

Change the World without Taking Power. The Meaning of Revolution Today.

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Chapter 1 - The Scream

I

In the beginning is the scream. We scream.

When we write or when we read, it is easy to forget that the beginning is not the word, but the scream. Faced with the mutilation of human lives by capitalism, a scream of sadness, a scream of horror, a scream of anger, a scream of refusal: NO.

The starting point of theoretical reflection is opposition, negativity, struggle. It is from rage that thought is born, not from the pose of reason, not from the reasoned-sitting-back-and-reflecting-on-the-mysteries-of-existence that is the conventional image of 'the thinker'.

We start from negation, from dissonance. The dissonance can take many shapes. An inarticulate mumble of discontent, tears of frustration, a scream of rage, a confident roar. An unease, a confusion, a longing, a critical vibration.

Our dissonance comes from our experience, but that experience varies. Sometimes it is the direct experience of exploitation in the factory, or of oppression in the home, of stress in the office, of hunger and poverty, or of state violence or discrimination. Sometimes it is the less direct experience through television, newspapers or books that moves us to rage. Millions of children live on the streets of the world. In some cities, street children are systematically murdered as the only way of enforcing respect for private property. In 1998 the assets of the 200 richest people were more than the total income of 41% of the world's people (two and a half billion). In 1960, the countries with the wealthiest fifth of the world's people had per capita incomes 30 times that of the poorest fifth: by 1990 the ratio had doubled to 60 to one, and by 1995 it stood at 74 to one. The stock market rises every time there is an increase in unemployment. Students are imprisoned for struggling for free education while those who are actively responsible for the misery of millions are heaped with honours and given titles of distinction, General, Secretary of Defence, President. The list goes on and on. It is impossible to read a newspaper without feeling rage, without feeling pain.

Dimly perhaps, we feel that these things that anger us are not isolated phenomena, that there is a connection between them, that they are all part of a world that is flawed, a world that is wrong in some fundamental way. We see more and more people begging on the street while the stock markets break new records and company directors' salaries rise to ever dizzier heights, and we feel that the wrongs of the world are not chance injustices but part of a system that is profoundly wrong. Even Hollywood films (surprisingly, perhaps) almost always start from the portrayal of a fundamentally unjust world - before going on to reassure us (less surprisingly) that justice for the individual can be won through individual effort. Our anger is directed not just against particular happenings but is against a more general wrongness, a feeling that the world is askew, that the world is in some way untrue. When we experience something particularly horrific, we hold up our hands in horror and say 'that cannot be! it cannot be true!' We know that it is true, but feel that it is the truth of an untrue world.

What would a true world look like? We may have a vague idea: it would be world of justice, a world in which people could relate to each other as people and not as things, a world in which people would shape their own lives. But we do not need to have a picture of what a true world would be like in order to feel that there is something radically wrong with the world that exists.

Feeling that the world is wrong does not necessarily mean that we have a picture of a utopia to put in its place. Nor does it necessarily mean a romantic, some-day-my-prince-will-come idea that, although things are wrong now, one day we shall come to a true world, a promised land, a happy ending. We need no promise of a happy ending to justify our rejection of a world we feel to be wrong.

That is our starting point: rejection of a world that we feel to be wrong, negation of a world we feel to be negative. This is what we must cling to.

II

'Cling to', indeed, for there is so much to stifle our negativity, to smother our scream. Our anger is constantly fired by experience, but any attempt to express that anger is met by a wall of absorbent cotton wool. We are met with so many arguments that seem quite reasonable. There are so many ways of bouncing our scream back against us, of looking at us and asking why we scream. Is it because of our age, our social background, or just some psychological maladjustment that we are so negative? Are we hungry, did we sleep badly or is it just pre-menstrual tension? Do we not understand the complexity of the world, the practical difficulties of implementing radical change? Do we not know that it is unscientific to scream?

And so they urge us (and we feel the need) to study society, and to study social and political theory. And a strange thing happens. The more we study society, the more our negativity is dissipated or sidelined as being irrelevant. There is no room for the scream in academic discourse. More than that: academic study provides us with a language and a way of thinking that makes it very difficult for us to express our scream. The scream, if it appears at all, appears as something to be explained, not as something to be articulated. The scream, from being the subject of our questions about society, becomes the object of analysis. Why is it that we scream? Or rather, since we are now social scientists, why is it that they scream? How do we explain social revolt, social discontent? The scream is systematically disqualified by dissolving it into its context. It is because of infantile experiences that they scream, because of their modernist conception of the subject, because of their unhealthy diet, because of the weakening of family structures: all of these explanations are backed up by statistically supported research. The scream is not entirely denied, but it is robbed of all validity. By being torn from 'us' and projected on to a 'they', the scream is excluded from the scientific method. When we become social scientists, we learn that the way to understand is to pursue objectivity, to put our own feelings on one side. It is not so much what we learn as how we learn that seems to smother our scream. It is a whole structure of thought that disarms us.

And yet none of the things which made us so angry to start off with have disappeared. We have learnt, perhaps, how they fit together as parts of a system of social domination, but somehow our negativity has been erased from the picture. The horrors of the world continue. That is why it is necessary to do what is considered scientifically taboo: to scream like a child, to lift the scream from all its structural explanations, to say 'We don't care what the psychiatrist says, we don't care if our subjectivity is a social construct: this is our scream, this is our pain, these are our tears. We will not let our rage be diluted into reality: it is reality rather that must yield to our scream. Call us childish or adolescent if you like, but this is our starting point: we scream.'

III

Who are 'we' anyway, this 'we' that assert ourselves so forcefully at the start of what is meant to be a

serious book?

Serious books on social theory usually start in the third person, not with the assertion of an undefined 'we'. 'We' is a dangerous word, open to attack from all sides. Some readers will already be saying 'You scream if you like, mate, but don't count me as part of your "we"! Don't say "we" when you really mean "I", because then you are just using "we" to impose your views on the readers'. Others will no doubt object that it is quite illegitimate to start from an innocent 'we' as though the world had just been born. The subject, we are told, is not a legitimate place to start, since the subject is itself a result, not a beginning. It is quite wrong to start from 'we scream' because first we must understand the processes that lead to the social construction of this 'we' and to the constitution of our scream.

And yet where else can we possibly start? In so far as writing/ reading is a creative act, it is inevitably the act of a 'we'. To start in the third person is not a neutral starting point, since it already presupposes the suppression of the 'we', of the subject of the writing and reading. 'We' are here as the starting point because we cannot honestly start anywhere else. We cannot start anywhere other than with our own thoughts and our own reactions. The fact that 'we' and our conception of 'we' are product of a whole history of the subjection of the subject changes nothing. We can only start from where we are, from where we are but do not want to be, from where we scream.

For the moment, this 'we' of ours is a confused 'we'. We are an indistinct first person plural, a blurred and possibly discordant mixture between the 'I' of the writer and the 'I' or 'we' of the readers. But we start from 'we', not from 'I', because 'I' already presupposes an individualisation, a claim to individuality in thoughts and feelings, whereas the act of writing or reading is based on the assumption of some sort of community, however contradictory or confused. The 'we' of our starting point is very much a question rather than an answer: it affirms the social character of the scream, but poses the nature of that sociality as a question. The merit of starting with a 'we' rather than with an 'it' is that we are then openly confronted with the question that must underlie any theoretical assertion, but which is rarely addressed: who are we that make the assertion?

Of course this 'we' is not a pure, transcendent Subject: we are not Man or Woman or the Working Class, not for the moment at least. We are much too confused for that. We are an antagonistic 'we' grown from an antagonistic society. What we feel is not necessarily correct, but it is a starting point to be respected and criticised, not just to be put aside in favour of objectivity. We are undoubtedly self-contradictory: not only in the sense that the reader may not feel the same as the writer (nor each reader the same as the others), but also in the sense that our feelings are contradictory. The dissonance we feel at work or when we read the newspapers may give way to a feeling of contentment as we relax after a meal. The dissonance is not an external 'us' against 'the world': inevitably it is a dissonance that reaches into us as well, that divides us against ourselves. 'We' are a question that will continue to rumble throughout this book.

We are flies caught in a spider's web. We start from a tangled mess, because there is no other place to start. We cannot start by pretending to stand outside the dissonance of our own experience, for to do so would be a lie. Flies caught in a web of social relations beyond our control, we can only try to free ourselves by hacking at the strands that imprison us. We can only try to emancipate ourselves, to move outwards, negatively, critically, from where we are. It is not because we are maladjusted that we criticise, it is not because we want to be difficult. It is just that the negative situation in which we exist leaves us no option: to live, to think, is to negate in whatever way we can the negativeness of our existence. 'Why so negative?' says the spider to the fly. 'Be objective, forget your prejudices'. But there is no way the fly can be objective, however much she may want to be: 'to

look at the web objectively, from the outside - what a dream', muses the fly, 'what an empty, deceptive dream'. For the moment, however, any study of the web that does not start from the fly's entrapment in it is quite simply untrue.

We are unbalanced, unstable. We scream not because we are sitting back in an armchair, but because we are falling over the edge of a cliff. The thinker in the armchair assumes that the world around her is stable, that disruptions of the equilibrium are anomalies to be explained. To speak of someone as unbalanced or unstable is then a pejorative term, a term that disqualifies what they say. For us who are falling off the edge of the cliff (and here 'we' includes all of humanity, perhaps) it is just the opposite: we see all as blurred movement. The world is a world of disequilibrium and it is equilibrium and the assumption of equilibrium that have to be explained.

IV

Our scream is not just a scream of horror. We scream not because we face certain death in the spider's web, but because we dream of freeing ourselves. We scream as we fall over the cliff not because we are resigned to being dashed on the rocks below but because we still hope that it might be otherwise.

Our scream is a refusal to accept. A refusal to accept that the spider will eat us, a refusal to accept that we shall be killed on the rocks, a refusal to accept the unacceptable. A refusal to accept the inevitability of increasing inequality, misery, exploitation and violence. A refusal to accept the truth of the untrue, a refusal to accept closure. Our scream is a refusal to wallow in being victims of oppression, a refusal to immerse ourselves in that 'left-wing melancholy' which is so characteristic of oppositional thought. It is a refusal to accept the role of Cassandra so readily adopted by left-wing intellectuals: predicting the downfall of the world while accepting that there is nothing we can do about it. Our scream is a scream to break windows, a refusal to be contained, an overflowing, a going beyond the pale, beyond the bounds of polite society.

Our refusal to accept tells us nothing of the future, nor does it depend for its validity on any particular outcome. The fact that we scream as we fall over the cliff does not give us any guarantee of a safe landing, nor does the legitimacy of the scream depend on a happy ending. Gone is the certainty of the old revolutionaries that history (or God) was on our side: such certainty is historically dead and buried, blasted into the grave by the bomb that fell on Hiroshima. There is certainly no inevitable happy ending, but, even as we plunge downwards, even in the moments of darkest despair, we refuse to accept that such a happy ending is impossible. The scream clings to the possibility of an opening, refuses to accept the closure of the possibility of radical otherness.

Our scream, then, is two-dimensional: the scream of rage that arises from present experience carries within itself a hope, a projection of possible otherness. The scream is ecstatic, in the literal sense of standing out ahead of itself towards an open future. We who scream exist ecstatically. We stand out beyond ourselves, we exist in two dimensions. The scream implies a tension between that which exists and that which might conceivably exist, between the indicative (that which is) and the subjunctive (that which might be). We live in an unjust society but we wish it were not so: the two parts of the sentence are inseparable and exist in constant tension with each other. The scream does not require to be justified by the fulfilment of what might be: it is simply the recognition of the dual dimension of reality. The second part of the sentence (we wish it were not so) is no less real than the first. It is the tension between the two parts of the sentence that gives meaning to the scream. If the second part of the sentence (the subjunctive wish) is seen as being less real than the first, then the scream too is disqualified. What is then seen as real is that we live in an unjust society: what we

might wish for is our private affair, of secondary importance. And since the adjective 'unjust' really makes sense only in reference to a possible just society, that too falls away, leaving us with 'we live in a x society'. And if we scream because we live in a x society, then we must be mad.

From the time of Machiavelli, social theory has been concerned to break the unbreakable sentence in half. Machiavelli lays the basis for a new realism when he says that he is concerned only with what is, not with what things as we might wish them to be. Reality refers to the first part of the sentence, to what is. The second part of the sentence, what ought to be, is clearly distinguished from what is, and is not regarded as part of reality. The 'ought' is not entirely discarded: it becomes the theme of 'normative' social theory. What is completely broken is the unity of the two parts of the sentence. With that step alone, the scream of rejection-and-longing is disqualified.

Our scream implies a two-dimensionality which insists on the conjunction of tension between the two dimensions. We are, but we exist in an arc of tension towards that which we are not, or are not yet. Society is, but it exists in an arc of tension towards that which is not, or is not yet. There is identity, but identity exists in an arc of tension towards non-identity. The double dimensionality is the antagonistic presence (that is, movement) of the not-yet within the Is, of non-identity within identity. The scream is an explosion of the tension: the explosion of the Not-Yet contained-in-but-bursting-from the Is, the explosion of non-identity contained-in-but-bursting-from identity. The scream is an expression of the present existence of that which is denied, the present existence of the not-yet, of non-identity. The theoretical force of the scream depends not on the future existence of the not-yet (who knows if there will ever be a society based on the mutual recognition of dignity?) but on its present existence as possibility. To start from the scream is simply to insist on the centrality of dialectics, which is no more than 'the consistent sense of non-identity' (Adorno 1990, p. 5).

Our scream is a scream of horror-and-hope. If the two sides of the scream are separated, they become banal. The horror arises from the 'bitterness of history', but if there is no transcendence of that bitterness, the one-dimensional horror leads only to political depression and theoretical closure. Similarly, if the hope is not grounded firmly in that same bitterness of history, it becomes just a one-dimensional and silly expression of optimism. Precisely such a separation of horror and hope is expressed in the oft-quoted Gramscian aphorism, 'pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will'. The challenge is rather to unite pessimism and optimism, horror and hope, in a theoretical understanding of the two-dimensionality of the world. Optimism not just of the spirit but of the intellect is the aim. It is the very horror of the world that obliges us to learn to hope.

V

The aim of this book is to strengthen negativity, to take the side of the fly in the web, to make the scream more strident. We quite consciously start from the subject, or at least from an undefined subjectivity, aware of all the problems that this implies. We start there because to start anywhere else is simply an untruth. The challenge is to develop a way of thinking that builds critically upon the initial negative standpoint, a way of understanding that negates the untruth of the world. This is not just a question of seeing things from below, or from the bottom up, for that too often implies the adoption of pre-existing categories, a mere reversal of negative and positive signs. What has to be tackled is not just a top-down perspective, but the whole mode of thinking that derives from and supports such a perspective. In trying to hack our way through the social theory which is part of the strands which bind us, there is only one compass to guide us: the force of our own 'no!' in all its

two-dimensionality: the rejection of what is and the projection of what might be.

Negative thought is as old as the scream. The most powerful current of negative thought is undoubtedly the Marxist tradition. However, the development of the Marxist tradition, both because of its particular history and because of the transformation of negative thought into a defining 'ism', has created a framework that has often limited and obstructed the force of negativity. This book is therefore not a Marxist book in the sense of taking Marxism as a defining framework of reference, nor is the force of its argument to be judged by whether it is 'Marxist' or not: far less is it neo-Marxist or post-Marxist. The aim is rather to locate those issues that are often described as 'Marxist' in the problematic of negative thought, in the hope of giving body to negative thought and of sharpening the Marxist critique of capitalism.

This is not a book that tries to depict the horrors of capitalism. There are many books that do that, and, besides, we have our daily experience to tell us the story. Here we take that for granted. The loss of hope for a more human society is not the result of people being blind to the horrors of capitalism, it is just that there does not seem to be anywhere else to go, any otherness to turn to. The most sensible thing seems to be to forget our negativity, to discard it as a fantasy of youth. And yet the world gets worse, the inequalities become more strident, the self-destruction of humanity seems to come closer. So perhaps we should not abandon our negativity but, on the contrary, try to theorise the world from the perspective of the scream.

And what if the reader feels no dissonance? What if you feel no negativity, if you are content to say 'we are, and the world is'? It is hard to believe that anyone is so at home with the world that they do not feel revulsion at the hunger, violence and inequality that surrounds them. It is much more likely that the revulsion or dissonance is consciously or unconsciously suppressed, either in the interests of a quiet life or, much more simply, because pretending not to see or feel the horrors of the world carries direct material benefits. In order to protect our jobs, our visas, our profits, our chances of receiving good grades, our sanity, we pretend not to see, we sanitise our own perception, filtering out the pain, pretending that it is not here but out there, far away, in Africa, in Russia, a hundred years ago, in an otherness that, by being alien, cleanses our own experience of all negativity. It is on such a sanitised perception that the idea of an objective, value-free social science is built. The negativity, the revulsion at exploitation and violence, is buried completely, drowned in the concrete of the foundation blocks of social science just as surely as, in some parts of the world, the bodies of sacrificed animals are buried by builders in the foundation blocks of houses or bridges. Such theory is, as Adorno (1990, p. 365) puts it, 'in the nature of the musical accompaniment with which the SS liked to drown out the screams of its victims'. It is against such suppression of pain that this book is directed.

But what is the point? Our scream is a scream of frustration, the discontent of the powerless. But if we are powerless, there is nothing we can do. And if we manage to become powerful, by building a party or taking up arms or winning an election, then we shall be no different from all the other powerful in history. So there is no way out, no breaking the circularity of power. What can we do?

Change the world without taking power.

Ha! ha! Very funny.

Chapter 2 - Beyond the State?

In the beginning was the scream. And then what?

The scream implies an anguished enthusiasm for changing the world. But how can we do it? What can we do to make the world a better, more human place? What can we do to put an end to all the misery and exploitation?

I

There is an answer ready at hand. Do it through the state. Join a political party, help it to win governmental power, change the country in that way. Or, if you are more impatient, more angry, more doubtful about what can be achieved through parliamentary means, join a revolutionary organisation, help it to conquer state power, by violent or non-violent means, and then use the revolutionary state to change society.

Change the world through the state: this is the paradigm that has dominated revolutionary thought for more than a century. The debate between Rosa Luxemburg and Eduard Bernstein a hundred years ago on the issue of 'reform or revolution' established clearly the terms that were to dominate thinking about revolution for most of the twentieth century. On the one hand reform, on the other side revolution. Reform was a gradual transition to socialism, to be achieved by winning elections and introducing change by parliamentary means; revolution was a much more rapid transition, to be achieved by the taking of state power and the quick introduction of radical change by the new state. The intensity of the disagreements concealed a basic point of agreement: both approaches focus on the state as the vantage point from which society can be changed. Despite all their differences, both aim at the winning of state power. This is not exclusive, of course. In the revolutionary perspective and also in the more radical parliamentary approaches, the winning of state power is seen as part of an upsurge of social upheaval. Nevertheless the winning of state power is seen as the centrepiece of the revolutionary process, the hub from which revolutionary change will radiate. Approaches that fall outside this dichotomy between reform and revolution were stigmatised as being anarchist (a sharp distinction that was consolidated at about the same time as the Bernstein-Luxemburg debate). Until recently, theoretical and political debate, at least in the Marxist tradition, has been dominated by these three classifications: Revolutionary, Reformist, Anarchist.

The state paradigm, that is, the assumption that the winning of state power is central to radical change, dominated not just theory but also the revolutionary experience throughout most of the twentieth century: not only the experience of the Soviet Union and China, but also the numerous national liberation and guerrilla movements of the 1960s and the 1970s.

If the state paradigm was the vehicle of hope for much of the century, it became more and more the assassin of hope as the century progressed. The apparent impossibility of revolution at the beginning of the twenty-first century reflects in reality the historical failure of a particular concept of revolution, the concept that identified revolution with control of the state.

Both approaches, the 'reformist' and the 'revolutionary' have failed completely to live up to the expectations of their enthusiastic supporters. 'Communist' governments in the Soviet Union, China and elsewhere certainly increased levels of material security and decreased social inequalities in the territories of the states which they controlled, at least temporarily, but they did little to create a self-determining society or to promote the reign of freedom which has always been central to the

communist aspiration. In the case of social democratic or reformist governments, the record is no better: although increases in material security have been achieved in some cases, their record in practice has differed very little from overtly pro-capitalist governments, and most social-democratic parties have long since abandoned any pretension to be the bearers of radical social reform.

For over a hundred years, the revolutionary enthusiasm of young people has been channelled into building the party or into learning to shoot guns, for over a hundred years the dreams of those who have wanted a world fit for humanity have been bureaucratised and militarised, all for the winning of state power by a government that could then be accused of "betraying" the movement that put it there. "Betrayal" has been a key word for the left over the last century as one government after another has been accused of "betraying" the ideals of its supporters, until now the notion of betrayal itself has become so tired that there is nothing left but a shrug of "of course". Rather than look to so many betrayals for an explanation, perhaps we need to look at the very notion that society can be changed through the winning of state power.

II

At first sight it would appear obvious that winning control of the state is the key to bringing about social change. The state claims to be sovereign, to exercise power within its frontiers. This is central to the common notion of democracy: a government is elected in order to carry out the will of the people by exerting power in the territory of the state. This notion is the basis of the social democratic claim that radical change can be achieved through constitutional means.

The argument against this is that the constitutional view isolates the state from its social environment: it attributes to the state an autonomy of action that it just does not have. In reality, what the state does is limited and shaped by the fact that it exists as just one node in a web of social relations. Crucially, this web of social relations centres on the way in which work is organised. The fact that work is organised on a capitalist basis means that what the state does and can do is limited and shaped by the need to maintain the system of capitalist organisation of which it is a part. Concretely, this means that any government that takes significant action directed against the interests of capital will find that an economic crisis will result and that capital will flee from the state territory.

Revolutionary movements inspired by Marxism have always been aware of the capitalist nature of the state. Why then have they focused on winning state power as the means of changing society? One answer is that these movements have often had an instrumental view of the capitalist nature of the state. They have typically seen the state as being the instrument of the capitalist class. The notion of an 'instrument' implies that the relation between the state and the capitalist class is an external one: like a hammer, the state is now wielded by the capitalist class in their own interests, after the revolution it will be wielded by the working class in their interests. Such a view reproduces, unconsciously perhaps, the isolation or autonomisation of the state from its social environment, the critique of which is the starting point of revolutionary politics. To borrow a concept to be developed later, this view fetishises the state: it abstracts it from the web of power relations in which it is embedded. The difficulty which revolutionary governments have experienced in wielding the state in the interests of the working class suggests that the embedding of the state in the web of capitalist social relations is far stronger and more subtle than the notion of instrumentality would suggest. The mistake of Marxist revolutionary movements has been, not to deny the capitalist nature of the state, but to underestimate the degree of integration of the state into the network of capitalist social relations.

An important aspect of this underestimation is the extent to which revolutionary (and, even more so, reformist) movements have tended to assume that 'society' can be understood as a national (that is, state-bound) society. If society is understood as being British, Russian or Mexican society, this obviously gives weight to the view that the state can be the centre point of social transformation. Such an assumption, however, presupposes a prior abstraction of state and society from their spatial surroundings, a conceptual snipping of social relations at the frontiers of the state. The world, in this view, is made up of so many national societies, each with its own state, each one maintaining relations with all the others in a network of inter-national relations. Each state is then the centre of its own world and it becomes possible to conceive of a national revolution and to see the state as the motor of radical change in 'its' society.

The problem with such a view is that social relations have never coincided with national frontiers. The current discussions of 'globalisation' merely highlight what has always been true: capitalist social relations, by their nature, have always gone beyond territorial limitations. Whereas the relation between feudal lord and serf was always a territorial relation, the distinctive feature of capitalism was that it freed exploitation from such territorial limitations, by virtue of the fact that the relation between capitalist and worker was now mediated through money. The mediation of social relations through money means a complete de-territorialisation of those relations: there is no reason why employer and employee, producer and consumer, or workers who combine in the same process of production, should be within the same territory. Capitalist social relations have never been limited by state frontiers, so that it has always been mistaken to think of the capitalist world as being the sum of different national societies. The web of social relations in which the particular national states are embedded is (and has been since the beginning of capitalism) a global web.

The focusing of revolution on the winning of state power thus involves the abstraction of the state from the social relations of which it is part. Conceptually, the state is cut out from the clutter of social relations that surround it and made to stand up with all the appearance of being an autonomous actor. Autonomy is attributed to the state, if not in the absolute sense of reformist (or liberal) theory, then at least in the sense that the state is seen as being potentially autonomous from the capitalist social relations that surround it.

But, it might be objected, this is a crude misrepresentation of revolutionary strategy. Revolutionary movements inspired by Marxism have generally seen the winning of state power as just one element in a broader process of social transformation. This is certainly true, but it has generally been seen as a particularly important element, a focal point in the process of social change, one which demands a focussing of the energies devoted to social transformation. The focussing inevitably privileges the state as a site of power.

Whether the winning of state power is seen as being the exclusive path for changing society or just as a focus for action, there is inevitably a channelling of revolt. The fervour of those who fight for a different society is taken up and pointed in a particular direction: towards the winning of state power. 'If we can only conquer the state (whether by electoral or by military means), then we shall be able to change society. First, therefore, we must concentrate on the central goal - conquering state power'. So the argument goes, and the young are inducted into what it means to conquer state power: they are trained either as soldiers or as bureaucrats, depending on how the conquest of state power is understood. 'First build the army, first build the party, that is how to get rid of the power that oppresses us'. The party-building (or army-building) comes to eclipse all else. What was initially negative (the rejection of capitalism) is converted into something positive (institution-building, power-building). The induction into the conquest of power inevitably becomes an induction into power itself. The initiates learn the language, logic and calculations of power; they

learn to wield the categories of a social science which has been entirely shaped by its obsession with power. Differences within the organisation become struggles for power. Manipulation and manoeuvring for power become a way of life.

Nationalism is an inevitable complement of the logic of power. The idea that the state is the site of power involves the abstraction of the particular state from the global context of power relations. Inevitably, no matter how much the revolutionary inspiration is guided by the notion of world revolution, the focus on a particular state as the site for bringing about radical social change implies giving priority to the part of the world encompassed by that state over other parts of the world. Even the most internationalist of revolutions oriented towards state power have rarely succeeded in avoiding the nationalist privileging of 'their' state over others, or indeed the overt manipulation of national sentiment in order to defend the revolution. The notion of changing society through the state rests on the idea that the state is, or should be, sovereign. State sovereignty is a prerequisite for changing society through the state, so the struggle for social change becomes transformed into the struggle for the defence of state sovereignty. The struggle against capital then becomes an anti-imperialist struggle against domination by foreigners, in which nationalism and anti-capitalism are blended. Self-determination and state sovereignty become confused, when in fact the very existence of the state as a form of social relations is the very antithesis of self-determination.

No matter how much lip service is paid to the movement and its importance, the goal of the conquest of power inevitably involves an instrumentalisation of struggle. The struggle has an aim: to conquer political power. The struggle is a means to achieve that aim. Those elements of struggle which do not contribute to the achievement of that aim are either given a secondary importance or must be suppressed altogether: a hierarchy of struggles is established. The instrumentalisation/hierarchisation is at the same time an impoverishment of struggle. So many struggles, so many ways of expressing our rejection of capitalism, so many ways of fighting for our dream of a different society are simply filtered out, simply remain unseen when the world is seen through the prism of the conquest of power. We learn to suppress them, and thus to suppress ourselves. At the top of the hierarchy we learn to place that part of our activity that contributes to 'building the revolution', at the bottom come frivolous personal things like affective relations, sensuality, playing, laughing, loving. Class struggle becomes puritanical: frivolity must be suppressed because it does not contribute to the goal. The hierarchisation of struggle is a hierarchisation of our lives and thus a hierarchisation of ourselves.

The party is the organisational form which most clearly expresses this hierarchisation. The form of the party, whether vanguardist or parliamentary, presupposes an orientation towards the state and makes little sense without it. The party is in fact the form of disciplining class struggle, of subordinating the myriad forms of class struggle to the over-riding aim of gaining control of the state. The fixing of a hierarchy of struggles is usually expressed in the form of the party programme.

This instrumentalist impoverishment of struggle is not characteristic just of particular parties or currents (Stalinism, Trotskyism and so on): it is inherent in the idea that the goal of the movement is to conquer political power. The struggle is lost from the beginning, long before the victorious party or army conquers state power and 'betrays' its promises. It is lost once power itself seeps into the struggle, once the logic of power becomes the logic of the revolutionary process, once the negative of refusal is converted into the positive of power-building. And usually those involved do not see it: the initiates in power do not even see how far they have been drawn into the reasoning and habits of power. They do not see that if we revolt against capitalism, it is not because we want a different system of power, it is because we want a society in which power relations are dissolved. You

cannot build a society of non-power relations by conquering power. Once the logic of power is adopted, the struggle against power is already lost.

The idea of changing society through the conquest of power thus ends up achieving the opposite of what it sets out to achieve. Instead of the conquest of power being a step towards the abolition of power relations, the attempt to conquer power involves the extension of the field of power relations into the struggle against power. What starts as a scream of protest against power, against the dehumanisation of people, against the treatment of humans as means rather than ends, becomes converted into its opposite, into the assumption of the logic, habits and discourse of power into the very heart of the struggle against power. For what is at issue in the revolutionary transformation of the world is not whose power but the very existence of power. What is at issue is not who exercises power, but how to create a world based on the mutual recognition of human dignity, on the formation of social relations which are not power relations.

It would seem that the most realistic way to change society is to focus struggle on the winning of state power and to subordinate struggle to this end. First we win power and then we shall create a society worthy of humanity. This is the powerfully realistic argument of Lenin, especially in *What is to be Done?*, but it is a logic shared by all the major revolutionary leaders of the twentieth century: Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky, Gramsci, Mao, Che. Yet the experience of their struggles suggests that the accepted realism of the revolutionary tradition is profoundly unrealistic. That realism is the realism of power and can do no more than reproduce power. The realism of power is focused and directed towards an end. The realism of anti-power, or, better, the anti-realism of anti-power, must be quite different if we are to change the world. And change the world we must.

Chapter 3 - Beyond Power?

I

The world cannot be changed through the state. Both theoretical reflection and a whole century of bad experience tell us so. 'We told you so', say the satisfied ones, 'We said so all along. We said it was absurd. We told you that you couldn't go against human nature. Give up the dream, give up!'

And millions throughout the world have given up the dream of a radically different type of society. There is no doubt that the fall of the Soviet Union and the failure of national liberation movements throughout the world have brought disillusionment to millions of people. The notion of revolution was so strongly identified with gaining control of the state that the failure of those attempts to change the world through gaining control of the state has led very many people to the conclusion that revolution is impossible.

There is a toning down of expectations. For many, hope has evaporated from their lives, giving way to a bitter, cynical reconciliation with reality. It will not be possible to create the free and just society we hoped for, but at least we can vote for a centre or left-of-centre party, knowing quite well that it will not make any difference, but at least that way we will have some sort of outlet for our frustration. 'We know now that we will not be able to change the world,' says one of the characters in a novel by Marcela Serrano. 'That has been the greatest blow of all for our generation. We lost our objective in the middle of the way, when we still had the age and the energy to make the changes... The only thing that is left is to ask with humility: where is dignity?'

Is the character in the book not right? If we cannot change the world through the state, then how? The state is just a node in a web of power relations. But will we not be always caught up in the web of power, no matter where we start? Is rupture really conceivable? Are we not trapped in an endless circularity of power? Is the whole world not a spider-web, which can be made a little better here and there? Or perhaps: is the whole world not a multiplicity of spider-webs, so that just when we have broken through one, we find ourselves entangled in another? Is the idea of a radical otherness not best left to those who comfort themselves with religion, to those who live with a dream of heaven as the reward for living through this vale of tears?

The great problem with trying to retreat into a life of private dignity and saying 'let's make the best of what we've got' is that the world does not stand still. There is a dynamic of development which is leading to more and more poverty, more and more inequality, more and more violence, more and more subjection of our lives to money. Dignity is not a private matter, for it involves the recognition of the dignity of others: in a world based on the negation of dignity, this inevitably involves the struggle for radical change. It is precisely the pursuit of personal dignity that confronts us with the urgency of revolution.

The only way in which the idea of revolution can be maintained is by raising the stakes. The problem of the traditional concept of revolution is perhaps not that it aimed too high, but that it aimed too low. The notion of capturing positions of power, whether it be governmental power or more dispersed positions of power in society, misses the point that the aim of the revolution is to dissolve relations of power, to create a society based on the mutual recognition of people's dignity. What has failed is the notion that revolution means capturing power in order to abolish power. What is now on the agenda is the much more demanding notion of a direct attack on power relations. The only way in which revolution can now be imagined is not as the conquest of power but as the

dissolution of power. The fall of the Soviet Union not only meant disillusionment for millions; it also brought the liberation of revolutionary thought, the liberation from the identification of revolution with the conquest of power.

This, then, is the revolutionary challenge at the beginning of the twenty-first century: to change the world without taking power. This is the challenge that has been formulated most clearly by the Zapatista uprising in the south-east of Mexico. The Zapatistas have said that they want to make the world anew, to create a world of dignity, a world of humanity, but without taking power.

The Zapatista call to make the world anew without taking power has found a remarkable resonance. The resonance has to do with the growth in recent years of what might be called an area of anti-power. This corresponds to a weakening of the process by which discontent is focused on the state. This weakening is clear in the case of the would-be revolutionary parties, which no longer have the capacity they once had to channel discontent towards the struggle to seize state power. It is also true of social-democratic parties: whether or not people vote for them, they no longer have the same importance as focuses of political militancy. Social discontent today tends to be expressed far more diffusely, through participation in 'non-governmental organisations', through campaigning around particular issues, through the individual or collective concerns of teachers, doctors or other workers who seek to do things in a way that does not objectify people, in the development of autonomous community projects of all sorts, even in prolonged and massive rebellions such as the one taking place in Chiapas. There is a vast area of activity directed towards changing the world in a way that does not have the state as its focus, and that does not aim at gaining positions of power. This area of activity is obviously highly contradictory, and certainly includes many activities that might be described as 'petty bourgeois' or 'romantic' by revolutionary groups. It is rarely revolutionary in the sense of having revolution as an explicit aim, yet the projection of a radical otherness is often an important component of the activity involved. It includes what is sometimes called the area of 'autonomy', but it is far, far wider than that which is usually indicated by the term. It is sometimes, but not always, in open hostility to capitalism, but it does not find and does not seek the sort of clear focus for such activity that was formerly provided by both revolutionary and reformist parties. This is the confused area in which the Zapatista call resonates, the area in which anti-power grows. It is an area in which the old distinctions between reform, revolution and anarchism no longer seem relevant, simply because the question of who controls the state is not the focus of attention. There is a loss of revolutionary focus, not because people do not long for a different type of society, but because the old focus proved to be a mirage. The challenge posed by the Zapatistas is the challenge of salvaging revolution from the collapse of the state illusion and from the collapse of the power illusion.

But how can we change the world without taking power? Merely to pose the question is to invite a snort of ridicule, a raised eyebrow, a shrug of condescension.

"How can you be so naïve?" say some, "Do you not know that there can be no radical change in society? Have you learnt nothing in the last thirty years? Do you not know that talk of revolution is silly, or are you still trapped in your adolescent dreams of 1968? We must live with the world we have and make the best of it."

"How can you be so naïve?" say others, "Of course the world needs a revolution, but do you seriously think that change can be brought about without taking power, by election or otherwise? Do you not see the forces we are up against, the armies, the police, the paramilitary thugs? Do you not know that the only language they understand is power? Do you think capitalism will collapse if we all hold hands and sing 'All we need is love'? Get real."

Reality and power are so mutually incrustated that even to raise the question of dissolving power is to step off the edge of reality. All our categories of thought, all our assumptions about what is reality, or what is politics or economics or even where we live, are so permeated by power that just to say 'no!' to power precipitates us into a vertiginous world in which there are no fixed reference points to hold on to other than the force of our own 'no!'. Power and social theory exist in such symbiosis that power is the lens through which theory sees the world, the headphone through which it hears the world: to ask for a theory of anti-power is to try to see the invisible, to hear the inaudible. To try to theorise anti-power is to wander in a largely unexplored world.

How can the world be changed without taking power? The answer is obvious: we do not know. That is why it is so important to work at the answer, practically and theoretically. Hic Rhodus, hic saltus, but the saltus becomes more and more perilous, the pressures not to jump become ever greater, the danger of falling into a sea of absurdity ever more difficult to avoid.

Let us forget our 'fear of ridicule' and ask then: How can we even begin to think of changing the world without taking power?

II

To think of changing the world without taking power, we need to see that the concept of power is intensely contradictory. But to make this argument we need to go back to the beginning.

In the beginning, we said, is the scream. It is a scream of hope, not of despair. And the hope is not a hope for salvation in the form of divine intervention. It is an active hope, a hope that we can change things, a scream of active refusal, a scream that points to doing. The scream that does not point to doing, the scream that turns in upon itself, that remains an eternal scream of despair or, much more common, an endless cynical grumble, is a scream which betrays itself: it loses its negative force and goes into an endless loop of self-affirmation as scream. Cynicism – I hate the world, but there is nothing that can be done – is the scream gone sour, the scream that suppresses its own self-negation.

The scream implies doing. 'In the beginning was the deed', says Goethe's Faust. But before the deed comes the doing. In the beginning was the doing. But before the doing comes the scream. It is not materialism that comes first, but negativity.

It is true that the scream springs from experience, from a doing or a frustrated doing. But the doing too springs from the scream. The doing springs from a want, a lack, a desire, a hunger. Doing changes, negates an existing state of affairs. Doing goes beyond, transcends. The scream which is our starting point pushes us towards doing. Our materialism, if that word is relevant at all, is a materialism rooted in doing, doing-to-negate, negative practice, projection beyond. Our foundation, if that word is relevant at all, is not an abstract preference for matter over mind, but the scream, the negation of what exists.

Doing, in other words, is central to our concern not simply because doing is a material precondition for living but because our central concern is changing the world, negating that which exists. To think the world from the perspective of the scream is to think it from the perspective of doing.

Saint John is doubly wrong, then, when he says that 'in the beginning was the Word'. Doubly wrong because, to put it in traditional terms, his statement is both positive and idealist. The word

does not negate, as the scream does. And the word does not imply doing, as the scream does. The world of the word is a stable world, a sitting-back-in-an-armchair-and-having-a-chat world, a sitting-at-a-desk-and-writing world, a contented world, far from the scream which would change everything, far from the doing which negates. In the world of the word, doing is separated from talking and doing, practice is separated from theory. Theory in the world of the word is the thought of the Thinker, of someone in restful reflection, chin-on-hand, elbow-on-knee. 'The philosophers', as Marx says in his famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, 'have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.'

Marx's thesis does not mean that we should abandon theory for practice. It means rather that we should understand theory as part of practice, as part of the struggle to change the world. Both theory and doing are part of the practical movement of negation. This implies, then, that doing must be understood in a broad sense, certainly not just as work, and also not just as physical action, but as the whole movement of practical negativity. To emphasise the centrality of doing is not to deny the importance of thought or language but simply to see them as part of the total movement of practical negativity, of the practical projection beyond the world that exists towards a radically different world. To focus on doing is quite simply to see the world as struggle.

It might be argued, with some force, that changing society should be thought of not in terms of doing but in terms of not-doing, laziness, refusal to work, enjoyment. 'Let us be lazy in everything, except in loving and drinking, except in being lazy': Lafargue begins his classic *The Right to be Lazy* with this quotation (1999, p.3), implying that there is nothing more incompatible with capitalist exploitation than the laziness advocated by Lessing. Laziness in capitalist society, however, implies refusal to do, an active assertion of an alternative practice. Doing, in the sense in which we understand it here, includes laziness and the pursuit of pleasure, both of which are very much negative practices in a society based on their negation. Refusal to do, in a world based on the conversion of doing into work, can be seen as an effective form of resistance.

Human doing implies projection-beyond, and hence the unity of theory and practice. Projection-beyond is seen by Marx as a distinctive characteristic of human doing. 'A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architecture from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement.' (Marx, 1965, p. 178) The imagination of the labourer is ecstatic: at the commencement of the labour process it projects beyond what is to an otherness that might be. This otherness exists not only when it is created: it exists already, really, subjunctively, in the projection of the worker, in that which makes her human. The doing of the architect is negative, not only in its result, but in its whole process: it begins and ends with the negation of what exists. Even if she is the worst of architects, the doing is a creative doing.

Bees, to the best of our knowledge, do not scream. They do not say 'No! Enough of queens, enough of drones, we shall create a society which will be shaped by us workers, we shall emancipate ourselves!' Their doing is not a doing that negates: it simply reproduces. We, however, do scream. Our scream is a projection-beyond, the articulation of an otherness that might be. If our scream is to be more than a smug look-how-rebellious-I-am scream (which is no scream at all), then it must involve a projected doing, the project of doing something to change that which we scream against. The scream and the doing-which-is-a-going-beyond distinguish humans from animals. Humans, but not animals, are ecstatic, they exist not only in, but also against-and-beyond themselves.

Why? Not because going-beyond is part of our human nature, but simply because we scream. Negation comes not from our human essence, but from the situation in which we find ourselves. We scream and push-beyond not because that is human nature, but, on the contrary, because we are torn from what we consider to be humanity. Our negativity arises not from our humanity, but from the negation of our humanity, from the feeling that humanity is not-yet, that it is something to be fought for. It is not human nature, but the scream of our starting point that compels us to focus on doing.

To take doing, rather than being or talking or thinking, as the focus of our thought, has many implications. Doing implies movement. To start from doing-as-going-beyond (and not just the busy-bee doing-as-reproduction) means that everything (or at least everything human) is in movement, everything is becoming, that there is no 'being', or rather that being can only be a frustrated becoming. The perspective of the scream-doing is inevitably historical, because the human experience can only be understood as a constant moving-beyond (or possibly a frustrated moving-beyond). This is important, because if the starting point is not screaming-doing (doing-as-negation) but rather the word or discourse or a positive understanding of doing (as reproduction), then there is no possibility of understanding society historically: the movement of history becomes broken down into a series of snapshots, a diachronic series, a chronology. Becoming is broken down into a series of states of being.

To put the point in other words, humans are subjects while animals are not. Subjectivity refers to the conscious projection beyond that which exists, the ability to negate that which exists and to create something that does not yet exist. Subjectivity, the movement of the scream-doing, involves a movement against limits, against containment, against closure. The doer is not. Not only that, but doing is the movement against is-ness, against that-which-is. Any definition of the subject is therefore contradictory or indeed violent: the attempt to pin down that which is a movement against being pinned down. The idea that we can start from the assertion that people are subjects has been much criticised in recent years, especially by theorists associated with post-modernism. The idea of the person as subject, we are told, is a historical construct. That may be so, but our starting point, the scream of complete refusal to accept the misery of capitalist society, takes us inevitably to the notion of subjectivity. To deny human subjectivity is to deny the scream or, which comes to the same thing, to turn the scream into a scream of despair. 'Ha! Ha!' they mock, 'you scream as though it were possible to change society radically. But there is no possibility of radical change, there is no way out'. Our starting point makes such an approach impossible. The sharpness of our No! is a sword that cuts through many a theoretical knot.

Doing is inherently social. What I do is always part of a social flow of doing, in which the precondition of my doing is the doing (or having-done) of others, in which the doing of others provides the means of my doing. Doing is inherently plural, collective, choral, communal. This does not mean that all doing is (or indeed should be) undertaken collectively. It means rather that it is difficult to conceive of a doing that does not have the doing of others as a precondition. I sit at the computer and write this, apparently a lonely individual act, but my writing is part of a social process, a plaiting of my writing with the writing of others (those mentioned in the footnotes and a million others), and also with the doing of those who designed the computer, assembled it, packed it, transported it, those who installed the electricity in the house, those who generated the electricity, those who produced the food that gives me the energy to write, and so on, and so on. There is a community of doing, a collective of doers, a flow of doing through time and space. Past doing (of ourselves and others) becomes the means of doing in the present. Any act, however individual it seems, is part of a chorus of doing in which all humanity is the choir (albeit an anarchic and discordant choir). Our doings are so intertwined that it is impossible to say where one ends and another begins. Clearly there are many doings that do not in turn create the conditions for the doing

of others, that do not feed back into the social flow of doing as a whole: it is quite possible, for example, that no one will ever read what I am now doing. However, the doings that do not lead back into the social flow of doing do not for that reason cease to be social. My activity is social whether or not anybody reads this: it is important not to confuse sociality and functionality.

To speak of the social flow of doing is not to deny the materiality of the done. When I make a chair, the chair exists materially. When I write a book, the book exists as an object. It has an existence independent of mine, and may still exist when I no longer exist. In that sense it might be said that there is an objectification of my subjective doing, that the done acquires an existence separate from the doing, that the done abstracts itself from the flow of doing. This is true, however, only if my doing is seen as an individual act. Seen from the social flow of doing, the objectification of my subjective doing is at most a fleeting objectification. The existence of the chair as chair depends upon someone sitting upon it, reincorporating it into the flow of doing. The existence of the book as book depends upon your reading it, the braiding of your doing (reading) with my doing (writing) to reintegrate the done (the book) into the social flow of doing.

It is when we understand 'we scream' as a material 'we scream', as a screaming-doing, that 'we-ness' (that question that rumbles through our book) gains force. Doing, in other words, is the material constitution of the 'we', the conscious and unconscious, planned and unplanned, braiding of our lives through time. This braiding of our lives, this collective doing, involves, if the collective flow of doing is recognised, a mutual recognition of one another as doers, as active subjects. Our individual doing receives its social validation from its recognition as part of the social flow.

III

To begin to think about power and changing the world without taking power (or indeed anything else), we need to start from doing.

Doing implies being able-to-do. The scream is of no significance without doing, and doing is inconceivable unless we are able-to-do. If we are deprived of our capacity-to-do, or rather, if we are deprived of our capacity to project-beyond-and-do, of our capacity to do negatively, ecstatically, then we are deprived of our humanity, our doing is reduced (and we are reduced) to the level of a bee. If we are deprived of our capacity-to-do, then our scream becomes a scream of despair.

Power, in the first place, is simply that: can-ness, capacity-to-do, the ability to do things. Doing implies power, power-to-do. In this sense we commonly use 'power' to refer to something good: I feel powerful, I feel good. The little train in the children's story (Piper, 1978) that says 'I think I can, I think I can' as it tries to reach the top of the mountain, has a growing sense of its own power. We go to a good political meeting and come away with an enhanced sense of our own power. We read a good book and feel empowered. The women's movement has given women a greater sense of their own power. Power in this sense can be referred to as 'power-to', power-to-do.

Power-to, it must be emphasised again, is always a social power, even though it may not appear to be so. The story of the little train presents power-to as a matter of individual determination, but in fact that is never the case. Our doing is always part of a social flow of doing, even where it appears to be an individual act. Our capacity to do is always an interlacing of our activity with the previous or present activity of others. Our capacity to do is always the result of the doing of others.

Power-to, therefore, is never individual: it is always social. It cannot be thought of as existing in some pure, unsullied state, for its existence will always be part of the way in which sociality is constituted, the way in which doing is organised. Doing (and power-to-do) is always part of a social flow, but that flow is constituted in different ways.

It is when the social flow of doing is fractured that power-to is transformed into its opposite, power-over.

The social flow is fractured when doing itself is broken. Doing-as-projection-beyond is broken when some people arrogate to themselves the projection-beyond (conception) of the doing and command others to execute what they have conceived. Doing is broken as the 'powerful' conceive but do not execute, while the others execute but do not conceive. Doing is broken as the 'powerful' separate the done from the doers and appropriate it to themselves. The social flow is broken as the 'powerful' present themselves as the individual doers, while the rest simply disappear from sight. If we think of 'powerful' men in history, for example, of Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Hitler, then power appears as the attribute of an individual. But of course their power to do things was not an ability to do them on their own, but an ability to command others to do what they wished them to do. The 'we' of doing appears as an 'I', or as a 'he' (more often a 'he' than a 'she'): Caesar did this, Caesar did that. The 'we' is now an antagonistic 'we', divided between the rulers (the visible subjects) and the ruled (the invisible de-subjectified subjects). Power-to now becomes 'power-over', a relation of power over others. These others are powerless (or apparently powerless), deprived of the capacity to realise our own projects, if only because we spend our days realising the project of those who exercise power-over.

For most of us, then, power is turned into its opposite. Power means not capacity-to-do, but incapacity-to-do. It means not the assertion of our subjectivity but the destruction of our subjectivity. The existence of power relations means not the capacity to obtain some future good but just the contrary: the incapacity to obtain the future good, the incapacity to realise our own projects, our own dreams. It is not that we cease to project, that we cease to dream, but unless the projects and dreams are cut to match the 'reality' of power relations (and this is usually achieved, if at all, through bitter experience), then they are met with frustration. Power, for those without the means of commanding others, is frustration. The existence of power-to as power-over means that the vast majority of doers are converted into the done-to, their activity transformed into passivity, their subjectivity into objectivity.

Whereas power-to is a uniting, a bringing together of my doing with the doing of others, the exercise of power-over is a separation. The exercise of power-over separates conception from realisation, done from doing, one person's doing from another's, subject from object. Those who exercise power-over are Separators, separating done from doing, doers from the means of doing.

Power-over is the breaking of the social flow of doing. Those who exert power over the doing of others deny the subjectivity of those others, deny their part in the flow of doing, exclude them from history. Power-over breaks mutual recognition: those over whom power is exercised are not recognised, and those who exercise power are not recognised by anyone whom they recognise as worthy of giving recognition. The doing of the doers is deprived of social validation: they and their doing become invisible. History becomes the history of the powerful, of those who tell others what to do. The flow of doing becomes an antagonistic process in which the doing of most is denied, in which the doing of most is appropriated by the few. The flow of doing becomes a broken process.

The breaking of doing always involves physical force or the threat of physical force. There is

always the threat, 'work for us or you will die or suffer physical punishment'. If domination is robbery of the done from the doer, that robbery is, necessarily, armed robbery. But what makes the use or threat of physical force possible is its stabilisation or institutionalisation in various ways, an understanding of which is crucial to understanding the dynamic and weakness of power-over.

In pre-capitalist societies, power-over is stabilised on the basis of a personal relation between ruler and ruled. In a slave society, the exercise of power-over is stabilised around the idea that some people (whose quality as persons is denied) are the property of others. In feudal societies, it is the notion of divinely-ordained hierarchies of person-hood that gives form to the commanding of some by others. The personal nature of the relation of power-over means that the use or threat of force is always directly present in the relation of domination itself. The refusal to work is always an act of personal rebellion against one's owner or lord and punishable by that owner or lord.

In capitalist society (which is what interests us most, since that is where we live and what we scream against), the stabilisation into a 'right' of the bossing of some people by others is based not on the direct relation between ruler and doer but on the relation between the ruler and the done. The doers have now won freedom from personal dependence on the rulers, but they are still held in a position of subordination by the fracturing of the collective flow of doing. Capital is based on the freezing of the past doing of people into property. Since past doing is the precondition of present doing, the freezing and appropriation of past doing separates the precondition of present doing off from that doing, constitutes it as an identifiable 'means of doing' (more familiarly, 'means of production'). Thus, the freed serfs and slaves are freed into a world where the only way in which they can have access to the means of doing (and therefore of living) is to sell their capacity-to-do (their power-to-do, now transformed into power-to-labour or labour-power) to those who 'own' the means of doing. Their freedom in no sense frees them from subordination of their doing to the dictates of others.

Capital is that: the assertion of command over others on the basis of 'ownership' of the done and hence of the means of doing, the preconditions for the doing of those others who are commanded. All class societies involve the separation of done from doing and doers, but in capitalism that separation becomes the sole axis of domination. There is a peculiar rigidification of the done, a peculiarly radical separation of done from doing. If, from the perspective of the social flow of doing, the objectification of the done is a fleeting objectification, immediately overcome through the incorporation of the done into the flow of doing, capitalism depends on making that objectification a durable objectification, on converting the done into an object, a thing apart, something that can be defined as property. Capitalism thus implies a new definition of 'subject' and 'object', in which the 'object' is durably and rigidly separated from the doing.

This does not mean that subject and object are constituted by capitalism. Subjectivity is inherent in negativity (the scream), and negativity is inherent in any society (certainly any in which doing is subordinated to others). However, the separation between subject and object, doer and done or done-to, acquires a new meaning under capitalism, leading to a new definition and a new consciousness of subjectivity and objectivity, a new distance and antagonism between subject and object. Thus, rather than the subject being the product of modernity, it is rather that modernity expresses consciousness of the new separation of subject and object which is inherent in the focussing of social domination upon the done.

Another way of formulating the same point is to say that there is a separation of the constitution of the object from its existence. The done now exists in durable autonomy from the doing which constituted it. Whereas from the perspective of the social flow of doing, the existence of an object is

merely a fleeting moment in the flow of subjective constitution (or doing), capitalism depends on the conversion of that fleeting moment into a durable objectification. But of course durable autonomy is an illusion, a very real illusion. The separation of done from doing is a real illusion, a real process in which the done nevertheless never ceases to depend on the doing. Likewise, the separation of existence from constitution is a real illusion, a real process in which existence never ceases to depend on constitution. The definition of the done as private property is the negation of the sociality of doing, but this too is a real illusion, a real process in which private property never ceases to depend on the sociality of doing. The rupture of doing does not mean that doing ceases to be social, simply that it becomes indirectly social.

Capital is based not on the ownership of people but on the ownership of the done and, on that basis, of the repeated buying of people's power-to-do. Since people are not owned, they can quite easily refuse to work for others without suffering any immediate punishment. The punishment comes rather in being cut off from the means of doing (and of survival). The use of force comes then not as part of the direct relation between capitalist and worker. Force is focused in the first place not on the doer but on the done: its focus is the protection of property, the protection of ownership of the done. It is exercised not by the individual owner of the done, for that would be incompatible with the free nature of the relation between capitalist and worker, but by a separate instance responsible for protecting the property of the done, the state. The separation of the economic and the political (and the constitution of the 'economic' and the 'political' by this separation) is therefore central to the exercise of domination under capitalism. If domination is always a process of armed robbery, the peculiarity of capitalism is that the person with the arms stands apart from the person doing the robbery, merely supervising that the robbery conforms with the law. Without this separation, property (as opposed to mere temporary possession) of the done, and therefore capitalism itself, would be impossible. This is important for the discussion of power, because the separation of the economic and the political makes it appear that it is the political which is the realm of the exercise of power (leaving the economic as a 'natural' sphere beyond question), whereas in fact the exercise of power (the conversion of power-to into power-over) is already inherent in the separation of the done from the doing, and hence in the very constitution of the political and the economic as distinct forms of social relations.

The conversion of power-to into power-over always involves the fracturing of the flow of doing, but in capitalism, to a far greater extent than in any previous society, the fracturing of the social flow of doing is the principle on which society is constructed. The fact that the property of the done is the axis on which the right to command the doing of others is based puts the breaking of the flow of doing at the centre of every aspect of social relations.

The breaking of the social flow of doing is the breaking of everything. Most obviously, the rupture of doing breaks the collective 'we'. The collectivity is divided into two classes of people: those who, by virtue of their ownership of the means of doing, command others to do, and those who, by virtue of the fact that they are deprived of access to the means of doing, do what the others tell them to do. That projection which distinguishes people from bees is now monopolised by the former class, the owners of the means of doing. For those who are told what to do, the unity of projection-and-doing which distinguishes the worst architect from the best bee is broken. Their humanity, in other words, is broken, denied. Subjectivity (projection-and-doing) is appropriated by the capitalists. The doers, deprived of the unity of projection-and-doing, lose their subjectivity, become reduced to the level of bees. They become objectivised subjects. They lose too their collectivity, their 'we-ness': we are fragmented into a multitude of I's, or, even worse, into a multitude of I's, you's, he's, she's and they's. Once the social flow of doing is broken, the we-ness which it braids is broken too.

The break between projection and doing is also a break between the doers and the doing. The doing is ordained by the non-doers (the commanders of doing), so that the doing becomes an alien act (an externally imposed act) for those who do. Their doing is transformed from an active doing to a passive, suffered, alien doing. Doing becomes labour. Doing which is not directly commanded by others is separated from labour and seen as less important: ‘What do you do?’ ‘Oh, I don’t do anything, I’m just a housewife.’

The separation between doer and doing, doing and done, is a growing separation. The capitalists’ control of the done (and hence of the means of doing) grows and grows, accumulates and accumulates. The fact that capitalist rule is focused on the done rather than on the doers means that it is boundlessly voracious in a way in which doer-centred domination (slavery, feudalism) is not. ‘Accumulate! Accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!’ (Marx, 1965, p. 595) The endless drive to increase the quantitative accumulation of the done (dead labour, capital) imposes an ever faster rhythm of doing and an ever more desperate appropriation of the product of doing by the owner of the done. The done comes to dominate the doing and the doer more and more.

The crystallisation of that-which-has-been-done into a ‘thing’ shatters the flow of doing into a million fragments. Thing-ness denies the primacy of doing (and hence of humanity). When we use a computer, we think of it as a thing, not of the union of our writing with the flow of doing which created the computer. Thing-ness is crystallised amnesia. The doing that created the thing (not just that specific doing, but the whole flow of doing of which it is a part) is forgotten. The thing now stands there on its own as a commodity to be sold, with its own value. The value of the commodity is the declaration of the commodity’s autonomy from doing. The doing which created the commodity is forgotten, the collective flow of doing of which it is part is forced underground, turned into a subterranean stream. Value acquires a life of its own. The breaking of the flow of doing is carried to its ultimate consequences. Doing is forced underground, and with it the doers, but it is more than that: those who exercise power-over too are pushed aside by the fragmentation on which their power-over is based. The subject in capitalist society is not the capitalist. It is not the capitalists who take the decisions, who shape what is done. It is value. It is capital, accumulated value. That which the capitalists ‘own’, capital, has pushed the capitalists aside. They are capitalists only to the extent that they are loyal servants of capital. The very significance of ownership falls into the background. Capital acquires a dynamic of its own and the leading members of society are quite simply its most loyal servants, its most servile courtiers. The rupture of the flow of doing is carried to its most absurd consequences. Power-over is separated from the powerful. Doing is denied and the crystallised negation of doing, value, rules the world.

Instead of doing being the braiding of our lives, it is now the negation of doing, value, in the form of its visible and universal equivalent, money, which braids our lives, or rather tears our lives apart and sticks the fragments back together into a cracked whole.

IV

Power-to is inherently social and is transformed into its opposite, power-over, by the form of this sociality. Our capacity to do is unavoidably part of the social flow of doing, yet the fracturing of this flow subordinates this capacity to forces we do not control.

Doing, then, exists antagonistically, as a doing turned against itself, as a doing dominated by the done, as a doing alienated from the doer. The antagonistic existence of doing can be formulated in different ways: as an antagonism between power-to and power-over, between doing and labour,

between done and capital, between utility (use-value) and value, between social flow of doing and fragmentation. In each case there is a binary antagonism between the former and the latter, but it is not an external antagonism. In each case, the former exists as the latter: the latter is the mode of existence or form of the former. In each case, the latter denies the former, so that the former exists in the mode of being denied. In each case, the content (the former) is dominated by its form but exists in antagonistic tension with this form. This domination of form over content (of labour over doing, of capital over done, and so on) is the source of those horrors against which we scream.

But what is the status of that which exists in the form of being denied? Does it exist at all? Where is power-to, where is unalienated doing, where is the collective flow of doing? Do they have any sort of existence separate from the forms in which they currently exist? Are they not mere ideas, or romantic echoes of an imagined Golden Age? They are certainly not intended as a romantic harking back to a past age: whether there was ever a golden age of free doing (primitive communism) does not really matter to us now. They point not towards the past but towards a possible future: a future whose possibility depends on its real existence in the present. That which exists in the form of being denied exists, therefore and inevitably, in rebellion against this denial. There is no unalienated doing in the past, nor can it exist, hippily, in a present idyll: nevertheless, it exists, crucially, as present antagonism to its denial, as present projection-beyond-its-denial-to-a-different-world, as a presently existing not-yet. That which exists in the form of being denied is the substance of the ecstatic, the materiality of the scream, the truth which allows us to speak of the existing world as untrue.

But it is more than that. The power-to that exists in the form of power-over, in the form, therefore, of being denied, exists not only as revolt against its denial, it exists also as material substratum of the denial. The denial cannot exist without that which is denied. The done depends on the doing. The owner of the done depends on the doer. No matter how much the done denies the existence of the doing, as in the case of value, as in the case of capital, there is no way in which the done can exist without the doing. No matter how much the done dominates the doing, it depends absolutely on that doing for its existence. Rulers, in other words, always depend on those whom they rule. Capital depends absolutely upon the labour which creates it (and therefore on the prior transformation of doing into labour). That which exists depends for its existence on that which exists only in the form of its denial. That is the weakness of any system of rule and the key to understanding its dynamic. That is the basis for hope.

'Power', then, is a confusing term which conceals an antagonism (and does so in a way that reflects the power of the powerful). 'Power' is used in two quite different senses, as power-to and as power-over. The problem is sometimes addressed in English by borrowing terms from other languages and making a distinction between potentia (power-to) and potestas (power-over). However, posing the distinction in these terms can be seen as pointing merely to a difference whereas what is at issue is an antagonism, or rather, an antagonistic metamorphosis. Power-to exists as power-over, but the power-to is subjected to and in rebellion against power-over.

The struggle of the scream is the struggle to liberate power-to from power-over, the struggle to liberate doing from labour, to liberate subjectivity from its objectification. In this struggle, it is crucial to see that it is not a matter of power against power, of like against like. The struggle to liberate power-to from power-over is the struggle for the reassertion of the social flow of doing, against its fragmentation and denial. On the one side is the struggle to re-braid our lives on the basis of mutual recognition of our participation in the collective flow of doing, on the other side is the attempt to impose and re-impose the fragmentation of that flow, the denial of our doing. From the perspective of the scream, the Leninist aphorism that power is a matter of who-whom is absolutely

false, as indeed is the Maoist saying that power comes out of the barrel of a gun: power-over comes out of the barrel of a gun, but not power-to. The struggle to liberate power-to is not the struggle to construct a counter-power, but rather an anti-power, something that is radically different from power-over. Concepts of revolution that focus on the taking of power are typically centred on the notion of counter-power. The strategy is to construct a counter-power, a power that can stand against the ruling power. Often the revolutionary movement has been constructed as a mirror image of power, army against army, party against party, with the result that power reproduces itself within the revolution itself. Anti-power, then, is not counter-power, but something much more radical: it is the dissolution of power-over, the emancipation of power-to. This is the great, absurd, inevitable challenge of the communist dream: to create a society free of power relations through the dissolution of power-over. This project is far more radical than any notion of revolution based on the conquest of power and at the same time far more realistic.

Anti-power is fundamentally opposed to power-over not only in the sense of being a radically different project but also in the fact that it exists in constant conflict with power-over. The attempt to exercise power-to in a way that does not entail the exercise of power over others, inevitably comes into conflict with power-over. Potentia is not an alternative to potestas that can simply co-exist peacefully with it. It may appear that we can simply cultivate our own garden, create our own world of loving relations, refuse to get our hands dirty in the filth of power, but this is an illusion. There is no innocence, and this is true with an increasing intensity. The exercise of power-to in a way that does not focus on value creation can exist only in antagonism to power-over. This is due not to the character of power-to (which is not inherently antagonistic) as to the voracious nature, the 'were-wolf hunger' (Marx 1965, p. 243) of power-over. Power-to, if it does not submerge itself in power-over, can exist, overtly or latently, only as power-against, as anti-power.

It is important to stress the anti-ness of power-to under capitalism, because most mainstream discussions of social theory overlook the antagonistic nature of developing one's potential. The antagonistic nature of power is overlooked and it is assumed that capitalist society provides the opportunity to develop human potential (power-to) to the full. Money, if it is seen as being relevant at all (and, amazingly, it is generally not mentioned in discussions of power, presumably on the basis that money is economics and power is sociology), is generally seen in terms of inequality (unequal access to resources, for example), rather than in terms of command. Power-to, it is assumed, is already emancipated.

The same point can be made in relation to subjectivity. The fact that power-to can exist only exist as antagonism to power-over (as anti-power) means of course that, under capitalism, subjectivity can only exist antagonistically, in opposition to its own objectification. To treat the subject as already emancipated, as most mainstream theory does, is to endorse the present objectification of the subject as subjectivity, as freedom. Many of the attacks on subjectivity by structuralists or post-modernists can perhaps be understood in this sense, as attacks on a false notion of an emancipated (and hence autonomous and coherent) subjectivity. To argue here for the inevitability of taking subjectivity as our starting point is not to argue for a coherent or autonomous subjectivity. On the contrary, the fact that subjectivity can exist only in antagonism to its own objectification means that it is torn apart by that objectification and its struggle against it.

This book is an exploration of the absurd and shadowy world of anti-power. It is shadowy and absurd simply because the world of orthodox social science (sociology, political science, economics and so on) is a world in which power is so completely taken for granted that nothing else is visible. In the social science that seeks to explain the world as it is, to show how the world works, power is the keystone of all categories, so that, in spite of (indeed, because of) its proclaimed neutrality, this

social science participates actively in the separation of subject and object which is the substance of power. To us, power is of interest only in so far as it helps us to understand the challenge of anti-power: the study of power on its own, in abstraction from the challenge and project of anti-power, can do nothing but actively reproduce power.

V

We have presented the issue of power in terms of a binary antagonism between doing and done, in which the done, existing in the form of capital (apparently controlled by, but actually in control of, the capitalists) subordinates, ever more voraciously, all doing to the sole purpose of its self-expansion.

But is this not too simple? Surely that which we scream against is far more complex than this? What about the way that doctors treat their patients, what about the way that teachers treat their students, that parents treat their children? What of the treatment of blacks by whites? What about the subordination of women to men? Is it not too simplistic, too reductionist, to say that power is capital and capital is power? Are there not many different types of power?

Foucault in particular makes the argument that it is mistaken to think of power in terms of a binary antagonism, that we must think of it rather in terms of a 'multiplicity of relations of force'. (1976, p. 121) Corresponding to the multiplicity of power relations there is then a multiplicity of resistances, 'present everywhere in the network of power. In relation to power, there is therefore not one place of the great Refusal – soul of revolt, hearth of all rebellion, pure law of the revolutionary. But resistances which are special cases: possible, necessary, improbable, spontaneous, wild, solitary, concerted, rampant, violent, irreconcilable, ready to negotiate, interested, or sacrificial: by definition, they can exist only on the strategic field of the relations of power'. (1976, p. 126)

In terms of our scream, that would suggest an endless multiplicity of screams. And indeed it is so: we scream in many different ways and for many different reasons. From the beginning of our argument it was stressed that the 'we-ness' of 'we scream' is a central question in this book, not a simple assertion of identity. Why, then, insist on the binary nature of an over-riding antagonism between doing and done? It cannot be a matter of an abstract defence of a Marxist approach – that would make no sense. Nor is it in any sense the intention to impose a single identity or unity upon the manifest multiplicity of resistance, to subordinate all the variety of resistances to the a priori unity of the Working Class. Nor can it be a matter of emphasising the empirical role of the working class and its importance in relation to 'other forms of struggle'.

In order to explain our insistence on the binary nature of the antagonism of power (or, in more traditional terms, our insistence on a class analysis), it is necessary to retrace our steps. The starting point of the argument here is not the urge to understand society or to explain how it works. Our starting point is much more pointed: the scream, the drive to change society radically. It is from that perspective that we ask how society works. That starting point led us to place the question of doing in the centre of our discussion, and this in turn led us to the antagonism between doing and done.

Obviously, other perspectives are possible. It is more common to start positively, with the question of how society works. Such a perspective does not necessarily lead to a focus on doing and the way in which doing is organised. In the case of Foucault, it leads rather to a focus on talking, on language. This perspective certainly allows him to elucidate the enormous richness and complexity

of power relations in contemporary society and, more important from our perspective, the richness and complexity of resistance to power. However, the richness and complexity is the richness of a still photograph, or of a painting. There is no movement in the society that Foucault analyses: change from one still photograph to another, but no movement. There cannot be, unless the focus is on doing and its antagonistic existence. Thus, in Foucault's analysis, there are a whole host of resistances which are integral to power, but there is no possibility of emancipation. The only possibility is an endlessly shifting constellation of power-and-resistance.

The argument in this chapter has led to two important results, which it is worth reiterating. Firstly, the focus on doing has led to an intimation of the vulnerability of power-over. The done depends on the doer, capital depends on labour. That is the crucial chink of light, the glimmer of hope, the turning-point in the argument. The realisation that the powerful depend on the 'powerless' transforms the scream from a scream of anger to a scream of hope, a confident scream of anti-power. This realisation takes us beyond the merely radical-democratic perspective of an endless struggle against power to a position from which we can pose the issue of the vulnerability of capital and the real possibility of social transformation. From this perspective, then, we must ask of any theory not so much how it illuminates the present, but what light it throws on the vulnerability of rule. What we want is not a theory of domination, but a theory of the vulnerability of domination, of the crisis of domination. The emphasis on understanding power in terms of a 'multiplicity of relations of force' does not give us any basis for posing this question. Indeed, on the contrary, it tends to exclude the question, for, while resistance is central to Foucault's approach (at least in his later work), the notion of emancipation is ruled out as being absurd, for it pre-supposes, as Foucault correctly points out, the assumption of a unity in the relations of power.

To pose the question of the vulnerability of power thus requires two steps: the opening of the category of power to reveal its contradictory character, which has been described here in terms of the antagonism between power-to and power-over; and secondly, the understanding of this antagonistic relation as an internal relation. Power-to exists as power-over: power-over is the form of power-to, a form which denies its substance. Power-over can exist only as transformed power-to. Capital can exist only as the product of transformed doing (labour). That is the key to its weakness. The issue of form, so central to Marx's discussion of capitalism, is crucial for an understanding of the vulnerability of domination. The distinction which Negri makes (and develops so brilliantly) between constituent and constituted power takes the first of these two steps and opens up an understanding of the self-antagonistic nature of power as a pre-condition for talking about revolutionary transformation. However, the relation between constituent and constituted power remains an external one. Constitution (the transformation of constituent into constituted power) is seen as a reaction to the democratic constituent power of the multitude. This, however, tells us nothing about the vulnerability of the process of constitution. In the face of power-over (constituted power) it tells us of the ubiquity and force of the absolute struggle of the multitude, but it tells us nothing of the crucial nexus of dependence of power-over (constituted power) upon power-to (constituent power). In this sense, for all the force and brilliance of his account, Negri remains at the level of radical-democratic theory.

Does this emphasis on the perspective of the scream lead us then to an impoverished view of society? The argument above seems to suggest that the perspective of the scream leads to a binary view of the antagonism between doing and done, and that in such a perspective there is no room for the 'multiplicity of forces' which Foucault sees as essential to the discussion of power. This seems to suggest a split between the revolutionary or negative perspective and the understanding of the undoubted richness and complexity of society. This would indeed be the case (and would constitute a major problem for our argument) if it were not for the second result of our previous discussion,

namely that the antagonistic relation between doing and done, and specifically the radical fracturing of the flow of doing that is inherent in the fact that power-over exists as ownership of the done, means a multiple fragmentation of doing (and of social relations). In other words, the very understanding of social relations as being characterised by a binary antagonism between doing and done means that this antagonism exists in the form of a multiplicity of antagonisms, a great heterogeneity of conflict. There are indeed a million forms of resistance, an immensely complex world of antagonisms. To reduce these to an empirical unity of conflict between capital and labour, or to argue for a hegemony of working class struggle, understood empirically, or to argue that these apparently non-class resistances must be subsumed under class struggle, would be an absurd violence. The argument here is just the contrary: the fact that capitalist society is characterised by a binary antagonism between doing and done means that this antagonism exists as a multiplicity of antagonisms. It is the binary nature of power (as antagonism between power-to and power-over) that means that power appears as a 'multiplicity of forces'. Rather than starting with the multiplicity, we need to start with the prior multiplication that gives rise to this multiplicity. Rather than starting with the multiple identities (women, blacks, gays, Basques, Irish and so on), we need to start from the process of identification that gives rise to those identities. In this perspective, one aspect of Foucault's enormously stimulating writings is precisely that, without presenting it in those terms, he greatly enriches our understanding of the fragmentation of the flow of doing, our historical understanding of what we shall characterise in the next chapter as the process of fetishisation.

A last point needs to be dealt with before passing on to the discussion of fetishism. It is an important part of Foucault's argument that power should not be seen in purely negative terms, that we must also understand the way in which power constitutes reality and constitutes us. That is clearly so: we are conceived and born not in a power-free vacuum but in a power-traversed society: we are products of that society. Foucault, however, fails to open up the category of power, to point to the fundamental antagonism that characterises it. Thus, we can say, for example, that we are products of capital, or that everything we consume is a commodity. That is clearly so, but it is deceptive. It is only when we open up these categories, when we say, for example, that the commodity is characterised by an antagonism between value and use-value (utility), that use-value exists in the form of value, and in rebellion against this form, that the full development of our human potential pre-supposes our participation in this rebellion, and so on: it is only then that we can make sense of the statement that everything we consume is a commodity. It is only then that it makes sense to speak of the commodity-form as a form of relations to be rejected and fought against. Similarly, with power: it is only when we open up the category of power and see power-over as the form of power-to that we can fully understand power-over as a form of social relations to be rejected and fought against.

Chapter 4 - Fetishism

The Tragic Dilemma: The Urgent Impossibility of Revolution

I

In the last chapter, we argued that the transformation of power-to into power-over is centred on the rupture of the social flow of doing. In capitalism, the done is severed from and turned against the doing. This severing of the done from the doing is the core of a multiple fracturing of all aspects of life.

Without naming names, we have already entered upon a discussion of fetishism. Fetishism is the term that Marx uses to describe the rupture of doing. Fetishism is the core of Marx's discussion of power and central to any discussion of changing the world. It is the centrepiece of the argument of this book.

Fetishism is a category that does not fit easily into normal academic discourse. Partially for that reason, it has been relatively neglected by those who would force Marxism into the moulds of the different academic disciplines. Although it is a central category in Marx's *Capital*, it is almost completely ignored by those who regard themselves as Marxist economists. It is similarly overlooked by Marxist sociologists and political scientists, who usually prefer to start from the category of class and adapt it to the frameworks of their disciplines. Fetishism, in so far as it is discussed at all, is often seen as falling in the realm of philosophy or cultural criticism. Relegated and classified in this way, the concept loses its explosive force.

The force of the concept lies in that it refers to an unsustainable horror: the self-negation of doing.

II

The young Marx discusses the self-negation of doing not in terms of fetishism but in terms of 'alienation' or 'estrangement'. Alienation, a term now often used to describe a general social malaise, refers in Marx's discussion to the rupturing of doing which is characteristic of the capitalist organisation of production.

In his discussion of 'estranged labour' in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx starts from the process of production, arguing that under capitalism production is not just production of an object, but production of an object that is alien to the producer: 'The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.' (1975, p. 272; emphasis in the original)

The sundering of doer from done is inevitably the sundering of the doer himself. The production of an alien object is inevitably an active process of self-estrangement. 'How could the worker come to face the product of his activity as a stranger, were it not that in the very act of production he was

estranging himself from himself?...If then the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation.' (1975, p. 274) Alienation of man from his own activity is self-estrangement: it is the worker himself who actively produces his own estrangement.

The rupture of the doer from the done is the negation of the doer's power-to. The doer is turned into a victim. Activity is turned into passivity, doing into suffering. Doing is turned against the doer. 'This relation is the relation of the worker to his own activity as an alien activity not belonging to him; it is activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating, the worker's own physical and mental energy, his personal life - for what is life but activity? - as an activity which is turned against him, independent of him and not belonging to him.' (1975, p. 275)

Alienation is the production of humans who are damaged, maimed, deprived of their humanity: 'In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labour tears from him his species-life, his real objectivity as a member of the species, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken away from him'. (1975, p. 277) This 'tearing away from man the object of his production' alienates him from his collective humanity, his 'species-being': 'Estranged labour turns ... man's species-being ... into a being alien from him, into a means for his individual existence.' (1975, p. 277) This implies the fragmentation of the collective human subject, the 'estrangement of man from man'. (1975, p. 277). Mutual recognition is broken, not just between ruler and ruled, but between the workers themselves. 'What applies to a man's relation to his work, to the product of his labour and to himself, also holds of a man's relation to the other man, and to the other man's labour and object of labour. In fact, the proposition that man's species-nature is estranged from him means that one man is estranged from the other, as each of them is from man's essential nature.' (MECW3, 277) The term 'species-life' or 'species-being' refers surely to nothing other than the social flow of human doing, the material braiding of a mutually recognitive 'we'.

This estrangement of man from man is not only an estrangement between workers but also the production of the non-worker, the master. 'If the product of labour does not belong to the worker, if it confronts him as an alien power, then this can only be because it belongs to some other man than the worker.' (MECW3, 278). Estranged labour is the active producing of domination, the active conversion of power-to into power-over: 'Just as he creates his own production as the loss of his reality, as his punishment; his own product as a loss, as a product not belonging to him; so he creates the domination of the person who does not produce over the product. Just as he estranges his activity from himself, so he confers upon the stranger an activity which is not his own.' (MECW3, 279)

The notion of alienation thus refers to the breaking of the social flow of doing, the turning of doing against itself. This is not the result of fate or divine intervention: human doing is the only subject, the sole constitutive power. We are the only gods, the sole creators. Our problem, as creators, is that we are creating our own destruction. We create the negation of our own creation. Doing negates itself. Activity becomes passivity, doing becomes non-doing, being. Alienation points both to our dehumanisation and to our complicity in the production of our own dehumanisation. But how can maimed, dehumanised, alienated people possibly create a liberated, human society? Alienation signals not only the urgency but also, apparently, the impossibility of revolutionary change.

III

The rupture of doing and done is introduced right at the beginning of Capital. Echoing the words of

the 1844 Manuscripts ('The alienation of the worker in his product means ... that ... it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him.'). Marx begins the second paragraph of *Capital* saying, 'A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us. ' (1965, p. 35) The commodity is an object produced by us, but standing outside us. The commodity takes on a life of its own in which its social origin in human labour is extinguished. It is a product which denies its own character as product, a done which denies its own relation to doing.

The commodity is the point of fracture of the social flow of doing. As a product produced for exchange, it stands at the unhinging or dis-articulation of social doing. It is of course the product of a social doing, but the fact that it is produced for exchange on the market breaks the flow of doing, makes the thing stand apart from the doing of which it is both product and precondition. It stands on its own to be sold on the market, the work that produced it forgotten. The labour which produces it is social (labour for others), but it is indirectly social, it is labour for others which exists in the form of labour for oneself. The sociality of doing is ruptured, and with it the process of mutual recognition and social validation. Mutual recognition is removed from the producers and transferred to their products: it is the product which is recognised socially, in the process of exchange. Recognition of doing is expressed as the value of the product. It is now the quantitative, monetary measure of value (price) which provides social validation for the doing of people. It is money which tells you whether what you do is socially useful.

The commodity, then, is not a thing to be taken at face value. Analysis allows us to discern the labour that has produced the commodity and to see labour as the substance of its value, but that just leads us on to a far bigger question: why is it that the doing which produced the commodity is negated? 'Political Economy has indeed analysed, however incompletely, value and its magnitude, and has discovered what lies beneath these forms. But it has never once asked the question why labour is represented by the value of its product and labour-time by the magnitude of that value.' (1965, p. 80)

Capital is a study of the self-negation of doing. From the commodity, Marx moves on to value, money, capital, profit, rent, interest – ever more opaque forms of the occultation of doing, ever more sophisticated forms of the suppression of power-to. Doing (human activity) disappears further and further from sight. Things rule. It is in this world where things rule, where the novum of human creativity disappears from sight, in this 'enchanted, perverted, topsy-turvy world' (Marx 1975, p. 830), that it becomes possible to speak of the 'laws of capitalist development'. It is on the basis of the critique of this insanity that it becomes possible to criticise the categories of the political economists, the rationality and laws of their analysis of an irrational, perverted world.

The core of all this is the separation of the done from the doing. This is inherent in the commodity, and receives its fully developed form in capital, the appropriation of the done by the owners of the past done (and therefore of the means of doing), the accumulation of done upon done, the accumulation of capital. 'Accumulate! Accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!' Accumulation is simply the voracious, relentless process of separating done from doing, of turning the done (as means of doing) against the doers in order to subject their future doing to the sole end of further accumulation. It is this ever-renewed process that gives a specific form to doing (as abstract labour, labour abstracted from any particular content, value production, surplus value production) and to the done (as value, as commodity, as money, as capital): all aspects of the ever-repeated rupture of the collective flow of doing.

Marx now refers to this process of rupture not as alienation, but as 'fetishism'. In his discussion of

fetishism at the end of chapter 1 of the first volume of *Capital*, he explains: 'In order ... to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent things endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and with the human race.'(1965, p. 72) The commodity is 'a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties' (1965, p. 71). The 'mystical character of commodities', Marx says, comes not from their use value, but from the commodity form itself, that is, from the fact that the product of labour assumes the form of a commodity. 'The equality of all sorts of human labour is expressed objectively by their products all being equally values; the measure of the expenditure of labour-power by the duration of that expenditure, takes the form of the quantity of value of the products of labour; and finally, the mutual relations of the producers, within which the social character of their labour affirms itself, take the form of a social relation between the products. A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour.'(1965, p. 72).

Just as Marx had insisted on understanding self-estrangement as the product of self-estranged labour, so he emphasises that the peculiar character of commodities has its origin in the 'peculiar social character of the labour that produces them'.(1965, p. 72) Commodity production is indirectly social labour: although the products are produced for social use, the form of production is private. 'Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labour does not show itself except in the act of exchange. In other words, the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between the producers. To the latter, therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things.'(1965, p. 73; my emphasis). Social relations do not merely appear to be relations between things: rather, this appearance reflects the real fracturing of doing and done, the real rupture of the community of doing. Relations between doers really are refracted through relations between things (between dones that deny their origin in the sociality of doing). These things are the fetishised forms of the relations between producers, and, as such, they deny their character as social relations. Commodities, value, money conceal, 'instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between the individual producers'.(1965, p. 76)

The fracturing of social relations is consolidated by bourgeois thought, which takes these fetishised forms as its basis rather than criticising them. 'The categories of bourgeois economy consist of such like forms. They are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production, viz., the production of commodities.'(1965, p. 76) There is, then, no clear distinction here between thought and reality, theory and practice. Theory is an element of practice, actively contributing to the production and reproduction of the separation of doing from done.

The starting point for our thought is the fetishised world which confronts us. We are born into a world in which the community of doing is fractured. The separation of doing and done permeates our whole relation to the world and to those around us. Our vision of the world is already pre-shaped before we begin to reflect critically. Power-over, that separation of doing and done which is inherent in the production of commodities for the market, presents itself here impersonally. Marx introduces fetishism in the context of the production and exchange of commodities. This is not,

however, a pre-capitalist phase, for the generalisation of commodity production presupposes the existence of labour power as a commodity, that is, the existence of a capitalist society. Commodity fetishism is, therefore, the penetration of capitalist power-over into the core of our being, into all our habits of thought, all our relations with other people.

Confronted with the fetishised world, all we can do is criticise. Value, for example, 'does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social products; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language.'(1965, p. 74) 'Man's reflections on the forms of social life, and consequently, also his scientific analysis of those forms, take a course directly opposite to that of their actual historical development. He begins, post festum, with the results of the process of development ready to hand before him.'(1965, p. 75)

Bourgeois thought has, in the best of cases, managed to decipher some of the social hieroglyphics. 'Political Economy has indeed analysed, however incompletely, value and its magnitude, and has discovered what lies beneath these forms.'(1965, p. 80) There is, however, a limit to bourgeois criticism. The separation of subject and object, doing and done, inevitably involves a hypostatisation of the present, a fixation of the present. As long as the separation of subject and object is not questioned, as long as the capitalist form of social organisation is not seen as transient, criticism is inevitably blind to the historicity of the phenomena criticised. The rupture of the sociality of doing is assumed to be natural, eternal. In other words, bourgeois (fetishised) thought is blind to the question of form. The question of form (value, money or capital as forms of social relations) arises only if one is alive to the historicity of bourgeois social relations, that is, to the fact that capitalism is a particular historical form of organising relations between people. 'If ... we treat this mode of production as one eternally fixed by Nature for every state of society, we necessarily overlook that which is the *differentia specifica* of the value-form, and consequently of the commodity-form, and of its further developments, money-form, capital-form, &c.'(1965, p. 81) Consequently, bourgeois criticism does not look to the genesis of the phenomenon criticised, does not ask why social relations exist in these forms.

The category of form is central to Marx's discussion in *Capital*. He speaks of 'money-form', 'commodity-form', 'capital-form' and so on. These are not to be understood in the sense of a species-genus distinction (money as a 'form' or 'species' of something else), but simply as a mode of existence. Money, commodity, capital are modes of existence of social relations, the forms in which social relations currently exist. These are the frozen or rigidified modes of existence of relations between people. 'Form', then, is the echo of the scream, a message of hope. We scream against things as they are: yes, comes the echo, but things-as-they-are are not eternal, they are just the historically congealed forms of social relations. 'These formulae, which bear it stamped upon them in unmistakable letters that they belong to a state of society, in which the process of production has the mastery over man, instead of being controlled by him, such formulae appear to the bourgeois intellect to be as much a self-evident necessity imposed by Nature as productive labour itself.'(1965, pp. 80-81) But for us who scream, they are neither self-evident nor eternal.

It should already be clear what a central part the concept of fetishism plays in revolutionary theory. It is at once a critique of bourgeois society, a critique of bourgeois theory and an explanation of the stability of bourgeois society. It points at once to the dehumanisation of people, to our own complicity in the reproduction of power, and to the difficulty (or apparent impossibility) of revolution.

The concept of fetishism is central to Marx's critique of capitalist society. The theme of dehumanisation is constantly present in Marx's discussion in *Capital* and elsewhere. In capitalism there is an inversion of the relation between people and things, between subject and object. There is an objectification of the subject and a subjectification of the object: things (money, capital, machines) become the subjects of society, people (workers) become the objects. Social relations are not just apparently but really relations between things (between money and the state, between your money and mine), while humans are deprived of their sociality, transformed into 'individuals', the necessary complement of commodity exchange ('In order that this alienation be reciprocal, it is only necessary for men, by a tacit understanding, to treat each other as private owners, and by implication as independent individuals'(1965, p. 87)). In the long and detailed discussion of conditions in the factory and the process of exploitation, the emphasis is constantly on the inversion of subject and object: 'Every kind of capitalist production, in so far as it is not only a labour-process, but also a process of creating surplus-value, has this in common, that it is not the workman who employs the instruments of labour, but the instruments of labour that employ the workman. But it is only in the factory system that this inversion for the first time acquires technical and palpable reality.'(1965, p. 423) It is not only for the physical misery that it brings, but above all for the inversion of things and people that Marx condemns capitalism: for the fetishisation of social relations in other words.

Inextricably linked with the condemnation of the inversion of subject and object in bourgeois society is the critique of bourgeois theory which takes this inversion for granted, which bases its categories on the fetishised forms of social relations: the state, money, capital, the individual, profit, wages, rent and so on. These categories are derived from the surface of society, the sphere of circulation, in which the subjectivity of the subject as producer is completely out of sight and all that can be seen is the interaction of things and of the individuals who are the bearers of these things. It is here, where social subjectivity is hidden from view, that liberal theory blooms. This sphere of circulation is 'a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham.'(1965, p. 176) The whole three volumes of *Capital* are devoted to a critique of political economy, that is, to showing how the conceptions of political economy arise from the fetishised appearances of social relations. Political economy (and bourgeois theory in general) takes for granted the forms in which social relations exist (commodity-form, value-form, money-form, capital-form and so on). In other words, bourgeois theory is blind to the question of form: commodities and money (and so on) are not even thought of as being forms, or modes of existence, of social relations. Bourgeois theory is blind to the transitory nature of the current forms of social relations, takes for granted the basic unchangeability (the 'is-ness') of capitalist social relations.

Bourgeois thought, however, is not just the thought of the bourgeoisie, or of capitalism's active supporters. It refers rather to the forms of thought generated by the fractured relation between doing and done (subject and object) in capitalist society. It is crucially important to see that the critique of bourgeois theory is not just a critique of 'them'. It is also, and perhaps above all, a critique of 'us', of the bourgeois nature of our own assumptions and categories, or, more concretely, a critique of our own complicity in the reproduction of capitalist power relations. The critique of bourgeois thought is the critique of the separation of subject and object in our own thought.

The fetishism which is so highly elaborated in the work of the political economists and other bourgeois theorists is equally the basis of everyday 'common-sense' conceptions in capitalist society. The assumption of the permanence of capitalism is built into the daily thought and practice of people in this society. The appearance and real existence of social relations as fragmented relations between things conceal both the basic antagonism of those relations and the possibility of

changing the world. The concept of fetishism (rather than any theory of 'ideology' or 'hegemony') thus provides the basis for an answer to the age-old question, 'why do people accept the misery, violence and exploitation of capitalism?' By pointing to the way in which people not only accept the miseries of capitalism but also actively participate in its reproduction, the concept of fetishism also underlines the difficulty or apparent impossibility of revolution against capitalism. Fetishism is the central theoretical problem confronted by any theory of revolution. Revolutionary thought and practice is necessarily anti-fetishistic. Any thought or practice which aims at the emancipation of humanity from the dehumanisation of capitalism is necessarily directed against fetishism.

IV

The tragic dilemma of revolutionary change, the fact that its urgency and its apparent impossibility are two sides of the same process, intensifies to the degree that the fetishism of social relations becomes more penetrating and more pervasive.

The separation of doing and done, of subject and object, it is clear from Marx's discussion in *Capital*, goes beyond the immediate 'tearing away from man the object of his production' by the exploiting class. It is not just that the capitalist tears away from the worker the object which she has produced. The fact that the sociality of doing is mediated (broken and stuck together cracked) through the market (the sale and purchase of commodities) means that the rupture of doing and done is by no means limited to the immediate process of exploitation, but extends to the whole society. The whole of capitalism is cracked, 'an enchanted, perverted, topsy-turvy world' (*Capital* III, 830). Although Marx's focus in *Capital* is on the critique of political economy, there is no reason at all to think that fetishism extends only to the sphere conceptualised by political economy. The implication of Marx's discussion is rather that fetishism permeates the whole of society, that the whole of capitalism is 'an enchanted, perverted, topsy-turvy world', and that the subjectification of the object and the objectification of the subject is characteristic of every aspect of life. 'Separation', says Marx, is the 'real generation process of capital'. (1972, p. 422)

The question of the all-pervasive character of fetishism is taken up by a number of authors working in the Marxist tradition. The further the argument is developed, the more intense the tragic dilemma of revolution becomes. The more urgent revolutionary change is shown to be, the more impossible it seems. In terms of reification, instrumental rationality, one-dimensionality, identity, discipline, the different authors have emphasised the penetration of power into every sphere of our existence, the increasing closure of existence under capitalism. Their work raises to an excruciating pitch the intensity of the revolutionary dilemma.

Rather than try to give an account of the contributions of the different theorists, we shall try to build on their work to develop some of the points made in the previous chapter. This involves going back over the argument so far.

The starting point is the separation of doing and done. This implies an antagonistic separation between the doers and the appropriators of the done. The appropriators of the done (the owners of capital) use their control of the done, which is the means of doing, to get the doers to labour for them to increase the done which they appropriate. The capitalists, in other words, exploit the workers: they pay them what they need in order to survive (the value of their labour power) and appropriate the surplus that they produce (the surplus value). The separation of doing and done implies a dual class analysis, an antagonism between capital and the working class. This is

fundamentally important and nothing in the argument should be taken as derogating from this position.

This class antagonism is often understood within the Marxist and socialist tradition to be an external relation. It is assumed that the antagonism between working class and capital is an external antagonism which leaves the two sides untouched in their fundamentals. The two sides of the antagonism are then a good side (working class) and a bad side (capitalist class). In such a perspective, one might expect that the question of revolution would be a relatively simple one, largely a practical question of organisation. Why, then, has there not been a successful communist revolution? The answers given are usually in terms of ideology, hegemony or false consciousness. The working class does not rise up because it is imbued with the ideology of the market; in a class society, the ideas of the ruling class are hegemonic; the working class suffers from false consciousness. In each case, the question of ideology, hegemony or false consciousness is separated from the question of the separation of doing from done: the sphere of ideology is seen as separate from the 'economic'. The emphasis on the lack of understanding of the working class is usually (inevitably?) accompanied by an assumption that the working class is a 'they'. 'They' have the wrong ideas, so our role (we who have the right ideas) is to enlighten them, to illuminate them, to bring them true consciousness. The problem of organisation is essentially 'how can we make them see?' 'We', of course, are generally assumed not to be subject to the same ideology, hegemony or false consciousness. The political problems inherent in such an approach should be obvious.

A second problem with such an approach is simply that it is unable to account for the complexity of the world. Lines are drawn too crudely, the complexity of social connections is short-circuited, so that Marxism loses its power of conviction. This has been particularly obvious in discussions of changing forms of social conflict in recent years – conflict around issues of gender or the environment, for example. There has been a tendency either to force such struggles into a pre-conceived mould of class struggle, or to speak of them as 'non-class struggles'. In the latter case, the concept of non-class struggle is accompanied either by the view that class struggle is diminishing in importance or that, in spite of everything, the fundamental conflict between capital and labour still remains the most important form of conflict. The understanding of the conflict between labour and capital as an external conflict which leaves both sides essentially untouched leads to the conception of the antagonism as an immediate one, in which both sides are immediately, empirically present. And then come the problems: where was the working class in the struggle against the Vietnam War, against nuclear weapons, where is the working class in support of the zapatista uprising, how can we speak of working class revolution when the working class is numerically on the decline, and so on. All of these questions can be answered, of course, but the cumulative evidence of a separation between 'the working class' as an empirically identifiable group and the most striking forms of rebellion has led to a progressive undermining of the idea that capitalism should be understood in terms of a basic class antagonism.

The argument here is that a class understanding of capitalism is fundamental, but that the class antagonism cannot be understood as an external relation, nor can class be understood in this immediate way. The separation of doing and done, as we have already begun to see in the previous chapter and in the first sections of this one, is not just a simple antagonism between doers and the appropriators of that which is done. Capitalist power-over, the separation of doing and done, is like one of those horrific modern bullets which do not simply pierce the flesh of the victim but explode inside her into a thousand different fragments. Or, less horrifically, capitalist power is like a rocket that shoots up into the sky and explodes into a multitude of coloured flares. To focus on the flares or the fragments of the bullet without seeing the trajectory of the rocket or the bullet is what much post-modern theory (or, indeed, bourgeois theory in general) does. On the other hand, to focus just

on the primary movement of the bullet or the rocket and to treat the flares and the fragments as something external (non-class struggle) is a crudity that is politically unhelpful and theoretically unconvincing.

The concept of fetishism is concerned with the explosion of power inside us, not as something that is distinct from the separation of doing and done (as in the concepts of 'ideology' and 'hegemony'), but as something that is integral to that separation. That separation does not just divide capitalists from workers, but explodes inside us, shaping every aspect of what we do and what we think, transforming every breath of our lives into a moment of class struggle. The problem of why revolution has not happened is not a problem of 'them', but a problem of a fragmented 'us'.

We live, then, in an 'enchanted, perverted, topsy-turvy world' in which relations between people exist in the form of relations between things. Social relations are 'thingified' or 'reified'. The term 'reification' is the one used by Lukács in his *History and Class Consciousness*, published in 1923. As the term 'reification' suggests, Lukács insists on its relevance for every aspect of social life. Reification is not just associated with the immediate labour process, nor just something that affects the 'workers'. 'The fate of the worker becomes the fate of society as a whole'. (1971, 91) 'The transformation of the commodity relation into a thing of 'ghostly objectivity' ... stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man... And there is no natural form in which human relations can be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical and psychic 'qualities' into play without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process.' (1971, 100)

V

The separation of doing from done (and its subordination to the done) establishes the reign of is-ness, or identity. Identity is perhaps the most concentrated (and most challenging) expression of fetishism or reification. The breaking of the flow of doing deprives doing of its movement. Present doing is subordinate to past done. Living labour is subordinated to dead labour. Doing is frozen in mid-flight, transformed into being. The beauty, transfixed by the witch's curse, losing her movement loses her beauty: sleeping beauty is a contradiction in terms. The freezing is not absolute (any more than the rupture of doing is absolute). It is not that everything stands still, but everything is locked into a perpetual continuity, everything is repeated, everything moves forward on tracks.

If the world is looked at from the point of view of doing, it is clearly impossible to say 'the world is', or 'things are', or 'I am'. From the perspective of doing it is clear that everything is movement: the world is and is not, things are and are not, I am and am not. The contradiction that is inherent in these statements presents no problem if we think in terms of doing: in doing I go beyond myself, the world moves beyond itself, and so on. The change in me that is implied in my doing means that I am and am not. But once doing is broken, once doing is subordinated to the done, movement is halted and the statement that I am and am not seems incoherent. Once doing is ruptured, it is no longer doing and contradiction that prevail. Identity rules, contradiction is flattened. The world is, that's the way things are. But if we say 'the world is not; that's the way things are not', these now seem meaningless, illogical statements.

Identity implies the homogenisation of time. When the flow of doing is broken and doing subjected to the done and its quantitative accumulation, then doing is forced onto certain tracks, contained within certain parameters. Doing is reduced to labour, limited to doing-in-the-service-of-the-expansion-of-capital. This both limits the content of doing and imposes a certain (and ever-

increasing) rhythm upon doing. Labour, as doing has become, is measured quantitatively: it is labour for a certain number of hours, labour that produces something that can be sold for a price, labour that produces value, labour which is rewarded quantitatively in money by a wage. People's doing becomes converted into a train that moves faster and faster, but along pre-established tracks. 'Time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable 'things' ...: in short, it becomes space' (Lukács 1971, p. 90). Time becomes clock time, tick-tick time, in which one tick is just the same as another: a time that moves but stays still, treadmill time. The varying intensity of lived time, of the time of passion and happiness and pain, is subordinated to the tick-tick of the clock.

Homogenous time has the present as its axis. It is not that the past and the future are completely denied, but the past and especially the future are subservient to the present: the past is understood as the pre-history of the present, and the future is conceived as the pre-visible extension of the present. Time is seen as a linear movement between past and future. Radically alternative possibilities for the future are pushed aside as fiction. All that lies, lay or might lie outside the tracks of tick-tick time is suppressed. Past struggles that pointed towards something radically different from the present are forgotten. 'All reification is a forgetting', as Horkheimer and Adorno put it. (1972, p.230) The rule of identity is the rule of amnesia. Memory, and with it hope, are subordinated to the relentless movement of the clock which goes nowhere. 'Only with the dismissal of the closed and static concept of being does the true dimension of hope arise.' (Bloch 1993, p. 17)

The rule of identity implies certain linguistic hierarchies. It implies, for example, the dominance of one verb, 'is', over all the others. In a world that is defined, other verbs are de-activated: their force is limited by that which is. Doing is a doing which is not just limited by, but permeated by, that which is: our everyday activity is constrained and permeated by that which is. Put differently, Is-ness implies the dominance of nouns over verbs. That which is becomes crystallised, consolidated, rigidified into nouns: in nouns movement is suppressed or contained. Just as time becomes tick-tick time, movement becomes tick-tick movement, the movement of an object without subject, a movement that itself becomes a thing, a movement rather than a moving.

The separation of doing from done is the separation of constitution or genesis from existence. That which is done is separated off from the doing which did it. It acquires a separate existence distinct from the doing which constituted it. I make a chair. From the perspective of the social flow of doing, there is a fleeting objectification of the chair: it is immediately integrated through use (through doing) into the collective flow (if it is not used, it ceases to be a chair from the perspective of doing). But in capitalism, the objectification is more than fleeting. The chair which I made exists now as the property of my employer. It is a commodity which can be sold. Its existence is quite separate from its constitution. Indeed, its constitution or genesis (the doing which made it) is negated by its existence as a commodity: it is forgotten, a matter of total indifference to the existence of the chair. The purchaser uses the chair and in that sense reincorporates it into doing, but the flow is (really and apparently) broken: there is absolutely no direct relation between the doing of the user and the doing of the maker. Existence acquires a duration. The time of existence of the chair is a time of duration: the chair now is, its is-not-ness totally forgotten. Constitution and existence are sundered. The constituted denies the constituting, the done the doing, the object the subject. The object constituted acquires a durable identity. This sundering (both real and apparent) is crucial to the stability of capitalism. The statement that 'that's the way things are' presupposes that separation. The separation of constitution and existence is the closure of radical alternatives.

VI

The separation of doing from done and the transformation of doing into being (identity) that it implies is the core not only of the rigidification of time but also of the falling apart of every aspect of social relations. If the social flow of doing is what braids people's lives together, if it is the material formation of a 'we', then the fracturing of the collective doing which capitalism involves pulls the braid apart, tears the individual strands of the braid one from another. If the flow of doing implies community, a community across time and space, then the breaking of that flow dismembers all possibility of community.

The breaking of the collective flow of doing brings with it the individualisation of the doers. For the exchange of commodities to take place, both the commodities and their producers must be abstracted from the collectivity of doing. 'In order that this alienation [of commodities] may be reciprocal, it is only necessary for men, by a tacit understanding, to treat each other as private owners of those alienable objects, and by implication as independent individuals. But such a state of reciprocal independence has no existence in a primitive society based on property in common...' (Marx 1965, p. 87) The starting point for thought becomes not the person-as-part-of-the-community but the individual as a person with his own distinct identity. Community can thenceforth be imagined only as the aggregation of discrete individuals, the putting together of beings rather than the flow of doings.

The individual stands apart from the collectivity. He is separated from his species-being or species-life, as the young Marx puts it. In the bourgeois notion of science, that is, in the notion of science which assumes capitalist society to be permanent, this distancing of the individual from the community is prized as a virtue. The further away the scientist of society stands from the society which he is studying the better. The ideal scientist would be an observer placed on the moon, from where he would be able to analyse society with true objectivity. The collectivity, society, becomes an object, separated from the subject by as great a distance as possible.

In this way of thinking, science and objectivity are regarded as synonymous. To study something scientifically is to study it objectively or, if it is accepted that this is not possible, then the scientist must do his best to approximate objectivity, to maintain a distance from the object of study. Objectivity here means suppressing our own subjectivity as far as possible: a subjective statement is considered, by definition, to be unscientific. The notion of what is scientific is thus based upon an obvious falsehood, namely the idea that it is possible to express a thought that excludes the thinker. (This does not, of course, mean that a statement that is explicitly subjective is thereby necessarily correct or scientific).

Identity thus implies a third person discourse. To write scientifically, we write about things in the third person, as 'it' or 'they': political parties are such and such; Marxism is so and so; Britain is this or that. First person discourse (I am bored by political parties; we want a better life; above all, we scream) is regarded as unscientific. Study or theory is therefore study of something or about something, as in: social theory is the study of society, that is a book about Marxism, today we are going to learn about Mexico in the nineteenth century. In each case, the preposition 'of' or 'about' marks a separation or distance between the student or theorist and the object of study. 'Knowledge about' is quite simply the other side of 'power-over'. The best students or theorists of society are those who can view society as though they stood outside it (students who find this pretence difficult often have problems in getting their work recognised, although, again, this does not mean that first person discourse is thereby correct). Theory, then, is what the word 'theory' (from *theōō*, I view) suggests: a viewing or contemplation of an external object. The subject is present, but as a viewer, as a passive rather than an active subject, as a de-subjectified subject, in short as an objectified subject. If we write about 'it', then the only way in which we may appear scientifically is as viewer

(voyeur). Then, precisely because the theory is seen as existing separately from the theorist, it is seen as something that can be 'applied' to the world.

The third person of which we speak is a third person present indicative. What is important in thought that takes identity as its basis is things as they are, not things as they might be or as we wish they were. There is no room for the subjunctive in the scientific discourse of identitarian thought. If we are excluded, then our dreams and wishes and fears are excluded too. The subjunctive mood, the mood of uncertainties, anxieties, longings, possibilities, the mood of the not yet, has no place in the world of objectivity. The language of the world of 'that's-the-way-things-are' is firmly in the indicative mood.

The breaking of the social flow of doing implies, then, that I (no longer the vague 'we') as a social scientist abstract from my feelings and my position in society and try to understand society as it is. Society presents itself to me as a mass of particulars, a multitude of discrete phenomena. I proceed by trying to define the particular phenomena that I want to study and then seeking the connection between those defined phenomena.

Identity implies definition. Once the flow of doing is fractured, once social relations are fragmented into relations between discrete things, then a knowledge which takes that fragmentation for granted can only proceed through defining, delimiting each thing, each phenomenon, each person or group of people. Knowledge proceeds through definition: something is known if it can be defined. What is politics? What is sociology? What is economics? What is a political party? What is Marxism? The introductory questions to study in schools or universities are typically definitional questions. Postgraduate theses typically begin with a definition or delimitation of the object of study. Definition is the description of an identity which is distinct from other identities. Definition aims to delimit identities in a non-contradictory manner: if I define x, it does not make any sense, from a definitional perspective, to say that x is both x and non-x. Definition fixes social relations in their static, fragmented, reified is-ness. A definitional world is a clean world, a world of clear divisions, a world of exclusion, a world in which the other is clearly separated as other. Definition constitutes otherness. The definition of x constitutes non-x as other. If I define myself as Irish, then I am not English; if I define myself as white, then I am not black; if I define myself as Aryan, then I am not Jewish. The English, the blacks, the Jews are Others, not-Us. A whole world of horror is contained in the process of definition.

Definition excludes us as active subjects. The 'we' who started this book, the still unexplored 'we' who want to change the world, are excluded from a definitional view of the world. When we define something, we normally define it as separate from us. Definition constitutes that which is defined as an object, as an object which, by its definition, is separated from the subject. It is no different when 'we' are defined, as in 'we are women' or 'we are the working class': the definition delimits us, denies our active subjectivity (at least in relation to that which is defined), objectifies us. The we-who-want-to-change-the-world cannot be defined.

The world of identity is a world of particulars, individualised and atomised. The table is a table, the chair is a chair, Britain is Britain, Mexico is Mexico. Fragmentation is fundamental to identitarian thought. The world is a fragmented world. A world of absolute identity is thereby also a world of absolute difference. Knowledge of the world is equally fragmented, into the distinct disciplines. Study of society takes place through sociology, political science, economics, history, anthropology and so on, with all their distinct sub-disciplines and endless specialisations, which rest in turn on fragmented concepts of space (Britain, Mexico, Spain), time (the nineteenth century, the 1990s) and social activity (the economy, the political system).

VII

But what is beyond this fragmentation? A world composed purely of particulars would be impossible to conceptualise and impossible to inhabit. The fracturing of doing is the fracturing of collectivity, but some sort of collectivity is necessary, both conceptually and practically. The collectivity is no longer a communal braiding of doing, more a lumping together of particulars into the same bag, much as potatoes in a sack might be said to form a collectivity, to adapt Marx's famous description of the peasants as a class. Collectivities are formed on the basis of identity, on the basis of being, rather than on the movement of doing. This is the process of classification. Doing may well be part of the process of classification, but it is a dead doing, doing that is contained within an identity, within a role or character-mask: classification of doctors as a group, say, is based not on the weaving together of their doing, but on their definition as a certain type of doer, on the imposition of a character-mask as doctor. Classes in this sense are always more or less arbitrary: any collection of identities can be thrown into a sack together, sub-divided into smaller bags, put together into larger containers and so on.

It is the fracturing of doing that, through definition and classification, constitutes collective identities. It is the fracturing of doing that creates the idea that people are something – whatever, doctors, professors, Jews, blacks, women – as though that identity excluded its simultaneous negation. From the perspective of doing, people simultaneously are and are not doctors, Jews, women and so on, simply because doing implies a constant movement against-and-beyond whatever we are. From the perspective of doing, definition can be no more than an evanescent positing of identity which is immediately transcended. The barrier between what one is and what one is not, between collective self and collective other can not therefore be seen as fixed or absolute. It is only if one takes identity as one's standpoint, only if one starts from the acceptance of the rupture of doing, that labels such as 'black', 'Jewish', 'Irish' and so on, take on the character of something fixed. The idea of an 'identity' politics which takes such labels as given inevitably contributes to the fixation of identities. In this, it makes little difference whether one thinks of that identity as woman or man, black or white, gay or heterosexual, Irish or English. The appeal to being, to identity, to what one is, always involves the consolidation of identity, the strengthening, therefore, of the fracturing of doing, in short, the reinforcement of capital.

Classification, the formation of collective identities on the basis of definition, is, of course, not just of immediately political relevance. It is fundamental to the scientific procedure as it is conceived in capitalist society. It is the core of formal abstraction – the attempt to conceptualise the world on the basis of static and non-contradictory categories, rather than on the basis of movement and contradiction (substantive or determinate abstraction). Formal abstraction, abstraction on the basis of identity in other words, is the basis of all the methods and procedures which are recognised as scientific in our institutions of teaching and learning.

Through classification, conceptual hierarchies are formed. Particulars are ordered under universals, universals under higher universals, and so on. This is a desk chair; the desk chair is an upright chair; the upright chair is a chair; the chair is a piece of furniture, and so on. A hierarchy of species and genera is established: a desk chair is a species, or type, or form, or class, of upright chair. The hierarchical ordering of concepts is at the same time a process of formalisation: the concept of chair (or furniture) becomes increasingly separated from any particular content. Lips touch in a kiss; a bullet flies towards the victim. Both the touching of the lips and the flying of the bullet are forms of motion. We can speak of the motion of both in a way that abstracts completely from the different contents of kissing and killing.

Formalisation, the abstraction from content, makes possible the quantification and mathematisation of the object of study. Once lip-touching and bullet-flying are classified as forms of motion, it becomes possible to compare them quantitatively by comparing the speed with the which the different objects move. In quantification all content is left behind: lips and bullet are brought together on the unassailable assumption that $1=1$, $2=2$, $3=3$ and so on.

Quantification, however, is just one aspect of the way in which mathematics develops the formal abstraction which is inherent in identification. If x is x and y is y , then the only way in which we can bring them into relation with each other is formally, by abstracting from their particular content. If we classify John and Jane as people, we do so not by denying their particular identities (John remains John, Jane remains Jane), but by abstracting from them, by leaving aside their particular contents as John or Jane and focusing on their formal equivalence as people. Formal abstraction is at the same time homogenisation: in identitarian thought one person is equal to another in the same homogeneous way that one tick of time is equal to another, one square metre of space is equal to another. Once particularities are left behind, it is possible to develop a formal reasoning which aims at making the whole structure of identification and classification as rigorous, orderly and non-contradictory as possible. Formal logic and mathematics start from the simple identity $x=x$ and develop its implications to the highest degree possible. If x were not x , if x were both x and not- x , then the basis of mathematics would be undermined. The mutual exclusion of x and non- x is expressed most clearly in binary logic (Boolean algebra), in which everything is expressed as 1 or 0, True or False, Yes or No. There is no room here for the yes-and-no or maybe of common experience. Over the last 50 years, binary logic has been elaborated with extraordinary practical impact in the development of computing.

The separation of doing from done which is the basis of fetishism or reification thus involves an increasing formalisation of social relations and a corresponding formalisation of thought. In the course of the Enlightenment, the philosophical accompaniment to the establishment of capitalist social relations, reason becomes increasingly formalised. Where previously the notion of reason had been related to the pursuit of the good or the true, it now becomes progressively limited to the establishment of the formally correct. Truth is reduced to 'formally correct': beyond that, truth is seen as a matter of subjective judgment. (Horkheimer 1997) What is formally correct can be seen as a mathematical problem which abstracts entirely from the content of the matter. The tendency of theory is 'towards a purely mathematical system of symbols'. (Horkheimer, 1972, p. 190). In this 'increasingly formalistic universality of reason ... value judgement has nothing to do with reason and science. It is regarded as a matter of subjective preference whether one decides for liberty or obedience, democracy or fascism, enlightenment or authority, mass culture or truth'. (Horkheimer, 1978b, p. 31). Reason is separated from understanding, thought from being. Reason becomes a matter of efficiency, 'the optimum adaptation of means to ends'. (Horkheimer, 1978b, p. 28). Reason, in other words, becomes instrumental reason, a means to achieve an end rather than a scrutiny or critique of the end itself. Reification involves the loss of meaning, or rather meaning becomes the purely formal process of measuring means to an end. Nuclear destruction is the outcome of rational thought. It is when judged by such rationality that our scream appears irrational.

The formalisation of reason is at the same time the separation of what is from what ought to be. Rational thought is now concerned with what is and its rational (efficient) ordering. This means not the elimination of 'ought' but its separation from 'is': what is is one thing and what ought to be another. Most people would agree that there ought to be no children forced to live on the streets, but (so the argument goes) the reality is different. The study of society, whether it be sociology, politics, economics or whatever 'discipline' of social science, is the study of what is. The question of

what ought to be may be interesting too, but we must not blur the distinction between the two, we must not confuse reality with dreams. As long as they are kept separate, there is no problem. Moralistic reasoning about what ought to be, far from undermining what is, actually reinforces it: 'the "ought" presupposes an existing reality to which the category of "ought" remains inapplicable in principle. Whenever the refusal of the subject simply to accept his empirically given existence takes the form of an "ought", this means that the immediately given empirical reality receives affirmation and consecration at the hands of philosophy: it is philosophically immortalised.' (Lukács, 1971, p. 160)

To the extent that there really is a formal abstraction of social relations, those relations can be understood as being governed by laws, and it becomes possible to speak of the 'laws of capitalist development'. The owners of capital do not control capitalist society. Rather, they too are subject to the laws of capitalist development, laws which reflect the separation of the doer from the doing, the autonomy of the doing. The most that people can do is adapt themselves to these 'laws' which they do not control: 'man in capitalist society confronts a reality "made" by himself (as a class) which appears to him to be a natural phenomenon alien to himself; he is wholly at the mercy of its "laws", his activity is confined to the exploitation of the inexorable fulfilment of certain individual laws for his own (egoistic) interests. But even while "acting" he remains, in the nature of the case, the object and not the subject of events.' (Lukács, 1971, p. 135) Freedom, in this context, becomes simply knowledge of and subordination to the laws, the acceptance of necessity. The law-bound nature of capitalist society, then, and the possibility of the scientific study of these laws is nothing other than an expression of the fact that doers do not control their doing and that 'all human relations ... assume increasingly the objective forms of the abstract elements of the conceptual systems of natural science and of the abstract substrata of the laws of nature.' (1971, p.131)

VIII

The argument could go on and on. The point is that at the basis of an immensely complex social structure lies a simple principle – identity. The principle of identity is so basic to capitalist social organisation that to underline its importance seems absolutely meaningless, simply because it seems so obvious. And yet it is not so obvious. The idea that someone is x without the simultaneous realisation that she is not x is rooted in something that is very far from obvious: namely, the daily repeated separation of done from doing, the daily repeated seizure from the doers of the product of their doing and its definition as the property of someone else. This very real, very material identification (this thing is mine, not yours) spreads like a crack into every aspect of our social organisation and every aspect of our consciousness.

Identity is the antithesis of mutual recognition, of community, friendship and love. If I say that 'I am x', it implies that my being x does not depend on anyone else, that it does not depend on anyone else's recognition. I stand alone, my relations with other people are quite peripheral to my being. Social recognition is something that stands outside me, something that comes through the market when I can sell my product or sell my own capacity to do things at a higher price (promotion, for example). Other people are just that, other. Seen through the prism of identity, relations between people are external. As Bublitz (1998, pp. 34ff) points out in her discussion of Aristotle, friendship and love are impossible to conceptualise on the basis of a formal logic of identity. There can be no mutual recognition, no recognition of ourselves in others, of others in ourselves. From an identitarian perspective, the 'we' with which we started can be no more than an arbitrary sack of potatoes, or else a false (and threatening) chumminess with no real basis. There is no room there for the mutual inter-penetration of existence which we experience as friendship or love. Enmity, on the other hand, is easy to understand: the other is the other. The other is not part of us and we are not

part of the other.

It is clear that the process of identification is not external to us. We are active in the process of identifying or reifying social relations, just as we are active in producing the done which is turned against our doing. There is no innocent subject. Power-over reaches into us and transforms us, forcing us to participate actively in its reproduction. The rigidification of social relations, the that's-the-way-things-are-ness that confronts our scream is not just outside us (in society), but reaches into us as well, into the way that we think, the way we act, the way we are, the fact that we are. In the process of being separated from our done and from our doing, we ourselves are damaged. Our activity is transformed into passivity, our will to do things is transformed into greed for money, our cooperation with fellow-doers is transformed into an instrumental relation mediated by money or competition. The innocence of our doing, of our power-to, becomes a guilty participation in the exercise of power-over. Our estrangement from doing is a self-estrangement. Here is no pure, eager revolutionary subject, but damaged humanity. We are all deeply involved in the construction of identitarian reality, and this process is the construction of ourselves.

The reality that confronts us reaches into us. What we scream against is not just out there, it is also inside us. It seems to invade all of us, to become us. That is what makes our scream so anguished, so desperate. That too is what makes our scream seem so hopeless. At times it seems that our scream itself is the only fissure of hope. Reality, the reality of capital, seems completely inescapable. As Marcuse (1998, p. 16) puts it, 'the unfree individual introjects his masters and their commands into his own mental apparatus. The struggle against freedom reproduces itself in the psyche of man, as the self-repression of the repressed individual, and his self-repression in turn sustains his masters and their institutions.' This introjection of our masters is the introjection of an identitarian, alienated reality (theorised by Freud as an absolute, biologically determined reality rather than a historically specific form of reality), to which we subordinate our pursuit of pleasure.

Reification, therefore, refers not just to the rule of the object but to the creation of a peculiarly dislocated subject. The separation of doer from doing and done creates a doer who is cut adrift from doing, who is subordinate to the done, but appears to be completely independent of it. The separation of people from the social tapestry of doing constitutes them as free individuals, free not only in the double sense indicated by Marx, namely free from personal bondage and free of access to the means of survival, but free also from responsibility to the community and free from a sense of meaningful participation in the collective doing. While our discussion has shown that the fracture of doing means that the subject too is fractured (alienated, anguished, damaged), the subject of bourgeois theory is an innocent, healthy, freely self-determining individual: admittedly, certain individuals have psychological problems, but they are just personal problems, nothing to do with the social schizophrenia that cuts through every aspect of our existence. The more subordination to the done is taken for granted, the more free the individual subject appears. The more thoroughly identification is established as something that is simply beyond question, beyond thought, the freer the society appears. The more profoundly unfree we are, the more liberated we appear to be. The illusory freedom of the citizen is the counterpart of the illusory community of the state. We live in a free society, don't we? No wonder our scream is so violent.

We have, then, two concepts of the subject. The subject of bourgeois theory is the free individual, whereas the subjectivity that has been central to our account is a collective subjectivity rent asunder by the tearing of doing from done, an atomised subject damaged to our depths. The subject of bourgeois theory does not scream, while our subject screams to high heaven, not because of any particularity, just because of our sundered subjectivity. For bourgeois theory, subjectivity is identity, whereas in our argument, subjectivity is the negation of identity.

There is no doubt that the first concept, that of the innocent, wholesome, subject, has often been transferred by some currents in Marxist theory to the notion of the working class. Soviet images of the heroic working class come to mind, but the image of the heroic revolutionary goes far beyond the Soviet experience. It is in this context that it becomes possible to understand the concern of some theorists (structuralists, post-structuralists, post-modernists) to attack the notion of the subject. Much of what is seen as an attack on subjectivity is simply an attack on identity, on the bourgeois identification of subjectivity with identity. Thus, for example, when Foucault speaks of (and analyses in detail) the 'immense work to which the West has set generations to produce ... the subjection of men; I mean their constitution as 'subjects' in both senses of the word' (1976, p. 81), then this is surely correct in relation to the constitution of the 'free' subject of capitalist society, who is indeed subject in both senses of the word. To identify the bourgeois subject with subjectivity as a whole, however, is a most murderous throwing of the baby out with the bathwater. To confound subjectivity with identity and criticise subjectivity in an attempt to attack identity leads only to a total impasse, since subjectivity, as movement, as negation of is-ness, is the only possible basis for going beyond identity, and therefore beyond the bourgeois subject.

IX

The fetish is a real illusion. Marx, as we saw, insists that in a commodity producing society, 'the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things.' (1965, p. 73) The fetishised categories of thought express a really fetishised reality. If we see theory as a moment of practice, thinking as a moment of doing, then there is a continuity between the fetishisation of thought and the fetishisation of practice. Fetishisation (and hence alienation, reification, identification and so on) refer not just to processes of thinking but to the material separation of done from doing of which those conceptual processes are part. It follows that fetishisation cannot be overcome in thought alone: the overcoming of fetishisation means the overcoming of the separation of doing and done.

This is important because the concept of fetishism (alienation and so on) loses its force if it is separated from the material separation of doing and done in which it is founded. Fetishisation is central to the material process by which the done is torn from the doer. If a separation is made between the material process of exploitation and the fetishisation of thought, then alienation or fetishisation becomes reduced to a tool of cultural critique, a sophisticated moan. This is indeed, as Adorno points out (1990, p. 190) to make 'critical theory idealistically acceptable to the reigning consciousness and to the collective unconscious'. It is to reproduce in the concept of fetishisation itself precisely that separation of 'economic' and 'cultural' which the concept of fetishism criticises.

The violence of identification, then, is by no means merely conceptual. The scientific method of identitarian thought is the exercise of power-over. Power is exercised over people through their effective identification. Thus, capitalist production is based on identification: this is mine. Law too is based on identity: the person subjected to legal process is identified, separated off from all those others who might be considered as co-responsible in some way. The identification is expressed very physically: in the handcuffs that identify the person as accused of a crime, in the treatment of the person as an identified individual, in the physical enclosure in a prison or a cell, possibly in execution, that supreme act of identification which says 'you are and have been, and shall not become'. Is-ness, identity, the denial of becoming, is death.

Identification, definition, classification is a physical as well as a mental process. The Jews who

were identified, classified and numbered in the concentration camps were the objects of more than a mental exercise. Identification, definition, classification is the basis of the physical, spatial and temporal organisation of armies, hospitals, schools and other institutions, the core of what Foucault refers to as discipline, the micro-physics of power, the political economy of detail. Bureaucratic power is based on the same process of identification and classification, as indeed is the whole operation of the state. The state identifies people, defines them, classifies them. A state is inconceivable without the definition of citizens and the simultaneous exclusion of non-citizens: 856,000 Mexicans were detained on the frontier with the United States in the last six months. That is identification, definition, classification on a grand scale.

X

The argument of this chapter has taken us forward in our understanding of power, but we are left with a depressing dilemma.

It should be clear now that power can not be taken, for the simple reason that power is not possessed by any particular person or institution. Power lies rather in the fragmentation of social relations. This is a material fragmentation which has its core in the constantly repeated separation of the done from the doing, which involves the real mediation of social relations through things, the real transformation of relations between people into relations between things. Our practical intercourse is fragmented and, with it and as part of it, our patterns of thought, the way we think and talk about social relations. In thought and in practice, the warm inter-weaving of doing, the loves and hates and longings which constitute us, become shattered into so many identities, so many cold atoms of existence, standing each one on its own. Power-over, that which makes our scream echo hollowly, that which makes radical change difficult even to conceive, lies in this shattering, in identification.

The state, then, is not the locus of power that it appears to be. It is just one element in the shattering of social relations. The state, or rather the states, define us as 'citizens', and 'non-citizens', giving us national identities in what is one of the most directly murderous aspects of the process of identification. How many millions of people were killed in the twentieth century for no other reason than that they were defined as being nationals of a particular state? How many millions of people did the killing for the same reason? How many times has the scream against oppression been diverted into the assertion of national identity in national liberation movements which have done little more than reproduce the oppression against which the scream was directed? The state is exactly what the word suggests, a bulwark against change, against the flow of doing, the embodiment of identity.

The understanding of power as the fragmentation of social relations takes us back again to Foucault's attack on the binary concept of power and his insistence that power must be understood in terms of a multiplicity of forces. It should now be clear that the dichotomy between a binary and a multiple view of power is a false one. The multiplicity of power relations derives precisely from the binary antagonism between doing and done. To reduce this complexity to a simple binary antagonism between capitalist class and proletariat, as has often been done, leads to both theoretical and political problems. Similarly, to focus on the multiplicity and forget the underlying unity of power relations leads to a loss of political perspective: emancipation becomes impossible to conceive, as Foucault is at pains to point out. Moreover to focus on a multiplicity of identities without asking as to the process of identification which gives rise to those identities is inevitably to reproduce those identities, that is, to participate actively in the process of identification. It is essential, then, to insist on the unity-in-separation, separation-in-unity of the binary and the

multiple.

We are left with a dilemma. The power of capital is all-penetrating. It shapes the way in which we perceive the world, our sexuality, our very constitution as individual subjects, our ability to say 'I'. There seems to be no way out. 'Absolute reification ... is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely', as Adorno (1967, p. 34) puts it. And absolute reification is absolute death. Identity negates possibility, denies openness to other life. Identity kills, both metaphorically and very, very literally. Over all our reflections on identity stands the terrible warning of Adorno: 'Auschwitz confirmed the philosopheme of pure identity as death.' (1990, p. 362).

The more we think about power in capitalist society, the more anguished our scream becomes. But the more anguished it becomes, the more desperate, the more helpless. The penetration of power-over into the core of those who are subject to that power-over is the central problem that any revolutionary theory has to deal with. The reaching of the separation of doing and done into the doer herself is both the reason why revolution is desperately urgent and the reason why it is increasingly difficult to conceive. The maiming of the subject through the penetration of power-over into the depths of her existence stirs both indignation and resignation: how can we live in a society based on dehumanisation? But how can we possibly change a society in which people are so dehumanised? This is the dilemma of the urgent impossibility of revolution.

There are three possible ways out of the dilemma.

The first is to give up hope. Instead of thinking that it might be possible to create a society free of exploitation, free of war, free of violence, an emancipated society based on mutual recognition, this approach accepts that the world cannot be changed radically and focuses instead on living as well as can be and making whatever small changes may be possible. Alienation is recognised, perhaps, but regarded as being permanent. The concepts of revolution and emancipation are abandoned and replaced with the idea of 'micro-politics'. The multiplicity of power comes to be seen as the underpinning of a multiplicity of struggles focussed on particular issues or particular identities: struggles which aim at a rearrangement but not an overcoming of power relations.

Disillusionment is associated most commonly with post-modern theory and politics, but it spreads much farther than that. In other cases, the notion of revolution may be retained as a point of reference, but left-wing discourse becomes more melancholic, more and more focussed on denouncing the horrors of capitalism and more and more removed from considering the possibility of a solution. Left-wing intellectuals adopt the position of Cassandra, prophesying the doom that is to come, but with little hope of being heard.

The melancholic Cassandras and the post-modernists may, of course, be quite right. Perhaps there is no hope, perhaps there is no possibility of creating a society that is not based on exploitation and dehumanisation. It may well be that when humanity finally destroys itself in a nuclear blast or otherwise, the last post-modernist will be able to say with glee to the last hopeful Marxist, 'you see, I told you so, now you can see that my approach was scientifically correct'. It may well be so, but it does not help us very much. The scream with which we started announced an obstinate refusal to give up hope, a refusal to accept that the miseries and inhumanities of capitalism are inevitable. From the perspective of the scream, then, giving up hope is simply not an option.

The second possible option is to forget the subtleties and focus exclusively on the binary nature of the antagonism between proletariat and capitalist class. Power, then, is quite simply a matter of 'who-whom', as Lenin put it.

In the mainstream Marxist tradition, fetishism has always been a rather suspect category, a mark of heterodoxy. It has always arisen as a critique of the 'scientificity' which defined Marxist orthodoxy, and which was upheld by the Communist Parties during the first two thirds of the twentieth century and continues to dominate much of Marxist discussion today. Especially during the reign of the Communist Parties, emphasis on the question of fetishism always had something of the character of 'anti-Marxist Marxism', with all the dangers of political or physical exclusion that that implied. Lukács's book caused him serious political problems within the Communist Party. The tensions that exist already in his work between the consistency of his criticism and his loyalty to the Party led him in practice to give priority to the Party and to denounce his own work. Other authors who suffered even more seriously for their attempt to return to Marx's concern with fetishism and form were I.I. Rubin and Evgeny Pashukanis, both of them working in Russia just after the revolution. Rubin, in his *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, first published in 1924, insisted on the centrality of commodity fetishism and the concept of form for Marx's critique of political economy. One of the implications of this insistence on the question of form was to underline the specifically capitalist character of value relations, and as a result Rubin disappeared during the purges of the 1930s. A similar fate was shared by Pashukanis who, in his *General Theory of Law and Marxism*, argued that Marx's critique of political economy should be extended to the critique of law and the state, that law and the state should be understood as fetishised forms of social relations in the same way as value, capital and the other categories of political economy. This meant that law and the state, like value, were specifically capitalist forms of social relations. At a time when the Soviet state was consolidating itself, this argument did not find favour with the Party authorities.

Orthodox Marxism has generally preferred a simpler picture of power, in which the taking of state power has been central to the concept of revolutionary change. In a later chapter we shall examine in more detail this tradition and some of the problems associated with it.

The third possible approach to solving the dilemma of the urgent impossibility of revolution is to accept that there can be absolutely no certainty of a happy ending, but nevertheless to look for hope in the nature of capitalist power itself. Ubiquitous power implies ubiquitous resistance. Ubiquitous yes implies ubiquitous no. Power-over, we have seen, is the negation of power-to, the denial of the social flow of doing. Power-to exists in the form of its negation, power-over. The social flow of doing exists in the form of its negation, individual performance. Doing exists in the form of labour, community in the form of a mass of individuals, non-identity in the form of identity, human relations in the form of relations between things, lived time in the form of clock time, the subjunctive in the form of the indicative, humanity in the form of inhumanity. All of those different expressions of human emancipation, all those images of a society based on the mutual recognition of human dignity, all exist only in the form of their negation. But they exist. It is to the force of that which exists in the form of being denied that we must look for hope. That is the stuff of dialectical thought: dialectics is the 'consistent sense of non-identity', the sense of the explosive force of that which is denied.

What is the status, then, of all of these categories that exist only in the form of being denied? Certainly they are not recognised by mainstream social science: for mainstream social science, there is absolutely no room for that which exists in the form of being denied. Are they then a mere chimera, mere fancies of discontented intellectuals, a romantic harking back to a mythical golden age? No, they are none of those. They are hopes, aspirations, prefigurations of a human society. But for these hopes to have force, we must understand them also as substratum, as that without which their denial could not exist, as that upon which their negating forms depend.

The third approach is to try to understand and thereby to participate in the force of all that which exists in antagonism, in the form of being denied.