CHAPTER 1

[September 1990]
Conceiving postsecular socialism

There is some sense to saying that capitalism has entered a new stage, "postmodernism." Whether this stage has superseded what Lenin called the highest stage of capitalism, i.e., imperialism, is not clear, however. Indeed, I find that Lenin's analysis and categories, as set out in the essay "Imperialism," and the extension of that analysis in such works as Raymond Lotta's *America in Decline*, are still entirely appropriate for understanding the direction and logic of capital today. However, I do want to propose an alternative to postmodern capitalism that will be seen at the same time as a provocation to Marxists. I think that something like the conception of the "postsecular" that I propose here and in other recent discussions (e.g., chapters 3, 5, and 6, and *Matrix and line*, pp. 2–8) is absolutely necessary for breaking with capitalism in a substantive way—what I unhesitatingly call a break with capitalism's spirit.

Let us begin with a sweeping orientation statement. In some important ways, Marxism and liberalism share the same contextual stock. This is not all to the bad, and a good historical materialist would undoubtedly claim that, given Marxism's emergence from the ground of liberal society, things could not be otherwise. In this discussion I want to focus on one element of this shared conceptual framework which has been almost completely neglected: secularism. Although *most* Marxists (despite notable exceptions) have written, spoken, and actively worked for a "radical rupture" with liberal society, *secularism* is an element of modern society that Marxism (most forms of it, in any case) has always swallowed whole. If secularism is "bourgeois," then in this respect Marxism is more (really much more) bourgeois than the classical bourgeoisie. The renaissance people of the rising bourgeoisie, for example, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Jefferson, Germaine de Stael, etc., who remain primary reference points for the revolution of modernity, are closer to pre-bourgeois traditions,

specifically of agrarian community life, that add a dimension to liberalism that is missing in later formulations, from Mill to Rawls. I want to put forward the (hopefully) provocative claim that this dimension, which I would call the communitarian dimension, is also missing from the "liberalism" of Marx (which is why Jon Elster, G. A. Cohen, and other "rational choice" Marxists, are comfortable with Marx). The communitarian dimension in Marx is effectively obliterated by Marx's secularism. The other provocation I will offer, then, is the following series of claims: 1) that without some communitarian dimension, Marxism cannot make either a theoretical or practical break with liberalism; 2) that without a better developed sense of *community* there is no point in working toward something called "communism"; 3) that without a critique of secularism neither of these first two provisos can be addressed; finally, and here I turn again toward Marxism, but in a way that not all (perhaps not most) Marxists will be happy with, 4) historical materialism, *in some form*, has the conceptual resources to at least begin to deal with the question of secularism. I want to flesh these questions out a bit with an eye toward conceiving postsecular socialism.

Having framed these questions, however, I want to attend, at every step of their articulation, to the practical dimensions that pertain not only to postsecular socialism's conception, but even more so to its birth.

In order to attend to these practical dimensions we must specify the practical meaning of secularism. This is a difficult task: for liberals and Marxists, secularism is so much the air we breathe (notice that I said "we") that it becomes difficult to even envision and thematize secularism as a problem. Of course, secularism is not a "problem" (that follows from what I just said), it is a form of life—and it is very difficult to get outside of a form of life. And yet this is what Marxism recommends that we do.

But this may be precisely what Marxism needs to learn again how to do. To sum up everything that I've said already into a concentrated statement of a "postsecularist" critique of Marxism: in terms of its own conception of historical materialism, Marxism *may* be able to show how the logic of private property, driven by capitalist social relations, leads to the creation of more public forms of property (Mao's discussion of what it means for property to be public, in *Critique of Soviet Economics*, is essential here), but it is not clear at all anymore (if it ever was) why the working out of the contradictions of liberal, secular society must necessarily lead to the logic (I sometimes like to think of it as a near-escape from logic, a resistance to logic from the inside) of com-

munity. It isn't even clear that Marx(ism) has or is even reaching for an understanding of community. (In places where there has been a reaching toward community, for example in China prior to Deng's counterrevolution, it is not clear that much of this has to do with classical Marxism, nor is it clear how to integrate Mao's communitarian side into classical Marxism; of course, one difficulty—or strength, from my point of view, but I still don't see how to make the integration in any straightforward way—of the China example is that we are talking about a society that had not really undergone the liberal-secular developments common in Western Europe.) It isn't even clear that the emergence of community from capitalist society is likely, much less necessary or inevitable. Readers of William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (another essential reference here) and its sequels know all too well that the scenario of a hyper-secular society in which there is nothing that can really be called politics and nothing that represents an opposition to the general social amnesia that is a necessary part of a liberalism that has lived long past its historic usefulness—this scenario is not especially foreign to the way things are now.

What follows is an outline of six points in which I present, in a somewhat formal way, the elements and considerations that seem necessary to taking a different road than that which leads to *Neuromancer* or to Baudrillard's "screen." This will be an outline obviously in need of a great deal of filling out.

1. The "production paradigm." The notion of the "obsolescence of the production paradigm" has, rather curiously, made theoretical bedfellows of Habermas and Baudrillard, thinkers who I imagine would otherwise have little to say to one another. (Those who, like Habermas, are always criticizing a caricatured version of Derrida, would do well to turn their attention to Baudrillard; on this point, see Christopher Norris, *Uncritical Theory*, pp. 15–21.) I find it hard to believe that the production paradigm is not at the center of world events today. After all, it isn't sardines that the U.S. went to war over in the Middle East, and it isn't simply "power" in the abstract either, even though power is certainly a key consideration. Although the changes in Eastern Europe are motivated by political aspirations, they are most certainly motivated by economic drives as well (in particular the logic of the Soviet Union allowing its empire to dissolve is surely motivated by economic factors). If anything, the production paradigm will prove to be more of a factor in the next few years than it has overtly been in the last decade of "perverse" economic recovery (as Raymond Lotta puts it)—or, in other words, the bill for this "recovery" is about to come due.

On a whole other level, however, the production paradigm is indeed obsolete. This level of analysis does not seem to concern Habermas so much anymore. The production paradigm is obsolete as the driving force toward communism. The logic of abundance has given way to the logic of junk in our period. Whether the latter was always an inherent outcome of the former is an interesting question—I suspect that "abundance," being somewhat undefineable, does contain within it the seeds of a society of junk, but perhaps this is only seen at the point where abundance has essentially been achieved.[1]

Marx, of course, had in mind abundance for everybody, a "shared abundance," and this has not been achieved. My point is that this abundance can be achieved with little further development of the productive forces. My position would have been called "Luddite" by Marx in his day; whether he would call me a "neo-Luddite" today I do not know, but I don't think that we can base our analysis here purely on what Marx or some orthodox Marxist might say about it. I am sure, however, that this claim will rankle orthodox Marxists. Let us be clear what that claim is: other than food, and perhaps a few other things such as certain medical items, we really don't need to produce anything more than what we already have. We need to take what we have, fix it up, remake some of it, redistribute most of it, etc., but we don't need to make a lot more junk for our grandchildren to be buried under.

Another way of coming at this point is to say that we need to rethink the possibilities of agrarian society.[2]

Before going on with this last question, I would like to interject that, in a public presentation of this paper at the Midwest Radical Activists and Scholars Conference, a person in the audience at this point began yelling at me. I am fairly certain that this person is a Marxist sociology professor at a university in the Chicago area. His intervention began with the shouted question, "Have you ever been to the Third World?" I was on the verge of answering that I've been to mill towns in South Carolina, but I thought better of this. Finally, I simply said, "Have you?" This prompted an oration by this person concerning the need for production in the Third World. He began by saying that he had been to Nicaragua three times, carrying a large suitcase of medicine each time. Admittedly, this is what prompted me to add medicine or medical items to the above list, which had originally only mentioned food. Even here I am skeptical. Much of the medicine of the industrialized world deals with conditions that only money can buy. On the other hand, some of these conditions have now been successfully exported to the Third World. In fact, I imagine that such export is an important

part of the "new world order" that capitalist politicians everywhere have been busy blowing their horns for.

But this is the place to reengage with the question of agrarian society. There is a tension between the questions, so to speak, of "what is to be done?" and "what is to be *undone*?" Imperialism has already wreaked its havoc on much of the formerly agrarian Third World. In this case, to think of simply "undoing" the damage and restoring the supposedly pristine original body politic would be reactionary romanticism. On the other hand, the way forward is not to make the whole world into a factory. Perhaps into a "place of production," that is combined with a place of learning, a place of fulfilling relationships, etc., but *not* on the model of the factory. Furthermore, there are pockets of indigenous cultures that haven't yet been entirely destroyed by imperialism (we even have examples of such cultures in the U.S., for example Amish farming communities, and some Native American practices). We need to build on these cultures *as they are*, without thinking that first we need to industrialize them. What we need to do is to deindustrialize, to a great extent, ourselves.

Of course we will never encounter these cultures "as they are." We can't—we're too far along a different road. But this fact does not alleviate the imperative to try.

What I am imagining is that there needs to be an encounter between Marxism, on the one side, and such agrarian thinkers as Wendell Berry, Wes Jackson, the Earth First! people, Thomas Jefferson (that is, the side of Jefferson that is best represented by his desire to learn from Native Americans and his agrarian communitarian sensibility—see Richard K. Matthews, *The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson*), etc., on the other. The point being not to come up with something "in the middle," but instead hopefully something more radical than either is at present. (Wendell Berry's *Home Economics* is a good starting point; I would like to see an honest Marxist response to this book—i.e., no gratuitous name-calling or other typical avoidances).

On this question there is still a great deal to be learned from Mao and the revolutions he led in China. Mao promoted the policy of "agriculture as the foundation and industry as the leading factor"—"the support of agriculture by all trades and industries is an important characteristic of the socialist economy."[3] In light of William Hinton's recent book, *The Great Reversal*, I would like to see Marxists and others once again honestly take up the question of Mao and his contributions to socialist theory and practice.

There are three caveats that immediately have to be appended to these recommendations.

First, as already indicated, this learning and reorientation that I'm recommending does not follow from Marxist materialism as traditionally conceived. Briefly, I am simply trying to follow two "rules": always serve the oppressed and marginalized, and learn from whatever sources and historical experiences that there are. The funny thing is that the second of these is more "materialist" than the first, in traditional terms. Marx looked for a systematic link that would make the second principle support the first. I think that such a link is still possible, but perhaps not in the terms of historical materialism thus far conceived. This will have to remain a problem for further exploration, but it is a key question in the attempt to conceive a post-positivistic Marxism; it is the question of "the heart of the science."

The second caveat has to do with the relation of traditional community practices to patriarchy. Whether this needs to be foregrounded as a major question is not made clear by the work of Berry and others. Nor is there any clear truth in the following claims: 1) that industrial society has really brought any great liberation or even laid the "material basis" for such, and 2) that all practices of traditional communities are patriarchal, or *necessarily* so, at any rate. The point is simply that patriarchy has to be addressed as a question in its own right, or it will not be addressed—this warning goes as much for Marxism as for radical communitarianism.[4]

Third, there is the question of community and homogeneity. This question is not unrelated to the question of patriarchy. Traditional communities are not known for their valuing of diversity. Advanced capitalism, on the other hand, though it may sometimes celebrate pluralism (and even "diversity," which is presently becoming such a buzzword as to be seriously devalued—but I think that we should not allow this word to be stolen), tends to promote a mind-numbing sameness. Adorno calls this tendency "identity logic." Perhaps this identity logic is *the* enemy. I do not think that social theory or practice has really yet even come close to understanding identity logic as a problem, much less to conceiving of solutions.

In terms of the project of reconceiving and rebuilding community, the problem of homogeneity is an enormous one. Whether there has ever existed a truly diverse community is questionable. On this point, if perhaps on no other, the countryside could stand to learn a little from the city.

2. Reading in the margins of Marxism. It is important to identify counter-trends within Marxist and socialist theory and practice that may give us some clues as to how to pursue a postsecular socialism. These can be very briefly outlined.

First, there is the trend that I would call "Jewish Marxism," which I identify especially with Walter Benjamin (and somewhat with Ernst Bloch and Theodor Adorno). This trend would emphasize the necessary relationship between history and memory. The latter term here is often not a part of most Marxist analyses. Furthermore, Jewish Marxism reemphasizes, in a non-Protestant way, the idea of historical redemption: what if Marxism, instead of being conceived on the model of secularized Christian messianism, was conceived on the model of (non-secular) Jewish messianism? This is absolutely necessary for a postsecular socialism that is not only present- and future-oriented, but which sees the necessity of connectedness to the past as well.[5]

There are other Jewish trends as well that need reemphasis. Among these would be the tradition of Kantian ethical socialism developed first by Hermann Cohen and more recently by Steven Schwarzchild and Harry Van der Linden. When I first began to use the term "postsecular," in *Matrix and line*, I thought that I had coined it myself. As it turns out, Emil Fackenheim has been using the term for a long time now, perhaps first in his *God's Presence in History*. I find his use of the term completely satisfactory—Fackenheim's notion turned out to be just what I have been looking (or groping) for in terms of a reconception of socialism.

Then again, Fackenheim really dislikes Marx—he finds Marx to be a kind of traitor to Judaism and simply a secular reformulator of Christianity. This is, unfortunately, somewhat true, and the anti-Semitism of Marx, which is evident in both his personality and his theory, continues to come through in much Marxism (for instance, on the question of Israel; see chapter 9). What strikes me is the possibility of rethinking Marxism not just in terms of another go-round of "the Jewish question," but rather in terms of Marxism as an episode in the ongoing development of Jewish civilization—i.e., "Judaism and the Marxist question." In still other words, perhaps there is the possibility of the de-Protestantization of Marxism.[6]

Second, there is the possibility of rethinking Marxism in terms of Kant, which has already been suggested by certain strains in Jewish thought.[7] Why is such a turn necessary? For one reason especially: the "ethics" of calculation, typical of modern society and of modern thinkers from Hobbes to Mill to David Gauthier, is reaching the point where

it will make any alternative literally inconceivable. That is, the capillary action of calculation, insinuated into every social institution and practice, tends to more and more create people from the ground up as primarily calculating beings, with no room for any kind of fundamental regard for the other. This regard is central to the Kantian ethical framework. Marx, unfortunately, participates too much in this ethics of calculation, which, for Kant, is not an ethics at all. (On this last point, see *Humanism and its aftermath*, part 1.)

The possibility of a reinvigoration of the thematics of memory and redemption in socialist theory and practice have been buried by a secularizing drive that, in a certain sense, is destined, by dint of its depleted semantic and intersubjective resources (the two are tied together in the Kantian-Jewish framework of Cohen and Schwarzchild), to arrive at the cynicism of Baudrillard. There must be past-orientation in order for there to be present- and future-orientation—this is the dimension that Benjamin restores to Marxism. Without this redemptive past-orientation, future-orientation collapses into pure "presentism," the "screen." In this context politics becomes simply Baudrillard's "challenge," a one-off hopeless struggle against an invulnerable system, reminiscent of Roquentin's singular, pointless face-off with Nazis in Sartre's *Les Chemins de la liberté* (on this question, see Tony Smith, "The Critique of Marxism in Baudrillard's Late Writings").

We have here a complex tangle of thematics. On one level my response to the disorderliness of the weave is to say, "Let a hundred socialisms bloom." This would be in response to an austere structuralist Marxism which, not without its attractions—its uses, at any rate, in a methodological sense—seems ultimately geared to a socialism without soul or vision.[8] On some levels we *should* let a hundred socialisms bloom—but then, I assume that it is not "we" who are preventing that blooming, and therein lies the problem with a kind of socialist pluralism. Certainly we should dream. Perhaps, in this space of the "new world order," a space that is unstable by its nature, there will be room for more practical attempts at different radical experiments, especially ones rooted in local cultures. But this road cannot be the only one. If it is successful, there will come, sooner or later, the need to confront the world order frontally. In other words, there will still be the need to understand what, in the largest terms, distinguishes socialism from capitalism. (One of the important obstacles standing in the way of this understanding is the idea, promoted by some on the left, that this is an easy question—this is usually promoted in the name of an "anti-Stalinism" that hasn't even begun to understand the Stalin period.)

On that level, however, I think that there is a coherent project to Benjamin's Marxism that should be explicitly articulated as such.

3. Graffiti politics. Now let us build on one very important aspect of this project: the question of language and history. In an important sense, language is the *material* of history. (One way to read this is as a play on Collingwood's idea that history is the history of intentions. I simply suggest that intentions and intending subjects are, to put it conservatively, *enabled* by language. This is a somewhat Heideggerian argument.) To change history or to "make history," people must address a language that they are always already in and constituted by, and which is already the substance of their address. Although this line of thinking comes fully to the surface with Derrida, it is already explicitly thematized in the work of Wittgenstein and (differently) the Vienna Circle and, for instance, in the discussion between Gershom Scholem and Franz Rosenzweig concerning the revival of spoken Hebrew in Palestine.[9] History bogs down, so to speak, when the authority of words cannot be questioned. "The authority of words"—this expression cannot be separated from words of authority and the authorship that is purportedly sanctioned by such words.[10] In reality, authoritarianism is not only sanctioned, or legitimated, but is indeed generated. Of course it is silly to think that the relationship between dominant knowledge and subjugated knowledges (to use Foucauldian terminology) depends only on the acceptance of words in a simple sense. While it is true that certain words are indeed the pressure points of particular configurations of knowledge/power, it is further important to take stock of the overall text, the configuration or matrix, that underwrites the word of power. We must begin with the pressure points, the places that represent the settling down of narrativity into the supposed solidity of the name; but, once this fray is entered into, the larger text/configuration comes into view as the scene of necessary engagement.

Now, lest these formulations come across as somewhat metaphysical- or ontological-sounding, some particular practical dimensions of the question should be specified. It is all a matter of the politics of the name.

Among the achievements of the "new social movements" is the questioning of the name: questioning the right of the dominant configuration to determine the name or to deprive the other of a name. One thinks of the "Names Project" (appropriately, a quilt) as an obvious example. That such guerrilla confrontations with the machinery of naming (and unnaming) have not found a totalizing form is a problem that has to be addressed—but only in the context of remaining faithful

to the strategy of renaming. This means, further, that a more totalizing strategy must remain faithful to the "re" in renaming: that is, we must have a strategy that is, like all serious political strategies, totalizing, but this totalizing movement must be able to continually turn in on itself and thereby transform itself.

More concrete examples will be addressed in sections 4 and 6 below.

This strategy, which derives in part from Derrida, also has affinities with Mao's revolution within/of the revolution. It is interesting, therefore, that critics on both the right, e.g., Stanley Rosen (*Hermeneutics as Politics*), and the left, e.g., Alex Callinicos (*Against Postmodernism*) and Terry Eagleton (*The Ideology of the Aesthetic*), have recently identified deconstruction as, in some respects, "Maoist."

At the same time, the problematics of the name is especially foregrounded in both ancient and medieval Jewish thought. At the center of this thought, after all, is the authorial name: but this name is unsayable. A graffiti politics in light of this thought would always approach the project of renaming, and engagements with the larger matrix of power necessitated by the project, with the sense that the project is never completed. As an epigraph for his *To Mend the World*, Emil Fackenheim quotes Rabbi Tarfon: "It is not incumbent on you to complete the work. But you are not free to evade it."

4. Internationalism. Heidegger once criticized this idea as being bound by the same logic as nationalism. Of course he was right in a sense, but that is just the point. There is still something to Marx's idea that we need to transform the world as we find it, not as we wish to find it. Internationalism still needs to be a touchstone of the socialist project. In fact, the question of internationalism (and the related question of imperialism) is a dividing line between reforms that can be supported in the context of a larger project of radical transformation, and reforms that make things better within the advanced capitalist countries at the expense of the Third World. Redistributive schemes that are mainly aimed at dividing up, in a more egalitarian way, the tremendous wealth of nations such as the U.S., but without addressing the lopsided development of the world economy that has made such wealth possible, fall into this latter category. This would include the programs of many of the groups that call themselves "democratic socialist." When it comes down to it, such groups do not seem inclined to question the idea of the "national interest" of countries such as the U.S. Lenin argued that, without such questioning, we will never build socialism in the imperialist countries or, perhaps, anywhere else. Lenin's analysis needs to be

built on in its own terms (Raymond Lotta's *America in Decline* is the best, and in general an excellent, contribution to this project thus far). The idea of imperialism may be passé to cheeseburger nationalism or its more sophisticated Baudrillardian exponents, but it is certainly real to the people of Nicaragua, among others. However, the point of the present discussion is to supplement the terms given to us by Lenin.

What would an internationalism be like that welcomed the diversity of diverse cultures? Although Lenin clearly intended proletarian internationalism to respect differences in cultures, just how this internationalism, as developed by Marx and Lenin, can ground such respect is not clear. One sees, especially with Stalin, the consequences of the lack of such a ground. Again, although Stalin paid lip-service to cultural diversity, and even provided for it in some ways that we should not ignore, Stalin on the whole expected the development of a series of monological modes of production—capitalism, socialism, communism—to lead to the development of a single world culture. Perhaps this point is best seen in his discussion of language, in *Marxism and the problems of linguistics* (a pamphlet, like most of Stalin's writings, that could stand more actual study and analysis from those who are forever invoking the horror of "Stalinism" in the abstract). In this pamphlet, Stalin argues that there will develop, in the long run, a single language for our species (it is unclear whether Stalin expected this language to be some form of Esperanto—significantly, the only language Stalin studied other than Russian and Georgian—or one of the existing natural languages; Quite possibly, Stalin expected Russian to become the universal language, just as he expected, geographically, spiritually, etc., that all subsequent socialist revolutions would be extensions of the Bolshevik Revolution). The assumption here is that, for instance, Proust translated into English or Japanese is still Proust, or Tolstoy translated into Urdu is still Tolstoy. To extend the point, the assumption is that, for instance, to take folk tunes from Georgian or Armenian culture and weave them into symphonic form (say in a work by Shostakovich) is to preserve and respect this culture and to place it into the context of a higher synthesis. Now, undoubtedly there should be translations, and there is nothing wrong in principle with the transplantation of musical or other forms, nor must we necessarily treat artifacts of "high culture" as sacred; however, a weaving of world cultures into a single world culture would not necessarily result in the preservation of those traditions that both define and enable. One might simply sample the offerings of "world music" (e.g., so-called "worldbeat"), syntheses that have arisen in our capitalism-dominated world, to test this argument. While some

of these syntheses are certainly appealing, they do not clearly show a real valuing of their material, any more than the Rolling Stones have preserved or strengthened interest in the Chicago blues tradition that inspired them.[11]

Significantly, when Stalin discusses actual traditions (as in "Marxism and the national question," the pamphlet which earned him the tag "the miraculous Georgian" from Lenin) he often mentions practices such as the binding of the feet of young girls in China or self-flagellation in some Islamic countries. Again, there is the idea of tradition as only a chain that binds us. But what is culture, if taken apart from tradition? Undoubtedly, certain "traditional" practices are oppressive, and one hopes that a socialist society would grapple with these practices and eliminate (or replace) them. It would seem, however, that a socialism driven by a purely secular logic must "scientifically" create a "new" culture that only sees the artifacts of diverse cultures as grist for the mill.

A related problem is that socialism has yet to really value diversity in a substantive way. Some investigation needs to be done concerning the idea of communism as a mode of production and the forms of culture that can co-exist with it. Even if communism is, in some sense, a single mode of production for the entire world, and in that sense "monological," must the "culture of communism" itself be "single" or monological? One would like to find a way to say that the situation needs to be exactly the opposite, that communism as a mode of production should, *constitutively*, make possible the greatest diversity in culture. I think that the beginnings of the constitution of such a communism would be in an internationalism that already respects this diversity in a real sense.

5. Margin and proletariat.[12] Recent discussions indicate that many in social theory and related fields regard the topic of "class" with embarrassment. Perhaps we have been scared off from this topic by, on the one side, an orthodox Marxism that posits unchanging classes, in particular the industrial working class, as quasi-metaphysical subjects, and on the other side by theorists such as Baudrillard and Lyotard who warn against the "grand narratives" of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The first thing to be said about this dichotomy is that the reaction of the latter pair can be explained somewhat by the rigidity of the orthodoxy. Lukacs's metaphysical proletarian subject, however, is not, for example, Sartre's (or, for that matter, Lenin's or Mao's).

Two recent works have helped to reestablish the thematics of class from a sociological/empirical standpoint: *The Retreat from Class* by Ellen Meiksins Wood, and *Classes* by Erik Olin Wright. I simply wish to

add some notes concerning the conceptualization of class. Marx and Engels end the *Manifesto* with the famous words, "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win." What if this statement were taken to be the very definition of the proletariat? Given the further development of capitalism since the time of Marx and Engels, this would not violate entirely the structural underpinnings of Marx's focus on the working class (e.g., in many agricultural economies today, the workers are, technically speaking, rural proletarians rather than peasants). What I'm proposing is a kind of synthesis of empirical work concerning class, focusing on the structural role of various classes, and the discourse of marginality and alterity. Each would enrich the other.

6. Televisual society. If, in some sense, the quarrel in this discussion has been with socialism as previously conceived, we still must remind ourselves that socialist experiments have never been allowed the space to develop and deal with their shortcomings. So we must look, in the final analysis, once again at capitalism. The flattening, secular logic of certain socialist trends has been, in large part, a mirror of the larger secular logic of modern Western society. The electronic media, and especially television, have emerged as a kind of "ideology" in their own right: "informing," and thereby *forming*, consciousness. The mainstream media, especially the television networks, are the major machinery of naming and unnaming today. Ronald Reagan and George Bush could not pull off their attacks on the peoples of various nations—Granada, Nicaragua, Panama, Iraq—without the media and the flattened consciousness that it makes possible and creates. In that respect, the mainstream media have become not only an enemy, but even *the* enemy, as much or more so than the state. While there may be some possibilities for subverting television from within, on the whole I do not see any better strategy than the outright destruction of the electronic apparatus. People will not know what to do with their time, it is true, but then it is also up to us to fill that gap with the news of the communitarian alternative to a flattened, atomized consciousness.