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**Laclau and Mouffe's Theory of Radical Democracy,
and Political Identity in Contemporary Europe**

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Abstract

Laclau and Mouffe's Theory of Radical Democracy, and Political Identity in Contemporary Europe

The rapid social and political transformation of post-Communist Europe has necessitated a re-examination of the question of political identity, particularly in relation to democracy and the nation-state. Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist notion of 'radical democracy', incorporating a non-essentialist conception of hegemony, promises much in this regard. Their work on the contingent nature of political identity and their understanding of the range and importance of the political and social changes in contemporary Europe is especially valuable. Although their work is a significant contribution in this area their project is ultimately more applicable to post-industrial Western Europe before the collapse of Communism than it is to post-'89 Europe.

Laclau and Mouffe's work can be divided into 'early' and 'later' periods. Their 'early' work includes their Marxist and post-Marxist formulations, while their 'later' period, influenced by post-Communist events, is characterised by a growing liberalisation of their thought. As a result of the epochal changes stemming from the fall of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe the question of Europe becomes crucially important in this 'later' period. Mouffe holds to a notion of Europe that is constituted through its democratic heritage. It is argued that this constitutes an exclusive identity and that European identity should not be dependant upon such a narrowly defined sense of tradition. Laclau and Mouffe place great emphasis on the constitutive role of antagonism in the construction of both identity and democracy. Throughout their work it is possible to identify a tendency towards a politics of 'us and them'. An emphasis on the role of exclusion in identity formation is particularly marked in their 'later' work.

The case of nationalism highlights a problem with Laclau and Mouffe's approach to conceptualising collective identity. This stems from their reliance upon democratic political identity as the sine qua non of democracy. Against this it is argued that the construction of national and ethnic identity cannot be understood in this way. The nation-state has been the single biggest factor in shaping European political identities in the post-war period. Challenges to the primacy of the nation-state from regional or ethnic separatism are having a similarly important influence in the contemporary context.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

Europe has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last ten years. The most significant change has been the collapse of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This has not only put an end to the Cold War and fragmented what was a powerful Soviet empire but has also had a profound effect on the politics of Western European countries. The fall of Communism means that the terms Eastern and Western Europe have lost much of their former meaning, but until a new European order comes into being the weight of that 40 years division will continue to impress upon the events of the present.

It will not be possible to dispense with the dichotomous Eastern/Western Europe division until a new relationship between what was East and what was West has been established. The signs are that this new order is taking the form of a structured, hierarchical relation between an expanding and hegemonic European Union (EU) and the emerging market economies of the former Eastern bloc. The development of democracy and market economies in what was Eastern Europe is very closely bound up with the policies and ambitions of the EU. This is a process that is still in its early stages, and for which the outcome will not be known for some time. What is clear however, is that a new kind of East/West division is emerging along the lines of EU member/non-EU member, with Eastern European countries vying with each other to be first in the queue for membership.

The end of the Yalta-inspired division of Europe has focussed attention on the question 'what is Europe?'. Issues concerning a European unity in terms of culture and history have been widely debated both in connection with the dismantling of the Iron Curtain, and the regeneration of interest in, and expansion of, the EU. There are

problems associated with the dominant position of the EU, highlighted by the development of 'Fortress Europe' through which member states regulate the movement of foreigners across their borders leading to the establishment of 'permeable internal borders and watertight external seals'. This development has been particularly noticeable during a time when EU members have had to respond to an unprecedented post-war refugee problem, itself being another consequence of the break-up of Communist states. Establishing a Europe/non-Europe distinction has become more important than ever, expressed by Stuart Hall in the following terms;

"Where does Europe stop and Asia begin? The question is critical - European prosperity depends on finding an answer to it. In the negotiations between European capitalism and disintegrating communist empires of eastern Europe - the Second World - we are about to discover the answer." (Hall, 1991)

The search for an answer has centred on the possible existence of a cultural heritage that can be said to be the determinant of European identity. In this sense Europe is now looking backwards to find suitable cultural justifications, reference points and themes of commonality that will enable a Europe/non-Europe distinction to be made. History and tradition are being fused with cultural boundary markers in the search for a blueprint for Europe's future.

Both within and without the EU other common trends can be observed Europe-wide. The former Communist countries have all taken steps towards democracy, but in many cases the process of democratisation has been sacrificed to economic expediency. The EU has compounded this trend by rewarding stability over democracy in its dealings with its Eastern neighbours. In several cases the path to democracy has

been short-circuited by a nationalist impulse. This rise in nationalism has tended to have an ethnic complexion and the last few years we have witnessed the advent of attempts to form nation-states based on ethnic exclusion. This pattern has been mirrored in the West not only in terms of a search for European identity but also with a plethora of regionalist movements, also largely ethnic in nature, but so far free of the attendant tragic consequences.

The work of Laclau and Mouffe

These have been epochal changes, the consequences of which have been felt in the sphere of political and social theory. The trajectory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe has been instructive in this context. From their critiques of Marxism in the late 70s and early 80s they have developed a post-Marxist theoretical ensemble designed to embrace the political fragmentation of post-industrial, postmodern, post-war Europe characterised by a displacement of the working class from the centre of political theory and practice. They offer a strategy for the Left based on the transformatory democratic potential of 'new social movements' (NSMs). Their view is that socialism must wholeheartedly embrace liberal democracy if it is to retain any purchase on contemporary social change. Hegemonic articulation of disparate social movements is the key to radical political strategy.

Laclau and Mouffe developed these ideas with a great degree of confidence during the period prior to the epochal changes outlined above, but the turbulence and uncertainty of the years that followed has had an effect on their subsequent theorising. They have been profoundly affected by the loss of traditional certainties and familiar political reference points. The 'constitutive

outside', to use one of their phrases, has undergone a massive change. The 'givens' of democracy in the West are no longer fixed, democratic identity can no longer be guaranteed by the Communist 'other', and the post-industrial society with its democratic potential and NSMs has been subordinated to the phenomena of post-Communism.

Political change has had yet another effect on the work of Laclau and Mouffe. An increasing reliance upon liberal, democratic traditions informing their work has been reinforced by a post-Cold War interest in the nature of democracy in a post-Communist world. Although their work never assumes the triumphalist tones of Fukuyama they have come to increasingly valorise democracy in its liberal variant, increasingly divorced from the radical democracy of the earlier works. Liberalism, citizenship and democratic identity have become key themes. One of the main lines of investigation throughout this thesis is the extent to which Laclau and Mouffe's focus becomes too narrow to enable them to satisfactorily address some very important issues thrown up by post-Communist Europe. Nationalism and its increasingly ethnic inflection as a major influence on identity formation is a case in point.

Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxism

The work of Laclau and Mouffe represents a cogent example of the general shift from Marxism to post-Marxism that has been widespread in social and political thought since the early 1980s. Indeed it could be argued that they have done as much as anyone to expedite that shift and reorientate the old Marxist left around a new set of concerns. They have been able to do this in part by conceiving of socialism as a project of which Marxism is but one part, and that a radical leftist politics can

exist independently of adherence to the tenets of Marxism.

In order to do this they have attempted to demonstrate that it is possible to utilise fragments of Marxism, re-articulated in a new theoretical matrix. Their starting point is a powerful critique of Western Marxism, demonstrating that Marxism, in pursuing its economistic, essentialist and deterministic project, fails to allow for the political construction of oppositional subject positions and socialist political identities. On establishing these limitations they have chosen to move on from Marxism while holding onto its 'best bits'.

The merits of Laclau and Mouffe's ideas vis-a-vis those of Marxism is not the central question that this thesis sets out to explore. The transition from Marxism to post-Marxism has to be viewed within a much wider context. A more pertinent question to explore therefore, is the extent to which Laclau and Mouffe's adopted methodology is bound by the logic of its post-Marxist preoccupations. The fall of Communism and fragmentation of the Soviet Union has meant that we are all living in a post-Marxist world now irrespective of our views on the merits of Laclau and Mouffe's critique of Marxism. It is clear that Laclau and Mouffe are correct to assert that even as a theoretical project the usefulness of Marxism has been much reduced in recent times. It can be argued for example that Marxism has little to contribute to an analysis of the rise of ethnic-nationalism in contemporary Europe, but this does not automatically mean that Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxism is the most satisfactory alternative framework through which to understand this change.

If neither Marxism or post-Marxism are sufficient the question of what interpretive framework to adopt becomes a

central concern. The problem cannot be solved simply or immediately however. This thesis takes the form of an extended critique of Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxism; its theoretical underpinning, its origins and development, and its applicability. Thus, it acknowledges the centrality of the work of Laclau and Mouffe and the need to 'work through' it if an alternative interpretive framework is to be found. This may well involve taking the 'best bits' not just from Marxism, but from radical democracy as well. In the age of post-Communism, and if only for that reason, we are all post-Marxists now.

From their earliest (Marxist) writing Laclau and Mouffe have been interested in the extent to which political actors are not necessarily (or only) class actors. An understanding of the category of 'the people' exercised them in their deliberations on Gramsci's notion of collective will (Mouffe), and the process of popular identification with the Nazis in pre-war Germany (Laclau). This accounts in some way for their predisposition towards ideas associated with the notion of post-industrial society. They were much taken with theories that depicted the emergence of social structures and social movements that were not tied directly to class. The confluence of various post-structuralist and postmodernist streams of thought with the general swathe of post-industrial society theses was also instrumental in re-orienting them away from purely Marxist concerns.

The attraction of this idea about post-industrial society stems from its central assumption that the working class is being displaced from centre stage. This leads consequently to the need to think of politics in terms other than those arising purely from class antagonisms. In other words, a productivist model is replaced by one which acknowledges a plurality of possible social

identities and conflicts, and incorporates recognition of NSMs with their concomitant revaluation of different forms of status distinction (ethnicity, gender, consumption). Laclau and Mouffe have sought to develop a politics that would have relevance to these new, non-class struggles. The Hegemony and Socialist Strategy project is a contribution to this thinking; a post-Marxist politics for post-industrial times.

Their passage from Marxism to post-Marxism has also to be understood in another context; that of the impetus given to their post-Marxism by postmodernism. At its most general level this consisted of the growing influence the ideas of post-structuralist thinkers such as Lacan and Foucault. This influence has been present in all their work. The early work of Laclau and Mouffe is marked by the influence of the structuralist Marxism of Althusser and Poulantzas, and this influence quickly extends to incorporate theories of language, discourse and subjectivity.

The primary sources of inspiration from the post-structuralist camp demonstrate the powerful influence of anti-essentialist thought on Laclau and Mouffe. Derrida's philosophy of language and his critique in the metaphysics of presence facilitates a deconstruction of universalistic and foundationalist thought, of which Marxism is the relevant example in this context. The appeal of Derrida for Laclau and Mouffe lies in his concept of the instability of identity; for Derrida language is a chain of signifiers and meaning is always undecideable and never fixed. Language is constitutive of identity, and signification is always partial and incomplete. Lacan's influence can also be discerned. He holds that it is language that constitutes us as subjects. Laclau and Mouffe also value his work because it too rests on the

idea of non-fixity of meaning. Identity is never fully complete and is open to change. It is bound up with the recognition of the existence of 'the other' whose presence is a potential threat; the exterior can subvert identity. Lacan's anti-essentialism - we do not have a fixed set of (biologically determined) characteristics - has also exerted an influence. Foucault's notion of discourse has had a profound influence on the thought of Laclau and Mouffe. It is also relevant that Foucault developed the view that the (Marxist) concept of ideology was inexorably linked to economic determinism. Discourse refers to the system of rules which permit statements to be made, and also to the history and the conditions of existence of those statements. Discourses include written and spoken statements as well as practices and the actions of institutions. In the context of Laclau and Mouffe's work discourse can properly be understood as an alternative to ideology, that is to say it is the post-structural equivalent of ideology, formulated as a concept without the contaminating baggage of classical Marxism.

More generally, the influence of post-structuralist thought can be detected in the move from Marxism to post-Marxism, particularly with the emphasis on anti-essentialist categories and discursive formations. It could be said that post-structuralism provides Laclau and Mouffe not only with the language in which to express their post-Marxist ideas, but the conceptual tools upon which those ideas are founded. It also constrains them within its own logic; the logic of anti-essentialism will not tolerate any lingering traces of Marxism. Once Laclau and Mouffe embarked on the postmodernist enterprise they were operating within the logic of a different paradigm and there was little opportunity to mediate between the two.

The periodisation of Laclau and Mouffe's work

It is necessary to turn our attention to the question of the periodisation of Laclau and Mouffe's work. Their work can be divided into two main periods; 'early' and 'late'. The 'early work' contains everything up to and including New Reflections, and the 'later work' is the work published after 1990. This division is not based on any profound change in their position but rather the impact of the events surrounding the collapse of Communism on the development of their ideas.'

The reason for this division needs further explanation. It is necessary to resist the temptation to divide their work into 'Marxist' and 'post-Marxist' episodes because, although there is a sense in which this is meaningful, it fails to take into account a less obvious, but more important aspect of their work. Rather than see the Marxist and post-Marxist periods as being distinct they should be viewed as a continuum, in the sense that they are part of the same overall project. Their post-Marxism is not a radical break with what went before but the outcome of their overhaul of its major categories. The main division is between their post-Marxist project, which was largely concluded by the early 1990s, and the later, more liberal, less collaborative work.

The justification for including both Hegemony and Socialist Strategy and the more Marxist early writing in the 'early period' is as follows. Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is the outcome of their deliberations on Gramsci and Althusser which occupied them in their earliest writing. As such Hegemony and Socialist Strategy does not constitute a break with this earlier writing but in many ways is the direct consequence of it. Likewise, the essays in defence of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (Post-Marxism Without Apologies, for example) are a part

of this period. The period ends with New Reflections, which both re-works some of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy's themes and leads Laclau in new directions. This also marks the end of the close collaboration between Laclau and Mouffe as their positions have begun to diverge in the later period.

The later period includes all the essays published in Dimensions of Radical Democracy, The Making of Political Identities, and The Return of the Political. This period is characterised by a greater distancing of themselves from the (post) Marxist concerns of their previous work, and an attempt to come to terms with post-89 Europe, and the problems it has posed for their notion of radical democracy. The epochal nature of the changes associated with the collapse of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe has not been kind to Laclau and Mouffe and their work of this period is less successful than the project associated with Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.

The earliest of the writings of Laclau and Mouffe are the subject of Chapter 2. This work is notable for containing the origins of the politics of hegemony which would find full expression in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, and also maps their retreat from the state, civil society and the nation via their rejection of Marxist categories. Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (the subject of Chapter 3) represents the fulfilment of Laclau and Mouffe's desire to reject the working class as the central agent of social change. The work demonstrates the importance of, and mechanisms for, the construction of non-essentialist identity. There are two theoretical tensions that run through Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. (i) Democratic politics is a politics of antagonism, and is constitutive of 'us and them', an increasingly characteristic theme in Laclau and Mouffe's work. (ii) Society is in constant

conflict (and is consequently unstable) between, on the one hand the need to forge unity, and on the other the tendency of democracy (through equivalence) to split the social into antagonistic camps.

Chapter 4 considers how New Reflections develops many of these themes in greater detail. The 'us and them' distinction is drawn more vividly and the question of political agency is more central. This marks the end of their 'early period'. The later work sees the rise to prominence of the politics of 'us and them' and its centrality to Laclau and Mouffe's ideas on democracy in post-Communist Europe. The work of this period consists of essays and commentaries and lacks a major theoretical focus or sustained attempt to apply their earlier work to changing circumstances. A further tension is revealed in their work; the problem of ascriptive versus constructed identity. Chapter 5 addresses Mouffe's collection Dimensions of Radical Democracy which announces the liberalisation of their work and introduces themes of liberal democratic traditions, citizenship and their relation to the idea of Europe. Chapter 6 looks at 'the question of Europe' more directly, and deals with the problem of European identity and what it could conceivably consist of.

Looking at Laclau and Mouffe's work as a whole one would have to conclude that theirs is a collaborative venture. This is much more true of the early phase however. The collaboration of course centres on Hegemony and Socialist Strategy but was in place before this and continued afterwards. Laclau himself says that their earliest work was mutually informative and compatible. The work immediately after Hegemony and Socialist Strategy and linked to it in the form of a defence or reiteration of their position is equally so. In the later work their

positions seem to diverge slightly (see Chapter 6) but nevertheless retain a commonality through their insertion into the Phronesis project, a series of books they commissioned for the publisher Verso.

The Phronesis project enables them to collect together the work of writers who aspire to the same general outlook and who make a contribution to a non-essentialist socialist project, as defined by Laclau and Mouffe. That is to say, socialism as reformulated in terms of an extension and deepening of democracy. They state that "...the critique of essentialism...is the necessary condition for understanding the widening of the field of social struggles characteristic of the present stage of democratic politics." (Publisher's note) Thus, the Phronesis project can accommodate all those who believe that "an anti-essentialist theoretical stand is the sine qua non of a new vision for the Left conceived in terms of a radical and plural democracy" (Publisher's note). It is for this reason that I believe that it is permissible to talk about the work of Tassin (Chapter 6) as an adjunct to the work of Laclau and Mouffe.

Chapter 7 looks at the construction of collective political identities, particularly nationalist, ethnic and regionalist identities, and their relation to the nation-state. It draws attention to the absence in Laclau and Mouffe's theorising of democratic politics of a role for the (nation-) state. The thesis concludes by placing the work of Laclau and Mouffe in the wider tradition of post-industrial society theses, a position from which they have difficulty in conceptualising the post-communist transformation of Europe: their idea of radical democracy is ultimately too specific to encompass ethnic-nationalism, and other identities that do not directly involve a 'deepening of democracy'.

CHAPTER 2

LACLAU AND MOUFFE AND THE LIMITS OF MARXISM

Introduction

The early work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe is interesting not just in comparison with what was to come later, but also in terms of the enthusiasm with which it was received at the time. Laclau and Mouffe were viewed primarily as theorists working within and around central problems in Marxist theory. They engaged with Gramsci and Althusser and wrote on the topics of class, ideology and politics in a way that was seen as exciting and potentially very productive.

Laclau and Mouffe's project was widely seen as an extension of Gramsci's work, but one which took them outside (or even beyond) Marxism itself. Their involvement with the theorisation of the social construction of meaning and a concomitant re-theorisation of the nature and role of ideology, was seen to take them to the very limits of Marxism and exacerbate the increasing vulnerability and fragility of the Marxist model to critique from post-structuralist and postmodernist positions.

Of course Laclau and Mouffe's work was becoming increasingly influenced by these problematics too, and their transformation from Marxists to post-Marxists, accomplished sometime between the early work reviewed in this chapter and Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, was as much a result of the impact of post-structuralism on their thinking as it was on their reaching the limits of Marxism. I have outlined the main post-structuralist influences on their work in the introduction to this thesis, and some of the themes will be taken up again in the following chapter.

It is true that ultimately - the point marked by Hegemony and Socialist Strategy - Laclau and Mouffe reject Marxism, if not in entirety then at least in terms of its epistemological underpinnings and its universalist pretensions. This was far from the case however when Laclau was writing the essays that comprise Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory and Mouffe was contributing to Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci, the work considered in this chapter. This early work was seen more simply as a contribution to Marxist theory which pushed Marxism to the limits, but nevertheless was still loyal to the project of historical materialism.

Their reputations were established on the basis of the work they were doing with Gramscian categories, notably hegemony. Laclau was appraised as having made a valuable contribution to our understanding of ideology by demonstrating that ideology or ideological elements had no necessary class belonging. In other words, he was allowing a great deal of autonomy between base and superstructure. He also allowed for the construction of 'the people' through interpellation in a way that was not tied to the formation of social classes, by arguing that "...fascism operated not at the level of class struggle but rather in the area of popular-democratic struggle." (Mercer, p.214). The idea that political ideology could be historically detached from class interest was new and exciting. Such developments were very well received. For example, Stuart Hall could write,

"The question as to how the articulation of ideological discourses to particular class formations can be conceptualized, without falling back into a simple class reductionism, is a matter on which important work has been done (the work of Laclau...is, once again, seminal)." (Hall, 1982, p.50)

Mouffe was more concerned with Gramsci and the use to which his Marxism could be put in theorising the construction of non-class categories such as 'the people'. At the time she concluded that Gramsci could provide 'the solution' to many Marxist problems as he was able, through his ideas of hegemony and collective will, to break with the essentialism that bedevilled Marxism.

By the time of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Laclau and Mouffe had 'worked through' Gramsci and his ideas of hegemony, discarded him, and put quite a lot of distance between themselves and the whole project that Marxism represents. All Marxists became irredeemably essentialist and economistic and had to be discarded, Laclau and Mouffe going as far as to say that they could have arrived at their new position without going through Marxism at all. There is more than a touch of hyperbole in this statement. Not only are Laclau and Mouffe heavily influenced by Gramsci, Althusser and other Marxists, both in their early work and in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, but as I argue in this chapter their subsequent work betrays the signs of having rejected Gramscian concerns. The consequences of their abandonment of key Marxist themes are very evident in their later work (that is, post-Hegemony and Socialist Strategy), particularly their problem over the construction of national identities, whose root lies in their rejection of a distinction between the state and civil society, and a consequent under-theorisation of the nation-state.

The early work of Laclau and Mouffe represents not just the period in which they engaged more directly with the Marxist problematic, but a high point in the Marxist theory of the time. Their interest in developing a non-reductionist form of radical democratic theory, evident from the earliest writings, was originally conceived as an

extension of Marxism. The key to this type of politics was to be found in the non-reductionist writings of Gramsci. Their work at this time should be seen as a major contribution to Marxist base/superstructure writing and an advancement of our understanding of ideology in Marxist theory. Mouffe in particular provides a significant contribution to our understanding of Gramsci, her early work in stark contrast to various unsatisfactory contemporaneous attempts (for example, Boggs, 1976). Laclau's work contributes a practical application of their ideas and his classic piece on fascism demonstrates both the subtlety and flexibility of his approach, and the advance he was able to make on previous Marxist attempts to tackle this difficult area.

The early work of Laclau and Mouffe represents an impressive collection of writing. It could be argued that their Marxist analytical framework of this period was far from exhausted, and could have yielded some impressive results if they had chosen to continue in this mode. They chose instead to embark upon their project of post-Marxism, which in the Hegemony and Socialist Strategy period at least yielded impressive results, and in retrospect can be seen to be their most successful period. Rather than criticise them for moving on from Marxism it is perhaps more appropriate to argue that the loss of the more dynamic form of post-Marxism associated with Hegemony and Socialist Strategy has contributed to the structural instability of a political project which has looked increasingly precarious in the post-Hegemony and Socialist Strategy period.

Laclau and Mouffe's Early Work

The following general points can be made about the earliest work of Laclau and Mouffe (ie. that prior to

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy). Even though they are working independently they are working from roughly the same theoretical and political perspectives, share many of the same concerns and address very similar problems. In fact, Laclau himself states at one point that their work is interrelated, and says of Mouffe; "Her contribution to the formulation of some of the central theses has been so decisive that in some respects they may be regarded as a collaborative venture". (Laclau, 1977, p.13)

There are differences of course; Mouffe's work on ideology is more strongly the product of a Marxist lineage, whereas Laclau is already more critical of the Marxist canon. Mouffe's stance is the result of working through Gramsci from a position informed by Althusserian Marxism. Whereas in Laclau, an earlier shift away from Marxism and towards discourse theory can be detected. Laclau dispenses with the Althusserian limits of ideology: there is no science/ideology dichotomy, there is now nothing outside of discourse. There is an obvious correspondence between Mouffe's work on ideology and ideological elements and Laclau's own work on populism and fascism. For example, that ideological elements are the stakes in political struggle is common to both. Both claim to espouse a non-reductionist politics but while Mouffe can find this within the fragmented work of Gramsci, Laclau avers that it is necessary to move beyond the perimeter of orthodoxy in order to avoid a reductionist paradigm.

The claims Mouffe makes for Gramsci in her early work are not reiterated in the collaborative venture of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. If we compare Mouffe's early interpretation of 'collective will' (political agency which is not class-bound - although it is class based), with the later reading of Gramsci in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, we might well be surprised. Gone is

the 'sophisticated Marxism' associated with the best of Gramsci. Now all Marxism is irredeemably essentialist and Laclau and Mouffe are no longer interested in questions such as the extent to which ideologies are class based. Apart from the different language in which the concepts in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy are expressed, class has long since been replaced by 'the people', undoubtedly as a result of Laclau's influence. It is permissible to say that in Mouffe's Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci we have classes, in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy 'the people', and Laclau's work provides the pivotal moment in the transition between the two.

Since the term 'discourse' is so central to Laclau's work, it is necessary to say something about how it is employed throughout Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory and what relation it enjoys with 'ideology'. Or, to put it another way, what sense can we make of a statement such as, "The overdetermination of non-class interpellations by the class struggle consists, then, in the integration of those interpellations into a class ideological discourse" (Laclau, 1977, p.109), or even, "...how are ideologies transformed?...through class struggle, which is carried out through the production of subjects and the articulation/disarticulation of discourses" (Laclau, 1977, p.109) It would seem that there is no rigid conceptual boundary that prevents 'ideology' and 'discourse' being used together in a consistent, coherent way. Before we can properly address this question it will be necessary to look in more detail at the Althusserian influences in Laclau's early work.

One of the most important features of the Althusserian problematic is the concept of 'social formation'. This is against both a base/superstructure model and a more Hegelian, expressive view of the social totality. Every

social formation has a particular unity of levels or instances. Each level (economic, politics, ideology) differs in its capacity to determine the others.

"The unity which they form is based on a hierarchical relationship between the levels in which we find that the economic determines, in the last instance, the political and the ideological levels but at the same time is overdetermined by each of them." (McLennan, p.79)

On this model the superstructures are not merely an expression of the economic base. The relationship is best characterised as one of reciprocal determination; overdetermination is governed by determination in the last instance by the economic and as such, this is where we can find the origin of Althusser's idea of relative autonomy. It is possible to distinguish between levels that are determinant (the economic) and those which are dominant. In certain social formations for example, politics can be dominant, but even where this occurs the economic mode of production is still determinant.

"Determinancy, then, for Althusser, is thought principally in terms of the economic level (determining) having, as one of its effects, the deciding which of the levels of the social formation - economic, political or ideological - will be 'dominant'" (Hall, 1977, p.69)

Althusser defines ideology as constitutive of subjectivity and interpellation is the means by which individuals are so produced. Interpellation is a discursive practice which produces political subjects. As such we are now able to see the link between ideology and discourse, although when compared to the status accorded discourse in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, ideology in the early work seems to be the subject of a less rigorous definition, and more of a transitional concept (transitional that is between orthodox Marxism and post-

Marxism). In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy the more overtly Althusserian themes have gone, to be replaced with elements from post-structuralism and discourse theory. The concept of ideology does not have any purchase in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, it unable to transcend its base/superstructure origins, nor can it easily be accommodated into the 'logic of contingency' tradition. In a universe where meaning is never fixed and social identity has to be negotiated, ideology is displaced by discourse. This displacement becomes necessary when Laclau abandons the notion of social totality, in other words sometime after the essays in Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory. In the context of Laclau and Mouffe's work discourse can be defined (in general terms) as the constant negotiation and construction of meaning. The move begun by Althusser and continued by Laclau in Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory is finally completed in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.

Mouffe's work on Gramsci

This chapter aims to compare the reading of Gramsci offered by Chantal Mouffe in Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci with the rather different utilisation of Gramsci found in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Initially, we should note the most obvious difference: In Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci Mouffe argues that Gramsci provides a non-reductionist conception of ideology, whereas in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Laclau and Mouffe treat Gramsci as an economic determinist. This change in position is best understood in terms of Laclau and Mouffe's approach to, and appreciation of, Althusser rather than a simple reversal of fortunes for Gramsci.

In Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci, Mouffe asserts that a non-reductionist concept of ideology is possible only if

an Althusserian notion of overdetermination is accepted. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy by contrast, Laclau and Mouffe give a very different definition of overdetermination; one which eschews any notion of (economic) determination. It is also important to note that Mouffe's use of ideology has strong Althusserian overtones; that is to say it is defined as a practice producing subjects, (in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy discourse largely fulfils this function). Ideology will also occupy centre stage in the comparison between early Mouffe and Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, in particular the question of the origin and meaning of the term 'ideological elements': we can say that one of the central problems in Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci is the nature of the relationship between ideology and ideological elements.

Ideological elements can tentatively be defined as those principles of subjectivity which exist in a relationship of mutual implication, and, importantly, which are of a non-class nature. For example, social agents are interpellated as members of a family, of a nation, as consumers etc. Ideological elements are introduced by Mouffe in her examination of the problems associated with a reductionist ideology.

"The Second International was strongly reductionist from an ideological point of view, and since it considered that all ideological elements had a necessary class belonging it concluded from this that all elements belonging to the discourse of the bourgeoisie had to be decisively rejected by the working class..." (Mouffe, 1979, p.173)

What is less clear is the actual origin of the term ideological elements. Mouffe does not provide this information, nor does she give a definition, or even explain the relationship between Gramsci's concept of

ideology and her use of the term 'ideological elements'. At times she leaves the reader with the impression that the term is in fact Gramsci's, although there is no evidence that Gramsci used the term in any of his writings. I would attribute the term to Ernesto Laclau, who develops it in Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory as an antidote to the perceived reductionism of Poulantzas.

Given the Althusserian input, overdetermination in Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci means that any social agent possesses several principles of ideological determination. Althusser moves away from the idea that the contradictions constituting the social formation are simply of the economic type, "...the overdetermination of a contradiction is the reflection in it of its conditions of existence within the complex whole, that is, of the other contradictions in the complex whole..." (Althusser, p.253) In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Laclau and Mouffe's use of the term is distinct from Althusser's. There is no longer any determination in the last instance, subject positions are discursive positions and due to overdetermination are never fully complete; in Laclau and Mouffe's own words, "...a field of identities which never manage to be fully fixed..." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.111).

In Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci a social agent is not simply interpellated as a class subject, an individual can be interpellated as a member of a sex, a family, a religion as well as a social class. This leads Mouffe to ask the question; what is the relation between these ideological elements? She answers thus; from a reductionist perspective each has a necessary class belonging;

"But if, on the contrary, we accept the principle of overdetermination, we must conclude that there can exist no necessary relation between them, and that it is consequently impossible to attribute a necessary class-belonging to them."
(Mouffe, 1979, p.171)

It is necessary to comment on overdetermination and its relation to reductionism, especially in the context of the Althusserian shadow it casts over Mouffe's own formulation. Firstly, the Althusserian concept of overdetermination allows Mouffe freedom to develop her ideas on ideological elements. She makes the point that a reductionist paradigm treats all ideological elements as having a necessary class belonging. Viewing ideological elements as obtaining their political connotation from the ideology they become articulated to, opens up the possibility for politics to embrace ideological struggle. In other words, the ideological elements become the stake in ideological struggle.

These assumptions raise several issues and question the validity of her interpretation. Firstly, from a reductionist perspective there could surely be no overdetermination at all, only simple determination by the economic. All contradictions would be expressive of the fundamental contradiction within capitalism, that is between capital and wage labour. Overdetermination only has currency in a world where relative autonomy has already been established. Secondly, can we accept Mouffe's assertion that family, sex and class are examples of ideological elements? Even if we accept Mouffe's comments on overdetermination, it is difficult to see how social class could ever have anything other than a class belonging.

Before moving on to consider Mouffe's work in detail it is necessary to give some further consideration to another aspect of Mouffe's position; namely, the tendency she shares with Laclau to reduce Marxism to economic determinism. This has serious consequences not simply because it is an unfair and inaccurate picture of Marxism, but mainly because both Laclau and Mouffe ground so many of their own theoretical strategies on this critique of Marxism. The following example serves to highlight the problem.

Determination in the last instance Mouffe says, means determination in the last instance by social classes.

"To stress determination in the last instance by the economic is equivalent to saying determination in the last instance by the social classes inasmuch as we define classes as constituting antagonistic poles in the dominant relations of production."
(Mouffe, 1979, p.171)

So by extension she can say,

"...if the ideological elements referred to do not express social classes, but if nevertheless classes do in the last instance, determine ideology, then we must thereby conclude that this determination can only be the result of the establishing of an articulating principle of these ideological elements, one which must result in actually conferring upon them a class character."
(Mouffe, 1979, p.171-2)

What Mouffe offers us is the possibility of a non-reductionist concept of class, but one which is paradoxically made possible by a reductionist conception of class. The contradiction stems from her insistence that determination by the economic is the same as determination by social classes. This is a reductionist move; classes can only determine in the last instance on a

reductionist view of class. The relation between the class configuration in any given social formation and the underlying economic order is a complex one. In any case it can never simply be the result of a direct causality. This type of homology is out of place in a serious non-reductionist account of politics.

Gramsci and collective will

If we look at Gramsci's work on hegemony we can find his most important contribution to Marxist theory; namely, an anti-economistic notion of ideology. Hegemony can never be reduced to class alliance, it is political leadership coupled with intellectual and moral leadership. In Gramsci's writings we can trace the development of a non-economistic conception of state, termed the 'integral state' by Mouffe, and characterised by what she refers to as dictatorship plus hegemony. Hegemony should be thought of as the ability of one class to articulate the interests of other social groups to its own. Only a fundamental class (ie. one which occupies one of the two poles in the capitalist relations of production) can become hegemonic.

"...for Gramsci...hegemony is not to be found in a purely instrumental alliance between classes through which the class demands of the allied classes are articulated to those of the fundamental class, with each group maintaining its own individuality within the alliance as well as its own ideology. According to him hegemony involves the creation of a higher synthesis, so that all its elements fuse in a 'collective will' which becomes the new protagonist of political action..." (Mouffe, 1979, p.184)

If Gramsci is here credited with the notion of collective will, (anti-economistic notion of ideology + hegemony = political subjects that are not simply social classes),

how can he ever be accused of economism? This point should not be underestimated; Mouffe actually says that in Gramsci, political subjects are no longer classes as such, but collective wills, which is a "higher synthesis". Collective will, or national-popular collective will as usually referred to by Gramsci, can be understood as a common world view, the unifying principle that allows a class and its allies to fuse. This unifying principle is always provided by the hegemonic class.

It is this notion of a unifying principle or hegemonic principle that allows Laclau and Mouffe to say in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy that Gramsci is still an economistic Marxist. Collective will may break with determinism in some respects, but at the most basic level it is still an idea that turns on the existence of economically determined class interests. It is equally important to note that in Gramsci's thought collective will and hegemony are compatible with a conception of class, in fact they actually depend on his theorisation of class. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy by contrast classes and hegemony are no longer compatible. The 'higher synthesis' represented by collective will in Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci gives way in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy to 'the people'; classes are split by equivalence, a new type of polarisation is possible, and the conditions for the emergence of hegemony are secured.

Mouffe characterises Gramsci's view of ideology as one rejecting both false consciousness and its reduction to mere epiphenomenon. It is, on the contrary the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position and struggle. Ideology has material existence and is embedded in institutional practices. It is also embedded in economic practices and thus Gramsci is able to conceive of reciprocal determinations between base and

superstructure in a non-mechanistic, non-reductionist way.
For Gramsci,

"...the level of the superstructure where ideology is produced and diffused is called civil society. This constitutes the ensemble of 'private bodies' through which the political and social hegemony of a social group is exercised." (Mouffe, 1979, p.187)

Gramsci holds that subjects that exist at the economic level are not necessarily duplicated at the political level. Inter-class subjects are thus possible, enabling Gramsci to think hegemony beyond a simple class alliance. The hegemony of a fundamental class consists in the creation of a collective will allowing that class and its allies to fuse.

"The creation of a new hegemony, therefore, implies the transformation of the previous ideological terrain and the creation of a new world-view which will serve as a unifying principle for a new collective will. This is the process of ideological transformation which Gramsci designates with the term 'intellectual and moral reform'." (Mouffe, 1979, p.191)

Intellectual and moral reform then, transforms and rearticulates existing ideological elements. Ideological struggle consists in breaking the dominant ideology into its basic elements, choosing suitable elements and rearticulating them into another system.

"It is obvious that viewed in this way moral and intellectual reform is incomprehensible within a reductionist problematic which postulates the existence of paradigmatic ideologies for each social class, and the necessary class-belonging of all ideological elements. If, in effect, one does accept the reductionist hypothesis, moral and intellectual reform can only amount to replacing one class ideology by another." (Mouffe, 1979, p.192)

The common world view or collective will is an organic expression of the whole historic bloc.

"This world view will therefore include ideological elements from varying sources, but its unity will stem from its articulating principle which will always be provided by the hegemonic class. Gramsci calls this articulating principle a hegemonic principle." (Mouffe, 1979, p.193)

Ideological elements acquire their class character by their articulation to a hegemonic principle. Ideological struggle is a process of disarticulation and rearticulation of given ideological elements in a contest between two hegemonic principles to appropriate these elements. This allows Mouffe to say that ideological ensembles existing at a given time are the outcome of relations of forces between rival hegemonic principles.

A successful hegemony manages to create a collective national-popular will. In order to achieve this the dominant class must articulate to its hegemonic principle the national-popular ideological elements. The national-popular can thus be the site of struggle between antagonistic classes. Through hegemony, the contending classes attempt to forge a collective will of a national-popular nature. According to Mouffe national-popular ideological elements are of the non-class sort and as such they are the site of struggle. We can explore this further by considering the following quotation.

"The conception of ideology found in the practical state in Gramsci's problematic of hegemony consists therefore of a practice which transforms the class character of ideological elements by the latter's articulation to a hegemonic principle differing from the one to which they are presently articulated." (Mouffe, 1979, p.195)

Perhaps this should read, 'transforms the non-class character' as we are repeatedly told that ideological elements are of a non-class nature and only acquire a class connotation as a result of articulation. There is certainly evidence enough in the rest of her article to support the view that the whole point about ideological elements is that they do not have a necessary class connotation.

The importance of ideology is summarised as follows;

"Once ... the problematic of ideology which is operating in the practical state in Gramsci's conception of hegemony, has been established, all the other conceptions fall quite naturally into place in a perfectly structured ensemble and the underlying meaning of his thought is revealed in all its coherence." (Mouffe, 1979 p.196)

Ideology, in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy becomes a concept far too heavily implicated in base/superstructure to have any meaning in a universe ruled by contingency. But in the pages of Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci Gramsci's ideology provides a springboard for a non-reductionist, non-essentialist political strategy.

"...Gramsci reaches the conclusion that political struggle does not only take place between two fundamental antagonistic classes, since the 'political subjects' are not social classes but 'collective wills' which are comprised of an ensemble of social groups fused around a fundamental class."
(Mouffe, 1979, pp. 196-197)

The crucial point about collective will is that it is the culmination of a double process, both the self awareness of the fundamental class and the creation of a basis of consensus. Mouffe describes collective will as an ensemble of social groups fused around a fundamental

class, an ensemble in which the class comes to self awareness (becomes a class for itself) and a (democratic) basis for consensus is created.

It is interesting to note how this same point is dealt with in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Laclau and Mouffe write that

"...Gramsci's thought appears suspended around a basic ambiguity concerning the status of the working class which finally leads it to a contradictory position. On the one hand, the political centrality of the working class has a historical, contingent character: it requires the class to come out of itself, to transform its own identity by articulating to it a plurality of struggles and democratic demands. On the other hand, it would seem that this articulatory role is assigned to it by its economic base - hence that this centrality has a necessary character." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.70)

War of position is the name given to a process of ideological struggle between the two fundamental classes where the stakes are the non-class ideological elements, (for example, the national-popular) which have to be articulated to the contending articulating principles. War of position is only compatible with a non-reductionist conception of ideology and politics. The new ideological bloc resulting from this process of disarticulation/rearticulation will contain ideological elements that formed part of the old dominant ideological bloc. Moral and intellectual reform allows the working class must become the national class. It must disintegrate the historical basis of the bourgeoisie's hegemony by disarticulating the ideological bloc by means of which the bourgeoisie's intellectual direction is expressed. In other words;

"...a class is hegemonic when it has managed to articulate to its discourse the overwhelming majority of ideological elements characteristic of a given social formation, in particular the national-popular elements which allow it to become the class expressing the national interest." (Mouffe, 1979, p.195)

Mouffe states that there are, "...three principles underlying the reductionist problematic of ideology." (Mouffe, 1979, p.189)

- all subjects are class subjects
- social classes have paradigmatic ideologies
- all ideological elements have a necessary class belonging

When these criteria are applied to Gramsci, Mouffe is able to show that he is not guilty of a reductionist view of ideology. This is Gramsci's apogee in Mouffe's interpretation; he never rises so high in her estimation again. The terrain has shifted by the time Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is completed. Gramsci the non-essentialist is subsequently indicted in the court of post-Marxism and found guilty of essentialism. What has caused this about turn? Were Mouffe's original criteria invalid, and if not, what is the reason for Mouffe's different reading of Gramsci in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy?

Let us take these possibilities one at a time. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Laclau and Mouffe play down collective will and highlight economic determination, ignore the celebrated non-reductionist concept of ideology and foreground class essentialism. It is clear that the above criteria are not readily applied to Gramsci in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy and the degree to which ideological elements have a necessary class belonging is

no longer a valid question. The very assumptions on which this question is formulated have been rejected. The choice in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is no longer between non-class elements and class ideology, it now centres on the rationale for assuming that the belonging must have a class or non-class nature at all. In other words, why can there not be a multiplicity of (partially completed) subject positions?

The premise that Mouffe is working from in this early essay is that Gramsci is a non-reductionist. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy this has been displaced by an assertion that he is an economic determinist, despite his best attempt to provide a non-reductionist account of ideology. In this sense Laclau and Mouffe do give a very different reading of Gramsci, and one which fails to credit him with the considerable, (and previously acknowledged) achievement that national-popular collective will represents.

Gramsci and the integral state

The definitions used by Mouffe in this period of her work rely heavily on a Gramscian notion of ideology. One aspect of this notion, the materiality of ideology, is neatly summed up by Roger Simon who writes;

"...ideologies have a material existence in the sense that they are embodied in the social practices of individuals and in the institutions and organisations within which these social practices take place."
(Simon, p.59)

Its other important aspect is that "...ideology [is] understood as a practice producing subjects..." (Mouffe, 1981, p.172) In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy ideology is not a term that has much currency and is largely

displaced by the terms discourse and political imaginary, although this is not to suggest that they are in any way similar. From a position in the early work where ideology produces subjects, in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy by contrast, subjects are discursively constructed.

The integral state, a concept developed by Gramsci to specify that the state includes political society and civil society, and that civil society is the terrain of ideological - hegemonic - struggle.

"The integral state is, in effect, that state which has gone beyond the economic-corporate phase and which establishes itself as the organizer of a real historical bloc through the creation of an intellectual and moral unity." (Mouffe, 1981, p.178)

The positive contribution this represents is expressed by Mouffe in the following terms;

"...the notion of the integral state clearly represents an enlargement of the conception of the state [...] articulated around his conception of hegemony...Hegemony involves the supersession of the classist and reductionist conception of politics which presents it as a simple confrontation of antagonistic classes, because it embodies a conception of politics as an articulation of the interests of a fundamental class and those of other social groups in the formation of a national-popular collective will." (Mouffe, 1981, pp.179-180)

This demonstrates the theoretical linkages between the integral state, hegemony, and Gramsci's other key concepts.

In her introduction to Gramsci and Marxist Theory, the volume which includes Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci Mouffe says,

"...the increasing intervention of the state in the countries of monopoly capitalism has led to an increasing politicisation of social conflicts. In fact it has multiplied the forms of confrontation between masses and the state and created a series of new political subjects whose demands must be taken up by the working class."
(Mouffe, 1979, p.11)

Again, we can note the pre-Hegemony and Socialist Strategy nature of this passage, with the emphasis still very clearly on the role of the working class as political agents (and the role of the state creating this antagonism) The most significant feature of this passage is its treatment of the construction of political subjectivity. Political subjects are created outside of a strict class antagonism but their interests can only be represented by the working class.

The problematic relationship between hegemony and determinism that can be adduced from Gramsci's writings is explored in another of Mouffe's early essays, Working Class Hegemony and The Struggle for Socialism, published in 1983. This can be said to belong to a transitional period exemplified by the emergence of her criticism that Gramsci accorded an a priori, determinist centrality to the working class. For example, Gramsci says that only the working class can provide the articulating principle for a national-popular collective will.

According to Mouffe, this view, endemic within Marxism, has its origins in Marx and,

"..is based on three presuppositions that are untenable today: (1) the neutrality of the productive forces; (2) the homogenization of the working class via the double process of proletarianization/pauperization; and (3) the statement that this homogeneous working class has a fundamental interest in the construction of socialism. (Mouffe, 1983, p.8)

Mouffe exhorts us to 'go beyond Gramsci' and abandon his economistic framework. She also poses the question; why should the working class alone have a fundamental interest in socialism? She also states that;

"I shall maintain that in order to break completely and definitively with economism it is necessary to introduce political struggle into the very heart of the economy, and to abandon the thesis that the development of capitalism will create both the material base of socialism...and its social base."
(Mouffe, 1983, p.8)

For reasons such as this Mouffe believed that neither Gramsci nor any other Marxist writers could 'solve' the kinds of problem that her work was posing. Marxism itself was proving to be a barrier to working through issues in a non-reductionist way. It was a problem that was to prevent Mouffe advancing her socialist political project until she was ready to reject the economistic basis of political theory. That moment would arrive with Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. However, as we shall see rejecting the economistic base of Marxism had other far reaching consequences. The sophisticated and inter-related ideas represented by ideology, hegemony, the integral state and national-popular collective will also rely on Gramsci's economistic, class based politics.

Laclau on politics and ideology

We will now consider the early work of Ernesto Laclau, in particular the essays Fascism and Ideology and Towards a Theory of Populism which were published in 1977 in his book Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory. In these essays Laclau advances a rather Althusserian view of ideology which consists of a theory of the production of political subjectivity through interpellation. Having

said that Laclau starts from an Althusserian position I would also stress that his work is characterised by important divergences from Althusser's own work. We can summarise this Althusserian basis in the following way;

(i) ideology refers to the representations through which people 'live', in an imaginary relation, their relation to the real conditions of their existence.

(ii) ideology only exists through material practices inscribed within (material) institutional state apparatuses (ISA's).

(iii) ideology interpellates individuals as subjects.

(iv) there is no practice except in and by ideology. This is where Laclau departs from Althusser's own position (which maintains the distinction between ideology and science). Laclau recognises no such distinction and reformulates ideology as discursive practice. This shift from ideology to discursive practice, one of the key motifs in Laclau's work from Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory to Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, and one of the most significant elements in the development of post-Marxism, is established very early in Laclau's work.

Despite his rejection of the scientific determinism characteristic of Althusser's work, Laclau does inherit one major flaw. Agents can, according to Laclau, depending on the type of antagonism, be interpellated as a class or as the people. This is a central plank of his argument, but, it presumes that subjectivity and agency can exist outside (or prior to) the practice of interpellation, and hence, ideology. If subjects construct themselves by representing in an imaginary way their relation to their conditions of existence, then in

order to carry out this representation they would have to be subjects in the first place. In other words, this appears to be a circular argument and does not satisfactorily theorise the relationship between subjectivity and interpellation.

There are also problems associated with the concepts 'ideological elements' and 'non-class ideologies'. For Laclau 'populism' is defined as a non-class ideology when it should perhaps be described as an ideological element. This is symptomatic of a deeper problem in his work, which manifests itself in the form of conflicting positions that undermine the coherence of his early essays. These positions can be summarised as follows;

(i) Class ideologies are constituted by non-class ideological elements. This position is prevalent in the essay Fascism and Ideology.

(ii) Class ideologies are articulated to non-class ideologies. This tendency is represented by the essay Towards a Theory of Populism. This ambivalence poses certain conceptual problems which are not adequately resolved in these essays. For example, can there be non-class ideologies as well as class ideologies? Can ideological elements interpellate, or can only ideologies do this? Before we can attempt to answer these questions it is necessary to look in more detail at the two essays in question.

Laclau's work on fascism

In his essay Fascism and Ideology Laclau develops a critique of the work of Poulantzas as the starting point for his own analysis. It is evident that Laclau considers Poulantzas' work a major advance over previous attempts at

explaining Fascism. As Laclau says, until Poulantzas's interpretation, "...the complexity of fascism was eliminated and reduced to a single contradiction: that existing between monopoly capitalism and the rest of society." (Laclau, 1977, p.88) What Poulantzas does is to present fascism, "...as the result of a very complex over-determination of contradictions." (Laclau, 1977, p.88) Apart from explaining why Laclau should be interested in Poulantzas it also indicates how both can be located within the sphere of Althusser's influence.

In summary then the main theses advanced by Poulantzas are as follows:

(i) Fascism belongs to the imperialist stage of capitalism.

(ii) Accumulation of contradictions was due to rapid expansion of capital in a country where the bourgeois revolution was carried out under the hegemony of the Junkers (feudal relics), not the bourgeoisie.

(iii) Fascism corresponds to a reorganisation of the power bloc which imposes the hegemony of a new class fraction: big monopoly capital.

(iv) The rise of fascism presupposes defeat for the organised working class.

(v) Fascism creates an alliance between big monopoly capital and the petty-bourgeoisie (who are in ideological crisis).

Laclau identifies two problem areas which he wishes to explore. He states that, "...the validity of Poulantzas's analysis as a whole rests on two fundamental components:

his conception of ideology, and his conception of the petty-bourgeoisie." (Laclau, 1977, p.92)

According to Laclau, Poulantzas has a, "...limited and ambiguous conception of ideology..." (Laclau, 1977, p.93) For Poulantzas ideology consists of elements. All elements have a class belonging.

"Class determination of ideological elements, concrete ideologies as an amalgam of elements, transformation of ideologies through an incorporation/articulation of ideological class elements - what criticisms does this approach merit?" (Laclau, 1977, p.97)

Laclau holds that the reverse is true, "...ideological, 'elements' taken in isolation have no necessary class connotation, and...this connotation is only the result of the articulation of those elements in a concrete ideological discourse." (Laclau, 1977, p.99) The signal is clear; Laclau is already working towards a non-reductionist conception of ideology (which by implication Poulantzas cannot manage).

Equally interesting is the use of the term ideological elements. Laclau develops all his ideas on ideology and discursive formations around these ideological elements and as such they constitute a central feature of his work. Not only are they the key to understanding his work on populism and fascism, but they also help explain the emergence of post-Marxism which characterises his later work (they also constitute a major problem area). Of the two essays considered in this paper the one on fascism relies more heavily on this conception of ideological elements (the other is more geared to the relationship between class and non-class ideologies). It is here that we discover how class ideologies, far from being determined by some structural configuration are in fact

constituted by ideological elements which have a non-class origin.

Laclau sets out to address two important questions; (i) what comprises the unity of an ideological discourse?, and, (ii) what is the process of transformation of ideologies? We will see how important ideological elements are in his answer to both of these questions.

Althusser's most important contribution to the study of ideologies is, "...the conception that the basic function of all ideology is to interpellate/constitute the individual as subjects." (Laclau, 1977, p.100) Thus, in answer to the first of his questions Laclau says, "...what constitutes the unifying principle of an ideological discourse is the 'subject' interpellated and thus constituted through this discourse." (Laclau, 1977, p.101) For Laclau then, interpellation is a discursive practice which produces political subjects.

Laclau is of course opposed to a reductionist approach to Marxism. He advances the thesis that not every contradiction is a class contradiction, but every contradiction is overdetermined by the class struggle. Therefore, if an antagonism is not a class antagonism the ideologies which express it cannot be class ideologies. This type of contradiction is, "...expressed through the interpellation of the agents as the people." (Laclau, 1977, p.107) In other words, he is not simply concerned with the terrain of class struggle but also the realm of popular-democratic struggle. On one level this is a project that extends all through his early work and reaches fruition in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. However, there is another sense in which this should be viewed. Although Laclau's thought in this essay is expressed through an Althusserian vocabulary the idea

itself is Gramscian to the core. For what is the popular-democratic if not collective will, that higher synthesis that transcends the limits of mere class?

"The popular-democratic interpellation not only has no precise class content, but is the domain of ideological class struggle par excellence. Every class struggles at the ideological level simultaneously as a class and as the people, or rather tries to give coherence to its ideological discourse by presenting its class objectives as the consummation of popular objectives." (Laclau, 1977, pp.108-109)

This is a reworking of the Gramscian notion of collective will, recast in the emerging language of post-Marxism. The notion of a class struggling to become 'the people' is only intelligible as a Marxist notion through a reading of Gramsci, and an extension of Althusser's notion that they are interpellated as 'the people'. Laclau takes this even further, using a terminology that prefigures one of the central themes of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. The passage is worth quoting in full.

"The overdetermination of non-class interpellations by the class struggle consists, then, in the integration of those interpellations into a class ideological discourse. Since ideology is a practice producing subjects, this integration is the interpellation of a subject in whom partial interpellations are condensed. But as classes struggle to integrate the same interpellations into antagonistic ideological discourses, the process of condensation will never be complete: it will always have an ambiguity, a greater or lesser degree of openness according to the level of class struggle, and various antagonistic attempts at fusion will always coexist." (Laclau, 1977, p.109)

Although this passage talks of classes and class struggle, terms which have lost their currency in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, we can easily establish the origin of

Laclau and Mouffe's partially completed subjects, and the open and contingent nature of the social. Laclau is now able to answer his second question: Ideologies are transformed through class struggle, through the production of subjects and the articulation/ disarticulation of discourses. It is interesting to compare this 'answer' with the premise in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy that what prevents identity from ever becoming fully fixed, and disrupts/transforms the social formation is the political imaginary.

Poulantzas fails because he attempts to find a class belonging in every ideological element and reduces every contradiction to a class contradiction. In contrast Laclau asserts that, "... popular-democratic interpellations have no precise class connotation and can be incorporated into quite distinct political discourses." (Laclau, 1977, p.111) Consequently he hopes to establish that fascism was one possible way of articulating popular-democratic interpellations. This limitation in Poulantzas's work is highlighted in Laclau's treatment of his categorisation of the petty-bourgeoisie.

The rise of fascism was the result of monopoly capitalism attempting to assert its political hegemony but finding that it could only achieve its aims by means of a mass movement. It had to utilise, "...interpellations which would prevent any identification between radical popular objectives and socialist objectives..." (Laclau, 1977, p.119), hence, "...the production of interpellations which hindered the identification between 'the people' and the working class - was the specific achievement of fascism." (Laclau, 1977, p.119) Furthermore, fascism was possible because the working class had vacated the political terrain described by Laclau as the arena of popular-democratic struggle:

"...fascism arose from a dual crisis: a crisis of the dominant sectors who were incapable of neutralizing by traditional methods the jacobin potential of popular-democratic interpellations; a crisis of the working class which was incapable of articulating them in socialist political discourse." (Laclau, 1977, p.135)

Laclau challenges the essentialist, economistic idea that democratic ideology can be nothing but bourgeois ideology. If, "...it is accepted that popular-democratic ideologies are not class ideologies ... the basic ideological struggle of the working class consists in linking popular-democratic ideology to its discourse..." (Laclau, 1977, p.141) What Laclau has achieved in this essay is to demonstrate the non-class character of popular interpellations. Fascism was, "...a popular radical discourse, neutralized by the bourgeoisie and transformed by it in a period of crisis..." (Laclau, 1977, p.142)

Laclau on populism

In his essay Towards a Theory of Populism Laclau's main object is to look at various theories of populism and present an alternative theoretical schema centred on the concept of popular-democratic interpellation. So, as we can see, there is a lot of common ground with the essay on fascism, although as I mentioned earlier there is a change in emphasis, away from ideological elements in this essay.

Laclau identifies four basic approaches that have been advanced to interpret the phenomenon of populism.

(i) Populism is the expression of a determinate social class.

(ii) Populism should be ignored in favour of an analysis of the class nature of a movement.

(iii) Populism is an ideology not a movement.

(iv) Populism is an aberration produced by the transition from traditional to industrial society.

What these theses have in common is that they all present populism as the expression of situations where classes cannot fully express themselves. This is of course one of Laclau's (and Mouffe's) main criticisms of Marxism, as expressed in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, that the more orthodox Marxists who adhere to the 'iron laws' of capitalist development have great difficulty in explaining any phenomenon that does not conform to these 'laws' (not that all the above positions can be said to be Marxist). Instead, historical events tend to be either categorised by the extent to which they deviate from the perceived norm (Perry Anderson's view of the Bourgeois revolution in England as being 'incomplete', for example), or have a Marxist worldview imposed on them irrespective of the suitability of such an operation (Kautsky's attempt to reduce every historical event to the unfolding of a grand teleological design).

Laclau asserts that contrary to a reductionist approach, we should view classes as, "...the poles of antagonistic production relations which have no necessary form of existence at the ideological and political levels." (Laclau, 1977, p.159) Let us pause for a moment in order to assess the importance of this statement, because it is a clear exposition of both Laclau's intentions and his relationship to Marxism. Firstly, it signals Laclau's interest in a non-reductionist politics, which we will find developed in full in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. However, we should note that in the populism essay he is still working with a non-reductionist class politics, and with the base/superstructure metaphor. Incidentally, we

should not be too concerned with Laclau's adherence to the idea of 'levels', as he says, "The conception of ideology and politics as levels presents a series of difficulties which we cannot pursue here." (Laclau, 1977, p.159)

Secondly, the passage is interesting because it prefigures another move made in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy namely, the distinction drawn between 'reductionism' and Laclau's own work. In this case reductionism equals;

"...an economist perspective common in the Marxism of the Second or Third Internationals - that theorizes superstructures as a reflection of relations of production, or a 'superstructuralist' perspective (Lukacs or Korsch) that makes 'class consciousness' the basic, constitutive moment of class as such." (Laclau, 1977, p.159)

Laclau outlines three consequences that follow from his non-reductive emphasis; (i) the class character of an ideology is not to be reduced to an economic determination. Instead, it is revealed in its specific articulating principle. In other words, the class connotation of an ideology, "...only derives from its specific articulation with other ideological elements." (Laclau, 1977, p.160)

(ii) articulation requires the availability of non-class interpellations and contradictions, which act as the raw material on which class ideological practices operate.

"A class is hegemonic not so much to the extent that it is able to impose a uniform conception of the world on the rest of society, but to the extent that it can articulate different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism is neutralised." (Laclau, 1977, p.161)

This clearly demonstrates the influence of Gramsci on this area of Laclau's work. In particular, the reference to

the articulating principle should be noted, not least because for Gramsci the articulating principle could only be provided by a fundamental class. Laclau continues, "...it is not in the presence of determinate contents of a discourse but in the articulating principle which unifies them that we must seek the class character of politics and ideology." (Laclau, 1977, p.162)

(iii) it is possible to assert both the class belonging of an ideology and the non-class character of some of the interpellations which constitute it. The value of this is that it allows Laclau to propose a satisfactory 'answer' to the problem of populism.

"If we can prove that the strictly 'populist' element does not lie in the movement as such, nor in its characteristic ideological discourse - for these always have a class belonging - but in a specific non-class contradiction articulated into that discourse, we will have resolved the apparent paradox." (Laclau, 1977, p.164)

This ties in with his statement that "... populism consists in the presentation of popular-democratic interpellations as a synthetic-antagonistic complex with respect to the dominant ideology." (Laclau, 1977, pp.172-173) He goes on to explain, that as

"...the ideology of dominant classes not only interpellates dominant subjects but also dominated classes, with the effect of neutralising their potential antagonism... the basic method of this neutralisation lies in a transformation of all antagonism into simple difference. The articulation of popular-democratic ideologies within the dominant discourse consists in an absorption of everything in it which is a simple differential particularity and a repression of those elements which tend to transform the particularity into a symbol of antagonism" (Laclau, 1977, p.173)

This point is echoed in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy with the assertion that antagonisms are the prerequisite for equivalence, whereas difference on the other hand prevents the formation of chains of equivalence.

"Populism starts at the point where popular-democratic elements are presented as an antagonistic option against the ideology of the dominant bloc." (Laclau, 1977, p.173)

This formulation allows Laclau to explain why it is possible to describe Hitler, Mao and Peron as populist. They all present popular interpellations in the form of antagonisms rather than mere difference.

In summary we can say that what is populist in an ideology is the presence of popular democratic interpellations in their specific antagonism, and the articulation of this antagonistic moment within divergent class discourses.

One thing that Laclau makes quite clear is that populism "...can never constitute the articulating principle of a political discourse..." (Laclau, 1977, p.194) Of course this is quite consistent with a Gramscian notions of ideology and hegemony. Where Laclau differs from Gramsci is that he assigns a very high status to the category 'the people'. Again, his thinking on this topic prefigures some of his work in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.

"It is precisely because 'the people' can never be totally absorbed by any class discourse, because there is always a certain openness in the ideological domain, whose structuring is never complete, that the class struggle can also occur as an ideological struggle." (Laclau, 1977, p.195)

This is compatible with Laclau and Mouffe's assertion that the social is open and contingent. Interestingly, Laclau goes as far as to say that "...classes cannot assert their

hegemony without articulating the people in their discourse..." (Laclau, 1977, p.196) Populism is one way that a dominated class can confront the existing power bloc and assert its hegemony.

Conclusions

I have identified elements in the transformation of Laclau and Mouffe from Marxists to post-Marxists. In fact, their trajectories have traced distinct but compatible paths on the way from their Marxist, or quasi-Marxist tracts of the late seventies and early eighties, to the post-Marxist ensemble represented by Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. In the concluding section of this chapter I will draw out some of the political repercussions of this shift and the resultant implications for both their early work and for Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.

Firstly, how true is it to speak of the early Laclau and Mouffe as Marxists? On one level it is true as a general indication of their political position but a good deal more needs to be explained if this label is to have any real meaning. Mouffe, in Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci is working quite openly within a Marxist framework informed by Gramsci, Althusser and Laclau. She gives an account of Gramsci which places him at the apex of Marxist political writing. His development of the concept of hegemony, in Mouffe's account, results in a most flexible and sophisticated tool of political analysis. Gramsci represents a tradition within Marxism (anti-economism, non-mechanistic determinism and anti-reductionism) which both Laclau and Mouffe admire greatly and in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy designate as exhibiting the 'logic of contingency'. This is the 'lost' tradition in Marxism, which they wish their work to be seen as a continuation of.

The main difference between Laclau and Mouffe's appreciation of Gramsci in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy and Mouffe's early work is easy to establish: whereas Mouffe was able to work with the economic, deterministic underpinning of Gramsci's base/superstructure Marxism, in collaboration Laclau and Mouffe find Gramsci tainted with too many Marxist residues which fatally flaw his undoubted achievement of developing a superior theory of class politics. In essence Gramsci was unable to 'go beyond' the limits imposed by adherence to orthodoxy; his politics were always those of class politics. The Marxist foundations which he built upon so well in the end prove to be no more than limitations, preventing the construction of a truly non-essentialist politics.

When considering the shift in position in Mouffe's work it is important to note that Mouffe is correct in asserting that for Gramsci the working class is central, in as much as it acts as the articulating principle of a national-popular will. Thus, Gramsci's Marxism contains the fundamental premise that hegemony must be class hegemony. This position is criticised by Mouffe, who sees the fundamental nature of the working class as sure evidence of essentialism. There is, however, another aspect to class hegemony that Mouffe ignores; the fact that for Gramsci the capitalist class, can also achieve hegemonic status. The bourgeoisie are a fundamental class too, (the two classes occupy antagonistic poles at the heart of the capitalist relation: the owners of the means of production and those who sell their labour power), and as such can also act as an articulating principle, and as Mouffe herself acknowledges, the post-war period witnessed the, "hegemony of capital". (Mouffe, 1983, p.17) If, as Mouffe maintains, we should jettison any notion of a fundamental class, and specifically the centrality of the working class, we must also consider the possibility that, we

should cease to talk about the possibility of bourgeois hegemony. Failure to do so would be inconsistent. However, such a move would only serve to empty the concept of hegemony of all explanatory power and take away the political edge that Gramsci endowed the concept with.

Mouffe criticises Marxists for holding to the belief that the working class has a fundamental interest in the overthrow of capitalism. The question that needs to be asked of Mouffe is; why have the New Social Movements of which she writes, (Feminism, the Greens etc.) any interest in the overthrow of capitalism either? "There is absolutely no reason to suppose that only a movement led by the working class can put an end to the domination of capital over paid labour." (Mouffe, 1983, p.23) However, the argument for their centrality to anti-capitalist struggles is more compelling than that of say, the anti-nuclear movement. Moreover, it is evident that many of these social movements do not incorporate an anti-capitalist element and, as such, it is difficult to see where an anti-capitalist impulse would come from, unless the working class acts as an articulating principle. These ideas will be considered more closely in the following chapter.

Laclau's relationship with other Marxist writers, as demonstrated in the pages of Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory is a little more complicated. It is possible to label Laclau as an Althusserian, but only if certain caveats are observed. I have argued in this chapter that some of the important elements in the development of post-Marxism are established early in Laclau's work, and in this way some Althusserian ideas are subject to criticism. It is also the case that he is engaged in debate with another Althusserian (Poulantzas) of whom he is critical. I have also mentioned that I

believe Laclau's work to be the origin of many of the strands of what later became called post-Marxism. In fact it could be argued that his early work is already post-Marxist, in the limited sense that it is no longer Marxist, but still engages with what we might want to call a Marxist agenda. Strictly speaking though the term post-Marxism should be reserved for the Hegemony and Socialist Strategy period rather than the earlier collection of essays.

The distinction that can be drawn from Laclau's work between Marxism and post-Marxism stems from the assertion that Marxism is necessarily reductionist in as much as it can never escape its economistic roots. This is the essence of the post-Marxist position; Marxism is undone by its reliance upon economics. But in adopting this position Laclau has conflated reductionism with determinism. Marxism does not lose any explanatory power because it is deterministic. There is a significant difference between reduction and determination and the two terms should never be used interchangeably.

Economic determination is part of Marxism's conceptual apparatus. Raymond Williams recognised this when he wrote "We have to revalue 'determination' towards the setting of limits and the exertion of pressure, and away from a predicted, prefigured and controlled content." (Williams, 1980, p.34) It was for this reason that Williams valued the work of Gramsci, a thinker who through the concept of hegemony, viewed the base and superstructure as a structured, mutually implicated totality.

The question of ideological elements has been discussed earlier in this chapter but there is one further aspect that should be considered. Ideological elements are a base/superstructure Marxist notion in which ideology and

subjectivity are inexorably linked. Mouffe's early work resolves to elucidate the link between class and ideological elements. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy any notion of subjectivity being linked to the economy in such an essentialist way is rejected. Therefore, a study of the development and utilisation of the idea of ideological elements, which comprises arguably the single most important facet of their theory of ideology, actually provides us with the moment of rupture between Marxism and post-Marxism. Ideological elements were designed to complement a non-necessitarian reading of ideology but were later seen by Laclau and Mouffe to undermine the whole project. Ideological elements are simply not consistent with a theoretical ensemble where contingency has replaced determinism. They belong in a Marxism that recognises relative autonomy, where the link between the economy and subjectivity has not been dissolved. If the one constant theme in Laclau and Mouffe's early work is to address the question, 'to what extent are ideologies class based?' , we can say that ideological elements were introduced in order to answer this question. Once the question is abandoned as being no longer adequate, ideological elements no longer serve a useful purpose.

It can be said that Laclau's project in his early essays is to explore that region of Gramscian Marxism denoted by the term national-popular collective will. In many ways the most challenging of Gramsci's contributions to the development of Marxist political analysis collective will moves Marxist politics onto the terrain of popular-democratic struggles. Moreover, it actually means that discussion of popular-democratic struggles can be understood within a Marxist framework in a way that makes them compatible, not antithetical to the class struggle. The popular-democratic therefore is no longer equated purely with bourgeois interests.

What should not be forgotten is that 'collective will' in the Gramscian idiom is meaningful only in as much as it is consonant with hegemony, base/superstructure and class struggle. Laclau endeavours to wrest popular-democratic politics, in the guise of 'collective will' away from its Marxist matrix. This is not finally achieved until Hegemony and Socialist Strategy but the initial moves are made in the pages of Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory. This attempt is exemplified by the move to replace collective will with 'the people'. Take for example the statement by Laclau that monopoly capitalism, in order to achieve hegemonic status, had to forge interpellations which would dissolve any link between 'the people' and the working class (Laclau, 1977, p.119). Laclau is trying to establish that the radical political move on behalf of the working class would have been to 'capture' those areas of the popular-democratic which would have resulted in working class hegemony and the defeat of the fascists. In fact the working class chose a rather more corporatist strategy, refused to have anything to do with 'bourgeois' politics and left way open for fascism to establish itself in Germany. The suggestion here then is that hegemony involves a process whereby the working class becomes 'the people'.

However, there is another way of reading this which calls into question both Laclau's idea of what constitutes hegemony and the status of the term 'the people'. The term 'the working class' is meaningful within a Marxist context in a way that 'the people' is not: the working class do not become 'the people' upon achieving hegemonic status. To suggest they do constitutes a misunderstanding of Gramsci's national-popular collective will. In its original Gramscian usage the term collective will, while stressing that political subjects are no longer classes as such, does not play down the role of the hegemonic class,

on the contrary it implies the presence of classes, who necessarily act as the unifying principle.

There is a strong sense in which Gramsci's notion of hegemony is bound-up with ideas of the nation and nationalism. For Gramsci the political project of hegemony is a nationalist project. A class becomes hegemonic in a given nation; the project of hegemony is to forge a national-popular collective will. Gramsci's view can be summarised thus;

"...a class becomes hegemonic in the extent to which it transcends its corporate phase and succeeds in combining the interests of other classes and social forces with its own interests, and in becoming the universal representative of the main social forces which make up the nation." (Simon, p.32)

This is also Mouffe's interpretation of Gramsci in her early work. She writes,

"A successful hegemony is one which manages to create a 'collective national-popular will', and for this to happen the dominant class must have been capable of articulating to its hegemonic principle all the national-popular ideological elements, since it is only if this happens that it (the class) appears as the representative of the general interest. This is why the ideological elements expressing the 'national-popular' are often at stake in the fierce struggle between classes fighting for hegemony." (Mouffe, 1979, p.194)

In addition to the point about the nationalist aspect of hegemony it is also worth noticing that both Simon and Mouffe highlight the importance of transcending the corporate. Thus Mouffe makes the key point about a class being 'representative of the general interest'; not a restricted or exclusive interest.

There is a strong association between transcending the corporate and embracing the national interest. Mouffe says,

"...a class is hegemonic when it has managed to articulate to its discourse the overwhelming majority of ideological elements characteristic of a given social formation, in particular the national-popular elements which allow it to become the class expressing the national interest." (Mouffe, 1979, p.195)

Mouffe's interest in the politics of nation-building through 'expansive hegemony' is in marked contrast to her later work, characterised by the return of corporate, exclusive -'us and them'-political identities. Laclau and Mouffe both identify corporatism as a problem within Marxist thought. It is ironic that their later work on identity, resting on exclusion and the politics of 'us and them', advocates a kind of neo-corporatism. The politics of hegemony has undergone a radical transformation; where it previously worked to overcome corporate interests it now embraces them.

This mutation is also evident in the case of the term Jacobinism. The political imaginary or democratic imaginary as it is sometimes referred to, is deliberately formulated as a concept antithetical to the Marxist tradition. Laclau and Mouffe draw a strict distinction between the democratic imaginary and the Jacobin imaginary, which is used to denote the revolutionary, epochal transition from one type of society to another.

Gramsci's explanation for the 'late arrival' of the Italian nation is that the Italian bourgeoisie failed to transcend its economic-corporate phase. The force which is needed to make this transformation from corporate to hegemonic class is termed Jacobin.

"An effective Jacobin force was always missing, and could not be constituted; and it was precisely such a Jacobin force which in other nations awakened and organised the national-popular collective will, and founded the modern States." (Gramsci, p.131)

Gramsci appropriates the term Jacobin from his interpretation of the history of the French Revolution where the Jacobins worked successfully to forge a bond between town and country. "They made the demands of the popular masses their own. They did not concern themselves solely with the immediate and narrow corporate interests of the bourgeoisie as the hegemonic group of all the popular forces." (Simon, p.33) In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Laclau and Mouffe talk of the Jacobin imaginary in very different terms (see following chapter for a full account), limiting it to the Marxist type revolutionary transition from one type of society to another.

With an extension of the democratic imaginary to more and more areas of social life (one of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy's central ideas), the idea of 'revolution' in the Marxist sense is no longer applicable. This interpretation of Jacobinism is somewhat confusing. There is evidence to suggest that Gramsci used it to indicate,

"...a form of political domination based on the ability to overcome a narrow economic-corporate conception of a class or class-fraction and form expansive, universalising alliances with other classes and class-fractions whose interests can be made to be seen as coinciding with those of the hegemonic class." (Forgacs, p.87)

In this sense the term 'Jacobin imaginary' offers many possibilities for the politics of hegemony. There is a strong link between Jacobinism, hegemony and civil society.

"The function Gramsci assigns to hegemony in transcending mere domination forcefully reveals the pre-eminent position he attributes to civil society, which is the mediating factor between the base and secondary superstructural phenomena. Hegemony is the intermediary force which welds together determinate objective conditions and the actual domination of the ruling group: this conjunction comes about within civil society. (Bobbio, p.93)

Gramscian notions are firmly linked to base/superstructure determination and other economistic Marxist ideas from which Laclau and Mouffe wish to distance themselves. So, in jettisoning their Marxist economistic baggage they lose one of the beneficial aspects of their early work; an approach to the formation of political identity which was not solely reliant upon political ideas. As we will see in the next chapter their work became increasingly centred on the politics of hegemony freed from any economic determination.

In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate that when working within a (Gramscian) Marxist framework Laclau and Mouffe could draw upon a theorisation of identity which enabled them to view identity formation in relation to the nation-state. Hegemony, civil society, the state and the nation are closely linked in Gramsci's work, through the notion of national-popular collective will. In other words, through their critique of large portions of the Marxist canon which forms their background, Laclau and Mouffe moved on to theorise identity in a completely different way. Their early work can be viewed as the origin of the break with the idea that identity must be conceptualised in relation to the state. An appreciation of the Marxist traditions which have informed them in reaching this position becomes possible through an examination of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.

CHAPTER 3

FROM MARXISM TO RADICAL DEMOCRACY

Introduction

Responses to Hegemony and Socialist Strategy upon its publication in 1985 were varied. It was greeted with enthusiasm by some writers who welcomed Laclau and Mouffe's critique of essentialism and move towards post-Marxism, and denounced by Marxists who saw their work as a betrayal of historical materialism. The responses fall into three general categories;

(i) Laclau and Mouffe's work is a development of the Gramscian notion of hegemony. Hegemony occupies central place in Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxism and is a concept that has a definite Marxist lineage. It is questionable however if their usage of hegemony is actually a development of the (Marxist) concept. Rather, it is likely that it is a completely new formulation, in the sense that it is distinct from its Marxist ancestor as a result of its de-articulation from ideology and class. One commentator cited the work of Laclau and Mouffe as an example "...of the attempt to integrate post-structuralist treatments of discourse with a neo-Gramscian non-reductionist politics." (Sarup, p.164) It is in this way that Hegemony and Socialist Strategy as the 'development of the Gramscian notion of hegemony' should be understood.

(ii) Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is a contribution to the theorisation of the politics of postmodernism, or the development of a politics of postmodernism. Best and Kellner, in their discussion of various theorists of postmodernism say,

"Only Laclau and Mouffe have attempted to critically reconstruct liberalism and to push the liberal democratic heritage to a higher level, though their efforts could have the effects of strengthening liberalism and undermining the radical democracy that they seek." (Best and Kellner, p.289)

This raises a further question; how radical is radical democracy?. There is the suspicion that what characterises the politics of postmodernism is a weakening of political agency.

The most sympathetic treatments of Hegemony & Socialist Strategy tended to view it as the future for both Marxism and post-structuralism alike. Frequently, either the post-structuralist or the post-Marxist aspects are highlighted, but seldom both. For example, Rattansi falls into the former category;

"Laclau and Mouffe's work represents an important advance in the construction of a decentered, de-essentialized conception of the social, extending in particular the work of Derrida..." (Rattansi, 1994, p.31)

Gross, on the other hand says that it "... maintains the strengths of the Marxist tradition while ridding it of all those features most often the object of anti-Marxist attacks..." (Gross, p.115) The work of Laclau and Mouffe thus takes on a crucial role not because it is a Marxist work, it almost certainly is not, but because it has headed Marxist theory in the quest to theorise the political spaces created by postmodernism.

(iii) Laclau and Mouffe's work is the outcome of a 'crisis of Marxism'. The work of Laclau and Mouffe can be said to have emerged from a 'crisis within Marxism', displaying a definite and permanent relationship to the Marxism that preceded it. (Laclau and Mouffe emphasise that their work is post-Marxist as well as being post-Marxist). The following factors can legitimately claim to contribute to the 'crisis': the absence of theoretical direction in the post-Althusserian period, the challenge of feminism and new social movements, the widespread failure or

incorporation of working class movements, and the fall of Eastern European Communism.

It is true to say that Laclau and Mouffe have begun to occupy the theoretical, intellectual and even political spaces vacated by Marxism during the period of post-Althusserian stagnation. The roots of this failure are to be found in the reluctance among Marxists to acknowledge the central problems in contemporary Marxism. It was for this reason that the idea of post-Marxism was received with enthusiasm in some quarters. O'Connor describes Hegemony and Socialist Strategy "the most sophisticated post-Marxist text" (O'Connor, p.33)

The responses from the Marxist camp have been harsh and indignant, relying mainly on a trenchant re-statement of Marxist orthodoxy. The obvious examples are Geras, who debated at length with Laclau and Mouffe in the pages of New Left Review (Geras, 1987 and 1988), and Wood with her book Retreat from Class (Wood, 1986). Both responses raise important issues in relation to Laclau and Mouffe's work but neither are at all sympathetic to the project of post-Marxism. Mouzelis offers a rounded response by adopting a position that challenges the idea promulgated by Geras and Wood that Laclau and Mouffe have completely broken with Marxism,

"...when obliged to refer to the broad features of capitalist formulations and their long term transformations, they revert ...to such conventional Marxist concepts as exploitation, commodification, the labour process, civil society, capitalist periphery etc...How are the above concepts, which Laclau and Mouffe freely use, connected with discourse analysis ? The connection is never made clear, and the gap between the two types of concepts creates a much more glaring dualism than that found in the Marxist texts they so vehemently criticise".(Mouzelis, p.115)

It is important to investigate the role of the Marxist tradition in Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist work. To do this it is necessary to look at Hegemony and Socialist Strategy in some detail.

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy

We can say that the main project in Laclau and Mouffe's collaborative venture, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is to explore the possibility of a non-essentialist socialist strategy, to which they give the name 'hegemony'. Laclau and Mouffe's challenge to Marxist essentialism develops out of a critique of the ontological centrality of the working class in the Marxist tradition, a tradition that never manages to transcend its economistic, deterministic, and essentialist foundations. Even those Marxists such as Gramsci, who represent the highest, most sophisticated level of political analysis are guilty of class essentialism. For Laclau and Mouffe a true democratic politics cannot emerge while the primacy of the working class is supposed, hence the need for a thorough rethinking of essentialist categories.

It should be noted however, that Laclau and Mouffe do not wish to reject Marxism in totality. They would like their work to be seen as a development of particular strands of thought within the Marxist tradition, in particular, what they would call 'the logic of contingency'. They would probably choose to be understood as political theorists who have recognised and come to terms with a fragmenting Marxism, utilised selected fragments (the 'best' ones), and as a result are in a position to provide what Marxism can no longer manage; a framework for political analysis in the postmodern world. We should understand the designation 'post-Marxism' in this light.

There is a tension resulting from the complex relationship between post-Marxism and the Marxist traditions it has in part rejected. Laclau and Mouffe acknowledge the plurality and diversity of positions within the Marxist corpus, but at the same time give what Geras has called an impoverishing view of Marxism, that is to say they reduce it to its irredeemably essentialist core. I would make two points here. Firstly, Laclau and Mouffe certainly appropriate the Marxist tradition very selectively, but their relation to, and appropriation of the Marxist tradition needs a much fuller investigation if it is to be understood properly. Secondly, it is interesting that Laclau and Mouffe can no longer work within a Marxist framework. Most of the Marxist strands they hold as good have emerged precisely because of the viability of the base/superstructure model, with its economistic and deterministic underpinnings. Their stance on essentialism, the cornerstone of their critique, has led them to this position but outright rejection of all Marxism on these grounds sits uneasily with their previous sympathy to, and understanding of, historical materialism. For example, they no longer have use for the concept 'mode of production', it is simply far too economistic, but how is it possible to speak of capitalism without a notion of mode of production? Although they make a point of highlighting the work of those Marxists whose ideas conflicted with the orthodoxy of historical necessity or economism, they play down the extent to which these same writers theorised the political as a relatively autonomous sphere freed from any simple economic determination.

At the start of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Laclau and Mouffe make an interesting statement that deserves attention. They describe "...an avalanche of historical mutations...", such as "...the new feminism, the protest movements of ethnic, national and sexual minorities, the

anti-institutional ecology struggles waged by marginalised layers of the population, the anti-nuclear, the atypical forms of social struggle in countries on the capitalist periphery - all these imply an extension of social conflictuality to a wide range of areas, which creates the potential, but no more than the potential, for an advance towards more free, democratic and egalitarian societies." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.1) The task of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is to explain the political strategy which will turn this potential into actuality; namely, hegemony. This new political logic presents a direct challenge to, "...the theoretical and political bases on which the intellectual horizon of the left was traditionally constituted", in other words, Marxism. This was the main reason that the work of Laclau and Mouffe was thought at the time to be applicable to an understanding of the politics of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition and emerging democracies within the former Eastern bloc, among other examples.

The concept of hegemony developed in the pages of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is central to Laclau and Mouffe's thesis but very different from its Marxist predecessor. They state that rather than being complementary to the Marxist tradition, it in fact, "...introduces a logic of the social which is incompatible with those [Marxist] categories." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.3) One of the tasks of this paper is to give a full exegesis of hegemony, as developed by Laclau and Mouffe, a task which can only be completed by giving a detailed account of other, related concepts such as articulation, antagonism, equivalence and overdetermination.

What factors can we identify which have led Laclau and Mouffe to adopt their post-Marxist position ? Their motivation is twofold; a growing disenchantment with all

forms of Marxism and a need to find a non-reductionist politics that can understand and embrace 'new social movements', two factors which are of course closely linked. Their book can be read on one level as a postmodernist critique of Marxism (see below). It is worth looking a little more closely at their dissatisfaction with the Marxist project.

"What is now in crisis is a whole conception of socialism which rests upon the ontological centrality of the working class, upon the role of Revolution, with a capital 'r', as the founding moment in the transition from one type of society to another, and upon the illusory prospect of a perfectly unitary and homogeneous collective will that will render pointless the moment of politics. The plural and multifarious character of contemporary social struggles has finally dissolved the last foundation for that political imaginary. Peopled with 'universal' subjects and conceptually built around History in the singular, it has postulated 'society' as an intelligible structure that could be intellectually mastered on the basis of class positions and reconstituted, as a rational transparent order, through a founding act of a political character. Today the Left is witnessing the final act of the dissolution of that Jacobin imaginary."(Laclau and Mouffe,p.2)

I would single out the following points for comment. Firstly, the 'collective will' referred to is class consciousness of the mechanistic Marxist variety (rather than the Gramscian type), where consciousness is expressive of a class formed at the economic level. Hence the reference to the 'moment of politics' being redundant. In this model class unity is not formed on the political stage, but rather class subjects are created a priori by their insertion into the relations of production. Secondly, for Laclau and Mouffe 'society' is no longer possible. Instead the social is open and contingent. They state that, "One of the central tasks of this book

[Hegemony and Socialist Strategy] will be to determine this specific logic of contingency." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.3) In order to do this they have to employ concepts bequeathed from the Marxist cannon. Their object of study will be, "...that infinite intertextuality of emancipatory discourses in which the plurality of the social takes shape".(Laclau and Mouffe, p.3)

As we shall see Laclau and Mouffe go to great lengths to emphasise the diversity and indeed plurality of positions within the Marxist tradition, some of which they wish to associate themselves with. They also firmly reject many other strands of Marxist thought, as evidenced by their rejection of economism. The logic behind what may seem at times to be a very selective appreciation of the Marxism is in fact a reading which views the degree of essentialism present in any text as the criterion of quality. Of course, for Laclau and Mouffe all Marxism is essentialist in the final instance and it is this reason, more than any other, why we should not be surprised that Laclau and Mouffe describe themselves as post-Marxists.

The problem with Marxism, Laclau and Mouffe might say, is that it necessarily grants privilege to the working class as agents of political change, reducing politics to a mere reflection of an underlying economic order. Their post-Marxist work is therefore an attempt to break with economism, and at the same time, establish the presence of a 'lost' tradition of nascent contingency within mainstream Marxism. Although it may be tempting to see them as socialists who have rejected the essentialism inherent in Marxism, I would suggest that this is too simple a view, and only a partially accurate description of their position. Their relation to Marxism is a much more complex one. True, they challenge essentialism and

economic determinism, but they also seek to establish Marxist antecedents for their own position.

In order for Laclau and Mouffe to carry out this project they need a guiding principle, which as we already know is their concept of hegemony. This choice serves two functions. Firstly, it allows them to re-read Marxist political theory in order to establish the presence of, or component pieces of, a political logic that would eventually be known as hegemony. Secondly, it allows them to situate themselves within the Marxist lineage, even if they now claim to have gone beyond it.

"Faced with the rationalism of classical Marxism, which presented history and society as intelligible totalities constituted around conceptually explicable laws, the logic of hegemony presented itself from the outset as a complementary and contingent operation, required for conjunctural imbalances within an evolutionary paradigm whose essential or 'morphological' validity was not for a moment placed in question". (Laclau and Mouffe, p.3)

What should not be forgotten about Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is that it can be read on one level as a postmodernist critique of Marxism. For example, Laclau and Mouffe can write that,

"...there is not one discourse and one system of categories through which the 'real' might speak without mediations. In operating deconstructively within Marxist categories, we do not claim to be writing 'universal history', to be inscribing our discourse as a moment of a single, linear process of knowledge. Just as the era of normative epistemology has come to an end, so too has the era of universal discourses."
(Laclau and Mouffe, p.3)

This is both an assertion of their postmodernist credentials and an acknowledgement of their debt to the post-structuralism of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan.

This introduction has sought to situate Laclau and Mouffe in relation to the Marxism that their work is in part a critique of. I propose to allow their own distinction between Marxism and post-Marxism as a valid and useful, as long as it is understood that what lies behind this appellation is a complex, and sometimes fraught relationship which contains more than just a thorough rejection of essentialism. When they say;

"We are now situated in a post-Marxist terrain. It is no longer possible to maintain the conception of subjectivity and classes elaborated by Marxism, nor its vision of the historical course of capitalist development, nor, of course, the conception of communism as a transparent society from which antagonisms have disappeared."
(Laclau and Mouffe, p.4),

we can clearly see the extent of their anti-essentialism. Obviously, the Marxist conception of classes depends upon an essentialist underpinning, but it does not necessarily follow that a mechanistic model of the unfolding of capitalist development is a feature of each and every strand of the Marxist tradition. Laclau and Mouffe underplay the extent to which those theorists who reveal an understanding of the contingent nature of politics, or a dissatisfaction with the 'iron law of capitalist development' thesis also allow for reciprocal determination between base and superstructure. What is required is a thorough examination of the origins of essentialism in Marxism, and its influence on specific historical and political writings. In the first and second chapters of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Laclau and Mouffe set out to do this.

The Marxist tradition and historical necessity.

It is clear that Laclau and Mouffe believe that they can not only establish that their own project has Marxist antecedents, but also that the historical development of Marxism contains evidence of a rich diversity of perspectives that cannot be reduced to classical orthodoxy. In order to establish the emergence of hegemony, Laclau and Mouffe study the political writings of Luxemburg, Bernstein, Kautsky and Sorel. In this way, they hope to show how Marxism has always had a need for the concept of hegemony, but how its full emergence was inhibited by structural problems within Marxism itself.

There is a tension within their work arising from their interpretation of these various Marxists. On the one hand Marxism is irredeemably essentialist, economistic and reductionist and this is true irrespective of whichever Marxist we might care to mention. On the other hand, they give an account of Marxism which stresses the plurality of positions, political strategies and theoretical direction out of which they are able to construct the genealogy of the concept 'hegemony'.

Their starting point is a critique of the idea of historical necessity. This is the somewhat crude, economistic Marxist notion that the laws of capitalist development will lead to the unity of working class consciousness, and ultimately the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalism. Laclau and Mouffe take as an example of a challenge to this position the work of Rosa Luxemburg, whose ideas of spontaneism broke with the notion that class unity is formed at the level of the economic base. She posits the unity of class as a symbolic unity, "...each struggle overflows its own literality and comes to represent, in the consciousness of the masses, a simple moment of a more global struggle

against the system." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.11) As such, she has rejected the logic of historical necessity and replaced it with a form of, "...symbolic overdetermination as a concrete mechanism for the unity of these [multiple] struggles..." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.11)

This introduces the term 'overdetermination'. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy this has a specific meaning: that there is an absence of any simple determinations, by the economic, for example. In the case of Luxemburg she has suggested that class unity is not given by the subject's position in the relations of production. Rather, the creation of this class unity is a political act. In Laclau and Mouffe's terminology, the unity of the working class is constituted through a process of revolutionary overdetermination.

Laclau and Mouffe believe that there is nothing in Luxemburg's theory of spontaneism to lead to the conclusion that this process of overdetermination to lead to class unity as such.

"On the contrary, the very logic of spontaneism seems to imply that the resulting type of unitary subject should remain largely indeterminate. In the case of the Tsarist state, if the condition of overdetermination of the points of antagonism and the diverse struggles is a repressive political context, why cannot the class limits be surpassed and lead to the construction of, for example, partially unified subjects whose fundamental determination is popular or democratic."
(Laclau and Mouffe, p.11)

This is a very important passage which contains several examples of terms developed by Laclau and Mouffe in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. As overdetermination is, "...a field of identities which can never manage to be fully fixed..." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.111), Laclau and

Mouffe talk in terms of 'partially unified subjects'. Antagonisms are overdetermined because in contrast to classical Marxism, antagonisms are not simply economic. When Laclau and Mouffe talk of overdetermination they are attempting to free the term from the (Althusserian) limits of 'relative autonomy', consequently there is now no determination in the last instance.

However, there seems to be a problem with their understanding of Luxemburg, stemming in part from a poor historical analysis and importantly, also from their own admission that their theory is only applicable to post-war western societies. There was of course no civil society to speak of in Tsarist Russia, and no subsequent tradition of, or political space for the emergence of, popular or democratic movements. To use Laclau and Mouffe's own terminology, we can say that partially constructed democratic subjects would be at the horizon of the social. Tsarist Russia was pre-capitalist by and large and certainly was not characterised by what Marxists (or Laclau and Mouffe for that matter), would call the capitalist mode of production. "The October Revolution [was] made against the husk of a feudal monarchy", and "...the Bolsheviks never had to confront...the contours of capitalist democracy" (Anderson, P. p.79) The type of democratic politics that Laclau and Mouffe invoke seems to belong to a later historical period. In other words, it is unlikely that Tsarist Russia would provide the correct conditions for the possibility of the emergence of democratic subjects. However, this type of explanation, while permissible within a Marxist framework, is not available to Laclau and Mouffe. They would not concede that the emergence of political actors is in any way conditioned by the development of productive forces.

Laclau and Mouffe take every opportunity to attack the essentialism characteristic of Marxist theory. They are saying that if we take away the limitations imposed by historical necessity then the open and contingent nature of subjectivity would be allowed to emerge. They suggest that the construction of political identities should have little to do with strict class boundaries. In the advanced capitalist countries the last few decades has brought about, "...the constant emergence of new forms of political subjectivity cutting across the categories of the social and economic structure." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.13) This would seem to confirm the view expressed earlier that the example of Tsarist Russia does not fit inside their model. They submit that when Luxemburg resorts to class subject identities, she has run up against the most fundamental limitation within Marxist theorising: essentialism. Another, less aleatory, explanation could be that non-class subject identities simply were not available in Tsarist Russia.

The study of Rosa Luxemburg serves more than one purpose. Laclau and Mouffe have found a theme within the Marxist tradition that they can identify with; namely, the non-necessary character of class formation (coupled with the importance of the moment of politics). They attribute to Luxemburg the realisation that the necessary logic of capitalist development was insufficient to effect a socialist revolution. The importance of this discovery is described thus: "The concept of hegemony did not emerge to define a new type of relation in its specific identity, but to fill a hiatus that had opened in the chain of historical necessity." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.11)

One strong criticism of Marxism advanced by Laclau and Mouffe is the tendency to impose its categories on the social field and its worldview on any political situation,

often producing a distorted picture as a result. Kautsky is singled out for criticism both for this failing and for his reductionist methodology. Kautsky, "...simplified the meaning of every social antagonism or element by reducing it to a specific structural location, already fixed by the logic of the capitalist mode of production." (Laclau and Mouffe, pp.15-16) So not only is he guilty of determinism but also of reducing history to the unfolding of a grand teleological design. Their critique of Kautsky is therefore both an attack on 'historical necessity', and the 'laws of capitalist development'. Laclau and Mouffe stress the failings of Kautsky's 'normative Marxism':

"...in the Marxist Vulgate, history advanced towards an ever greater simplification of social antagonisms, the extreme isolation and confrontation course of the German workers movement would acquire the prestige of a paradigm towards which other national situations had to converge and in relation to which they were merely inadequate approximations." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.17)

In other words, Kautsky is being criticised for not theorising the specificity of the German situation. Once it became clear that capitalism was advancing in a way that neither conformed to any Marxist model nor obeyed 'iron laws of development', the theorists of historical necessity had to rethink their whole project.

If the failure of the logic of historical necessity was the problem, then the solution, according to Laclau and Mouffe was threefold. The formation of Marxist orthodoxy, revisionism and revolutionary syndicalism all represent responses to the 'crisis' posed by the fragmentation of the working class and the resistance offered by organised capital. Laclau and Mouffe sum up the situation in the following terms.

"A proliferation of caesurae and discontinuities start to break down the unity of a discourse that considered itself profoundly monist. From then on, the problem of Marxism has been to think those discontinuities and, at the same time, to find forms of reconstituting the unity of scattered and heterogeneous elements."
(Laclau and Mouffe, p.18)

Laclau and Mouffe discuss the three responses to the crisis in some detail. (i) The formation of Marxist Orthodoxy. If politics is a superstructure then, "...it is a terrain of struggle between agents whose identity, conceived under the form of 'interests', has set itself up at another level." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.20). This is developed in greater detail.

"Diverse subject positions are reduced to manifestations of a single position; the plurality of differences is either reduced or rejected as contingent; the sense of the present is revealed through its location in an a priori succession of stages. It is precisely because the concrete is in this way reduced to the abstract, that history, society and social agents have, for orthodoxy, an essence which operates as their principle of unification. And as this essence is not immediately visible, it is necessary to distinguish between a surface or appearance of society and an underlying reality to which the ultimate sense of any concrete presence must necessarily be referred, whatever the level of complexity in the system of mediations." (Laclau and Mouffe, pp.21-22)

This then is the Marxism that allows for no autonomy for the political, recognises no determination save for economic determination, and as such could not allow either overdetermination or non-class subjects.

Laclau and Mouffe place a great value on contingency, open subject positions, overdetermination and the like but see the development of such concepts from within the Marxist

tradition virtually impossible due to the straitjacket of Orthodoxy. Laclau and Mouffe's work can be read as an archaeology (in the Foucauldian sense) of the suppressed traditions within Marxism. They seek to resurrect elements of these traditions which they can then use to deconstruct, (in the Derridean sense) a Marxism dominated by simple economic determinism. One neglected tradition is Austro-Marxism.

"The moment of class unity is,...a political moment. The constitutive centre of what we might call a society's relational configuration or articulatory form is displaced towards the field of the superstructures, so that the very distinction between economic base and superstructures becomes blurred and problematic." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.28)

We should note the emphasis on the challenge to 'historical necessity', and the emergence of non-reductive subject positions.

(ii) Revisionism. It is a mistake to equate reformism with revisionism. Reformism equals political quietism and the corporate confinement of the working class. A revisionist theory however, places emphasis on autonomous political action. (This is another part of Laclau and Mouffe's own lineage of course.) "The autonomy of the political from the economic base is the true novelty of Bernstein's argument." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.30) For Bernstein, political mediation was constitutive of class unity. However, there is an ambiguity here; "...if the working class appears increasingly divided in the economic sphere, and if its unity is autonomously constructed at the political level, in what sense is this political unity a class unity?" (Laclau and Mouffe, p.32) Laclau and Mouffe see this dilemma as prefiguring a lot of their own work. Bernstein is important, as he demonstrates the emergence of anti-essentialism from within the Marxist

tradition itself. Their sympathies with his project are presented thus;

"When Bernstein questions whether any general mechanism can validly explain the course of history...he does not question the type of historical causality proposed by orthodoxy, but attempts to create a space where the free play of subjectivity will be possible in history." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.33)

The similarity between the two political projects can be demonstrated again; Bernstein argued that, "...Marxism had failed to show that socialism necessarily followed from capitalism's collapse." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.33) But Bernstein's solution brought with it a whole series of new problems. He introduced the notion of an ethical subject, aware of the progressive and ascending character of human history. Thus, he broke with mechanical determinism only to create a new transcendent subject, the ethical subject. According to Laclau and Mouffe this is a dead end as it prevents a, "...move towards a theory of articulation and hegemony." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.34) Bernstein's transcendent ethical subject can never be reconciled with Laclau and Mouffe's partially fixed subjects.

What we are seeing, through Laclau and Mouffe's account of Marxism's struggle to re-establish its theoretical viability, is a group of responses to the problem of historical necessity which so far have all placed a premium on the non-correspondence between political subjects and the economic base.

(iii) Revolutionary Syndicalism, then, goes a step further by dissolving 'totality' and replacing it with 'melange'. Although Sorel breaks with historical necessity in favour of the, "syndicalist myth of the general strike." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.39), the purpose of

which is to unify the workers consciousness, the problem must again be posed; "Why does this politically or mythically reconstituted subject have to be a class subject?" (Laclau and Mouffe, p.41)

To summarise then, what Laclau and Mouffe propose is that the work of those Marxists discussed above shows that the economic base is not able to ensure class unity. However, politics, while able to construct that unity, is not able to guarantee the class unity of subjects. In other words, the Marxist writers considered here were able to highlight the structural blockage but were not capable of going beyond it.

The emergence of the concept of hegemony

Laclau and Mouffe assert that the concept of hegemony, "...fills a space left vacant by a crisis of what...should have been a normal historical development." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.48) In other words, where the course of 'normal' historical development has been interrupted, a concept is needed to account for this 'deviation from the norm'. This concept is hegemony and thus arises out of the failure of historical necessity.

"The centrality attributed to the working class is not a practical but an ontological centrality, which is, at the same time, the seat of an epistemological privilege: as the 'universal' class, the proletariat - or rather its party - is the depository of science."
(Laclau and Mouffe, p.57)

Once the need for a politics of hegemony has been established the working class can be displaced and a range of non-economic subject positions become possible. Or to put it another way; "Without hegemony socialist practice can only focus on the demands and interests of the working

class." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.58) Mass democratic practice can only be achieved, Laclau and Mouffe say, if these tasks are seen as having no necessary class character. The identity of classes is transformed by hegemonic tasks. Hegemony supposes the political construction of social agents, as opposed to Marxism which assumes the non-political constitution of classes.

In Laclau and Mouffe's model politics is no longer the representation of interests, and thereby offers a direct challenge to the validity of the base/superstructure metaphor. The identity of social agents is no longer thought to be constituted by their insertion in the relations of production. Thus, hegemony also poses a significant threat to the notion that there is an identification between social agents and classes. Moreover, it questions the Marxist reliance on the topography of the social, a metaphor that refers to the idea that there are different 'levels of society'. For instance, Marxism posits the economy, politics and ideology as different 'levels' within the totality of the social. More importantly perhaps, this Marxist mode of thinking treats the political as an epiphenomenon of the economy. Superstructures imply a topography of the social. For Laclau and Mouffe hegemony is conceived as a political relation not as a topographical concept.

Laclau and Mouffe use the term equivalence to express the non-class basis of popular-democratic movements. For example, groupings within a broad oppositional movement will have differentiated, even antagonistic interests. However, their common opposition to what Laclau and Mouffe call the "dominant pole", constructs, "...a 'popular' discursive position that is irreducible to class positions." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.63) In Marxist orthodoxy the category of 'people' is untheorised, and as

a consequence, every position is reduced to a class position.

Before going on to look at equivalence in detail there are two issues raised by the preceding quotation. Firstly, we have seen that Laclau and Mouffe argue that the most fundamental consequence of essentialism is the tendency to only think in terms of class subjects and consequently fail to adequately theorise the possibility of either non-class subjects or the category 'the people'. This view posits Marxism as pure class essentialism and suggests that it is devoid of any other categories. However, elsewhere in their book they take the trouble to point to the work of writers like Sorel, Gramsci and others who are notable precisely because they are able succeed in producing non-reductionist political analyses. It is rash to criticise all Marxism for class essentialism when they themselves provide numerous examples of Marxists who have grappled with the problem of the relationship between political forms and the economic infrastructure which is supposed to underpin it.

Secondly, Laclau and Mouffe do not say much about the dominant pole itself. All we are allowed is that the dominant pole is what chains of equivalence are constructed in opposition to. But this is far too vague to be of much use. Are they referring to the state, capitalism, the family, or perhaps all of these in combination, none of these, or a different amalgam for a specific historical conjuncture? Presumably the dominant pole in Tsarist Russia is not the same as that in post-war Britain. Given its importance in relation to 'equivalence', the idea of the dominant pole remains poorly developed. Surely an understanding of the specificity of the constitution of the dominant pole at any given historical conjuncture is fundamental when

deciding on the type of political strategy to adopt. This would no doubt also have a bearing on the political configuration of the chains of equivalence that would ensue. However, Laclau and Mouffe do not accord any importance to this question; chains of equivalence simply form in opposition to the dominant pole.

When considering equivalence then, two initial points are in order; it is best understood in the context of its relation to 'difference', and it should be distinguished from more general terms such as identity and equality. By subverting the differential logic of the social, equivalence makes hegemony possible. While the logic of difference serves to engender a complexity of the social space, the logic of equivalence is the simplification of the social, which ultimately leads to the creation of two antagonistic camps. For this to be possible difference has to be negated. These ideas, essential to an understanding of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy will be further developed in the rest of this chapter.

The importance of equivalence is essentially symbolic, in fact individual elements can be substituted for each other. For example, elements in opposition to the dominant pole enter into equivalence by expressing their opposition not their particular political position as such. In other words, such elements are interchangeable on the basis of their symbolic role as oppositional groups.

For Laclau and Mouffe the relation of equivalence outlined here splits the identity of classes, constitutes a new type of polarisation and paves the way for the emergence of the 'people'. Having its origins in Marxist notions of class alliance and refracted through Gramsci's notion of collective will hegemony has finally broken with its class

base; "...popular-democratic symbols emerge to constitute subject positions different from those of class..." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.64)

We can see that Laclau and Mouffe's use of hegemony is very different from Gramsci's, for whom class would still be central. The fact that they persist in using a Marxist concept long after it has had all its Marxist content removed could conceivably confuse or antagonise Laclau and Mouffe's political opponents. However, I would rather see it as an example of what they mean by post-Marxism: hegemony emerged from within Marxism but could only find its full expression in a political ensemble that seeks to go beyond class dominated categories. Post-Marxism implies a continuity with Marxism and therefore the continued use of the term hegemony is inescapable. If Marxism has fragmented as they claim, then hegemony is a fragment that still has some currency. They would argue that the hegemony that appears in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is the culmination of a protracted struggle for the full recognition and expression of that concept. The political logic that we may call hegemony had a long and difficult gestation period.

Gramsci's contribution to the development of hegemony was to introduce the idea of the materiality of ideology, that is, one embodied in institutions. He is also seen as significant because he acknowledged that ideology should not be simply reduced to the economic. Political subjects are not just classes but 'collective wills'; "...the collective will is a result of the politico-ideological articulation of dispersed and fragmented historical forces." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.67), all of which attracts high praise from Laclau and Mouffe. However, Gramsci had his limitations, which for Laclau and Mouffe, consists in his insistence that there must be a single unifying

principle in every hegemonic formation: a fundamental class. Therefore, class hegemony is not just the result of struggle but has, "an ultimate ontological foundation" (Laclau and Mouffe, p.69). This is true, Gramsci is interested in constructing class hegemony, therefore class is central.

However, if a class is to exercise hegemony, and by this I mean its ability to articulate the interests of other groups to its own, then this must be realised at the political level. Gramsci does not hold with a mechanistic view of the base/superstructure, that is to say, one which admits little autonomy for the superstructures. If Laclau and Mouffe have confirmed that Gramsci has an essentialist core, and that he sees, "...the economy as a homogeneous space unified by necessary laws..." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.69), then they have neglected to note that he would advocate reciprocal determination between the economic and the political, and that his writing on the economy took into account the many changes that had occurred within the logic of capital accumulation since Marx's time. What Laclau and Mouffe can salvage from Gramsci however is of great importance.

"The Gramscian theory of hegemony...accepts social complexity as the very condition of political struggle and...sets the basis for a democratic practice of politics, compatible with a plurality of historical subjects."
(Laclau and Mouffe, p.71)

Laclau and Mouffe discuss at length what they see as the major limitation of the Marxist view of the world; the primacy of the economic.

"The economic level...must satisfy three very precise conditions in order to play this role of constituting the subjects of hegemonic practices. Firstly, its laws of motion must be strictly endogenous and

exclude all indeterminacy resulting from political or other external interventions - otherwise, the constitutive function could not refer exclusively to the economic. Secondly, the unity and homogeneity of social agents, constituted at the economic level, must result from the very laws of motion of this level (any fragmentation and dispersion of positions requiring an instance of recomposition external to the economy is excluded). Thirdly, the position of these agents in the relations of production must endow them with 'historical interests', so that the presence of such agents at other social levels - through mechanisms of 'representation' or 'articulation' - must ultimately be explained on the basis of economic interests." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.76)

Laclau and Mouffe actually acknowledge that with Gramsci at least, Marxism attained the status of a non-mechanistic theory. Non-mechanistic perhaps, but still determinist and essentialist. In a very telling sentence Laclau and Mouffe say. "Even those Marxist tendencies which struggled hardest to overcome economism and reductionist maintained, in one way or another, that essentialist conception of the structuring of economic space..." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.76) This is significant because I believe that it highlights a problem area in their work. Laclau and Mouffe cannot talk about capitalism except in Marxist terms. This means that they themselves retain the use of terms which refer to an essentialist conception of the economic. The comment made by Mouzelis illustrates this point perfectly;

"...when obliged to refer to the broad features of capitalist formulations and their long term transformations they revert...to such conventional Marxist concepts as exploitation, commodification, the labour process, civil society, capitalist periphery etc..." (Mouzelis, p.115)

In order to escape this essentialist prison Laclau and Mouffe want to, "...demonstrate that the space of the

economy is itself structured as a political space, and that in it, as in any other 'level' of society, those practices we characterized as hegemonic are fully operative." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.77) There is perhaps less distance than Laclau and Mouffe think between their new position and 'economistic' Marxism. For example, Raymond Williams, on the subject of base/superstructure writes;

"We have to revalue 'superstructure' towards a related range of cultural practices, and away from a reflected, reproduced or specifically dependent content. And, crucially, we have to revalue 'the base' away from the notion of a fixed economic or technological abstraction, and towards the specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships, containing fundamental contradictions and variations and therefore always in a state of dynamic process."
(Williams, p.34)

As in the other instances we have discussed, Laclau and Mouffe seem unwilling to give credit to the full range of theoretical positions that one can observe under the umbrella 'Marxism'. What is more serious however are their claims that for example, viewing the economy as structured as a political space, is a position that cannot be found within Marxism, and by implication that one has to look to their own formulation to find such a 'sophisticated' position. Once the primacy of the economic has been shown to be false, Laclau and Mouffe can move against the political primacy of the working class.

"In our view, in order to advance in the determination of social antagonisms, it is necessary to analyse the plurality of diverse and frequently contradictory positions, and to discard the idea of a perfectly unified and homogeneous agent, such as the 'working class' of classical discourse." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.84)

But was the working class, or any other class for that matter, ever viewed as homogenous? To give just one example, Lenin certainly believed that the differences within classes, whether the proletariat or the peasants, were just as significant as those between classes. It is certainly not difficult to find examples of attempts to theorise the extent to which classes are not unified, either economically or politically.

Laclau and Mouffe outline the consequences of their critique and how it relates to their own political programme; radical democracy, an exposition of which will form the next section of the thesis. Once the link between the hegemonized task and class has been dissolved, unfixity is the condition of every social identity (there is no constitutive principle for social agents). Following Laclau and Mouffe we can identify three consequences of adopting this position: (i) The articulation between political agents and their objectives is a hegemonic relation. The era of privileged subjects is over. (ii) There are no privileged points for the unleashing of a socialist political practice (class positions are not the necessary location of historical interests). It hinges on a collective will that constructed from a number of dissimilar points. No movement is inherently progressive, its direction depends on a hegemonic articulation with other struggles. (iii) "...the radicalization of the concept of 'overdetermination' will give us the key to the specific logic of social articulations." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.87)

The political logic of hegemony

So far we have followed Laclau and Mouffe's critique of Marxism to the point where they show the limitations of an essentialist, materialist conception of politics. What we

must now do is to examine the development of Laclau and Mouffe's own political framework. In order to do this the following section will be taken up with a critical exposition of their conceptual innovations.

They state that "... the concept of hegemony supposes a theoretical field dominated by the category of articulation." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.93) The notion of articulation supposes the presence of separate elements that are recomposed through articulatory practice. This process is contingent and external to the elements themselves. Articulation establishes a relation among these elements and their identity is modified as a result. The result of such an articulatory practice, a structured totality, is called a discourse. Moments are differential positions articulated within discourse. An element, on the other hand, is difference that is not discursively articulated: "...no discursive formation is a sutured totality and the transformation of the elements into moments is never complete." (Laclau and Mouffe, pp.106-107) "The status of the 'elements' is that of floating signifiers, incapable of being wholly articulated to a discursive chain. The importance of articulation is that it allows for the partial construction of the social (remember that the social can only exist as a partially completed field). This construction, or fixing is always partial because the social is open and contingent.

"In order to place ourselves firmly within the field of articulation we must begin by renouncing the concept of 'society' as founding totality of its partial processes. We must, therefore, consider the openness of the social as the constitutive ground or 'negative essence' of the existing, and the diverse 'social orders' as precarious and ultimately failed attempts to domesticate the field of differences."
(Laclau and Mouffe, pp.95-96)

Society does not exist, because for Laclau and Mouffe the social is open and contingent. "There is no sutured space peculiar to 'society', since the social itself has no essence." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.96)

"A conception which denies any essentialist approach to social relations, must also state the precarious character of every identity and the impossibility of fixing the sense of the 'elements' in any ultimate literality." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.96)

What we are left with is a field of difference, a field that has no underlying principle of fixity. This field is the realm of overdetermination. Laclau and Mouffe make the point that with Althusser there was the potential to elaborate a concept of articulation that would begin from the overdetermined character of social relations. But this did not develop, Althusser's inherent essentialism won out. However, his idea that the social constitutes itself as a symbolic order that lacks any ultimate literality is one that Laclau and Mouffe would endorse. Althusser tried to combine two incompatible elements: a full blown notion of overdetermination and economic determination. Laclau and Mouffe are very clear on this point; there is no possibility of 'relative autonomy'. The political is either determined or it is contingent, there is no other possibility.

"If the economy is an object which can determine any type of society in the last instance, this means that, at least with reference to that instance, we are faced with simple determination and not overdetermination." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.99)

When Laclau and Mouffe use overdetermination they do so with the intention of freeing it completely from the limits of 'relative autonomy'. In their hands it signifies the absence of any simple determination, thus

they can say that it is a "...field of identities which never manage to be fully fixed..." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.111) As this 'fully developed' overdetermination does not permit economic determination, the very notion of 'superstructures' is no longer permissible as it is loaded with the implication that, " they have a place assigned to them within the topography of the social." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.100) Having discarded the limitations imposed by essentialist categories, Laclau and Mouffe can conceive hegemony as a political relation not a topographical concept.

Overdetermination then, points the way to a non-essentialist politics. It has been stressed that overdetermination focusses on the partial fixing of discursively constructed identities. In fact, Laclau and Mouffe develop this point in some depth; neither absolute fixity nor absolute non-fixity is possible. For this formulation they have drawn on the work of two major influences. Non-fixity; in Derrida the absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. Partial fixity; Lacan refers to points de capiton - privileged signifiers that fix the meaning of a signifying chain. (Laclau and Mouffe use this idea as the basis for 'nodal points', see below). There is no possibility of suture between signifier and signified. Thus, Laclau and Mouffe provide us with further evidence for the demise of 'society'.

"The incomplete character of every totality necessarily leads us to abandon, as a terrain of analysis, the premise of 'society' as a sutured and self defined totality. 'Society' is not a valid object of discourse."
(Laclau and Mouffe, p.111)

The practice of articulation, which is at the heart of the politics of hegemony,

"...consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.113)

All social practices are articulatory. "The social is articulation insofar as 'society' is impossible." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.114)

We must move on to consider the significance of antagonisms in Laclau and Mouffe's work. Whereas in Marxism antagonisms are simply economic, a multiplication of antagonisms becomes possible when essentialist determination has been rejected. Where there are many points of antagonism, the development of democratic struggles becomes possible. However, contradiction does not necessarily lead to an antagonistic relationship. For example, Laclau and Mouffe are adamant that class opposition is unable to divide the social body into two antagonistic camps, because the relationship between worker/capitalist is merely a differential position and cannot be transformed into an antagonistic relation. Antagonisms can transform relations of subordination into relations of oppression.

Associated with the concept of antagonism is the concept of equivalence. As mentioned earlier, equivalence can only be fully understood in the context of its relation to 'difference'. By subverting the differential logic of the social, equivalence makes hegemony possible. While the logic of difference serves to engender a complexity of the social space, the logic of equivalence is the simplification of the social, which ultimately leads to the creation of two antagonistic camps. For this to be possible difference has to be negated. The democratic

imaginary (a concept similar to, but not identical with ideology, more of which below) prevents difference becoming established and thus, makes antagonisms possible. If difference were to become established then antagonism would be impossible. Here we see the disruptive influence of the political imaginary, it is the key to a democratic (hegemonic) politics.

Within the logic of equivalence elements can be substituted for each other.' The importance of equivalence is essentially symbolic. It allows for the expression of opposition to oppression, and thus the creation of antagonisms. "The equivalential displacement between distinct subject positions is a condition for the emergence of an antagonism..."(Laclau and Mouffe, p.159) There are particularly close links between the logic of equivalence and the democratic imaginary. Each makes it possible to view various forms of inequality as, "...illegitimate and anti-natural, and thus make them equivalent as forms of oppression." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.155).

As an example of the logic of equivalence at work Laclau and Mouffe talk about millennarian movements. In this scenario the world divides, through a system of what Laclau and Mouffe call paratactical equivalences into two camps, peasant culture versus urban (evil) culture. The second is the negative reverse of the first, "...no element in the system of equivalences enters into relations other than those of opposition to the elements of the other system." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.130) There are no discourses capable of establishing differences within an equivalential chain in which each all of the elements symbolize evil. "...the logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and

increasing complexity." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.130) A proliferation of points of antagonism permit the multiplication of democratic struggles, but these do not tend to constitute 'a people', that is enter into equivalence with one another and divide the political space into two antagonistic fields. Where the political space is divided into two antagonistic camps we have what Laclau and Mouffe call popular subject positions. Where an antagonism does not divide society that way we have democratic subject positions.

We have now introduced all the innovative concepts outlined by Laclau and Mouffe in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. As such we are able to move on to a discussion of hegemony itself. Hegemony emerges in a field dominated by articulatory practices and supposes the, "...incomplete and open character of the social..." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.134) Furthermore, hegemony must emerge not only in a field dominated by antagonisms but where equivalence occurs. Antagonisms can occur without hegemony, for example, millenarianism.

"Thus the two conditions of a hegemonic articulation are the presence of antagonistic forces and the instability of the frontiers which separate them. Only the presence of a vast area of floating elements and the possibility of their articulation to opposite camps...is what constitutes the terrain permitting us to define a practice as hegemonic. Without equivalence and without frontiers, it is impossible to speak strictly of hegemony." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.136)

Translated into political strategy this would mean that the task of a truly democratic politics would be to overcome difference and attain a situation of equivalence. In other words, replace class struggle with radical democracy.

Towards Radical Democracy

For Laclau and Mouffe an acceptance of the plurality and indeterminacy of the social, is a precondition for the construction of a new political imaginary. In other words, privileged points of rupture and the confluence of struggles into a unified political space (Marxism) has to be rejected. Once again they stress that class opposition is incapable of dividing the totality of the social body into two antagonistic camps, a task which is of course the remit of hegemony.

There is nothing inevitable in struggles against power. Power is constructed internally to any hegemonic formation through the opposed logics of equivalence and difference. Power is never foundational. The struggle against subordination is not a result of the subordination itself. The political character of struggles is delineated by, "...a type of action whose objective is the transformation of a social relation which constructs a subject in a relationship of subordination." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.153) Or to put it another way, an antagonism transforms a relation of subordination into one of oppression.

Relations of oppression then, are relations of subordination which have transformed themselves into sites of antagonisms. Relations of subordination cannot be antagonistic relations: a relation of subordination only establishes a set of differential positions between social agents, for example employer/employee. A system of such differences constructing each social identity as a positivity cannot be antagonistic, in fact it would eliminate all antagonisms, (and excludes equivalences). But how does a relation of subordination transform itself into an antagonism and become oppressive. Laclau and Mouffe provide us with the answer; "...there is no relation of oppression without the presence of a

discursive 'exterior' from which the discourse of subordination can be interrupted." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.154)

Two points to note here. Firstly, Laclau and Mouffe's use of the term 'interrupted'. The task of a hegemonic politics is to transform subordination and prevent the fixing of difference. Difference, like subordination, requires the intervention of the democratic imaginary otherwise oppression and equivalence are simply not possible. Secondly, the 'discursive exterior' mentioned here needs some elaboration. By this Laclau and Mouffe are referring to the democratic imaginary. It is democratic discourse which articulates different forms of resistance to subordination, and it is democratic discourse which prevents the stabilization of subordination as difference. In Laclau and Mouffe's own terminology we can say that the democratic imaginary makes possible the resistance to subordination necessary for equivalence to take place, and as such it is the external discourse which makes all social struggles possible.

"Our thesis is that it is only from the moment when the democratic discourse becomes available to articulate the different forms of resistance to subordination that the conditions will exist to make possible the struggle against different types of inequality." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.154)

The democratic principle of liberty and equality constitutes the fundamental nodal point in the construction of the political.

"This decisive mutation in the political imaginary of Western societies took place two hundred years ago and can be defined in these terms: the logic of equivalence was transformed into the fundamental instrument of production of the social."
(Laclau and Mouffe, p.155)

This accounts for their proposition that the opposition people/ancien regime was the last moment in which the antagonism between two forms of society presented themselves as given. After this time there can be no politics without hegemony.

As we have seen Laclau and Mouffe pose the relationship between workers and capitalists as purely one of subordination, as a relationship which precludes transformation by the political imaginary. Laclau and Mouffe reduce this relation to one of legitimate differential positions in a unified discursive space. Therefore, there is no potential for transformation by the political imaginary, and consequently no possibility of an antagonistic relationship. In other words, in this example difference has become fixed and chains of equivalence are not possible. However, they maintain that certain relations of subordination can be transformed into relations of oppression. The mechanism for this transformation is, as we already know, the presence of that discursive exterior, the democratic imaginary. The question of why the most fundamental relationship within capitalism, the point at which surplus value is created and appropriated by the capitalist, the moment when exploitation takes place, should not be considered as a relation of oppression will have to be examined in great detail. Of equal interest is the marginalisation of capitalism that this implies.

The equivalential displacement between distinct subject positions is a condition for the emergence of an antagonism. Every antagonism implies an 'externality of power', that is to say, new forms of radical subjectivity that are capable of turning relations of subordination into relations of oppression. Laclau and Mouffe give an example of how the democratic imaginary can work.

Relations of subordination already in existence can, due to a displacement of the democratic imaginary, be re-articulated as relations of oppression. Here Laclau and Mouffe are thinking of feminism or ethnic minority civil rights. "But in every case what allows the forms of resistance to assume the character of collective struggles is the existence of an external discourse which impedes the stabilization of subordination as difference." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.159) Of course, if difference were to become established then antagonism would not be possible. Of the worker/capitalist relation then, the following features can be adduced; (i) as there is no antagonism, then difference has become established. (ii) the democratic imaginary was unable to interrupt the crystallisation of subordination as difference. Laclau and Mouffe also seem to imply that this process is irreversible.

Part of Laclau and Mouffe's thesis is that after the Second World War a new hegemonic formation consolidated which involved the extension of capitalist relations of production to a wider range of social relations. Society was transformed into a vast market in which new needs were ceaselessly created, a consumer society which had at its core the commodification of social life.

"Today it is not only as a seller of labour-power that the individual is subordinated to capital, but also through his or her incorporation into a multitude of other social relations: culture, free time, illness, education, sex and even death. There is practically no domain of individual or collective life which escapes capitalist relations." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.161)

A number of points should be made here; (i) there are striking similarities between these ideas and the 'Postmodernism' thesis advanced by Fredric Jameson. In

fact, there would be very little disagreement between Jameson and Laclau and Mouffe on the rise of postmodernism. (ii) the status of 'capitalism' in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy betrays a significant contradiction in their work. I have argued above that the capitalist relation is marginalised by their insistence that it only has the status of 'subordination as difference'. All politically important relations achieve the status of antagonisms through becoming relations of oppression and entering into equivalence. However, although it is clear that capitalist relations do not fall into this category, there is enough evidence to suggest that Laclau and Mouffe also attribute great significance to capitalist relations. How else can we explain statements such as, "There is practically no domain of individual or collective life which escapes capitalist relations." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.161), and the assertion that capitalist relations of production brought about the commodification of social life? According to Laclau and Mouffe new struggles have developed to express resistance against new forms of subordination.

"Hence the multiplicity of social relations from which antagonisms and struggles may originate: habitat, consumption, various services can all constitute terrains for the struggle against inequalities and the claiming of new rights." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.161)

The origins of these new forms of subordination are explained by Laclau and Mouffe as follows;

"...intervention by the state at ever broader levels of social reproduction has been accompanied by a growing bureaucratization of its practices which has come to constitute, along with commodification, one of the fundamental sources of inequalities and conflicts. In all of the domains in which the state has intervened, a politicization of social relations is at the base of numerous

new antagonisms. This double transformation of social relations, resulting from the expansion of capitalist relations of production and of the new bureaucratic state forms, is found in different combinations in all the advanced industrial countries."
(Laclau and Mouffe, p162)

Once again the emphasis on the role of capitalist relations of production is very noticeable. One could almost say that they use it in a straightforwardly Marxist way, and indeed this is Mouzelis' point when he comments that when talking about developments in capitalism, Laclau and Mouffe revert to conventional Marxist concepts.

We should not allow this to divert our attention from the main thrust of Laclau and Mouffe's argument. They have provided us with the context for understanding the emergence of new political subjects. They write, "...this proliferation of antagonisms and calling into question of relations of subordination should be considered as a moment of deepening of the democratic revolution." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.163) What Laclau and Mouffe term the 'democratic consumer culture' has stimulated the emergence of new struggles. The democratic imaginary has intervened and various groups have rejected old forms of subordination. For example, youth culture. Young people constitute one new axis for the emergence of antagonisms. They are constructed as a specific type of consumer, (one who seeks financial autonomy, often denied or compounded by unemployment), and this coupled with social problems such as the disintegration of family and no alternative forms of social integration can lead to the rebellion of the young.

"The central idea which we have defended thus far is that the new struggles - and the radicalization of older struggles such as those of women or ethnic minorities - should be understood from the double perspective of

the transformation of social relations characteristic of the new hegemonic formation of the post-war period, and of the effects of the displacement into new areas of social life of the egalitarian imaginary constituted around the liberal-democratic discourse. It is this which has provided the framework necessary for the questioning of the different relations of subordination and the demanding of new rights." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.165)

We now need to look in some detail at Laclau and Mouffe's own political project.

"Renunciation of the category of subject as a unitary, transparent and sutured entity opens the way to the recognition of the specificity of the antagonisms constituted on the basis of different subject positions, and, hence, the possibility of the deepening of a pluralist and democratic conception." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.166)

Radical democracy, they claim, can be both pluralist and radical, but only if the unitary subject is rejected. Also, the working class as universal class has to be rejected. 'The plurality of antagonisms which surround 'workers struggles' must be recognised in order to deepen the democratic process. For example, ecological struggles may be anti-capitalist, anti-industrialist, authoritarian, libertarian, socialist, reactionary, and so on. The forms of articulation of an antagonism, therefore, far from being predetermined, are the result of a hegemonic struggle.

"All struggles, whether those of workers or other political subjects...have a partial character, and can be articulated to very different discourses. It is this articulation which gives them their character, not the place from which they come. There is therefore no subject - nor, further, any 'necessity' - which is absolutely radical and irrecoverable by the dominant order, and which constitutes an absolutely guaranteed point of departure for a total transformation." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.169)

Ideas of class struggle, revolution and socialist transformation of society have given way to, 'the deepening of the democratic revolution'.

"Every antagonism, left free to itself, is a floating signifier, a 'wild' antagonism which does not predetermine the form in which it can be articulated to to other elements in a social formation." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.171)

This raises the question of political direction. If an antagonism does not have an inherent political content, in the sense that its political connotation is determined by the specific articulation that it enters into, in other words, is external to it, how can subject positions ever be 'progressive' or how would struggles for liberation achieve a political direction?

Laclau and Mouffe answer this by asserting that the task of the left is to expand liberal-democracy in the direction of a radical and plural democracy. Up to this point classism has been the obstacle to determining the fundamental antagonisms. "The multiplication of political spaces and the preventing of the concentration of power in any one point are, then, preconditions of every truly democratic transformation of society." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.178) Thus the key to the politics of hegemony is not the antagonistic elements themselves but the way in which they are articulated. "There are not, for example, necessary links between anti-sexism and anti-capitalism, and a unity between the two can only be the result of a hegemonic articulation." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.178)

By way of a summary it is necessary to say something about the relationship between democracy and hegemony. The logic of democracy by itself is not sufficient for the formulation of a hegemonic project. "...the logic of democracy is simply the equivalential displacement of the

egalitarian imaginary to ever more extensive social relations, and, as such, it is only a logic of the elimination of relations of subordination and inequalities." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.188) Hegemony describes the democratic practice of politics compatible with a plurality of historical subjects. The new logic of the social implied by hegemony is the central theme of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Hegemony, in order to be possible requires both articulation between subject positions and the creation of chains of equivalence. The relationship between hegemony and articulation is a close one. Hegemony becomes possible only when there exists a field dominated by articulatory practices. It should be stressed that antagonisms can occur without hegemony, but unless an antagonism becomes articulated to a particular discourse it remains without political meaning.

The availability of floating elements and the possibility that they can be articulated into antagonistic camps are prerequisites for hegemony. "Without equivalence and without frontiers, it is impossible to speak strictly of hegemony." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.136) These frontiers are what separates antagonistic forces and they need to be unstable if hegemonic articulation is to take place. Stable frontiers would, of course only consolidate a system of difference.

Conclusions

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is rightly considered as a critique of essentialism, but strictly speaking this statement is only true if we add the qualification that it is a critique of Marxist essentialism. Other forms of essentialism such as, liberalism, materialism or humanism are not considered at all. Laclau and Mouffe's work is

also very much an attempt to supersede Marxism, hence the term post-Marxism, but one which does not accord centrality to capitalism as an explanatory historical category.

What exactly is the status of capitalism in Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxism? Before further exploring this question it is necessary to identify what we mean by capitalism in the context of Marxism, as the term can be used in two different, but interrelated ways. Firstly, it is employed as an abstraction, to denote a particular mode of production (capitalism succeeds feudalism, for example). Secondly, the term capitalism can be used to refer to an actually existing social formation (for instance, we might say that contemporary Britain is a capitalist society, as opposed to a communist or traditional one).

In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy the term capitalism only has an application in terms of an economic relation. That is to say it categorises that system of production which is based on wage labour. So for Laclau and Mouffe capitalism has a very narrow application. They have no room for the idea of a mode of production (too economistic), and no use for a categorisation of society derived from its dominant economic idiom. Having said this they are not particularly consistent in their application. We have already seen how capitalism is both marginalised (the worker/capitalist relation can never transcend the status as 'difference'), and yet central (the structuring power of post-war capitalism and the increasing commodification of everyday life).

This contradiction surfaces once more when we come to consider the meaning of the term 'dominant pole'. I have already pointed to the exiguous theoretical development of what should be a vital component in the overall concept of hegemony, but this omission takes on a new significance

when the role of capitalism is considered. Even if we accept Laclau and Mouffe's premise that overdetermination is always complex, and the identity of the agents of political change cannot be derived from their location in the social structure, (thereby breaking the necessary link between economy and politics, class and agency) it would still be difficult to imagine that capitalism would not exert an influence, however small, over the anatomy of the dominant pole. If this criticism holds, then not only does the question of the actual configuration of the dominant pole become a crucial political question, but the ambiguity that surrounds the status of capitalism within Hegemony and Socialist Strategy assumes a greater theoretical significance.

Laclau and Mouffe posit the logic of contingency to replace the more Marxist notion of relative autonomy. They not only refuse to credit Marxism with a well developed theory of relative autonomy but also consider that it is not even theoretically viable. There is either determinism or contingency, but nothing in between. For example, in Sorel and Gramsci the logic of necessity is replaced by the logic of contingency. However, this has to be a gross oversimplification as it is only possible to hold such a view if all the other elements of their work is disregarded. In common with most, if not all Marxists, they are neither totally contingent or totally necessistic. The role of 'relative autonomy', the genealogy of which can be traced in the same texts that Laclau and Mouffe are happy to utilise, is underplayed and undervalued by Laclau and Mouffe in their progression to post-Marxism.

Laclau and Mouffe heavily criticise reductionist forms of Marxism, the ones that rely on necessity, teleology, economism and class essentialism, but despite their best efforts they themselves are reductionist for the simple

reason that they reduce Marxism to class essentialism. Even though they single out Gramsci or Sorel for attempting to break out of the essentialist straightjacket, they refuse to accept that the relative autonomy accorded to politics or ideology by the same writers has any significance (even though the ideas they like so much were generated by the belief in a political realm beyond any simple economic determinations). Ultimately, all such theorising counts for nought as it is always underpinned by the contaminating trait of economism. This is summed up by Geras, who says;

"Marxism is defined by Laclau and Mouffe in the most uncompromisingly necessitarian or deterministic, most rigidly economistic and ...most simplifyingly 'essentialist' terms and then dismissed for being deterministic, economistic, 'essentialist'" (Geras, p.48)

What we are witnessing is an attempt by Laclau and Mouffe to define the problem in terms of the solution they offer. In the same way that it takes the law to define 'crime' and it takes medicine to define 'sickness', it takes contingency to define determinism, economism and essentialism.¹ Hegemony then, defines the problem it claims to solve.

Note:¹ Paraphrased from Judith Williamson's article Three Kinds of Dirt in Consuming Passions (Williamson, 1986)

CHAPTER 4

THE POLITICS OF ANTAGONISM

Introduction

Laclau opens his essay New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time with a clear statement of intent. When considering the 'crisis of reason' he contends, we should no longer need to try to defend 'reason' or re-launch 'modernity'. This should be read in part as a statement of his own position; he does not favour the pursuit of the Enlightenment values of truth and reason, and, also as a political marker; one which distances him from contemporaries such as Habermas. This positioning is quite consistent with the development of Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxism in their collaborative work Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, which of course was an attempt to forge a non-essentialist socialist politics based on contingency rather than necessity.

In the same vein Laclau now asserts that antagonism is intrinsically negative and this, "...prevents us from fixing it a priori in any positive theorization about the 'objectivity' of social agents (such as the class struggle, for example)..." (Laclau, 1990, p.4) In one sense this is little more than the reiteration of one of the central themes of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: that socialism is not the inherent expression of the working class merely because of its position in the relations of production. However, the more significant point to note is the stress on antagonism, and particularly, that negativity can be the basis for a radical and progressive politics. The legacy of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy that Laclau introduces to this essay then, revolves around the assertion that we cannot speak of objectivity in relation to social agents, and as a consequence we must speak of the political construction of social identities. In other words, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is the text that breaks the link

between subjectivity and class, and thereby breaks the necessistic bond between class and politics.

Laclau draws our attention to Marx's Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. This is a text in which the base/superstructure model is expressed in somewhat mechanistic terms; social being determines consciousness, in a particularly unreflective way. It is one of Marx's more deterministic offerings; reciprocal determination is not included and one is left with the impression that politics, ideology, (the 'superstructures' are totally determined, and wholly dependant. Laclau is correct to point out that class struggle is excluded from this model, in effect it is not even mentioned by Marx in this particular text. Laclau then asks us to compare The Communist Manifesto, which of course states that history is the history of class struggles, with the 'Preface' where class struggle is completely absent, (history is simply the result of a contradiction between the forces and relations of production).

Laclau identifies the following problem in Marx's writings: "...the contradiction between productive forces and relations of production is a contradiction without antagonism, class struggle, for its part, is an antagonism without contradiction." (Laclau, 1990, p.7) Laclau's language, using terms originally developed in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, should be understood in the context of his attempt to develop a non-essentialist politics. In other words, Laclau is claiming that the two features of Marx's theory discussed here should not be seen as necessarily connected in a causal manner. Class struggle is the result of an antagonism, but that antagonism does not derive from a structural location in the productive process. Therefore, class struggle, in as much as it

exists, cannot be 'read off' from the economic formation but must be politically constructed. Similarly, the tension between the forces and relations of production has no special status in the work of Laclau (and Mouffe).

Laclau's argument stems from his interpretation of the two texts mentioned above. However, it can be argued that neither of the texts referred to are as one-dimensional as Laclau believes. The Communist Manifesto is not totally devoid of economic determinism, and the 'Preface' contains a nascent conceptualisation of class struggle. There is another of Marx's texts that is worth examining in this context. The German Ideology (1844), according to David McLellan, "...sets out the materialist conception of history with a force and in a detail that Marx never afterwards surpassed." (McLellan, p.158) The German Ideology is a much less reductionist text than the 'Preface', in the sense that Marx states that rather than consciousness being totally dependant on the economic base, it is infact the case that "Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas etc - real active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of the productive forces". (McLellan, p.164) The key word here is conditioned. The determinism attributed to the economic in Marx is best understood as a form of conditioning, in the sense of 'setting of limits', or creating the boundaries of what is possible.

The schematic base/superstructure model outlined in the 'Preface' is no doubt chosen by Laclau because it reinforces the point he wishes to make, but the mechanistic relationship between class, politics and ideology is expressed somewhat differently elsewhere in Marx's writings. On the question of advanced capitalism automatically giving rise to a working class socialist

consciousness for example, we should consider the following;

"In the first place, Marx acknowledged that capitalist economic development did not by itself give rise to socialist consciousness in the working class; as he said of the most advanced industrial proletariat of the day: 'The English have all the material prerequisites for the social revolution. What they lack is a spirit for generalisation and revolutionary fervour'". (Rattansi, p.655)

Laclau believes that by failing to integrate the two positions alluded to above, Marx also fails to show that the antagonism of the relations of production (conflict between wage labour and capital) is a contradiction, and that the antagonism is inherent in the relations of production. "Antagonism does not necessarily mean contradiction" (Laclau, 1990, p.8), and we might want to add that neither does a contradiction automatically lead to antagonism. The conclusion drawn by Laclau is that this reveals a tension in Marx's work; "For history to be grasped conceptually as a rational and coherent process, antagonism must be reduced to a contradiction." (Laclau, 1990, p.8) The capitalist/worker relationship only becomes antagonistic if the worker resists the extraction of surplus value. Resistance is not a logical conclusion of the worker/capitalist relationship. Antagonisms do arise but not within the capitalist relations of production. Thus, the "...constitutive outside is inherent to any antagonistic relationship." (Laclau, 1990, p.9)

This, then, is another rehearsal of the theoretical underpinning for Laclau's whole anti-essentialist enterprise. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy we found that socialism is not the necessary political expression of a social class unified at the economic level. Neither

class interests, nor even classes themselves have an a priori existence at the economic level. In New Reflections Laclau reveals a weakness in Marx's own model: the antagonism at the heart of the capitalist relationship is not in fact an antagonism which is inherent to that relationship. The relationship can become antagonistic, but this is contingent on an interruption from the democratic imaginary, otherwise known as the 'constitutive outside'. In other words, "...antagonism does not occur within the relations of production, but between the latter and the social agent's identity outside them." (Laclau, 1990, p.15) Laclau sums up the position thus. "To repeat: antagonism is established between the relations of production and something external to them, not within the relations of production themselves." (Laclau, 1990, p.11)

Laclau gives as an example of an antagonism the dual role (attributed to the contemporary industrial proletariat) of worker and consumer. The consequences of this are that; "A fall in a worker's wage, for example, denies his identity as a consumer." (Laclau, 1990, p.16) This is undoubtedly true but there are attendant problems with this position, not least the conceptualisation of capitalism that Laclau adopts. This is problematic on several fronts. At the most fundamental level it displaces capitalism from the heart of political struggle in the same way as Laclau and Mouffe did in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Also, it is apparent that when Laclau uses the term 'capitalism' he is using it to mean capitalism as it exists in the contemporary western world. Many of his examples both in this essay and Hegemony and Socialist Strategy do not hold for capitalism per se. For example, it must be recognised that the worker as consumer only emerged with the advent of Fordism. Workers in Victorian factories earned an average of 5p per hour (Independent, 5 May 1991, p.59), and many workers in the

third world still earn subsistence wages. Therefore, Laclau's model does not hold good for every historical period and each geographical location. This may have a special bearing on his commentary on Marx's economics, if only because the dual role of worker/consumer was not central to capitalism in the mid-nineteenth century.

Althusserian influences

Laclau is aiming to show the impossibility of establishing the social as an objective order, and to deny the privileging of positivity over negativity, a project that began in an interesting short essay entitled The Impossibility of Society, (originally published in 1983, and subsequently reprinted in the volume entitled New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time), and of course continued in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. This earlier essay is worthy of attention because it focusses on the Marxist theory of ideology. Laclau identifies two different uses of the term ideology, both of them essentialist. First, there is the notion of ideology which posits it as a level of the social totality. This derives from the base/superstructure model in which structural totality has a positivity. "In this sense, this totality operated as an underlying principle of intelligibility of the social order." (Laclau, 1990, p.90) In other words, the social has an existence because the very notion of totality implies that the social can be bounded and delineated. Laclau has a very different view of the social, which he expounds in the following way.

"Against this essentialist vision we tend nowadays to accept the infinitude of the social, that is, the fact that any structural system is limited, that it is always surrounded by an 'excess of meaning' which it is unable to master, and that, consequently, 'society' as a unitary and intelligible object which grounds its own partial process is an impossibility". (Laclau, 1990, p.90)

He continues, "...the social must be identified with the infinite play of difference, that is, with what in the strictest sense of the term we can call 'discourse'..." (Laclau, 1990, p.90) Laclau subsequently qualifies this last statement because if society is never fully constituted, neither is it completely contingent. He introduces the ideas of 'relative fixation' and 'nodal points' to substantiate this argument. We know from Hegemony and Socialist Strategy that there is no simple underlying principle which can fix the whole field of difference. From the same text:

"Society never manages fully to be society, because everything in it is penetrated by its limits, which prevent it from constituting itself as an objective reality." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.127)

This is a very good example of Laclau's argument to establish the priority of negativity in the constitution of the social. Attempting to move away from the base/superstructure model of the social Laclau advances the following, non-reductionist construct;

"Each social formation has its own forms of determination and relative autonomy, which are always instituted through a complex process of oversteering and therefore cannot be established a priori." (Laclau, 1990, p.91)

This formulation reveals Laclau's Althusserian influences. Laclau continues: "With this insight, the base-superstructure distinction falls and, along with it, the conception of ideology as a necessary level of every social formation." (Laclau, 1990, p.91)

The passage quoted above mixes Althusserian Marxism (social formation, relative autonomy), with Laclau's own post-Marxist reformulations, (overdetermination is a term

used both by Althusser and Laclau, but in each case the meaning is different). The problem with Laclau's assertion stems from the view that the Althusserian 'social formation' is one and the same as the more orthodox base/superstructure model, which it most certainly is not. Althusser did not hold with the base/superstructure metaphor; his concept of overdetermined social formation is precisely an attempt to supersede the more traditional model.

"Against both the mechanistic interpretation of the "base-superstructure" metaphor, and the essentialist or Hegelian view of the social totality, Althusser proposes a quite distinct concept of the social whole (social formation)." (McLennan, p.77)

Althusser's formulations can be understood as a critique of reductionist Marxism. Laclau seems to have fully accepted the Althusserian contribution to the critique of orthodox Marxism: every social formation has a particular unity of instances and each instance differs in its capacity to determine the others. On this model the economic is overdetermined by each of the other instances.

According to Laclau the second way in which ideology is used by Marxism is in the context of false consciousness. "The notion of false consciousness only makes sense if the identity of the social agent can be fixed. It is only on the basis of recognising its true identity that we can assert that the consciousness of the subject is 'false'." (Laclau, 1990, p.91) This understanding of ideology as false consciousness has in fact been challenged from within Marxism for being the root of class essentialism. As the result of the Althusserian critique false consciousness has largely been replaced by the more sophisticated notion of ideology as a representation of an

imaginary relation to real existence, which is constituent of subjectivity.

"This thesis, which comes from For Marx implies a definite break with all conceptualisations of ideology as "false consciousness". In opposition to the current conception about ideology, for Althusser ideology is not a representation of reality. It is a very different thing: a representation of an (individual) relationship to reality. What is represented in ideology is men's lived relation with reality: a relation to real conditions of existence..." (McLennan, p.95).

This is one usage of the term ideology that Laclau does not explore, possibly because he wishes to move away from the idea of the subject as a unified identity. In fact he would probably subsume the Althusserian notion of ideology under the general heading of 'false consciousness', and thus not have to deal with the question of subjectivity. What he is able to say however, is that false consciousness must be abandoned if non-essentialist potentialities are to be explored. Thus, we can say that the relationship between ideology and subjectivity is a problem for Laclau, but it is important to recognise that he is not too restricted by not being able to untangle this particular Althusserian knot. For Laclau the identities of social agents are not homogenous, the subject is decentered to a degree not imagined by Althusser; "...identity is nothing but the unstable articulation of constantly changing positionalities." (Laclau, 1990, p.92)

One of the central thrusts of Laclau's argument in New Reflections is that class struggle and the contradiction between productive forces and relations of production which is at the heart of all Marxist formulations, have no foundation when subjected to a thorough non-essentialist revision. This means that the type of teleological

'history by necessity' favoured by Marxist orthodoxy has lost its theoretical base. In other words, Laclau is "...questioning the ultimate coherence and rationality of history." (Laclau, 1990, p.17)

Laclau suggests that rather than deny the constitutive nature of the negative as Marx did, we should study, "...the nature and depth of the changes in our social and historical outlook which stem from privileging the moment of negativity..." (Laclau, 1990, p.17) To do this we have to engage with the notion of antagonism which, "...prevents the constitution of objectivity itself." (Laclau, 1990, p.17) The constitutive outside blocks the identity of the inside but is at the same time the prerequisite for its constitution. On this basis Laclau poses two alternative explanatory frameworks;

"Either we can describe the development and outcome of an antagonistic process in terms of causal or dialectic 'transformation'. In that case the unity and positivity of the process must be assumed, thus requiring the negativity experienced by social agents to be reduced to the mere appearance of an 'objective meaning' which escapes them. Or we can make negativity constitutive and foundational, with the result that the uniqueness and rationality of history must be abandoned. But in the second case it is easy to see, as objectivity presupposes the positivity of all its elements, that the presence of the inherent negativity of the 'constitutive outside' means that the social never manages to fully constitute itself as an objective order." (Laclau, 1990, p.18)

What Laclau is offering us is a direct comparison between Marxism (the first case), and his own project (the second case). Antagonism reveals the contingent nature of all objectivity.

"Contingency does not therefore mean a set of merely external and alterer relations between identities, but the impossibility of fixing with any precision - that is, in terms of a necessary ground - either the relations or the identities...This link between the blocking and simultaneous affirmation of an identity is what we call 'contingency', which introduces an element of radical undecidability into the structure of objectivity." (Laclau, 1990, pp. 20-21)

In this way the priority of negativity is established.

The concept of dislocation

Any explanation of the term 'contingency' must include the statement that contingency is not simply the opposite of necessity. "In a universe from which necessity had evaporated, we would thus find nothing but indeterminacy and the impossibility of any coherent discourse." (Laclau, 1990, p.26) Contingency is rather a subversion of necessity. Contingency prevents the full constitution of necessity. There are no strict boundaries between necessity and contingency. "...all objectivity necessarily presupposes the repression of that which is excluded by its establishment." (Laclau, 1990, p.31)

For Laclau social relations are, a) contingent relations, and b) power relations. Laclau here clarifies what he means by power, initially by saying what it is not. It is incorrect to assert that power is an empirical reality which characterizes relations between social forces. On the contrary, "Our thesis is that the constitution of a social identity is an act of power and that identity as such is power." (Laclau, 1990, p.31) If objectivity manages to partially affirm itself it can only do so by repressing that which threatens it. Therefore, power mechanisms make social identity possible, in much the same

way as power is constitutive of the social in the work of Foucault.

Without power there would be no objectivity. In developing this thesis Laclau also draws upon the work of Jacques Derrida to show how the constitution of identity is based on exclusion and the establishment of a violent hierarchy between opposites such as black/white and man/woman. Power is therefore necessary for identity, and as such the disappearance of power would equal the disintegration of the social fabric.

"Destroying the hierarchies on which sexual or racial discrimination is based will, at some point, always require the construction of other exclusions for collective identities to be able to emerge." (Laclau, 1990, p.33)

If this is the case then it is difficult to see why Laclau wishes to completely dispense with the idea of a hierarchy based on class. On the Marxist model the hierarchy is established in such a way that all other social identities are secondary to those of class, and from what Laclau is saying, he would have to agree that this hierarchy is as legitimate as any other. In his defence he would probably add that class is perfectly acceptable as a collective identity, but only as the result of a political articulation, not as a datum of the social formation.

Social relations are also, c) characterised by, "...the primacy of the political over the social." (Laclau, 1990, p.33) The institution of the social is only possible through the repression of options that are equally open. The instituted tends to assume the form of mere objective presence and the original contingency fades, this process is termed 'sedimentation' by Laclau.

"The sedimented forms of 'objectivity' make up the field of what we will call the 'social'. The moment of antagonism where the undecidable nature of the alternatives and their resolution through power relations becomes fully visible constitutes the field of the 'political'." (Laclau, 1990, p.35)

Social relations are constituted by the distinction between the social and the political. The boundary between the social and political is constantly displaced.

Social relations also, d) exhibit a radical historicity. By this Laclau means that objectivity is historical in that it is socially constructed and structured by systems of meaning. "To understand something historically is to refer it back to its contingent conditions of emergence." (Laclau, 1990, p.36) To summarise then, we can say that there are four interrelated characteristics of the social: contingency, power, primacy of politics and historicity.

This is of course a development of Laclau's idea of a non-objectivist conception of the social. It therefore stands in stark contrast to a Marxism which for example, looks for reasons that prevent the establishment of working class identity. This could be explained by the thesis that the development of class consciousness is impeded by embourgeoisement, and assumes not only that full consciousness would be possible without such impediment, but that full consciousness is the 'natural' outcome of subjugation to capitalism. Such a view is essentialist; for Laclau class consciousness is one possible working class identity, depending on the precise historical conditions. On this basis, 'class struggle' can never be taken for granted, and if it exists at all it only does so as the outcome of political struggle.

Laclau introduces the concept of dislocation at this point, "...every identity is dislocated insofar as it depends on an outside which both denies that identity and provides its condition of possibility at the same time." (Laclau, 1990, p.39) Dislocation is a crucial concept in New Reflections and one that ties together contingency, negativity and anti-essentialism. As an example of how it operates, Laclau talks of the dislocatory effects of emerging capitalism on the lives of workers; the destruction of traditional communities, poor work and living conditions, and low wages. However, workers did not passively submit to this new regime. They organised trade unions, went on strike and as such their political identities were constructed in the process of struggle. Thus the workers identities were simultaneously denied (by the precarious nature of low paid work), and made possible (by political resistance)

For Laclau dislocation of the social is coterminous with the construction of power centres. This approach must be compared with that of the classical Marxist tradition.

"For classical Marxism, the possibility of transcending capitalist society depended on the simplification of social structure and the emergence of a privileged agent of social change, while for us, the possibility of a democratic transformation of society depends on a proliferation of new subjects of change." (Laclau, 1990, p.41)

This will only be possible if contemporary capitalism throws up multiple dislocations and creates a plurality of new antagonisms.

Laclau states that there are three dimensions of the dislocation of the social: a) dislocation is the very form of temporality (temporality is the exact opposite of spatiality). This requires further explanation. In this

formulation Laclau equates space with repetition, and events of a cyclical or predetermined nature. This is an oblique attack on the perceived teleology of the Marxist canon. Teleology reduces time to space, whereas dislocation is pure temporality: dislocation therefore must be understood as an anti-teleological concept. However, there is most certainly a confusion in Laclau's writing on this topic. At one point he says that; "Any teleological conception of change is therefore also essentially spatialist", thereby equating space with teleology and time with dislocation, but goes on to say that "Through dislocation time is overcome by space." (Laclau, 1990, p.42) This is most likely a printing error: what it should say in order to make sense is that 'through dislocation space is overcome by time.' Laclau subsequently corrects himself by asserting that dislocation involves a temporalization of space.

To move on to the second dimension of the dislocation of the social; b) dislocation is the very form of possibility. "The dislocated structure thus opens possibilities of multiple and indeterminate rearticulations for those freed from its coercive force and who are consequently outside it." (Laclau, 1990, pp.42-43) The dislocation of a structure involves, "...a temporalization of spaces or a widening of the field of the possible, but this takes place in a determinate situation: that is, one in which there is always a relative structuration." (Laclau, 1990, p.43) This all refers to the assertion that the type of change inherent in a teleological model opens up no real possibilities as such, but merely identifies the already given and preordained.

Thirdly; c) dislocation is the very form of freedom. The greater the degree of indetermination, the freer a society

will be, or to put it another way, "Freedom is the absence of determination." (Laclau, 1990, p.43) "To understand social reality, then, is not to understand what society is, but what prevents it from being." (Laclau, 1990, p.44) "Our basic thesis is that the possibility of a radical democracy is directly linked to the level and extension of structural dislocations operating in contemporary capitalism." (Laclau, 1990, p.45)

Laclau reminds us that reflection on dislocation and its political potential does have a tradition within Marxism; the Trotskyist notions of 'uneven and combined development' and 'permanent revolution' in particular. Dislocation opens up different possibilities and expands the area of freedom of historical subjects. For Trotsky, the possibility of revolution depends on structural unevenness. Trotsky's analysis of the Russian situation led him to conclude that the

"...possibility of revolution does not spring from underlying and positive structural laws dominating the whole of the historical process, but from the latter's dislocations which determine an unevenness that cannot be grasped by any structure." (Laclau, 1990, p.48)

The dislocation thesis advanced by Laclau in New Reflections can be read as an extension of the logic of contingency tradition outlined in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Possibility implies a non-essentialist articulation rather than a necessistic unity, and the logic of contingency implies that a structural articulation/rearticulation will be purely political. The political in this context literally means the realm of the non-necessistic, non-essentialist and non-teleological.

Laclau looks at the dislocation - possibility relationship in the context of commodification.

"It is without doubt true that the phenomenon of commodification is at the heart of the multiple dislocations of traditional social relations...[this] dislocation of social relations...provokes acts of resistance which launch new social actors into the historical arena; and the new actors, precisely because they are moving on a dislocated terrain, must constantly reinvent their own social forms."
(Laclau, 1990, pp. 51-52)

Similarly, the growth of bureaucratic control in contemporary societies can be explained in terms of dislocation. Bureaucratic rationalization dislocates existing power structures and a range of new alternative rationalizations are created. Laclau does acknowledge that the organization of the production process exhibits dislocatory features. Large-scale industry leads to alienation (the direct producer ceases to be the centre of reference and meaning of the production process). On the other hand, the organization of the production process is freed from any dependence on the direct producer. It is interesting to note in passing the rather surprising appearance of alienation in such an anti-humanist discourse. Laclau continues,

"Any transformation of capitalism opens up a range of possibilities that are not just determined by the endogenous logic of capitalist forms, but also by the latter's constitutive outside and by the whole historical situation in which those logics operate." (Laclau, 1990, p.56)

Laclau acknowledges the 'disorganized capitalism' thesis described by Lasch and Urry. However, his uncritical acceptance of this theory is somewhat of a problem. The main features of the 'disorganized capitalism' thesis include; the internationalization of capital, a

deconcentration of capital/ decline in cartels, an increased separation between industrial and finance capital, the replacement of Taylorism with more flexible forms of organisation, and a growth in the service sector. David Harvey in his book The Condition of Postmodernity (Harvey, 1988) challenges the assumption that this is an adequate characterisation of contemporary capitalism, and prefers the term 'flexible accumulation' to describe the contemporary capitalist configuration.

"By the very use of the terms 'organized' and 'disorganized' to characterize the transition, they emphasize more the disintegration than the coherence of contemporary capitalism, and therefore avoid confronting the possibility of a transition in the regime of accumulation." (Harvey, pp.174-176)

What is called into question in this critique of Lash and Urry's work is their claim that somehow capitalism has lost its cohesion and structural effectivity. Harvey explores the evolving nature of capitalism in the following way:

"...the tension that has always prevailed within capitalism between monopoly and competition, between centralization and decentralization of economic power, is being worked out in fundamentally new ways. This does not necessarily imply, however, that capitalism is becoming more 'disorganized' as Offe (1985) and Lash and Urry (1987) suggest. For what is most interesting about the current situation is the way in which capitalism is becoming even more tightly organized through dispersal, geographical mobility, and flexible responses in labour markets, labour processes, and consumer markets, all accompanied by hefty doses of institutional, product, and technological innovation." (Harvey, p.159)

Laclau's desire to utilise the 'disorganized capitalism' thesis underlines the ambivalence he continually exhibits

towards capitalism in general. The question; 'what structuring effectivity does the economic actually have?', is never fully addressed. He gives differing, contradictory and partial answers throughout Hegemony and Socialist Strategy and New Reflections. The most likely answer that Laclau would give to such a question is, 'the economy is one of a large number of potential sites for dislocation that has no privilege over any other'. Thus he is able to talk in terms of the displacement of the economic from any centre of determination in the following way;

"The plurality of dislocations generates a plurality of centres of relative power, and the expansion of all social logic thus takes place on a terrain that is increasingly dominated by elements external to it. Accordingly, articulation is constitutive of all social practice." (Laclau, 1990, p.59)

The thesis so far outlined by Laclau in New Reflections is that politics has its source in the field of negativity, and that this approach is the antithesis of Marxism and other variants of the Enlightenment project. Thus he is able to say; "Dislocation is the source of freedom" (Laclau, 1990, p.60), and indeed the source of politics. On this view, identities are not positive (given, structural) but must be constructed, through acts of identification. Laclau states that in a dislocated structure identification never reaches full identity, and in doing so turns his attention to the problem of agency/structure. "'Politics' is an ontological category: there is politics because there is subversion and dislocation of the social. This means that any subject is, by definition, political." (Laclau, 1990, p.61)

Laclau identifies the "...basic dimensions of this antithetical relationship between subject and structure."

(Laclau, 1990, p.61) "Any subject is a mythical subject. By myth we mean a space of representation which bears no relation of continuity with the dominant 'structural objectivity'." (Laclau, 1990, p.61) It is interesting to compare this formulation with Althusser's notion of ideology as a representation of a lived experience. Laclau's insistence that myth has no relation to structural objectivity, may be another symptom of his reluctance to engage with Althusserian concepts of subjectivity.

Myths are forms of identifications that give the subject its discursive presence, "...myth functions as a surface on which dislocations and social demands can be inscribed." (Laclau, 1990, p.63) A surface of inscription is incomplete, that is to say the process of inscription is more important than what is inscribed (this can be related back to Laclau's comments on the politics and the social. Politics is analogous to the process of inscription, the social to what is inscribed). "In this sense, social myths are essentially incomplete: for content is constantly reconstituted and displaced." (Laclau, 1990, p.63) "The incomplete character of the mythical surfaces of inscription is the condition of possibility for the constitution of social imaginaries." (Laclau, 1990, p.63)

If the moment of representation of fullness dominates it can become the unlimited horizon of inscription of any social demand and any possible dislocation. Myth is then transformed into an imaginary. Examples of imaginaries include communist society, the Enlightenment, and positivism's conception of progress, they are all modes of representation of the very form of fullness, and are located beyond the precariousness and dislocations typical of the world of objects. "The condition of emergence of

an imaginary is the metaphorization of the literal content of a particular social demand." (Laclau, 1990, p.64) In summary then, dislocations prompt social groups to formulate proposals to overcome them. This is the mythical space of a possible social order: the literal content of a social demand is transformed into a metaphorical representation of fullness and with the addition of other dislocations and demands the metaphorical moment can achieve autonomy from the literality of original dislocation, thereby establishing the imaginary horizon.

This process can be likened to the more Marxist notion of Gramsci's corporatist class becoming the hegemonic class by the universalization of its demands. Laclau's version 'adds' to the Gramscian version because it recognises that mythical space is external to the dislocation, that is to say it cannot be deduced from the dislocation, and a group is exterior to its own demands. In other words, it is a non-essentialist conception. In Marxist theory the working class is not exterior to socialist ideology, on the contrary, its demands are given a priori. Socialism is not exterior to the dislocations caused by capitalism; socialism is created by those dislocations.

There is another example given by Laclau. In pre-war Germany the rise of the Nazi's did not stem necessarily from the economic crises of the 1920's (dislocation);

"...Nazi discourse was the only one in the circumstances that addressed the problems experienced by the middle class as a whole and offered a principle for their interpretation. Its victory was the result of its availability on a terrain and in a situation where no other discourse presented itself as a real hegemonic alternative."
(Laclau, 1990, p.66)

By way of a commentary on this section it will be useful to compare Laclau's ideas on myth with Althusser's work on ideology. Laclau says that any subject is a mythical subject and the subject is constitutively metaphor. Althusser posits an ideologically constituted subject whose subjectivity is constructed through an imaginary representation of their relationship to conditions of existence. For Laclau the subject's forms of identification function as surfaces of inscription, while Althusser talks of ideology interpellating individuals as subjects. The incomplete character of the mythical surfaces of inscription is the condition of possibility for the constitution of social imaginaries. "...all mythical space is external to the dislocation it purports to suture..." (Laclau, 1990, p.65) By contrast, Althusser's ideology works through material practices inscribed within institutional apparatuses. Laclau writes that;

"...myth is constitutive of any possible society. As we have seen, any space formed as a principle for the reordering of a dislocated structure's elements is mythical."
(Laclau, 1990, p.67)

It would be possible to repeat this sentence replacing 'myth' and 'mythical' with 'ideology' and 'ideological' and the result would be consistent with an Althusserian outlook. Laclau continues with his argument;

"The combined effects of commodification, of bureaucratic rationalization, and of the increasingly complex forms of division of labour - all require constant creativity and the continuous construction of spaces of collective operation that can rest less and less on inherited objective, institutional forms." (Laclau, 1990, p.67)

Therefore, contemporary societies are likely to become increasingly mythical.

"...any space formed as a principle for the reordering of a dislocated structure's elements is mythical. Its mythical character is given by its radical discontinuity with the dislocations of the dominant structural forms." (Laclau, 1990, p.67)

Laclau acknowledges the increase in dislocations peculiar to advanced capitalism, in his analysis brought about by the onset of disorganized capitalism. Thus commodification, bureaucratic rationalization and complex forms of the division of labour mean that contemporary society has become increasingly mythical. The mythical space of the subject increases at the expense of structural objectivity.

The idea of reoccupations

Laclau introduces the term 'reoccupations' (which is derived from the work of Hans Blumberg) to denote new ideas or visions which replace ancient notions formed on a basis of different set of issues. The latter impose their demands on the former and deform them. Modernist ideologies of radical social transformation 'reoccupy' a ground formed by medieval visions of millenialist apocalypse. God may have been superseded but we still have,

"...the image of a necessary transition to the chiliastic world of homogenous, reconciled (and therefore non-dislocated) society...If everything that happens can be explained internally to this world, nothing can be a mere event...and everything acquires an absolute intelligibility..." (Laclau, 1990, p.75)

Dislocation, is mere event and is unrepresentable. The above quote is a critique of what Laclau would term the Hegelian - Marxist moment; the moment of meta-narrative and omnipotent reason. In other words, no dislocation can occur. This is what prompts Laclau to say that modern

rationalism has adapted badly to the ground of medieval eschatology in terms of its 'reoccupation' of the latter.

Before moving on it is necessary to examine Laclau's assertion more closely, and in particular the comments on meta-narrative and intelligibility. Although it is undoubtedly true that Marxism consists of a meta-narrative (and doubtful that Laclau avoids this pitfall), the accusation of an insistence on ultimate intelligibility that Laclau levels at Marxism seems to fail by conflating intelligibility and interpretation.

Laclau posits dislocation as mere event: that which cannot be represented in existing discourse. Only in this way can it produce dislocatory effects. There is a major problem with this formulation. Nothing is ever mere 'event'. Every discourse provides the interpretative mechanisms that permit 'event' to be rendered to experience. Of course, different discourses would arrive at different conclusions; this is the nature of interpretation. The same event can therefore be variously expressed within different ideological frameworks because each uses a different system of interpretation and representation. Different categories of thought produce different identifications, different experiences and divergent political responses. However, there is no perspective, discourse, or ideological framework from which no interpretation results, because every perspective has a tradition of interpretation, a way of making sense of the world, an ability to categorize and classify 'events'.

This is what Raymond Williams very usefully designates as 'structures of feeling'. Williams wants to conceptualise areas of human experience in terms of the process of experience. He is aware that there are social experiences

which, "...do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and action". (Williams, p.132) Thus, he provides us with a mechanism for dealing with "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs..." (Williams, p.132). Williams is interested in the realm of,

"...social experience' which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognised as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies. These are often more recognizable at a later stage, when they have been (as often happens) formalized, and in many cases built into institutions and formations". (Williams, p.132)

The crucial difference between the two positions is that Williams incorporates a subjective and experiential dimension which is not present in Laclau's. If dislocation is unrepresentable then there can be no link between experience and subjectivity, and infact no possibility of subjectivity as it is traditionally understood. Laclau, in consistently advocating an anti-essentialist position has given up the ground which would make such a subject-experience correlation possible. Thus, it is possible to go as far as to say that dislocation precludes the very notion of subjectivity: 'event' can only be non-representable on the basis that the subject is unable to do the representing. Laclau's notion of subjectivity certainly falls into this category.

In response to the criticism that dislocation precludes subjectivity Laclau would say that the totalising (Laclau would even say totalitarian) nature of Enlightenment thinking in the twentieth century is intent on eliminating

any thought of dislocation. It maintains the idea of the radical representability of the real, a notion which is inconsistent in combination with a quasi-eschatological reiteration of struggle against forces of evil. The age of democratic revolution, by contrast, explores the possibility of historical action opened up by dislocation of pure event (temporality) and representation becomes impossible. When new ideas, and new discourses adapt badly to the ground they reoccupy, historical analysis (not teleological explanation) can begin.

It is interesting to compare Laclau's reading of 'reoccupations' with Raymond Williams' idea of 'residual' and 'emergent' cultural forms, as both try to express the dynamic of cultural supersession.

"The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. Thus certain experiences, meanings and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue - cultural as well as social - of some previous social and cultural institution or formation."
(Williams, p.122)

Laclau's example of the continued effectivity of the religious ground that Marxism has 'reoccupied' would sit easily in Williams' model. Examples given by Williams himself include: organized religion; rural community (as an alternative to urban industrial capitalism but, largely incorporated as a leisure function of the dominant order); and the monarchy (not actively oppositional - incorporated as political and cultural function.)

The residual can have an alternative or oppositional relation to the dominant culture, but some aspects of the residual can be incorporated into the dominant culture. "It is in the incorporation of the actively residual - by reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion - that the work of the selective tradition is especially evident." (Williams, p.123) For example, the literary tradition: "...selective versions of the character of literature to connecting and incorporating definitions of what literature now is and should be." (Williams, p.123) Actively residual meanings and values can be sustained against the pressures of incorporation by maintaining an alternative version of what literature is, or has been, and what literary experience is and must be. An analogy could be made with Laclau's notion of myth. In particular, the functioning of myth as a surface of inscriptions on which social demands can be inscribed. In Williams' version, the alternative experience of literature is the prerequisite for the construction of a social imaginary.

For Williams the residual is coupled with the emergent, and both have to be understood in the context of a cultural dominant; a hegemonic form which in some sense is the (mediated) embodiment of the politically dominant class. "By 'emergent' I mean, first, that new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created." (Williams, p.123) Definitions of the emergent (and the residual) can be made only in relation to a full sense of the dominant. The 'residual' relates to earlier social formations, and in particular meanings and values generated in the past which are significant because they represent areas of human experience which are neglected by dominant culture. Nevertheless, like Laclau's 'reoccupations' they exert a pressure on the dominant culture and are able to moderate

cultural forms. Cultural emergence is most likely to be observed in relation to the emergence of a class, for example that of the working class in nineteenth century England. Such new meanings and values are often incorporated by an alert dominant culture.

"What has really to be said, as a way of defining important elements of both the residual and the emergent, and as a way of understanding the character of the dominant, is that no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention." (Williams, p.125)

Dominant forms select from and exclude the full range of human practice. What the dominant chooses to seize is the ruling definition of the social. On the political level "It is this seizure that has especially to be resisted." (Williams, p.125) In terms of political analysis, attention must be paid to the extent to which a dominant social order is able to reach into the whole range of practices and experiences and attempt to incorporate them; this functions as an index of that dominant social order.

In advanced capitalism, argues Williams

"..because of changes in the social character of labour, in the social character of communication and in the social character of decision making, the dominant culture reaches much further than ever before in capitalist society into hitherto 'reserved' or 'resigned' areas of experience and practice and meaning. The area of effective penetration of the dominant order into the whole social and cultural process is thus now significantly greater." (Williams, pp. 125-6)

and in doing so offers a reconceptualisation of the 'disorganized capitalism' thesis.

Returning to Laclau's deployment of 'reoccupations' we need to focus on the example he gives of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in which the universal nature of the history of the millenium resurfaces. This fails for Laclau, as the social imaginary is totally reduced to mythical space, which effectively means that myth loses its character as a limitless surface of inscription. Instead myth denies its own character (it is presented as a necessary social order) and there is no separation between dislocations of structure and the mythical surface on which they are inscribed. This results in the return of closure; the closed nature of a space denies its mythical character.

The importance of this from the point of 'reoccupations' is that some basic dimensions of the medieval millenium have continued to determine fundamental structures of radical thought. For instance, the universal nature of the history of the millenium and the universality of both the actors and society in which the millenium is finally realised. Thus claims Laclau, the current crisis of socialism can be attributed to the long term effects of the 'reoccupation' by the socialist discourse of the ground of the universalist history of Christian apocalypse.

One of Laclau's main criticisms of the Marxist path to socialism is that it advocates a form of social management which is based on empiricist, universalist and rationalist assumptions. In Laclau's opinion socialist demands need to be inscribed in a discourse different from that of 'social management'; only in this way will socialism acquire new historical possibilities.

Of course this vision of a socialism freed from the limitations of rationality, universalism, teleology and

the humanist, self-conscious, self-reflective subject is only feasible if the notion of dislocation is engaged. As we have already seen dislocation destroys all space and also the very possibility of representation. As an example of this, Laclau chooses the case of migrants from rural to urban areas. They bring with them their own values, own discourse, and own set of symbols. The new environment results in fresh dislocations and the need to reaffirm traditional symbols in order to create a culture of resistance.

"...those symbols and values operate as surfaces for the inscription of the new urban antagonisms and dislocations once the symbols' circulation has reached a certain level of generalisation in the representation of a vast range of antagonisms, they become the necessary surface for the inscription of any new demand." (Laclau, 1990, p.79)

Thus, the symbols can be appropriated by other group, for example the middle class, because they are the only ideological raw material expressing anti-establishment protest. 'Emergent' cultural artefacts in Williams' terms. To draw upon the concepts elaborated in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, it is through this process that chains of equivalence start to emerge.

Universality is built through the overdetermination of an open range of concrete demands. Hegemonic struggle can embody these 'relative universalities', this is in fact what politics consists of,

"... a 'collective will' will only consolidate its hegemony if it manages to appear to other groups as the force capable of providing the best social arrangement possible to secure and expand a universality that transcends it...In relatively stable societies there is no distancing between inscription surfaces and what is inscribed on them. (Laclau, 1990, p.81)

Presumably, in such societies there is also little distance between the social and the political, the social being the sedimentation of politics.

"The fragmentation and growing limitation of social actors is linked to the multiplication of the dislocations produced by 'disorganized capitalism'." (Laclau, 1990, p.81) The fragmentation of social actors is a reference to the demise of class politics, so it follows that we can no longer speak of a 'universal class'; post-Marxism celebrates this fact, rather than a cause for concern it is the basis for a new optimism. The fragmentation of issues allows for a greater autonomy, new social movements present the political system with an increasing list of demands which, because of their sheer numbers and diversity, are difficult to manipulate and ignore. The greater the plurality of subject positions, the wider the field of possibilities for historical action.

"The future is indeterminable and certainly not guaranteed for us; but that is precisely why it is not lost either. The current expansion of democratic struggles in the international arena gives cause for cautious optimism." (Laclau, 1990, p.83)

Laclau ends New Reflections on this note of optimism. But is it an 'optimism of the will' as Gramsci would say, or, in the post-Marxist universe described by Laclau where the future of the 'subject' is in doubt, merely the complete free play of relativism disguised as 'radical democracy'? Does Laclau have a compelling argument to justify the survival of politics after the demise of the subject ?

Conclusions

New Reflections continues the 'logic of contingency' theme begun in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, and introduces a

a major new concept in 'dislocation'. Dislocation can be compared to the Marxist notion of contradiction, but there is a crucial difference which can be expressed in the following way. Contradiction refers to an event internal to a given structure or formation, whereas dislocation is brought about by the constitutive outside. Thus, this new concept is designed to stand in opposition to the teleology perceived by Laclau as inherent to Marxism. When discussing capitalism for example, contradiction implies a necessary internal development, whereas dislocation implies radical contingency, a non-stagist conception of development, and a non-necessitarian theoretical underpinning. According to Laclau this opens up the true field of possibility and freedom.

We have seen that one main thrust of Laclau's argument is to establish that negativity is constitutive of the social, and that only by rejecting teleology and essentialism can we hope to create the ground for a true democratic politics.

By way of a conclusion I would like to evaluate Laclau's innovations in conceptualising political agency by considering his idea of 'reoccupations' and related concepts alongside the Gramscian notion of 'collective will'. Discussion of these areas will focus on the question of the role of the subject in Laclau's writing, especially in its relation to politics. Laclau contends that he has forged the ground for a radical democratic politics, but to what extent has this been done at the expense of political agency?

Laclau characterises Marxism as continuing the tradition of apocalyptic universalism, as a result of its unsuccessful 'reoccupation' of the latter's ground. As an

alternative to the 'spent force' represented by Marxism we are invited to adopt Laclau's approach:

"To reformulate the values of the Enlightenment in the direction of a radical historicism and to renounce its rationalistic epistemological and ontological foundations, then, is to expand the democratic potentialities of that tradition, while abandoning the totalitarian tendencies arising from its reoccupation of the ground of apocalyptic universalism" (Laclau, 1990, p.83)

There are two main comments to be made in relation to 'reoccupations'. Firstly, it can be argued that Laclau's post-Marxist radical democracy is nothing more than a 'reoccupation' of Marxism, in which Marxism still exerts a crucial influence. We have seen this particularly in the case of Althusser, and the same could be said of Gramsci. In fact, the analogy could be extended to the entire project of post-Marxism; that by definition post-Marxism reoccupies Marxism's traditional ground.

Secondly, there is a feature of Laclau's work that he holds in common with some post-structuralist writers, namely the interest he shows in sedimentation and traces. Take the notion of 'suture' as developed by Laclau and Mouffe, for example.

"Their application of the concept of suture to the field of politics carries with it an idea that Derrida's work on deconstruction has made influential: the traces of the old cannot be destroyed but remain as sedimentary deposits, even, and indeed especially, where the new is trying hardest to exclude the old. (Deconstruction being the method of uncovering these buried traces)." (Barrett, p.67)

This cluster of images: 'reoccupations' - the past continuing to exert an influence on the present; sedimentation; traces; suture, which all have an important

role in Laclau's work, prompt the image of the 'palimpsest' as an attempt to characterize Laclau's approach. A palimpsest is a parchment where writing has been erased; a rewritten manuscript. 'All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and re-inscribed exactly as often as was necessary' was written by Orwell (in 1984) but could equally apply to Laclau's appropriation of Marxism. Laclau's work is therefore a manuscript in which later writing (post-Marxism) is imposed on an effaced earlier text (Marxism). Marxism has been partly erased and written over in Laclau's non-essentialist, non-reductionist hand. The image is enhanced by Laclau's point that 'politics is analogous to the process of inscription, the social to what is inscribed'.

"It is only with the Gramscian notion of 'collective will' that the barrier of class essentialism begins to dissolve." (Laclau, 1990, p.51) If Laclau's political project is to expand the logic of the social that was first opened up with Gramsci's term 'collective will', then any gains that he may claim to have made must be offset by a corresponding diminution in the area of political subjectivity. If 'collective will' opened the door on a non-necessary politics of hegemony by decentering class, 'dislocation' has expanded the logic of the social but at the expense of the role of politics (or at least politics as understood by Marxism). This is because the democratic imaginary and plurality of antagonisms expand the realm of social practice but displace the political subject.

The key to this problem is Laclau's concept of subjectivity. Anti-humanist discourses, of which Laclau's is one, are unable to generate a notion of subjectivity which entails consciousness, reflectivity and an ability to act on and change the world. In Laclau's case his

desire to eschew the traditional ground of subjectivity, ie. rationality, leaves whatever subject does emerge from his theorising in danger of being politically directionless and mired in relativism.

Laclau avers that he wishes to break the link between rationality, the Enlightenment and politics and "...renounce its [the Enlightenment's] rationalistic epistemological and ontological foundations..." (Laclau, 1990, p.83). However, this move has the effect of detaching the subject from morality, notions of what is progressive, and an ability to transform the world. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Laclau and Mouffe removed hegemony from its tradition ground of class, politics and economic determinism. Subjectivity, however, is too deeply embedded in a rationality - politics - agency nexus to make such a transplant feasible.

The notion of 'collective will' as developed by Gramsci does not suffer from an underlying lack of political agency because its rationalist baggage carries with it the requisite subjectivity. 'Dislocation' on the other hand precludes subjectivity. Laclau posits 'dislocation as pure event', and he says is non-representable.

'Dislocation' and Laclau's notion of subjectivity are totally implicated and his theory implies a 'subject' that is unable to actively 'do the representing'. In a world where subjects are denied the ability to make sense of their experiences there is little possibility of political action, unless the political is radically redefined.

Antagonism, with its assertion of non-essentialism and the constitutive nature of negativity, performs precisely this function. Laclau has taken up many of the central themes of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy and continued to work them into a functioning model of politics which displaces

the working class ever further from centre stage. A radical and progressive politics by definition can no longer be founded on the Enlightenment platform of consciousness, subjectivity and agency.

CHAPTER 5

THE 'LATE' PERIOD

Introduction

This chapter begins an examination of the applicability of Laclau and Mouffe's work to issues in contemporary European politics. I will also explore the 'idea of Europe' implicit in the work of Mouffe, and the implications of this for (Laclau and) Mouffe's work generally. Laclau and Mouffe demonstrate a highly developed notion of Europe, if not especially in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy and other texts of the 'early' period, then certainly in their (less-collaborative) later work. This sense of Europe is characterised by the following feature;

(i) Europe is defined by its democratic heritage. Mouffe demonstrates a belief in the idea that democracy is a European affair; democracy had its origins and was nurtured in Europe, and Europe became defined by this democratic heritage.

(ii) In view of the above Europe achieved a sense of democratic identity in relation to 'the other', which lacked a democratic heritage. Mouffe's view is that inclusion in such traditions of liberal democracy is constitutive of 'us and them' in which the 'us' consists of Europe, or at least a Europe that is receptive to radical democracy. Mouffe writes that,

"European citizenship cannot be understood solely in terms of a legal status and a set of rights, important as these are. It must mean identifying with a set of political values and principles which are constitutive of modern democracy." (Mouffe, 1992, p.8)

a succinct encapsulation of her view of the link between Europe and its constitutive traditions of democracy.

In order to explore these themes I will look at two essays from the volume Dimensions of Radical Democracy. Mouffe's essay Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community, and her short preface to the volume; Democratic Politics Today. Another essay from this volume Europe: A Political Community?, by Etienne Tassin, is discussed in the following chapter.

Mouffe's book Dimensions of Radical Democracy, (Mouffe, 1992) is the first publication of what I have earlier referred to as the 'later period' of Laclau and Mouffe's work. These essays represent the starting point for the 'liberalisation' of radical democracy; the point at which Mouffe seeks to emphasise the importance of liberal democracy in the radical democratic tradition that she and Laclau have been constructing. These essays and us the ones that are written later place greater emphasis on the (liberal) democratic aspect of radical democracy, whereas the earlier work stressed the radical (Marxist and socialist) lineage of their work.

The reliance upon the liberal tradition exhibited in Mouffe's later work is in part a corrective to the earlier emphasis on the Marxist legacy. Thus, we witness not just a liberalisation of radical democracy, but an all-round liberalisation of Mouffe's political position. Different aspects of democracy are brought to the foreground; citizenship and pluralism for example, and the more radical elements are subdued. It is my contention that this new emphasis leads to a conception of Europe couched in relation to these selective traditions of democracy.

There is no doubt that Mouffe's work is pertinent to the political situation in Europe today, at a time when the post-War East-West division no longer exists, and the old Communist bloc and the countries of Western Europe all

inhabit, or strive to inhabit, the same democratic terrain. In this sense the meaning of democracy is a crucial issue to address at the present conjuncture; at a time when everyone is (or at least claims to be) a democrat, it is especially important to investigate what constraints act upon the construction of democratic identities. We also need to understand the intellectual forces that propagate ideas of democracy and its power as an ideology or doctrine, as well as its embodiment in institutions. In a world where everyone is a democrat democracy could easily lose its meaning.

It is timely that Mouffe should locate radical democracy in the wider context of democratic traditions in the European 'political community'. This allows us to examine the extent to which the ideas of (Laclau and) Mouffe are applicable to the emergent democracies of Eastern and Central Europe where such long histories of Western-style democracy are largely absent. Put slightly differently, we could say that these Eastern countries do not necessarily share in full the same democratic traditions as Western Europe. What relevance has a term such as 'a deepening of democracy' (it strongly implies that a baseline of democracy already exists) to a former Communist state?

As mentioned previously, the main concerns of this chapter are Mouffe's ideas on democracy and Europe, and how the two are mutually implicated in her work. Moreover, it is not Mouffe's ideas of democracy per se that are of primary interest, but the way in which discourses of citizenship and democracy are constitutive of political identities. Another central concern is the extent to which Mouffe's notion of democracy 'floats free' from institutions of democracy.

Terms such as 'citizenship' and 'community', which are emblematic of the new emphasis on the liberal traditions of radical democracy in Dimensions of Radical Democracy both, carry a heavy weight of conceptual baggage. They are deeply embedded in notions of the nation-state for example, as well as democracy. The term citizenship, in particular, resonates with ideas of the rule of law, rights and obligations, and private property which are closely associated with the modern nation-state. The nation-state is "...the entity to which, until now, the modern language of citizenship primarily referred." (Hall and Held, p.173) Citizens qua citizens do not exist. Citizenship is bestowed by a state on its subjects.

The European nation-state is itself in a state of flux (see Chapter 7). It is under attack from above (the growing influence of the supra-national EU, for example), and from below (the rise of regionalism and ethnic fragmentation); "Everywhere, the nation-state itself - the entity to which the language of political citizenship refers - is eroded and challenged." (Hall and Held, p.183) As such, the future of citizenship, in a Europe where the nation-state is in decline, is uncertain.

Mouffe's interest in citizenship is indicative of a more general renewed interest on the left of what was hitherto thought of as a rather bourgeois interest in 'rights'. This re-evaluation of liberal democratic ideas is consistent with 'New Times' thinking and is generally concerned with a redefinition of citizenship and an attempt to free it from its association with the nation-state. This brings its own problems, summed up by Hall and Held. "Older European ideas of citizenship assumed a more culturally homogeneous population, within the framework of a strong unitary nation-state." (Hall and Held, p.187) This means that citizenship must be

understood in a wider sense than abstract membership of a society and of reciprocal rights and duties; "It must address not only issues of class and inequality, but also questions of membership posed by feminism, the black and ethnic movements, ecology...and vulnerable minorities like children." (Hall and Held, p.176)

Contemporary political commentary is dominated by the triumph of 'Western values' associated with the end of the Cold War and decline of the Communist regimes. The exemplar of this view is Francis Fukuyama, whose book The End of History and the Last Man (Fukuyama, 1992) has attracted much attention, not least because it propagates the triumphalist view that 'the West has won'. Fukuyama sums up the position in the following way;

"...a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government has emerged throughout the world over the past few years, as it conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and most recently communism. More than that, I argued [in his original essay The End of History?] that liberal democracy may constitute the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and the "final form of human government", and as such constituted the "end of history"." (Fukuyama, p.xi)

This then, is the spirit of the times, and although Mouffe and her colleagues would no doubt disagree with the Hegelian logic and the teleological nature of Fukuyama's argument, they both share the assumption that democracy is the *sin qua non* of contemporary politics.

This is only one aspect of the contemporary political scene. European politics is also characterised by an increase in ethnic nationalism, the rise of the far right in many of the 'old' democracies of Western Europe, 'Fortress Europe', and other examples of the politics of

exclusion, all of which have an implication for citizenship. An extension of democracy in Eastern Europe cannot be taken for granted. Democracy will come about through political struggle; it is not the guaranteed outcome of 'historical necessity'. Rather than see Europe simply as a nascent political community that can be constructed out of traditions of democracy and citizenship, as I believe Mouffe, Tassin and others do, it is important that Europe is also viewed as the site of fragmentation and conflict.'

Mouffe's essay marks the transition between the approach adopted in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy - which has an obvious applicability to the situation in the former Communist states of Eastern Europe in that it insists upon (i) the absolute contingency of politics, and (ii) that democratic identities are not given but must be constructed - and the later work which relies more and more on exclusion and boundary regulation in the process of identity formation. We can say that a degree of tension emerges between the theoretical framework developed by Laclau and Mouffe in their 'early' period, and Mouffe's subsequent utilisation of it in this essay.

Democratic traditions

That liberal democracy should no longer be seen as the antithesis of socialist politics, is one of the main themes of Dimensions of Radical Democracy, and is an extension of Mouffe's political project which, as outlined in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, is to re-orientate the Left in the direction of radical democracy. Now, that project is associated equally with liberal as well as radical democracy. For example, Mouffe talks of "...a project of radical and plural democracy..." (Mouffe, 1992, p.10) It constitutes a pivotal moment in the work of

Laclau and Mouffe, the point of transition between 'early' and 'late' periods.

Mouffe states that "...the objective of the left should be the extension and deepening of the democratic revolution initiated two hundred years ago." (Mouffe, 1992, p.1) This involves not the rejection of the liberal democratic tradition, but rather "...a radicalization of the modern democratic tradition." (Mouffe, 1992, p.1) Mouffe is keen to distance herself from Fukuyama whose democratic project has some similarities with her own and centres on the complete "...implementation of the twin principles of liberty and equality on which modern democracy is founded" (Fukuyama, p.xi) as a way of 'solving' problems that still exist in stable democracies. It is his view that the ideal of liberal democracy cannot be improved on and as such our political tasks should be to do what is necessary in order that this ideal can be realised. Mouffe dissents saying "For those who refuse to see 'really existing' liberal democratic capitalism at the 'end of history', radical democracy is the only alternative." (Mouffe, p.1)

Mouffe holds that the radical principles inherent in the idea of modern democracy are sufficient by themselves to bring about a deepening of democracy, provided that this latent radicalism can be liberated. This can be achieved through "...an immanent critique, by employing the symbolic resources of that very tradition." (Mouffe, 1992, p.1) What Mouffe has identified is again not so different from one of Fukuyama's formulations; the gap between the ideals of modern democracy and their implementation. One problem with this view of democracy is that ideas are viewed as being totally independent of institutions (of the state or of the economy etc.), as if simply strengthening the idea of democracy will actually bring about a greater degree of democracy 'on the ground', so to

speak. Modern democracy is not just a set of precepts that citizens chose to implement or ignore; democratic principles are one component in a system where ideas are embedded in institutions and practices that have their own efficacy.

Mouffe says that the purpose of radical democracy is to take to task actual democratic societies for not living up to their promise, to force liberal democratic societies to be accountable for their professed ideals. The future of the Left then, according to Mouffe, lies not in the reconstruction of its revolutionary tradition (what Laclau and Mouffe would call the 'Jacobin imaginary'), but the claiming of democratic rights for groups hitherto denied them. Mouffe explains it thus;

"Radical democracy must acknowledge that the articulation of the ideas of popular sovereignty and civic equality with the liberal themes of natural rights, constitutional government and separation of powers - an articulation that is constitutive of liberal democracy - has made it possible for new rights to be claimed, and new meanings, new uses and new fields of application to be created for the ideas of liberty and equality. It is within such a framework that the struggle for a free and equal society has to be waged."
(Mouffe, 1992, p.2)

This quote is significant for its scope; it can be read as linking the struggles of the 'new social movements' with those of more traditional democratic politics; traditions of pre-capitalist democracy 'popular sovereignty and civic equality' with bourgeois liberalism, natural rights and constitutional government. It also forms a link between the radical democracy of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy with Mouffe's more recent interest in traditions of liberalism, and maps out a field for radical democratic

political action. What it also does, in a single move, is to both legitimate the tradition of liberal democracy as providing the 'right conditions' for the advance of radical democracy, and limit the application of radical democracy to societies where these conditions prevail. The implications of this line of thought will be drawn out later in this chapter, but it is sufficient at this stage to make the point that the countries of Eastern Europe, recently emerged from decades of Communism, do not yet possess the framework that Mouffe believes is essential for the struggle for a free and equal society.

This problem can be approached from a slightly different angle. As I have already mentioned there is a heavy dependence on tradition in the work of (Laclau and) Mouffe, exemplified by their writings on the history of the concept of hegemony in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. One problem that can follow from this approach is that everything outside of that tradition tends to be excluded, marginalised and invalidated; tradition works as a form of closure. As with the notions of citizenship, community, and nationality tradition can be invested with the quality of integrity, difference effaced, and diversity subordinated to similarity, in order to homogenise the 'us', or 'the elect' of the tradition, and internal antagonism and dissent are sacrificed for stability, coherence and continuity.

Mouffe makes the important observation that liberalism is often identified with a defence of private property and capitalism, and "...that capitalist relations constitute an insuperable obstacle to the realization of democracy." (Mouffe, 1992, p.2) The link is not a necessary one she argues, and can be broken because it is the result of an articulatory practice. This requires a distinction between economic liberalism and political liberalism.

"Defending and valuing the political form of society specific to liberal democracy does not commit us to the capitalist economic system." (Mouffe, 1992, p.2-3)

Mouffe's statement is true in principle, but ignores the substantive observation that capitalism generally, but not exclusively, favours liberal democracy (at least in the long term) and, more importantly, any economic system exerts much pressure on the type of political formations that co-exist with it. The economy acts to shape, direct, or (for Marxists) even determine the political sphere. The standard Marxist view would be that the economic base determines the (political) superstructure, but even without resorting to such economism it is naive to down play the efficacy of capitalism on any social order.

The assertion that liberal democracy does not commit us to the capitalist economic system quoted above needs further discussion. Capitalism and democracy are commonly found together. The contemporary world is replete with examples of liberal democracies that are founded on a capitalist underpinning; this is in fact the dominant model, certainly in Europe. Any political project embracing Mouffe's radical democracy would have to start deepening democracy in a society orientated around a market economy. One could argue that the economic liberalism - political liberalism nexus is too pervasive to be dismissed lightly as mere contingency, and that the very term liberal democracy implies a capitalist market economy.

What is liberal democracy anyway? Actually existing democracies are incredibly diverse. Sweden is a democracy and so is Turkey, but this is merely a superficial observation which tells us very little about the type of economy or society in those countries. In their detail, these democracies, as represented by institutions, laws, traditions, how they actually exist for millions of

citizens who participate in them (and those who are marginalised from, or are denied access to, their workings) on a daily basis, have little or nothing in common. It is not really possible to talk of liberal democracy in general, only of specific historical instances of liberal-democratic states (which have a particular relation to an underlying capitalist, or other type of economic order). That liberal democracy is not necessarily linked to capitalism is not in doubt but Mouffe's unshakable belief in its contingency is presumably the kind of thinking that led Terry Eagleton to comment that; "This means, presumably, that it is wholly coincidental that all capitalists are not also revolutionary socialists." (Eagleton, p.215)

Citizenship and pluralism

Mouffe wishes to subject the liberal tradition to examination in order that she might;

"...identify the areas where it needs to be reformulated, so that the great contribution of political liberalism to modern democracy can be freed from the individualistic and rationalistic premises that have become fetters to democracy in its present form. The notions of citizenship and community have been stripped of much of their content by liberal individualism, and we need to recover the dimension of active participation that they hold in the classical republican tradition." (Mouffe, 1992, p.3)

Of course, a purely liberal conception would reduce citizenship to legal status but the aim here is to defend pluralism, as defined by political community, institutions and citizenship, without destroying democracy. On the contrary, the purpose is to enhance it. To this end the idea of citizenship is of central importance because,

"A citizen cannot properly be conceived independently of her insertion in a political community. In order to formulate a satisfactory concept of the political community, we must go beyond liberal individualism to questions of justice, equality and community." (Mouffe, 1992, p.4)

Thus, the concept of citizenship has to be extended so that we are able to go beyond the narrow limits of social democracy and embrace the 'new social movements'. A defence of pluralism entails a type of social justice that can regulate the diversity of demands within the political community. Thus, radical democracy seeks to overcome the traditional problem with democracy which is that it inevitably involves the denial of rights, benefits and status etc. to those not classified as citizens, whether they be within or without the jurisdiction of the state.

This is where the idea of community is so important. Mouffe finds desirable "...a return to the civic republican tradition in order to restore the idea of politics as the realm where we can recognize ourselves as participants in a community." (Mouffe, 1992, p.5)

However, she is careful to avoid retreating into a pre-modern notion of the political "...we need to be alert to the dangers of nostalgia for the Greek polis and Gemeinschaft types of community." (Mouffe, 1992, p.5)

Individualism disrupts the constitution of such a community; it prevents the formation of the link between pluralism, liberalism and democracy which lies at the core of radical democracy.

The essay by Etienne Tassin, Europe: A Political Community?, in Dimensions of Radical Democracy approaches these questions from the point of view of the possibility of the creation of a European identity and the break-up of nationalism that would be entailed in creating a truly

European political community. I will comment on this essay at some length later in the next chapter but it is important to raise several points at this stage. There is an assumption in all that Mouffe and Tassin and others write that Europe and European identity refer to a extant entity called Europe that is bound up with the traditions of liberalism, democracy and citizenship that they place such an emphasis on and wish to deepen and radicalize.

Does this Europe exist? It is an extremely problematic aspect of Mouffe's work, not least because the use of the term Europe here is shorthand for Western Europe, perhaps even the European Union, but certainly not a Europe that extends to the Balkans, Carpathians or the Caucasus. The democratic tradition that is being referred to is quite specific in terms of geography, history, and probably ethnicity, although this is not acknowledged by Mouffe and her associates.

This assumed association between Europe and democracy is expressed by Mouffe in several ways. There is an uncritical acceptance that Europe is the bearer of democratic traditions; in talking about civic republicanism, one of the two key traditions identified by Mouffe that she wishes to build upon (the other being the liberal tradition) she mentions that it is a tradition which has;

"almost disappeared today because it has been displaced by Liberalism, though it has a long history. It received its full expression in the Italian republics at the end of the Middle Ages but its origins go back to Greek and Roman thought. (Mouffe, 1992, p.226)

The question of whether Europe has such a unbroken democratic lineage will be considered in the following chapter, but this quote is indicative of the association

between Europe and democracy that Mouffe places great emphasis on. The assumption that Europe and democracy are intimately linked is also expressed in terms of the uniqueness of European development. Mouffe says;

"The defence of pluralism, the idea of individual liberty, the separation of church and state, the development of civil society, all these are constitutive of modern democratic politics. (Mouffe, 1992, p.227)

This type of thinking is part of a larger tradition that has sought to view the development of democracy as an exclusively Western phenomenon. This tradition, which views democracy as the outcome of European history, is evident in the above statement. Its representatives include Weber, who believed in the uniqueness of the West and for whom ideas of individual liberty were bound up with a conception of law in which private property was protected (in contrast to the despotic East where such law was absent); Montesquieu, for whom law, private property, and estates (civil society) were Western phenomenon (again, in contrast to the despotism of the East; Hegel, who saw the West as the realm of history proper, where change was possible (any change in the East being a result of Western influence); and Marx, who saw class antagonism being absent in the East, as opposed to the West where it was the motor of historical development.

It is now necessary to examine the status of pluralism in Mouffe's current work. Pluralism can be thought of as the recognition of diverse and competing interest groups and the distribution of power across a range of centres, rather than concentration in few privileged points. Mouffe's use of pluralism must be viewed from the perspective of its non-essentialist formulation;

"Indeed, pluralism can only be formulated adequately within a problematic that conceives of the social agent not as the unitary subject but as the articulation of an ensemble of subject positions, constructed within specific discourses and always precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of those subject positions. This requires abandoning the reductionism and essentialism dominant in the liberal interpretations of pluralism, and acknowledging the contingency and ambiguity of every identity, as well as the constitutive character of social division and antagonism."
(Mouffe, 1992, p.10)

Mouffe makes the point that there are limits to pluralism. It does not extend to a "...valorization of all differences...", and "...criteria must exist to decide between what is admissible and what is not." (Mouffe, 1992, p.13). This is because politics cannot be conceived without antagonism and division. In other words, 'us and them' exists in relation to conceptions of pluralism too. Pluralism involves rights for ethnic and other minorities but the notions of tradition and community that are at work here act as barriers to the 'other' no less effective than for example, the policies of the Schengen Group who act to regulate the international borders of the fifteen member states of the European Union. 'Tradition' no less than 'community' is a powerful form of social closure.

In order to look at the usefulness of Mouffe's concept of pluralism I will assess the extent to which Mouffe's ideas are applicable to the political and social transformations within the countries of what was Eastern Europe. In particular, what type of European identities can be formed under conditions where citizenship, pluralism and liberal democratic traditions are largely absent? Mouffe more or less answers this question with the following statement;

"In the end what is always necessary for a democratic society to function is a set of institutions and practices which constitute the framework of a consensus within which pluralism can exist. It is in such a way that a modern democratic political community should be conceived, as a discursive surface of inscription, not an empirical referent. Within such a framework there will always be competing interpretations of the shared principles of equality and liberty and therefore different views of citizenship."
(Mouffe, 1992, p.14)

This is of course a political concept framed within the logic of anti-essentialism and hegemony developed in the pages of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, and is entirely consistent with those formulations. The key phrase in the above quote is surely, "what is always necessary for a democratic society to function is a set of institutions and practices which constitute the framework of a consensus within which pluralism can exist." We must conclude that in the absence of these institutions and practices, pluralism and hence democracy cannot exist.

What the above formulation of Mouffe's signally fails to address is the question of the role of the state in the creation/denial of the type of citizenship that is necessary for radical democracy. Any theory of pluralism must have a developed notion of the interrelation between various social groups, possibilities for citizenship and the apparatus of the state. Her work does not take into account the presence of democratic traditions, equally deeply rooted, which would work to disrupt the creation of radical democracy. Nationalism is one such ideology, which can take ideological elements like citizenship and democracy and articulate them in such a way that pluralism, in the way that it is described by Mouffe, will not be possible. This in turn leads to the question of why radical democracy is better than other kinds of

democracy, and more to the point, why citizenship and democracy should be articulated in its favour, rather than that of, say, nationalism? The basis for and direction of political mobilization is not fixed, one might even say it is fickle, and there is no reason why radical democracy should not lose out to nationalism. This is a position compatible with Laclau and Mouffe's 'early period'. It is a question of looking at a concrete historical conjuncture for the 'democratic resources' that are available to a particular democratic struggle. In the Baltic States, ex-Yugoslavia or the Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union for example, we may well find that the conditions for democratic expression at the present time favours nationalism rather than radical democracy. Magas makes the useful point that nationalism in Eastern Europe

"...takes the form of a political struggle for control of the existing local states, through which it is possible to command all other branches of 'civil society': economy, cultural institutions, media and so on. For simple acquisition of control over the existing state structure is a much more straightforward task than breathing new, democratic life into it, or creating a new one altogether."
(Magas, 1992)

This is linked to the problem raised earlier of those societies for whom radical democracy is currently a structural impossibility. A deepening of democracy implies there is a democracy to begin with; many emerging democracies simply do not have the traditions, practices and institutions (the democratic resources) that provide the pre-requisites for radicalization. Of equal importance is that the model of democracy advanced by Mouffe pays insufficient attention to the influence of the economy and the state. Radical democracy must not only take account of the political traditions that it seeks to radicalize, but the economic and social context within

which they operate.

From Hegemony and Socialist Strategy we know that democratic politics, once freed from its class determinations, depends upon the hegemonic articulation of new forms of identification. As such the question of democratic political identity is crucial; "...to attempt to construct 'citizens' identities should be one of the most important tasks of democratic politics." (Mouffe, 1992, p.225) But as Mouffe, rightly points out there are many different varieties of citizenship and the struggle over their meaning is an important dimension of democratic politics.

Mouffe holds that a citizenship compatible with the ideals of radical democracy requires "...the creation of a chain of equivalence among democratic struggles, and therefore the creation of a common political identity among democratic subjects." (Mouffe, 1992, p.235) Chain of equivalence is a term that Laclau and Mouffe introduce in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy and should be understood as the simplification of the social, leading ultimately to the creation of two antagonistic camps. Within the logic of equivalence elements can be substituted for each other, thus permitting the expression of opposition to oppression. Mouffe is saying that for a chain of equivalence to be created it must be possible to 'see a little piece of your own struggle in that of other groups'.

To further explore how the idea of equivalence works in practice we can take an example from recent history. The situation that recently occurred in the countries of the former Eastern bloc, where the dichotomy 'the people versus Communism' was briefly created and where every

oppositional grouping had at least one thing in common with other groups: their anti-communism.

In the break-up of the Communist regimes diverse social and political groups had one overarching theme of common identification; opposition to the Communist regime. This was true whether they were nationalist or socialist, free-marketeers or environmentalists; they could all respond to the call for 'democracy'. This democratic element was present in all of their struggles whether reformist, socialist, green or capitalist, and in keeping with Mouffe's theory their individual identities would have been modified as a result of their articulation into a chain of anti-Communist equivalence. It is not necessarily the case however that this democratic commonality can be equated with citizenship.

More problematically for Mouffe, the phenomenon of the polarisation of the social also occurs at times of extreme ethnic conflict, for example in the process of nation formation and consolidation exemplified by the events in break up of the former Yugoslavia where there has been polarisation along ethnic lines between Croats and Serbs, Serbs and Albanians and Muslims and Serbs and Croats, for example. None of these polarisations has been created as a result of equivalence, and their existence is not connected with a deepening of democracy.

Conceptions of citizenship

Mouffe believes that it is necessary to go beyond the conceptions of citizenship found in both the liberal and the civic republican tradition (neither Rawls nor communitarianism are sufficient, she argues), in order to create a form of citizenship compatible with radical democracy. John Rawls favoured a view of citizenship that

prioritized the pursuit of an individually defined good. Citizens use their rights to promote their self interest. This notion of citizenship does not permit the citizen to join with others to pursue common action in view of the common good. Rawls thus holds to an instrumental community; individuals with previously defined interests wish to further those interests. A constitutive community, on the other hand, would constitute the very identity of the individuals. What Rawls represents in other words, is a justification of bourgeois right and the primacy of private (legal) ownership as the basis of democracy; citizenship equals the right to own property. The civic republican tradition is largely pre-modern and

"...does not acknowledge the novelty of modern democracy and the crucial contribution of liberalism...a modern democratic political community cannot be organized around a single substantive idea of the common good."
(Mouffe, 1992, p.227)

The political community is not compatible with modern democracy and liberal pluralism (it limits liberal pluralism). Liberalism, on the other hand,

"...reduced citizenship to a mere legal status, setting out the rights that the individual holds against the state...Ideas of public-mindedness, civic activity and political participation in a community of equals are alien to most liberal thinkers."
(Mouffe, 1992, p.227)

As such, there are shortcomings with both the liberal and the civic republican conceptions of citizenship. The problem then resolves into the incompatibility and insufficiency of the two models of democracy, one ancient, the other modern. But as a way out of the impasse Mouffe refers to the work of Quentin Skinner

"...who shows that there is no basic incompatibility between the classical republican conception of citizenship and modern democracy. He finds in several forms of republican thought, particularly in Machiavelli, a way of conceiving liberty which though negative - and therefore modern - includes political participation and civic virtue. It is negative because liberty is conceived as the absence of impediments to the realization of our chosen ends. But it also asserts that it is only as citizens of a 'free state', of a community whose members participate actively in the government, that such individual liberty can be guaranteed...The idea of a common good above our private interest is a necessary condition for enjoying individual liberty."
(Mouffe, 1992, p.228)

What this formulation does of course is to introduce an understanding of the importance of the state and civil society to the idea of citizenship. But Mouffe does not really take up the important themes that she introduces by mentioning Skinner's work. What her thesis does not acknowledge sufficiently is that traditions of citizenship cannot be reduced to two models of democracy; republican and individualistic. Democracy has always been dependant upon the outcome of struggles centring on the control of various apparatuses of the state, and the legal ownership or effective control of the economy. In between these two extremes is located civil society, the realm of civic freedom, collective action and free association .

I would criticise Mouffe for reducing democracy to forms of citizenship - forms which effectively limit democracy to an offshoot of bourgeois liberalism. As we will see later, constricting the origins of citizenship and democracy to a conflict between communitarianism and individualism, and denying the possibility of socialist democracy, has implications for Mouffe's understanding of the nature of democracy in the countries of Eastern

Europe, an understanding that would be enhanced by placing the development of forms of democracy and civil society in the context of struggles between economic systems or between economic systems and the state, in all types of societies not just those that were subjected to the development of bourgeois rights.

We must return to Mouffe's main theme and consider the type of political community which would allow an articulation, as described above, between the rights of the individual and the political participation of the citizen. In the contemporary world individual freedom is valued above all else and has been gained at the expense of any notion of 'a common good'. For Mouffe civil society has, in modern societies, replaced the rather pre-modern communitarianism. However, as I indicated above this is only the case if a narrow definition of modern societies is accepted. By modern societies Mouffe is alluding to those found in Western Europe, as it is debatable that the same process occurred in the Eastern Europe of the old Communist bloc. From what Mouffe has said so far it follows that the growth of individualism has resulted in the loss of an ethical dimension to politics, sacrificed for an instrumentalist rationality.

"We do need to re-establish the lost connection between ethics and politics, but this cannot be done by sacrificing the gains of the democratic revolution. We should not accept a false dichotomy between individual liberty and rights on one side and civic activity and political community on the other. Our only choice is not one between an aggregate of individuals without common public concern and a pre-modern community organized around a single substantive idea of the common good. Envisaging the modern democratic political community outside of this dichotomy is the crucial challenge." (Mouffe, 1992, p.231)

One might want to add that all that stops us envisaging such a society is the very political tradition that Mouffe insists we work within. Equally, it is not difficult to reject the 'false dichotomy between liberty and political community' if one takes the view that it was introduced by Mouffe in the first place. We need, Mouffe tells us, to view "...citizenship not as a legal status but as a form of identification, a type of political identity: something to be constructed, not empirically given." (Mouffe, 1992, p.231) Although the idea of the 'substantive common good' is rejected as being pre-modern, the need for a sense of commonality, "an ethico-political bond" is acknowledged.

"In other words, what we are looking for is a way to accommodate the distinctions between public and private, morality and politics which have been the great contribution of liberalism to modern democracy, without renouncing the ethical nature of the political association." (Mouffe, 1992, p.231)

To pursue this idea Mouffe employs terms developed by the conservative political theorist Michael Oakeshott; *universitas* (pursuing a common substantive purpose or promoting a common interest) and *societas* (a formal relationship defined by rules, not a substantive relation in terms of common action).

"It seems to me that Oakeshott's idea of the civil association as *societas* is adequate to define political association under modern democratic conditions. Indeed it is a mode of human association that recognizes the disappearance of a single substantive idea of the common good and makes room for individual liberty." (Mouffe, 1992, p.232)

However it is acknowledged that the bonds of association are political ones which have to be constantly negotiated and enacted.

"This modern form of political community is held together is held together not by a substantive idea of the common good but by a common bond, a public concern. It is therefore a community without a definite shape or a definite identity and in continuous re-enactment." (Mouffe, 1992, p.233)

Thus, the type of civil association defined by *societas* prioritizes the right over the good, but does so in accordance with a set of principles (*respublica*). The advantage of this formulation is that *societas* does not relinquish a normative dimension but succeeds in releasing the free play of pluralism and individual liberty. The political community, the non-instrumental, ethical, civic bond has been severed from the substantive common good.

The relevance of collective will

It is interesting to compare this formulation with the Gramscian notion of 'collective will' that Mouffe utilised in the past and subsequently rejected, as it seems to have a relevance to the idea of the *respublica*. In Gramsci's work 'collective will' is a common world view which acts as the unifying principle that allows a hegemonic class and its allies to fuse. As such it is the culmination of the self-awareness of a fundamental class and the creation of a consensus. As a result of her critique of Gramsci 'collective will' gave way to 'the people' in the work of Laclau and Mouffe.

Mouffe recognises the conservative bias in Oakeshott's work and believes that this stems from the fact that his conception of politics lacks a notion of antagonism. The following quotations is worth quoting at length as it sums up this position and underlines the similarity with 'collective will'.

"What is completely missing in Oakeshott is division and antagonism, that is, the aspect of the 'enemy'. It is an absence that must be remedied if we want to appropriate his notion of *societas*...it is necessary to realise that the *respublica* is the product of a given hegemony, the expression of power relations, and that it can be challenged. Politics is to a great extent about the rules of the *respublica* and its many possible interpretations, it is about the constitution of the political community...it aims at the construction of a 'we' in the context of diversity and conflict" (Mouffe, 1992, p.234)

To further this conception and underpin it with the non-essentialist language of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Mouffe reminds us that a political community can never be wholly realized as there will always be a 'constitutive outside', an exterior to the community that threatens to disrupt it but at the same time makes its existence possible. In other words, there will always be a 'them' by which the category 'us' acquires its meaning. Citizenship now can be understood as;

"...the political identity that is created through identification with the *respublica*... it is a common political identity of persons who might be engaged in many different purposive enterprises and with differing conceptions of the good, but who accept submission to the rules prescribed by the *respublica*..." (Mouffe, 1992, p.235).

Although the language is different, the formulation itself is not dissimilar to the notion of 'national-popular' created by Gramsci's 'collective will': persons (no longer class subjects) bound together by a common recognition of a set of (hegemonic) ethico-political values.

Mouffe's radical democratic application of this idea must emphasize the social relations which include relations of domination which act to block the establishment of liberty

and democracy. Thus, a common political identity will be forged; that of radical democratic citizens. The principles of liberal-democracy have been interpreted in a radical democratic way, in a manner which allows for the emergence of a multiplicity of subject positions. What is not clear however is how social identities become political identities, nor why identification as a citizen should lead to radical democracy. As I indicated earlier, a common political identity is just as likely to result in ethnic exclusivity or nationalism as it is in radical democracy (see for example the case of the Northern Leagues outlined in Chapter 7). Mouffe sums up her position in the following way;

"The creation of political identities as radical democratic citizens depends therefore on a collective form of identification among the democratic demands found in a variety of movements: women, workers, black, gay, ecological, as well as in several other 'new social movements'. This is a conception of citizenship which through a common identification with a radical democratic interpretation of the principles of liberty and equality, aims at constructing a 'we', a chain of equivalence among their demands so as to articulate them through the principle of democratic equivalence. For it is not a matter of establishing a mere alliance between given interests but of actually modifying the very identity of these forces."
(Mouffe, 1992, p.236)

We can see the continuities between this formulation and the politics of hegemony. A non-essentialist perspective permits the notion of a subject, not as a unitary subject, but as "the articulation of an ensemble of subject positions" (Mouffe, 1992, p.237) In the same way *respublica*, *societas* and political community should be understood discursive surfaces, not empirical referents and the outcomes of political struggle can never be assumed in advance. The above formulation is in essence a

non-essentialist version of 'collective will', which although rejected as too deterministic by Mouffe some time ago, continues to inform her thinking. It is possible that the idea has not outlived its usefulness as it would at least have the advantage of enabling her to explain why political identities become nationalist rather than radical democratic in character.

Conclusions

Mouffe's work on democratic politics in Dimensions of Radical Democracy is a significant contribution to important debates on contemporary European politics and the politics of identity. However, the notion of Europe that exists in Mouffe's work stems from a heavy reliance on the twin (and mutually implicated) traditions of European identity and Western democracy.

In all of this the term democracy is key, because of its implication in the political project of hegemony. As I have indicated above the meaning of this term is not fixed or given and the particularity of its use in Mouffe's work must be examined. It should not be forgotten that democracy, and indeed liberalism, citizenship, community and all of Mouffe's other key terms, are contested terrain.

If the emphasis is placed, as I suggest that it should be, on democracy in its concrete forms, an important question arises; how applicable are her ideas to the 'emerging democracies' of Eastern Europe? Do these countries share the democratic traditions on which Mouffe places so much emphasis? Mouffe acknowledges the important role of institutions and practices in order that democracy is able to function and prosper. What happens however, in the absence of these?

It is my contention that the answer to these questions is 'no'; 'radical democracy' is applicable only to Western Europe. Mouffe's contention that radical democracy entails a 'deepening of democracy' needs particular scrutiny as the situation in the former Communist Eastern Europe would seem to exclude this possibility. This is the problem of closure alluded to earlier in this chapter. If liberal democratic traditions are expressive of 'Europe', then European identity is only possible to those on the inside this identity boundary. On this model the boundaries of Europe are coincidental with the existence of such traditions. The important question then becomes, what is the future for democracy in situations where a deepening is not possible?

Another term foregrounded by Mouffe is that of pluralism which, in the language of post-Marxism, allows for contingent, ambiguous subject positions and the constitutive character of social division and antagonism and recognises the diversity of demands produced by, amongst others, new social movements. Thus pluralism is privileged above citizenship. Citizenship implies a political community, but also denial of full democracy, in as much as there will always be a group of non-citizens to whom these rights are denied.

What Mouffe seeks is a type of (modern) political community that would link liberalism, pluralism and democracy but encounters problems inasmuch that democracy, as conceived here in its liberal variant, is implicated with tradition, and tradition and pluralism work against each other. Pluralism extends rights (deepens democracy) while tradition (community, nationalism, ethnicity) seeks to bound and exclude. In other words, certain aspects of the democratic tradition that Mouffe is working with -

community, citizenship - lead to closure, and subvert the pluralistic aspects of that same democratic tradition.

The main limitations of Mouffe's approach are;

i) when Mouffe talks of democracy she is referring to democratic ideas. Democratic practices and institutions do not feature large and the role of the state is undertheorised. Social identity is forged as much by the state and the economy as it is by democratic ideals and notions of citizenship. By only talking of democracy in abstraction Mouffe is unable to address the issue of democratic resources. A society will construct its democratic debates out of the raw material that is readily available; nationalism, Islam etc. It would be interesting to be able to investigate the nature and extent of democratic resources are present in the former Yugoslavia for example, in relation to this question.

ii) democratic traditions can subvert 'radical democracy'. For example, nationalism can articulate notions of citizenship and community to produce an ideology that is not compatible with radical democracy. The fact is that the construction of chains of equivalence and the simplification of the social does not necessarily lead to a deepening of democracy.

Another of Mouffe's central concerns is identifying the form of citizenship that is compatible with radical democracy. Mouffe artificially limits the field by claiming that the choice is between the liberal, property owning option and the communitarian, civic republican form. The problem can only be resolved if we look at the relationship of citizenship and democracy to the state and civil society. This enables us to conceive of democracy in a less Eurocentric way. The development of democracy

should be seen in the context of the struggle between social groups, the state and the economy.

It is significant that Mouffe aligns herself with Oakeshott's *societas* as the best idea of the modern political community; bonds of association are political and have to be constantly negotiated, not unlike Renan's idea of the nation as a daily plebiscite. On this model 'right' is privileged over common good in a way that allows for the full development of pluralism and the growth of a political community. What is not satisfactorily explained is the basis on which the political community is formed, the bond which creates what Gramsci would have called 'a collective will'. This is linked to the problem mentioned earlier - why should this form the basis for radical democracy rather than, say, nationalism.

Mouffe stresses the need to constitute the political community through the construction of a 'we' in the context of disunity and conflict. Again we find parallels with the formation of the type of closure exemplified by nationalism, this time it is in the context of the role of the constitutive outside to form the exterior, the threat of disruption that makes identity possible. This is the realm of nationalism par excellence, what is not yet proven is the ability of radical democracy to forge other, more deeply democratic identities from the same raw material.

CHAPTER 6

THE QUESTION OF EUROPE

Chantal Mouffe, in her essay Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community, conceives of Europe as a political community that knows itself through traditions of democracy and citizenship. In order to understand more fully the way that this notion of Europe is constructed I will look at the essay Europe: A Political Community? by Etienne Tassin, included in Mouffe's volume Dimensions of Radical Democracy. Tassin's piece is instructive as it provides us with a detailed formulation of the idea of Europe which is consistent with Mouffe's views. Moreover, Tassin develops Mouffe's theme of the need for a break in the link between citizenship and membership of a nation.

The essay by Tassin deals with two main issues; (i) the conditions that would permit the creation of a European identity, and (ii) the conditions for creating a truly European political community (and the concomitant break-up of nationalism that would be entailed by this). In his discussion of these issues Tassin reveals an assumption that also underpins the work of Mouffe, namely that Europe is the bearer of traditions of liberalism, democracy and citizenship of which 'radical democracy' is the culmination.

Do these traditions exist, and if so, are they European? There is no doubt that there are commonalities of history, culture and tradition shared by many European countries; feudal ancestry, linguistic roots, and liberal democracy, for example. But these only constitute common traditions at the most general level. The whole enterprise of identifying traditions that are peculiar to Europe and which provide a sense of shared history is problematic. As has been mentioned previously tradition acts as a form of closure, and forms the basis for an 'us and them' dichotomy. If Europe is equated with liberal democracy and citizenship then an absence of these traditions leads

to non-Europe. This is a problematic area because membership or non-membership of a European community is then dependent on shared history, rather than shared values and common aspirations.

This is a concern because Mouffe and Tassin's concept of Europe is more applicable to Western Europe (perhaps even the European Union), but certainly not a Europe that extends from the Atlantic to the Balkans, the Carpathians or the Caucasus. The democratic traditions that are being alluded to are quite historically specific, and lead to a narrow conception of Europe, one which is exclusive rather than inclusive. However, this exclusivity is also part of the project. As Mouffe herself says of radical democracy; "What kind of political identity does it require?...what kind of political identity can contribute to the construction of the 'we' of radical democratic forces?" (Mouffe, p.3) This search for a 'we' to which the project of radical democracy can apply is interwoven with this exclusive idea of Europe.

One of the main problems with this approach to delineating Europe in terms of common democratic traditions is that its exclusivity can undermine the democratic and pluralistic project itself. For example, pluralism may extend democratic rights to ethnic and other minorities but the ideas of tradition and community which work to create this notion of Europe can also act as barriers to the 'other'. This is no less effective than the processes within the European Union that have led to 'Fortress Europe', a term that refers to the enforcement of tight controls on immigration and refugees imposed at the external borders of the European Union. Tradition, no less than community, is a powerful form of social closure.

Before examining Tassin's argument in detail it is necessary to consider the question of 'what is Europe?', and address the problems of definition that are likely to be encountered when talking about Europe. The first problem to deal with is the conflation of terms such as Western Europe and the European Union with Europe itself. This is explained by one commentator in the following way: "Because the European Community emerged as the core regional organization, there is a tendency to regard the Community as synonymous with Western Europe and even with Europe as a whole." (Laffan, p.2)

Defining Europe is very difficult. For example, geographically it may be possible to delineate: it extends from the Atlantic to the Urals and the Arctic Circle to the Mediterranean, but Europe cannot be understood purely as a geographical region. It is, and always has been, a political construct and as such the boundaries are a lot more elusive. The political boundaries to the east and south are not established by consensus, rather they are the product of on-going political debate; is Russia in Europe?, is Turkey? If the answer to these questions is 'yes', what are the implications for Asia of extending Europe's borders further eastward? Does this not tend to displace Asia as a central historical and political region in its own right? The political boundaries of Europe are permanently in the process of being made and remade according to political and economic exigencies.

So even in current political terms it is very difficult to give a satisfactory definition of Europe. This difficulty is summed up by Wallace who says that, "'Europe' is a geographical expression with political significance and immense symbolic weight, but without clear definition or agreed boundaries." (Wallace, p.7) To illustrate this it is useful to consider the case of Russia and ask the

question 'is Russia in Europe?' Just a few years ago the consensus would have been that the countries in the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe would have been in Europe, but that the Soviet Union as a whole was geographically, politically and culturally beyond Europe (although historically speaking certain regions within the Soviet empire could be considered as European). Now however, with the break up of the Soviet Union it is more likely that the Ukraine and the Baltic states, say, can be considered as part of Europe, even if Russia is still beyond Europe's borders in our mental maps.

It is also pertinent that these countries themselves feel more a part of Europe at the present time, thus the subjective dimension to the question of 'what is Europe?' has to be acknowledged.

"From time to time it appears that the Western appeal has faded, but then new Westernizers appear, reviving the fundamental paradox of the Russian psyche, which is to be European by Asian standards and Asiatic by European standards...Russians will never be unequivocally Asian or unequivocally European...a firmly rooted tradition has held that they have gained something by not being completely European." (Konrad. p.88)

This view would also hold good for Turkey. It has to be acknowledged that countries such as Russia and Turkey have never been entirely European or Asian and continue to adopt this Janus like position in the contemporary context. This should be viewed as a positive attribute; who better to advise other Europeans on relationships with Asian countries than those countries who themselves have an Asian orientation?

What we consider to constitute Europe today - and debates concerning its borders - will be different from what

constituted Europe at other times throughout history. This is true both in terms of politics and geography. Two thousand years ago the question 'what is Europe?' could not have been posed in the same terms. Europe as a geographical region did not have a meaning at a time when the Mediterranean would have been the focus of a political economic system taking in portions of present-day Europe, Asia and North Africa. "The Roman world was a Mediterranean world rather than a European world, in which Asia minor and North Africa, as well as parts of Europe, were integrated." (Barracclough, p.160) The idea that Scandinavia or Poland belonged to the same region would have had no meaning.

It is not possible to talk of a unified European history over two millennia if only because of the domination of the Mediterranean as a regional economic system for much of this time (there are also other reasons for arguing against a unified and unbroken history centring around debates on culture and religion for example, which will be dealt with later in this chapter).

"Many consider that one can speak of European history as such from about 800, when the centre of historical development was shifted northwards to Europe by the Arab conquests, which robbed Graeco-Roman civilization of a southern swathe stretching from Syria through North Africa to Hispania." (Szucs, p.291)

If the Mediterranean is again accorded the centrality that it would have enjoyed in Antiquity Europe, as we understand it today, would be no more than a sub-system of this at best, or in a more extreme view, a mere appendage of Western Asia or the Eastern Mediterranean. Another issue associated with defining Europe is the question of the internal division of Europe along East - West lines, and whether this is simply a product of the Cold War. We

also need to examine the continuing relevance of this terminology following the events of 1989.

The 'return to Europe'

We might begin by addressing why, in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet bloc, politicians in the former communist bloc spoke of a 'return to Europe'. Vaclav Havel announced that he was determined to lead Czechoslovakia 'back to Europe'. I take this to mean that he was drawing a qualitative distinction between Western and Eastern Europe, and inferring that during the past 40 years or so the Eastern portion of Europe had somehow been less European, or deprived of its European identity as a result of the dominance of the Soviet empire. This accords with Kundera's view that Czechoslovakia and other countries in Central Europe had been 'kidnapped' by the East.

There is no doubt that this East/West distinction has been a major division since the end of WWII and to a large extent the division is still a valid one, as the legacy of those years is still influential. However, it must be recognised that the division of Europe into East and West, symbolised by the Iron Curtain, was a political division arising out of Yalta, one of the consequences of which was to erase Central Europe from the political map of Europe. In acknowledging the existence of Central Europe as a region distinct from Eastern Europe we are participating in the 'long revolution against Yalta', as Ferenc Feher describes it. "Yalta created a geopolitical entity 'Eastern Europe', which as a polity or a community had never before existed." (Feher, P.20)

A consequence of asserting the existence of Central Europe is the renewed emphasis on the closeness of the historical

links between Western and Central Europe. Agnes Heller argues that Central Europe forms a zone of transition between East and West, and provides a middle route between western individualism and eastern collectivism. It is also a region that has stood between the state absolutism of the east and the autonomous civil society of the west; the autocracy of the east and the parliamentary democracies of the west. It is noticeable that the politicians of Central Europe in making such claims wish to break the links with the East by asserting their Western credentials.

"Central Europe is...a lost or broken-off part of Western Europe, struggling to regain its proper home. This is what is meant by the return to Europe...In the recoil from 'Eastern Europe', the most eloquent and enthusiastic partisans of the Central European idea have come to insist ever more strongly that Central Europe is essentially a part of Western Europe. Its incorporation in Eastern Europe...has been a grotesque and tragic error. Properly viewed it is at the eastern edge of Western Europe. As such, its true role is as the defender of western culture against the barbarism of the east." (Kumar, p.449)

Such a view holds that Russian communism has succeeded Ottoman militarism in inheriting the mantle of oriental despotism, and further south in Serbia the issue of 'Europeaness' is couched in even more familiar terms; that they are a bulwark against muslim fundamentalism encroaching from the east (they are European because they are not Muslim) Here claims to be European are justified by assuming the status of defenders of the faith' and by pointing out the weaker claims to 'Europeaness' of those standing further behind. This argument is summarised by Wallace in the following way.

"Each claimant to full European participation attempts to draw the boundaries of Europe around and behind it; to include all the countries of the Western tradition, of Catholicism and the Enlightenment, for Austria, Hungary and Poland; of the broader Christian tradition, for the southern republics of Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria and Russia; of the secularising and modernising tradition, for Turkey...Each group of claimants except Turkey and Russia, it should be noted, is as concerned to exclude those beyond it as to include themselves within the community of Europe: Hungarians, Czechs and Poles to shut out Russia; Serbs and Bulgarians to emphasize their distinctiveness from their Islamic neighbours; Israel to stress the divide between 'Judaean-Christian civilization' and Islam." (Wallace, pp.18-19)

The anxiety of Central Europe to be considered part of Western Europe is due, in no small part, to the hegemony of the West over the rest of Europe.

"If Europe is not just the west, if there are other traditions that go into its making, then Central Europe may not feel so constrained to follow the single and rather narrow path of 'westernization'. It can acknowledge the various strands and influences that make up the European mosaic." (Kumar, pp.453-454)

Kumar also makes the important point that if Central Europe as part of Eastern Europe was an artificial creation then Central Europe as part of western Europe would be equally artificial.

In writing about Europe in the post 1989 period it is still valid, from the point of view of the continuing legacy of the divide, to talk of Western and Eastern Europe. It is also legitimate to assert the existence of Central Europe as a distinct geo-political entity. However, the division of Europe into Western and Eastern portions is not entirely satisfactory for the following reasons. Firstly, this division is (and always was) too

simplistic. Europe, even during the period 1945 - 1989, was never split entirely along these Cold War lines. Several European countries have a tradition of neutrality or independence (Switzerland, Austria, Turkey, and the Republic of Ireland, in their different ways, have tended to remain largely outside this dichotomy). Secondly, concentration on an East - West split tends to displace the equally important North - South divide (the idea that the northern countries tend to be wealthier than their southern neighbours), which is a more compelling division. Thirdly, dividing Europe according to the West - East principle gives the false impression that the two blocs were unified or homogeneous. It masks the fact that the Communist Eastern bloc was replete with political divisions, and the countries of Western Europe had no common organising principle, save for their common (and US led) antipathy to communism.

The idea of common European traditions

Tassin's essay Europe: A Political Community? begins by questioning the type of political community that is at stake in the development of the European Community (EC) (now known as the European Union (EU)) towards a Single Market, and to what extent the EC can in fact be considered a political community when it is so obviously aimed at rationalizing the capitalist system of production and exchange.

"In this regard, we have to ask to what extent Europe can be something other than a market, whether common or single. To what kind of community can Europe lay claim? ... What are the cultural and historical foundations of Europe?" (Tassin, p.170)

Tassin has raised two very important issues. Firstly, in the period of rapid change and great instability resulting

from the fall of the Communist bloc, there is a distinct danger that the EU will become hegemonic, not just amongst its traditional constituency of western European nations, but also in the developing markets of eastern and east-central Europe. It is already clear that the EU is in a position to dictate the terms of trade with the countries of eastern Europe and make economic and other aid conditional on the institution of a market orientated legal and economic infrastructure. For example, the PHARE project (Poland and Hungary Assistance for Economic Restructuring Programme) was not designed to give assistance to the Polish and Hungarian economies as a whole, but rather the private sector in particular. When other Eastern European countries put in bids for PHARE aid it was made clear that they had to be committed to "...economic liberalization with a view to introducing market economies." (Commission of the European Communities communication 1/2/90).

As such the likelihood is that the idea of Europe engendered by market values (the common market) will extend to all regions of Europe, east and west. But Tassin realises that the unity of Europe (if such a thing is ever possible) must exist at another, more profound level if Europe is ever to become a true political community. Hence his concern to identify the cultural and historical foundations of Europe which could provide alternative loci around which a modern political community could be united.

However, it is by no means certain that such foundations exist, and if they do whether they can in fact provide the basis for future European stability. There is, I acknowledge, widespread support for the view that the principle of European unity inheres in common history and ancestry but in opposition to this position I believe that

only a principle of political unity grounded in a common European political agenda for the future - which addresses the needs and aspirations of all European peoples - is capable of acting as a principle of unification.

It is possible to share the concern that in the near future (if not already) the notion of the common market will be the most compelling theme of European unity, and at the same time have major reservations regarding attempts to fuse an alternative European unity out of shared notions of culture and tradition. The ideas of a shared culture and common traditions are powerful unitary themes, not especially when considering European identity, but more generally as components of nationalist ideologies, or in constituting ethnic identity. In fact, whilst they may be suitable raw material for the construction of national identity they would actively hamper efforts to build a democratic political community of the kind envisaged by Mouffe in which the importance of active citizenship, minority representation and deep democracy are paramount. Concerns over the suitability of shared culture and common traditions, as outlined in the introduction to this chapter, arise from the fact that they are exclusive and self-selecting, leading to the formation of closure, hierarchical communities and marginalisation. In other words, that they will increase divisions within Europe along nationalist or ethnic lines, which is in fact what seems to be happening in large portions of the former Soviet bloc.

The argument put forward in this chapter is that political unity in Europe is by no means guaranteed but is only possible through an identification with a series of common concerns and political issues thrown up by the contemporary situation in Europe; in other words, it is more about the future than the past. However, it is

essential to explore in more depth the contrary view; the question of whether the organising principle of European political unity can be found in the archaeology of common historical traditions. In order to do this it is necessary to follow the line of Tassin's argument.

The Single European Act, ratified in February 1986, seeks to create a form of European union, primarily of an economic, free-market nature, within the framework of the EU. This economic union, and the creation of a single market, has evolved independently of political union, which was identified as the ultimate goal by the Paris Summit in 1972, but has been perpetually postponed as a result of its dependence on other, largely economic concerns. Tassin argues that the,

"...goal of political union has been developing independently of the tradition of cultural unity which initially brought it forth...it is clear that the idea of Europe has denoted, and continues to denote, a common tradition of thought and culture rooted in that constant interchange over two millennia which has given this part of the world a certain unity of the mind." (Tassin, p.171)

It is necessary to dispute this idea of Europe as a cultural community, with an unbroken historical lineage.

Tassin notes the post-War division of Europe into East and West, dividing Europe according to its democratic principle (democratic or socialist), as the crucial event that ruptured the unity of Europe as a cultural entity (which presumes of course, that prior to this rupture a unified, cultural entity did exist). This leads him to the observation that when we talk of Europe we must not forget Eastern Europe; "If there is to be a political community, presumably it should be rooted in a common experience and a tradition of thought and history that

reside equally in all the peoples of Europe." (Tassin, p.171) One can agree with Tassin on at least one aspect of this issue: the importance of bridging the East - West divide to forge a common outlook. But how does this fit with for instance, what Tassin calls common cultural experiences and traditions that are shared by all the peoples of Europe? And more pertinently, what experiences and traditions of democracy are shared by the people of Europe?

Tassin's reasoning is that, "In short, political Europe saw the light of day as the Europe of the mind was collapsing." (Tassin, p.172) This is a reference to both the formation of the EU ('political Europe'), and the crisis in thought dating from around the end of the Second World War that so afflicted Western intellectuals. Western Europe was shaken by the deprivations of Nazism and Stalinism, and existentialism, structuralism and the like undermined the rationalist, essentialist, metaphysical subject. Tassin is quite right in asserting that "a convergence of economic interests cannot alone make a political community" (Tassin, p.172), but posing the idea of 'a Europe of the mind', especially when this refers to a notion that is said to derive from the Greeks ("...the Greek city as the birthplace of the European mind..." (Tassin, p.173)) as an antidote is equally problematic. Tassin is looking to

"...a common life which sustains itself not just on interests and cultural references but also, and above all, on a real postulated identity: real, through being woven into a history that is also a history of the mind; and postulated, since this never consummated identity is constantly changing as it projects a horizon of principles or values on which the community maintains itself without ever exhausting it." (Tassin, p.172-173)

This is a particularly striking passage, written in a style heavy in the language and imagery of Laclau and Mouffe's Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, which expounds the ideas of non-fixity of identity that are fundamental to the politics of anti-essentialism. It is also a reiteration of her position, that the key to European unity is to be found in the past, the mind that 'raised humanity to a new level of reflexive consciousness and which was identified with humanity as a whole' (Patocka, quoted by Tassin, p.171).

Tassin makes the observation that the idea of modern (ie. post-war) Europe was founded not on a philosophical foundation ('a Europe of the mind') but instead on the political experience of resistance to Nazism; the EU is the culmination of a process set in motion by resistance to Nazism during the Second World War, and the result of a political will born out of that experience. "The idea of a federal Europe, of a union of European peoples, was grounded upon the resistance to Nazi and then Stalinist totalitarianism." (Tassin, p.183) Tassin makes strong claims for this position.

"The Declaration of European Resistance Movements (July 1944), drawn up at secret meetings by representatives from nine European countries, proclaimed the 'necessity of rebuilding Europe on a federal basis'. This presupposed that 'the various countries of the world agree to go beyond the dogma of absolute state sovereignty and integrate themselves into a federal organization'" (Tassin, p.182)

It should be noted that the EU is not a federal organisation, although in recent years it has showed signs of moving closer to becoming one.

The idea that the EU was created as a response to totalitarianism and forged by the same political will and strength of purpose which characterised the war-time resistance movements (which in any case were mainly Communist led) is pure romanticism. The genesis of the EU is far more prosaic; a US led, post-war rebuilding exercise that was undoubtedly infused with a certain amount of idealism, but more importantly necessitated by the economic demands of the post-war crisis and spurred on by the perceived threat of the economic and political might of the Soviet Union. But it is interesting that Tassin highlights the federalist origins of the idea of the EU, which I believe strengthens the case for being more closely associated with the United States.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Western powers were worried that portions of Western Europe would fall under Soviet control under the conditions of depravation and social unrest of the time, and looked for a way to bind Western Europe together (safety in numbers), and harness the industrial capacity of Germany in a way that would benefit a large part of Europe, particularly those countries such as France, and the Low countries who had suffered greatly from occupation.

At the end of WWII it was the intention of the US to establish a system of international management based on a multilateral system of free trade. The IMF, World Bank and GATT provided the global institutions for the post-war capitalist economic system. Fear of communism led the US to conclude a series of multilateral defence arrangements, a 'Pax Americana', with states throughout the world, but the 'drive for growth' was the prime concern in the European sphere. According to Ellwood (1992) the United States identified the following political and economic goals for Europe;

- economic unification
- a federation on the US model
- the re-development of Germany
- creation of a market large enough to justify modern methods of cheap production for mass consumption
- political resistance to Soviet expansionism

The over-emphasis of the role of the resistance in forging Europe in the post-war period tends to detract from the rest of Tassin's argument. 'It is therefore necessary to return to her attempts to construct a line of reasoning to account for the claims to 'an unbroken line of intellectual heritage stretching back to the Greeks'.

The idea of European history

Tassin states that, "The political concept of Europe has a long history." (Tassin, p.178) For a unifying principle of this history he relies on Christianity, whose religious bonds replaced the juridical bonds of the Roman empire. This then is what he means when he talks of the 'history of Europe that goes back two thousand years'. This is a difficult argument to sustain however, and is what Samir Amin would describe as the product of a Eurocentric vision; 'Western' history as a progression from Ancient Greece and Rome, via feudal Christian Europe to capitalist Europe. This is perhaps one of the most problematic themes in Tassin's essay and it is necessary to take issue with many of these ideas, especially the claim that the political concept of Europe has a long history, and that Europe was united by Christendom.

Firstly, the idea that European history has an unbroken lineage going back two millennia is an example of what Hall (in another context) refers to as the construction of "...an unbroken continuity towards pure, mythical time."

(Hall, 1992) European history cannot, contrary to Tassin's claims, demonstrate such linearity. The reason for this is that knowledge of Greek culture and democracy was lost in the Middle Ages until it was revitalised by medieval Islamic and Jewish scholars who inspired the rebirth of Christian scholasticism in the West.

"In the West, semi-barbaric until the eleventh century and, for this reason, incapable of assimilating Hellenistic and Eastern Christian scholasticism (which disappeared as a result of Islamization)...Hellenistic thought was thus discovered by the West through the mediation of the Islamic metaphysical construct. It is only later, with the exile of the Greeks of Constantinople to Rome after their city's fall in 1453, that the West begins to learn that Hellenistic thought was preceded by that of Classical Greece, whose very existence was unknown until that time." (Amin, p.54)

In other words, the line connecting Classical Greek thought to modern European philosophy was ruptured in the Middle Ages and not reconstructed for several centuries.

Secondly, the conflation of Christendom with Europe is deeply problematic, not least because Christianity originated in Asia: "Christianity, by which Europe defines itself, is like Hellenism and Islam, Oriental in origin." (Amin, p.100) However, this is not to deny that the identification of Christendom with Europe is a recurring and persuasive image in the literature. Hay acknowledges as much, "...Christendom was virtually interchangeable with Europe for all of the sixteenth century and much of the seventeenth" (Hay, p.115), and perhaps this historical context helps to explain the deeply rooted nature of the belief. What is often effaced in the commonly held view that Europe is synonymous with Christianity is that Christianity had a very long history in other regions of

the world prior to becoming (slowly) established in Europe.

"The places that really mattered in the early Christian centuries were not in Europe at all, but were cities like Alexandria and Carthage in Africa, or Nicaea and Cappadocia in Asia Minor..." (Barracclough, quoted in Kumar, p.456)

Tassin's strategy in this interpretation of Christianity - annexed arbitrarily to Europe - is to provide himself with the most important underlying explanation for the maintenance of European cultural unity. This view fails to account not only for Christianity's extra-European origins but also for the very long period it took for Europe to become Christian. As Hay explains "...the spreading of Christianity was uneven ...it radiated out from its east Mediterranean birthplace, covering the Hellenistic east and Romanized North Africa and Europe" (Hay, p.27), and it had little scope for proselytisation beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire in this period. The diffusion of Christianity further north was even slower - Germany and Scandinavia did not become totally Christian until C10th or later:

"...the conversion of Scandinavia was not accomplished until the eleventh or twelfth centuries...Even as late as the thirteenth century large areas of northern Europe were overtly pagan and in the Wendish areas of Northern Germany and Pomerania it was settlement by Germans which made Christianity something more than a superficial conversion." (Hay, p.19)

It would also possible to construct a plausible argument to support the view that Europe never became fully Christian. The following reasons are central to this argument. Stated briefly: (i) other religious groups have always been strongly represented, and have played an important part in the history of the continent,

particularly the Jews and Muslims. The role of medieval Jewish and Muslim scholasticism has already been mentioned. (ii) religion as a fundamental organising agent of social life declined strongly from the fifteenth century onwards.; the rise of scientism, the demise of feudal and absolutist regimes (and their concomitant cosmologies), and the related social and political changes spreading through Europe at this time. (iii) Christianity was always subject to schism and internal conflict. The disunity within the Christian world - the Orthodox and Catholic churches, not to mention the ruptures caused by the rise of Protestantism - can hardly constitute one seamless, harmonious religious movement.

Thirdly, the role of Ancient Greece is pivotal in this construction of European ancestry, the origins of 'Europe of the mind'. On Tassin's model Greece's location in the Orient is effaced in order to annex Hellenism to Europe. The myth of Greek ancestry maintains the idea that Greek heritage predisposed Europe to rationality, and enabled it to 'raise humanity to new levels' in Patocka's memorable phrase (quoted above, p.188), while the rest of the world was condemned to superstition and irrationality. Barraclough supports the view that the identification of Greece and Europe is a disputed one by raising the

"...problem [of] whether ancient civilization should be termed 'European' at all...there are reasons for questioning such an identification. Greek history, in its Hellenistic phase, had seen a fusion of Greece with the Orient; civilization became Hellenistic Oriental instead of Hellenistic and western."
(Barraclough, p.160)

In addition, Tassin signally fails to acknowledge is the influence of Egypt on Greece. Martin Bernal in his book Black Athena (Bernal, 1987) attempts to redresses this balance and informs us that it was the Egyptians who were

the first to introduce the concept of eternal life and immanent moral justice - which opened the way for humanist universalism (universal morality; rewards and punishments) - the basis of Christian morality.

Tassin's search for a contemporary European identity via history, tradition, culture and religion is compromised by the fragmented nature of these histories, cultures and religions that one discovers on closer inspection, and any project to build a European identity out of a common heritage in this way is deeply flawed. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, Europe does not need a long shared history to forge a common identity: our history starts now, and our common identity (or more realistically, compatible different identities) can better be forged out of shared aims and objectives and a common vision of the future.

Secondly, it is clear that Christianity cannot achieve this goal.. Furthermore, there must be no religious barrier to an identification with Europe, or the assumption of European identity. This holds true both for religious minorities dispersed throughout Europe and for the claims of non-Christian countries (Bosnia, Turkey) to be European.

Citizenship and the nation-state

Tassin has sympathy with the view that totalitarianism, as exemplified by Nazism and Stalinism, was an expression of the dogma of absolute state sovereignty, and that the nation-state is inevitably totalitarian. Support for this assertion comes from de Rougement, "The nation-state was one of Europe's creations and must inevitably, by its inner logic become totalitarian." (de Rougement, quoted by Tassin, p.183) On this argument Europe cannot become a

community until the nation-state has ceased to be the primary unit of sovereignty. What is needed to break the hegemony of the nation-state is a federation based on regions not states,

"...because only the region, in reproducing the human scale of the ancient Greek cities, offered a community framework favourable to the exercise of genuine citizenship within elective rather than natural, or native, communities." (Tassin, p.184)

This argument is significant for three reasons. Firstly, the political community to be constructed again has its blueprint in the past (ancient Greek cities) showing once again Tassin's reliance on both the mythical lineage of European history and the deployment of tradition and history as the key to European unity. Secondly, the conflation of the nation-state with the totalitarian state is problematic. There are many examples of nation-states that are not totalitarian. Nor can it be accepted that Nazism and Stalinism, as political doctrines, had anything more than a few superficial similarities. Thirdly, Europe as a federation of regions, necessitating the displacement of the nation-state as the primary political unit is a valid political objective which does not have to be arrived at via points one and two.

Tassin continues thus; Europe needs human communities not defined, as the nation is, by "...frontiers, physical contours or civil status, but rather in terms of social, cultural or spiritual goals..." (Tassin, p.184), an elective, not natural entity whose basis rests upon the principle of chosen citizenship. Tassin poses an active citizenship, one that is rendered obsolete by the size and complexity of the modern state. The basic political unit has to be redefined, Europe has to be built from the 'bottom up' in order to redistribute the state, and the

region must be acknowledged as the 'true socio-economic unit of present day Europe'.

It is not clear however how this community actually differs from the nation, the political community par excellence. Rather than a 'natural entity' as Tassin would have it the nation is a purely political construct, which may employ rhetorical ethnic or religious justifications for its existence, but in actuality there is no sociological justification for the 'nation', either as a concept, or in any of its historical manifestations.

The central theme of Tassin's argument is that the nation-state is not a suitable political framework within which to build 'the new Europe' or create a more democratic type of citizenship. It is true that both the EU as a supra-national entity and individual nations carry with them limitations as far as democracy is concerned. However, it is a large step to move from this position to the statement made by Tassin that, "the failure of the immediate post-war attempt to build Europe should be attributed to the fact that Europe was to be unified on the basis of nation-states." (Tassin, p.186)

For one thing post-war Europe was divided not simply along national lines but also to a certain extent into ideological blocs. This was not simply a result of the Yalta carve-up but also a direct product of the US-led rebuilding process after 1945. Central to this project was an emphasis on the importance of the integrity of nation-states as a bulwark against perceived threats of Soviet expansionism. Thus, contrary to Tassin's belief that the choice was between competing nation-states or a new supra-national state - unionist versus federalist - it is possible to argue that the range of choices was perceived by European governments as much more restricted;

integral nation-states or the possibility of a Soviet take-over. By such ideological means was the survival of the Western European nation-state ensured.

In his concluding section Tassin continues the theme that a European community cannot be based on the conception of the state, or the general, national will. What is needed is a public space, which will produce a community of a plurality of political initiatives.

"The political institutions cutting across states actually mark out a public space which does not have to express a supposedly common identity or will. Far from being created by a general will and becoming its expression, they give birth to a public space of plural judgements, decisions and actions in which not only states or ad hoc commissions but all citizens, by virtue of common citizenship, are called upon to participate."
(Tassin, pp.188-9)

What this conception lacks is what Mouffe would term the 'constitutive outside'. Mouffe has made it clear in Dimensions of Radical Democracy that a political community can only be established through the constitution of a 'we' in the context of diversity and conflict. Who threatens to disrupt the political community of Europe envisaged by Tassin and what is its exterior that makes its existence possible?

The answer to this of course lies in Tassin's construction of Europe; if Europe has a shared history, a common culture and other principles of unity then there must also exist non-Europe, those who do not share this history or these traditions. Tassin's novel move is to deny the importance of the arbitrary and mythical political community of the nation while promoting the importance of the equally arbitrary and mythical community of Europe. The following passage is worth quoting at length.

"The republican (nation-state) principle of citizenship is based on a deliberate conflation of general will and national will or, in other words, on an amalgamation of nationality and citizenship. The prospect of a Europe of fellow-citizens is shattering this dogma of nation-states. It requires citizenship to be broken away from nationality. The right of foreign residents (including non-Europeans) to vote in local elections is, for example, an essential and obligatory step in the formulation of this new community citizenship. It indicates that participation in the life of public institutions takes precedence over nationality; that, whatever the citizen's cultural or national identity, his or her insertion in public political space is elective and not 'native'; that it derives from a political choice and not from birth (natio) or an identity passed on by history; that the idea of a European fatherland has to be replaced by that of a public space of disparate communities." (Tassin, p.189)

But what are the nature of the communities that are envisaged here? Tassin's vision contains a contradiction; the type of communities that he sees as being the foundation of 'the new Europe' have their basis in the dual notion of a Europe freed from the nation-state, and a Europe created out of a sense of shared history and culture. However, it is by no means certain that in the absence of the nation-state the resulting political communities would be united around the area of common (non-national) citizenship. In the Europe of nation-states nationality itself has never been the only, or even the strongest collective identity. It could be argued that the strongest, most enduring collectivities are regional in nature, often ethnic in complexion, which have coexisted with, or have been denied full expression by nations for centuries. Present day Europe is witnessing the renewed assertion of these regional identities, both within the framework of the European Union and the break-up of the Soviet sphere of influence.

Catalans in Spain have maintained their regional identity in adversity over a long period of time to the extent that for many it rivals their Spanish identity. Serb and Croat ethnic identities have not been diminished but enhanced by their experience of seventy or so years of Yugoslavia's existence. Likewise, Flemish and Walloon identity in Belgium is still distinct despite the longevity of the Belgian state and stand ready to resume their independent existence should the European Community move further towards embracing the ideas of a federal Europe of regions. It must be stressed that this move to regional autonomy was already in progress, in a 'bottom-up' fashion, before receiving the official sanction or encouragement of the European Union in the form of a move to federalism within the framework of an increased supra-national role for the Community;

"...there are unmistakable and synergetic trends to both greater regional self-government and greater European Union. Belgium may break up into two self-governing regional mini-states before long and Italy seems headed in the same direction...the political bonds between the regions and the future European union will be as important as those between the EC and the existing nation states at present." (Palmer, 1992)

This rise of regionalism has corresponded to a decline in big-state nationalism and internationalism. Globalism - the growth of a single world market - has led not to uniformity, but a proliferation of ethno-social cultures. In Europe there does appear to be a decline in the fortunes of the nation-state, under attack from both below and above. Alter views the rise of regionalism in the following way. Nationalism is often conceptualised as being tied to economic development and modernization (Gellner is the exemplar of this position). This era, he argues, is now at an end and the nation is not such an

important vehicle for collective identity. What emerges with the break-down of big-state nationalism are regional tensions, periphery versus centre for example, which were previously over-ridden by the unifying political power of the nation-state.

"Like the idea of European unity, regionalism seems to signal the end of the age of homogeneous and independent nation-states. On the one hand, nation-states have come under external pressure to delegate some major areas of economic and socio-political responsibility to over-arching supra-national institutions such as the EC; on the other, they have run up against demands at home for the decentralization of political and economic power."
(Alter, p.136)

Within the boundaries of every nation-state there exists economic disadvantage and unequal distribution of wealth. Economic heterogeneity and cultural and linguistic disparity make these regional tensions manifest. "The breeding ground for regionalism in centralist nation-states is provided by the continuing presence of both economic heterogeneity and cultural and linguistic disparity." (Alter, p.136) This is underpinned by the uneven development of the economy - which Alter terms 'internal colonialism' - which disadvantages peripheral groups and may generate tensions between the centre and the margins. Social underprivilege gives a decisive boost to regionalist tendencies. So as we have seen the prevalent view is that,

"...authority is being decentered from previous national states, simultaneously upwards to Euro-institutions and downwards to this range of new and more local powers."
(Nairn, p.31)

However, there is no reason to suppose that communities based on regions would be less exclusionary, less 'native' than nation-states. In fact, it is more likely the case

that identities based more rigorously on ethnic, linguistic or religious criteria would be more so. There is the case of the break-up of the Soviet Union where new political identities in the Baltic States, for example have been =created out of the widespread opposition to the previous political regime not in terms of citizenship, but in terms of local and regional identities where ethnicity has replaced citizenship as the dominant identity, and where public space for the non-dominant groups and respect for disparate communities has proved to be strictly limited. One development has been to tie citizenship to ethnicity in such a way as to discriminate against the minority (formerly politically dominant) Russian population.

Tassin seems not to recognise the efficacy of other, non-national forms of political identity. He acknowledges that the new kind of European political community that he advocates will involve the break down of nation-states but fails to take into account that the supra-national community which he advocates can only be created by relying on the same kinds of myths and legends that are typically used to create, what Benedict Anderson would call the 'imagined community' of the nation. It is difficult to see how this will result in 'a new type of political community'. Once again we are witnessing the invention of tradition, with Mouffe it is the tradition of democracy, with Tassin it is the common experience of Europeans. Stuart Hall, writing about nationalism said;

"It has been the main function of national cultures...to represent what is in fact the ethnic hotch-potch of modern nationality as the primordial unit of 'one people'; and their invented traditions to project the ruptures and conquests, which are their real history, backwards in an apparently seamless and unbroken continuity towards pure, mythic time" (Hall, 1992, p.6),

and his ideas are equally relevant in the context of Tassin's version of Europe.

Tassin's claim that the region is the prime socio-economic unit of present-day Europe, or at least is moving in this direction, is supported by other commentators. However, the nation-state is far from dead. Indeed the same period that has witnessed the growth of regionalism has seen a revitalisation of the nationalist phenomenon, particularly in the republics of the former Soviet Union. What we are not witnessing is the emergence of a 'community of plurality' or a 'Euro-space' so desired by Tassin. There has been a growth in the importance of the region as a socio-economic unit from within the boundaries of former nation-states (Czechoslovakia, Spain, Yugoslavia, for example), but not the development of the region across national boundaries.

The move towards regionalism in Western Europe has been very much one of nations splitting into component regions. This process is facilitated by the revitalised supra-national agency of the European Union. As such, this development is one that is occurring under the aegis of the same regional organisation that promoted the nation-state as an effective bulwark against Communism. The rhetoric of the inviolability of the borders of the nation may have given way to a sympathy with regional units but the economic imperatives of the European Union towards its members have not changed to any large degree. It is rather a case of economic re-organization and an evolving strategy for achieving economic objectives rather than the genesis of a new form of European community.

The argument advanced in this chapter in opposition to Tassin is that the unifying principle for European unity cannot be found in Europe's history or a search for a

shared past, common customs and traditions. As an alternative to the search for a European community rooted in the past it would be more appropriate to argue for a Europe that is based on shared political and social objectives which will form the basis for a future community. Before outlining this approach in detail there are two further points that need to be made regarding Tassin's thesis.

There is of course already a strong cluster of principles at work in present day Europe that will also most probably serve to unify Europe to a greater degree in the future. This cluster of principles is economic in orientation and revolves around the development of capitalistic relations of production and exchange on a massive scale throughout the Eastern portion of Europe. With the fall of the Communist bloc the West has already begun to expand eastwards and influence the outcome of the emergent democratic and market reforms. Support for the increasingly autocratic but pro-Western and pro-market Yeltsin in Russia is one example, the radical free market "...shock therapy of...the Balcerowicz plan in Poland [which] would allow Western firms to move into East European markets with generous tax breaks and the ability to repatriate profits", (Glenny, p.240) is another. The outcome of this process is likely to be a greater degree of economic unity in Europe than at any time since the second World War.

The second point to be raised is the question of the extent to which it is possible to delineate Europe as a geographical region. Whether Europe is defined in terms of economic orientation, history, culture or religion there are many other regions of the world that share these attributes to a greater or lesser extent. One only has to think of the relatively common mix of ethnicity,

intertwined cultures, and interdependent economies of Europe, North America and Australasia to see that a notion of Europe as a distinct and unique region is flawed. Critics of the idea of an expanded Europe extended to the Balkans and beyond might argue that Europe was 'closer' to the United States than to Turkey, Albania and the Ukraine. These points must be borne in mind when addressing the question, 'what is Europe?' In order to formulate a satisfactory answer the following must be considered.

(i) Europe is a political construct. Its boundaries are never fixed but such boundaries that it does have are not to be conceptualised in geographical terms that can be represented by lines on a map. It has to be acknowledged that the boundary between Europe and Asia for example, is neither clearly defined nor agreed by consensus. It is rather to be understood as existing in a state of flux, its boundaries shifting according to political imperatives, "Europe is present everywhere and yet invisible; the circumference is everywhere and the centre nowhere." (Petrie, p.1)

(ii) The idea of Europe is subjective. Where or who you are will have a bearing on your conceptualisation of Europe. Being European means different things to different countries, and even within national boundaries different groups (ethnic, political, gendered etc) will have different perceptions. The uneven nature of this subjective element of identity can be summarised as follows;

"...becoming European is a process of endless becomings and divisions;...it is a process marked by a multitude of histories of uneven development, defined by difference and by quite difficult instability at both the personal and the collective level..."
(Caughie, p35)

(iii) The meaning of Europe is not to be found in the past. Europe cannot be defined solely by a shared history and common traditions which act as a unifying principle. Tassin's model relies too heavily on history. It is the product of the invention of tradition, especially the myth of Christian consanguinity. It is a solipsistic, idealised and romanticised history which is at odds with a professed postmodern political analysis. More importantly Europe also consists in its future and the common political and social goals that can create a true 'European community'.

(iv) European identity does not depend on ethnicity. Europe cannot be defined in terms of dominant ethnicities. There is a need to go beyond nationalist and ethnic perspectives and challenge the 'tragic popularity' of ideas about the integrity and purity of the ethnic nation. This holds true both in the case of Germany where ethnic Germans have prior rights to citizenship over guest workers, as well as ex-Yugoslavia which has disintegrated along ethnic lines.

(v) Europe cannot be defined in the language of the nation-state. It must be acknowledged that "...neither political or economic structures of domination are still simply coextensive with national borders." (Gilroy, p.7) As such, adherence to political nationalism hinders the construction of a European identity. While this is true the regionalist impulses that have been identified in recent years have not disturbed the overall domination of the nation-state. Nor are they always a progressive force; the Northern Leagues in Italy are an example of a reactionary regionalist movement.

(vi) Europe has an international context. It is impossible to study Europe in isolation from the

international economic and political networks in which it is inserted. This has the following consequences.

Firstly, an assertion that in the contemporary world characterised by a global economy the full nature of Europe's inter-relationships with the rest of the world can not be over-emphasised. Secondly, Europe's history of colonialism must not be forgotten. The inter-related nature of the contemporary world is in part a result of this legacy.

(vii) The European Union. Europe must not be seen as synonymous with the European Union, or Western Europe etc. However, the hegemonic position of the Union must be acknowledged in order to understand the relationship of the Union with other European countries.

What Europe is however is still not easy to define. Europe is a political construct and as such will always mean different things at different times to different peoples. For this reason it is not profitable to view Europe as a nascent community. It is more productive to view Europe as a network of overlapping and compatible identities, none of which are dominant. This once again draws our attention to the distance between the Laclau and Mouffe of the Hegemony and Socialist Strategy period, and the 'later' (Phronesis) period. Laclau and Mouffe's 'early' work was very much concerned with the question of the construction of identity. They would not hold to a view of identity which privileges exclusion, boundary and history - all markers of 'community' - to conceptualise contemporary Europe. Europe, like 'society', is better conceived of as an open and contingent space rather than a 'sutured totality'. Laclau and Mouffe's notion of an overdetermined field of difference without any one simple underlying principle of unification could apply equally to Europe as to 'society'.

CHAPTER 7

POLITICAL IDENTITY AND THE NATION STATE

Introduction

At first sight the complex political nature of post-Communist Europe leads us to identify the following paradox: nationalism can be said to be on the rise in what was Eastern Europe (particularly in the Baltic states and the Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union), while at the same time being in decline in Western Europe (the growth of regionalism and supra-nationalism in the form of European Union federalism, for example). An examination of this apparent paradox forms one of the main themes of this chapter. The European nation-state has undergone many changes since WWII. The general trends can be summarised in the following way;

- the European nation-state is the product of C19th politics. The history of the European nation-state, in particular the legacy of C19th and C20th nationalism and nation-building in Europe, is profoundly important in understanding the present condition of nationalism and the nation-state. The political project of modern nation building, creating sovereign national units out of disparate ethnic raw material, has been a signal failure. Italy and Yugoslavia represent this failure most fully but most, if not all, European nations have arbitrary boundaries and a heterogeneous ethnic base (the one often being a product of the other). We are now witnessing the end point of this trend towards the 'inclusive' nation, or 'civic nation as Ignatieff describes it:

"...civic nationalism, maintains that the nation should be composed of all those - regardless of race, colour, creed, gender, language or ethnicity - who subscribe to the nation's political creed. This nationalism is called civic because it envisages the nation as a community of equal, rights-bearing citizens..." (Ignatieff, p.3)

The evidence of recent European history suggests that the creation of a democratic state populated by citizens, irrespective of ethnicity, is no longer considered a viable nationalist project.

- the internal coherence of the nation-state has been weakened by the rise of particularisms, partly as a result of globalisation (which has rendered the political projects of the C19th period irrelevant in a world dominated by global markets and multi-national enterprises), and partly a product of the recent emphasis on the 'other' internal to the nation-state (immigrants and ethnic minorities, for example) rather than the 'other' expressed in terms of an outside threat. These factors have also contributed to the rise of regionalism and ethnic particularism.

- linked to this is the fall of Communism, whose threat provided the nation-states of Western Europe with their *raison d'être*. So strong was this perceived threat that it was felt necessary to create various supra-national organisations (culminating in the European Union) in addition to forging strong nation-states. The end of the Cold War and the demise of the Yalta division of Europe that followed, facilitated the emergence of the phenomena variously known as 'regionalism', 'particular nationalism', 'separatism', or 'ethnic nationalism' in both East and West. The demise of the Yalta-created Eastern bloc/Western bloc mentality has brought about two major changes by removing the 'necessity of nationalism' from the European political field. Firstly, it has aided and consolidated expressions of nationalism from within the Soviet Union fuelled by the perceived exploitation by the Russian Empire. Secondly, it has acted to encourage a proliferation of sub-national regional identities

coinciding with the development of the supra-national European Union (EU) in the West.

The importance of the ideology of nationalism and the role of the nation-state as a bulwark against Communism in Western Europe immediately after the second World War cannot be underestimated. Roughly speaking this period of nation strengthening in Western Europe corresponded to the spread of nationalist ideologies, 'nativization' and ethnic revitalization in non-Russian regions of the Soviet Union (although it has to be acknowledged that this process had been in progress since 1917).

- the creation of the European Union has further undermined the rationale for the nation-state both by binding nations closer in economic and social union and by taking on many of the roles formerly undertaken by the state at national level. The role of the state and the changing relationship between the state and civil society throughout Europe consequent upon these changes has made possible forms of political organisation which would not previously have been possible or not have been tolerated. This is true of both East and West. The rise of the Northern Leagues in Italy are one example, the nationalist-protest movements in the Central Asian Republics are another. These changes have also contributed to the success of nationalist movements couched in ethnic terms.

The role of the state (as an instrument of coercion and consent) in forging the nation has to be acknowledged. In several cases a strong state actually held nations together, Yugoslavia for example, which otherwise would not have survived. In general it is true to say that the state serves two prime functions with regard to maintenance of the nation; it exercises power or coercion

to maintain the integrity of the physical boundaries of the nation, and it also has an active role in reproducing the ideology of nationalism through which the nation coheres. To illustrate these points it will be useful to look briefly at the examples of Yugoslavia and Italy.

Yugoslavia existed for around seventy years because of a strong centralised (Communist) state which under Tito was dependent on a balance of power and influence between the various Republics. These Republics retained a large degree of autonomy and their ethnic complexion was an integral part of that balance. Yugoslavia was a nation which was never composed of Yugoslavs, its federal nature and ethnic heterogeneity, coupled with its short history did not lend itself to the production of a Yugoslav identity. The case of Italy is similar. After the unification of Italy Massimo D'Azeglio (Prime Minister in the 1850s) said "Italy is made, now it is necessary to make the Italians." (quoted in Miglio, p.24). The north-south division within the country, an enduring feature of Italian political history, could bring about its dissolution in the near future.

- the economy has always played an important role in the fortunes of the nation-state. In many ways - including its primary function (sovereign administrative control over a bounded territory), and also post-war reconstruction and the impulse to separatism in contemporary Europe - the existence of the nation-state has always been economically conditioned. In order to explain the role of the economic in the break up of the nation-state in contemporary Europe it is instructive to look at the ideas of writers such as Alter and Hechter with their theories of internal colonialism and regional tensions within the nation-state, Suny who demonstrates that Russian imperialism created a centre/periphery

hierarchy in the Soviet Union, and Gellner who posits that social inequalities can form the core of separatist ideologies.

- ethnic identity is becoming the sine qua non of collective identity (ethnic identity is constitutive of particularism). This feature of contemporary Europe is present in both East and West. The disintegration of Yugoslavia and Italy has proceeded along ethnic lines. The nationalism associated with C19th nation building, called 'civic' nationalism by Ignatieff, or Risorgimento nationalism, as Alter would term it, has been replaced by 'ethnic nationalism'. In order to contextualise this it is important to remember that the process of ethnic identity formation (under which I would subsume regional identity) has been facilitated by the failure of the traditional nation building project.

This view of the construction of ethnicity is opposed to the 'sleeping beauty' approach to explaining the rise of ethnic antagonisms. The latter holds that the reason Yugoslavia fractured along ethnic lines was that the conflicts between for example, the Serbs and the Croats unresolved at the end of the second World War, were merely suppressed or frozen under the Communism regime and resurfaced undiminished after forty years. The same explanation would be used to explain the ethnic polarisation in, say, Georgia. However, I believe that this explanation is inadequate. Ethnicity is not primordial or pre-given; ethnicity is constructed in much the same way as nationalism. The ethnicities that have played such an important role in re-shaping Europe have been formed in the process of the failure of the nation-state. They are contemporary phenomena, no doubt drawing on the 'myth-symbol complex' (Smith, 1986) of previous ethnic communities, but activated and articulated in

response to particular contemporary problems. Nationalism is a very flexible political ideology. It never appears in a 'pure' form as it is always wedded to other political ideologies, and in this sense should be understood as a political resource capable of being mobilised to a variety of political ends.

Consequent upon these changes has been a change in the role of the political project of nation-building. Nationalism is no longer concerned with the creation of nation-states on the C19th model but the creation of other collectivities, in particular the region and the ethnic nation, which are both significantly different from their C19th ancestor. Such transformations have not resulted in a diminution of the importance of nationalism, merely a redefinition of its objectives. At the same time there has been a valorisation of ethnicity as a cultural/national marker; a move from an elective to an ascriptive identity. Ethnic nationalism is exclusive, for example in ex-Yugoslavia where ethnicity has become polarised and one must be either a Serb, a Croat or a Muslim and where mixed or dual identities are not possible. C19th nationalism on the other hand, was more inclusive (in theory at least) and membership of a nation, conceived in terms of citizenship, was not solely based on ethnicity, although most nations were constructed around a dominant ethnicity.

Rather than conceive of the changing face of nationalism as being the result of separate and distinct processes in Eastern and Western Europe, I wish to develop the idea that the same general processes with regard to nationalism and nation-states, have been at work in both halves of Europe throughout the twentieth century, even during the period of heightened division between East and West arising from the formation and consolidation of the

Communist bloc. I believe that the phenomena alluded to in the above 'paradox' are actually part of the same overall process. The nationalist fragmentation of the former Soviet bloc and the rise of regionalism in the West are processes that share many common features.

The creation of national identity relies on processes of identification that are required to form any collective identity. As such nationalism becomes associated with diverse movements, which may or may not have anything in common. What do contemporary Kurdish nationalism, Basque separatism, Latvian ethnic revitalization or Czech Republicanism have in common, which allows them all to be subsumed under the heading 'nationalism'?

What justifies the continued use of such a generalised term in all these cases is that all social movements formed on the basis of large-scale collective identities mobilise through the medium of nationalism; their objectives may be different but the language, symbolism and imagery are that of nationalism. As Sami Zubaida says

"It should be emphasised that this idea of the conception or imagination of the nation does not necessarily entail political commitment to this entity: pan-Arab, pan-Islamic as well as narrow ethnic commitments are clearly beyond that of the nation state, but the conception of the nation becomes the field and the model in terms of which to think of these other commitments and loyalties."
(Zubaida, 1993, pp.148-149)

Nationalism (mainly in the form derived from its C19th manifestations) is the archetypal collective political identity.

To return again to the paradox alluded to in the opening paragraph - that nationalism in Europe is simultaneously

on the rise and in decline - not only is this not the case for the reasons outlined above, but it can be also shown to be a false paradox once it is understood that there is a major distinction to be made between nationalism as a set of beliefs (Smith's 'myth-symbol complex') on the one hand, and as a political project leading to the construction of viable democratic nation-states on the other. In other words, it is quite possible to talk of the success of nationalism as an ideology, its power to mobilise and inspire people towards a common goal, while at the same time to conclude that the idea of the nation-state as a democratic political project is currently under threat.

It is clear from this introduction that there is a need to clearly define the usage of terms such as nationalism, nation-state, ideology, and regionalism, especially so as they are used differently by various commentators in the literature on the subject.

Nationalism. The ideology of nation-building consisting of a set of beliefs, symbols and associations expressing identification with a given (national) community. Nationalism can take many forms and varies in its concrete manifestations. Alter makes the point that,

"nationalism does not exist as such, but a multitude of manifestations of nationalism do. In other words, it is more appropriate to speak of nationalisms in the plural than of nationalism in the singular." (Alter, p.5)

Ideology. The use of the term ideology in relation to nationalism generally refers to a set of ideas espousing the primacy of the nation. However, in the context of a study of the work of Laclau and Mouffe a more rigorous formulation is required. Rather than employing a (Althusserian) Marxist concept of ideology (a practice

producing subjects) which would be dissonant with post-Marxism, I favour the definition advanced by Barrett; "discursive and signficatory mechanisms that may occlude, legitimate, naturalise or universalise in a variety of different ways but can all be said to mystify." (Barrett, p.167)

Nation-state. A state, characteristic of the modern world, in which a government has sovereignty over a delineated territory, where the inhabitants are citizens and know themselves to be members of that (national) community.

Regionalism. The ideology that prioritizes the region over other units of socio-political organisation, for example the nation.

Ethnic group. A body of people marked off by common descent, language, culture and traditions. Ethnicity is wholly constructed: it works to divide peoples into different collectivities.

There is one issue on which all writers on nationalism are in agreement. All nationalist ideologies share a common problem: the designation of the national unit and its boundaries in terms of territory, ethnicity, culture and language. A nation may contain diverse ethnic/linguistic groups, and the territory they occupy may vary over time. Nationalism must justify its claim on territory and emphasize the ethnic, cultural and linguistic community of the nation. It must forge homogeneity from disparate social groups or explain why heterogeneity can be overridden, by religion for example. As such a constructed unity is of more fundamental importance than natural unity. It has to delineate itself by drawing distinctions from and maintaining borders against other

nationalities via ethnicity, territory or culture. However, as we shall see later the real question for theorists of nationalism is whether they consider the nationalist project to be the territorial assertion of a state sponsored ideology or the creation of the idea of 'national belonging' in the minds of the populace.

Nationalist ideologies have to specify a national essence which underlies and guarantees the unity of the nation. For this nation to have a plausible existence and boundaries in the present, its essence has to be demonstrated in its history. This is equally true of ethnic and regional mobilisations; the justification for the exclusivity of the nation, ethnic group or region includes the positing of an underlying historical essence. The delineation of 'us' from 'them' gains its legitimacy from having its origins in antiquity.

To better explore contemporary formulations of collective identity in Europe it will be useful to review various theories of nationalism and assess what they can contribute to an understanding of the present situation. I have selected the following writers for this purpose. Ernest Gellner, whose ideas on nationalism as outlined in Thought and Change, (Gellner, 1964) and Nations and Nationalism (Gellner, 1986) are often thought of as being linked to theories of modernisation and economic development in a rather functionalist way. However, his contribution to the debate on the origins of nations and nationalism deserves re-examination in the light of the changes in Eastern Europe, and indeed he has recently written on this topic.

Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities (Anderson, 1983) demonstrates how the modern nation superseded pre-modern dynastic realms and religious communities and how mass

culture - particularly through print - enabled people to imagine a community of citizens belonging within a delineated territory. Both Anderson and Gellner are examples of what Anthony Smith would call 'modernists'. That is they conceive of the nation as being totally distinct from the communities that came before them in terms of principles of legitimacy and economic and political systems. While acknowledging the merits of this position Smith, in his works The Ethnic Origins of Nations (Smith, 1986) and National Identity (Smith, 1991), favours the view that nations developed from the ethnic communities that preceded them.

All three of these writers provide accounts of the rise of nationalism in the C18th and C19th. As they were written for the most part in the 1980s they are not able to examine the challenges to the nationalist project witnessed over the past few years, nor do they deal directly with the rise in importance of regionalism or ethnic nationalism. However, this is not to say that they are unable to provide us with insights into recent developments. As I will show later they offer much that is of use in attempting an analysis of post-89 nationalism and regionalism.

The work of Hroch and Suny is more directly related to the changing political and social situation in the former Eastern bloc. Hroch provides a general schema of nation-building that is particularly pertinent to the emerging 'ethnic nations' of Eastern Europe, while Suny outlines the 'creation of nations' thesis which accounts for the rise of nationalism in the non-Russian regions of the former Soviet Union.

The rise of regionalism in Western Europe has implications for nationalism and the nation-state. The example of the

Italian Northern League (Lega Nord) will be employed to demonstrate the contemporary importance of ethnicity and ethnic revitalisation, and their articulation with traditional nationalist themes. The contribution of Laclau and Mouffe to an understanding of the construction of collective identities will also be assessed in connection with this analysis of the rise of the Northern League. Their work on the construction of political identities is particularly relevant to the rise of ethnic nationalism and regionalism in the post-89 world.

Nationalism and modernity

Ernest Gellner's work on nationalism is characterised by the idea that the creation of nations is inexorably linked to modernisation and economic development. He outlines his theory of nationalism in Nations and Nationalism, (Gellner, 1986) which is a fuller development of the position outlined in his much earlier work Thought and Change (Gellner, 1964)

Gellner provides us with an account of the economic processes that give rise to the cultural conditions that underscore nationalism and the nation-state. At its simplest level his account describes an economic drive toward the production of the necessary social, political and cultural phenomena which complement and, at the same time consolidate that drive. In other words, the road to nationalism is economically driven but requires continuous loops of cultural feedback in order to be self-sustaining. However, the economic conditions that determine this process are not generated from within; pre-national societies are overtaken by a 'tidal wave' of modernisation, on a global scale;

"...as the wave of industrialisation and modernisation moves outwards, it disrupts the previous political units. These are generally small and intimate (village, tribe, feudal unit), or large but loose and ill-centralised...It disrupts them both directly and by undermining the faiths and practices which sustained them. This by itself would already lead to the formation of political units. But, more specifically, the wave creates acute cleavages of interest between sets of people hit by it at differing times - in other words the more and the less advanced." (Gellner, 1964, p.171)

Thus, for Gellner nationalism is a product of modernity. There is a common socio-historical context that underlies the spread of nationalism; this context is that of modernisation and industrialisation. The process works as follows; traditional societies are hit by modernisation (most commonly in the form of industrialisation) which results in a breakdown of traditional social life (of village, kin or religious fraternity, for example), particular social groups (the intelligentsia, proletariat or peasants) engage in a fight against tradition, oppositional groups within their society, or external enemies such as colonialists, and in doing so become nationalists.

Gellner allows that nationalist movements are very varied and the social composition of nationalist groups varies enormously too. It is possible to tie nationalism to the aspirations of any social group (the intelligentsia, workers, bureaucrats), and this is what is referred to when we talk of nationalism as a political resource, although it is true that the intelligentsia (an imprecise term admittedly) are often involved.

One major problem with this formulation is the emphasis on modernisation as a unitary, homogenous phenomenon. Gellner does not acknowledge that modernisation consists of a variety of processes, for example education and mass

communication, in addition to industrialisation and capitalist development. He also neglects the differential rates at which these processes penetrate societies, their uneven effects on different sectors, and their variable distribution across societies. In other words, modernisation is too general a concept with which to adequately theorise such diverse processes. Likewise industrialisation means different things in different contexts. Consider for example the process of industrialisation in Eastern Europe and its development in the absence of capitalist economic relations.

Gellner's account is rather functionalist and the economic dynamic at the heart of his industrialising process remains under-theorised. He posits a modernizing dynamic of industrialisation which demands a centralised state, an increasingly diverse and perpetually changing division of labour, a homogenous culture, along with nationalism as the consciously held recognition of external social and political differentiation and internal identity. He therefore posits a bounded, self-maintaining system whose structured processes are organized to secure society's survival whilst maximizing the potential for internal change, in the form of economic development.

The state for Gellner (as for others) is the specialized concentration of institutions and agents for the maintenance of order. It is seen as the instrument of supervision and control, and as such, would seem to be the product of the social division of production. The complex division of labour necessary for industrialisation requires perpetual change. It is constantly shifting in its complexity. This provides the linkage for relating culture and education to the economy. Given the need for mobilizing individuals within this division of labour and its corollary of a citizenry responsive to their placement

and redeployment in that system, a homogenous (state sponsored) culture is required which must be accessible to all individuals equally. Since vertical and horizontal mobility is crucial to this division of labour, culture is defined solely as that which is functional for work and vocation. Consequently, education as the vehicle of mass socialization is subordinated to the necessity of reproducing that culture.

Thus, Gellner stands accused of functionalism on two counts; in the context of the effects of the 'tidal wave' of (undifferentiated) modernisation and again with respect to the role of culture in the formation of a nationalist ideology. His views are encapsulated in the statement: "The appeal of the nationalist principle - One culture, One state - seems to me an inescapable corollary of the new socio-economic order, carried along by industrialism..." (Gellner, 1991, p.129) It has to be said that industrialism or any other harbinger of nationalism, did not always lead to one nation/one state (for example, Britain, Belgium, and Switzerland), and a weakness of Gellner's argument is that he is unable to account for this within his model.

The role of state sponsored mass culture is not simply to create nationalism - it also has to sustain and reproduce it. If nationalism is seen as the fusion of culture and politics, the nation-state can only come into being when the nation's culture becomes that of the state. Consequently, culture comes to mean 'official' or 'high' culture and folk culture or the different cultures of classes or regions are effaced, replaced by the homogenous 'top-down' culture of the nation-state. This is made possible through the rationalisation of industrial organisation allied with state-sponsored education. Thus

the process of socialisation into national identity is completed.

Gellner states that "Polities...extend their boundaries to the limits of their cultures and protect and impose their culture with the boundaries of their power" (Gellner, 1986, p.55). The nation state is the resulting construction of these converging factors; whilst nationalism, becomes an impulse for internal social solidarity and the demarcation of that community over and against an outside world. As such, the nation-state is the product of several factors which occur whenever industrialisation develops. Thus, Gellner premises the conception of the nation-state firmly within a theory of industrialisation and given the development of this process alongside the universal accompaniment of the state, division of labour, homogenous culture and bounded territory; he produces the idea of the 'community', national consciousness, the nation and nationalism as necessary and integral features of the production of the nation-state.

The discussion so far has viewed Gellner's theory as a rather simple model based on a determining economic dynamic. This simplicity is fractured however as he attempts to account for nationalisms that aim to break away from that of other nations. Separatist nationalisms can occur where there is a coincidence of severe social inequalities in conjunction with ethnic, cultural or linguistic factors within an overall industrialising process. Groups can coalesce in the lower strata of society through articulating a fusion of these ethnic, cultural or linguistic differences which contrast them to the main body, and produce a common notion of community in opposition to that of the dominant group. Nation-ness can create an ideology of separation in immediate reaction to

structures of national incorporation. In such cases the loops of cultural feedback sustaining the modernisation-led drive to nationalism have failed, the state-sponsored culture providing instead a nucleus for political discontent.

Gellner's ideas on the creation of separatist nationalisms arising from a breakdown of the 'one-culture/one-nation' project - it is the disfunction of the nation-state in failing to complete its project which provides the separatist impulse - while having a potential relevance to dissolution of the Soviet empire or the challenge to the nation-state in contemporary Italy, are limited by their functionalism.

The idea of an historical community, whose culture displays the legacy of a common experience, and whose origins provide an ancestry and destiny to a mass community, are for Gellner pure invention. He sees the consciousness instilled in nationalism as part of the imposition of one elevated culture onto another. The correspondence between a unified community, territory and its 'history' is but part of the deception required to order a society integrally in relation to its industrial base. Hence, "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents traditions where they do not exist." (Gellner, 1964, p.169). However, although this observation is accurate enough at a general level, its precise formulation in these terms is problematic. As Anderson comments,

"...Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'. In this way he implies that 'true' communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations." (Anderson, p.15)

The nation as an imagined community

If Gellner's approach to nation building is centred on the necessity for modern societies to impose cultural homogeneity in order to function, Benedict Anderson on the other hand, while concurring that nations are modern phenomena linked to the rise of capitalism, stresses the role of popular culture in the formation of 'imagined communities'.

Anderson introduces Imagined Communities (Anderson, 1983) by reminding us of the universality of nationalism in the contemporary political world. He makes the point that since WWII every successful revolution has defined itself in national terms, and even Marxist movements have tended to become nationalist (as opposed to internationalist). His aim in the book is to suggest interpretations of this phenomenon.

Anderson's argument can be summarised as follows; nationalism is a particular kind of cultural artefact - the creation of these artefacts towards the end of C18th was the result of a convergence of discrete historical forces - but once created these became 'modular' that is to say capable of being transplanted to a variety of social formations and could be amalgamated with a wide variety of political and ideological constellations.

He identifies three paradoxes of nationalism, and an investigation of these constitutes the sub-text of the book. They are; (i) the objective modernity of nations versus their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists; (ii) the universality of nationalism in the modern world versus the particularity of its concrete manifestations; (iii) the political power of nationalisms versus their philosophical poverty and incoherence.

He then defines some key terms that he uses in the book.

The nation - is an imagined political community; imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.

Imagined - because the members will never know most of their fellow members.

Limited - because it has finite, if elastic boundaries beyond which lie other nations.

Sovereign - nations view themselves as being free (or dream of it).

Community - the nation is conceived as a horizontal comradeship.

The first stage of Anderson's investigation is to examine the cultural roots of nationalism. He states that broadly speaking, nationalism historically supersedes religion. He is not saying however that the imagined communities of nations simply grew out of or replaced religious communities, but that these communities were important, in the sense that in a religious community believers were part of an 'imagined community' that could extend over large geographical areas. Such communities were made possible to a great extent by sacred languages.

The break up of these communities and of dynastic realms such as the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, which Anderson identifies as another important cultural system, were the prerequisites for the development of nationalism. Religious communities waned in importance primarily because the sacred languages which constituted their unifying principle were gradually fragmented and pluralised. The dynastic realms on the other hand,

despite being in decline still held onto power by appropriating nationalism as their old principle of legitimacy withered away.

The nation is a different type of imagined community from those that preceded it. What is 'imagined' in the case of the nation is a horizontal solidarity and comradeship of citizens. "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion." (Anderson, p.15)

The growth of capitalism is a major factor in Anderson's explanation of the spread of nationalism. Print capitalism especially so as it engendered the vernacularization of language and provided the technical means for representing the kind of imagined community that is the nation. It connected fellow readers through this language, gave a fixity to language and created languages of power, for administrative and legal use. He sums these developments up by stressing that the imagined community was made possible by an interaction between; (i) a system of production (capitalism), (ii) a technology of communications (print), (iii) the fatality of linguistic diversity.

Anderson makes the point that language, as such, should not be treated as an emblem of nation-ness in the same way as flags, costumes and folk dances. The important aspect of language is its capacity for generating imagined communities. He says, "Print language is what invents nationalism, not a particular language per se" (Anderson, p.122).

Anderson asks; in the cases of Venezuela, Mexico and Peru why was it creole communities that developed so early conceptions of their nation-ness - well before most of Europe? It is interesting that Anderson, alone amongst the theorists of nationalism, does not place Europe at the centre of this development. He is interested in how it was possible for colonial provinces with large, oppressed non-Spanish speaking populations, to produce creoles who consciously redefined these populations as fellow-nationals? This is where his analysis differs markedly from Gellner's. For Gellner the process of nation formation is not complete until a national culture has been imposed in a top-down fashion on the various groups that compose society. Anderson's model, in contrast, stresses the role of culture in forging a common identity, not by the creole magnates and functionaries imposing it on the native population, but by including them in the definition of the nation.

Two important reasons why these American nations were 'imagined' in this way were the tightening of Madrid's control (increased taxes) and the spread of liberalizing Enlightenment ideas in the latter half of C18th (shared language meant easy transmission of new economic and political doctrines being produced in Europe). Another important reason was that each South American republic had been a self-contained administrative unit from C16th to C18th. Also Madrid forbade trade between individual parts of the continent, in other words, Spain had a monopoly on trade with each of the colonies.

Anderson says that neither economic interest, Liberalism, nor Enlightenment could, or did, create in themselves the kind, or shape of the imagined community to be defended from those regimes' depredations. In accomplishing this specific task, pilgrim creole functionaries and provincial

creole printmen played the decisive historic role. So, the tension between colonial officials and creole magnates: resistance to metropolitan influence (conceived in nationalistic terms) and above all the spread of print provided a framework for a new consciousness and shaped the imagined community to be defended. By the end of the C19th a 'model' of the independent nation state was available for pirating. The development of print meant that the French revolution, once it had been written about, then became this model.

Anderson differentiates between popular nationalism, such as the French Revolution, and what he calls 'official nationalism', which developed after, and in reaction to, the popular national movements proliferating in Europe after the 1820's. Nationalism was utilized by dynastic powers in order to retain their position and legitimacy. This in turn became a model for states in which the ruling class felt threatened by the spread of the nationally-imagined community. For example, Hungarian nationalism developed along these lines from within the Austro-Hungarian empire.

Anderson also accounts for the emergence of 'colonial nationalism'. In the colonies of Africa and Asia, economic power was monopolised by the European colonials. The natives were excluded from the realm of capitalist activity to a large degree but substantial numbers of them were educated. Many were bi-lingual and they had access to western culture and its models of nationalism. He stresses that in the colonial context the role of the intelligentsia was central to the rise of nationalism. Because they were by and large, excluded from capitalist activity they tended to be involved in the bureaucracy and in education. Quite often they would have been educated or trained abroad, and this is important from the point of

view of them being able to view themselves as 'nationals'. Therefore the early colonial nationalists were bi-lingual intelligentsia not linked to the bourgeoisie. Their struggles were a response to imperialism and were facilitated by developments in industrial capital, and as we have seen before, the advent of print-language.

The importance of Anderson's work is that he presents us with a view of nationalism that prioritises the role of culture in the formation of the 'imagined community' that is the nation. Furthermore, his work provides the key to an understanding of various collective representations;

"...there is no inherent difference (although sometimes there is a difference of scale) between ethnic and national collectivities: they are both the Andersonian 'imagined communities'" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, p.25)

This goes a long way to answering Anderson's original question; why every successful revolution (even Marxist movements) has defined itself in national terms and brings us back to the point that nationalism is a political resource. This also explains why nationalism can be both an emanation of the state, serving the interests of the state whatever its particular form, and a rallying call for movements in opposition to the state.

The ethnic foundation of nations

Anthony Smith agrees with Anderson that in the contemporary world national identity is the main form of collective identification and that the appeal of the nation and nationalism is global. His thesis in National Identity (Smith, 1991) is that the origins of this all-embracing form of identification with the nation can be found rooted in a history of ethnic ties that pre-date the

modern world, but which have been powerfully revitalized by modern bureaucratic state systems.

"Through the rediscovery of an ethnic past and the promise of collective restoration of the former golden age, national identity and nationalism have succeeded in arousing and inspiring ethnic communities and populations of all classes, regions, genders and religions, to claim their rights as 'nations', territorial communities of culturally and historically cognate citizens, in a world of free and equal nations."
(Smith, 1991, p.170)

Smith states that he is interested in the differences between ethnic communities and nations, and the role of ethnic ties and sentiments on the formation of nations,

"an enquiry into the similarities and differences between ethnic communities and nations, and into the ways in which ethnicity and ethnic communities form the models and groundwork for the construction of nations."
(Smith, 1986, p.3)

As such he stands apart from those such as Anderson, Nairn and Gellner who believe the nation to be "a wholly modern creation with few, if any, roots in earlier epochs."
(Smith, 1986, p.1) These 'modernists', especially Anderson and Gellner, share the belief in the contingency of nationalism and the modernity of the nation. Smith understands and acknowledges their position;

"In a sense the 'modernists' are right. Nationalism, as an ideology and movement, is a phenomenon that dates from the later eighteenth century, while a specifically 'national' sentiment can be discerned little earlier than the late fifteenth or sixteenth centuries in Western Europe. The 'nation-state', too, as a political norm is quite modern."
(Smith, 1986, p.11)

But Smith believes that there is a history of nations and nation formation that is not accounted for by the various modernist theories of nationalism on offer. As such he

feels it necessary to depart from the assumptions of both the main schools of thought on the origin and formation of nations. The nation is neither a datum of social existence, a primordial unit of human existence, neither is it a wholly modern phenomenon. He rejects the claims of both the modernists - that there is a radical break between pre-modern units and modern nations - and the perennialists - modern nations are updated versions of pre-modern communities - and adopts a position which accords central importance to the concept of 'ethnie' (ethnic community) in the formation of nations. In doing so he conceded a measure of continuity between traditional and modern, but respects "...the transformations wrought by modernity and their effects on the basic units of human loyalty in which we operate and live." (Smith, 1986, p13) The ethnie acts as a source of 'myths and memories' from which the history of the nation is created. Smith sees similarities between the construction of ethnie and nations which centre on the role of collective memory.

"Of course, there is much more to the concept of the 'nation' than myths and memories. But they constitute a sine qua non: there can be no identity without memory (albeit selective), no collective purpose without myth, and identity and purpose or destiny are necessary elements of the very concept of the nation. But this is also true of the concept of an ethnic community; it too must be felt to have an identity and destiny, and hence myths and memories." (Smith, 1986, p.2)

His aim is to trace the ethnic foundations and roots of modern nations, and thus modify the 'modernist' positions. For this reason he places emphasis on the cultural forms of "...sentiments, attitudes and perceptions, as these are expressed and codified in myths, memories, values and symbols" (Smith, 1986, p.15), wherein the core of ethnicity resides.

Smith identifies the following fundamental features of national identity;

- an historic territory, or homeland
- common myths and historical memories
- a common, mass public culture
- common legal rights and duties for members
- a common economy with territorial mobility for members

Which leads to a definition of the nation:

"A nation can therefore be defined as a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members." (Smith, 1991, p.14)

The above definition of national identity also sets it apart from any conception of the state. The state refers to public institutions, exercising a monopoly of coercion and extraction within a given territory.

"The nation on the other hand, signifies a cultural and political bond, uniting in a single political community all who share an historic culture and homeland."
(Smith, 1991, p.15)

The corollary of which is that Smith holds that a 'true' nation-state only occurs where the state's boundaries coincide with the nation's and the total population of the state share a single ethnic culture. Thus Smith would seem to support Gellner's position that a 'true' nation is one where the 'one culture/ one nation' situation prevails.

This would appear to be a rather limited view of the nation-state and sits rather uneasily with Smith's assertions that national identity is multi-dimensional, and cannot be reduced to a single element, and that

national identity draws on other kinds of collective identity (and can be combined with) class, religious and ethnic identity. On the model outlined above it would appear that a form of nationalism based on ethnic absolutism would be possible, and therefore nationalism could be formed from a single and exclusive core element. Also, Smith's assertion that nationalism cannot be induced in a population by artificial means, also suggests the 'authenticity' of nations that fits with the 'one nation/one culture' approach. Smith's approach has more in common with the work of Gellner than of Anderson in as much as he conceives of the project of nationalism as the imposition of the state's authority over a delineated geographical space that is coextensive with the nation, rather than the construction of a common identity.

Taking Smith's model literally the United States of America would not qualify as a nation-state and neither would any of the world's other multi-ethnic states. In the context of C19th Europe it was the task of nationalism to create nation-states out of a diversity of ethnic peoples, to impose a homogeneous cultural and political framework on heterogeneous raw material. Implicit in this is the idea that national identities have to be created, they are not pre-existing identities looking for a home. In explaining this Anderson is more useful than either Gellner or Smith.

There are two important points to be drawn from this discussion. Firstly, the role of the state as a promoter of nationalist sentiment is very different in the theories of Smith and Anderson. Secondly, there are obvious differences between the formation of C19th nation-states and the post WWII developments. In the contemporary context the break-down of European nation-states has revealed a firm link between nation-states and ethnic

homogeneity. What needs to be investigated is whether as Smith claims, ethnic identity pre-dates the more 'modern' national identity.

As we have previously established Smith seeks to discover the ethnic basis of national identity. In order to do so it is necessary for him to demonstrate how ethnie form the basis for modern nations. The ethnic community which pre-dates the nation has the following attributes; a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, common culture that distinguishes the community from other communities, an association with a specific homeland, and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the community. It is necessary to look at these in more detail.

(i) a collective name. The identifying mark of an ethnie in the historical record.

"By invoking a collective name, by the use of symbolic images of community, by the generation of stereotypes of the community and its foes, by the ritual performance and rehearsal of ceremonies and feasts and sacrifices, by the communal recitation of past deeds and ancient heroes exploits, men and women have been enabled to bury their sense of loneliness and insecurity in the face of natural disasters and human violence by feeling themselves to partake of a collectivity and its historic fate which transcends their individual existences." (Smith, 1986, p.46)

(ii) a common myth of descent. The sine qua non of ethnicity, "...provides the means of collective location in the world and the charter of the community which explains its origins growth and destiny." (Smith, 1986, , p.24) Myths provide a framework of meaning for the ethnic community (a mythomoteur) without which a group is unable to define itself to itself or others. Smith defines

mythomoteur as the constitutive myth of the ethnic polity which describes how and why the collectivity was created, why it is unique, and what its mission is.

(iii) A shared history.

"Ethnie are nothing if not historical communities built up on shared memories. A sense of common history unites successive generations, each with a its set of experiences which are added to the common stock, and it also defines a population in terms of experienced temporal sequences, which convey to later generations the historicity of their own experiences." (Smith, 1986, , p.25)

(iv) A distinctive shared culture. Ethnie are differentiated by culture, which facilitates community solidity and separates them from outsiders.

"The most common shared and distinctive traits are those of language and religion; but customs, institutions, laws, folklore, architecture, dress, food, music and the arts, even colour and physique, may augment the differences or take their place." (Smith, 1986, , p.26)

(v) Association with a specific territory. The ties to location may be residential or symbolic (a homeland to which it may return). Nostalgia for territory can lead to a renewed emphasis on social cohesion.

(vi) A sense of solidarity. An ethnie is a community with a sense of identity and solidarity. In times of stress this can override class or factional divisions within a community. Following which Smith offers this definition;

"...ethnie (ethnic communities) may now be defined as named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity." (Smith, 1986, , p.32)

Smith acknowledges that nations are modern phenomena and as such are distinct from ethnie. This is because;

- they require a unified legal code of common rights and duties, with citizenship rights where the nation is independent.

- they are based on a unified economy with a single division of labour, and mobility of goods and persons throughout the national territory.

- they need a fairly compact territory, preferably with 'natural' defensible frontiers, in a world of similar compact nations.

- they require a single political culture and public, mass education and media system, to socialise future generations to be citizens of the new nation. Nations and nationalism did not exist in the pre-modern period. Put succinctly; mass citizen-nations can only exist in the era of industrialism, citizenship and democracy.

In order to establish the link between ethnie and nation Smith traces two routes by which different kinds of ethnic community were transformed into nations. The first is state-sponsored; centralised state tried to incorporate outlying regions through military, fiscal, juridical and administrative processes, and in doing so welds disparate populations into a single political community based on the cultural heritage of the dominant core.

The second route, more common, starting from smaller, demotic communities required an active intelligentsia to mobilize 'the people', through an appeal to the community's alleged ethnic past.

"To do this they had to provide cognitive maps and historical moralities for present generations, drawn from the poetic spaces and golden ages of the communal past. In this way they hoped to transform a backward traditional ethnic community into a dynamic, but vernacular political nation."
(Smith, 1991, p.69)

The significance of Smith's version of how nations came into being is that unlike Gellner and Anderson he puts forward an endogenous explanation for the transition from ethnie to nation. Gellner and Anderson favour exogenous explanations; pre-modern societies are transformed as a result of their experience of external forces (industrialisation and modernisation for Gellner, colonial exploitation for Anderson). Smith's ethnie are transformed from within; incorporation by an expanding state or mobilization by the intelligentsia. Smith's explanation relies heavily on the efficacy of the ideology of nationalism to perform these tasks, hence the following definition of nationalism:

"...an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'." (Smith, 1991, p.73)

Nationalist ideology evokes sentiments and aspirations relating to three main things: territory, history and community. It appeals to a golden age and it makes the realization of fraternity possible through symbols, rights and ceremonies, which bind the living to the dead and fallen. It does this by overlaying or replacing older, less durable modes of civic, religious and familial education. As Smith says "nationalism is a form of culture - an ideology, a language, mythology, symbolism and consciousness - that has achieved global resonance..." (Smith, 1991, p.92).

Smith's work on nationalism is founded on the idea that nations were formed out of pre-existing communities of an ethnic complexion. The processes identified by Smith by which these communities were transformed into nations are very different from those proposed by Gellner and Anderson. The differences revolve around the importance accorded by Smith to the rediscovery of the ethnic past, the 'authentic' community of which the modern nation is the latest incarnation. For Anderson the construction of a this history is one of the main tasks of nationalism. History and heritage are important, not necessarily because they are 'real' but because they legitimize the nation, they symbolise the longevity and inviolability of the national lineage.

In the context of contemporary Europe and the trend towards particularisms of the ethnic type Smith's work would appear to have an important application. His insistence on the ethnic origins of nations leads to the view that nations were built upon the foundations of an ethnie, and these underlying communities are somehow more authentic, more stable and more durable than modern nations. This is the 'sleeping beauty' interpretation of Smith's work which holds that the revitalisation of ethnicity in the break-up of the Soviet Union for example, should be interpreted as a desire to return to those type of communities. However, a different interpretation of the events in the Soviet Union and elsewhere suggests itself. Rather than nations having ethnic origins, ethnicity has been nurtured by nationalism. In other words, instead of the ethnic origins of nations we should be studying the nationalist origins of ethnicity. By this I mean that the contemporary movements of ethnic nationalism have their origins in the history and dissolution of 19th nation-building, and the states they gave rise to.

Nationalism and the nation

Miroslav Hroch, in his essay From National Movement to Fully-Fledged Nation: the Nation Building Process in Europe (Hroch, 1993) asserts that it is misleading to look at nation formation as the unfolding or spread of ideas of 'nationalism'. For him, national consciousness does not create the nation, rather for nationalism to exist there must be something to be conscious of. In other words, national consciousness follows from the prior idea of the nation (or proto-nation). Hroch advances the following definition of the nation. It is;

"...a large social group integrated not by one but by a combination of several kinds of objective relationships (economic, political, linguistic, cultural, religious, geographical, historical), and their subjective reflection in collective consciousness." (Hroch, 1993, p.4)

Three ties are vital to the nation-building process;

- a 'memory' of some common past, treated as the 'destiny' of the group
- a density of linguistic or cultural ties enabling a higher degree of social communications within the group than without it
- a conception of the equality of all members of the group organized as a civil society

While this formulation is useful there is little to distinguish Hroch's nation from Smith's ethnie. There is nothing modern about Hroch's nation, no strong sense of citizenship, for example. Nation-building can be dated from the moment when selected groups within the non-dominant ethnic community started to discuss their own ethnicity and to conceive of it as a potential nation-to-

be. This move to achieve the attributes of a fully-fledged nation he calls a national movement (not nationalist, which is an ideology that prioritises the nation over all other values and interests). The goals of a national movement are as follows;

- development of a national culture based on language and its use in education, administration and economic life
- achievement of civil rights and political self-administration (including autonomy and independence)
- creation of complete social structure from the ethnic group (including educated elites, entrepreneurs and workers)

Following on from an earlier work (Hroch, 1985) in which he posited that the type of political mobilization that characterises nationalism in the nineteenth century proceeded in three distinct phases, each drawing support from different social groups, Hroch now asserts that there are three phases of a national movement;

Phase A - in which the intelligentsia turn their attention to their language, history and culture, and support organisations designed to promote these. This involves the dissemination of an awareness of the linguistic, cultural and social attributes of the non-dominant group, without pressing national demands.

"...the modern nation-building process started with the collection of information about the history language and customs of the non-dominant ethnic group, which became the critical ingredient in the first phase of patriotic agitation. The learned researchers of Phase A 'discovered' the ethnic group and laid a basis for the subsequent formation of a 'national identity'." (Hroch, 1993, p.9)

Phase B - in which this interest spreads to other sectors of the population, who form pressure groups (rather than nationalist parties), and transform an interest in cultural history into political agitation. These tasks are carried out by the 'nationalists' (Hroch calls them patriots). This is the period described as the 'fermentation process of national consciousness', the project of creating a future nation; patriotic agitation to 'awaken' national consciousness

Phase C - in which the national cause is adopted by the mass of the population and nationalist parties come into being. Hroch sees as central,

"...the relationship between the transition to phase B and then to Phase C, on the one hand, and the transitional to constitutional society based on equality before the law, on the other hand - what is often generically called the moment of 'bourgeois revolution.'
(Hroch, p.7)

Hroch asks the question; why should affection or loyalty to a region pass into identification with an ethnic group as a nation-to-be? The answer lies in three processes;

- the social or political crisis of the old order
- the emergence of discontent
- the loss of faith in traditional moral systems (religion)

This may explain procession to Phase B but does not automatically lead to the birth of the modern nation. What circumstances would create the mass movement of Phase C? This is where Hroch's schema is at its weakest because what he does not do is establish the mechanism by which one stage transforms into the next, as Alter puts it,

"...he is silent on the precise impetus that takes nationalist mobilization from one qualitative stage to the next. What we wish to know, however, is why the interest of a minority elite in the national question becomes the basis of a mass movement." (Alter, p.79)

He lacks an obvious motor for such change although, as in the case of Smith, his is an endogenous explanation which does not rely on outside stimuli to trigger the nationalist moment. Whereas Gellner's model attributes the growth of nationalism to the experience of industrialization, Hroch and Smith find the motor of change in the ideology of nationalism itself. This also means that Hroch is not reliant on the same periodisation as the 'modernists', "...most of the national movements in Europe emerged well before the arrival of modern industry..." (Hroch, p.10)

What Hroch offers by way of a mechanism of change is social mobility and communication. Members of patriotic groups belonged to professions with high vertical mobility. The growth of national movements went hand in hand with the advance in social communication and mobility. Social communication increases awareness and understanding of national sentiment. Also important is "...a nationally relevant conflict of interests..."

(Hroch, p.11) For example, in the C19th new university graduates coming from a non-dominant ethnic groups created tensions within the existing social order. A closed elite experienced a challenge to their grip on leading positions in state and society.

A successful national movement includes four elements;

- a crisis of legitimacy
- vertical social mobility
- high level of social communication
- nationally relevant conflict of interests

Hroch's work, concentrating as it does on the history of nationalism in Eastern Europe may provide some insights into the new nationalisms of Eastern and Central Europe. Are they the result of long frozen conflicts, suppressed under Communism, now in full revival?

"It is more plausible to see the forces reshaping Central and Eastern Europe during the last decade as 'new national movements', whose goals offer many analogies with those of the nineteenth century, as well as some significant differences." (Hroch, p.14)

Following the model of nation-building outlined by Hroch it is possible to identify the following features of contemporary Eastern Europe which correspond to his schema;

- linguistic and cultural demands. Examples include; the former Soviet Union where Russian was imposed as the language of public life, and the campaign to separate Croat as a fully independent language from Serb.
- the near universal call for democracy corresponds to the demand for civil rights in the programme of C19th. The desire for full independence recalls the drive for ethnic autonomy in C19th.
- the leaders of the new national movements aim to 'complete' the social structure of the nation by creating a capitalist class corresponding to that of Western states.
- with the breakdown of Communism traditional ties have been dissolved, leaving insecurity - the national idea takes over the role of collective integration. "In conditions of acute stress, people characteristically tend

to over-value the protective comfort of their own national group." (Hroch, p.15)

Under political conditions where the masses are not politically educated appeals to the political discourse of civil or human rights may not be effective: a common language or customs can provide a much more effective rallying point. In Eastern Europe today an education in civil society is still missing so linguistic and cultural factors may again act as substitutes for articulated political demands, for example Yugoslavia, Romania and the Baltic states.

What of the role of nationally relevant social conflict in contemporary conditions? The old order has disappeared leaving a political and social vacuum. A new ruling class is recruited from apprentice politicians, veteran bureaucrats, and emergent entrepreneurs.

"The fight within, and among, these groups for positions of privilege has so far yielded the most intense conflicts of interest in post-Communist society; and wherever members of different ethnic groups live on the same territory, it generates the leading tensions of a nationally relevant character today."
(Hroch, p.18)

Nationalism and ethnicity

It is interesting to compare Hroch's version of nationalism with that of Suny who argues for an exogenous origin for the nations that emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union. Rather than autonomous intellectual movements of proto-nations aware of their ethnic roots, Suny stresses that not only were nations such as Uzbekistan created by the policies of the Soviet empire, but also that their very ethnicities were constructed and

consolidated by Communist rule. As such, Suny's work is closer to that of Anderson than any of the other theorists.

There are two main schools of thought on the relationship between the Soviet Union and the nationalism of its constituent Republics. The first acknowledges the importance of the 'nationalities question' and its role in the dissolution of the Russian empire, but treats the nations as pre-given, relatively homogeneous ethnic homelands. This position is expressed by Lapidus;

"The complexity of the nationalities question in contemporary Soviet politics stems from the fact that the key actors are...nations and nationalities inhabiting or laying claim to historical territorial homelands... political-administrative boundaries in the USSR tend to coincide with ethnic boundaries, infusing centre periphery relations with heightened emotional intensity and injecting the nationalities question into virtually every aspect of Soviet policy."
(Lapidus, p.432)

Suny favours the argument advanced by writers such as Brzezinski that communism in fact created and nurtured the nationalism that eventually destroyed the Soviet Union, "...communism in fact intensified popular nationalist passion...[and] fused with and even reinforced intolerant nationalism..." (Brzezinski, Z - quoted in Suny, 1991a, p416).

This means that Suny explains Soviet nationalisms not in terms of the 'sleeping beauty' approach - nationalism as the essential and authentic expression of ethnic communities - but rather as a result of 'the making of nations' approach. It is certainly the case that much of the nation building in the Russian empire took place in the Soviet period than in the years before 1917. Suny's

'making of nations' approach not only confronts Smith's idea that nations have an ethnic origin by positing that nations were created under the Soviet regime, but also introduces the idea that ethnicity was also constructed, systematised and consolidated by a succession of Communist policies.

"One of the central ironies of Soviet history is that a regime dedicated to effacing nationality and creating a supraethnic community and a party that posited that class rather than nationality was the key determinant of social structure have presided over a long historic process in which modern nations have been formed within the union they governed. These Soviet nations, though built on earlier ethnic communities and elite nationalist movements, are largely the result of the complex history of the last seventy years." (Suny, 1991a, p.416)

In order to understand this approach it is necessary to appreciate the pre-revolutionary history of the Soviet Union, and the pre-modern nature of the Tsarist empire.

"Before the revolutions of 1917, most of the constituent peoples of what now makes up the Soviet Union were not yet fully formed, self-conscious nations. Though ethnolinguistic communities with distinct religious and ethnic cultures had existed on what is now Soviet territory since prehistoric times, few of the peoples of the Russian empire had coalesced around the more modern notions of a secular, territorial nation. Most had never had a state in the past, and nationalist ideas expressed by urban intellectuals had not yet spread to the less educated, either in towns or the countryside." (Suny, 1991a, p418-419)

At the end of the Civil War, those nationalities under Soviet rule were organised into a federal state - with its political units based on ethnicity. So there were Republics created for the Armenians, Georgians, Ukrainians etc. A hierarchical, imperial relationship was soon

created between the centre and the periphery. The republics never had real autonomy, but maintained their own language and culture and native cadres dominated the administration.

"This policy of 'nativization' (korenizatsiia in Russian), encouraged by Lenin (and even supported by Stalin for a time) was sincerely carried out in the 1920's with spectacular results. The ethnic republics became demographically and culturally more ethnic."
(Suny, 1991a, p.419)

The power of the Soviet system to impose conformity on its vast geographical area was considerable but the policies of the Soviet state had contradictory effects.

"The deeply contradictory policy of the Soviet state, on the one hand, nourished the cultural uniqueness of distinct peoples and thereby increased ethnic solidarity and national consciousness in the non-Russian republics, and on the other, by requiring conformity to an imposed political order frustrated full articulation of a national agenda."
(Suny, 1991b, p.113)

Under Stalin the notion of federalism became less important and was replaced by a unitary state, highly centralised, with little autonomy for the peripheries. Russian culture was promoted - to the extent that it was made compulsory in schools. Industrialization led to the migration of hundreds of thousands of Russians and other Slavs to Central Asia, and after they were annexed in 1940, to the Baltic states. Non-Russian peoples were subordinated to the Soviet State's economic and political priorities. Tens of thousands of ethnic Communist leaders were imprisoned or executed in the Great Purges.

More recently, three aspects of Gorbachev's reform program played critical roles in bringing the question of

nationalities to the fore. Firstly, the impact of glasnost gave impetus to the expression of deep-seated grievances by legitimising public discussion of issues which previously had been taboo. The Soviet media began to speak out against overcentralization, linguistic and cultural Russification, and the repression of national elites. Secondly, political democratization, which was at the centre of Gorbachev's reform plans and the encouragement of grass-roots political activity, expanded the boundaries of permissible political activity and enabled the emergence of popular fronts (in the Baltic republics, for example).

"In virtually every republic, embryonic political organizations had emerged, embracing a broad spectrum of political positions, from explicitly separatist parties in several of the non-Russian republics, to extreme Russian chauvinist organizations like Pamyat, to the progressive Popular Fronts, to Christian, Social-Democratic, 'Green', and other movements." (Lapidus, p436)

Finally, economic stringency, and the upheaval of economic reorganization, was a major source of discontent. Under Gorbachev "...the gradualist politics of early perestroika was transformed into the ethnopolitics of national self-determination and democratization" (Suny, 1991a, p423) Gorbachev admitted that "we had underestimated the forces of nationalism and separatism that were hidden deep within our system and their ability to merge with populist elements creating a socially explosive mixture" (quoted in Suny, 1991a, p424)

"These massive ethnic expressions represented the emergence of civil society and were far more the product of Soviet history than any primordial ethnicity or striving for self-determination" (Suny, 1991a, p424)

This was because the history of the Soviet peoples has been one of consolidation of ethnic nations, heightened national consciousness and an increased capacity to act in defence of their perceived national interests. The period of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' presided over by Gorbachev created the opportunity, by redefining and restricting the power of the state and for the expression of nationalist agendas.

The rise of regionalism

Regionalism, here defined as an ideology and political project that prioritizes the region over other units of socio-political organization, such as the nation, is an increasingly important feature in contemporary Western Europe. The rise of regionalism has corresponded to a decline in big-state nationalism. Globalisation - the creation of a single world market - has led, in the words of Stuart Hall "to a strengthening of 'local' allegiances and identities" (Hall, 1992); not to uniformity, but to a proliferation of ethno-social cultures. The rise of regionalism has also corresponded to the growth, or regeneration of ideas of European Union and federalism in the past ten years. For all these reasons there appears to be a decline in the fortunes of independent nation-states. In other words, the nation-state has come under attack from both below and above.

"Like the idea of European unity, regionalism seems to signal the end of the age of homogeneous and independent nation-states. On the one hand, nation-states have come under external pressure to delegate some major areas of economic and socio-political responsibility to over-arching supra-national institutions such as the EC; on the other, they have run up against demands at home for the decentralization of political and economic power." (Alter, p.136)

Alter views the rise of regionalism in the following way. Nationalism is often (pace Gellner) tied up with economic development and modernisation. This era has now ended and the nation is not such an important vehicle for collective identity, hence the rise of regionalism. What rises to the surface with the break-down of big-state nationalism is regional tensions - periphery versus centre - which are created through, but held in check by, the political power of the nation-state. Within the boundaries of every nation-state there are richer and poorer areas, areas of greater resources and opportunity, and areas of concentration of capital and population. Economic heterogeneity and cultural and linguistic disparity make the regional tensions manifest. "The breeding ground for regionalism in capitalist nation-states is provided by the continuing presence of both economic and cultural and linguistic disparity." (Alter, p.136)

Uneven development of the economy disadvantages peripheral groups and may generate tensions between the centre and the margins. Social underprivilege gives a decisive boost to regionalist tendencies. To give an example, in Britain England is relatively (although differentially) prosperous, whereas the Celtic periphery is less so as a result of unequal economic development. this leads to an unequal distribution of political power - some regions grow at the expense of others - resulting in what Alter terms (after Hechter) 'internal colonialism'.

This thesis although helpful in supporting the view that one outcome of the project of nation-building has been a rise in particularisms, is heavily bound up with the economic growth, modernisation theory. We need to look more closely at the recent trend towards regionalism and examine why authority is being decentered from previous national states, simultaneously upwards to Euro-

institutions and downwards to this range of new and more local powers. We can advance the following reasons which would seem, in general terms, to underpin the erosion of the importance of the nation-state in all its specific manifestations;

- the discrediting of nationalism. Nationalism in its extreme form - Fascism and right wing extremism - is seen to be a wholly undesirable facet of democracy.

- the end of East/West confrontation. A strong nation-state was seen as a vehicle for ensuring that democracy was entrenched in the countries of Western Europe in the post-war period. The nation-state as a bulwark against communism.

- the arbitrary nature of the nation-state. The nation was frequently a political imposition on ethnically diverse and previously independent communities (Yugoslavia and Britain, for example), which then became dominated by one ethnic group at the expense of others. Similarly, the nation-state was also imposed on disparate regions (Italy)

- the advent of a supra-national framework. The availability of a wider economic, political and social framework (The European Union) makes sub-national regions more viable.

- separatism. The role of the EU makes the possibility of a Europe of the regions more likely. This in turn stimulates the ideology of regionalism, especially within those regions who perceive that they are being 'held back' by their partners in the nation-state. This is the case with the Czech Republic, Catalonia and the Northern Leagues in Italy.

Eric Hobsbawm makes the following points about contemporary popularity of regionalism (of the separatist kind) in the former Eastern bloc and elsewhere. First, the collapse of communism, which imposed political stability over such a large portion of Europe, has

"re-opened the wounds of the first world war, or more precisely, of the misconceived and unrealistic peace settlements after it. The explosive nationalist issues in central and eastern Europe today are not ancient ethnic conflicts but those created during the formation of the successor states to the collapsing multi-ethnic Habsburg, Ottoman and Tsarist Russian empires." (Hobsbawm, 1991, p.17)

The point being that tensions between, say, the Serbs and the Croats could not have occurred prior to the formation of Yugoslavia, which did not begin to happen until the 1920s. For centuries prior to that Serbia had been dominated by the Ottoman empire and Croatia by the Habsburgs. The disintegration of the centralised, Communist (of sorts) Yugoslav state has encouraged its republics to "assert independence as a means of self preservation" (Hobsbawm, 1991, p.17)

The second reason is the rise in xenophobia created by the massive population movements of the past forty years. "Xenophobia encourages ethnic nationalism since the essence of both is a hostility to other groups." (Hobsbawm, 1991, p.17) Thirdly, Hobsbawm cites political illiteracy;

"...the politics of group identity are easier to understand than any others, especially for peoples who, after decades of dictatorship, lack political education and experience." (Hobsbawm, 1991, p.17)

In other words, a nationalism couched in terms of language or ethnicity, is relatively easily comprehended. Magas

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rather than the 'other' beyond the perceived community. That xenophobia feeds ethnic nationalism is not in dispute, but it is equally likely that ethnic nationalism creates xenophobia. The key point to make is that the rise of ethnic, exclusive nationalisms is endogenous, that is to say coming from within the social, compared with C19th nationalism which was largely exogenous.

His third and fourth points are closely related. A combination of political illiteracy and social instability encourage peoples to fall back on comforting and reassuring identities such as those offered by close knit ethnic communities or aggressive nationalisms, particularly when fuelled by a sense of injustice or persecution, as with the Serbs. This is a seductive theory and one which has much to support it; the countries of Eastern Europe had no tradition of democracy to speak of, the fall of planned economies and centralised bureaucracies created a political vacuum.

Before proceeding to the case of the Lega Nord and an examination of the relevance of Laclau and Mouffe's ideas to contemporary regionalism and nationalism it is necessary to review the various approaches to nationalism considered above. As I have already indicated the various theories can be divided into endogenous and exogenous explanations. Exogenous approaches such as Gellner, Anderson, Hobsbawm and Suny, for example, focus on the importance of external forces as a mechanism of change. Endogenous approaches - Smith and Hroch - highlight the role of the ideology of nationalism in mobilising existing social forces. These approaches hold that ethnicity is already present in society and acts as a focus for national sentiment. 'Ethnic nationalism' on this model is an authentic expression of deep rooted and previously hidden sentiments.

The exogenous approaches considered here do not offer a common or unified theory of nationalism. In fact, the differences in approach are enormous, and in order to justify my typology I must add the caveat that all of what I see as valuable in the exogenous approach does not apply to Gellner. What these approaches do offer is the opportunity to view all collective identities as constructed rather than given. This means that they are more productive when giving consideration to the construction of ethnicity which underpins any understanding of regionalism or 'ethnic nationalism'.

The Northern Leagues

The construction of collective identity via ethnicity is characteristic of the rise of the Lega Nord (Northern Leagues) in Italy. The Lega Nord is an example of contemporary regionalism, dominated as it is by ideologies which privilege the sub-national region in such a way as to threaten the continued existence of the Italian nation-state. This example of regionalism is comparable to other contemporary particularisms and 'ethnic nationalisms' such as those in Yugoslavia, although without the tragic consequences. The Lega Nord represents ethnic and exclusive collective identity rather than the type of collectivities constructed by C19th nationalists.

The emphasis on ethnicity as the sine qua non of nationalism or regionalism can lead to the view that this is somehow a more 'authentic' - one culture/one nation - type of nationalism. This is particularly true when expressed by spokesmen for the Leagues, such as Miglio. But such a view does not account for the construction of ethnicity, rather it views ethnicity (as do Smith and Hroch) as pre-given. In fact, ethnicity - like nationalism - has to be constructed in order for people to

be able to view themselves as being united in some profound sense, despite the many other social divisions - class, religion, gender etc - that may otherwise divide them.

"No nation possesses an ethnic base naturally, but as social formations are nationalised, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized - that is - represented in the past or in the future as if they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins culture and interests which transcends individual and social conditions." (Balibar, p.96)

This means that in order to understand the Lega Nord we must examine the contemporary construction of political identity rather than view regionalism or nationalism as a 'return' to an underlying ethnicity.

The Leagues claim legitimacy from the artificiality of the Italian nation which has been imposed on the peoples of Italy to the detriment of them all, and which never succeeded in forging national unity. Poche expresses this feeling thus; "To understand the League phenomenon it is important to acknowledge that Italy never became a real nation-state." (Poche, p.71) Thus, legitimacy for this federal approach is sought in the 'myth of the nation' and the belief that the Italian nation 'unified' disparate historical, cultural and ethnic groups which resulted in particularism being sacrificed to the nation-state. Central to this view is the assertion that "...Italy lacks the ethnic, cultural and historical homogeneity for becoming a 'unitary' state." (Miglio, p.32)

Interestingly, in this example of 'the nationalist origins of ethnicity' the myth common to many nationalisms - that the nation is an authentic entity which has its origins in antiquity - is here inverted. The legitimation of the

region is a product of the youth, artificiality and failure of the nation.

In part, the Leagues' popularity is the result of a successful appropriation of the people versus the (corrupt and inefficient) state antagonism. In the mid and late 1980s the Italian state was in crisis; public services were inadequate and overburdened with bureaucracy. Clientism - the dominance of political parties over the state and their channelling of public resources to their clients - was rife. The Lombard League in particular gave voice to these grievances. It is axiomatic for the Lega Nord that the crisis of Italian unity can only be resolved through a federal solution. "Italians do not constitute an ethnic and cultural entity sufficiently homogenous to sustain a centralised unitary state." (Miglio, p.19) The Leagues' position reinforces the idea that a nation cannot exist if it is not based on ethnic homogeneity. The Lega Nord's orientation in terms of a traditional right/left classification is confusing.

"It has some regionalist features and some clearly fascist ones. It is very clearly a party of the right, yet its attack on the Christian-Democrat and Socialist oligarchies and impassioned solidarity with the investigating magistracy has led some observers to view it as in some ways a progressive force, the vanguard of a democratic revolution against the entrenched forces of Old Corruption." (Abse, pp. 11-12)

The recent electoral coalition between Berlusconi's Forza Italia, the fascists and the Lega suggests that it is quite at home on the right.

The aims of the Lega Nord (prior to the 1994 electoral pact) can be summarised as follows;

- to decentralise and federate the present unitary state to create an Italy of regions who could be members of the EU without the handicap of Europe's most inefficient and corrupt state.
- to create the conditions that would allow the populations to retain their identity (language, customs, culture)
- to ensure that (lower) public offices are held by local people (those families who have lived in territory for more than one generation, and share cultural and ethnic background of those they govern). This stems from the wish 'not to be dominated by outsiders'.
- to privatise and manage public services by local people
- to redistribute public funds throughout the various parts of Italy. A right to use one's own resources and an end to assistance to other regions.

There are many issues raised by these developments. Is the history of the modern state coming to an end? Is the nation-state, with its imposed homogeneity and myths of national solidarity, disintegrating? Are regions more appropriate units? For the Leagues the answers to these questions is certainly 'yes'.

"As an enterprise once optimal for satisfying people's needs, the great national State with precise borders is obsolete. It will be increasingly displaced by a texture without preconstituted boundaries. Its configuration will be a function of peoples concrete needs, extending from a plurality of modest, natural 'basic' aggregations such as regional states up to conditional arrangements for vast areas (primarily economic ones) (Miglio, p.42).

The Leagues advocate cultural, economic and political self-determination in order to rid themselves of corruption and inefficiency, the cause of which is contamination by the 'Mediterranean mentality' of the Southerners. As Miglio explains,

"The Mediterranean mentality belongs to a different part of Europe. The concept of authority which prevails in the Europe of Spain, southern France and southern Italy is that of the person in charge. In 'cold Europe', citizens want to be subject to laws, not to people or protectors. But, unfortunately, the Southern model has polluted Northern Europe." (Miglio, quoted in The Guardian 1 December 1993)

In this way differences between 'Mediterranean' southerners and 'European' northerners are polarised according to models of personal and economic relations. Relations of personal dependence (redolent of pre-modern, almost feudal ties of fealty) in the South, versus impersonal rule and individual rights (modern, 'European' and egalitarian). These differences are of central importance in the construction of the self-identity of Northerners and as such are raised to the level of ethnic differences. This identity is consolidated by the addition of a series of 'wrongs' to which the ethnic 'us' have been subjected. The issue of regional autonomy is re-cast not simply in people versus the state terms, but also along the lines of the Republic (nation-state) denying local inhabitants the right to self-determination.

"...the problem of unsatisfactory public services and political corruption is explained in terms of destruction of the values of work identified with the Lombard community. Here again the culprits are the southerners, whose particular culture and lack of a work ethic allegedly has colonized the Italian state and its political parties. Many Lombards feel part of a 'middle-European' culture. They are proud of their economic success and feel exploited by the south. (Ruzza and Schmidtke, p.58).

There have been two main factors in the League's success. Firstly, they have been able to articulate and focus previously dispersed themes of popular dissatisfaction, for example political corruption and state inefficiency. Secondly, they have politicized dormant social sectors by means of a new cultural identity - Lombard identity. The extent to which this identity is in fact an ethnic identity is the subject of some debate, what is not denied however is its power to mobilize support.

"...the Lombard League does not represent a Lombard 'ethnic identity'. The League's electoral successes are not dependant on its organisational ability to mobilize a distinct ethnic and linguistic group, but on its ability to constitute a regional identity." (Woods, p.117)

The history that has been appropriated for this purpose - the 'myth-symbol complex' of the Lombard League - is the 12th league of Lombard cities, a history that permits it to perceive itself as Italy's 'hen that lays the golden eggs', and which is presently exploited by Rome and the South. Culturally it focuses on

"...the 'culture of the Alps and the Po Valley', thus successfully bringing together three main themes: 1) the region's spatial unity; 2) an economic tradition based on rich agriculture and on active industry...; and 3) a similar history from the old free cities to the cradle and origin of the Italian Kingdom..." (Poche, p.77)

The root of its success in articulating dissatisfaction with the state and political corruption is the reinterpretation of national problems as north-south problems. The elements of this dissatisfaction can be summarised thus;

- political corruption has its origins with organised crime (the Mafia). "What does Northern Italy have to do with the Mafia? If the people of the South really want to

fight it, let them do something about it." (Miglio, quoted in The Guardian 1 December 1993)

- inefficient and bureaucratic central state and inadequate public services. "Why is 90% of our civil service made up of southerners?" (Miglio, quoted in The Guardian 1 December 1993)

- waste of public resources. Over-centralised, bureaucratic and profligate government

- immigration. A 'problem' to be solved by the Leagues,

"...grassroots Lega activists play the immigration card as often as possible, arguing that crime and unemployment can be eliminated provided the wave of southerners who came to the northern cities in the wake of the economic miracle of the 1950s and 1960s are sent home, along with the millions of Arabs, principally Moroccans, and Africans, principally Senegalese, who have entered Italy...over the last decade." (Abse, p.12)

The Leagues have been successful in mobilizing this support by articulating themes of public discontent, and has been described by the media as 'an army of uneducated villagers challenging the Italian intelligentsia' (quoted by Ruzza and Schmidtke, p.58). The rise of the Lombard League coincided with a decline in support for all traditional parties. Over the past few years citizens of the north have abandoned national parties such as the Christian Democrats, who have become associated with clientism, financial profligacy and the corruption endemic to Italian politics.

The Lombard League is the major partner of the Lega Nord, other participants are the Venetian League and Autonomous Piedmont. Founded in 1984 it became fully established in

the 1990 administrative elections with 15 out of 80 seats in the regional Council of Lombardy. (Poche, p.76) Its rise has been rapid; in 1985 it obtained 2.5% of the regional vote, in 1991 this had risen to 19% (Ruzza and Schmidtke, p.57).

The social profile of the Leagues' supporters reveals that its activists are young (typically 18 - 25 years old), poorly educated (left school at 15), rural (from small villages), but form the wealthier strata of their society. The Leagues appeal to informal groups based on existing communities who exhibit a strong sense of territorial belonging. Their supporters would have little experience of urban based organisational belonging such as is found in universities, schools or factories.

"The League's activists share a common ideological outlook centred on a Lombard identity, ie. honest hard work as a moral duty and as a prized personal inclination. It extends to an appreciation of 'facts rather than words' and a distrust for career politicians, their convoluted language and corrupted morals." (Ruzza and Schmidtke, p.64).

The 150 year long project to create an Italian nation-state has failed. The very workings of that nation-state, its disfunction, and the economic disparities that it spawned - in the ways suggested by Alter, Gellner and others - has allowed the Leagues to portray Lombardy (and the North in general) as a region deprived of what it is supposedly entitled to by a wasteful political and economic system. This Lombard identity is new and its influence and power over the popular imagination can be explained, according to Ruzza and Schmidtke, in the same way as as nationalism. They express this in terms heavily imbued with Anderson's influence.

"Lombardy is the ingenious creation of the Lombard League. Through it the League was able to overcome narrow localism and present itself as the herald of a shared heritage and the expression of a broader social movement. Ethnic identities tend to appear timeless, even if they have been minted yesterday."
(Ruzza and Schmidtke, p.64).

Mingione places the Italian experience of regionalism in the wider context of the changing role of the nation-state. Regionalist movements are the result of,

"...the weakening of the system of nation-states, under attack from above as a result of the need for global economic regulation and from below as a result of the resurgence of particularistic social clusters..."
(Mingione, p.305).

The Northern Leagues make much of the diversity within Italy, to the point where the differences assume the status of different ethnicities not compatible with a unitary state. For 150 years the Italian nation-state attempted to forge a sense of national identity, as did every other nation-state, with a certain amount of success. That attempts to homogenise culture and language through education never eliminated Italy's multi-cultural ancestry is not only evidence of failure as far as the Northern Leagues are concerned, but also an indication of the undesirability of the project. As Mingione correctly points out the decline in importance of the nation-state is in tension with the continued political centrality of the idea of the nation-state. This tension is evidenced by the centrality of the Italian nation-state in the ideology of the Lega Nord: it is the idea (and existence) of the unitary nation that the Lega Nord is opposed to, and the process of 'demonising' the nation-state is constitutive of ethnicity.

"The nation-state remains the key to the system by which social identities are divided. It is not by chance that the borderlines of what we call societies or economies coincide with the boundaries of nation-states. Even international forms of solidarity organised around class, religious, humanitarian or cultural issues have been channelled or managed at the nation-state level." (Mingione, p.307)

So the nation-state, through its insertion in the global versus local matrix, acts to regulate the regionalist impulse. In Italy as elsewhere, particularisms thrown up by globalist/regionalist tensions have been encouraged by the decline in importance of the nation-state. What is particular to the Italian case is that the north-south divide, while previously unable to fatally undermine the viability of the nation-state, has with reinforcement from new forms of inclusion and exclusion arising from particularism, been re-worked by the Northern Leagues as a marker of ethnic difference. It was this difference that the Italian nation sought to suppress.

In this way the rise of the Lega Nord is tied to wider social and economic tensions in Italy (and beyond). Mingione identifies three sources of socio-economic tension that have particular relevance to the Italian case. Firstly, the changing employment structure leading to a polarization between high-income and low-income jobs. Secondly, the conflicts generated by global versus particular interests,

"...the nation-state constitutes a crucial stress point of the present transition in various different ways related to globalisation and particularistic tendencies..." (Mingione, p.307).

Thirdly, the Italian political scene has become unstable as a result of a;

"...decreasing capacity to govern the new complexity on the part of the associate political order that matured within the system of notional democracies as definitively consolidated in the Fordist-welfarist age."
(Mingione, p.306)

Each of these sources of socio-economic tension has been successfully utilised by the Lega Nord in the construction of their regional identity. The inability of the 'old order', bedevilled by corruption and clientism, to grasp the 'new complexity' was a major factor in enabling the Lega Nord to present itself as a new political force. The Lega Nord's new coalition partners, Berlusconi's Forza Italia recognised this and succeeded in creating for itself an image of freshness, untainted by the scandals embroiling the old guard.

The politics of 'us and them'

In the introduction to her book The Return of the Political (Mouffe, 1993) Chantal Mouffe addresses the 'explosion' of pluralisms' that characterise the post-Communist period. She takes as her starting point the collapse of Communism, from which common origin the resurgence of nationalism and the emergence of new antagonisms appear to have stemmed. Are we witnessing progress towards the universalisation of liberal democracy as Fukuyama would have it, or a challenge to Western universalism? Fukuyama holds that with the demise of Marxism the notion of antagonism can be dispensed with. Mouffe, on the other hand, sees antagonism as being at the heart of democratic politics; every identity depends on the "...affirmation of a difference, the determination of an 'other' that is going to play the role of a 'constitutive outside...' (Mouffe, 1993, p.2)

Affirmation and mutual acceptance of difference leads to collective identifications, the creation of an 'us' in opposition to a 'them'. It is conceivable that this us/them relationship can turn into a friend/enemy relationship. This occurs when the mutual recognition of identity (difference) breaks down, to be replaced by identities that threaten to destroy one another. This is the site of a political antagonism. As such, the political "...must be conceived as a dimension that is inherent to every human society..." (Mouffe, 1993, p.3) Until the collapse of Communism the most important political frontier of the friend enemy type was that of democracy/totalitarianism. Now we are witnessing the redefinition of collective identity and the establishment of new political frontiers. Mouffe identifies two developments deriving from the fall of Communism that are of particular importance in relation to nationalism and the construction of ethnic identity. Firstly,

"In the former Communist bloc, the unity created in the common struggle against Communism has vanished and the friend/enemy frontier is taking on a multiplicity of new forms linked to the resurgence of old antagonisms - ethnic, national, religious and others." (Mouffe, 1993, p.3)

In ethnic, religious and nationalistic politics the opponent is perceived not as an adversary, but as an enemy to be destroyed. Thus, the problem here is the lack of adversarial positions around which a pluralist politics could be constructed. Democracy is not possible for Mouffe where no adversarial identities exist and furthermore the growth of identities around religious, nationalist or ethnic identities makes adversarial positions less likely.

Second, the identity of democracy is at stake in the West. The Communist 'other' was constitutive of that democracy as it constituted its negation. Thus democracy requires a new frontier. The collapse of right/left adversarial positions is also "...harmful for democratic politics, as it impedes the construction of distinct political identities." (Mouffe, 1993, p.5) Mouffe is seemingly arguing for a field of politics that is defined in terms of a traditional left/right orientation, and in which shades of democratic political opinion are represented by political parties in parliament. In discussing the work of Niklas Luhmann she says;

"the current blurring of political frontiers between left and right is harmful for democratic politics, as it impeded the constitution of distinctive political identities. This in turn fosters disaffection towards political parties and discourages participation in the political process. Hence, the growth of other collective identities around religious, nationalist or ethnic forms of identification." (Mouffe, 1993, p.5)

Mouffe is saying that the old left/right division of the political field was 'good' for democracy. What is 'bad' for democracy are the blurred political distinctions of the post-Cold War period. The problem for the West is to successfully create a pluralist democratic order by means of antagonism - agonistic pluralism is constitutive of modern democracy - through the recognition of adversarial positions. Where this does not successfully happen, as with the case of the extreme right who - with immigrants - have already identified their 'enemy within'. Mouffe says,

"I submit that the growth of the extreme right ...can only be understood in the context of the deep crisis of political identity that confronts liberal democracy following the loss of the traditional landmarks of politics." (Mouffe, 1993, p.4)

The two important developments identified by Mouffe are closely linked and deserve detailed consideration. With the first development Mouffe accounts for the political crisis in some of the former Communist countries. Under Communism the friend/enemy lines were clearly demarcated and oppositional forces could enter (in the terms outlined in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy) into chains of equivalence, thereby dividing the social into two antagonistic camps. Now, the frontier is confused because of the 'resurgence of old antagonisms' and difference, not equivalence characterises the social field. By 'old antagonisms' Mouffe is referring to ethnic and other particularistic identities which I have elsewhere argued are not necessarily old at all.

One thing that is most surprising about her formulation is that it combines an insistence on the constitutive nature of exclusion in respect to political identities, with a marginalisation of the constructed nature of those identities. Consider for example Mouffe's decision not to differentiate between nationalist, religious or ethnic collectivities. All are characterised as 'archaic' and antithetical to the development of pluralistic democracies. As I have indicated, in the case of the Northern Leagues the ethnic identity is very much a constructed one, not a reversion to an atavistic past. This line of thinking on the construction of ethnicity is certainly owes a debt to the work of Laclau and Mouffe (of the Hegemony and Socialist Strategy period). Extending this approach one could argue that identities emerging in the former Communist Asiatic Republics of the ex-Soviet Union for example, have been constructed to a large extent by the experience of Communism, and that the religious inflexion that this gives to their nationalism is very much a contemporary phenomena.

The implications of the fall of Communism for democracy within the former Eastern bloc are not explored by Mouffe, except to the extent that a proliferation of enemies to the exclusion of adversaries precludes this from happening. How it might be possible to introduce new political frontiers for example, is not explored. It is the other side of the coin, the impact of the fall of Communism on the politics of Western Europe, that Mouffe is really interested in. The most important change has been the removal of democracy's 'other', by which it was defined. For Mouffe pluralist democracy requires antagonism (antagonism is constitutive of the social);

"It requires that, within the context of the political community, the opponent should be considered not as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an adversary whose existence is legitimate and must be tolerated. We will fight against his ideas but we will not question his right to defend them. The category of the 'enemy' does not disappear but is displaced; it remains pertinent with respect to those who do not accept the democratic 'rules of the game' and who thereby exclude themselves from the political community." (Mouffe, 1993, p.4)

It is interesting to note that Fukuyama reaches the opposite conclusion. For him the end of the Cold War has brought about the 'end of history' characterised by the resolution of all the major ideological conflicts of the last 200 years and the inevitable march of capitalism. Capitalism does not need an enemy such as Communism, it is quite capable of completing its own development. Mouffe characterises democratic thinking today as rationalist, universalist and individualist and it

"cannot but remain blind to the specificity of the political in its dimension of conflict/decision, and that it cannot perceive of the constitutive role of antagonism in social life." (Mouffe, 1993, p.2)

The existence of every identity is the affirmation of difference, that which creates the 'other' (the constitutive outside).

"In the domain of collective identifications where what is in question is the creation of a 'we' by the delimitation of a 'them', the possibility always exists that this we/them relation will turn into a relation of the friend enemy type...This can happen when the other, who was until then considered under the mode of difference, begins to be perceived as negating our identity...From that moment onwards, any type of we/them relation, be it religious, ethnic, national, economic or other, becomes the site of a political antagonism." (Mouffe, 1993, p.3)

From the above formulation it is clear that the emphasis on exclusion as a prime mover in the creation of a 'we' also creates the potential for a break-down of the vital antagonistic forms of political recognition; the frontier separating us/them from friend/enemy is unstable. Political parties are for Mouffe an important mechanism for stabilising this frontier. They

"...can play an important role in giving expression to social division and the conflict of wills. But if they fail in their job, conflicts will assume other guises and it will be more difficult to manage them democratically." (Mouffe, 1993, p.5)

Mouffe argues that the loss of the totalitarian/democratic opposition that was the main political frontier has led to the need to redefine collective identities and establish new political frontiers. This allows us to return to the two developments identified by Mouffe that have resulted from the fall of Communism - the new friend/enemy frontier, and the crisis of identity of democracy. In the first case the polarisation of Europe along East/West lines was largely a product of the Cold War; Western paranoia and ideological insecurity is neatly encapsulated

in the Iron Curtain as symbol of Communist threat to our way of life. The spectre of totalitarianism was invoked to encourage solidarity throughout the West and as a mechanism to encourage Western Europeans to put a high value on democracy. The bi-polar division of Europe is in fact too simple, in the post-war period there were many countries in Europe that were neither Communist or 'democratic'; Portugal, Spain, Greece and Turkey had significant spells under right-wing dictators for example, and the case of Yugoslavia and Albania demonstrates that the Communist bloc was less than homogenous.

Mouffe's argument that the old friend/enemy frontier was based on the binary division of Europe along Cold War lines is too simplistic; even for a model that depends on exclusion to create the 'us and them' divide. We must also question Mouffe's notion of 'the unity created in the common struggle against Communism'. In the satellite states of the Soviet Union the people could possibly have been unified against the imperialism of the Soviet Union or the totalitarian state perhaps, but not against Communism itself. Large numbers of people in these countries were Communists for one thing, and it would be possible to argue that the Yugoslavs were unified by Communism, not in opposition to it. Within the Soviet Union the various republics were unified by their opposition to the Russian Empire more than Communism per se. Influence in the local Communist party would have provided them with leverage against Russification.

The collapse of the Communist regimes has allowed "the resurgence of nationalism and the emergence of new antagonisms." (Mouffe, 1993, p.1) We must also question the assertion that these are old ethnic, national or religious antagonisms. Following Suny, I would argue that these conflicts are new. Antagonisms along ethnic,

religious or national lines are not necessarily new per se, but what is new is the construction of antagonisms resulting from the fall of Communism. For example, the Serb/Croat conflict is more about the uncertainties resulting from the balance of power created by the 1974 Yugoslavian constitution, and the way that this left both the Serbs and the Croats exposed and vulnerable, than it is a resurrection of WWII hostilities.

The predisposition to identification with particularistic principles stems from the lack of democratic political struggles. This prevents the construction of an 'adversary' in favour of an 'enemy' who must be destroyed. As Mouffe puts it;

"When there is a lack of democratic political struggles with which to identify, their place is taken by other forms of identification, of ethnic, nationalist or religious nature, and the opponent is defined in those terms too."
(Mouffe, 1993, p.6)

Throughout this thesis I have argued above that (Laclau and) Mouffe's work is characterised by a theory of democracy in the absence of a theory of the state, and nowhere is this better illustrated than in the context of their ideas on nationalism. Mouffe talks of a crisis of political identity rather than a crisis of the nation-state being the source of new collective identifications. Throughout this chapter I have argued that the rise of the Lega Nord is the product of the failure of the Italian nation-state, and that nationalism (whether in its C19th form or more recent manifestations such as ethnic nationalism) cannot be understood outside of the nation-state context. All the major theorists of nationalism reviewed here believe there to be a strong link between the state and nationalism. In this sense nationalism is best understood as a state-sponsored ideology. This line

of enquiry is not open to Mouffe. Neither can she conceive of democracy (in its widest sense) as being embedded in the institutions of the state. For her as for Laclau, democracy exists as ideas and beliefs, and is propagated through political struggle.

In relation to the Northern Leagues I have argued that their rise is the result of their appropriation of the people versus (corrupt) state antagonism. Mouffe does not talk about the people versus the state in relation to the construction of democratic identity. Her us/them antagonism does not easily apply to the Northern Leagues' situation. The break down of traditional left/right orientation of Italian politics evidenced by the popularity of the Leagues also fits uneasily into her scheme. While it is certainly true that the loss of the democracy/totalitarian frontier has had a profound effect on contemporary Italian politics, the construction of collective political identity has proceeded along the lines ordained by the break-up of the nation-state rather than by the creation of adversarial collective political identities.

The antagonism along north-south lines characteristic of Italy is appropriated by the League as an issue of self-determination. Their adversaries are not the southerners or the old political parties as such, but the state apparatus that permits the promotion of the South and the continuance of corrupt practices or clientism. The state occupies the adversary/enemy position because it is denying self-determination to the League. Mingione's point that the nation-state is constitutive of social identities is more useful in explaining the Italian case than Mouffe's reliance on democratic antagonisms (or their absence) fulfilling this role.

Collective identity and exclusion

It is interesting to compare Mouffe's work with the approach adopted by Laclau in The Making of Political Identities (Laclau, 1994). Laclau also wishes to address the explosion of pluralisms that characterise the contemporary world. He holds that the end of the Cold War has coincided with the end of the globalizing ideologies that have dominated the political arena since 1945. On a larger scale this represents the end of the political ideology of modernity; the universality of political ideology. The post-Cold War world, which I take to mean the world in the period since 1989, is marked by

"a proliferation of particularistic political identities, none of which tries to ground its legitimacy and its action in a mission predetermined by universal history - whether that be the mission of a universal class, or the notion of a privileged race, or an abstract principle." (Laclau, 1994, p.1)

This 'crisis of universalism' permits us an awareness of the construction of social reality by removing the scales of universality from our eyes. The "very tangible emergence of its void, of what we could call the presence of its absence" (Laclau, 1994, p.1) reveals the contingent nature of the social. That we were not aware of it before is because we could not see the wood for the trees, as it were. What we now see is not an object but rather its conditions of possibility. This Laclau terms historicist deconstructivism.

From this platform Laclau introduces the term 'radical constructivism' which harnesses this retreat from universalism and opens up an 'horizon of possibilities' by broadening the range of strategies that are possible within the social. For example, institutions may be viewed not as immutable, but as the outcome of 'merely

contingent possibilities'. With the age of universalism behind us we are freed from the requirement to view the formation of political identity as a matter of simply recognizing that identity (the process by which Marx's a class in itself becomes a class for itself, for example). We must look to the construction of social and political identity not merely its recognition.

Laclau posits a distinction between identity and identification, moreover this distinction represents a 'constitutive split in all social identity'. The distinction between the social and the political, as developed in New Reflections is utilised by Laclau in the context of identity formation. The social is the sedimented, solidified realm of repetition and routine whose original conditions of possibility are submerged. However, the political character of these sediments is increasingly revealed - by historicist deconstructivism - in the modern world. Repetition gives way to reconstruction as the contingent nature of the social is revealed. It would seem that the social is fundamentally unstable - neither fully constituted nor totally disrupted - and always in a state of flux between the solidification of the social (difference) and dislocation. Dislocations, antagonisms and the democratic imaginary will always prevent the exclusion of the political and the dominance of the social.

The political on the other hand, institutes these social practices and the act of institution has no foundation outside of itself. This means that the repetitive, sedimented social cannot provide the impetus for this social innovation, otherwise the "sedimented social practices would have as something inherent to themselves the principle of their own transformations." (Laclau,

1994, p.3) This self-founding aspect of the political is equated to identification.

Sedimented social practices do not reveal their political foundation - visibility comes only through the struggle between contending and contingent alternative institutions of the social. An example of this is the Northern League's questioning of the legitimacy of the Italian state. Through the 'foundation' of the social being questioned new acts of identification are socially required thus politicising social identities: "...there is a politicization of vast areas of social life that opens the way for a proliferation of particularistic political identities." (Laclau, 1994, p.4) The Leagues have introduced the idea of Lombard identity as a result of declaring the Italian nation as 'artificial', and in doing so they have politicised sections of the social.

This then, is Laclau's explanation for the rise of particularisms. In the case of the Northern Leagues we can see how the nation-state was a triumph of the social over the political. Even so, the democratic imaginary, antagonisms and dislocations, through fiscal crises, government and party political corruption, and a 'bottom-up' regionalism fuelled by European Union supra-nationalism, did emerge and eventually ruptured the (imposed) unity of the social. All long-standing social issues - north-south disunity, xenophobia - were re-presented as issues of regional autonomy. A multiplicity of (new) antagonisms and movements exist in a state of flux and are preventing a new social from crystalising.

In such a situation the continual subversion of the social by the political does not necessarily lead to a deepening of democracy. However, Laclau does not believe that it will result in a generalised xenophobic exclusivism

either.

"For the very emergence of highly particularistic identities means that the particular groups will have to coexist with other groups in larger communities, and this coexistence will be impossible without the assertion of values that transcend the identities of all of them. The defence, for instance, of the right of national minorities to self-determination involves the assertion of a universal principle grounded in universal values. These are not the values of a 'universal' group, as was the case with the universalism of the past but, rather, of a universality that is the very result of particularism. It is, in this sense, far more democratic. Whether this new relationship between universality and particularism - grounded in the notion of rights - will prevail or, on the contrary, be submerged by rampant xenophobia, is something that cannot be predicted. But, clearly, it is something worth fighting for."
(Laclau, 1994, p.5)

It is not clear however, that it will be universally considered as a cause worth fighting for. Coexistence implies a respect for the identity of the other that may be present in radical democracy, and in fact in many variants of liberal democracy, but is not an essential component of the politics of identity. Coexistence may result if democratic adversaries mutually recognise each other but as Mouffe points out, forms of political identity based on exclusion often seek to deny or obliterate the identity of the opponent: at the point where the opponent becomes the enemy.

The endogenous model advanced by Laclau - the identity formation of a group is catalysed by enmity - depends heavily on the politics of exclusion. But as we have seen with the Lega Nord the identity of one collectivity is not solely the result of enmity with another.

Reading the above passage one is struck by the extent to which Laclau believes that the state of coexistence would be fostered by the contending identities, by one group recognising the right to exist of others. Expressed in political language from a more liberal tradition, some would say that the state fulfils (or attempts to fulfil) this role and civil society is the resulting terrain of coexistence. Laclau's comment that there has been

"...a decline both of the great historical actors and of those central public spaces where decisions meaningful for society as a whole had been taken in the past. But, at the same time, there is a politicization of vast areas of social life that opens the way for a proliferation of particular-istic political identities" (Laclau, 1994, p.4)

requires detailed examination in this light. Firstly, this statement implies that the importance of the state is on the decline, and secondly that the existence of civil society is not in and of itself a measure of democracy. Thirdly, it is implied that particularistic political identities emerge not within, but outside the public space constituted by civil society. On Laclau's model the emphasis is on the politicization of the social resulting in the formation of new political identities rather than the more traditional view that stresses the protective role of civil society.

As such, democracy for Laclau is only possible where there is: a "plurality of political forces substituting for each other in power" (Laclau, 1994, p.5) Democracy exists in the 'gap' between aspirations of social groups and their abilities to succeed in such attempts. Civil society, once the terrain of politics and contending ideologies, is replaced by a 'gap' which exists because of the partial

fixity of the social. This is in line with Mouffe's formulation that pluralist democracy is;

"...always democracy 'to come'. Conflict and antagonism are at the same time its condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of its full realisation."
(Mouffe, 1993, p.8).

Such ideas permeate Laclau and Mouffe's work. For example, dislocation means that every identity depends on an outside. This constitutive outside means that identity is simultaneously denied, and provides its condition of possibility. Laclau talks in the same way about identification "...with its explicit assertion of a lack at the root of any identity: one needs to identify with something because there is an originary and insurmountable lack of identity." (Laclau, 1994, p.3) There is a radical lack which threatens identity but at the same time is the condition of its possibility.

Laclau's thinking is influenced by Zizek, a fellow 'Phronesis' contributor. Zizek's argument, developed from a position informed by Lacanian psychoanalytical categories, is that the focus of nationalist sentiment is 'our way of life', which he calls 'the Nation-Thing'; that which "gives plenitude and vivacity to our life" (Zizek, p.52). What the 'Thing' is is not easy to define;

"All we can do is enumerate disconnected fragments of the way our community organises its feasts, its rituals of mating, its initiation ceremonies - in short, all the details by which is made visible the unique way a community organises its enjoyment."
(Zizek, p.52)

The 'Thing' will only exist as long as members of the community believe in it. The 'other' is constituted by those who would spoil our way of life, and spoil our

enjoyment (the 'Thing' is enjoyment incarnated). We are threatened by the way the 'other' organises its enjoyment and its apparent excess: we have a hatred of the way the 'other' enjoys, "...the smell of their food, their 'noisy' songs and dances, their strange manners, their attitude to work"...(Zizek. p.54)

Zizek gives examples from the former Yugoslavia which could easily be extended to apply to the Italian case, if we substitute Serbs and Bosnians for Southerners and Slovenes for Lombards;

"Slovenes are being deprived of their enjoyment by 'Southerners' (Serbians, Bosnians) because of their proverbial laziness, Balkan corruption, dirty and noisy enjoyment, and because they demand bottomless economic support, stealing from Slovenes their precious accumulation by means of which Slovenia could already have caught up with Western Europe. The Slovenes themselves, on the other hand, are supposed to rob Serbs because of their unnatural diligence, stiffness and selfless calculation..." (Zizek, p.55)

Zizek makes the point that what we conceal by accusing the 'other' of the theft of enjoyment is "...the traumatic fact that we never possessed what was allegedly stolen from us." (Zizek, p.54) Our attribution of various qualities to the 'other' is in fact the repression of our own enjoyment. In other words, our nationalism is an attempt to disguise our own failings and insecurities.

It can be said that nationalism in Eastern Europe has been on the rise since the fall of Communism because of increased social disorientation and a lack of social cohesion which reveals a true 'lack', which nationalism attempts to transfer to the other. In this way nationalism acts as a force for cohesion during a time of particular instability, but only does so by focussing on

the cohesion of one particular group (to the exclusion of others), and by denying the full range of democratic possibilities.

Conclusions

In contrast to the work of their 'early' period Laclau and Mouffe have moved, in their less collaborative work, to value exclusion as a prime determinant of collective identity. We have noted that Chantal Mouffe argues that the construction of collective identity is based on exclusion, what I have termed the creation of 'us' and 'them'. Collective identities can only arise under conditions of exclusion and hierarchy. However, the prioritisation of the role of exclusion in the formation of identity inevitably leads to the conclusion that the type of identities that are constructed tend to be of the extremely particularistic and intolerant type - ethnic, religious, nationalistic. Laclau, along with Mouffe, has developed a political theory which views collective identity based on exclusion. For example, from an earlier text;

"Even in the most radical and democratic projects, social transformation thus means building a new power, not radically eliminating it. Destroying the hierarchies on which sexual or racial discrimination is based will, at some point, always require the construction of other exclusions for collective identities to be able to emerge." (Laclau, 1990, p.33)

Mouffe's work on collective identity, stressing as it does the constitutive role of antagonism, is useful when dealing with highly polarized and confrontational politics. Radical democracy however makes claims to be radical and plural; it is to be conceived as a struggle against the multiple forms of subordination that exist in social relations. As exclusion tends towards rigidity,

hierarchy and particularism, it might be profitable to consider 'inclusion' as the basis for democratic political identity (as was suggested in the case of European identity). Inclusion - rejecting the constitutive nature of 'us and them' - would lead to tolerance, flexibility, reciprocal recognition and, what we might term, democratic multiplicity. It is not conceivable that mutual respect and tolerance, the lynchpins of any radical democracy, will emerge from the politics of enmity.

The key to understanding Laclau and Mouffe's politics of 'us and them' is the utilisation of the term 'difference'. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy it is established that difference serves to engender a complexity of the social and makes antagonism impossible. Without antagonism there is no hegemony. Equivalence subverts the differential logic of the social and makes hegemony possible.

Equivalence works to simplify the social leading to the creation of two antagonistic camps. Part of Laclau and Mouffe's critique of Marxism is that class opposition can never split the social body into two antagonistic camps. The relationship between capitalist/worker is one of difference, and cannot become antagonistic. The logic of difference works towards a complexity of the social and a denial of the possibility for hegemony. Difference, once established precludes antagonism, and can only be disrupted by the political imaginary.

In the work of the 'later' period Mouffe says that difference (the mutual recognition of identity) can be broken down by the political imaginary to create an antagonism in a way that leads to an 'us and them' relationship in which one party threatens to destroy the other. This highlights a tendency in their work towards theorising the politics of confrontation in a way that

views such confrontation as 'good' and that of coexistence as 'bad'. This is what I have termed 'the politics of enmity'. It is true that Mouffe says that where this 'us and them' situation leads to friend/enemy relations then the possibility for democratic politics is inhibited. The key then is the need for a 'them' who are adversaries not enemies.

In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy the implications of this politics of 'us and them' was not fully drawn out; Laclau and Mouffe were theorising the politics of radical democracy which was couched in positive and progressive terms. The wider ramifications of their 'us and them' type politics become clearer only in their 'later' writings. Their disapproval of the complexity of the social with its concomitant politics of mutual recognition and tolerance in favour of the politics of confrontation and enmity appears to confound common sense notions of the direction that a radical democratic politics should take. In their earlier work Laclau and Mouffe say that hegemony can only emerge in a field dominated by antagonisms and where equivalence occurs; "...the logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity." (Laclau and Mouffe, p.130)

In her discussion of the ramifications of the fall of communism Mouffe talks of the collapse of right/left adversarial positions as being;

"...harmful for democratic politics, as it impeded the construction of distinctive political identities. This in turn fosters disaffection towards political parties and discourages participation in the political process." (Mouffe, 1993, p.5)

In their earlier, post-Marxist mode Laclau and Mouffe sought to break down the traditional left/right dichotomy on the basis that they could never become antagonistic, contribute to a chain of equivalence, or form the basis for the politics of hegemony. It is worth stressing that the breakdown of the old left/right political distinctions, based as they were on the old productivist, class-ridden assumptions, were exactly what they wished to challenge in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. The political potential of NSMs was based precisely on the break down of this dichotomy. Once Laclau and Mouffe championed the 'blurring of political frontiers between left and right' and the nascent democratic potential of NSMs, now they mourn the passing of 'traditional' politics.

This newly discovered valorisation of the traditional field of democratic politics is an indication of the liberalisation of their thought. The (now qualified) need for antagonism evident in The Return of the Political requires only an adversary "...whose existence is legitimate and must be tolerated" (Mouffe, 1993, p.4) This is some distance from the politics of hegemony where antagonism is essential if chains of equivalence can be produced and the social split into two camps. Radical democracy has given ground to liberal democracy; what could be more liberal than Mouffe's statement, "We will fight against his ideas but will not question his right to defend them"? (Mouffe, 1993, p.4)

The revised role played by the term 'difference' surfaces again in Laclau's The Making of Political Identities. Laclau equates difference with the solidification of the social (in contrast to the political which represents the unstable, contingent nature of the social. Following on from Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Laclau argues that

antagonism will always prevent the solidification of the social (difference) because of dislocations and the political imaginary.

There is a contradiction between according prime importance to the prevention of difference and the establishment of the social on the one hand, and a reliance on 'us and them' to fashion political identities, on the other. It must be the case that the establishment of 'us and them' takes place once the social has solidified. If the existence of an external source (dislocation) constitutes a threat to identity then the political frontier must be unstable. If however, the 'us and them' is to develop at all the frontier must be quite stable. In other words, 'us and them' is the establishment of the social to the exclusion of the political.

Laclau accounts for the establishment of particularistic groups via the disruption of the social. However, Laclau now does not see this as necessarily leading to a simplification of the social. He talks of groups coexisting in larger communities, in a way that suggests that these are not going to be subject to articulation into chains of equivalence. The emergence of highly particularistic identities precludes the formation of chains of equivalence and moreover a complexity, rather than simplification, of the social.

In situations where highly particularistic groups are formed by a process of exclusion or external threat leading to a relation of 'us and them' it is evident that equivalence is not possible. A complexity of the social will be engendered by an absence of a dominant pole, and any groups so formed would be unable to enter into equivalence. A greater complexity of the social is

increasingly likely, particularly where political frontiers are of the unstable type that divide adversaries from enemies. Laclau's acceptance that the independent coexistence of particularistic groups is likely and that "this coexistence will be impossible without the assertion of values that transcend the identities of all of them." (Laclau, 1994, p.5) suggests that he has come a long way from the politics of hegemony where antagonism, rather than difference, counted for all.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Laclau and Mouffe's work in the 1980s was a significant contribution to contemporary political thought. Their critique of Marxism and consequent pursuit of an anti-essentialist politics are emblematic of a wider political shift on the left that can conveniently labelled as a shift from Marxism to post-Marxism. In fact, the fate of Marxism as a political project was sealed during this period. Not only did many leading adherents move towards a variety of post-Marxist positions but the credibility of Marxism as a political enterprise was compromised by the the political fragmentation of the working class, the collapse of Communist regimes in eastern Europe, and Communist parties in the west.

Laclau and Mouffe's shift was the result of a twofold process. Firstly, they came to a realisation based on their extensive and detailed critique of Marxist theory that no matter how sophisticated a Marxist position they adopted, and no matter to what extent they embraced a non-reductionist position, Marxism was irrevocably essentialist and determinist. The working class would always be granted political centrality as an agent of change as a result of the structural primacy of the economic.

The consequence of this is that secondly, Marxism was unable to provide them with a vehicle for understanding the political importance of the new social movements (NSMs). The politics of class, channelled through parliamentary political parties and the representatives of organised labour are no longer capable of expressing the interests of all groups and all people. New subject positions have emerged and the project of the left must be to democratise the field of political struggle by recognising a plurality of political identities. It is for these reasons that their work has been described as

making an important contribution to our understanding of "...the importance of micropolitics, new social movements, and new strategies of social transformation..." (Best and Kellner, p.263)

This prioritisation of new political identities and new social movements places Laclau and Mouffe in the tradition of a set of theories that can best be described by the general term theories of post-industrial society. Laclau and Mouffe's 'early period' contains the thesis that the post-war period has witnessed a shift towards post-industrialism, or postmodernism as some would have it. It should be noted that a cluster of terms are used in connection with this societal transformation and we can understand the designations 'post-Fordism', 'disorganized capitalism' as referring to the same range of phenomena. One other characterisation of these changes is 'New Times' a designation proposed by the journal Marxism Today, which holds that;

"...Britain and other advanced capitalist societies are increasingly characterised by diversity, differentiation and fragmentation, rather than homogeneity, standardisation and the economies and organisations of scale which characterised modern mass societies. This is the essence of the so-called transition from 'Fordism', which defined the experience of modernity in the first two-thirds of the 20th century, to 'post-Fordism'.(Hall and Jacques, p.12)

'New Times' is an umbrella term for the many economic, political and social changes characteristic of late capitalism, and was coined to embrace the

"...new global interdependence, an emergent post-Fordism in production and consumption, a decline in the dominance of manufacturing and traditional class politics, and so on..." (Boyne and Rattansi, p.19)

The 'New Times' formulation is especially pertinent in the context of Laclau and Mouffe's work because as Osborne points out 'The Manifesto for New Times' received "Laclau's endorsement" (Osborne, p.222), in recognition of the parallels with his own work.

In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Laclau and Mouffe describe the emergence of new political identities commensurate with the type of changes associated with 'New Times'. They talk about "...an avalanche of historical mutations...", such as

"...the new feminism, the protest movements of ethnic, national and sexual minorities, the anti-institutional ecology struggles waged by marginalised layers of the population, the anti-nuclear, the atypical forms of social struggle in countries on the capitalist periphery - all these imply an extension of social conflictuality to a wide range of areas, which creates the potential, but no more than the potential, for an advance towards more free, democratic and egalitarian societies."
(Laclau and Mouffe, p.1)

This establishes Laclau and Mouffe's alignment with new social movements; the politics of protest, identity and lifestyle which are incredibly varied in content but can be attributed a core commonality from their non-productivist origins. Thus, the newness of NSMs is derived from their difference from the more 'traditional' form of class politics.

In a similar vein, in New Reflections Laclau acknowledges the 'disorganized capitalism' thesis described by Lasch and Urry, the main features of which include; the internationalization of capital, a deconcentration of capital/ decline in cartels, an increased separation between industrial and finance capital, the replacement of

Taylorism with more flexible forms of organisation, and a growth in the service sector.

Laclau and Mouffe realised that these movements has substantial potential to transform democratic societies and were the emerging political potential in the post-war period. They calculated that these movements, partly as a result of their diversity, and partly as a result of their non-productivist origins, were never going to be articulated to the class struggle.

These wide-ranging societal changes are at one point summarised by Mouffe in the following way.

"Since the Second World War Britain and the other advanced capitalist countries had seen the expansion of capitalist relations into most spheres of social life, and this has entailed the emergence of new antagonisms and new forms of struggle against these relations of domination. " (Mouffe, interviewed in Socialist Review: 66, 1982)

In this sense the era of class politics had come to an end. Anti-colonial struggles, civil rights movements, environmental concerns, the womens movement, campaigns for homosexual equality and the protests of oppressed minorities in the countries of advanced capitalism were of a different nature to the movements spawned by the class struggles of the earlier part of the twentieth century. Whereas the trade union movement, the party political wing of the labour movement and various working class campaigns for employment for example, were all centred on the workplace and employment, NSMs rarely are. They are more frequently the result of conflicts in the sphere of consumption rather than production. Political identity now has a range of foci; rather than a single identity derived from an insertion into the productive process we have a situation where multiple identities are possible as

a result of our roles as workers and consumers, as well as our gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation, for example. The lesson to be drawn from this is that these changes have led to the foundation of numerous new antagonisms, not all of them economic of course; antagonisms are no longer generated solely around the worker/capitalist axis.

"Today it is not only as a seller of labour-power that the individual is subordinated to capital, but also through his or her incorporation into a multitude of other social relations: culture, free time, illness, education, sex and even death."
(Laclau and Mouffe, p.161)

That Laclau and Mouffe saw the transformatory potential of these movements early on is one way in which their shift from Marxism to post-Marxism can be understood. Their shift was also facilitated by changes within Marxism itself. Laclau in particular was heavily influenced by structuralist Marxism, particularly the work of Althusser. This interest in structuralism also extended to the work of the post-structuralist French thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida and Lacan whose work is incompatible with Marxism. In fact, as we have seen, their influence assisted Laclau and Mouffe with their critique of Marxism, and consequently their rejection of it.

Their interest in French post-structuralism and reformulations of Marxism in pursuit of a politics that could embrace NSMs enables us to bracket them with others working in the field of postmodernism. Laclau and Mouffe make a deliberate move away from Marxism in their collaborative venture Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, the main purpose of which is to theorise the means by which collective identity is constructed given that the working class is no longer granted ontological centrality. Moreover, in order to do this they "...provide strong

critiques of modernity and much modern theory, while undertaking a postmodern turn in theory which builds on and appropriates salvageable aspects of modern theory." (Best and Kellner, p.278)

Laclau and Mouffe's work of the Hegemony and Socialist Strategy period is by far the most interesting and influential that they have produced to date. Their interrogation of Marxism, out of which they developed the politics of hegemony, was a turning point in contemporary social and political theory. Their work gave impetus to the idea that anti-essentialism was the way forward for conceptualising NSMs, for example, as well as the theoretical foundation for a range of political positions which sought to displace the centrality of the working class. In this sense post-Marxism is not simply a strategy which applies to a critique of Marxism. It has a much wider applicability.

This thesis has acknowledged the cogent claims represented by Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. The importance of Marxist traditions to Laclau and Mouffe's ideas and the way these have been 'worked through' is reflected in the way that the 'early' work is viewed through a filter of Marxist concerns, and critically evaluated from Marxist positions. The 'later' work, seen in many ways as a deviation from their general position, is examined more from a post-Marxist stance, the result of the influence of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, and a further indication of the shift in position that their 'later' work represents. It is paradoxical that the theoretical position developed at the time of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, with its emphasis on the contingent nature of constructed collective identity, should subsequently permit the emergence of 'us and them', a quite different argument for establishing collective identity.

Theirs is a postmodern politics whose key markers are elements of post-structuralism, post-Marxism, and post-industrialism. However, in their attempt to theorise the role of NSMs their concerns have become ever more narrow. The world that Laclau and Mouffe are viewing is one that is in fact quite specific in its application. As mentioned previously, post-Marxism identifies closely with a cluster of post-industrial society theses which ultimately limit its usefulness. Their assumptions about the nature of (post)modern society are, in a post-communist world, too narrow in focus. The societies to which they relate only existed in 'the West' between 1945 and the mid-80s, if they existed at all. Not only has the world beyond these narrow confines changed in the past 10 years, but the very nature of these western or western European societies has changed too, as part of the same series of processes. The assumptions upon which Laclau and Mouffe's radical democratic politics are built are beginning to look outdated and restricted.

In fact the term post-industrial society (and its cognates) has always had too narrow a focus to represent the entire range of changes that were ongoing from 1945. To their rather restricted perspective should be added; the role of nationalism and the nation-state in shaping political concerns and social identities in the post-war period, the long struggle against communism in Eastern Europe, the impact of the growing influence of the EU, and the rise of the far right (and the decline in influence of the far left). All of these have been long-term features of post-war Europe and they are all necessary components of a much broader and more representative picture than those painted by either 'New Times' or Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist preoccupations.

A further effect of the broad swathe of changes associated with post-Communism is that the idea of Europe is once more the subject of debate. The changes associated with post-Communism correspond to what I have termed Laclau and Mouffe's 'later' period when there is a liberalisation of their theory and a search for a new constitutive outside, a search that involves demonstrating the congruence between Europe and democracy. In other words, they have perceived the need to establish a new theoretical ground on which their ideas could have an application. It is not so much that Laclau and Mouffe had a strongly developed notion of Europe in their early work, rather the case that the loss of the clearly demarcated terrain of the post-industrial society, meant that a new arena had to be found. That this new terrain happened to be construed as 'Europe' is a result of two processes. Firstly, Laclau and Mouffe were working closely with political traditions which they increasingly identified as European, and which acted as reference points. Secondly, the epicentre of the seismic political disturbances of 1989 and after was Eastern Europe which immediately placed Europe at the heart of the post-Communist world.

The social and political map of Europe has been fundamentally transformed by the events surrounding the collapse of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe. The fall of Communism was incredibly rapid given the apparent strength of those regimes over a forty year period. The impact of the wide-ranging changes set in motion by the transformation of the Soviet bloc - which itself is still very much in process - continues to shape the politics of Europe. However, the initial shock waves have now subsided leaving a very different Europe in their wake, and opening up the very question of 'what is Europe?'.

Many old certainties have gone. The east/west divide being perhaps the most obvious, and with it the simplistic dichotomous democratic division of Europe. This profound transformation has had a widespread influence on both the domestic politics of European nations, and the very notion of the nation itself, as witnessed by the changing role of the EU and the growth of regional movements. Italy has been perhaps the country most affected by the removal of the Iron Curtain; its domestic politics transformed by new orientations and priorities.

Corresponding to the sweeping effects of globalisation has been a growth in prominence of particularistic identities, especially ethnic and regional identities. In addition to the Northern Leagues in Italy there has been an upsurge in regionalism activity in Catalonia, Scotland and Belgium in the west of Europe, and in Serbia, Russia and Slovakia in the east. At the same time some collective identities have disappeared; Soviet, Yugoslav, East German, Communist, Czechoslovak. All of these changes can (in part) be attributed to the changing role of the nation-state. New European conflicts have emerged, in Yugoslavia as previously mentioned, but also out of the former Soviet Union have emerged conflicts between Chechnians and Russians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, for example. In Eastern Europe conflicts between Romanians and Moldavians. There has also been the peaceful break-up of Czechoslovakia.

To begin to understand these new European conflicts it is necessary to examine the processes of identity formation that are prevalent in contemporary Europe. This must necessarily focus on the increased importance of ethnicity, in the sense that it is both a causal factor in many of these conflicts, and also because it is increasingly the sine qua non of collective identity.

Ethnicity is a key component in the conflicts in Germany, Yugoslavia, Turkey and the former Soviet Union. In Chapter 7 it was argued that contemporary identity formation, including ethnicity, must be understood in relation to the changing role of the nation-state. The processes that are shaping Europe at the present time are not the same as those that were prominent in the mid-80s. Laclau and Mouffe's work on the politics of hegemony and ideas of deepening democracy stemmed from their analysis of post-war western Europe, and now look a little out of place in the post-'89, post-Communist version of Europe.

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