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1.

Marxism

What is Orthodox Marxism?

Any effective political theory will have to do at least two things: it will have to offer an integrated understanding of social practices and, based on such an interrelated knowledge, offer a guideline for praxis. My main argument here is that among all contesting social theories now, only Orthodox Marxism has been able to produce an integrated knowledge of the existing social totality and provide lines of praxis that will lead to building a society free from necessity.

But first I must clarify what I mean by Orthodox Marxism. Like all other modes and forms of political theory, the very theoretical identity of Orthodox Marxism is itself contested — not just from non- and anti-Marxists who question the very 'real' (by which they mean the 'practical' as under free-market criteria) existence of any kind of Marxism now but, perhaps more tellingly, from within the Marxist tradition itself. I will, therefore, first say what I regard to be the distinguishing marks of Orthodox Marxism and then outline a short polemical map of contestation over Orthodox Marxism within the Marxist theories now. I will end by arguing for its effectivity in bringing about a new society based not on human rights but on freedom from necessity.

I will argue that to know contemporary society — and to be able to act on such knowledge — one has to first of all know what makes the existing social totality. I will argue that the dominant social totality is based on inequality — not just inequality of power but inequality of economic access (which then determines access to health care, education, housing, diet, transportation,...). This systematic inequality cannot be explained by gender, race, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, or nationality. These are all secondary contradictions and are all determined by the fundamental contradiction of capitalism which is inscribed in the relation of capital and labor. All modes of Marxism today explain social inequalities primarily on the basis of these secondary contradictions and in doing so — and this is my main

argument — legitimate capitalism. Why? Because such arguments authorize capitalism without gender, race,... discrimination and thus accept economic inequality as an integral part of human societies. They accept a sunny capitalism — a capitalism beyond capitalism. Such a society, based on cultural equality but economic inequality, has always been the not-so-hidden agenda of the bourgeois left — whether it has been called 'new left', 'postmarxism', 'radical democracy', or 'democratic socialism'. This is, by the way, the main reason for its popularity in the culture industry — from the academy (Frederic Jameson, David Harvey, Donna Haraway, Jodie Dean,...) to daily politics (Michael Harrington, Ralph Nader, Jesse Jackson, Bernie Sanders,...) to.... For all, capitalism is here to stay and the best that can be done is to make its cruelties more tolerable, more humane. This humanization (not eradication) of capitalism is the sole goal of all contemporary lefts (marxism, feminism, anti-racism, queeries,...).

Such an understanding of social inequality is based on the fundamental understanding that the source of wealth is human knowledge and not human labor. That is, wealth is produced by the human mind and is thus free from the actual objective conditions which shape the historical relations of labor and capital. Only Orthodox Marxism recognizes the historicity of labor and its primacy as the source of all human wealth. In this text I argue that any emancipatory theory has to be founded on recognition of the priority of Marx's labor theory of value and not repeat the technological determinism of corporate theory ('knowledge work') that masquerades as social theory.

Finally, it is only Orthodox Marxism that recognizes the inevitability and also the necessity of communism — the necessity, that is, of a society in which 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs' is the rule.¹

¹ Karl Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', Karl Marx/Frederick Engels: Collected Works, 50 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1984), 24, p. 87.

Why Everyone has Suddenly Become an Orthodox Marxist

A parody of politics has taken over left politics in the US and Europe. A parody in which — after the dead-end of the designer socialisms of postmarxisms — suddenly everyone is an 'orthodox' Marxist: from Žižek who in the introduction to a selection of his work writes of the need to 'return to the centrality of the Marxist critique of political economy'; to Michael Sprinker who referred to himself as a 'neo-conservative marxist'. In calling himself a 'neoconservative', Sprinker was embracing with pride Butler's definition of the term in her 'Merely Cultural' in which she equates it with 'leftist orthodoxy'. Then there is Paul Smith who now, after mocking Orthodox Marxism in *Discerning the Subject* and *Universal Abandon*, says he has a 'fairly orthodox understanding of what Marx and the Marxist tradition has had to say about capitalism'. 4

Parody is always the effect of a slippage, and the slippage here is that in spite of the sudden popularity of 'orthodox' Marxism, the actual theories and practices of the newly orthodox are more than ever before *flexodox*. It seems as if once more Lenin's notion that when the class antagonism emerges more sharply 'the liberals [...] dare not deny the class struggle, but attempt to narrow down [and] to curtail [...] the concept' has been proven by history.⁵ 'Orthodox' Marxism has become the latest cover by which the bourgeois left authenticates its credentials and proceeds to legitimate the economics of the ruling class and its antiproletarian politics.

Take Paul Smith, for example. In Orthodox Marxism, class is the central issue. (I put aside here that in his writings on subjectivity, for example, Smith has already gotten rid of the 'central' by a deconstructive logic.) What Smith does with class is a rather interesting test of how

² Michael Sprinker, 'Forum on Teaching Marxism', Mediations, Spring (1998), pp. 68–73 (p. 68); Slavoj Žižek, 'Preface: Burning The Bridges', The Žižek Reader, ed. by Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1999), pp. vii-x (p. ix).

³ Judith Butler, 'Merely Cultural', Social Text, 52/53, 15.3/4, Fall/Winter (1997), pp. 265–77 (p. 268).

⁴ Paul Smith, Millennial Dreams (New York: Verso Books, 1997), p. 3.

V. I. Lenin, 'Liberal and Marxist Conceptions of the Class Struggle', V. I. Lenin Collected Works, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 19, pp. 119–24 (p. 122).

Orthodox Marxism is being used to legitimate the class interests of the owners. Smith reworks class and turns it into a useless Habermasian communicative act. He writes that 'classes are what are formed in struggle, not something that exists prior to struggle'. To say it again: the old ideological textualization of the 'new left' is not working any more (just look at the resistance against globalization), so the ruling class is now reworking the 'old left' to defend itself. Against the Orthodox Marxist theory of class, Smith evacuates class of an objective basis in the extraction of surplus-labor in production and makes it the effect of local conflicts. In short, Smith reverses the Orthodox Marxist position that, 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness', and turns it into a neomarxian view that what matters is their consciousness. In this he in fact shares a great deal with conservative theories that make 'values' (the subjective) as what matters in social life and not economic access.

Žižek provides another example of the flexodox parody of Marxism today. Capitalism in Orthodox Marxism is explained as an historical mode of production based on the privatization of the means of subsistence in the hands of a few, i.e., the systemic exploitation of labor by capital. Capitalism is the world-historic regime of unpaid surpluslabor. In Žižek's writings, capitalism is not based on exploitation in production (surplus-labor), but on struggles over consumption ('surplus-enjoyment'). The Orthodox Marxist concepts which lay bare the exploitative production relations in order to change them are thus replaced with a 'psycho-marxist' pastiche of consumption in his writings, a revisionist move that has proven immensely successful in the bourgeois cultural criticism. Žižek, however, has taken to representing this displacement of labor (production) with desire (consumption) as 'strictly correlative' to the concept of 'revolutionary praxis' found in the texts of Orthodox Marxism. Revolutionary practice is always informed by class-consciousness and transformative cultural critique has always aimed at producing class-consciousness by laying bare the false consciousness that ruling ideology institutes in the everyday.

⁶ Millennial Dreams, p. 60.

⁷ Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', *Karl Marx/Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, 50 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987), 29, pp. 257–417 (p. 263).

Transformative cultural critique, in other words, is always a linking of consciousness to production practices from which a knowledge of social totality emerges. Žižek, however, long ago abandoned Orthodox Marxist ideology critique as an epistemologically naïve theory of ideology because it could not account for the persistence of 'desire' beyond critique (the 'enlightened false-consciousness' of The Sublime Object of *Ideology, Mapping Ideology,...*). His more recent 'return to the centrality of the Marxist critique' is as a result a purely tropic voluntarism of the kind he endlessly celebrates in his diffusionist readings of culture as desireal moments when social norms are violated and personal emotions spontaneously experienced as absolutely compulsory (as 'drive'). His concept of revolutionary Marxist praxis consists of re-describing it as an 'excessive' lifestyle choice (which for Žižek are analogous to pedophilia and other culturally marginalized practices).8 On this reading, Marxism is the only metaphorical displacement of 'desire' into 'surplus-pleasure' that makes imperative the 'direct socialization of the productive process' which causes the subjects committed to it to experience a Symbolic death at the hands of the neoliberal culture industry.9 It is this 'affirmative' reversal of the right-wing anti-Marxist narrative that makes Žižek's writings so highly praised in the bourgeois 'high-theory' market where it is read as 'subtle' and an example of 'deep thinking' because it confirms a transcendent position considered to be above politics by making all politics ideological. If everything is ideology, then there can be no fundamental social change, only formal repetition and reversal of values (Nietzsche). Žižek's pastiche of psycho-marxism thus consists in presenting what is only theoretically possible for the capitalist — those few who have already met, in excess, their material needs through the exploitation of the labor of the other and who can, therefore, afford to elaborate fantasies of desire — as a universal form of agency freely available to everyone.

Psycho-marxism does what bourgeois ideology has always done: maintain the bourgeois hegemony over social production by commodifying, through an aesthetic relay, the contradictions of the wages system. What bourgeois ideology does above all is deny that the

⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (New York: Verso Books, 1999), pp. 381–88.

⁹ Ibid., p. 350.

mode of social production has an historic agency of its own independent of the subject. Žižek's 'return' to 'orthodox' Marxism erases its materialist theory of desire: '[o]ur desires and pleasures spring from society' and do not stand in 'excess' of it.¹⁰ In fact, he says exactly the opposite and turns the need for Orthodox Marxist theory now into a phantom desire of individuals: he makes 'class struggle' an effect of a 'totalitarian' desire to polarize the social between 'us' and 'them' (using the 'friend/enemy' binary found in the writings of the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt).¹¹

What is basic only to Orthodox Marxist theory, however, which is what enables it to produce class-consciousness through a critique of ideology, is its materialist prioritization of 'need' over 'desire'. It is only Orthodox Marxism which recognizes that although capitalism is compelled to continually expand the needs of workers because of the drive for profit, it at the same time cannot satisfy these needs because of the logic of profit. 'Desire' is always an effect of class relations, of the gap between the material level and historical potential of the forces of production and the social actuality of un-met needs.

In spite of their formal 'criticality', the writings of Žižek, Spivak, Smith, Hennessy and other theorists of designer socialisms produce concepts that legitimize the existing social relations. The notion of class in their work, for example, is the one that now is commonly deployed in bourgeois media. In their reporting on what has become known as the 'Battle of Seattle', and in the coverage of the rising tide of protest against the financial institutions of US monopoly capital that are pillaging the nations of the global South, the corporate media represents the emergent class struggles as a matter of an alternative 'lifestyle choice'. On this diffusional narrative, 'class' is nothing more than an opportunity for surplus-pleasure 'outside' the market for those who have voluntarily 'discarded' the normal pleasures of US culture. It is the same 'lifestyle' politics that in the flexodox marxism of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri is made an autonomous zone of 'immaterial labor' which they locate as the 'real communism' that makes existing society

¹⁰ Karl Marx, 'Wage Labour and Capital', *Karl Marx/Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, 50 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 9, pp. 197–228 (p. 216).

¹¹ Žižek, Ticklish Subject, p. 226.

¹² Nicholas Riccardi, 'Hey Hey, Ho Ho, Catch Our Anti-Corporate Puppet Show!', The Los Angeles Times, 13 August 2000, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-aug-13-tm-3457-story.html

post-capitalist already so that revolution is not necessary. 13 What is at the core of both the flexodox marxism and the popular culture of class as 'lifestyle' is a de-politicization of the concepts of Orthodox Marxism which neutralizes them as indexes of social inequality and reduces them to merely descriptive categories which take what is for what ought to be. Take the writings of Pierre Bourdieu for example. Bourdieu turns Marx's dialectical concepts of 'class' and 'capital' which lay bare the social totality into floating 'categories' and reflexive 'classifications' that can be formally applied to any social practice because they have been cut off from their connection to the objective global relations of production. Bourdieu, in short, legitimates the pattern of class as 'lifestyle' in the bourgeois media by his view that 'class' is an outcome of struggles over 'symbolic capital' in any 'field'. I leave aside here that his diffusion of the logic of capital into 'cultural capital', 'educational capital', and the like is itself part of a depoliticization of the relation between capital and labor and thus a blurring of class antagonism as I explain this in more detail in a later chapter ('Capital').

Without totalizing knowledge of exploitation — which is why such dialectical concepts as 'capital' form the basis of Orthodox Marxist class theory — exploitation cannot be abolished. The cultural idealism of the de-politicized voiding of Marxist concepts fits right in with the 'volunteer-ism' of the neoliberals and 'compassionate' conservatives which they use to justify their massive privatization programs. Considering class struggle politics as a matter of cultural struggles over symbolic status is identical to the strategy of considering the dismantling of social welfare as an opportunity for 'local' agency freed from coercive state power, i.e., the bedrock of the 'non-governmental' activism and 'community' building of the bourgeois reformists. When George W. Bush claimed to mobilize what he called the 'armies of compassion' against the 'Washington insiders' and return 'power' to the 'people', it is the old cultural studies logic that all politics is 'people vs. power bloc', a warmed over populism that makes politics a matter of building depoliticized cross-class coalitions for bourgeois right, utopic models of a post-political social order without class struggle possessing equality

¹³ Empire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire (London: Penguin Books, 2004); Commonwealth (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2009).

of representation that excludes the revolutionary vanguard. As Marx and Engels said of the 'bourgeois socialists' of their day, such utopian measures at 'best, lessen the cost, and simplify the administrative work, of bourgeois government'. Žižek's 'affirmation' of revolutionary Marxism as a 'totalitarian' desire that polarizes the cultural 'lifeworld' between 'friends' and 'enemies' is another relay of 'class-as-an-after-effect of struggle' of the networked left. What the parody does is make class struggle a rhetorical 'invention' of Marx(ists) analogous to the bourgeois 'rights' politics of the transnational coalitional regime of exploitation ruling today, and erases the need for a global theory of social change. Orthodox Marxism cuts through the closed atmosphere of the 'friends' of the networked left and their embrace of a voluntarist 'compassionate' millenarianism with a critique from outside so to expose the global collective need for a revolutionary social theory and red cultural studies to end exploitation for all.

The Left Partys

The goal of the left <code>bal masqué</code> is perhaps most clearly represented in the image for the 'Marxism 2000' conference on millennial marxism — the poster for <code>Rethinking Marxism</code> which is the organ of the contemporary neoliberalism masquerading as 'Marxism'. The poster, which opportunistically appropriates Diego Rivera's 'Dance in Tehuantepec' (1935), completes the ironic slippage the bourgeois left has taken as the purpose of post-al theory: the troping of concepts as puncepts. The image on the poster is of peasants performing a (folk) dance and the caption reads, 'The Party's Not Over'. The transcoding of the Party of the proletariat to the party of folk-dancers is the transcoding of revolution to reform that Žižek's 'Orthodox Marxism' performs.

The idea is that social inequality is an effect of the persistence of cultural rituals that need to be addressed separately from class exploitation and revaluated from within as cultures of resistance. The 'folk'-sy theme accommodates the populist romanticization of people on the neomarxian Thompsonite left (Smith, Sprinker) as well, where class

¹⁴ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'The Manifesto of the Communist Party', *Karl Marx/Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, 50 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 6, pp. 477–519 (p. 514).

is reduced to the 'lived experience' of traditions of 'resistance' which say good-bye to the urban working class as a revolutionary agency that critiques all conventions. The flexodox left wants a party-ing proletariat (Hennessy) rather than a Party of the proletariat to put a smile-y face on exploitation.

The hollowing out of Marxism in the name of (Orthodox) Marxism by such theorists as Smith, Sprinker, and Žižek is based on the ideological unsaid of the bourgeois right of property and its underpinning logic of the market which are represented as natural ('inalienable') 'human rights', or, more commonly in daily practices, as individual rights. Revolutionary struggles against these 'rights' (of property) are assumed to be signs of dogmatism, ruthless impersonality, vanguardism and totalitarianism all 'obvious' markers of Orthodox Marxism. The remedy put forward by these theorists is to resist the revolutionary vanguard in the name of 'democracy from below', which is itself a code phrase for 'spontaneity'. Spontaneity — the kind of supposed 'freedom' which is the fabric of bourgeois daily life — is itself a layered notion that, in its folds, hides a sentimentalism that in reality constitutes 'democracy from below' and its allied notion of the 'individual', and the 'human subject'. Žižek and other 'high theorists' manage to conceal this naïve emotionalism (of which soap operas are made) in the rather abstract language of 'theory'. What is subtly implicit in the discourses of 'high theory', however, becomes explicit in the annotations of middle theory — that is, in bourgeois cultural commentary and criticism. Rosemary Hennessy's Profit and Pleasure is the most recent and perhaps most popular attack on Orthodox Marxism in the name of Marxism itself. Instead of looking at the cultural commentary in Hennessy's book (the book is actually a reprinting of older essays, and is thus even more historically significant as a documentary record of the continual emptying of Marxism in the 1980's and 1990's), I will look at its 'Acknowledgments'. This text is not something 'personal' and 'separate' from the cultural commentary and criticism of the essays in the body of her book. The 'Acknowledgments' text represents in fact a summing up — and a mutual confirmation between Hennessy and those she 'acknowledges' — of the core assumptions and ideas that inform the practices of the bourgeois left now.

As the 'Acknowledgments' text makes clear, the cultural commentary of Hennessy's *Profit and Pleasure* is rooted in the notion that politics is

basically a community activity. In bourgeois cultural criticism, the idea of 'community activity' is a code term that signals the substitution of shared 'ideas', 'assumptions', and 'emotions', for 'class' solidarity. 15 What, therefore, lies at the core of 'community' is not a structure (class) but a 'feeling' (emotional intensity). Hennessy, who is not as subtle as Žižek or even Smith, is quite open about the valorization of 'feeling' ('opened her heart', 'feisty politics', 'precious friendship', 'a path with heart', 'warmth and love').16 The mark of membership in her post-al community is 'heartache': in this evaluative social scheme, she who has felt the most 'heartache' (emotional intensity), is the most authentic member of the community. This appeal to a 'comradeship' based on the intensity of 'feeling' clearly indicates that no matter what Marxist or quasi-Marxist language Hennessy uses elsewhere in her book, she basically believes that people's lives are changed not by revolutionary praxis but by encountering other 'feeling' people: 'During the last year of writing this book, I met [...] and my life has not been the same since [...]'.17 The lesson of this encounter, Hennessy indicates, was not the classic lessons of Marxism that social change is a product of structural change, but that social change comes about by means of something called 'revolutionary love' ('amor revolutionario') which — according to her — has taken her 'time and time again to the other side' ('llevarme una *y otra vez al otro lado'*). ¹⁸ The other lesson is the danger of vanguardism: 'revolutionary love' has also reminded her that 'power is finally and always in the hands of the people' ('el poder es finalmente y siempre en los manos de la gente'). 19 People as spontaneous actors.

On this view, Orthodox Marxism is dogmatic and totalitarian. So to 'correct' its 'faults', Hennessy empties its revolutionary vanguard of its commitment and puts feeling (manifested by 'heartache') in its place. What is, of course, so significant is that Hennessy installs such sentimentality as the ultimate layer of her Marxism in the name of Marxism itself. This is what makes the work of bourgeois writers

¹⁵ Richard Rorty, 'Solidarity or Objectivity?', Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth (Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 21–34.

¹⁶ Rosemary Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. xii-xiii.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. xiii.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

like Žižek, Smith, Sprinker, and Hennessy effective and welcome in the academy and the culture industry: they do not (unlike regular rightwingers) attack Marxism, but they reduce its explanatory power and its revolutionary force by substituting spontaneity for revolutionary praxis. For these writers, social transformation is the effect not of revolutionary praxis but of a spontaneous and emotionally intense exchange between two kindred 'spirits'. It is the spirit that moves the world. What in Hennessy is presented as Marxism or feminism turns out to be a souped-up version of the old bourgeois cultural feminism which, running away from revolution, retreats once again into community, spontaneity, affectivity, and above all the autonomous subject who gives and receives love above and beyond all social and economic processes.

One of the ways such writers hollow out Marxism of its Marxism and produce a Marxism beyond Marxism is by their overt acknowledgement of the way Marxism is treated in the bourgeois culture industry. Hennessy, for example, writes that Marxism in English Departments (the trope of the culture industry) is both 'courted and tamed'.²⁰ In other words, by announcing her awareness of the way that Marxism is tamed, she hopes to inoculate herself from the charge that she is doing so. The message the reader is supposed to get is this: because she knows Marxism is always being 'tamed', she herself would never do that. Under cover of this ideological self-inoculation, Hennessy then goes on to produce her 'tamed' version of Marxism which is only metaphorically 'marxist' because it is void of all the concepts and practices that make Marxism *Marxism*.

My larger point is of course that the most effective writings for the ruling class are located in the middle register, in that register of writing usually praised as lucid, clear, jargon-free, and above all, 'readable'. Žižek is abstract; Hennessy is concrete. This is another way of saying that the work of Hennessy and other such 'tamers' of Marxism is always a work of synthesis and consolidation — they make concrete the work of high theory; it is for this reason that their work forms the very center of the culture industry. Finally, to be clear, the question here is not to play a game of determining the 'good' from the 'bad' Marxism. What is good Marxism — what is effective in overcoming inequality — is

²⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

determined by history itself. The question is whether what is being done actualizes the historical potential made possible by the development of the forces of production and thus brings about change in the existing social relations of production (overcomes class inequality) or whether it plays within the existing actuality and thus turns the limits of the actually existing into the very limits of reality as such. And in doing so, it reifies the present social relations of production. Flexodox Marxists like Hennessy accept the proposition that capitalism is here to stay and thus reject as 'impractical' any pressure put on the external supports of capitalism (capital and labor relations) and then work within capitalism — on the basis of community and emotional intensity — to make its ongoing process of the exploitation of the labor of the world's workers more 'humane' and tolerable.

Capitalism is, according to Hennessy's soap-operatic leftism, something that one should always keep in mind but not seriously consider overthrowing. She is too cynical to take even her own views seriously:

This means that eliminating the social structures of exploitation that capitalism absolutely requires and so violently enacts at the expense of human needs must be on the political agenda, at the very least as the horizon that sets the terms for imagining change.²¹

Capitalist exploitation is a heuristic consideration not a revolutionary imperative. Beyond the theatrical moves of the bourgeois left, however, Orthodox Marxism is emerging as the only understanding of the new global formations that lead to transformative praxis.

Orthodox Marxism has become impossible to ignore because the objective possibility of transforming the regime of wage-labor into a system in which the priority is not profit but meeting the needs of all is confronted as a daily actuality. The flexodox left turns the emergent class struggles into self-enclosed struggles for symbolic power so to represent class hegemony in the relations of production as capable of being changed through cross-class 'coalitions', when in fact exploitation is everywhere in the world maintained by such coalitions which are losing their legitimacy and breaking apart under the weight of their own contradictions precisely because the class divide is growing under their

²¹ Ibid., p. 232.

rule and beyond their borders. Orthodox Marxism demonstrates that the productive forces of capitalism have reached tremendous levels and have the ability to feed, clothe, and house the world many times over but are fettered by capitalism's existing social relations: its fundamental drive to privately consume the social resources of collective labor. That the left today has, in dramatic fashion, been forced to return (if only rhetorically) to Orthodox Marxism marks the fact that the struggle to transform capitalism has reached a stage of development that necessitates a systemic theoretical basis for revolutionary praxis. The hegemonic left now wants to incorporate Orthodox Marxism into its dogmatic coalitional logic as a discourse which depends for its identity on 'class' as 'real': which is a code for the 'lived experience' or the transcendental ineffable politics (Lacan) of class as an outside inferred from the inside (the side of subjective 'values') and as such held to be unavailable for positive knowing. Which is another way of saying that class is a matter of 'persuasion' and 'seduction' rather than production.

What the resulting flexodox marxism cannot explain therefore is that class

is not a matter of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment *regards* as its aim. It is a question of *what the proletariat is*, and what, in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do.²²

Orthodox Marxism does not consist of raising 'class' as a dogmatic banner of the 'real', but in the critique of false consciousness which divides the workers by occulting their collective interest by shifting the focus from their position in social production, their material antagonism with the capitalist class. 'Class as real' (a spectral agency) cannot explain, and therefore cannot engage in, the material process through which capitalism, by its very own laws of motion, produces its own 'gravedigger' in the global proletariat. What the flexodox return to, and hollowing out of the concepts of Orthodox Marxism proves, among other things, is that 'the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas' and history progresses despite this ideological hegemony

²² Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism', *Karl Marx/Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, 50 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 4, pp. 5–211 (p. 37).

through the agency of labor. In short: 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles'.²³

Orthodox Marxism has become a test-case of the 'radical' today. Yet, what passes for orthodoxy on the left — whether like Smith and Žižek they claim to support it or like Butler and Rorty they want to 'achieve our country' by excluding it from 'U.S. Intellectual life' — is a parody of orthodoxy which hybridizes its central concepts and renders them flexodox simulations. Yet, even in its very textuality, the orthodox is a resistance to the flexodox. Contrary to the common-sensical view of 'orthodox' as 'traditional' or 'conformist' 'opinions', is its other meaning: ortho-doxy not as flexodox 'hybridity', but as 'original' 'ideas'. 'Original', not in the sense of epistemic 'event', 'authorial' originality and so forth, but, as in chemistry, in its opposition to 'para', 'meta', 'post', and other ludic hybridities: thus 'ortho' as resistance to the annotations that mystify the original ideas of Marxism and hybridize it for the 'special interests' of various groups.

The 'original' ideas of Marxism are inseparable from their effect as demystification of ideology — for example the deployment of 'class' that allows a demystification of daily life from the haze of consumption. Class is thus an 'original idea' of Marxism in the sense that it cuts through the hype of cultural agency under capitalism and reveals how culture and consumption are tied to labor, the everyday determined by the workday: how the amount of time workers spend engaging in surplus-labor determines the amount of time they get for reproducing and cultivating their needs. Without changing this division of labor, social change is impossible. Orthodoxy is a rejection of the ideological annotations: hence, on the one hand, the resistance to orthodoxy as 'rigid' and 'dogmatic' 'determinism', and, on the other, its hybridization by the flexodox as the result of which it has become almost impossible today to read the original ideas of Marxism, such as 'exploitation', 'surplusvalue', 'class', 'class antagonism', 'class struggle', 'revolution', 'science' (i.e., objective knowledge), 'ideology' (as false consciousness). Yet, it is

²³ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'The German Ideology', Karl Marx/Frederick Engels: Collected Works, 50 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 5, p. 59; 'Manifesto', p. 482.

²⁴ Richard Rorty, Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Judith Butler, 'Left Conservatism II', Theory & Event, 2:2 (1998).

only these ideas that clarify the 'elemental' truths through which theory ceases to be a gray activism of tropes, desire and affect, and becomes, instead, a red, revolutionary guide to praxis for a new society freed from exploitation and injustice.

Marx's original scientific discovery was his labor theory of value. Marx's labor theory of value is an elemental truth of Orthodox Marxism that is rejected by the flexodox left as the central dogmatism of a 'totalitarian' Marxism. It is only Marx's labor theory of value, however, that exposes the mystification of the wages system that disguises exploitation as a 'fair exchange' between capital and labor and reveals the truth about this relation as one of exploitation. Only Orthodox Marxism explains how what the workers sell to the capitalist is not labor, a commodity like any other whose price is determined by fluctuations in supply and demand, but their labor-power — their ability to labor in a system which has systematically 'freed' them from the means of production so they are forced to work or starve — whose value is determined by the amount of time socially necessary to reproduce it daily. The value of labor-power is equivalent to the value of wages workers consume daily in the form of commodities that keep them alive to be exploited tomorrow. Given the technical composition of production today, this amount of time is a slight fraction of the workday, the majority of which workers spend producing surplus-value over and above their needs. The surplus-value is what is pocketed by the capitalists in the form of profit when the commodities are sold. Class is the antagonistic division between the exploited and their exploiters. Without Marx's labor theory of value, one could only contest the after effects of this outright theft of social labor-power rather than its cause which lies in the private ownership of production. The flexodox rejection of the labor theory of value as the 'dogmatic' core of a totalitarian Marxism is, therefore, a not-so-subtle rejection of the principled defense of the (scientific) knowledge workers need for their emancipation from exploitation because only the labor theory of value exposes the opportunism of knowledges (ideology) which occult this exploitation. Without the labor theory of value, socialism would only be a moral dogma that appeals to the sentiments of 'fairness' and 'equality' for a 'just' distribution of the social wealth that does the work of capital by naturalizing the exploitation of labor under capitalism giving it an acceptable 'human face'.

It is only Orthodox Marxism that explains socialism as an historical inevitability that is tied to the development of social production itself and its requirements. Orthodox Marxism makes socialism scientific because it explains how, in the capitalist system, based on the private consumption of labor-power (competition), the objective tendency is to reduce the amount of time labor spends in reproducing itself (necessary labor) while expanding the amount of time labor is engaged in producing surplus-value (surplus labor) for the capitalist. This is mainly done through the introduction of machinery into the production process by the capitalists themselves to lower their own labor costs. Because of the competitive drive for profits under capitalism, it is historically inevitable that a point is reached when the technical mastery — the amount of time socially necessary on average to meet the needs of society through the processing of natural resources — is such that the conditions of the workers worsen relative to the owners and becomes an unbearable global social contradiction in the midst of the ever-greater masses of wealth produced. It is therefore just as inevitable that at such a moment it makes more sense to socialize production and meet the needs of all to avoid the explosive social conflicts perpetually generated by private property than to maintain the system at the risk of total social collapse on a world scale. 'Socialism or barbarism' (Luxemburg) is the inevitable choice faced by humanity because of capitalism. Either maintain private property and the exploitation of labor in production, in which case more and more social resources will go into policing the growingly desperate surplus-population generated by the technical efficiency of social production, or socialize production and inaugurate a society whose founding principle is 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs' and 'in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'.25

The time has come to state it clearly so that even the flexodox opportunists may grasp it: Orthodox Marxism is not a free-floating 'language-game' or 'meta-narrative' for arbitrarily constructing local utopian communities or spectral activist inversions of ideology meant to seduce 'desire' and 'mobilize' (glorify) subjectivity — it is an absolute

²⁵ Marx and Engels, 'Manifesto', p. 506; Karl Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', Karl Marx/Frederick Engels: Collected Works, 50 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1984), 24, pp. 75–99 (p. 87).

prerequisite for our emancipation from exploitation and a new society freed from necessity! Orthodox Marxism is the only global theory of social change. Only Orthodox Marxism has explained why under the system of wage-labor and capital, communism is not 'an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself' but 'the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things' because of its objective explanation of and ceaseless commitment to 'the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority' to end social inequality forever.²⁶

²⁶ Marx and Engels, 'German Ideology', p. 49; 'Manifesto', p. 495.