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TWO WAYS OF BEING WESTERN:
SOME SIMILARITIES BETWEEN LIBERALISM AND MARXISM

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1. Introduction

There has been no scarcity of efforts in the last century or so, and particularly in the last decade or so, to spell out the differences between liberalism and marxism, in terms of their social analysis as well as their general cosmology. It is therefore felt that it is high time to devote more research effort in the direction of pointing out their similarities. They are many, they are, at least some of them, deep and significant, and some of them are relatively difficult to see. The reason for that is simple: in a world, and not least an intellectual world used to see them as polarities, there is difficulty in finding an outside point of reference from which their similarity can be more clearly perceived.

And yet, the simplest analysis should lead one immediately towards a perspective of similarity rather than polarity. Thus, given these three circumstances:

1. they both developed at about the same time, during the 18th and 19th (to some extent also 20th) centuries.
2. they both developed in about the same place, Western Europe.
3. they both developed as a reflection of a particular culture dominated economically by the capitalist system in a certain phase of its development, and culturally by the tremendous growth of natural science.

It would be strange, indeed, if liberalism and marxism should not be more similar than different - leaving aside how the "more" in this sentence should be operationalized. Indeed, even if we accept

(as we do) the basically marxist idea that liberalism was the ideology rationalizing the status quo of a society in which the bourgeoisie had a vested interest, and marxism was the ideology leading to a self-understanding of the proletariat, the exploited class, of that society, this is only a polarity within the system. It does not look at the system from the outside. Liberalism and marxism may still be two cosmologies relating to capitalism as one system, liberalism in an apologetical and marxism in a critical way, and thus be each other's opposite within the system. Only when one accepts that system as a totality, world-embracing, will differences rather than similarities be the only focus worthy of attention.

In the following we shall try to spell out a number of such similarities. In doing so we have to operate with some conceptions of "liberalism" and "marxism". Both terms stand for a class of ideologies, or social cosmologies, rather than for anything very precise and limited. No doubt, whatever is stated below it may be asserted that liberalism in interpretation x and marxism in interpretation y do not exhibit the similarity that is claimed for them in this attempt to change the focus a little bit.

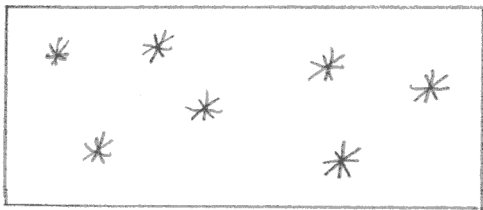
However, we are not inclined to take such objections too seriously. We shall be operating with very common sensical, even "vulgar" images of what "liberalism" and what "marxism" stand for. In fact, we shall even be so vulgar as to see the two superpowers of today, the United States and the Soviet Union as realizations, to some extent, of these two cosmologies. And this makes it still more important to ask the question: why can the two understand each other so well when the two cosmologies are held to be mutually incompatible? Why can it be that they are able to arrive at not only a modus vivendi, not only passive peaceful coexistence, but even a productive, creative system, capable of producing agreements about how to institutionalize the arms race (SALT), and the biggest trade treaty in the history of the world? Our thesis, briefly stated, is that this is not simply because they have common interests as great powers, but above all because they are reacting to each other according to the frame of reference defined by similarities rather than polarities of their two systems.

But, of course there is much more to "liberalism" and "marxism" than what is embodied in the two superpowers, and we shall

occasionally make reference to it. In short, we shall operate with relatively broad definitions of the two doctrines, and proceed immediately to those definitions.

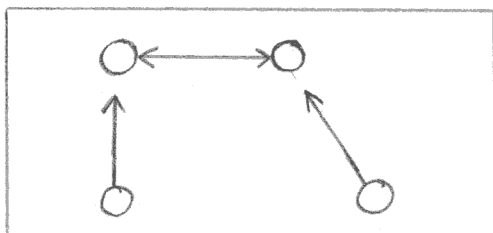
2. An image of "liberalism" and "marxism"

We shall define "liberalism" as a special case of what could be called an actor-oriented perspective on social reality:



In this image society is seen as an unstructured set of actors, they may be individuals or other collectivities, usually nations. Social reality is the sum of the actors, nothing more, nothing less. The actors are capable of formulating goals and pursuing them, not necessarily equally well; that depends on their "talent". Since they formulate different goals, and since, even when the goals are the same, they may be incompatible, society is at its best when it is so organized that there is an equilibrium institutionalized in society balancing various pursuits of goals. In the field of economics this takes the form of regulated competition, in the field of politics the form of regulated competition for votes, parliamentary democracy, compromises etc., in the field of science and culture it takes the form of pluralistic competition on the market of cognitions and values, in the field of military relations it takes the form of balance of power, and so on.

We then see "marxism" as a special case of what could be called a structural perspective on social reality:



According to this image social reality is a set of positions and the relations between them. Particularly important among these relations are relations of exploitation, built-in interaction whereby one party is enriched and the other is impoverished. Social

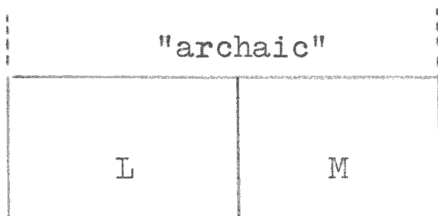
reality is the functioning of this system. The names of the individual actors placed in the position ("**names**" meaning their individual characteristics) are of minor significance; the structure is the important fact. This structure has certain regularities, some of them static, some of them dynamic, and according to whether one emphasizes the static or dynamic regularities one gets a structural image of social reality as a state or a process.

These are broad, even vague, formulations indeed. We do not even expect that liberals or marxists will recognize them or identify with them. All we claim is that with increasing preciseness from these points of departure versions of liberalism and versions of marxism may be obtained. However, our concern is not to carry out these precisations, but rather to start commenting on the similarities and give more meaning to "liberalism" and "marxism" as we proceed.

There are twelve such similarities we want to focus on. Needless to say, the number is completely arbitrary - many more could be found, some of them could be collapsed into one. It all depends on presentation, and we have preferred to present them in six pairs of similarities that somehow belong together.

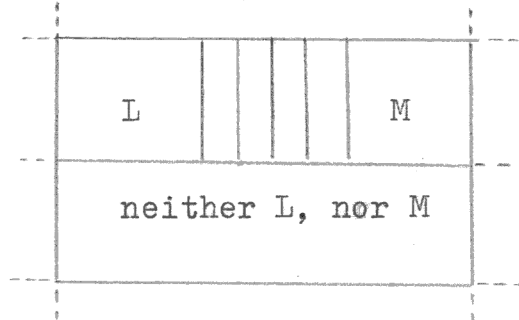
3. The ideas of mutual exclusiveness and exhaustiveness

The idea here is very simple. The two ideologies have a shared self-perception as each other's unbridgeable contradiction, as well as something filling the universe of social cosmologies, except for some residues that may be referred to as archaic forms:



Thus, ideological elements are either absorbed, pushed across the L/M border, or defined away as archaic.

Quite to the contrary, our images is something much more like this:



Even with the extremely general perspectives referred to as actor-oriented and structure-oriented above it is quite obvious that any dogma of mutual exclusiveness should be seen as propaganda, as an effort, sustained by some kind of shared, gentlemen's agreement, to span the world by means of these two ideologies. For it is rather clear that social reality embodies a richness that gives more than sufficient space for both of these perspectives, and many others as well, not to mention those perspectives that slice social reality in a completely different way.

Thus, take the Indo-China conflict. In the liberal view it is a conflict between North and South Vietnam, either of which is supported by great powers, Soviet Union and China on the one side, the United States (and some of her allies) on the other. These are the actors, they are small and big, they have goals, they have intentions and capabilities, they are pursuing them more or less skillfully, and history is a drama where social reality unfolds itself by letting the actors be precisely that, actors. The goal is to reestablish an equilibrium, a balance of forces; more or less status quo.

According to a marxist vision what happens in Indo-China is not captured in these terms at all. It can only be seen by looking at structural relations, some of them between nations, particularly the United States and Vietnam, some of them within nations, particularly between the feudal, pre-capitalist and capitalist upper classes in Saigon (and elsewhere in South Vietnam), and those exploited by them. These two structures are then related because the center of the United States is tied up with the center of "her" Vietnam, symbolized by the word Saigon. For that reason South Vietnam has to fight against an alliance between these two centers, and one might also add, in addition against the proletariat of the United States, the three million or so Americans who have been willing to participate in the war in Vietnam. The goal is to transcend the status quo and establish a society without exploitation.

It is hard to see that these two perspectives should exclude each other in any analysis of what happens in Indo-China. Rather, they both seem to be glimpses of reality. Which perspective one prefers to use, we assume, depends on the general orientation at a level much more fundamental than the choice of perspectives. It depends, for instance, on who one wants to win, what one prefers as the outcome. But aspects of social reality can be understood by using both perspectives, even in an eclectic combination. Since no

good meta-theory seems to be in existence today it is up to the individual professional or amateur analyst to define his mixture, and many of these mixtures may be close to the 0% or 100% extremes. However, it is very hard to find analysts who would really cultivate a pure version on either extreme, because of the difficulties in expressing and understanding what happens in such terms.

Thus, our first thesis is simply that social reality is much more complex than any such view, and that any effort to press social reality into any one of these views only means a loss in complexity. One perceives that which is caught within the paradigms given by the perspectives. It should then be remembered that our perspectives are broadly defined, and that "liberalism" and "marxism" must be seen as very special cases within these perspectives, narrowing the visions of reality even further down.

This is not to say that the two views may not be incompatible in an other way. Thus, one would not disagree with the idea that the liberal view sees the world in terms that are not only comprehensible but also comforting to the leading classes, just as the marxist view sees the world in terms that are comforting to the oppressed. If one assumes that the interests of these two groups are really contradictory, then the views are contradictory in the sense that they may empirically not be held by the same persons or groups seeing themselves as representatives of the classes. But that is an empirical thesis about social reality, itself capable of verification, falsification and indeed of modification, not a thesis about the two ideologies as such.

Our second point in this connection is that, in fact, liberal elements are used by marxists and marxist elements by liberals. They have borrowed from each other, they are absorbing from each other, as social reality changes. Thus, a liberal economist facing the crises of capitalist society between the two world wars had to introduce some of the structural insights prominent in marxist thinking, and the result was, perhaps, most clearly expressed by Keynes: And similarly, what shall a marxist economist do after the revolution? A Cuban economist does not find much in classical marxist writings that will tell him how to operate a socialist economy, since Das Kapital certainly was not a blue-print for a socialist economy, but an analysis, and a brilliantly critical one,

of capitalist economy. What he does, in general, is to absorb a number of elements from liberal economists - which is one reason why liberal economists (and also other social scientists) can have much more easy communication with the social scientists and experts in the socialist countries than with marxist thinkers in their own countries.

In short, there is a grey middle zone. And this zone will sooner or later become less eclectic, more synthetic - out of the thesis and antithesis a synthesis will emerge. This synthesis will transcend the two, it will include elements absent in either. And the people that should be in the forefront in doing this work, it seems, would be precisely economists in socialist countries - but perhaps also economists in some of the welfare state countries in Northern Europe, especially if these move away from technocratic, centralized state capitalism, towards more decentralized systems.

Let us then look at the exhaustiveness assumption. This exhaustiveness is so typical for both of them that it can only be understood, we assume, within a Western context. Fundamental to that context is Christianity, and fundamental in Christianity is the missionary assumption (Matthew, 28: 18-20 - the missionary command). This is an interesting assumption. It is not only that Christians seem to feel that they have something of such a crucial value that it would be a crime not to bring it to others. It is also that in bringing it to others and making others accept it their own faith receives a confirmation of no minor significance. It is like the technical assistance expert (the latter-day version of the missionary command) who in giving his technical-scientific gospel to the pagans confirms the value of his own message.

This should be contrasted with the many non-missionary religions of the world: Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others. In these religions it looks as if the faith I have does not depend on whether others share that faith or not. I do not receive a plus by converting others, rather: the missionary field is inside myself, and in my immediate surroundings. No universal validity is claimed for faith on "laws".

However, the idea that the West is going to save the world is shared by liberalism and marxism alike, and even in a curious dialectical fashion. It can be compared to the famous Chaplin movie

where Chaplin's ally walks down the street and knocks out all the window panes, whereupon Chaplin appears upon the stage as the glass master, generously offering to install window panes again. Thus, liberalism spreads as a gospel around the world, knocks out many, even most independent economic systems and subordinates them under the giant imperialistic economic cycles emanating from the Western world; whereupon marxism (Chaplin), also emanating from the West, comes and equally generously offers to remedy this situation. (In the next stage, then, comes one more generation from the West offering to remedy the remedies.) Thus, liberalism as well as marxism sees its social cosmology as potentially embracing the whole world, not only a minor or major sector of it, for instance the place where it originated. Truth, in order to be true, has to be universal according to this type of perspective. Other ideologies or cosmologies can be coopted, pushed over on the other side of the L/M border, or seen as archaic, only artificially kept alive. Neither of them will recognize anybody else as a serious competitor, although they may both admit that even in their own camp there are serious deviations, "misunderstandings". Needless to say, this is highly compatible with the world view whereby the East-West conflict is seen as all-pervasive, penetrating into the smallest villages, even into the mind of the most remote Indian in the Andean hills, African in the bush, and Asian in the swamps somewhere in Southeast Asia. Thus, the exhaustiveness applies to space - and it applies to time: the fight between the two can, according to the protagonists of either, end in one out of three ways: liberalism wins, marxism wins, or there is a stalemate ("peaceful coexistence"). Since they are both scientific ideologies, social cosmologies with empirical content, history and the world are giant laboratories that will prove one of them right, and this will convert the rest. Tertium non datur.

4. The ideas of nature's soullessness and society's Naturgesetzlichkeit

As mentioned in the introduction both ideologies emerged strongly in a period when natural science was on the way up, and both of them are colored by it. This has two implications, one of them being the general relation to nature, another being the extent to which natural science thinking, of a certain kind, has colored them both.

Both of them see nature in a de-individualized, abstracted form deprived of soul. Both of them accept the image of nature given by natural science: a nature where the elements are deprived of all individualizing characteristics, abstracted into a caricature like

the frictionless surfaces of mechanics, or the "horse-ness" of a horse - to some extent latter day versions of the "universalia" from medieval philosophy, to some extent abstractions made so as to fit natural science "laws". Under such perspectives two stones, two horses, and for that matter also two human beings, are much more similar than they are different, similar enough to be interchangeable. In the search for invariances individuality has to yield to substitutability.

In addition, nature is seen as inanimate, as an object, not as a subject. Liberalism obtains this through Christianity's asymmetric distribution of soul: all of it to man, none of it to non-man. Marxism obtains it through atheism, no soul anywhere and structural orientation. As a consequence both of them have a relation to nature which makes it possible to exploit her completely, ravage and destroy for production purposes, pollute and deplete ad infinitum, making these two 1970 evils look more or less the same in capitalist and socialist countries. It is a relation of Herrschaft, not one of Partnerschaft - the kind of companionship and respect for the dignity of nature found among "primitives", among American Indians, Hindus, and so on, is completely unknown. Man is undisputed master.

This view of nature is, of course, related to the adoption of natural science as the basic paradigm for understanding of reality. Basic to natural science is the formulation of "objective laws"; basic to the notion of "objectivity" is the idea that the law is valid regardless of any consciousness found among the objects of the law. Natural science applied to nature is unproblematic where this is concerned since nature is deprived of consciousness by definition; natural science applied to social reality becomes more problematic.

Liberal doctrine and marxist doctrine solve this problem in different ways, marxist doctrine in a way that is certainly more sophisticated than the naive visions usually held within liberal doctrine.

In liberal doctrine not only is the social landscape flat in the sense that the basic verticality, the fundamental contradiction seen by marxist doctrine does not exist. History is also flat: changes are of degree, not of kind as soon as equilibrium is by and large obtained and stabilized through reinforcing mechanisms. Thus, it is meaningful to establish laws for social reality, since social reality is basically unchangeable. Out of this phase grows positive social science: laws formulated in the form and language of natural

science, but with social elements, among them individual actors, as objects. Out of this grows the entire social science tradition particularly associated with the United States: all the experiments and surveys leading to the formulation of laws that all of them have one thing in common. They presuppose that the human beings to which they apply do not themselves know the law. For the moment they know the law they may also act against it. Thus, what would happen to the Asch effect, or to the Sheref effect when Asch and Sheref themselves are exposed to them?

We do not pursue this theme further since it is in a sense too obvious. But in marxist thinking Naturgesetzlichkeit can also be found, it only takes a more sophisticated form. Thus, to marxist doctrine the "laws" of liberal social science are at most useful for understanding the society to which they apply, and since this society is finite in its existence it cannot claim any kind of universal invariance, neither in time, nor in space. On the contrary, that society is going to be superseded (one of the current, but also bad English translation of the excellent German expression "aufheben"), and once that has happened a new society will take shape the laws of which can at most be intuited, not extrapolated from the laws of the preceding form.

But if this is the case, why should it not also be possible to supersede the supercession? If the supercession itself is so rough that it outweighs any effort to counteract it, even when the most conscious, most capable, most powerful actors are mobilized for this purpose, then Naturgesetzlichkeit has obviously survived, at least at this point. In short, the prophecy is only seen as self-denying or self-fulfilling to a limited extent. Consciousness can at most delay or promote revolution by a small (how small is debatable) time interval, otherwise the law would not be a law, the prophecy not a prophecy, only a highly conditional prediction depending on constancy in the level of consciousness.

And, more significantly, what about the law of stages of societies? What about the idea that after the capitalist society there is a socialist society in storage for us, after that a communist society will come, with internal variations? If each individual society is capable of being superseded, why should this not also apply to the succession of the stages? Could it not be

said that what marxism does at this point is only to push the Naturgesetzlichkeit one level up. Denied is the invariance of the laws defining one social order, but not the invariance of the law defining the transition from one stage to the next and their succession?

Thus it is that both systems claim to be "scientific", a term with high prestige within the particular time and space region in which the two cosmologies emerged and developed. This creates intricate problems since science is mobilized on either side to disprove the other and to prove oneself. The result of this is clearly seen in universities today in one out of the following three ways: either liberal doctrine dominates completely or marxist doctrine dominates completely, or there is a basic struggle leading to some kind of stalemate - as for instance at the Freie Universität in Berlin where social science institutes tend to split into two, one for liberal psychology and one for marxist psychology, etc. Again, tertium non datur.

Just as either system rejects the idea of true Partnerschaft with nature, either system rejects the idea that man's consciousness could be capable of superseding any law imposed on social reality. The reason why this Naturgesetzlichkeit prevails must probably be seen historically: either group had the experience that natural engineering were possible, either group might like to transfer this paradigm to the social reality they wanted to control, for stability or for change. In order to do so society had to be endowed with Naturgesetzlichkeit, there had to be some thing fit and permanent that was seen as working in favor of one's own favored social reality, either by maintaining it in an equilibrium state, or by changing it dynamically, first quantitatively, then qualitatively in a jump that establishes a new social order. And that brings us close to the next pair of similarities.

5. The ideas of industrial production as primordial and the economic heroes of history

The fascination with Economic Man shared by the two cosmologies is in no need of much elaboration. Like natural science production also underwent tremendous growth, there were changes obvious and highly conspicuous even to the most unperceptive mind, and the two cosmologies reflected the changes in those two fields. Factors that at that time were more constant, such as institutions like education, perhaps even family, were not seen as primordial.

In other periods of history, in other parts of the world geography with the whole system of production in a steady state and changes elsewhere, (in systems of faith, science, in education, family matters) other social cosmologies would probably commit the same type of fallacy: basing a theory of prime movers on that which they see as changing around them, taking constant factors as something given.

This has something fundamental to do with the euro-centric ethnocentrism of liberalism and marxism. For instance, neither system will be capable of coping in any reasonable way with an (admittedly idealized) South Sea island where primary needs are satisfied out of nature's abundance, the water is always fresh and plentiful, bread fruits, fish etc. are there to be picked and enjoyed, shelter and clothes are unproblematic in the congenial climate, and so on. And the systems would be equally incapable of coping with realities in an Eskimo society where a balance with nature is obtained, and an existence is made possible, through constant and hard labor, but with no "economic growth" of any kind. Of course, in saying so the idea is not that the two systems would not have something to say about these types of societies, only that what they might say would be trivial, flat because the variables on which they are pinning their cosmologies are too constant to offer any variance on which anything but a flat theory can be built.

It may be objected that the two examples mentioned in a sense point backwards in human history. However, exactly the same can be said if one looks forward in time, to a society with automated production, a society where fundamental needs are satisfied through a production machinery serviced by practically speaking nobody, where food, shelter and clothes, maybe also medical services, would be available much in the same way as water is taken out of a creek in the mountains or electricity out of a socket, supplied through an automated power grid served by a couple of computers and a handful of people. It is certainly not inconceivable that such a system might be a steady state system. Its inputs might be frozen in an automatic chain of cause and effect, its output might be defined in the culture of that system as both necessary and sufficient. What would happen to analytical systems where Man, the Producer, plays such a prominent role in that kind of society? It is more likely that either system will try to prove within its paradigm

the impossibility of systems of that kind. And that points to the danger of the two cosmologies, or of any relatively consistent, closed system for that matter: it defines as real only that which is understandable within the limits set by the paradigm. If the system then is elevated to the status of a creed, its definition of reality may become real in its consequences. The cosmology neither stabilizes nor liberates, it simply freezes and narrows down.

When the system of production occupies a central position in the theory of social reality, those who occupy central roles in the system of production will necessarily be seen as movers of history, or at least as being particularly close to the king-pin of the social mechanism. Both cosmologies have their key persons who are made heroes of history: the entrepreneurs in liberalism and the part of the industrial proletariat that is most industrialized and most proletarianized, often found in heavy industries according to marxism. Of course, neither theory is so simplistic that other sectors of social life are disregarded, only that these particular roles are seen as being particularly consequential for the stability or change of social reality. In this regard either cosmology represented a rupture with the past, a break with tradition that would see either the managers of power or the great producers of ideologies, philosophy and culture as basic. In a sense intellectual authors of liberalism and marxism all abdicate, as if they were saying: we are only the formulators of systems essentially created by others. It is like John the Baptist relative to Jesus Christ, informing the masses about The Real One. Shared hypocrisy, in other words.

In seeing the entrepreneurs as the avant garde of the business community and the workers in the heavy industries as the avant garde of the proletariat the deep similarity between the two cosmologies is crystallized even further. First, two social groups, to the marxist two social classes, are singled out for attention and these groups span the social universe in a way which is isomorphic to the way in which the two cosmologies span the ideological universe. Of course, the primary sector, particularly agriculture, is to a large extent left out of any consideration, but since both cosmologies are basically urban and they both see agriculture as something that is disappearing this is a minor matter. Second, within these two groups the avant garde is seen as the carrier of forward moves: the entrepreneurs pave new paths for the production system towards the

future, the avant garde of the proletariat will help the revolution come into being. Important here is the way in which the two cosmologies share the age-old idea of an elite, and the way in which society and history are viewed in such a way that some people simply are more important than others. Some are main actors, some play minor roles, and very many are simply spectators. In viewing history in this way neither liberalism nor marxism has been able to free itself from the view of history that depicts it as a succession of regimes headed by princes or battles fought by generals. But again: the heroes are new, and that brought fresh air into the thinking, and indeed changes into social practice.

Marxism has, however, another latent hero who is curiously neglected in marxist theory: the engineer. When one bases a social cosmology among other things on the idea of contradictions between means of production and modes of production then he who invents new means of production should be rather important. In fact, he should be close to the innermost nucleus of the historical machinery itself. If new means of production imply new modes of production, and these new modes of production are incompatible with old modes of production, then one may perhaps assume that something is going to happen, at least in a society where production plays a key role. This should place the inventor of new means of production in a position that is almost God-like. But in marxist thinking it looks as if means of production simply happen to be invented (a very idealistic position), and then become contradictory to existing models of production. The latter has to yield. What is missing in this is the idea of being on a constant and deliberate search for new means of production that would serve to push the modes of production ever further, towards less exploitation and less alienation, beyond the horizon of collective ownership. In other words, one would have to look at the mode of production at the micro level, inside the factory for instance, not only at the macro level. New innovations would then be a conscious strategy, and the Chinese have shown that it does not have to be engaged in by a small elite of "brilliant innovators" only.

However this may be the net result is pronounced difference in the composition of the power elites in the two superpowers: business men and lawyers in one, people with a proletarian origin and technicians in the other. Our point would be that this is not only because they express class interests, but simply because they are seen as relevant - as the real ones, capable of moving history, as heroes.

5. The ideas of nation-states and individuals as basic social units

For liberal theory society consists of sectors out of which the economic one is basic; for marxist theory society consists of classes. These views differ, but they are similar in what they regard as society: society tends to be the nation-state, something like the entries on the membership list of the United Nations. These are the units that enter in national accounting schemes found in liberal theory as well as in revolutionary strategies elaborated by marxism. A revolution takes place neither in Steiermark, nor in Hessen, nor in Champagne; nor in Western Europe for that matter: the revolution will take place in Austria, in Western Germany or in France. And there is a joint interest in giving the Third World a similar shape, so that investment/institution-building and propaganda/revolution can take place

It is worth noting that with some relatively small changes these were the geo-political units in existence when liberalism and marxism emerged as social cosmologies. In the basic texts these units are referred to, and nothing much has changed since those days. If there is a change liberal theory may perhaps be said to be more adjustable to objective changes, both in emphasizing the interrelatedness of classical societies making it almost impossible to draw a clear line around one of them and define it as a self-sufficient unit, and in emphasizing their relative autonomy of parts, groups, institutions within these societies. But neither theory has been able to put new units into focus in the way populism does today. To populism the local community is the basic unit, and the strategy of political struggle is the strategy of defense against the forces that transgress into these communities. Thus, populism can integrate the sectors of the liberal view, as well as the classes of the marxist view and see the local community in its struggle against superior social forces and in favor of preserving nature and basic human values. Needless to say, in this view there are elements that are also found in Tanzania's ujamaa village, in Gandhi's sarvodaya village and in the people's commune of China. But none of these have originated within classical liberal or marxist paradigms of thinking.

In the reification of society in the sense of the nation-state lies the main reason why those who talk of convergence between capitalism and socialism cannot be said to be completely wrong. There are basic differences in capitalist and socialist systems of production and consumption, but when the nation-state is taken as the unit of social change and social organization, many things will by

necessity have to be common. Thus, some measure of centralized authority with a strong asymmetry between the capital and the rest of the country is more or less bound to develop. On the other hand, we do not in general agree with the convergence thesis since the word "convergence" suggests a process. In the view taken here the similarities between liberalism and marxism are already so overwhelming that they should rather be seen as two variations of the same theme than as point and counter-point.

Something similar can be said concerning the reification of the individual. In the preceding section something was said about the highly asymmetric distribution of soul between man and nature found in Christianity. There is another characteristic aspect of the way in which soul is distributed: it is given to man in individual units, one soul per body, at the moment of conception, birth, when baptized or converted. To the individualization of the body there is a corresponding individualization of the soul. With the fragmentation of souls also comes a fragmentation of salvation: my salvation does not contribute, nor detract from yours, they are simply separate processes. This should be compared with an image of souls as something collective, as a medium in which we all live and aspire, and where the improvement of one immediately communicates to others because we are all part of the same.

However this may be, the contrast between the individualistic countries found between United States and the West and the Soviet Union Far East on the one hand, and the collectivistic cultures and societies found in countries like Japan and China is basic. Japan has transformed liberalism and given it a collectivist content, China has transformed Western marxism and given it a collectivist content. One may then say that this only shows that individualism is not typical for the two cosmologies; rather, they may be seen as neutral in that regard since they can be adjusted to either type of culture. But this raises the basic question of whether China under the banner of marxism and Japan under the banner of liberalism are really discontinuous with their semi-feudal, pre-capitalist past - or whether there is a basic continuity in either which is in a sense equally important.

China and Japan may well transform marxism and liberalism and give them a different ethos, particularly if world history in the decades or century to come will witness a decline of the nations around the North Atlantic and a corresponding upsurge of China and Japan. Let it only be said that so far it is Western liberalism and

marxism that have dominated, and the word "Western" has had a connotation of an individualism that is profoundly Christian and also goes much further back, and has been shared, in practice if not in theory, by both liberalism and marxism. And for that reason Soviet marxists have difficulties with their Chinese colleagues that are not too different from the difficulties American liberals will have with their Japanese counterparts: a polarity along the individualism-collectivism dimension so strong that one wonders whether this dissimilarity is not much stronger than the alleged similarity and ideology.

In short, it is felt that both liberalism and marxism in their European versions will have difficulties coming to grips with the type of collectivism found in certain buddhist-inspired Asian systems of thought. Also, in taking the nation-state so seriously a change will not be defined as real unless it takes place at that level. To the liberal it has to be registered in the political institutions of the state, to the marxist expression has to be found in the pattern of ownership of the means of production at the same level. This means that important changes at lower levels will be seen as experiments, even as alibis and deviations; at the same time as the changes at the "right level" may turn out to be of minor significance, even highly overestimated. Examples of either misjudgement are numerous and likely to be multiplied as long as our thinking is caught in this 18th or 19th century framework of territorially defined nation-states.

7. The idea of social time's arrow: secularism and ameliorism

In both liberalism and marxism time is equipped with an arrow, as pointed out: history flows like a river, quietly, only with some eddies in the liberal vision; turbulently, with water-falls and probably also against gravity in the marxist vision, ends up in the ocean; in the ocean there is no longer any flow, the ocean simply is. History is over. Man's real existence has started, guaranteed through equilibrium and transcendence respectively.

The similarity with Christian paradise is obvious. The idea that movement, history as a flow is something preliminary, transient whereas stability is reality is also Aristotelian. But the idea of a one-way flow leading from becoming to being is too similar to the pilgrim's progress to be merely a coincidence. To see this more clearly let us point to some alternative cosmologies.

Let us first accept the duality good-evil, and the idea that these are principles that are embodied in certain forms of existence, abstract and/or concrete, such as a paradise and hell. The paradigm of "development" would be the transition leading towards paradise or the realization of good, away from hell and evil. The transition can take the form of the continuity of bourgeois

Christianity, an accumulation of good deeds, or the sharp discontinuity of fundamental Christianity with its emphasis on real conversion; paradigmatically more similar to the marxist cosmology. But just as in Christianity one is only converted once, crossing slowly or abruptly the borderline between evil and good, neither liberalism nor marxism envisage a return to earlier forms. A rich society cannot become poorer again, a socialist society cannot revert to capitalism - just as little as a Christian once converted can become reconverted. Of course, in all three cases there may be slips and lapses, the mishaps of social and individual history, but that is not the same as a deliberate change back to the form left behind. He who converts backwards does not have in him what makes a real person.

Thus, liberal societies "helping" fellow liberal societies from sliding backwards into poverty, socialist societies "helping" fellow socialist societies from reverting to capitalism, and Christians helping a brother not only committing an occasional sin but from disavowing Christianity, are exercising something much more fundamental than simple brotherly assistance. They are, in fact, trying to save their own theory of unidirectionality. And if they do not succeed then they have defense mechanisms ready at hand: the brother in distress was not really firm, solid, what looked like a relapse was only an indication that his conversion was not a genuine one in the first run. For if it had been genuine, then a relapse would have been impossible. History is a one-way street that is the message.

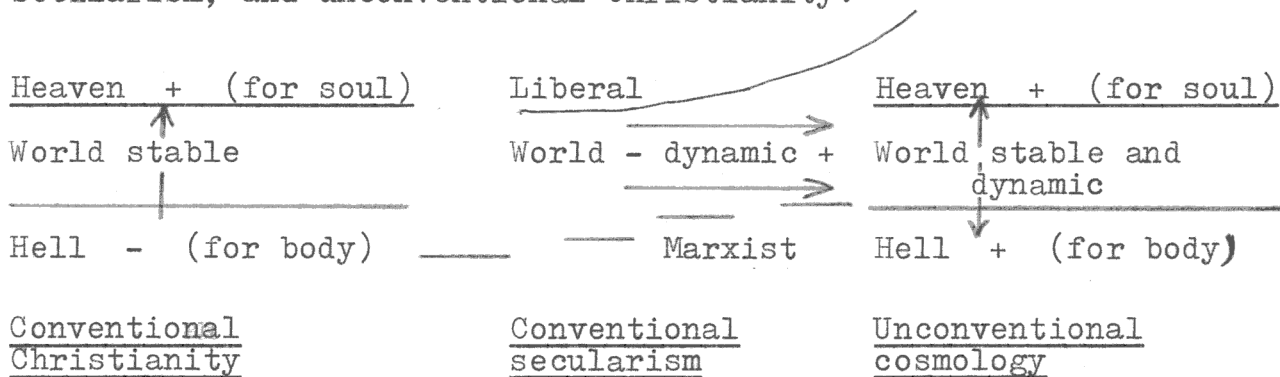
Contrast this with the Hindu idea of an oscillation between existential forms. Of course, there is no complete difference for the duality between the ephemeral existence in mundane incarnations and the real transcendence existence is still there, only that the transition is not monotone, be that continuous or discontinuous. But the whole vision is more generous. It is conceived as completely natural or normal that relapses take place. There is not the Christian insistence that you can gain paradise once and for all through one tremendous effort and that this will guarantee you against ever losing the grip. Of course, you may have to strengthen and fortify your position and your movement along the path of transition, but for this there are rules and procedures.

If, however, one should speculate really about alternative cosmologies one would have to leave the principle of duality. That is,

if a non-directional duality could be imagined, not between good and evil, but between two goods, two neutrals, or even two evils for that matter, then oscillations or conversion and reconversion in either direction might be conceivable. But in general it looks as if duality is almost inextricably linked up with directionality; duality is asymmetric rather than symmetric.

Let us imagine a cosmology with three poles, not ordered like the successive stages found in marxist thinking, but as three social forms that each and by themselves is regarded as acceptable, not necessarily for the same person P in the same situation S (e.g. period in his life-cycle), but for different persons in the same situation or for the same person in different situations. One could imagine transitions and conversions of six kinds in such a configuration, one could link these transitions together in a chain of transitions that might span a person's life-cycle or a people's existence, and completely different visions of history would evolve, all of them different from the disciplinary simplicity found in liberal-marxist thinking. Thus, a true pluralist society might contain within its limits several social forms and if the belief system permits of transcendental societies some of them might not be in this world, and social as well as personal histories could take on an enormous complexity depending on the kind of route steered from one form to the other.

A simpler way of expressing the same would be arrived at by introducing a change in Christianity. Below are three figures: what one might call conventional Christianity, liberal/marxist ameliorative secularism, and unconventional Christianity:



Through secularization the transcendental Hell and Heaven of Christianity are placed in this world; the arrow pointing to Heaven becomes an arrow pointing to the future, "salvation" becomes "progress". To be on the side of progress you must be "saved", you must see the truth, liberal or marxist truth. But imagine now a Christianity promising a symmetric duality, one place where it is good for the soul to be, one place that is good for the body - and even an oscillation between the two - - -

But such a relaxed, pluralistic, undirected cosmology is not ours. Liberalism as well as marxism were post-renaissance and post-enlightenment phenomena; and they share the view that history is equipped with an arrow, that there is progress, that the future will be better than the past. History is accumulative, but whereas liberal theory sees this in simple quantitative terms leading to such trivial concepts as economic growth, marxism sees quantitative accumulation up to a saturation point, and then a qualitative jump that brings with it a new social reality. Where liberalism sees institution-building and accumulation between them, marxism sees revolution and the creation of a new society. Where liberalism sees a continuous curve of amelioration marxism sees discontinuities, and may even accommodate decline, regression, within its world view. Fascism was much more of a shock to liberalism than to marxism: for liberalism it was a major challenge to the whole assumption of general improvement and had to be explained away (for instance by invoking theories about the significance of the psychopathic nature of Hitler). For marxism it was simply the sign of a social formation in crisis. Again, marxism comes out with a more sophisticated view of the two, as indicated in the figure.

With the central position given to the system of production man is seen as a being at work. He is not sitting in the shade of a palm tree, simply enjoying the view of a nature unpolluted and undepleted by the technology and industrialism that fascinated the authors of either system. Or more correctly, he may be sitting under that tree if this is in order to accumulate health, energy or inspiration so that he can later on produce something, not necessarily economic goods, it may also be a poem or science - but it has to be something. For his production is the condition of progress: both to liberalism and to marxism the mechanisms of stability and of transformation are only operative under the assumption that man produces. If he stops producing everything falls apart. This idea may be seen as puritan, as Christian, as Western; and as very closely related to the conception generally prevailing as to what makes man human, and not animal-like. He has to produce, if not good deeds, at least goods.

In short, in sharing the assumption of general amelioration and that man owes his existence to some kind of production the two cosmologies in fact once more make basic choices in the same direction. Only from the outside, from an African tribe invaded by Western missionaries of the liberal or marxist persuasions, from an Asian

Buddhist monastery to which stability and minimum production, just in order to maintain life, would seem to be the natural order, will it be clearly seen how special this choice is. To Western man the choice is seen as natural as water to the fish - an occasional excursion into the air, even on land, will only reinforce the strong feeling that water is the place to be. And thus it is, for instance, that the United States and the Soviet Union will have no difficulty agreeing on the type of cooperation that leads to "progress" for either, for wheels are set into motion on either side, production is promoted and the differences in the organization of that production become very minor indeed relative to this overwhelming similarity. And this is a similarity that defines the two superpowers as further ahead on their secular roads of amelioration, and hence entitled to assume a leading position - as models and "helpers".

8. The withering away of the state and the shared utopia

It is well known that both liberalism and marxism envisage a development of human society towards a stateless form. In that stateless society prediction and prescription coincide: not only will it come about, this stateless society is also seen as a higher, even ultimate, form. To the liberal the state withers away as equilibrium is perfected; to the marxist the state withers away as class contradictions are finally superseded and there is no longer any dominant class of which the state could be the instrument. Thus, the mechanisms differ, but the net result is about the same.

Much more interesting than the dissimilarity in mechanism is the similarity in prediction/prescription. Why should the state wither away? Historians of ideas might perhaps find that the late-comer, marxism, would promise nothing less than the liberals, so that they also had to show a path, however complex, leading to the same promised land. But this is only begging the question: why should the promised land to Western thought be stateless? Is Western political thought fundamentally anarchist?

One key to this may be found in the state versus individual contradiction. If both liberalism and marxism are fundamentally individualist, which would mean that they would see self-realization as individual self-realization rather than as dissimilarities in a collective Self, then the state may appear as too collectivist.

For if the state functions for all, is something of, by and for the collectivity, then it may be incompatible with individual variation in self-realization. Regimes fostering a strong state apparatus will also tend to emphasize similarity rather than dissimilarity. The difference between liberal and marxist thought becomes only one of time perspective and general cosmological topology. For the liberal the social landscape is flat and development is if not linear at least continuous, for the marxist the social landscape has tremendous cleavages and development is through quantum leaps. To the liberal slow withering away of the state can start today, for the marxist the state has first to be used as instrument of the forces needed to overcome class contradictions. It may be added that between the two, in a curious sense, stands the Keynesian planner who wants the apparatus of the state to modify the mal-development of a liberal social form, sharing neither the liberal optimism that this machinery may gradually disappear, nor the marxist assumption that the machinery can be used not only to negate itself, but also to negate class contradictions. In either case the state is a sign of prematurity, of a job not yet done.

What has been said so far is accentuated further if one compares the glimpses of utopia shared by the two cosmologies. They are, in fact, so similar that it is hard to explain without seeing them as expressions of the same social ideas and ideals, derived from the same basic source.

Neither liberalism nor marxism admits of transcendental social forms, which is not the same as saying that all liberals and all marxists are atheists. The basic point is that the end stage is realizable in this world, and even relatively soon. To Herbert Spencer British society had already come so far that only a little extra effort was needed; to Marx and Engels it also looks as if communist society would not be more than some generations away. And the similarities between these two stateless end-states are astounding. Thus, it looks as if they both include:

- the idea of a society where all primary needs are satisfied more or less automatically; food, shelter, clothes, health, etc. come at no effort, work is not needed for such things.
- the primary sector is more or less abolished: agriculture is automated (the final negation of farming),

- the secondary sector is also automated (the negation of workers)
- the tertiary sector is the one that dominates as envisaged in all liberal predictions and implicitly in marxist descriptions of communist society,
- this does not mean that people are simply idling their time away; they are busy with arts and sciences, producing and consuming culture for each other. There are no structural problems left; man is free to create - he has become like God.

It is not so difficult to see where this kind of vision stems from: Christian eschatology. It is the triumph of the soul over the body, of mental over manual work, of the white collar over the blue collar, of education over the economy to speak in sectoral terms. Neither the liberal nor the marxist utopia exhibits anything of the carnal lust, of the vigour and sensuous enjoyment found in Muslim and Viking images of the paradise. We hear nothing of endless supplies of beer, of women that can be enjoyed afresh every day since they wake up in the morning as virgins, of battles that can be resumed for all their adventure because the killed and maimed become live and healthy again. The harps and bassoons of Christian eschatology are extended to cover all the arts and sciences, and in some versions there may even be an occasional mention of some sports activities. But we have never seen neither a liberal nor a marxist paradise built around the pleasures of the palate or the enjoyment of sexual communion. Both utopias are puritan, both utopias promise plenty for the soul and nothing, except freedom from need, for the body. Man is free because he no longer has to toil, but he is not free to become an "animal"; he is "free" to redirect his work towards nobler pursuits. Ultimately this is the triumph of the intellectual authors, leaving to the economic heroes the dirty work of preparing a utopia for intellectuals.

Of course, there must also have been another model lurking in the minds of these authors: the life of the high bourgeoisie of the 19th and 18th centuries. Marx' future man who hunts in the morning and engages in shepherding, fishing, ending up with social criticism at night is very similar to landed gentry and both liberal and marxist intellectuals might have been envious of their care-free lives. Of course, they have also projected into that life an element of their own life style, a high component of intellectualism, the final triumph of academic man over all others in making the utopias a purified and problem-free version of academic life ("academic" taken in its scientific as well as its artistic connotation). And they share the implicit Christian assumption that there is a oneness to goodness, that good society is monistic rather than pluralistic. Just as there is one universal God, there is one good world state.

In the liberal theory of today this kind of future vision has become trivialized to the extreme. The equilibrium has been split into sectors and been institutionalized, the transition from bad to good takes the form of economic growth, and it is even operationalized as gross national product per capita. Leaving aside the criticism of this operationalization, there is one interesting point absolute evil is at the bottom, but where is absolute good? The focus has been on the first couple of thousand dollars along this scale, and no serious answer has been given to the question "how much is enough?" Of course, in setting a limit that might be realized even in this century one runs into the difficulty that paradise loses its credibility. People will not easily believe that a society where \$10,000 per capita would be that much different from current societies in the 3-4000 range; and this is precisely the difficulty Kahn and Wiener fall into in their visions of the future. The liberal vision has become so trivial that it fails to attract, regardless of how far out on the GNP/capita scale the goal is placed. The liberal utopia becomes unattractive simply because it is too clearly spelt out, the marxist utopia is unattractive because it always has remained extremely vague. This, of course, says nothing about their qualities as concrete action programs for the present. But it says much about the poverty of the future, the poverty of Western utopia - and the survival of the emphasis on the negative, the triumph of Hell over Heaven.

9. Conclusion

In propagating liberalism and marxism Western man propagates a promise of distilled, purified Western university campus life to the whole world. In the faith of tertium non datur, in the missionary belief in universalism, in both of them seeing liberalism/marxism as the basic duality between good and evil Western man carries some of his internal dilemma to others, at the tip of the sword, in the shape of books and journals, in technical assistance programs. The idea of inverse flows of influence, for instance of reciprocal assistance for social reconstruction from today's "developing" countries to today's "developed" countries would be repulsive to capitalist and socialist societies alike. Western arrogance is not split by such simple polarities, particularly when the polarity is a division of labor in Western imperialism rather than the bitter fight for and against marxists try to convert it into.

Incidentally, talking about imperialism: in their economism the two cosmologies have a shared blindness when it comes to seeing

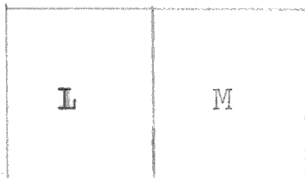
Western cosmological imperialism from the outside. Of course, marxism, and particularly in its leninist version, sees much more deeply than liberal theories what colonialism is, but what they both have in common can only be seen from the outside. Thus, neither of them has developed a comprehensive theory of imperialism, liberal theory tending to emphasize the political aspects, marxist theory the economic aspects. If they should really go more deeply into the "cultural" aspects they would have had to characterize Western culture, and in so doing similarities rather than dissimilarities would become so apparent as to shake the basic myth they share.

And that is, of course, the point in this article: the myth of mutual exclusiveness and exhaustiveness has to be exploded. And this has to be done not only through pious references to cultures from the past, but through a deeper understanding of the non-Western present, which also may be found inside Western countries, in counter-cultures, in populist movements, and the like. This is of crucial significance not only to protect the few parts of the world not yet completely penetrated by the liberal-marxist techno-structure, but also in order to have a healthy impact on Western cosmology itself. Much blindness is needed not to see the clear relation between what happened under Stalinism, Nazism-Fascism, and the current period of United States terror not yet suitably baptised. Should one call what has happened during the last five US presidents liberalism? Americanism? We do not know, but it is strongly felt that it derives from the same roots as the other phenomena just mentioned: world self-righteousness, a man-man relation modelled after a man-nature relation brought about by Christianity and natural science, an emphasis on production and the nation-state, and a faith in riding on the wave of history. But that last point has become rather moot recently. Wave, yes - but it looks rather like being on the crest of a wave about to break and to engulf us all.

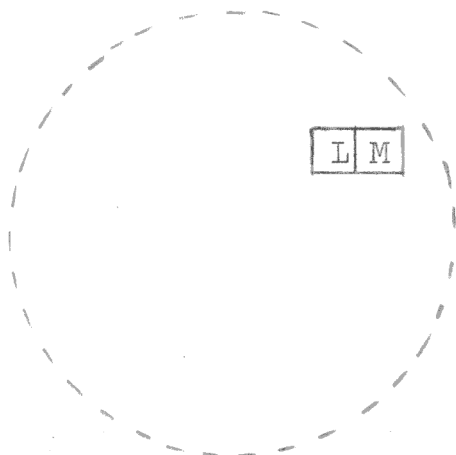
What is the alternative? To ask for the alternative would be one more way of being Western; to ask for alternatives is more promising. Some idea may be obtained by negating all the twelve similarities hypothesized here between liberalism and marxism, in other words as expressions of the West in world society and culture. But there is more than one negation. Thus, the negation of the utopia for the soul is not necessarily a utopia for the body or a set of utopias with some kind of random walk between them - but no utopia

at all. There are numerous ways of negating the emphasis on the nation state, and so on. And all these negations should not be connected with an "and" to form an alternative, but with an "or" - yielding a wealth of alternative cosmologies, some of them identifiable empirically, some of them not, some of them possibly too inconsistent to make any sense at all (but in that case, to whom?).

So, in conclusion, we reject this image of the world of cosmologies:



as one more product of Western arrogance. And we opt in favor of this one:



where that little box is not even placed in the center. For the world is not that poor, fortunately.