Rethinking Marxist Anthropology

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RETHINKING MARXIST ANTHROPOLOGY

Eugene E. Ruyle

> When asked whether or not we are Marxists, our position is the same as that of a physicist or a biologist when asked if he is a "Newtonian," or if he is a "Pasteurian." There are truths so evident, so much a part of people's knowledge, that it is now useless to discuss them. One ought to be "Marxist" with the same naturalness with which one is "Newtonian" in physics, or "Pasteurian" in biology, considering that if facts determine new concepts, these new concepts will never divest themselves of that portion of truth possessed by the older concepts they have outdated. Such is the case, for example, of Einsteinian relativity or of Planck's "quantum" theory with respect to the discoveries of Newton; they take nothing at all away from the greatness of the learned Englishman. Thanks to Newton, physics was able to advance until it had achieved new concepts of space ("Che" Guevara, in Mills 1962:455).

The recent growth of Marxist anthropology has both positive and negative aspects. The growing recognition that Marx does indeed have something of significance to say for anthropology is a major achievement, for the mere name of Marx is, as Marx himself said of dialectics, "a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors" (Marx 1965:20).[1] But the actual results produced by Marxist anthropology have been unsatisfying. Marxist analyses within anthropology have not only failed to challenge effectively the hegemony of bourgeois modes of thought within our discipline, they have failed to enrich the revolutionary science of socialism. This dual failure, I suggest, is at root a failure of theory. While some may excuse the failure of Marxist anthropology to spread by pointing to the resistance of other theories, the real problem lies within Marxist anthropology itself. Marxist

anthropology has stressed a mystical and highly nebulous concept of "structure" to the neglect of Marx's basic analytical tool, the labor theory of value. It is necessary, therefore, to "rethink" the Marxist endeavor within anthropology and reconstitute Marxist anthropology on a materialist basis so that it may better serve the working class.

Marxist Anthropology or Anthropological Marxism?

While this paper is not intended to be a direct critique of existing Marxist studies in anthropology, some critical comments are essential. First and foremost is the question of objective. In their thoughtful evaluation of Marxist anthropology, Kahn and Llobera make a number of valuable suggestions for enabling "the fruitful meeting of Marxism and anthropology...to continue to generate debate, insight and interest" (1981:300). But however important debate, insight, and interest may be as means to our ends, they are not ends in themselves. Our objective is not simply a better Marxist anthropology which uses historical materialism to provide more interesting analyses of anthropological problems; our objective rather is an anthropological Marxism which uses the facts, theories, and insights of anthropology to enrich the revolutionary science of socialism. As Marxists, our struggles within anthropology must contribute to the political maturity of the working class and assist in clarifying working-class struggle as a totality, of which ideological struggle is but one part.[2]

However, rather than being an instrument for clarifying class struggle, Marxism "has recently become for anthropologists a new source of obscurity as a result of recent work which is difficult and barbarously phrased" (Bloch 1983:v). Jargonized modes of expression are, of course, what we expect from bourgeois scholars whose social function, after all, is to obscure social reality. But they are inexcusable among Marxists. We must ask, therefore, what there is that makes it worthwhile to penetrate the obfuscating jargon so rampant in Marxist anthropology? The answer, unfortunately, is obfuscating theory.

Although space prohibits an extended theoretical critique of the Marxist literature in anthropology, two observations need to be made.

One would expect Marxist analyses of precapitalist societies to draw very heavily on the actual material remains of prehistoric civilizations as uncovered by archeologists. But archeological data

is conspicuous by its absence.[3] The seminal work of Childe (1936), Steward (1949), and Flannery (1972, 1973) is virtually ignored, as are standard reviews of prehistory (e.g. Chard 1975, Clark 1961, Daniel 1968, Fagan 1983, Wenke 1980). Perhaps this failure to deal with prehistory is related to the particular form of Marxism that has dominated Marxist anthropology.

In their efforts to understand precapitalist societies, Marxist anthropologists have noted that Marx's analysis of capitalism was concerned with uncovering the hidden structure which generates the observed phenomena of bourgeois society. In their efforts to find comparable structures in precapitalist societies, they have analyzed various historical and ethnographic societies using a particular reading of Marx, that of Althusser and Balibar (1970), and drawing heavily upon the work of French structuralists such as Levi-Strauss (1963). Now, while one may regard Marx as a structuralist if one wishes, to do so is to misunderstand both Marx and structuralism. French structuralism is concerned with mental structures existing in the human mind (or outside the human mind in the nature of human thought or communication), while Marx attempted to understand the structure of society that existed outside and independently of the human mind but which was hidden by veils of ideology (Harris 1968:464-513).[4]

It has thus been a mystical rather than a materialist conception of structure which has dominated Marxist anthropology. To paraphrase Marx (1965:20), Marxist anthropology is standing on its head; it must be placed on its feet if it one wants to understand the inner dialectic of precapitalist societies.

In accomplishing this task vis-a-vis Hegelian dialectics, Marx used an analytical tool ignored by structural Marxism: the labor theory of value. The labor theory of value is the central analytical tool which enabled Marx to penetrate the ideological veils and reveal the underlying thermodynamic structure of bourgois civilization. As Sweezy points out, "value calculation makes it possible to look beneath the surface phenomena of money and commodities to the underlying relations between people and classes" (1942:129). Without the labor theory of value, one cannot understand surplus value and the exploitative relation between ruling and ruled classes. Without the labor theory of value, the "fundamental discussions of the concepts of mode of production, social formation, class, relations of production, forces of production, and exploitation" (Bailey 1981:90) in Marxist anthropology lack a real materialist base. But the labor theory of value, as developed by

Marx, was designed specifically to analyze capitalist relations of production and exploitation (Amin 1978). What is needed is a modification of Marx's value theory to enable it to be used in societies where money and markets do not play a dominating role.

Elsewhere, I have suggested ways in which Marx's labor theory of value can be generalized so that it can be a useful analytical tool for understanding precapitalist systems (Ruyle 1973b, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1985). The purpose of this paper is to summarize this approach and indicate its utility for Marxist anthropology. This will involve: 1) generalizing the labor theory of value into social thermodynamics which can analyze precapitalist modes of production and exploitation, 2) using this analysis to understand the prehistoric revolutions that have transformed the material conditions of life of our species, 3) using our understanding of these prehistoric revolutions to shed light on the nature of the revolutionary transformation our species is currently undergoing, thereby integrating these insights into a general societal taxonomy of systems of production and exploitation.

Clearly, only the barest outlines of such a broad enterprise can be sketched in a short paper (for a longer, but still incomplete effort, see Ruyle 1984). Such an outline may, however, be useful in placing our work in perspective.

From the Labor Theory of Value to Social Thermodynamics

In *Capital*, Marx makes it clear that the hidden secret of social structure is to be found in labor-time. In capitalism, this secret is concealed in the "fetishism of commodities," in which the products of human labor, commodities, "appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and with the human race" (1965:72). Thus, for example, when we go to McDonalds for a Big Mac, we tend to be concerned solely with the price and utility of the Big Mac - how much it costs and how it tastes in comparison to a "Whopper" or "Jumbo Jack." We lose sight of the fact that we are involved in a definite social relationship with the workers and owners of McDonalds in which we are exchanging a portion of our labor time (embodied in our money) for the labor time embodied in the Big Mac.[5] The labor theory of value is the analytical tool developed by Marx to analyze the social relationships concealed by money and commodities in a capitalist society.

These social relations have an essential thermodynamic aspect in that definite amounts of labor energy (measured in units of time) are embodied in commodities:

> that which determines the magnitude of the value of any article is the amount of labour socially necessary, or the labour-time socially necessary for its production. Each individual commodity, in this connexion, is to be considered as an average sample of its class.... As values, all commodities are only definite masses of congealed labour-time (Marx 1965:39-40).

The exchange of commodities involves a flow of the labor-energy congealed in those commodities. The labor theory of value enables Marx to analyze the flow of labor energy between individuals and between classes in capitalist society. There is a definite amount of labor-energy embodied in the wages paid to workers, and the production of surplus value in capitalism involves forcing the worker to expend more labor energy than he or she receives in wages (Marx 1965:186-192).

To analyze the thermodynamic structure of capitalism fully, Marx had to elaborate the labor theory of value with more specific concepts, such as constant and variable capital, organic composition of capital, rates of surplus value, and so on. Although these more elaborate concepts are only applicable to capitalism, the basic insight of the labor theory of value is applicable to all human societies. All human societies, capitalist and non-capitalist, are dependent upon articles (use-values) which are produced by social labor and which therefore had definite amounts of labor energy (which can be measured in units of labor time) congealed in them.[6] In capitalism, most of these articles take the form of commodities in that they are produced for sale on the market, but, as Marx points out, a thing "can be useful, and the product of human labour, without being a commodity" (1965:40). Although Marx does not address directly the question of whether such things have value, it is certainly reasonable to say that they do and this opens the way for using the labor theory of value to analyze the relations of production and exploitation in non-capitalist societies.[7]

The use of this thermodynamic theory is simpler in non-capitalist societies because, on the one hand, these societies are themselves simpler, and, on the other hand, the thermodynamic

structure of production and exploitation is more direct. As Marx puts it:

> The whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labour as long as they take the form of commodities, vanishes therefore, so soon as we come to other forms of production....
>
> Let us now transport ourselves from Robinson's island bathed in light to the European middle ages shrouded in darkness. Here, instead of the independent man, we find everyone dependent, serfs and lords, vassals and suzerains, laymen and clergy. Personal dependence here characterises the social relations of production just as much as it does the other spheres of life organised on the basis of that production. But for the very reason that personal dependence forms the ground-work of society, there is no necessity for labour and its products to assume a fantastic form different from their reality. They take the shape, in the transactions of society, of services in kind and payments in kind. Here the particular and natural form of labour, and not, as in a society based on production of commodities, its general abstract form is the immediate social form of labour. Compulsory labour is just as properly measured by time, as commodity-producing labour, but every serf knows that what he expends in the service of his lord, is a definite quantity of his own personal labour-power. The tithe to be rendered to the priest is more matter-of-fact than his blessing. No matter, then, what we may think of the parts played by the different classes of people themselves in this society, the social relations between individuals in the performance of their labour, appear at all events as their own mutual personal relations, and are not disguised under the shape of social relations between the products of labour (Marx 1965:76-77).[8]

It is unfortunate that Marxist anthropology has not followed up Marx's suggestions here on how to analyze pre-capitalist systems of production and exploitation in terms of labor-time. Some general comments on social thermodynamics as a mode of analysis are in order.[9]

The process of capitalist production involves pumping labor energy into commodities where it is congealed and consumed when the commodities themselves are consumed. Money may also be considered to have a definite amount of labor energy congealed in it since it requires energy to obtain and gives its owner a claim on other peoples' energy.[10] The exchange of commodities and money

in capitalism, therefore, involves what I have called a deep structure of energy flow in contrast to the superficial flows of energy in other aspects of daily life (Ruyle 1976). This deep thermodynamic structure is what Marx called "the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness" (Tucker 1978:4).

Productive labor is the expenditure of human energy, but other forms of human activity, such as reproductive labor, also involve the expenditure of energy and, therefore, can be measured in the same terms as labor energy, units of minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years. Just as bourgeois relations of exploitation and domination can be measured in thermodynamic terms, so the patriarchal relations between men and women within family structures can be analyzed thermodynamically in terms of how much time is spent, and by whom, in such activities as cleaning, cooking, and child care. Useful work along these lines has been done by feminists (e.g. Vogel 1983:17-25, Harris and Young 1981:130-134, Rubin 1975, Eisenstein 1979, Gardiner 1979), but more remains to be done. A full exploration of the social thermodynamics of domestic labor is, of course, beyond the scope of this essay, but it is worth stressing that both productive and reproductive labor require the expenditure of human energy. Social thermodynamics, in providing a linkage between feminist analyses of gender relations and the classic (sometimes seen as "gender blind") Marxian analysis of bourgeois class relations, may help improve the "unhappy marriage" of Marxism and feminism (Hartmann 1981).

Other forms of human activity also require the expenditure of human energy. Politics, law, philosophy, religion - all require definite expenditures of human energy. Churches, schools, courts, jails, and government bureaus all have definite amounts of social labor congealed in them. Thus, it is not only the economic base of society that is susceptible to thermodynamic analysis but also legal, political, and ideological superstructures. Again, it is impossible to explore this fully in a short paper, but recognition of this fact may help us better understand the articulation of infrastructures, structures, and superstructures.

Finally, Marx suggested that definite forms of social consciousness correspond to economic structures. I have suggested that this correspondence may be understood as resulting from selective

pressures (analogous to those determining the structure of the gene pool) generated by thermodynamic structures (Ruyle 1973a).

Social thermodynamics, then, is a potentially powerful analytical system which builds upon Marx's own thermodynamic analysis of capitalism. In the next section, I will use social thermodynamics to analyze some of the major transformations that have occured in the prehistory of our species.

Prehistoric Revolutions

Although those who equate anthropology with the study of primitive or precapitalist societies are mistaken (as will be discussed in the next section), most Marxist anthropology does in fact focus on precapitalist systems. A fuller examination of anthropology's contribution to the understanding of precapitalist social formations is therefore in order.

The original anthropological intervention in Marxism occurred a century ago, when Marx and Engels drew upon anthropological materials, especially the work of Morgan (1963) to enrich the materialist conception of history. As Bloch (1983:10) points out, Marx and Engels used anthropological materials for two purposes. They used anthropology, first, to demonstrate that the materialist conception of history was universally valid, that all societies were constructed along the same general principles. Second, they used anthropology to show that the particular institutions of bourgeois society, such as the state, private property, and the family, were not universal, but instead were historically limited responses to the particular material circumstances of the modern epoch.

This latter point is absolutely fundamental and underlies the entire Marxian enterprise. For if the institutions of class and gender oppression in bourgeois society are simply the products of human activity within a particular set of material conditions, they can be changed by human activity. The struggle for socialism, which would be doomed to failure if class and gender oppression were inevitable concomitants of human nature, is thereby legitimized. This point, it should be noted, was made by radical thinkers long before Marx, using, quite frequently, anthropological facts and approaches (Lenski 1966, Harris 1968). Thus, the cross-cultural data professionally controlled by anthropologists is crucial to the proletarian struggle for socialism. This fact makes Marxist anthropology an important arena of ideological class struggle (and, it may be added, gender struggle).

It is impossible to understand precapitalist social formations without an understanding of prehistory and the prehistoric revolutions that have dramatically altered the material conditions of life for our species. We are currently living through a major transformation in the evolutionary development of our species, the Industrial Revolution, which began with the emergence of capitalism and which will not be completed until the establishment of a world socialist order There have been three transformations of comparable significance in prehistory: the Human, Neolithic, and Urban Revolutions.

The Human Revolution involved the emergence of humanity from pongid ancestors. It began about 5 million years ago and was not completed until about 40 thousand years ago (if, indeed, it has been completed). Before the Human Revolution our ancestors were apes; by 40 thousand years ago they were indistinguishable from contemporary humans, with hunting and gathering modes of production, and fully developed languages, religions, and family and kinship systems.

The Neolithic Revolution involved the development of plant and animal domestication and sedentary village life. Before the Neolithic Revolution, our ancestors lived in small, nomadic bands of hunter gatherers; afterwards, they lived in larger, settled villages and began to accumulate wealth. Independent Neolithic Revolutions occured in at least three areas: the Near East, about 10,000 years ago, East and Southeast Asia, about the same time or slightly later, and Central and South America, about 5,000 years ago.

The Urban Revolution involved the emergence of patriarchy and class rule (a.k.a. civilization), with cities, writing, and dramatically more powerful productive systems supporting vastly larger populations. The Urban Revolution saw the final breakup of the "liberty, equality, and fraternity" of the primitive commune and its replacement by the exploitation, oppression, patriarchy, and class struggles that have characterized all historic civilizations. Urban Revolutions occured in Mesopotamia and Egypt about 5,000 years ago, in the Indus Valley slightly later, in China about 4,000 years ago, and in Mesoamerica and Peru about 2,000 years ago.

Each of these prehistoric revolutions dramatically altered the material conditions of life for our species. They did not happen overnight; they were not events but processes which took generations or even hundreds of years for their full implications to be felt. Nonetheless, they did occur. The archeological and eth-

nographic records, it is true, reveal some transitional forms and also examples of settled foragers and nomadic horticulturalists. But statistical analysis also shows clearly the systemic differences between hunting and gathering societies, horticultural societies, and more complex agrarian civilizations in terms of population size and density, settlement patterns, division of labor, frequency and scale of warfare, degree of political authority, degree of inequality, kinship and marriage practices, and religious ideology (Lenski 1970:129-142). Such analysis provides cross-cultural confirmation of Marx's basic principle of historical materialism, that "the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general" (Tucker 1978:4).

Limitations of space prevent any full discussion of these transformations, but reasonably good discussions can be found in most introductory texts in anthropology (e.g. Harris 1975, Keesing 1981, Kottak 1978) and prehistory (e.g. Chard 1975, Fagan 1983, Wenke 1980). Our concern here is to analyze thermodynamically the underlying structural transformations associated with these revolutions.

Humans, like all other animals, must expend energy to satisfy their needs. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the structure of energy expenditure of humans and non-human primates. In contrast to all other primate species, in which needs are satisfied through direct, individual appropriation of naturally occurring use values, humans satisfy their needs through production.

Every human being in every known human society is dependent upon a system of social production in which human labor energy is used to transform environmental resources into culturally acceptable use-values before they are used to satisfy human needs. Since these use-values have been produced by human labor (like the commodities of capitalist production which are but a special case of this universal human characteristic), they have a definite amount of labor energy embodied in them. Thus, when people consume the products of human labor, they are consuming a definite amount of human labor energy. More than this, since people in all known human societies produce use-values for, and consume use-values produced by, other people, all human beings are dependent upon other people's labor.

This difference is absolute. No other primate is involved in productive processes except in the most rudimentary and marginal manner (e.g. the termite fishing behavior of some chimps); all hu-

man societies are completely dependent upon the underlying flow of social labor that sustains human life by producing the goods necessary for human life, that is, upon a mode of production. It is this structural feature that differentiates humanity from all other primates. As Marx and Engels put it,

> Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence (1939:7).

In his paper "On the Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man," Engels discusses this process in greater detail on the basis of data available in 1876 (1972a), and Engels' work has been updated in the light of recent work on human origins by Woolfson (1982) and myself (Ruyle 1976). This labor theory of human origins is of fundamental significance for historical materialism. It shows that not only are particular social and ideological complexes related to particular modes of production but our distinctive characteristics as humans--our bipedalism, our linguistic capabilities, our powers of reasoning--all consequences of our dependence on social production.[11]

However, although all people are dependent upon the products of labor, not all people labor. For the greater part of humanity's existence, throughout the millions of years of the Human Revolution and through the Neolithic Revolution of 10,000 years ago, our ancestors lived in conditions of communism, with an equal obligation to labor and equal access to the social product. The last 5,000 years of human history, by contrast, have been dominated by classes of people who do not participate directly in productive labor but who nevertheless are abundantly provided with the good things of life. How did such a situation come about?

To answer this question we must first understand the nature of the problem. Just as the difference between human and animal populations may be understood in thermodynamic terms, so may the difference between primitive communism and patriarchal class rule. In terms of their underlying thermodynamic structure, human societies fall into one of two categories: classless societies (primitive communism) and class-structured societies. There are, of course, differences of opinion among Marxists as to the usefulness of the concept of primitive communism which cannot be fully discussed here. (e.g. Bloch 1983:96, Keenan 1981).

Primitive communism, which occurs most typically among nomadic hunter gatherers but also among some horticulturalists, is characterized by the following: 1) all members of society, for most if not all their lives, participate directly in production through the expenditure of their own labor power, so that no one lives without working; and 2) all members of society enjoy free and equal access to the social product.

Systems of class rule, which include all historic and contemporary civilizations, are characterized by: 1) differential access to the social product, so that some people are wealthy and others poor; and 2) differential participation in production, with the wealthier classes expending little or no energy in production while the laboring classes do not enjoy the full product of their own labor. There is thus a flow of labor energy, or surplus, out of the productive classes and into the ruling class. This extraction of surplus from the direct producers is a result of the efforts of the ruling class which expends energy not in production but in a system of exploitation. All historic and contemporary ruling classes support themselves by manipulating definite modes of exploitation which include definite exploitative techniques, such as simple plunder, slavery, rent, usury, and wage-slavery, and definite institutions of violence and thought control, the state and the church, respectively (Ruyle 1973b, 1975, 1977, 1985).

Exploitation, then, does not simply "occur." It is a consequence of definite energy expenditures on the part of the ruling class. The mode of exploitation may thus be thought of as the "mode of production" of the ruling class, with the understanding that the energy expended into the exploitative system is not productive; it is not labor energy but rather exploitative energy. As a result of the efforts of the ruling class a predator-prey relationship has emerged between populations of our species similar to that existing between different animal species. The stakes involved, however, are not the food-energy locked up in animal flesh but instead the labor-energy that the human animal can expend in production (Ruyle 1973a:209).

These different thermodynamic structures--primitive communism and patriarchal class rule--are rooted in different material conditions. Primitive communism is associated typically with a hunting and gathering mode of production that supports a small, highly mobile population. Exploitative systems cannot be constructed in such conditions for several reasons, of which we shall merely mention two of the more important. First, the nomadic

character of life required by hunting and gathering prevents any significant accumulation of wealth, so there is little incentive to exploit others. Second, any attempt to exploit other would jeopardize the bonds of mutual interdependence, expressed in kinship ties, upon which all members of society depend. As these material conditions change, exploitation becomes possible. With the settled village life that develops after the Neolithic Revolution, people can begin to accumulate wealth, and hence there is an incentive to exploit others. As populations become larger and denser non-kin may be exploited without jeopardizing bonds of mutual interdependence. Ambitious men can begin to develop techniques for exploiting first women, then other men, and begin to organize themselves as a ruling class (see Ruyle 1985).[12] As ruling classes develop progressively more powerful exploitative systems capable of extracting increasing amounts of surplus, this surplus is used not only to support the extravagant life style of the rulers but also to support full-time specialists in both exploitation (soldiers, scribes, priests, kings) and production (metallurgy, ceramics, weaving, and other artisans). The Urban Revolution is thus a consequence both of the progressive development of the forces of social production and of the forces of exploitation supporting the ruling class and its retainers.

The perspective sketched above is, I believe, an important elaboration of Marxian theory (see Ruyle 1975). In contrast to the more usual view which sees the class structure as determined by the mode of production, this thermodynamic view sees the class structure as determined by a mode of exploitation devised by the ruling class for its own purposes.[13] The progressive development of the forces of social production, of course, makes exploitation possible, but exploitation does not flow automaticaliy from the requisites of production. Rather, it flows from the needs of the ruling class However much the rulers may appropriate to themselves important social functions in an effort to consolidate and legitimate their rule, they are expendable and always have been.

I stress this not as an idle intellectual exercise, but as an important theoretical point related to practical politics. For by understanding what kinds of material conditions permit the development of patriarchal systems of class rule and precisely how these systems were constructed and have been maintained throughout history, we can better understand how to dismantle these oppressive systems which are causing such misery for our species.

The Industrial Revolution initiated by our modern bourgeoisie has once again radically altered the material conditions of human life, making the abolition of class rule not only possible but essential if our species is to survive.

Varieties of Modernity

As noted above, it is a mistake to equate anthropology with the study of primitive or precapitalist societies, for anthropologists have always seen our focus on such exotica as Crow kinship terminologies, subincision, potlatches, and kula rings as part of an effort to understand the the human condition in its entirety and the full range of the human experience. Morgan, it will be recalled, made some very perceptive remarks on the nature and direction of modern social change (1963:561-562), and anthropologists have never relinquished their claim on the understanding of modern societies (e.g. Boas 1928, Bodley 1985, Harris 1981, Keesing 1981, Miner 1956, Ruyle 1978, 1979a, 1979b, 1979c; Spradley and Rynkiewich 1975, Weaver 1973).

Marxist anthropology cannot, therefore, be limited to the study of precapitalist social formations. Marxist anthropology must also combine the insights of anthropology and historical materialism to better understand the nature of modern sociocultural variation. There is a particular urgency to this task, for just as popular conceptions of savages, barbarians, and backward nations were used to legitimate the colonial plunder of the non-Western world, so similar misconceptions of contemporary sociocultural phenomena are used to justify North American interventionism in the third world and the suicidal arms race. These misconceptions are subsumed by the two great myths which sustain United States imperialism: the myth of an advanced America surrounded by backward peoples, and the myth of anti-communism (Ruyle 1983).

In order to combat these myths, we need to understand both the nature of modern sociocultural variation and the dialectic of structural change in the modern world. While Marx's analysis in *Capital* remains as valid as when it was written, it must be continually updated to show how the underlying tendencies revealed by Marx are being manifested in the complex class struggles of the twentieth century. The taxonomy of modern societies diagramed in Figure 1 (below) is offered as a framework for understanding these struggles.[14]

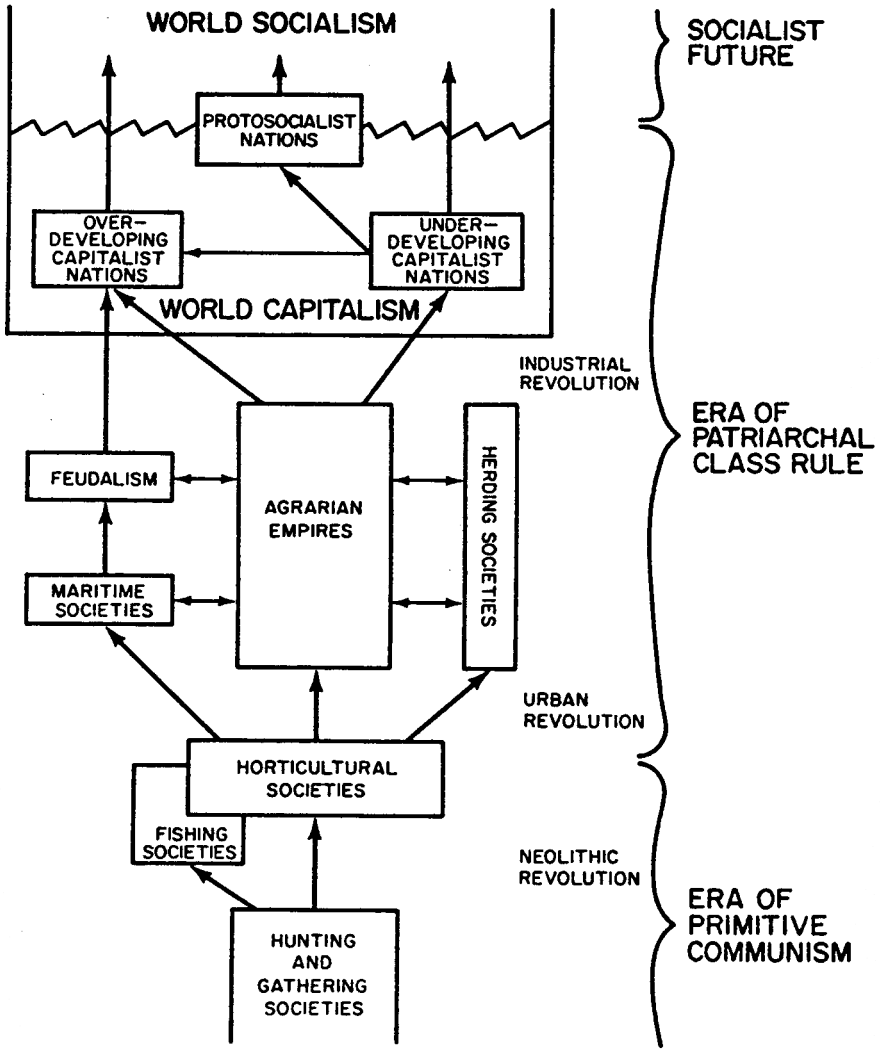

Figure 1. Evolutionary Taxonomy of Precapitalist and Modern Societies.

In one sense, capitalism is but the latest form of class rule, a form, however, in which exploitation (and the concomitant misery of the oppressed) is carried to an extreme. Capitalism, moreover, represents a universal stage in humanity's development, not in the sense that all societies are striving to become capitalist, but rather in the sense that when capitalism emerges anywhere, it must spread everywhere. As Marx and Engels noted in the *Communist Manifesto*:

> It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image (Tucker 1978:477).

But in forcing the bourgeois mode of production on all nations, capitalism does not act in a unilineal manner, with "advanced" nations forging a path for the "backward" nations to follow. There are not one but two paths into the modern bourgeois world, and social change in the modern world capitalist system is multilineal rather than unilineal.

As Marx demonstrated in his chapters on the primitive accumulation of capital (1965:713-774), the Industrial Revolution was financed by the plunder of Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Thus, although from a superficial standpoint the Industrial Revolution first occured in Europe, in a deeper, structural sense it was in reality a world historical process which transformed the social structures of the entire world: Asia, Africa, and Latin America as well as Europe and North America The result was the emergence of a single world thermodynamic system (call it what you will--the world capitalist system, world imperialism, the great white conspiracy--the reality remains the same). Its chief characteristic is the forcible extraction of social energy as well as raw materials from third world nations (called "backward" by the imperialists) by the dominant Euro-American nations (who call themselves "advanced").

Within this global thermodynamic system, there are not one but two kinds of modern social structure. The Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations of Europe, North America, and Japan have, on the basis of their centuries of imperialist looting of the third world, developed forms of bourgeois affluence and irrationality criticized by Marxists and non-Marxists alike (for a summary of

the major critiques and citations, see Bodley 1985). The Underdeveloping Capitalist Nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America show the reverse side of world capitalism--the poverty and irrationality created by centuries of imperialist oppression. These are not products of backwardness as bourgeois development and modernization theories would have us believe (and, indeed, as some Marxists seem to agree), but products of modern capitalism.

Underdevelopment and Overdevelopment are thus the twin forms of capitalism in the modern world. These are not stages in a unilineal sequence, but interdependent trajectories of change within the modern world capitalist system.[15] Since 1917, as portions of the formerly colonial or semicolonial world have broken free from imperialist control, they have embarked on yet a third developmental trajectory. Under the leadership of Communist parties associated with the Third International, the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and other nations have embarked on independent courses of development which are not capitalist but not yet fully socialist.

There is perhaps no question more divisive among Marxists than the nature of these societies, and a full consideration of the various aspects of the debate is out of the question here (for sources and discussion of the major lines of the debate, see Socialist Labor Party 1978, Line of March Editorial Board 1982). Two observations may be made, however. First, it is essential to distinguish between the particular policies pursued by the leaderships of these societies and the underlying structure of the societies themselves. An analogy may be useful. We can debate the merits of the particular style of football played by the L.A. Raiders as much as we like, but this does not alter the fact that they are playing U.S.-style football and not soccer, the football of the rest of the world. From an anthropological perspective, it is the structural differences between U.S. football and soccer that are significant; without understanding these differences one cannot meaningfully debate the pros and cons of particular styles of either football or soccer In a similar manner, bourgeois tacticians may discuss the merits and demerits of invading Nicaragua, or blockades, economic pressure, or even cooperation, as alternate ways of preserving the global system of capitalist property relations.

As Marxists, we of course need to evaluate in a critical manner the particular economic, political, and social policies pursued by the leaderships of the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, Nicaragua, and other revolutionary societies. Such criticism, however, must be

analytically distinguished from the taxonomic problem of understanding the structural nature of these societies. For this, we need to understand the inner structural nature and laws of motion of the emerging socialist world.

Now, from the standpoint of social thermodynamics developed in this paper, the significant questions relate to the flows of energy in such societies. Thermodynamic analysis can provide clues as to whether these societies are in fact dismantling the systems of exploitation and oppression which have plagued humanity since the dawn of civilization, or are merely new forms of class rule. To what extent has the flow of energy out of these nations been reduced or halted? To what extent has the social energy within these nations been redirected toward meetinq more fully the basic human needs of their populations and reducing inequality?

To the extent that the extraction of social energy from these nations has been reduced or halted, they are no longer underdeveloping capitalist nations (however much they may still bear the stigmata of underdevelopment), but are rather in process of dismantling the imperialist system of exploitation. To the extent that the social energy of these nations is being redirected from elite consumption to meeting the basic human needs of their people, they are not new forms of class rule but rather emerging forms of socialism.

Unfortunately, in spite of the large amounts of conflicting evidence and opinions relating to such questions, little scientific analysis has been done. A notable exception, however, is the recent study by Cereseto on global inequality and basic human needs (1983). Cereseto uses World Bank statistics on income and the quality of life in both capitalist and socialist nations to test the two most important aspects of the Marxian paradigm: the law of capitalist accumulation, and the prediction of socialist revolution. Given the importance of Cereseto's study, I shall briefly summarize some of her findings.[16]

The Pax Americana since World War II has seen the degradation, misery, and denial of basic human needs of a large and growing portion of humanity. While the population of the world was increasing by 60% from 1950 to 1975, the total production of wealth was increasing faster, from $1 trillion in the later 1940s to over $6 trillion in 1975 and more than $9 trillion in 1978! But although wealth was increasing faster than population, poverty was also increasing, so that in one decade of rapid economic growth (1963-1973), the number of seriously poor people in the world increased

by 119 million, to 1.21 billion people, or 45% of the entire capitalist world (1983:18-19). Thus the poverty and misery of third world peoples, Cereseto finds, are not caused by overpopulation or "backwardness," but rather are consequences of the fundamental law of motion of capitalism, as Marx originally noted:

> Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own Product in the form of capital" (Marx 1965:645).

The extremes of wealth and poverty that characterize the contemporary capitalist world system are continuations of the growing inequality that has marked the history of civilization since its inception (Lenski 1966), but have reached hitherto unimaginable extremes. Cereseto divides capitalist nations into three categories, based on per capita GNP: rich, middle-income, and poor.[17] She finds, not surprisingly, that the physical quality of life in rich nations is better than in poor nations.

What is surprising (not because Marxists should not have known it, but rather because no one had bothered to prove it before) is that socialism improves the physical quality of life and better meets the basic human needs of its members than does capitalism. All socialist nations fall within the middle-income category based on per capita GNP, even though many were desperately poor before their revolutions. Cereseto uses a variety of statistics on such things as inequality, infant mortality, life expectancy, literacy, and health care and finds that: 1) the socialist nations, all middle-income, do better than the capitalist nations taken as a whole in meeting the basic human needs of their members; 2) the socialist nations do far better in meeting these human needs than do capitalist nations with the same resource base (i.e. middle-income capitalist nations), and 3) socialist nations do about as well as rich capitalist nations in meeting basic human needs. Cereseto also finds that, while inequality is increasing both within and between capitalist nations, inequality is declining both within and between socialist nations.[18]

There is much more in Cereseto's careful study that merits close attention by Marxists. Her work is stressed here because it demonstrates that the elaborate thermodynamic structures of inequality that have been constructed and intensified since the begin-

ning of civilization are in fact being dismantled by socialist revolutions of the modern era. Since the social structures and laws of motion of these societies are different from either the Overdeveloping or Underdeveloping forms of capitalism, they must be regarded as different kinds of society from the standpoint of societal taxonomy, irrespective of how one feels about the particular policies pursued by their leaderships. These societies are clearly part of the break-up of world capitalism. But they are not yet fully socialist, as the term has been understood in the working-class movement prior to Stalin's time. I have suggested that these societies be called Proto-socialist Nations, a term which expresses their dialectical nature and location in the world revolutionary process (Ruyle 1975, 1979c).

Concluding Remarks

As Marxists and as anthropologists, our goal cannot be simply a Marxist anthropology which uses the insights of historical materialism to provide more interesting analyses of anthropological problems. We also need an anthropological Marxism which uses the facts and theories of anthropology to enrich the revolutionary science of socialism. This dual objective can best be approached through the basic analytical tool of Marx's *Capital*, the labor theory of value.

Although Marx's specific elaborations of this theory are limited to capitalism, the underlying insight, that the social relations of production can be analyzed thermodynamically, is applicable to all human societies. I have suggested how this thermodynamic conception of social structure can shed light on such diverse social phenomena as the origin of our species, the nature of primitive communism, the origin of patriarchy and class rule, as well as the nature of capitalism and overthrow of class rule currently in progress. This thermodynamic conception can also be useful in specifying in a materialist manner the articulation of economic base with legal, political, and ideological superstructures and in understanding the transformations of structures themselves. Such work, of course, needs to be done to transform these suggestions into a useful additions to the theory which guides the working class in its struggle for socialism. As Engels notes,

> To accomplish this act of universal emancipation is the historical mission of the modern proletariat. To thoroughly com-

> prehend the historical conditions and thus the very nature of this act, to impart to the new oppressed proletarian class a full knowledge of the conditions and of the meaning of the momentous act it is called upon to accomplish, this is the task of the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, scientific socialism (Tucker 1978:717).

By providing a materialist understanding of prehistoric revolutions and clarifying the nature of our current revolutionary epoch, anthropology can contribute to our future.

NOTES

1 Witness the reaction of "liberal" anthropologists to the publication of *Reinventing Anthropology* (Hymes 1972), as discussed by Scholte (1981:150-151).

2 But a very important part. In *What Is To Be Done*, Lenin quotes Engels in support of his view that ideological struggle is "on a par" with economic and political forms of class struggle (1973:27). The importance of ideolgoical class struggle, of course, does not mean that it can be carried on by specialists divorced from other forms of class struggle. As Engels noted elsewhere,

> In our eventful time, just as in the 16th century, pure theorists on social affairs are found only on the side of reaction and for this reason they are not even theorists in the full sense of the word, but simply apologists for reaction (Engels 1966:2).

In this connection, it would be useful perhaps for Marxist anthropologists to discuss explicitly their involvement in the class struggle. Perry Anderson (9184) has recently criticized the "intellectualist isolation" of Western Marxism and "its sundering of all bonds that might have linked it to popular movements for revolutionary socialism" (Lentricchia 1984:2). We do have some information on the political affiliation of some Marxist anthropologists (See Kahn and Llobera 1981a:280-285), but little discussion of the actual involvement of Marxist anthropologists in the political and economic arenas of class struggle.

3 I would guess that less than 1% of the citations in Marxist anthropology are archeological sources. A brief review of the bibliographies of recent work (Block 1975, Godelier 1977, Hindess and Hirst 1975, 1977; Kahn and Llobera 1981; Seddon 1978)

turned up only the following: Harris and Young (1981:133) cite Cohen (1977), and Hindess and Hirst (1975:25) cite Childe (1952), but only tangentially; Ekholm (1981) and Godelier (1977, 1978) cite several sources each and do discuss archeological data, but very incompletely. Gilman's excellent article on the "upper paleolithic revolution" is an exception to these remarks (1984).

4 For further discussion of the relationship between Marxist anthropology and French structuralism, see Copans adn Seddon (1978), Kahn and Llobera (1981a), and Bloch (1983). For discussion of the shortcomings of the French Marxist tradition, see Kahn and Llobera (1981a); of French structuralism, see Harris (1968). It may be worthwhile to quote a portion of Anderson's devastating critique of the relationship between Marxism and structuralism:

> After French Marxism had enjoyed a lengthy period of largely uncontested cultural dominance, basking in the remote, reflected prestige of the Liberation, it finally encountered an intellectual adversary that was capable of doing battle with it, and prevailing. Its victorious opponent was the broad theoretical front of structuralism, and then its post-structuralist successors. The crisis of Latin Marxism, then, would be the result, not of a circumstantial decline, but of a head-on defeat. The evidence of that defeat, it could be argued, is the triumphant ascendancy of structuralist or post-structuralist ideas and themes wherever Marxist ones once held sway.... But even at the peak of its productivity, Althusserianism was always constituted in an intimate and fatal dependence on a structuralism that both preceded it and would survive it. Levi-Strauss had peremptorily sought to cut the Gordian knot of the relation between structure and subject by suspending the latter from any field of scientific knowledge. Rather than resistinq this move, Althusser radicalized it, with a version of Marxism in which subjects were abolished altogether, save as the illusory effects of ideological structures (P. Anderson 1984:33, 38).

Anderson also makes some perceptive comments on relationship between the political explosion of May, 1968, and the failures of structural Marxism, apropos our remarks in Footnote 2 (1984:38-39, 66-67).

5 More than this, the entire social relations of imperialism are embodied in the Big Mac. Consider, for example, the "Hamburger Connection": much of the beef for fast food chains comes from ranches in Central America where it is more profitable and

prestigious to raise beef for export than grow maize for the impoverished local population (W.T. Anderson 1984).

Also, the Big Mac has inspired bourgeois economists to develop the "Big Mac Index" which provides a cross-cultural comparison of the labor time necessary to purchase Big Macs, small fries, and medium Cokes for a family of four (Banks 1984). A bus driver in Chicago works only half as long as his London counterpart for this culinary delight. Comparable measures could, and should, be used to compare labor times for such things as medical care, housing, and transportation in various bourgeois and socialist nations.

6 It is entirely true that different societies have different conceptions of time and punctuality (Levine and Wolff 1985) and that "the conceptualization of productive activity is totally integrated with other social relations in pre-capitalist societies and that the sharp boundary we draw between labour and other activities is absent" (Bloch 1983:91). But these facts no more negate the dependence of human beings on labor than the fact that different societies conceptualize food differently negates the human dependence on food.

7 Since there are so many dictionary definitions of the term "value" (17 in Webster's second edition), this term is easily misunderstood. Perhaps the term "labor-value" would be preferable since it would be clearly materialist and not easily confused with the metaphysical concepts of the cultural idealists.

8 Marx's entire section "On the Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof" (1965:71-83) is an excellent statement of the need for a thermodynamic conception of society.

9 Elsewhere I have used the term ethnoenergetics to refer to this mode of analysis, but perhaps social thermodynamics is preferable (Ruyle 1973b, 1975, 1977).

10 There are metaphysical complexities in this formulation, of course, which cannot be entered into here.

11 The labor theory of human origins is thus an important arena of struggle against the excesses of structuralism, which asserts

> the outright primacy of the communicative over the productive functions in the definition of humanity and the development of history alike: that is, in Habermas's terms, of "language" over "labour".... Whereas hominids practised labour with tools, revealing it as a pre-human activity, homo sapiens

> as a species was characterized by the innovation of language and the family that it alone could institute. Moreover, this privilege of communication over production is not simply constitutive of what it meant to become fully "human"; it continues to operate as the dominant principle of historical change thereafter (P. Anderson 1984:61).

It is, however, the human dependence on labor activities that serves to distinguish humans from tool-using apes (Ruyle 1976:140). Those familiar with the first law of dialectics, the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa (Engels 1940:26), should have no problems with this.

12 Contrary to what I suggested earlier (Ruyle 1973b), it appears that the emergence of exploitation was closely linked with the emergence of patriarchy. Engels, in discussing the earliest form of exploitation, remarked,

> It was not long then before the great "truth" was discovered that man also can be a commodity, that human energy can be exchanged and put to use by making man into a slave (1972:234).

What Engels did not know is that the first slaves were not men but women. References to slave women appear in the earliest protoliterate tablets in Sumeria, centuries before references to male slaves, and slave women were more numerous than slave men throughout early Sumerian history (Adams 1966:96ff). The economic role of women slaves in the early stages of the development of civilization was comparable to that of women workers in the textile mills of early capitalism. As Adams notes:

> Their economic role was a much more significant one, however, in connection with great estates and temples, of which the Bau archive furnishes so richly documented an example. In the Bau community of some 1200 persons, there were from 250 to 300 slaves, of whom the overwhelming proportion were women. One tablet alone lists 205 slave girls and their children who probably were employed in a centralized weaving establishment like one known archeologically at the site of ancient Eshnunna; other women are known to have been engaged in milling, brewing, cooking, and similar interior operations permitting close supervision (1966:102).

For further discussion of the subjugation of women and the rise of Sumerian civilization, see Rohrlich (1980). While there are disagreements among both feminists and Marxists as to the degree of female subordination in primitive communism (for the major opposing views, see Rosaldo 1974, Leacock 1972), it is clear that women's oppression increased with the rise of class rule. While, as Harris and Young stress, it is incorrect to see women as a

uniformly oppressed category (1981:111-112), systems of class rule are universally patriarchal in that 1) the most oppressed people are women, and 2) the major institutions of class rule are almost exclusively staffed by men. Feminist scholars are increasingly aware that "the state is male in the feminist sense" (MacKinnon 1983:644) and are exploring the relationship between the state and women's oppression (Sacks 1976, Rapp 1978, Rohrlich 1980, Gailey 1985).

13 For an evaluation of this view, see Moseley and Wallerstein (1978:273-274).

14 My formulation here has been shaped by a variety of sources, of which the most important are: Amin (1976), Baran (1957), Baran and Sweezy (1966), Domhoff (1967), Frank (1969a, 1969b), Magdoff (1969), and Wallerstein (1974a, 1974b).

15 Marx noted in 1853 that capitalism took on a different appearance in underdeveloping nations than in the overdeveloping nations:

> The profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked (1969:137).

16 It appears that some of the most important work (i.e. Cereseto 1983, Lenski 1966, 1970) in anthropological Marxism has been done by sociologists rather than anthropologists. Perhaps the reasons for this situation are similar to those suggested by Anderson who, after observing that some of the best ethnographies are written by non-anthropologists, wrote (1984:1002):

> It is partly because anthropologists choose to write in sesquipedalian jargon, and choose to focus their books on arcane and frequently absurd points of theory. There is, however, a deeper failure. Don't anthropologists care about people anymore?

Similarly, we may ask, don't Marxists care about revolution anymore?

17 There is no contradiction, incidentally, between Cereseto's three categories and the two I specified above (Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations and Underdeveloping Capitalist Nations). Cereseto's categories are based on the observed data on per capita income, which forms a continuum from the richest nation to the poorest. My categories are based on underlying structural features (energy flow) which are analytically distinct (comparable to Weberian "ideal types), even though the surface manifestation (per

capita income) may form a continuum. This does not negate the reality of the underlying distinction.

18 Not only has income inequality been increasing in the capitalist world, but also institutional violence, political assassinations, and state-sponsored torture have increased since World War II (Chomsky and Herman 1979). By contrast, the proto-socialist nations, and specifically the Soviet Union, have become less repressive since Stalin's time (Chomsky and Herman 1979:8, Szymansky 1979, 1984).

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