

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY: THE ANTINOMIES OF C.B. MACPHERSON

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'... what I have been trying to do all along (and am still trying to do). . . is to work out a revision of liberal-democratic theory, a revision which clearly owes a good deal to Marx, in the hope of making that theory more democratic while rescuing that valuable part of the liberal tradition which is submerged when liberalism is identified with capitalist market relations.'

C.B. MACPHERSON



There are two different ways in which creative intellectuals, who seek to make use of Marxism in their life's work, locate themselves in terms of Marxism.¹ One way is for the intellectual to see himself in his work as part of the revolutionary socialist movement. It means taking one's standpoint and judging the contribution one makes in terms of maximising the human potentialities of man as expressed in the revolutionary potentialities of the socialist movement taken as a whole. The role of the intellectual, on this view, is to help develop the strategy and tactics of the socialist movement in terms of his understanding of Marxism (and of the world through it); *and* to help develop Marxism in terms of the changing world and the needs of the socialist movement as it confronts this world. A second way of locating oneself in terms of one's knowledge of Marxism, entails taking a standpoint, locating oneself, outside of both Marxism and the revolutionary socialist movement. Here one seeks to bring the insight of Marxism to some other set of ideals or social entity and enrich them thereby. This second approach has been one which may be said to characterise the work of such intellectuals as Reinhard Bendix or C. Wright Mills or Barrington Moore Jr.² It has been epitomised most clearly, perhaps, in the work of C.B. Macpherson.

One should be careful not to caricature either approach. The first approach does not mean subordinating one's intellectual work to the momentary 'political line' of a Communist Party. It does not mean refraining from passing critical judgement *on any part* of the revolutionary socialist movement or on the inadequacies and errors of Marxism itself.

Precisely because this approach does not mean reducing science to ideology in the Mannheimian sense of the 'Party School', it does *not* mean cutting oneself off from, or merely attacking, other intellectuals who embrace an alternative, even an opposing, theory to Marxism. On the

contrary, the task of this Marxist intellectual is to maintain a scientific dialogue in order to *incorporate* the best of opposing and alternate theories, *into* Marxism. Gramsci:

In the formulation of historico-critical problems it is wrong to conceive of scientific discussion as a process at law in which there is an accused and a public prosecutor whose professional duty it is to demonstrate that the accused is guilty and has to be put out of circulation. In scientific discussion, since it is assumed that the purpose of discussion is the pursuit of truth and the progress of science, the person who shows himself most 'advanced' is the one who takes up the point of view that his adversary may well be expressing a need which should be incorporated, if only as a subordinate aspect, in his own construction. To understand and to evaluate realistically one's adversary's position and his reasons (and sometimes one's adversary is the whole of past thought) means precisely to be liberated from the prison of ideologies in the bad sense of the word—that of blind ideological fanaticism. It means taking up a point of view that is 'critical', which for the purpose of scientific research is the only fertile one.³

There is no less danger that the second approach may be caricatured, however. Its difference with the first approach *cannot* be captured in a presumed rejection of Marx's famous aphorism about the point of philosophy being to change the world, not just understand it. The work of Bendix or Mills or Barrington Moore is often explicitly directed toward contributing to progressive democratic social change and even justifying revolutionary change which overcomes human degradation. Much more clearly still, Macpherson's life work has been so directed, and justificatory. As we shall see, he uses Marx as an ethical benchmark to measure how far change has to go to realise human potential.

It is perhaps one of the ironies of the second approach, however, that it may sometimes lead one to be much more *tolerant* of Marxism's weaknesses and failures than one ought to be, or than the best practitioners of the first approach are. At least in the case of Macpherson, we shall see that, because he is speaking to liberal democratic theory's failure to accept the insights of Marxism, rather than to Marxism itself, he fails to address himself in any systematic way to those weaknesses in Marxism which have contributed, all too often in this century, to the perversion in practice of Marxism's ends. He recognises this perversion but, in terms of who he is talking to he is content to show that Marxism is not *necessarily* totalitarian and that its perversion is the result 'direct and indirect, of the failure of liberal-individualist theorists and defenders of an established capitalist society to see what impediments to (individual self-direction) are inherent in that society, and hence their failure to recommend, or permit to be taken, those actions required to remove those *impediments*'.⁴ Macpherson's argument appears to be that the dictatorships that have been produced in the name of socialism came about because of the tenacious opposition they faced from those opposed to changing capitalist social relations. But

surely Marxism must be capable of evolving means appropriate to its ends without being able to count on the support or acquiescence of its opponents. On the question of what Marxism and the socialist movement can accomplish itself in terms of developing appropriate theory and strategy to usher in socialist democracy, Macpherson has been largely silent.

By locating oneself outside of Marxism, by seeking 'to learn from it' in terms of one's location in liberal democratic theory, one fails to take *responsibility* for Marxism, through admitting and seeking to correct its own serious deficiencies. Macpherson justifies Marxism and the socialist movement in terms of its ends *to* liberal democratic theory, when what is needed, at least as much as justification to non-Marxists, is *improvement* of Marxism's and the revolutionary socialist movements' *means* (i.e., its theory and practice) to those ends. Insofar as this improvement may entail incorporating what is valuable in liberal democratic theory *into* Marxism, it is arguable that by concentrating on the liberal tradition, Macpherson implicitly is indicating the power and value of liberal freedoms to Marxists. But Marxist intellectuals of the first approach will want to be much more explicit in this regard. Paradoxically, they necessarily will have to be less tolerant of Marxism's weaknesses and errors than C.B. Macpherson has been.

II

C.B. Macpherson's project has been to demonstrate, on the basis of a sophisticated understanding of Marxian political economy and ethics, that liberal democratic theory must, to be true to its claim to the ethic of the full and equal development of individual human capacities, be prepared to accept that the impediments of capitalist society to this goal—the absence of free and equal access to the means of life and labour—must go by the board. That his critique of liberal democracy is rooted in his understanding *via* Marxism of the necessary operation of capitalist relations of production seems to me absolutely clear from all his major works. Because he addresses himself to, and locates himself in, the liberal democratic tradition in terms of the ethic he asks it to live up to, there has developed, however, a rather misdirected charge that he does not employ a Marxian mode of analysis in his work. In response to this, a student of Macpherson's, Victor Svacek, undertook a fulsome demonstration (on the basis of a comprehensive reading of Macpherson's whole *oeuvre* up to 1976) that Macpherson was in every sense employing a Marxian mode of analysis *except to the point* of accepting the *necessity* of a violent proletarian revolution. This was a judgement which Macpherson himself readily accepted, although he questioned whether the necessity of violent change was in fact a view which Marx or Engels themselves held.' Not surprisingly, perhaps given the subsequent publication of *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*, where Macpherson still located his project in terms of

fulfilling liberal democracy's promise, the issue of Macpherson's Marxism has not gone away.

In an essay in *Socialist Register* 1978 another Canadian political theorist, Ellen Wood, argued that what Macpherson brings to a critique of liberal democracy is uninformed by the essential tenets of Marxian analysis, and is, moreover, virtually *incompatible with such an analysis*. Largely on the basis of a discussion of *The Life and Times* and one earlier article ('Post Liberal Democracy'), Wood concluded that Macpherson in the grand tradition of Anglo-Saxon radicalism and social democracy, has been 'seduced' by liberalism's mystifications of capitalist *society*.⁶ Were she to have rested her case simply on Macpherson accepting as genuine liberalism's claim, as expressed *via* Mill and Green, to pursue 'the highest and most harmonious development of (man's) powers to a complete and consistent whole'" she would be on safe ground, although Macpherson's own demonstration that this claim remained inconsistently combined, even in Mill and Green, with the acceptance of capitalist market society, would need to be stressed as well. But Wood goes further, much further. She argues that Macpherson's seduction by liberalism goes so far as to his 'accepting capitalism on its own terms' (i.e., liberal theory) and that 'his account of capitalism differs very little from conventional portraits by apologists for capitalism'. This argument is based on the assertions: a) that Macpherson means by 'class inequality' and 'capitalist market relations' nothing more than the Weberian (and, one might say, Millsian) unequal competition over goods and services, to the exclusion of the understanding of class as a *relation of production* in which surplus extraction and domination are inscribed; and b) that by virtue of his characterisation of the contemporary 'pluralist-elitist' model of democracy as 'substantially accurate' as 'a description of the actual system now prevailing in Western liberal democratic nations', Macpherson 'confirms that he shares its most fundamental premises and is unable—or unwilling—to confront in more than the most superficial ways the consequences of class power and the nature of the state in a class *society*'.⁷ Because I detect traces here of Gramsci's 'public prosecutor', it may be difficult to avoid the posture of acting as Macpherson's unsolicited defence attorney in what immediately follows. My main concern, however, is to clear the way for my own critique of Macpherson which is based on other, and less sweeping, grounds.

As against Macpherson, Wood contends that Marxian class analysis involves understanding that capitalism is 'the most perfect form of class exploitation: the complete separation of the producers from the means of production and the concentration in private hands of the capacity for direct *surplus-extraction*'.⁸ But this has *always* been the centrepiece of Macpherson's analysis, so much so that one faces an embarrassment of riches when searching for an appropriate quotation to make the point. (Indeed, one hesitates to quote any one passage at all, lest it be thought

that the quote is unique rather simply indicative of the *basis* of all of Macpherson's work.) In Macpherson's view, there are three assumptions that are basic to Marx and Marxism, all of which he accepts, but only two of which liberal theory accepts. These assumptions are:

(a) that the human essence is to be realized fully only in free, conscious, creative activity; (b) that human beings have a greater capacity for this than has ever hitherto been allowed to develop; and (c) that a capitalist society denies this essential humanity to most of its inhabitants, in that it reduces human capacities to a commodity which, even when it fetches its exchange value in a free competitive market, receives less than it adds to the value of the product, thus increasing the mass of capital, and capital's ability to dominate those whose labour it buys.

This is the philosophic underpinning of **Marx's** whole enterprise. It is difficult for a liberal to fault (a) and (b), the assumptions about the nature and capacities of man: virtually the same position was taken by, for instance, Mill and Green. And it is shortsighted for the liberal not to give serious consideration to the validity of (c)—the postulate of the necessarily dehumanizing nature of capitalism—for that does not depend on the ability of **Marx's** labour theory of value to explain market prices (which has been the main complaint about his economic theory) but only on *his path-breaking argument that the value produced by human labour-power (i.e., by its capacity of working productively) exceeds the cost of producing that labour-power, the excess going to the increase of capital.*¹⁰ This position is more difficult to fault than is the adequacy of his price theory.

Anyone who confronts seriously Macpherson's concept of the 'net transfer of powers' cannot fail to see that it is entirely founded on the theory of surplus value, only *extending* it to point out that, in addition to the material value transferred by the labourer to the capitalist in the process of production in the form of value over and above that of what it takes to reproduce the wage of the exchange contract in material terms, there is an additional *loss* to the labourer. This takes the form of the non-material 'value that cannot be transferred but is nevertheless lost by the man who, lacking access [to the means of production] has to sell his labour power, namely the value of the satisfaction he could have got from using it himself if he had been able to use it himself'. *And* it takes the form also of a certain loss of his 'extra-productive powers': 'that is, his ability to engage in all sorts of activities beyond those devoted to the production of goods for consumption, to engage in activities which are simply a direct satisfaction to him as doer, as an exerter of (and enjoyer of the exertion of) his human capacities, and not a means to other (consumer) satisfactions.' It is through this concept, clearly derived from **Marx's** theory of value, that Macpherson, unlike so many *Telos* Marxists on the one hand and structuralists on the other, is able to see 'that there is no dichotomy between Marx the humanist and Marx the analyst of *capitalism*'.¹¹

Macpherson affirmed in 1976 that this concept 'has been prominent in most of what I have written in the last fifteen years' and suggested that he personally 'made it a test of my critics' understanding of my analysis

whether they understand the concept of the net transfer of powers'.¹³ That a Marxist political theorist like Wood should have missed it entirely is, to put it mildly, surprising. But to be fair to Wood, she concentrates mainly on *The Life and Times* and 'Post-Liberal Democracy', although she makes claims well beyond them. Could it be that in these texts Macpherson has adopted a use of class and of capitalist market relations which omits the 'net transfer of powers' inscribed in capitalist production relations as a result of the separation of the worker from the means of production? To be sure, Macpherson does not explicitly use the term in either text but his understanding of surplus value should have been unmistakable in his analysis, at least for a Marxist who was looking for evidence of it. Wood quotes a passage from 'Post-Liberal Democracy', where Macpherson defines capitalism 'as the system in which production is carried on without authoritative allocation of work or rewards, but by contractual relations between free individuals (each possessing some resource be it only his own labour-power) who calculate their most profitable course of action and employ their resources as that calculation dictates'.¹⁴ To Wood, this descriptive definition proves that Macpherson shares the fundamental premises of bourgeois economics, including marginal utility theory. Unfortunately, she neglects to mention that one can find passages in Marx's own writings very similar to this one, as a descriptive statement of the contrast between a competitive, contractual market system of production and a coercive, non-competitive system of production. Were either Marx or Macpherson unaware of the fact that *surplus extraction* was taking place *via* economic relations in the first case and extra-economic relations in the other (with market relations disguising what before had been open—the appropriation of labour's productive efforts), she might have a case against both of them. But this is clearly absurd. The whole first half of Macpherson's article—right up to the page previous to the quotation—entails a critique of marginal utility theory, not just in terms of unequal distribution of resources and income, but in terms of the *necessity* (which Mill did not recognise) of the 'degradation of wage-labour' under capitalist production, in terms of the 'concentration of capital ownership', in terms of (not the quantitative but) the '*qualitative* differences in utilities' maximised, and in terms of the 'massive inequality between owners and workers, an inequality which stood in the way of any extensive development and fulfillment of individual capacities', which, in his view, cannot be measured simply in terms of (manufactured) consumer wants. If he maintains the definition of capitalism he does, it is to show that the process of production in question remains capitalist in the monopoly era and with extensive state regulation. This development of capitalism further undermines the justificatory nature of classical and neo-classical economics, but it does not 'alter the basic nature' of the system, in that the actors in the system still relate to each other in terms of competition for commodities (including

labour power) and access to the means of production, and 'the driving force' of the system remains the competitive 'maximisation of profit' among corporate giants: 'for it is only by accumulating profit that the corporation can continue to **grow**'.¹⁵ Without seeing capitalism as a competitive market system, in this way, one cannot employ **Marx's** political economy in the modern era. Macpherson sees this. Many 'state monopoly capital' theorists do not.

As for *The Life and Times*, he makes himself even clearer, and explicitly rejects a liberal definition of class. 'Class', he writes, 'is understood here in terms of property: a class is taken to consist of those who stand in the same relations of ownership or non-ownership of productive land or capital. A somewhat looser concept of class, defined at its simplest in terms of rich and poor, or rich and middle and poor, has been prominent in political theory as far back as one likes to go. . .'.¹⁶ As for class inequalities under capitalism, what could be clearer than this: 'Mill was able to think that the capitalist principle was not in any way responsible for the existing inequitable distributions of wealth, income and power, and even to think it was gradually reducing them. What he failed to see was that the capitalist market relation enhances or replaces any original inequitable distribution, in that it gives to capital part of the value added by current labour, thus steadily increasing the mass of **capital**'.¹⁶

If Wood fails to see all this, it is perhaps because Macpherson, like Marx (and Gramsci's 'advanced' intellectual), also often pursues the logic of alternate theories in their own terms to show what is valuable in them and to show at the same time the serious inconsistencies in their own construction, which he challenges them to correct by incorporating **Marxian** assumptions. *To demonstrate a theory's inconsistency one must confront it on its own terms. To transcend it, one must move to an alternate problematic*, Wood consistently mistakes the one procedure with the **other** to make her case against Macpherson, nowhere more **conspicuously** than in her attack on his acceptance of pluralist-elitist theory as an accurate description of existing liberal democratic societies. In saying this, **Macpherson** is saying no more than that in terms of democracy defined narrowly (as the 'realist' school of Schumpeter and Dahl do), as merely 'a mechanism for choosing and authorising governments or in some other way getting laws and political decisions made', it is accurate, but only at the expense of denying any explanatory and **justificatory** problematic which defines democracy more broadly 'as a kind of society, a whole set of reciprocal relations between the **people**'.¹⁷ Wood upbraids Macpherson for adopting the use of the terms 'elite' and 'political system' rather than '**class**' and 'state', and for measuring the comparative effectiveness of demands between 'socio-economic' (i.e., income- and status-defined) classes in terms of unequal 'purchasing power' in the political 'market', rather than in terms of relations of domination and exploitation. What she fails

to see is that Macpherson adopts this terminology to be able to engage in a discussion with pluralist-democratic theory at all, to be able to show that as an explanatory and justificatory theory (and to some extent, as he makes clear, even as a descriptive model, since the elites whom the voters choose between can decide what are issues and non-issues), it fails *on its own terms*.¹⁸ Macpherson's *own* preferred political mode of analysis, for descriptive, explanatory and justificatory purposes, was already made clear in the text *before* he engaged with pluralist-elitism on its own terms:

I think it is not overstating the case to say that the chief function the party system has actually performed in Western democracies since the inception of a democratic franchise has been to blunt the edge of apprehended or possible class conflict, or if you like, to moderate and smooth over a conflict of class interests so as to save the existing property institutions and the market system from effective attack.¹⁹

This description is not necessarily inconsistent with Schumpeter's famous definition of democracy as 'that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote'.²⁰ But it is *better*, as a description, because of its explanatory and justificatory connections, and *can be shown to be better* by revealing the weaknesses of the pluralist-elitist model in terms of its correlate connections. Having done this, Macpherson can then return to his own model, later in the text, and say:

. . . underlying class division and opposition. . . requires that the political system, in order to hold the society together, be able to perform the function of continual compromise between class interests, and that function makes it impossible to have clear and strong lines of responsibility from the upper elected levels downwards.²¹

This is just to quote from *The Life and Times*. Had Wood bothered to look elsewhere in Macpherson's work, his position on modern liberal political science would have been even clearer:

What is lost sight of is that political power, being power over others, is used in any unequal society to extract benefit from the ruled for the rulers. Focus on the *source* of political power puts out of the field of vision any perception of the necessary *purpose* of political power in any unequal society, which is to maintain the extractive power of the class or classes which have extractive *power*.²²

Is Ellen Wood justified, then, in making the charge that C.B. Macpherson has 'no conception of the state as an institution whose function it is to sustain a particular social order, that is a particular set of production relations and a particular system of class dominance'? The answer, manifestly, is NO.

III

All of this now leaves us where we began: with the question of why Macpherson, despite his critique of liberal democracy as a theory and a system in terms of a Marxian mode of analysis, chooses to continue to locate himself in terms of the liberal democratic rather than the Marxist project, and the implications thereof. Wood herself began with this puzzle:

Macpherson's account of the foundation of liberal democracy as a class ideology makes the rest of the argument rather puzzling. If the doctrine is based on class-division one must question Macpherson's characterization of its ethical position as a commitment to the free and equal development of all individuals. For that matter, one might wonder why he chooses to single out liberal democracy as the embodiment of this cherished principle when a doctrine opposed to the class-nature of liberal democracy—that is, Marxism—is more centrally and genuinely concerned with this ethical commitment than is liberalism in any of its forms. . . . It is typical of Macpherson's approach that he is often able to treat capitalism as if it were merely the (temporary) instrument of liberal democracy, or even of liberal democratic thinkers and their ethical goal.²⁴

As we have seen, however, her answer to the puzzle was incorrect. It is not because Macpherson rejects the essential tenets of the Marxian analysis of capitalism that he locates himself within liberal democracy. Macpherson explicitly accepts these tenets, and uses them in his *critique* of liberal democracy. This not only includes the theory of value but also (as Wood implies it does not) the acceptance of the claim that it is *Marx, more than Mill or Green*, who provides the most genuine formulation of the ethic of the full and equal development of all individuals. It is Macpherson's position that the measure of a society's approximation to this goal is not some existing or previously existing standard of achievement in this regard, but the extent to which it approximates the *socially possible* attainment of this goal. 'A democratic theory must measure men's present powers down from the maximum rather than up from a previous amount because it asserts that the criterion of a democratic society is that it maximises men's present powers.'²⁵ And what is that maximum for Macpherson? To him, it is *obviously* that provided by Marx. 'The Marxian vision of the ultimately free classless society offers, *of course*, the greatest conceivable opportunity for each individual to use and develop his human attributes.'²⁶

What then is going on? Why does Macpherson not locate himself in terms of the Marxian rather than the liberal democratic project? Macpherson himself gives two reasons, one related to liberal democratic, the other to Marxian, theory. First, he does not accept 'the proposition that liberal democracy must always embrace the capitalist market society with its class-division'.²⁷ It has done so historically, he argues, because capitalism appeared to theorists like Mill and Green the only way to establish the necessary material basis (to overcome the economy of scarcity) for the

fully democratic society. Secondly, he rejects that 'one-sixth' (as Svacek calls it) of Marxian theory which propounds a necessary revolutionary transition to socialism. As he puts it:²⁸

My reason for not accepting the revolutionary theory as necessary is fairly simple. It is not. . . that I consider the possible cost in terms of denial of individual freedom to be always too high. That is a judgement that must be made for each time and place. I do not think it can be made in advance. But to assert the necessity of forcible revolution is to do just that. It is no doubt true that the creation of a good society requires the conscious and active participation of those who are to live in it, but it does not follow that in all circumstances that must be forcible revolutionary participation.

Now, it does not seem to me that either of these reasons can be taken too seriously. In the first place, it is notable that the 'overcoming of scarcity through capitalism' argument is one much more made by Marx, rather than Mill or Green, and one that Macpherson apparently derives from Marx. As he himself shows, both Mill and Green never adequately resolved the tension (I would say contradiction) in their works between their developmental theory and their acceptance of capitalist society. Indeed he suggests that they did not *understand* the political economy of capitalism. ** Were they to have understood it, would they have rejected it? We cannot know this. But is Macpherson really suggesting that those in power in capitalist society would reject the foundation of their power even if their greatest political theorists did so? The democratic element in liberal-democracy, he is under little illusion, derives less from the necessary requirements of capitalism as a system, and less from the theorists of 'developmental' democracy, than from the *organisation of the working class*. 'It cannot be too often recalled that liberal-democracy is strictly a capitalist phenomenon. Liberal-democratic institutions appeared only in capitalist countries, and only after the free market and the liberal state have produced a working class conscious of its strength and insistent on a voice.'³⁰ No, on these grounds alone one would have to expect Macpherson to locate himself, not with Mill and the contemporary successors to Gladstone, but with Marx and the contemporary working class successors to the Chartists (i.e., the working class socialist movement).

As for the second reason, this will not stand up to serious scrutiny, and Macpherson (unlike Svacek) knows it can't. He says himself that 'there is some doubt how essential a part of Marx's theory was the theory of revolutionary transition'.³¹ Although he believes that the reasons Marx gave for the possibility of a peaceful transition in Holland, England and the United States (i.e., the lack of standing armies and the decentralisation of state power) no longer hold, he contends that once the possibility is recognised, it is entirely arguable that different conditions will establish the possibility anew. In any case, Macpherson not only admits that a

forcible revolution does not *necessarily* entail too great a cost in terms of individual freedom, he explicitly argues that in a great many circumstances the balance of cost and advantages favours forcible revolution, precisely because his concept of the net transfer of powers indicates that more is gained from the revolution than the reclamation of the surplus previously appropriated by the capitalists (because the previous absolute loss of non-material powers due to the treatment of labour as a commodity no longer obtains). If a Stalinist dictatorship negates these advantages, he explains this in terms of either a) the necessity of forced industrialisation in an economy of scarcity, or b) the intransigence of those in power in liberal democratic society toward a peaceful revolution.³² As we shall see, I don't think this will do as a defence of socialism. But the very fact that it is offered, suggests that his self-location within the liberal democratic tradition cannot rest primarily on the question of violent or peaceful change.

So again, what is going on? Two more possibilities have been suggested to explain Macpherson's position, one by Macpherson himself, one by Wood. Macpherson claims that to provide an alternative theory of transition to the classical Marxism would involve a great deal of empirical study of the 'actual and possible forces making for and against change'. And he adds: 'I do not regard this as my *métier*. . . I have thought myself better occupied with seeking to improve the theoretical *understanding*.'³³ This is a much more plausible explanation of his position than he offered on the other two grounds, but it still doesn't resolve the question. One still can ask why he doesn't address himself then to Marxist *political theory*, to improve *its theoretical understanding*, which, as we shall see, it terribly much needs. Indeed, Macpherson *after* offering this explanation in 1976, explicitly advised neo-Marxist theorists of the state to turn their attention from political economy to political philosophy (albeit still in terms of probing 'the limits of the possible relation of the capitalist society and state to essential human needs and capacities'). He still resolutely placed himself, however, with the theorists of the liberal democratic, rather than Marxist, tradition.³⁴

The other plausible explanation is that of Wood:

It could conceivably be argued that the contradictions in his position result merely from *tactical considerations*. He does often write as if his primary object were to persuade liberals that some kind of socialism follows naturally from their convictions, by representing his own brand of socialism as an extension of liberalism. He often appears to be self-consciously addressing an audience that needs to be persuaded that socialism—a doctrine which, apparently, must parade in sheep's clothing as something called 'participatory democracy'—is the last and best form of liberal democracy, preserving what is essential and valuable in the liberal tradition and devoid of its evils. Such a conspiratorial interpretation of Macpherson's argument would suggest that he *intentionally obscures* as much as he reveals about the nature of both capitalism and liberalism.³⁵

Without accepting for a moment Wood's judgement that Macpherson *does*, in fact, obscure as much as he reveals, I think there is a great deal in this explanation. Wood, of course, rejects it herself, in favour of her conclusion that his very *analysis* of capitalism is fundamentally liberal, and thus is merely an unusually critical variant of pluralist democratic apologetics. We have seen that this view is insupportable. But, if we accept the alternative explanation, we still have to ask why Macpherson thinks it best to adopt the tactic he does. The reason I think lies in a whole complex of factors related to what Macpherson accepts and rejects in Marxist *political* theory.

IV

Macpherson's main approach to Marxist political theory can be characterised in one word: defensive. That is, his main interest appears to be to demonstrate, against theorists like Berlin and Friedman, or against popular conceptions of the effects of a social transformation, that tyranny is not *necessarily* the result. He argues against Friedman that the absence of a capitalist market does not mean that a socialist state must be incapable of providing the conditions for 'effective political advocacy'. And he argues against Berlin that a commitment to 'positive liberty' in the sense of individual self-mastery does not mean that men must be forced into a single, monist pattern which denies human diversity. He asserts that it is possible, and that Marx and Lenin thought it was, that once men were allowed equal freedom 'there would emerge not a pattern but a proliferation of many ways and styles of life which would not be prescribed and which would not necessarily conflict'; '... a society where diverse, genuinely human (not artificially contrived) desires can be simultaneously fulfilled'. As against this, he characterises Berlin's 'negative liberty' as one where 'chains, enslavement, direct physical domination are counted in. But domination by withholding the means of life and labour is not: it is put outside the province of liberty *altogether*.'³⁶

These arguments are powerful and uplifting, but they scarcely put the more detailed and daunting questions of the Marxist political theory of transition to the test. For insofar as Macpherson (and Marx) admit that the exploited may 'hug their chains' by internalising *domination*,³⁷ and insofar as he admits that socialist revolutions have commonly led to dictatorship in the twentieth century, the question remains of how Marxist political theory stands up not just in terms of the *possibility*, but in terms of suggesting the likely basis for the *reality* of a transition that will usher in a democratic socialist order.

The central concept of the classical Marxist political theory of the transition is the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. It expresses not one, but two ideas, indissolubly linked together in Marx, Engels and Lenin, which are, nevertheless, in a state of severe *tension* (if not contradiction) with

one another. In one respect, the concept means the coming to power of the working class in the sense that the bourgeoisie is in power in capitalist society. Insofar as this includes the vast majority of the people, it is referred to in the classics as 'mass democracy', 'democracy taken to its limits', etc., and conceived in conjunction with the democratic forms (election to administrative posts, a popular militia, workers' cooperatives, communally elected deputies, recall, etc.), described by Marx in *The Civil War in France* and, with the addition of the Soviets, by Lenin in *State and Revolution*. To Macpherson, it made perfect sense to see the concept in terms of democracy. Insofar as (pre-liberal) democracy originally 'meant rule by or in the interests of a hitherto oppressed class', and insofar as this new class state was to abolish capitalism and lay the basis for a classless society, to call this dictatorship 'democracy was not outrageous at all: it was simply to use the word in its original and then normal sense'.³⁸

But there is another side to the concept which expresses the idea of dictatorship in a way other than direct rule by the working class. It is unclear that Marx would have accepted that the notion of such rule 'in the interests of' rather than 'by' the hitherto oppressed class was 'democracy'. At certain times Lenin apparently did, as Macpherson immediately makes clear. But even for Marx the concept expressed the notion of *coercion* in the transition. In the class struggle of the transition period the proletarian state was to play the role against the bourgeoisie which the bourgeois state hitherto played in terms of its repressive function against the proletariat. Even if the point was to lay the groundwork for a classless society, it was necessary 'to appeal for a time to force' (Marx) against the counter-revolutionary class. The tension in the concept arises not so much in the question of whether the taking of power is to be peaceful, or violent, as in the question of how this coercive aspect of the state was to be married with the forms of democratic participation of soviets, communes, recalls, etc.; and if it could not be, how one could move to establish such participation once power—and the institutions of state control and repression—were consolidated.

Now, insofar as one treated, as Lenin did in *State and Revolution*, the liberal democratic state *simply* as the 'dictatorship of the bourgeoisie', whereby it is alleged that the previous state excluded the exploited from participation, and the proletarian state is simply excluding the exploiters from participation, the tension seems to go away. But this device, if good rhetoric, is poor theory. For the question is: how can one evolve principles of *political* (not social) exclusion which allow working class participation and deny the same to the exploiters and their many supporters (without which they would not constitute a serious political force)? As Luxemburg pointed out to Lenin at the time, his 'simplified view' of the capitalist state 'misses the most essential thing: bourgeois class rule has no need for the political training and education of the entire mass of the people, at least

not beyond certain narrow limits. But for the proletarian dictatorship that is the life element, the very air without it is not able to exist'. And she continued: 'Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion. . . bureaucracy becomes the active element. . .—a dictatorship to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians.'³⁹

Nor does the matter end here. For it is not just a matter of political theory, but of political economy at the same time. In a capitalist society the short-term demands of the working class are not inconsistent with the long-term interests of the working class in socialism even if they are not themselves revolutionary. For to engage in struggle over distribution of the surplus, over conditions of work, over control over the labour process not only weakens capital, but also develops the organisation and consciousness of the proletariat. In the transitional socialist state, however, long-term and short-term interests are dissociated. The realisation of short-term material interests undermines the ability of the socialist state to consolidate its power, to cope with economic sabotage by the reactionary forces at home and abroad, to lay the basis for socialist economic growth. Precisely because of this phenomenon, there is a tension between the need to restrict the self-organisation of the working class (lest it compromise the revolution) and the need to allow it to flourish in order to provide the political, participatory satisfactions which will compensate for the economic sacrifice.⁴⁰ To be sure, the tension is lessened considerably in a society which is industrially advanced at the moment of transition. But it does not go away. This is not only because scarcity is inevitably a relative concept, and not only because the question of global scarcity must impinge on socialism in a highly industrialised state; it is also, it is more, because we are talking of a transitional period, in which, unless the transition takes place simultaneously throughout the advanced capitalist world, the new society will find itself cut off from that global capitalist system which provides so much of the basis of its material sustenance. Economic hardship, in a relative sense, is virtually inevitable for the majority of the population of a transitional society for a certain period.

What this means is that the tension in Marxist political theory between discipline and consent is not there by chance. The weakness of Marxist political theory is that it has not dwelt on it enough. If it decides that the balance must be tilted toward discipline, it must make damn clear how it thinks the organisations of control, superimposed from above, whether party or state, can eventually be democratised, or specify the foundations for their democratisation that can be laid in the period of discipline.

C.B. Macpherson is certainly cognisant of all this. But he shares with Marxist political theory many of those elements that get in the way of posing this problem centrally. All too often Macpherson has adopted a

rigid economic determinism when considering this tension in the revolutionary project. This was seen most clearly in *The Real World of Democracy* (1965), where the political evolution of the Soviet Union since 1917 was entirely accounted for in terms of 'material scarcity', without even so much as a bow to the distinctions between Stalinism and Leninism, let alone any possible defects in Leninism. He granted that the 'vanguard route' is 'exceedingly dangerous', but 'in the circumstances we are talking about, there seems no less dangerous way'. The 'vanguard state', moreover, should have no great difficulty in transforming itself into a democratic state once material scarcity, the old class system and 'the desires and value judgements of the people have so changed. . . that the people will freely support the kind of society that the vanguard state has brought into being'.⁴¹ Macpherson gave some indication, moreover, that he thought the Soviet Union was tending towards achieving this and democratising itself. In any case, he contended that in principle the one-party state could be democratic provided: '(1) that there is full intra-party democracy, (2) that party membership is open, and (3) that the price of participation in the party is not a greater degree of activity than the average person can reasonably be expected to contribute.' The case is plausible, but his assertion that 'the first two conditions can scarcely be met until the old class society has been replaced',⁴² leaves one gaping. Excluding the exploiters from participation, gives way all too quickly to the virtual exclusion of democratic participation in the transitional political process, even through intra-party democracy.

In subsequent, less popular writings in the 1960's, Macpherson's position became clearer. He granted that Stalin's Russia was the classic case where the vanguard went 'the whole way to the perverted doctrine, the doctrine that only they can know, and that it is sufficient for them to know'.⁴³ (He still seemed to entertain the notion that the USSR was democratising itself, citing repeatedly Khrushchev's 20th Congress speech which he apparently took as an abandonment of 'the doctrine of the class war and proletarian dictatorship'.⁴⁴) But what is most important, he attributed Stalinism simply to 'the long-continued and intensive refusal of the beneficiaries of unequal institutions on a world-wide scale to permit any moves to alter the institutions in the direction of more nearly equal powers'. Thus, he added to the material scarcity explanation of Stalinism, the intransigence of the bourgeoisie as a factor, seeing this either in terms of capitalist 'encirclement or cold-war' or in terms of the origins of the regime in revolution or civil war. (The only other possible cause he mentioned was that a country with a high level of development might be subject to 'external domination', e.g. Czechoslovakia.⁴⁵ But he did not raise the question, on which Marxist political theory has no handles, of what one socialist state was doing dominating another.) His argument, then, was (1) that scarcity (and the stunting of individuals by an

exploitative society) often *necessitates* 'coercion not only of those who upheld the old order but also, in some measure and for some time, of those whose support and effort are needed to install the new order'; (2) that this is not a sufficient condition for any advance to full liberty but is a necessary one; and (3) that such an illiberal regime (he cites the examples of new African states) can still make it its business 'to develop grass roots participation'. But in terms of explaining why the latter does not happen, and why resort to the 'perverted doctrine' (epitomised by Stalinism) has been so common in our century, he argued that the problem is not due to revolutionary theory but 'it is due rather to a specific failure of liberal theory, and of those who hold power in the societies which justify themselves by liberal theory, to take account of the concrete circumstances which the growing demand for fuller human realisation has encountered and will encounter'. He means, as we have seen, the bourgeoisie's refusal to 'recommend or permit to be taken, the action required to remove [capitalist] impediments'.⁴⁶

The question is whether Marxist political theory can be let off the hook in this way? Were he to have taken some *responsibility* for Marxist theory, he would surely have had to go further to ask, at least, whether the theory of the Leninist vanguard party, which is so widespread through the world, does not display some *internal* deficiencies unexplainable by material scarcity and the intransigence of the bourgeoisie? In response to Friedman's complaint that Western socialists have not 'made even a respectable start at developing the institutional arrangements that would permit freedom under socialism', Macpherson replied that their time is better spent seeking ways to minimise the cold war and the likelihood of civil war. But he agreed that institutional arrangements should not be neglected and immediately went to the heart of the matter: the question of the party. He argued that there should be 'no ubiquitous party or that, if there is, such a party should consistently put a very high value on political freedom (which stipulation can scarcely be set out as an institutional arrangement)'. In other words, as he baldly put it: 'Where there's a will there's a way. . .'. So we move from the extreme of economic determinism to the extreme of sheer voluntarism (only conditioned by the 'circumstantial forces that are going to shape that will'.)⁴⁷ Only an intellectual who does not see Marxism and its revolutionary project as his personal business can afford such theoretical luxury. (Even then it is hardly likely to be convincing to liberals and thus reduce the likelihood of civil war or cold war). To take this stand is to negate the need for Marxist political theory, to reduce it entirely to political economy on the one hand and ethics on the other.⁴⁸

In a sense, however, all this now appears beside the point. For Macpherson, for all his justification of the trajectory of 'actually-existing socialism' in terms of material scarcity and capitalist resistance, came to

reject a Marxist theory of transition at some point in the mid-1960's. He did so not for the faults in it we have been suggesting, but because he came to reject its central ingredient: the theory of class struggle as the agency of change, and of the proletariat as the revolutionary class. Taking at their word the leaders of some new African states in the 1960's, he accepted their claim that their societies were classless, and that their one-party systems were appropriate to democracy. He found entirely plausible and worthy their apparent adoption of a Marxian humanist morality combined with their rejection 'as applicable to their countries or the contemporary world the Marxian theory of class struggle as the motor of history, nor the theory of the state as essentially an instrument of class domination, both before the proletarian revolution and in the post-revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat'.⁴⁹ As for the advanced capitalist societies, one position he took in *The Life and Times* seemed pretty well to sum up his view over the previous decade: that Marx's political theory rests on the premise of the development of capitalism sharpening the class consciousness of the working class and that since there is 'little evidence of this in prosperous Western societies today, where it has generally declined since Marx's day', Marx no longer provides 'a way out of our vicious circle'.⁵⁰

This uncritical attitude towards the rhetoric of African populist leaders, and this despair of the Western working class certainly entailed a sharp break with Macpherson's earlier writings. In his outstanding work of political economy, *Democracy in Alberta* (1953, 2nd ed., 1962), Macpherson had analysed the shortcomings of petit bourgeois radicalism. He argued that a radicalism that emanated only from a perception of unequal exchange at the level of the price system could not penetrate to an understanding of the necessary workings of capitalism as a system of production and could only produce a political thought of oscillation and confusion. He held the view at this time that only those that experienced the fundamental relations of exploitation in capitalist production, i.e., the working class, could evolve a 'positive class consciousness', and had in fact done so at crucial historical periods. Moreover, however socially homogeneous a quasi-colonial society appeared in relation to an advanced capitalist society, it could not be described as 'classless' so long as it remained 'a subordinate part of a mature capitalist economy'. And he concluded: 'In such a society a one-party state does not even theoretically meet the requirements of democracy'.⁵¹

The outcome of Macpherson's break with this view was that while continuing to employ Marxian political economy in his critique of liberal democracy, he dissociated himself from Marxism when addressing the question of transition to socialism. The result was that he lost the precision that he had credited Marx with introducing to the age-old (pre-liberal) notion of democracy. 'The old notion had been rather vague about how the liberation of a class was to be the liberation of humanity. Marx

gave it a new precision by relating it to the historical development of systems of production, and particularly of the capitalist system of production. The working class created by capitalism could liberate itself by taking political power.⁵² Losing that precision, Macpherson became almost as vague as the age-old tradition. Moreover, he was no longer able to provide a link between the capital-labour relation of exploitation as being at the heart of the 'net transfer of powers', and the specification of social forces making for revolutionary change. All this produced a vague conception of the 'whole people' of poor nations being exploited by foreign domination (and with the underlying problem apparently being removed 'once the imperial power has been driven out'). As for the West the precise location of the internal contradictions of the system generated by exploitation in the capital/labour relationship was displaced and Macpherson saw the challenge to the system being mainly *external*, in terms, moreover, of the 'moral advantage' of the Soviet Union and the Third World *vis-à-vis* the capitalist liberal democracies.⁵³

In his latest work, Macpherson has dropped this latter theme. One can only presume that the costs of his idealism became apparent as the 'moral advantage' of both the Third World and the USSR did not materialise. Perhaps he took account of some Marxist political economy of Africa.⁵⁴ As for the Soviet Union, his judgement is now unequivocal: 'If a revolution bites off more than it can chew democratically, it will chew it undemocratically.'⁵⁵ In any case, he now puts more stress on internal developments in capitalist countries: a growing consciousness of the costs of economic growth; the development of neighbourhood and community associations, and movements for democratic participation in the workplace; and a popular doubt about the ability of corporate capitalism to meet consumer expectations, which he explains in terms of traditional underconsumptionist crisis theory. There has surfaced a strange tension in his argument as pertains to the western working class: for on the one hand he argues that established trade union practice does nothing to increase workers' consciousness; on the other hand, he argues (in classical Marxist terms—just having rejected it a few pages before) that the economic crisis of the 1970's is leading to an erosion in earnings and increased trade union militancy and/or participation in communist or socialist parties. 'It is to be expected that working class participation in political and industrial action will increase and will be increasingly class conscious.'⁵⁶

It is difficult to know what to make of such contradictions, especially in light of the fact that in this book Macpherson finally does turn his attention, albeit very briefly, to the institutional arrangements of 'participatory democracy', a democracy still stringently defined in terms of socialism, one only possible 'in the measure that the capital/labour relation that prevails in our society has been fundamentally changed'.⁵⁷ He

proposes a pyramidal conciliar system of direct democracy at the base and delegate democracy at every level above. And he thinks it essential that this be combined with a competing party system which maintains the existing structure of government, but relies on the parties themselves to operate by pyramidal participation. What is significant is that this is not a model in which the revolutionary party plays a role at all. He envisages, apparently, that such a system might be introduced by a socialist/Marxist coalition similar to that of Allende in Chile (but which has broad control of the legislature as well as of the presidential executive). But he makes no statement about the necessary internal organisation of the parties in the pre-revolutionary period, and their links with the working class; and he does not specify what role they will have to play in terms of meeting his stipulation that there must be a strong and widespread popular commitment to the 'liberal democratic ethic'.

Wood is right when she says that Macpherson's political programme is 'far too sketchy to sustain close analysis'.⁵⁸ I believe she was also right, however, when she said that the contradictions in his position resulted from tactical considerations. But the tactical considerations apparently pertain to more than trying to convince the liberals that socialism is their true goal. They also, I suspect, pertain to Macpherson's overly defensive attitude to Marxist political theory, despite the weaknesses of that theory. Let me explain and conclude.

V

Let's face it. The lot of a Marxist political philosopher who attempts to raise seriously the question of the relationship between state and individual in general terms is not a happy one. Whatever one may think about the failings in the Marxist political theory of transition, there can be little doubt that the weakest part of Marxist political theory is its conception of the state in terms that go beyond class-divided society. Marxism simply does not have, as Wood herself argues and as I have argued before, a very credible theory of the relation between state and individual in socialist and communist society.⁵⁹ The 'withering away of the state' appears to rob it of the necessity of such a theory at all. But it does so only apparently, since the concept of the state employed here is a very special one. It means the state in the sense of an organ of class domination. But amidst inconsistent and loose usages in Marx and Engels, it is clear that they did not see the state only in this way. As Marx once put it (in a passing comment), even in 'despotic states, supervision and all-round interference by government involves both the performance of common activities arising from the nature of all communities, and the specific functions arising from the antithesis between the government and the mass of the people'.⁶⁰ References to the 'legitimate functions of the old government power', to 'social functions' in communist society 'analogous to

present state functions' are not uncommon, but are not systematically examined in light of the predominant concern with demonstrating that these activities were contained within the primary social function of a class state. The fact that Marx and Engels generally refused to call the public authority they envisaged under full communism a state, and failed systematically to analyse the possible tensions between individual and state in a classless society has been unfortunately replicated in most subsequent Marxist literature. It has contributed to the general failure of Marxism to pay more attention to how the political institutions of the transition will develop appropriately for the exercise of public authority in non-class society. But the point pertains not just to socialism and communism. It pertains to the weakness of Marxism in terms of examining the relationship between individual and state in those dimensions of class society which nevertheless carry a degree of autonomy from class repression.

All indications—from the scattered comments Marx had to make on the question, to the writings of two of the genuinely great political theorists of the early twentieth century, Luxemburg and Gramsci, right up to the most recent work of *both* Miliband and Poulantzas—are that to construct such a theory, Marxism will have to incorporate within its problematic those elements of the liberal democratic theory of the state that can be found to be consistent with a non-market, classless society. This is not as impossible as it sounds since some of—and arguably the best of—liberal theory assumes a harmonious society to discuss the relationship between individual and state, while merely neglecting, rather than explicitly assuming, 'market man'. Indeed it is arguable that liberal democratic theory can only truly address the question of the individual and the state in a classless society. This is, after all, what Macpherson has been telling us all along.

But the vision—and the material practice to achieve that vision—of a classless, non-market society, does not emanate in our era from liberalism; it emanates, 'of course', as Macpherson admits, from Marxism. And what needs to be done is to incorporate the valuable and non-historically limited insights of liberalism into a Marxian theory of state under socialism. These elements may be suggested to be: (1) representative government; (2) an understanding of the state that includes its 'performance of common activities arising from the nature of all communities'; and (3) the preservation of the civil liberties so central to liberal theory—freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom from arbitrary arrest—in order to guarantee for the individual what Macpherson calls 'Protection Against Invasion by Others' (including the state). All these elements are necessary to construct a viable Marxist theory of the state in general terms as well, a theory which is only hinted at in Marx's statement (which Wood also quotes) that: 'Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it, and

today, too, the forms of state are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the "freedom of the state".⁶¹

Would it be going too far to suggest that Macpherson has been preparing liberal theory for this 'raid' by Marxism? One might have wished that, in addition, he had explicitly undertaken the raid himself, concentrating on demonstrating liberalism's strengths to Marxism, as well as Marxism's strengths to liberal democratic theory. But the necessary first step in this would entail subjecting Marxist political theory to a rigorous critique. And one can understand the reluctance of a Marxist intellectual in the midst of the cold war milieu he found himself in for so many years, and without the supports of a vibrant Marxist intellectual community or a large-scale socialist movement in his own country, to risk contributing further to the denigration Marxism has generally received in Canada by opening up even a comradely critique of Marxist political theory. From the other side, and as was the case for so many others of his generation, the heavy 'official Marxist' invocation of infallibility regarding the Stalinist interpretation of Marxism (of which the small Canadian Communist Party remains extant as an unfortunate example) certainly ensured that any critique of Marxist political theory would be treated as 'anti-Soviet' and hence reactionary. All this is entirely apart from any relatively modest individual recoiling at the enormity of the task involved in actually reconstructing Marxist political theory (not least because of the weakness of Marxist political economy of 'actually-existing socialism' on which he would need to draw).⁶² It is scarcely surprising, in these conditions, that the political philosopher who works with Marxist tools might be tempted to shift his attention instead to a critique of that theory—liberalism—which centrally posed the question of the state and the individual, but which ignored or accepted what Marxism pointed to and rejected—the class exploitation and domination inscribed in liberal capitalist society. One works from one's strengths. Unfortunately, this sometimes means that one limits oneself, in classical Fabian fashion, to trying to educate the ruling class, in this case its theorists, to socialism.

By all means, let us 'soften up' the enemy when we can. But let us not mistake tactics for strategy, or defence for offence. Let us not forget that if one of Marxism's greatest weaknesses has been its tendency to underestimate the power and value of liberal democracy, one of its greatest strengths has been its ability to pierce the illusion that 'those who hold power in the societies which justify themselves by liberal theory' might be persuaded to embrace socialism. To take responsibility for one's Marxism means being intolerant of Marxism's weakness to the end of improving theory and strategy so that those social forces upon which the socialist movement must rely in the struggle for socialist democracy may be better equipped and strengthened. There have been—and will be—occasions when proponents of liberal democracy and socialist democracy can coalesce

against a common enemy. But this cannot obliterate the difference between them in terms of the goals and interests they represent. The choice between liberal democracy and socialist democracy remains, as it always has been, a choice of sides in the class struggle. We can enrich socialist theory and political practice by recognising what is valuable in liberal democracy, but we must ensure that in doing so we do not relegate our socialism to the status of a critique of 'actually-existing liberal democracy', or to being a subordinate aspect in the struggle to preserve either liberal democracy or 'actually-existing socialism' against reaction. Rather we must incorporate what we can of liberal democracy as a necessary, but still subordinate aspect in the struggle for, and construction of, socialist democracy.

NOTES

This is a revised version of a paper presented for the 'Socialism and Democracy' Panel in honour of C.B. Macpherson, at the Political Economy meetings of the Canadian Political Science Association, Montreal, June 1980. I am indebted to Ralph Miliband and Reg Whitaker for advice on revisions. The quotation from Macpherson which opens this paper is from his 'Humanist Democracy and Elusive Marxism', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, IX:3, September 1976, p. 423.

Few will have difficulty recognising the work of C. Wright Mills or Barrington Moore in this light. For an example of Bendix's work in this light, see his 'Socialism and the Theory of Bureaucracy', *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, XVI, 1950, pp. 501-14.

Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. by Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, pp. 343-4.

4. C.B. Macpherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973, p. 116 (hereafter *DT*).

5. Victor Svacek, 'The Elusive Marxism of C.B. Macpherson', and C.B. Macpherson, 'Humanist Democracy and Elusive Marxism', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, IX:3, September 1976, pp. 394-422, 523-30.

Ellen Wood, 'C.B. Macpherson: Liberalism and the Task of Socialist Political Theory', *The Socialist Register 1978*, R. Miliband and J. Saville, eds., London, Merlin, 1978, pp. 215-240. Among Macpherson's considerable writings, Wood makes only a passing reference to *Possessive Individualism*, apart from the two mentioned. Svacek's article is not even cited.

J.S. Mill, quoted in Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 48.

8. Wood, *op. cit.*, pp. 226, 216, 223-4.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

10. C.B. Macpherson, 'Do We Need a Theory of the State', *Archives européennes de sociologie*, XVIII, 2, 1977, pp. 232-3.

DT, pp. 66-7. For an interesting critique of Macpherson's distinction between 'material' and 'non-material', see W. Leiss, 'Marx and Macpherson: Needs, Utilities, and Self-Development', in A. Kontos (ed.), *Powers, Possessions and Freedom. Essays in Honour of C.B. Macpherson*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1979, pp. 131 ff.

'Do We Need a Theory of the State', *op. cit.*, p. 11.

'Humanist Democracy', *op. cit.*, p. 424. Macpherson cites *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford, 1962), 56; *The Real World of Democracy* (Toronto, 1965), 43; *Democratic Theory* (Oxford, 1973), 10-14, 16 ff, 40-1, 64-6. In my view, the clearest exposition of it is in the last book, especially pages 64-6, but including page 67, where the concept of extra-productive powers is discussed.

'Post Liberal Democracy', in *DT*, p. 181. Wood (p. 224) cites the article from R. Blackburn (ed.), *Ideology in Social Science*, London, Fontana/Collins, 1972, p. 29, where it earlier appeared and remarks (apparently critically) that it was selected as the first in this collection of essays by 'radical scholars'. (The quotes are hers.)

15. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

16. *The Life and Times*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 55. As an indication of Macpherson's consistency regarding this definition of class, see his, *Democracy in Alberta*, University of Toronto Press, 2nd ed., 1962, p. 225: 'The concept of class which finds the significant determinant of social and political behaviour in the ability or inability to dispose of labour—one's own and others'—demonstrated its value in nineteenth-century historical and sociological analysis, but has been rather scorned of late years. No doubt it is inadequate in its original form to explain the position of the new middle class of technicians, supervisors, managers, and salaried officials, whose importance in contemporary society is very great; yet their class positions can best be assessed by the same criteria: how much freedom they retain over the disposal of their own labour, and how much control they exercise over the disposal of others' labour. Nor is this concept of class as readily amenable as are newer concepts to those techniques of measurement and tabulation which, as credentials, have become so important to modern sociology. Yet it may be thought to remain the most penetrating basis of classification for the understanding of political behaviour. Common relationship to the disposal of labour still tends to give the members of each class, so defined, an outlook and set of assumptions distinct from those of the other classes.'

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6, cf. p. 83 ff.

18. What is even more surprising is that Wood (*op. cit.*, p. 222) counterposes this approach to that of Miliband's in *The State in Capitalist Society*, where Miliband in fact uses here a rather similar approach to Macpherson (including some common terminology) in order to confront the pluralist thesis. Indeed, Wood's insistence on terminological purity against Macpherson ironically echoes in this respect the Poulantzasian critique of Miliband.

19. *The Life and Times*, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66. It has indeed been argued that 'in this book Macpherson states his own view more explicitly in terms of Marxian Theory' than before. Leis, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

20. Quoted in *The Life and Times*, p. 78.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

22. *DT*, pp. 46-7.

23. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

25. *DT*, p. 58.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 15, (emphasis added).

27. *The Life and Times*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

28. 'Humanist Democracy', *op. cit.*, p. 424.

29. See *DT*, pp. 98-9.

30. 'Post Liberal Democracy', in Blackburn, *op. cit.*, p. 19; in *DT*, p. 173.

31. 'Humanist Democracy', *op. cit.*, pp. 424.5.

32. *DT*, pp. 72-76, 106-116.
33. 'Humanist Democracy', *op. cit.*, p. 425.
34. 'Do We Need a Theory of the State?', *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.
35. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 217, (emphasis added).
36. *DT*, pp. 111, 113; cf. pp. 73-6, 150-3.
37. *DT*, p. 76.
38. *The Real World of Democracy (RWD)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-15.
39. 'The Problem of Dictatorship', in R. Luxemburg, *The Selected Political Writings*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1972, pp. 244-7.
40. See Sartre's outstanding elucidation of this tension in *The Ghost of Stalin*, trans. by M.H. Fletcher, New York, George Braziller, 1968, pp. 66-8.
41. *RWD*, pp. 19-20.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
43. *DT*, p. 107.
44. *DT*, pp. 165, 168, 172.
45. *DT*, pp. 151-2.
46. *DT*, pp. 106-7, 115-6.
47. *DT*, p. 151-3.
48. For my own inadequate suggestions: 'Workers Control and Revolutionary Change', *Monthly Review*, Vol. 29, No. 10, March 1978, and 'The State and The Future of Socialism', in *Capital and Class*, 11, Summer, 1980.
49. *DT*, p. 163.
50. *The Life and Times*, pp. 100-101.
51. *Democracy in Alberta*, pp. 225, 245.
52. *RWD*, p. 15.
53. See *ibid.*, esp. p. 66, and *DT*, pp. 166-9.
54. For a recent outstanding example of this, see Colin Leys, 'Capital Accumulation, Class Formation and Dependency—The Significance of the Kenyan Case', *The Socialist Register 1978*, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-266. But there was much that went before, stretching back to the 1960's.
55. *The Life and Times*, p. 109.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-106.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
58. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 218.
59. L. Panitch, 'The State and the Future of Socialism', *op. cit.*, pp. 57 ff; cf. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 231-40. The strength of Wood's arguments in this latter part of her article, recognising both that 'liberalism has a lesson for socialism' regarding the relationship between state and individuals, and that Macpherson has 'broken ground' in the necessary construction of a *socialist* history of political theory, remains vitiated, unfortunately, by her conclusion that Macpherson is virtually indistinguishable from J.S. Mill, and has been seduced by liberalism's 'huge mystification'.
60. *Capital*, Vol. 3, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959, pp. 376-7.
61. 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Moscow, Progress, 1970, p. 25.
62. For Macpherson's view that 'our lack of knowledge about the inherent properties of the socialist model' presents an 'insuperable' difficulty in weighing 'the claims of different kinds of writing to maximise individual powers', see *DT*, p. 15. For a good critique of Macpherson's search for these 'inherent properties', both in capitalist and non-capitalist societies, at too high a level of abstraction from concrete socio-historical structures, see S. Lukes, 'The Real and Ideal Worlds of Democracy', in A. Kontos, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-152. But if

'Macpherson retains too much of the abstract humanism for which Marx criticised Feuerbach', as Lukes suggests, this remains very far from Wood's view of Macpherson as analysing capitalism 'on its own terms', or as virtually indistinguishable from J.S. Mill.