. New York: Harper & Row.
- . 1975c. *The Young Hegel*. London: Merlin Press.
- . 1978. *The Ontology of Social Being: Marx*. London: Merlin Press.
- . 1979. Introduction to a Monograph on Aesthetics. In *Marxism and Art*, edited by Maynard Solomon, 404–19. Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press.
- . 1980a. *The Destruction of Reason*. London: Merlin Press.
- . 1980b. *The Ontology of Social Being: Labour*. London: Merlin Press.
- . 1981. *Essays on Realism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- . 1983. *Record of a Life: An Autobiography*. London: Verso.
- . 1991. *The Process of Democratization*. Albany: State Univ. of New York Press.
- . 2000. *A Defence of History and Class Consciousness*. London: Verso.
- Mannheim, Karl. 1971. The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge. In *From Karl Mannheim*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff, 59–115. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- . 1969. *An Essay on Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- . 1970. *Five Lectures*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- . 1972. The Foundation of Historical Materialism. In *From Luther to Popper*, 1–48. London: Verso.
- . 1987. *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Markels, Julian. 2003. *The Marxian Imagination: Representing Class in Literature*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- . 2005. How to Stop Paying Lip-Service to Class—And Why it Won't Happen. *Red Critique* 10. <http://www.redcritique.org/WinterSpring2005/howtostoppayinglipservicetoclass.htm>.
- Marks, Louis. 1957. Introduction to *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, by Antonio Gramsci, 11–18. New York: International Publishers.
- Marx, Karl. 1967. *Capital*, Vol. 1. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- . 1970. *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- . 1975a. Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction. In vol. 3 of *MECW*, 175–87.

-
- . 1975b. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. In vol. 3 of *MECW*, 229–346.
- . 1975c. On the Jewish Question. In vol. 3 of *MECW*, 146–74.
- . 1976a. Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality. In vol. 6 of *MECW*, 312–40.
- . 1976b. *The Poverty of Philosophy*. In vol. 6 of *MECW*, 105–212.
- . 1978. *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*. In vol. 10 of *MECW*, 45–145.
- . 1979. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. In vol. 11 of *MECW*, 99–197.
- . 1986. First Draft of *The Civil War in France*. In vol. 22 of *MECW*, 437–514.
- . 1986–87. Economic Manuscripts of 1857–58 (*Grundrisse*). Vols. 28 and 29 of *MECW*.
- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. 1975–2004. *Collected Works*. 50 vols. New York: International Publishers. Abbrev. *MECW*.
- . 1975a. *The Holy Family*. In vol. 4 of *MECW*, 3–209.
- . 1975b. *Selected Correspondence*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- . 1976. *The German Ideology*. In vol. 5 of *MECW*, 19–539.
- Mayer, Robert. 1997. Plekanov, Lenin and Working-Class Consciousness. *Studies in East European Thought* 49:159–85.
- Mayo, Peter. 1999. *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education*. London: Zed Books.
- McCarthy, John D., and Mayar N. Zald. 1977. Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory. *American Journal of Sociology* 82: 1212–41.
- McCormick, Chris, ed. 1999. *The Westray Chronicles: A Case Study in Corporate Crime*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood.
- McKay, Leo. 2003. *Twenty-Six*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
- McLaren, Peter. 1995. *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture: Oppositional Politics in a Postmodern Era*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2000. *Che Guevara, Paulo Friere and the Pedagogy of Revolution*. Lanham, UK: Roman & Littlefield.
- McMullan, J. L. 2005. *News, Truth and Crime: The Westray Disaster and its Aftermath*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood.
- Mészáros, Istvan. 1971. Contingent and Necessary Class Consciousness. In *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness*, edited by Istvan Mészáros, 85–127. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- . 1989. *The Power of Ideology*. New York: New York Univ. Press.
- . 1995. *Beyond Capital*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Mishler, Paul C. 1999. *Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.
- Ollman, Bertell. 1971. *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*. London: Cambridge Univ. Press.

- . 1993. *Dialectical Investigations*. New York: Routledge.
- O'Neill, Chris, and Ken Schwartz. 2004. *Westray: The Long Way Home*. Vancouver, BC: Talonbooks.
- O'Neill, John. 2004. *Civic Capitalism: The State of Childhood*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press.
- Parkinson, G. H. R. 1970. Lukács on the Central Category of Aesthetics. In *Georg Lukács: The Man, His Work, and His Ideas*, edited by G. H. R. Parkinson, 109–46. London: Wiedenfeld & Nicson.
- . 1977. *Georg Lukács*. London: Routledge.
- Porter, John. 1965. *The Vertical Mosaic*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press.
- Richard, K. Peter. 1997. *The Westray Story: A Predictable Path to Disaster: Report of the Westray Mine Public Inquiry*. Halifax: Province of Nova Scotia.
- Rubin, Lillian. 1976. *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working Class Family*. New York: Basic Books.
- Sayers, Sean. 2007. The Concept of Labor: Marx and his Critics. *Science & Society* 71:431–54.
- Secombe, Wally, and David Livingstone. 2000. *Down to Earth People: Beyond Class Reductionism and Postmodernism*. Toronto: Garamond.
- Sennett, Richard, and Jonathan Cobb. 1973. *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. New York: Vintage.
- Solomon, Mark. 1998. *The Cry was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917–1936*. Jackson: Univ. of Mississippi Press.
- Somerville, John. 1974. Marxist Ethics, Determinism and Freedom. In *Dialogues on the Philosophy of Marxism*, edited by John Somerville and Howard Parsons, 270–78. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- . 1999. *The Philosophy of Marxism: An Exposition*. Minneapolis, MN: MEP Publications.
- Stepan-Norris, Judith, and Maurice Zeitlin. 2003. *Left Out: Reds and America's Industrial Unions*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Tamás, G. M. 2005. Telling the Truth about Class. *Socialist Register 2006*. London: Merlin Press.
- Terkel, Studs. 1988. *The Great Divide*. New York: Avon.
- Thompson, E. P. 1968. *The Making of the English Working Class*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- . 1978a. *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- . 1978b. Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class? *Social History* 3:133–65.
- Truitt, Willis H. 2005. *Marxist Ethics: A Short Exposition*. New York: International Publishers.
- Tumin, Melvin. 1953. Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis. *American Sociological Review*, 18:389–94.
- Tumino, Stephen. 2001. What is Orthodox Marxism and Why It Matters Now More Than Ever Before. *Red Critique*, 1. <http://www.redcritique.org/spring2001/whatisorthodoxmarxism.htm>.

-
- Turner, Stephen P., and Regis A. Factor. 1981. Objective Possibility and Adequate Causation in Weber's Methodological Writings. *Sociological Review* 29:5–28.
- Vazsonyi, Nicholas. 1997. *Lukács Reads Goethe: From Aestheticism to Stalinism*. Columbia, SC: Camden House.
- Watnick, Morris. 1962. Relativism and Class Consciousness. In *Revisionism: Essays on the History of Marxist Ideas*, edited by Leopold Labedz, 142–65. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Weber, Max. 1949. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. New York: Free Press.
- . 1978. *Economy and Society*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Westray Mine Public Hearing Transcripts. 1995–96. http://library.stfx.ca/collections/westray_collection.
- Wilde, Gerald, J. S. 1997. Risk Awareness and Risk Acceptance at the Westray Coal Mine: An Attempt to Understand Miners' Perceptions, Motivations and Actions Prior to the Accident. <http://psyc.queensu.ca/faculty/wilde/westray.html>.
- Williams, Raymond. 1961. *The Long Revolution*. New York: Harper & Row.
- . 1976. *Keywords*. London: Fontana.
- . 1989. You're a Marxist, Aren't You? In *Resources of Hope, Culture, Democracy*, 65–76. London: Verso.
- Willis, Paul E. 1977. *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Farnborough, UK: Saxon House.
- Wright, Erik Olin. 1978. *Class, Crisis and the State*. London: Verso.
- . 1985. *Classes*. London: Verso.

Index

- Alabama 164, 172, 174, 178
alienation 4, 14, 34, 50, 73, 85, 137, 131
Allen, James S. 19, 172
Anderson, Kevin 36
Arato, Andrew 40
Bhaskar, Roy 136
Bloch, Ernst 31
Bloch, Joseph 176
Blumin, Stuart 108n2
Boelhower, William Q. 187
Boggs, Carl 108n2
Bonosky, Phillip 163
Borg, Carmel 108n2
Brantlinger, Ellen A. 78
Breuer, Stefan 12
Brienes, Paul 40
Brown, Harold I. 36
Camfield, David 156
Cape Breton 19, 94
Cheverie, Wayne 167
civil rights movement 111
class consciousness 1–2, 4–5, 9, 13, 23–24, 29, 32, 40–44, 46, 51–54, 55–56, 68–71, 75, 79, 89–91, 97–101, 107, 109–10, 119, 126, 135, 137–38, 143–45, 147–48, 154, 156, 161–62, 165, 169, 171, 173–74, 177–79, 181–86, 188
class struggle 21, 23, 26, 28, 38, 40, 43–44, 55, 67, 89, 92, 98, 104–5, 108, 139, 157, 161, 169–70, 176–78
Coal Mines Regulation Act 3, 191 n3
Cobb, Jonathan 77, 81
collective action 3, 17, 104–5, 161, 177
collective interests 19, 44, 84, 106, 149, 174
collective will 157
Comish, Shaun 168
communism 2
communist 12, 21, 89, 107, 156, 172, 178, 186–87, 195
communist party 68, 69, 138, 173–74
Communist Party
 Britain 107; Canada 19, 21; Hungary 68; Italy 108n2; U.S. 163, 172
Congdon, Lee 12
conscious action 37, 40–41
conscious deliberation 184
consciousness, individual 13, 40, 171, 181
consensus 48, 90
contradiction 1, 10, 12, 37–38, 41, 43, 46–47, 49, 63, 64, 73, 95, 137, 144, 162, 179, 181, 193, 195
Corredor, Eva L. 12
Davis, Kingsley 26
dialectical logic 8
dialectical 8, 10, 12, 25, 37–41, 43, 54 n3, 64, 74, 93, 128, 134, 151, 155, 173, 175, 180, 182, 184, 186–87, 189
division of labor 5, 31, 33, 61–62, 64, 86, 145, 155

- Dunk, Thomas 83–92, 107, 174, 178
 education 45, 51–52, 68, 79–82, 84–85, 89, 129, 135, 138, 150, 163, 170, 172–73, 176–77
 Eisenstein, Hester 129
 Engels, Frederick 34–39, 43–44, 51–52, 55, 58, 61–65, 71, 75, 105, 151, 156, 160, 171, 175–77, 183; *Condition of the Working Class in England* 65, 176; *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* 176
 ethics 57–58, 133, 140–41, 178
 Evans, Mary 75, 187
 exploitation 19, 26, 34, 39, 48–49, 51, 58, 105, 137, 155
 externality 136
 Eyerman, Ron 151
 Factor, Regis A. 59
 false consciousness 7–8, 87, 90, 101, 111, 148–53, 181, 194
 family 95, 103, 111, 146
 fatalism 118, 166, 168
 Foley, Barbara 187
 Foner, Philip S. 19, 129
 formal equality 12, 129, 131
 Foucault, Michel 53
 Fox, Ralph 179
 Frank, David 19
 Frankfurt School 107
 Gettleman, Marvin 172
 Giddens, Anthony 105, 143, 157, 161
 Giroux, Henry A. 29n1
 Glasbeek, Harry 4, 166
 Golding, Sue 108, 157
 Goldmann, Lucien 5, 8, 17, 40, 43–44, 58, 60, 70–77, 82, 87, 161, 166, 168, 171, 186–87; real consciousness 17, 40, 44, 60, 99, 166, 180, 182–83, 187
 Gorman, Thomas J. 79–86, 92, 98
 Gouldner, Alvin 77
 gradualism 193
 Gramsci, Antonio 35; 37; 54n1, n2; 88–91; 104; 108n2; 125; 156–57
 Guevara, Ernesto Ché 120–21, 124, 165
 Hardt, Michael 53
 Harris, Benjamin 172
 Hegel, G. W. F. 35–36, 38, 41, 175
 Heller, Agnes 107
 historical materialism 62, 93, 97, 110, 125, 136, 163, 175, 180
 historical method 59
 historical necessity 32, 36–43, 55, 75, 155
 Hofstadter, Richard 86
 Horkheimer, Max 60
 individual will 42, 177, 190
 Jefferson School 172
 Jobb, Dean 4, 167, 191n2
 Kaplan, Judy 173
 Kelley, Robin D. G. 69, 172
 knowledge 5, 7, 9–11, 18–20, 23, 33, 37–39, 43–46, 49–53, 56–64, 66–75, 81–83, 85–86, 88–91, 94, 97, 99, 105, 106, 108, 145–47, 150–53, 155, 157, 159–62, 166, 168–75, 177–78, 182–85, 187, 190, 191, 193–95
 labor power 26, 31, 46–48, 52–53, 79, 83, 151
 labor 15, 31, 39, 46–49, 52–53, 80, 86, 95–96, 102–3, 106, 127, 131, 152, 155, 162–63, 181–83, 186, 189–90
 Lacey, Joanne 89
 Lanning, Robert 108n1
 Lareau, Annette 78
 learning 51, 57, 75, 162, 172, 174, 178, 186
 Lenin, V. I. 34, 42–43, 51–52, 75, 100, 143, 146–47, 149, 153–56, 159, 173–75, 183, 186–87
 Levi, Primo 22
 Lilley, Stephen 3, 169
 Livingstone, David 46, 91–106, 109, 111, 113, 147–49, 151, 174, 181
 Livingstone, Rodney 188
 Lowy, Michael 11, 13, 165
 Lukács, Georg 1, 8, 10, 12–13, 20, 23, 38, 43, 45–46, 69, 75, 77, 96, 108, 126, 132, 136, 137, 140,

- Lukács, Georg (*continued*)
 193, 196: class consciousness
 40, 99, 117, 135, 138, 165, 171,
 173; Communist Party 153, 171,
 177–78; conscious minority 36,
 141, 162, 184, 188, 191, 196;
*Defence of History and Class
 Consciousness* 64; *Destruction of
 Reason* 23; ethics 57–58, 139–41,
 178–79; experience 189–90;
 false consciousness 152, 190;
 freedom 175, 176; *History and
 Class Consciousness* 14, 64, 70;
 ideological crisis 125, 135, 138,
 141; imputed class consciousness
 5, 41, 55, 57, 61, 64, 65, 66, 68,
 69, 74, 87, 90, 99, 137, 191; indi-
 vidual/individual development
 165–96; Marxism 10, 11, 38;
 objectivity 136–37; objective con-
 ditions 46, 47, 48, 122, 123, 135,
 146, 162, 165, 177, 180, 182, 185
 (*see also* objective conditions);
 objective possibility 64, 69, 99,
 186 (*see also* Weber); *Process of
 Democratization* 13; psychologi-
 cal consciousness 17, 40, 44, 60,
 99, 166, 180, 182–83, 187; reifi-
 cation (inward barrier) 4, 5, 14,
 17, 50, 55, 56, 95, 134, 135; self-
 mastery 175–76, 188; subjectivity
 90; totality 182, 184, 185; type/
 typical 179–83, 186–90; working
 class (proletariat) 32, 33, 34, 38,
 40, 41, 43, 46, 91, 121, 126, 138,
 139, 185
- MacKay, Tom 168
- Mannheim, Karl 96–100, 181, 183
- Marcese, Herbert 35, 48, 164, 189
- Markels, Julian 7, 160
- Marks, Louis 108n2
- Marx, Karl 5, 11, 46, 55, 58, 61, 62,
 89, 105, 107, 137, 146, 162; alien-
 ation 95, 188, 189; being deter-
 mines consciousness 93–94
Capital 150; capitalism 32, 46, 95;
- Marx, Karl (*continued*)
Civil War in France 41; class 24,
 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 43,
 44, 52, 79, 83, 147, 154, 160,
 171, 188; class consciousness
 37, 38, 51, 149, 181; *Economic
 and Philosophical Manuscripts
 of 1844* 114, 188; *Eighteenth
 Brumaire* 44, 51; false conscio-
 usness 101; *Grundrisse* 39, 65, 136;
 historical development 64; his-
 torical materialism 97; historical
 necessity 32, 36–41, 43, 55, 75;
 individual 169, 170, 179; labor
 53; mediation 39, 61; method
 65, 186; proletariat 34, 35, 36,
 37, 39, 42; self-activity 97, 158,
 188; self-mastery 175–76, 188;
 species-being 179, 188, 189;
Wages, Prices and Profit 186
- Marx and Engels, *Communist
 Manifesto, The* 52, 156
- Marx and Engels, *German Ideology,
 The* 61, 62, 64, 113, 114
- Marx and Engels, *Holy Family* 34,
 55, 64, 71, 171
- Marxism 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 18, 32, 36, 37,
 48, 51, 52, 77, 91, 92, 93, 107,
 125, 172, 176
- Mayer, Robert 51, 149
- Mayo, Peter 108n2
- Mazo, Ike 81–82, 85
- McCarthy, John D. 111
- McCormick, Chris 4
- McDougall, Tom 166
- McKay, Leo 4
- McLaren, Peter 29n1
- McMullan, J. L. 4
- mediation 22, 36, 37, 39, 40, 43, 114,
 131, 145, 146, 170, 185
- Mehring, Franz 151
- Mészáros, Istvan 35, 37, 38, 40, 50,
 53, 55, 99, 109, 125–42, 143, 144,
 146, 157, 162, 181
- Mills, C. Wright 86
- Mishler, Paul C. 172

- Moore, Wilbert 26
necessity 14, 27, 28, 32, 35, 36, 38,
39, 41, 49, 52, 62, 67, 91, 109,
136, 140, 141, 170, 175, 185, 193
Negri, Antonio 53
neutrality 6, 58, 77, 78, 81, 87, 90
Nova Scotia 2–3, 19, 23, 174
O'Neill, Chris 4
O'Neill, John 105
objective conditions 40, 48, 62, 63,
69, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124,
125–28, 130, 135, 139, 152, 174,
180, 181, 190; *see also* Lukács
objective possibility 8, 25, 29, 41,
54n2, 63, 64, 67, 173, 179, 191,
195, 196; *see also* Lukács, Weber
objectivity 41, 48, 136, 137, 172
Occupational Health and Safety Act,
Nova Scotia 3
Ollman, Bertell 32, 37, 43, 44, 45, 46,
49, 50, 98, 107, 157, 158, 159,
170, 171
Ontario 83, 91, 174, 178
organization 31, 33, 38–40, 42–43,
45, 52, 56–58, 67–69, 72, 91,
98, 104–6, 147, 151, 153, 156,
170, 173–75, 177, 178, 181, 182,
184–87, 191, 195–96
Parkinson, G. H. R. 36, 58, 175,
186–87
Parry, Roger 168
Porter, John 108n1
potentiality 8, 56, 183, 189, 196
proletariat 12, 34–43, 52, 58, 68, 69,
75, 99, 106, 125, 127, 139, 146,
156, 162, 185, 188, 191
racism 19, 39, 84, 107, 174, 177
Reich, Wilhelm 107
relativism 96–97, 105
Richard, K. Peter 167–68, 191 n3
Rubin, Lillian 77, 81, 86
Rudas, Lazslo 177
Sayers, Sean 53
Schwartz, Ken 4
Seccombe, Wally 46, 91–106, 109,
111, 113, 147–49, 151, 174, 181
self-activity 8–9, 38, 39, 43, 53, 89,
97, 114, 157, 187–88, 195
Sennett, Richard 77, 81
Shapiro, Linn 173
social movements 40, 57, 67, 104,
106, 112, 130–31, 134, 142, 157,
163, 178, 184
socialism 9, 11, 13–14, 18, 38, 51, 58,
78, 106, 107, 126, 128, 133–34,
137, 141, 142, 145, 163, 170, 174,
179, 183, 196
socialization 150, 173
socioeconomic status 6, 25, 32–33,
97–98, 143, 194
sociology of knowledge 96
Solomon, Mark 172
Somerville, John 41, 118
Soviet Union 147, 163
Stalinism 10, 147
Stalin period 13
Stelco 91, 102–4
Stepan-Norris, Judith 163
subjective 40, 43, 44, 46, 59, 79, 80,
86, 102, 126, 157, 165, 171, 176,
195
subjective conditions 124
subjective experience 7, 61, 173, 178
subjective factor 43, 47–48, 100
subjective interests 100
subjectivism 81, 86, 97
surplus labor 78, 127, 131
surplus value 31, 78, 83
Tamás, G. M. 146
Terkel, Studs 81–82
Thompson, E. P. 51, 78, 83, 143–64,
173
Truitt, Willis H. 140–41, 142n2
Tucker, Eric 166
Tumin, Melvin 26
Tumino, Stephen 5
Turner, Stephen P. 59
United Mine Workers 19, 166
United Steelworkers of America 104
value, economic 46–48, 49, 53, 105,
186
value, social 49, 50, 84, 86, 90

- value judgment 39, 46, 48–50
Vazsonyi, Nicholas 12
Watnick, Morris 10, 97
Weber, Max 24, 26, 45–46, 54 n3, 94,
101, 102; objective possibility 29,
58–64; *see also* Lukács
Westray Coal Mine 3–5, 18–20,
166–68, 174
Wilde, Gerald J. S. 166–67, 191n1
Williams, Raymond 22, 118, 193–94
Willis, Paul E. 78, 83–84
working class 2, 4, 10, 21, 28, 31–36,
38–39, 42–44, 51–53, 55–58,
65–69, 72–73, 75–76, 77–91,
95, 98, 102, 104–7, 138, 143–49,
152–61, 163–64, 169–71, 174,
177–78, 182, 184, 190–91,
193–95
Wright, Erik Olin 26, 79
Zald, Mayar N. 111
Zeitlin, Maurice 163

