

III

**Fundamental Characteristics
of the Capitalist State**

INTRODUCTION

We shall now attempt to grasp some basic characteristics of the capitalist state. But first it is important to restate certain points vital for what follows.

A. The characteristics of the capitalist type of state are contained in the concept of that state which can be constructed from the 'pure' CMP as elaborated in *Capital*. However, owing to the specific autonomy of the instances proper to this mode of production the characteristics of the capitalist state are only sketched in implicitly in *Capital*. Consequently I shall refer mainly to the political works of Marx, Engels, Gramsci and Lenin, whose *double status* has already been pointed out (particularly in the case of Marx and Engels): as well as containing a study of historically given capitalist states, they contain at the same time a theory of the capitalist type of state. So as to indicate, in this way, the theoretical construction of the capitalist type of state, I shall refer to formations dominated by the CMP, in order to study the capitalist state in operation.

B. The state in its role as cohesive factor in the unity of a formation (a role which is especially important in the capitalist formation) has several functions: economic, ideological and political. These functions are the particular modalities of the globally political role of the state: *they are over-determined by, and condensed in, its strictly political function, its function in relation to the field of the political class struggle*. It is around this function and this relation that the following analyses will be grouped.

C. The nature of the relation between the state and the field of the class struggle belongs to the type of relations which hold between the structures and this field. The capitalist state, in which the specific autonomy of instances is located by its relation to the relations of production, *sets the limits* which circumscribe the relation of the field of the class struggle to its own regional structures. In other words, these state structures, as they

appear in the relation of the instances, *carry inscribed within them a set of variations* which in delimiting the class struggle achieve concrete reality according to the effects which this struggle has on the state within the limits thus set. Henceforth, when we say that in a capitalist formation certain characteristics of the class struggle are related to the capitalist state, it must not be understood as meaning that these characteristics are a simple phenomenon derived from its structures or that they are exhaustively determined by them. It must be understood as meaning that the field of the class struggle has fundamental effects on this state, effects which are realized within the limits set by its structures to the extent that they control a set of variations.

The line of demarcation between the relations of the state to the dominant classes and its relation to the dominated classes can give a guide to our study of this state. The capitalist state presents this peculiar feature, that nowhere in its actual institutions does strictly political domination take the form of a political *relation* between the dominant *classes* and the dominated classes.¹ In its institutions everything takes place as if the class 'struggle' did not exist. This state is organized as a political unity of a society of divergent economic interests and these are presented not as class interests but as the interests of 'private individuals', economic subjects: this is connected to the way in which the state is related to the isolation of socio-economic relations, an isolation which is partly the state's own effect. Because of this isolation, in performing its political function the state presents a characteristic ambivalence, depending on whether it is dealing with the dominant or the dominated classes.

1. With regard to the dominated classes, the function of the capitalist state is to prevent their political organization which would overcome their economic isolation: it does this by maintaining them in this isolation which is partly its own effect. The state assumes this function in a very particular form which allows a radical distinction to be drawn between this state and other states, such as slave or feudal states. These latter limit the political organization of the dominated classes by institutionally fixing the classes of slaves or serfs in their very structures by means of *public statutes*, that is to say, by institutionalizing political class subordination in the form of estates or castes. On the other hand, by virtue of its isolating effect on the socio-economic relations and by also taking advantage of this effect, the capitalist state maintains the political disorganization of the

1. Structure/Institution: see p. 115n above.

dominated classes, by presenting itself as the unity of the people-nation, composed of political-persons/private-individuals. The capitalist state thus fulfils its function both by concealing their own class character from the dominated classes and also by specifically excluding them from the state institutions, in so far as they are the dominated classes.

2. On the other hand, with regard to the dominant classes, the capitalist state is permanently working on their organization at the political level, by cancelling out their economic isolation which, in this case too, is the effect both of the state and of the ideological.

The capitalist 'popular-class' state's principal contradiction, i.e. the effective (class) aspect of its internal contradiction (that between private and public), could be described as follows: its function is to disorganize the dominated classes politically, and at the same time to organize the dominant classes politically; to prevent the dominated classes from being present in its centre as classes, whilst introducing the dominant classes there as classes; by relating itself to the dominated classes as representative of the unity of the people-nation, whilst at the same time relating itself to the dominant classes *qua* politically organized classes. In short, this state exists as a state of the dominant *classes* whilst excluding from its centre the class 'struggle'. Its principal contradiction is not so much that it 'calls' itself the state of all the people, although it is in fact a class state, but that, strictly speaking, it presents itself in its very institutions as a 'class' state (i.e. the state of the dominant classes which it helps to organize politically), of a society which is institutionally fixed as one not-divided-into-classes; in that it presents itself as a state of the bourgeois class, implying that all the 'people' are part of this class.

1. The Capitalist State and the Interests of the Dominated Classes

This first characteristic of the capitalist state depends on the specific autonomy of the political and economic struggle, of political and economic power and of political and economic class interests in capitalist formations. The capitalist state, characterized by hegemonic class leadership, does not *directly* represent the dominant classes' economic interests, but their *political interests*: it is the dominant classes' political power centre, as the organizing agent of their political struggle. Gramsci expressed this excellently when he remarked that:

The life of the state is conceived of as a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria . . . between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups – equilibria in which the interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point, i.e. stopping short of narrowly corporate interest (*Prison Notebooks*, p. 182).

In this sense, the capitalist state has inscribed in its very structures a flexibility which concedes a certain guarantee to the economic interests of certain dominated classes, within the limits of the system. To the extent that this guarantee is in accordance with the hegemonic domination of the dominant classes, i.e. with their political constitution vis-à-vis this state, as representatives of the general interest of the people, this concession is part of this state's very function. The concept of the capitalist state of course involves a specific function for *political ideology*, a form of power based on 'consent', which is organized and directed in a specific manner for the dominated classes. However, the aspect of the capitalist state under discussion here is not simply that of ideological conditioning. The notion of the general interest of the 'people', an ideological notion covering an institutional operation of the capitalist state, expresses a *real fact*: namely that this state, by its very structure, gives to the economic interests of certain dominated classes guarantees which may even be contrary to the short-term economic interests of the dominant classes, but

which are compatible with their political interests and their hegemonic domination.

This brings us to a very simple conclusion but one which cannot be too often repeated. This guarantee given by the capitalist state to the economic interests of certain dominated classes cannot be seen *per se* as a restraint on the *political power* of the dominant classes. It is true that the *political and economic struggles of the dominated classes* impose this on the capitalist state. However, this simply shows that the state is not a class instrument, but rather the state of a society divided into classes. The class struggle in capitalist formations entails that this guarantee of the economic interests of certain dominated classes is inscribed *as a possibility*, within the very limits imposed by the state on the struggle for hegemonic class leadership. But in making this guarantee, the state aims precisely at the political disorganization of the dominated classes; in a formation where the strictly political struggle of the dominated classes is possible, it is the sometimes indispensable means of maintaining the dominant classes' hegemony. In other words, according to the concrete conjuncture, a *line of demarcation* can always be drawn within which the guarantee given by the capitalist state to the dominated classes' economic interests not only fails to threaten the political relation of class domination but even constitutes an element of this relation.

In fact, this is a *particular* characteristic of the capitalist state stemming from the specific autonomy of the political superstructure from the economic instance, of political power from economic power. In the 'pre-capitalist' formations where the relation between the instances does not take this form, an 'economic' demand from the dominated classes (e.g. the repeal of a law, obligation or privilege) is most often a political demand directly challenging the system of 'public power'. Rosa Luxemburg correctly pointed out that the economic struggle is to some extent a directly political struggle, according to the content of these concepts in these 'preceding' formations.¹ These demands of the dominated classes can be satisfied only to the limited extent that they are compatible with the definite economico-political interests of the dominant classes and do not challenge the state's power. In the case of the capitalist state, the autonomy of the political can allow the satisfaction of the economic interests of certain dominated classes, even to the extent of occasionally

1. R. Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', and 'The Political Party and the Trade Unions', *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, New York, 1970, pp. 207 ff.

limiting the economic power of the dominant classes, restraining, where necessary, their capacity to realize their short-term economic interests; but on the one condition, which has become *possible* in the case of capitalist states, that their political power and the state apparatus remain intact. Hence, in every concrete conjuncture, the dominant classes' political power, which has become autonomous, represents in its relations with the capitalist state *a limit within which the restrictions of the economic power of these classes has no effect.*

Thus the capitalist state's particular characteristic feature of representing the general interest of a national-popular ensemble is not simply a mendacious mystification, because within these limits it can effectively satisfy some of the economic interests of certain dominated classes. Furthermore, it can do this without however allowing its political power to be affected. It is obviously impossible to delineate once and for all the limit of this hegemonic domination: it depends equally on the relation between the forces in the struggle, on the forms of the state, on the articulation of its functions, on the relations of economic power to political power and on the functioning of the state apparatus.

In this state, political power is thus apparently founded on an *unstable equilibrium of compromise*. These terms should be understood as follows:

1. *Compromise*, in the sense that this power corresponds to a hegemonic class domination and can take into account the economic interests of certain dominated classes even where those could be contrary to the short-term economic interests of the dominant classes, without this affecting the configuration of political interests;

2. *Equilibrium*, in the sense that while these economic 'sacrifices' are real and so provide the ground for an equilibrium, they do not as such challenge the political power which sets precise limits to this equilibrium;

3. *Unstable*, in the sense that these limits of the equilibrium are set by the political conjuncture.

So this equilibrium clearly does not indicate (as with a pair of scales) any sort of *equivalence* of power amongst the forces present. This latter meaning of equilibrium must not be confused with that attributed to it by Marx and Engels when they speak of the state's autonomy in the situation where, in the political struggle or in the relation between the political and economic struggle, the classes are close to a state of equilibrium. The equilibrium which is at issue here indicates the complexity and dislocation of relations of power in the framework of the capitalist state, and the

relations of force in the field of the economic struggle within the limits set by political power. In this sense, Gramsci pointed out:

Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed – in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind. But there also is no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential.²

The capitalist state is therefore characterized by a *two-sided* feature: on the one hand, its autonomy vis-à-vis the economic involves the possibility of a social policy (according to the concrete relation of forces), i.e. of economic sacrifices to the profit of certain dominated classes; on the other hand, this very same autonomy of institutionalized political power sometimes makes it possible to cut into the dominant classes' economic power without ever threatening their political power. It is in this context that we should locate, for example, the whole problem of the so-called 'Welfare State', a term which in fact merely disguises the form of the 'social policy' of a capitalist state at the stage of state monopoly capitalism. The political strategy of the working class depends on adequately deciphering in the concrete conjuncture this limit which fixes the equilibrium of compromises and which is the demarcation line between economic and political power.

Now this 'social policy' of the capitalist state is sketched in implicitly in *Capital*, especially in the texts of Volume I concerning *factory legislation*, even though these deal only with false sacrifices which in fact correspond to the precise economic interests of capital.³ It is elaborated more clearly both in *The Class Struggles in France* – on the subject of the February Republic, which is a historical example of a capitalist state which had to present itself as a 'republic surrounded by social institutions' – and in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* with regard to Louis Bonaparte's 'social Caesarism'.⁴ Moreover, it is obvious that this 'social policy' of the state has nothing to do with state *intervention* in the relations of production in the strict sense of the term, which is an entirely different problem. I mean that the type of capitalist state, sketched in implicitly in *Capital*, involves the possibility inscribed within the limits of its structures of a 'social

2. *Prison Notebooks*, p. 161.

3. See P. Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development*, New York, 1962, pp. 239 ff.

4. *MESW*, 1970, pp. 97 ff.

policy' whose realization and modalities (variations) obviously depend on the concrete relation of forces in the class struggle. So this 'social policy', though it may happen to contain real economic sacrifices *imposed on* the dominant class *by the struggle of the dominated classes*, cannot under any circumstances call into question the capitalist type of state, so long as it operates within these *limits*.

2. The Capitalist State and Ideologies

(i) THE HISTORICIST CONCEPTION OF IDEOLOGIES

The particular relation between the capitalist type of state and the dominated classes also manifests itself at the ideological level. In fact hegemonic class domination, as a particular type of class domination, marks the particular place and function of the ideological in its relations to the political in capitalist formations: in short, it marks the particular way in which '*bourgeois ideology*' functions politically. In fact, this particular feature of bourgeois ideology is merely the political aspect vis-à-vis the state of the specific operation of ideology as such, which Marx saw in *Capital* as the condition of existence of the CMP. The question is all the more important in that it concerns one of the crucial problems of political science, that of *legitimacy*.

On this subject, Gramsci's analyses of class hegemony are very enlightening, especially on this point: on the one hand Gramsci, with amazing acuteness, perceived the problems posed by the political functioning of bourgeois ideology in a capitalist formation; on the other hand, though his analyses are distinct from the typical historicist conception of ideologies as presented for example by Lukács, because of the historicist problematic which essentially governs his work, they demonstrate very clearly the impasses and errors to which this problematic of ideology leads. This is why a radical critique of the historicist conception of ideologies is so important as a prior condition to the scientific posing of the question.

To do this we must first of all briefly mention the problematic of ideology as found in the young Marx, which was centred on the subject. Marx's conception of ideology, as well as of the superstructures in general, was based on the model: '*the subject|the real|alienation*'. The subject is deprived of its concrete essence in the 'real', this concept of the 'real' being constructed theoretically from the ontological objectification of the subject. Ideology is a projection in an imaginary world of the subject's mystified essence, i.e. the alienating 'ideal' reconstitution of its essence, objectified-alienated in the socio-economic real. Ideology, modelled

according to the schema of alienation-abstraction, is identified with 'false consciousness'. Thus in the young Marx's elaboration of the concept of ideology there are the following oppositions characteristic of the historicist problematic: state/civil society, superstructures/base, ideology/real, alienation/essence, abstract/concrete.

This conception of ideology has remained alive in the historicist school of Marxism whose problematic is centred on the subject. It has had numerous consequences, including in the first place an inadequate analysis of ideologies in capitalist formations and of their current transformations. In fact, whether the subject is seen as the social class, the concrete individual, social work, praxis, etc., this problematic inevitably identifies *ideology* with *alienation* and results in an inadequate theoretical status being granted to ideologies: these are considered as the 'products' of consciousness (i.e. class consciousness) or of freedom (i.e. freedom of praxis), alienated from the subject. Hence this status of ideologies presupposes that the 'subject' is at once both alienated and not-totally-alienated in the 'real'. For example, in the case of a communist society where the subject is supposed to have recovered his essence, ideologies have disappeared and given way to a 'scientific' transparency of consciousness to its objectified existence. But what is more interesting here is the fact that this perspective dominates the contemporary theme of the 'end of ideology' which, according to some ideologists inspired by Marxism, characterizes contemporary 'industrial societies'. In fact, in the case of a total alienation of the subject in the real, ideologies are seen as having swung 'into reality'; they have done this precisely in so far as consciousness has been entirely ensnared in, and the subject entirely lost in the real, and so any possibility of a projection of the essence on to an ideal world, a projection which is 'alienating' yet in the sole case of the proletariat (the privileged class in the real) 'liberating' and relatively coherent, has disappeared. It is this precise invariant relation 'ideology/the real/alienation' which governs the often implicit theme of the 'end of ideology' in numerous authors from Marcuse¹ to Adorno² and Goldmann.³ They interpret contemporary developments of the capitalist formation closely in accordance with the schema of a total reification-alienation of

1. *One-Dimensional Man*, Boston, 1964, and 'Über das Ideologieproblem in der Hochentwickelten Industriegesellschaft' in Kurt Lenk (ed.), *Ideologie*, Neuwied, 1961, pp. 334 ff.

2. *Prisms*, London, 1967.

3. *Pour une sociologie du roman*, Paris, 1964.

the subject in the real in the industrial-technological society. Although there are notable differences between these authors, the common conclusion which they reach is, as Marcuse puts it, the 'absorption of ideology into reality',⁴ a claim that contemporary capitalist formations have been de-ideologized, indeed, de-politicized.

However, the historicist conception of ideologies is even more clearly expressed in the typical example of Lukács's theory of 'class consciousness' and 'world-view' (*Weltanschauung*). It is important to dwell on this theory for it poses clearly the whole problem of the epistemological presuppositions of a historicist ideological perspective. More important still, because of Gramsci's historicism as expressed in his views on dialectical materialism and in particular in his concept of the 'historical bloc', the majority of Marxist theorists use the concept of hegemony in a sense relating it to Lukács's problematic. The most important part of my following remarks is an exposition of the erroneous relation established by this problematic between the politically dominant class and the dominant ideology in a formation; and consequently, the relation between the dominant ideology and the politically dominated classes: more specifically, it is in this latter context that the extremely debatable consequences of Gramsci's analysis are located.

In the Lukácsian problematic of the subject, the unity characterizing a mode of production and a social formation is not that of a complex ensemble with several specific levels and determined in the last instance by the economic. In it this unity is reduced to a totality of the functionalist type, composed of *gestalt* interactions, of which Hegel's concept of the concrete-universal is a good example: in other words it is an *expressive totality*. In this case, the unity of a formation is related to a central instance, originating and giving meaning to this unity. In Lukács, this 'totalizing' instance is represented by the class-subject of history: the unity of a social formation is referred back to the political organization of this class (itself reduced to the role of founding a 'world-view') which erects this world-view into a central principle in the unity of a determined formation. This world-view which encompasses *both ideology and science*,⁵ expresses the unity of a formation within a linear and circular

4. op. cit., p. 11. It should be noticed that Marcuse refuses, explicitly, to reach the conclusion of the 'end of ideologies'.

5. This identification of ideology and science, or the conception of ideology as encompassing science, itself goes back to the relation between the subjective and the

totality, in so far as it is related to the central principle of unity, the class-subject. This latter, through its world-view, constitutes the consciousness-will of the 'totality' of men 'who make their own history' through praxis. Thus the role assigned to ideology through the medium of the class-subject is that of the principle of totalizing a social formation, which is precisely the young Marx's position when he held that it is ideas that rule the world and the weapons of criticism that can change it.

This relation between ideology and the unity of a social formation is the more interesting because it governs the contemporary problematic of the 'functionalist' sociological school. It is implicit, as we shall see when discussing legitimacy, in many of the analyses of contemporary political science. In order to bring to light the links between Lukács's Hegelian totality and the functionalist totality, we need only refer to the direct filiation between Lukács and Max Weber. What links the theories of Weber to those of functionalism (as Parsons noted) is that the global structure is, in the last analysis, considered as the *product* of a society-subject which in its teleological becoming creates certain social values or ends. In functionalism, these determine the formal framework for an *integration* of the various particular and 'equivalent' structures in the social 'whole'. This integration is related to an 'equilibrium' based on certain regular and recurrent processes of *normative* elements, e.g., motivations of conduct,⁶ which govern social 'action'. For Weber,⁷ these

objective within the framework of a problematic of the subject. In fact, the subjective character of ideology as the expression of the subject encompasses the objectivity of science in the case in which a 'rising class's' subjective consciousness of the world takes in the totality of a social formation. This side of the argument, as applied by Lukács, Korsch, etc. to the proletariat and 'proletarian science' is well known. According to it, the proletariat is in essence a universal class, so its subjectivity is universal; but a universal subjectivity can only be objective, therefore scientific. The consequence of this conception is also well known - spontaneism.

6. Motivations of conduct in the strict sense of the term. This leads exactly to Adorno's notion of 'political temperament' (see Adorno and Horkheimer, *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York, 1950).

7. On the connections between Weber's and Lukács's theories of classes, which have been almost ignored in France, see Weber, *Gesammelte politische Schriften*, Tübingen, 1958, pp. 294-431, especially 'Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland', written in 1918. As to the connections between Weber and Parsons, Parsons certainly misinterprets Weber's work in some respects: see *The Social System*, New York, 1964, pp. 100 ff., 519 ff., etc. However, the relation between Weber and functionalism which he establishes is in the last analysis correct. On the problem of Weber's historicism, it should be noted that Weber himself made an explicit critique of the historicist 'totality', particularly in his analyses of Eduard Meyer's work (see

social values are the crystallization of social actors' projects and are the elements out of which his ideal types are formed. In the case of the state, his conception leads to a typology exclusively of types of legitimacy, these types being constituted exactly out of the values of the agents-actors. Weber frequently relates the creation of these social values or ends to the action of social groups (the well-known 'status-groups' which he distinguishes from class situations, i.e., classes-in-themselves), which are the subjects of society and history: these considerations are at the basis of his conception of bureaucracy. But the theory of class consciousness of Lukács, whose explicit links with Weber are well known, looks like an attempt at a heavy-handed Marxization of Weber. It presupposes an expressive totality,⁸ within which there is simply no role for a dominant factor (as Weber himself quite correctly saw), yet at the same time it attributes to ideology the role of dominant factor in the social whole.⁹ Gramsci's historicist conception of dialectical materialism, coupled with the ambiguity of his formulations, has led several theorists to reduce his analyses of class hegemony to the Lukácsian problematic.¹⁰ On such an interpretation, a hegemonic class becomes the class-subject of history which through its world-view manages to permeate a social formation with its unity and to lead, rather than dominate, by bringing about the 'active consent' of the dominated classes. This interpretation of Gramsci

Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre). However, despite his warnings, his theory may be considered as a 'typical' historicist theory. On the relations between Weber's 'ideal type' and Hegel's 'concrete-universal' concept, see especially K. Larenz, *Methodenlehre der Rechtswissenschaft*, 1960.

8. Weber's historicism goes hand in hand with the conception of an expressive totality of the social whole without a dominant instance, as is clear in his theory of 'factors' and 'variables'. It is also found in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London, 1930, and particularly in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*.

9. There is no better example of this perspective, applied to political analysis, than the work of Marcuse, although it leads him to different results. As long ago as 1935, for instance, he admitted that the unity of a social formation (as opposed to a purely 'functionalist' conception) lay in the 'dominance' of a certain element of this formation over the others. However, he saw this element as the consciousness-cum-world-view of a class which was ideologically dominant in this formation (*Kultur und Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt, 1965, pp. 34 ff.). Marcuse now argues that a global de-ideologization characterizes industrial societies; from this he concludes that a social formation is an integrated Hegelian-functionalist 'totality', in the absence of an ideologically dominant class and in the absence of a proletarian 'class consciousness' which would 'countervail the whole' (*One Dimensional Man*, op. cit., pp. 51 ff.).

10. A characteristic example is L. Magri, 'Problems of the Marxist theory of the revolutionary party' in *New Left Review* 60, March/April 1970.

is for example very clear in the Marxist school of *New Left Review* which I have had the occasion to criticize elsewhere.¹¹ It appears in embryo in the following definition of hegemonic class by Perry Anderson, one of the most important representatives of this school: 'If a hegemonic class can be defined as one which imposes its own ends and its own vision on society as a whole, a corporate class is conversely one which pursues its own ends within a social totality whose global determination lies outside it.'¹² It is clear that the unity of a social formation, the social 'totality', is here related to a hegemonic class; its hegemony would consist in constituting a world-view which would establish that class as the unifying principle of a determinate formation: 'A hegemonic class seeks to transform society in its own image, inventing afresh its economic system, its political institutions, its cultural values, its whole "mode of insertion" into the world.'¹³

Moreover, Gramsci undeniably lays himself open to a misinterpretation of his analyses of historical materialism, particularly of his analyses of political domination, i.e. hegemonic class domination, because of his historicist conception of dialectical materialism. This historicism becomes clear in his treatment of the status of ideology, in Gramsci's concept of the 'historical bloc'. This concept allows Gramsci to think the unity of theory and practice, the unity of ideology, encompassing science ('organic intellectuals') and structure; i.e. the unity of a social formation in its ensemble at a historically determined instant. But this unity is precisely the expressive totality of the historicist type, which conflates the ideological and theoretical instances in the ensemble of the social structure. 'The analysis of these propositions tends to reinforce the conception of "historical bloc" in which precisely material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction between form and content has purely didactic value.'¹⁴ In this context the historical bloc is merely the theoretical formulation of the Hegelian historical 'present', the co-presence of instances in the expressive totality of linear becoming, with ideology conceived as the mere expression of history. This role of central principle of unity of a formation attributed to ideology/world-view is also manifest in the somewhat ambiguous metaphor, in Gramsci's context of ideology

11. N. Poulantzas, 'Marxist Political Theory in Great Britain' in *New Left Review* 43, May/June 1967. I must however point out that this school's theoretical conceptions have in the meantime developed considerably.

12. P. Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis' in *New Left Review* 23, January/February 1964, p. 41.

13. *ibid.*

14. *Prison Notebooks*, p. 377.

as the 'cement' of a formation: 'This problem is that of preserving the ideological unity of the entire social bloc which that ideology serves to cement and to unify . . .' Or again: 'One might say "ideology" here, but on condition that the word is used in its highest sense of a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life.'¹⁵

However, it is also true that we find several theoretical breaks in Gramsci's work, particularly in his analyses of dialectical and historical materialism: a *symptomal reading* of Gramsci, which is outside the scope of this work, would certainly reveal the scientific and original features contained (under the polemical cover of 'absolute historicism') in his conception of ideology. We may simply mention two of them here:

a. Gramsci's metaphor of ideology as the 'cement' of a society poses the major problem of the relation between the dominant ideology and the unity of a social formation in an original manner.

b. In the history of Marxist thought Gramsci is the first to break with the conception of ideology as a conceptual system, in the strict sense of these two terms.

(ii) DOMINANT IDEOLOGY, DOMINANT CLASS AND SOCIAL FORMATION

How can the Lukácsian problematic explain the Marxist tenet that the dominant ideology in a social formation is generally that of the dominant class? In other words, how does it explain the fact that the dominant ideology, possessing a unity of its own and thus reflecting in a relatively coherent universe the ensemble of the social formation which it permeates, is that of the dominant class? This is, in fact, *three series* of questions concerning the relation between the dominant ideology and the unity of a social formation:

1. Concerning that specific unity and relative coherence (what the Lukácsian problematic happily terms 'totality of meaning') belonging to the ideological universe, i.e. to a formation's dominant ideology considered as a *regional structure* of instances.

2. Concerning the fact that this coherent universe is a dominant ideology precisely in so far as it also permeates the dominated classes, and becomes their world-view also, i.e. in so far as its internal coherence corresponds to the ensemble of classes engaged in struggle in a formation.

3. Concerning the fact that this dominant ideology is that of the dominant class.

It is useful to separate these three series of questions since their Lukácsian explanation depends precisely on conflating them, by reference to the generic principle of the class-subject of society and history. Once the unity of a formation is attributed to a class-subject and hence to the 'consciousness' of this class, the role of central determinant instance of the social whole will be attributed to that global world-view, which is the direct product of this class. So the answer to these questions will reside in the genetic relation between the dominant ideology and the class 'for itself', the subject of history. As Lukács says: 'For a class to be ripe for hegemony means that its interests and consciousness enable it to organize the whole of society in accordance with those interests. The crucial question in every class struggle is this: which class possesses this capacity and this consciousness at the decisive moment? . . . The question then becomes: how far does the class concerned perform the action history has imposed on it "consciously" or "unconsciously"? And is that consciousness "true" or "false"?'¹⁶ The dominant ideology both presents a unity and constitutes a characteristic world-view of the ensemble of a formation in so far as it is genetically related to the dominant class – or rather, to the rising class. This class, which is the subject of a historical becoming, progresses through broader and broader totalizations until it reaches the final coincidence of objectification and essence; it is always pregnant with the meaning of history and concretely incarnates the totality of meaning and unity of a social formation.

This conception of ideology leads to a whole series of errors of which I shall indicate only the more important.

A. In general it leads to what can be termed an *over-politicization* of ideologies, the latter being considered as if they were political number-plates worn by social classes on their backs. The ideological structure is reduced to the political organization of a class and this political organization is constituted by its *own* world-view which establishes it as a class-for-itself, the subject of history. In this way, political class consciousness is identified with the function performed by the world-view. Consequently no specific autonomy can be attributed to the ideological instance. In particular, it is impossible in this conception to decipher the concrete relation between the dominant ideology and the politically dominant

16. *History and Class Consciousness*, London, 1971, pp. 52-3.

class or fraction. It leads to errors when we try to locate precisely the dominant class or fraction in a historically determined situation. In fact, one of the indices permitting this location is to be found precisely in the relation between the dominant class or fraction and the structures of the dominant ideology: but this relation cannot be admitted in the Lukácsian problematic, except in the very rare cases in which the dominant ideology appears in the 'purity' of its relation to the dominant class or fraction. But in reality, the dominant ideology does not simply reflect the conditions of existence of the dominant class, the 'pure and simple' subject, but rather the concrete political relation between the dominant and the dominated classes in a social formation. It is often permeated by elements stemming from the 'way of life' of classes or fractions other than the dominant class or fraction. We have, for example, the classic case in which the dominant bourgeois ideology of capitalist formations receives 'elements' of petty-bourgeois ideology ('Jacobinism' and its successor 'radicalism'), and even of working-class ideology – the 'bourgeois socialism' described by Engels (e.g. Saint-Simonism during the Second Empire in France).¹⁷

Furthermore, owing to the specific autonomy of the ideological instance, and to the very status of the ideological in the structures, the relations between the dominant ideology and the dominant class or fraction are always masked. In the complex constitution of the ideological level, this ideology which (like all ideologies) hides its own principles from itself may appear closer to the way in which a class or fraction other than the dominant class or fraction experiences its conditions of existence. In short we can establish the possibility of a whole series of dislocations between the dominant ideology and the politically hegemonic class or fraction. These can be due to several factors: for example, to the concrete function of the caste of 'intellectuals'; or again to the uneven development of the various levels of the structures due to their specific rhythm and to their dislocation from the field of class practices. For example, a dominant ideology profoundly impregnated by the way of life of a class or fraction can continue to remain the dominant ideology even if this class or fraction is no longer dominant; in the latter case the ideology is not a mere 'survival' but is subject to a whole series of modifications with regard to its concrete political functioning. We can decipher these however only on condition that we break with the historicist problematic of ideology. The typical example of this case is Britain, where the displacement of the index

17. See C. Willard, *Socialisme et communisme français*, 1967, pp. 18 ff.

of political dominance from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie is characterized by the permanence of a dominant, though modified, aristocratic ideology. The Lukácsian problematic will mask the way in which this index has changed, since from the permanence of aristocratic ideology it will deduce the continuity of the domination of the feudal class.¹⁸ In short, this problematic cannot establish an adequate relation between the series of questions indicated above; it only poses the question of the relation between the dominant ideology and the politically dominant class.

B. Moreover it can lead to errors on the question of the relations between the dominant ideology and the *dominated classes*. This is demonstrated by one of Gramsci's own theses in which he incorrectly extends the concept of hegemony to the strategy of the working class. Though this thesis may appear to contradict the explicit conclusions of this problematic, it does however stem from the same theoretical principles and has to a large extent contributed to the falsification of the scientific content of the concept of hegemony, in the sense that hegemony is no longer considered as a type of class domination. Gramsci introduces a theoretical break between *hegemony* and *domination*. According to him, a class can and must become the leading¹⁹ class *before* it becomes a politically dominant class; and it can win hegemony before the conquest of political power. In this context, the concept of hegemony effectively indicates the fact that a class imposes its own world-view on a formation and so (in this sense) gains ideological domination *before* the conquest of political power. But Gramsci applied this theoretical analysis to working-class strategy in opposition to Leninist theses. On many occasions Lenin insisted on the fact that in the case of a concrete conjuncture of transition from capitalism to socialism (as opposed to certain cases of transition from feudalism to capitalism, e.g. the case of the bourgeoisie in France), the working class cannot gain ideological domination before conquering political power. This analysis is at the root of Lenin's texts on the necessity of the ideological organization of the working class by its party. Gramsci's thesis is on the face of it opposed to the Lukácsian problematic in so far as it advocates a dislocation between the dominant ideology (which for Gramsci could be that of the dominated class) and the politically dominant class. Nevertheless, it flows from the same principles: the problem of the politi-

18. See my 'Marxist Political Theory in Great Britain', op. cit.

19. Following the English translation of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (see p. 55 n. 5), *dirigente* is translated 'leading', in contrast to 'dominant'. [Trans.]

cal organization of a class is apparently related to the elaboration of a world-view which it imposes on the ensemble of society.

In this case it is, however, impossible for a class not only to be politically dominant but even to have a strictly political organization without having gained the position of dominant ideology, since its ideological organization coincides with its emergence as class-subject of society and of history. Here we recognize Lukács's analyses of the proletariat's class consciousness, modelled on the general theme of the 'rising class', the bearer of the meaning of history. It is in this light that we can see in Gramsci's thesis the logical consequence of the Lukácsian thesis. Gramsci's dislocation between the ideologically dominant class (the hegemonic proletariat) and the politically dominant class (the bourgeoisie), i.e. the *historical* dislocation (which takes on the appearance of a *theoretical* dislocation in this thesis) between hegemony and domination, simply enables him to explain the facts by an inadequate theory, which provides an apparent contradiction to the Lukácsian conception. This also explains why Gramsci always thought that he had found this usage of the concept of hegemony in Lenin: Lenin indeed stressed the necessity for the autonomous ideological organization of the working class, but only as one of the aspects of its political organization. His theory differs importantly from Gramsci's in that according to it, (i) ideological organization has nothing to do with the proletariat's conquest of ideological domination before the taking of power, and (ii) ideological organization is even systematically conceived as being directed against the dominant ideology: even after the conquest of power this dominant ideology continues for a long time to remain bourgeois and petty bourgeois.

C. Finally, if ideologies were seen as number-plates carried on the backs of class-subjects (as in the historicist picture), it would be impossible (i) to establish the existence within the dominant ideology of elements belonging to the ideologies of classes other than the politically dominant class and (ii) to account for the permanent possibility of contamination of working class ideology by the dominant and petty-bourgeois ideologies. According to this conception of ideology there can be no *world over and beyond* the ideology of each class: these various ideologies each function as it were in a vacuum. Hence it is impossible to see the effects of ideological domination by the dominant ideology on working-class ideology. This leads directly to various forms of *spontaneism* and to its practical consequences: simply because it is the ideology of the proletariat-universal

class, working class ideology is considered to possess the keys to Marxist science. Yet numerous texts of Marx, Engels and Lenin show that the spontaneous ideology of the working class was at the root of anarcho-syndicalism and later of trade-unionism and of reformism: this is merely the effect of the permanent domination of working-class ideology by the dominant bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology. This conception is also at the base of Lenin's acceptance of the famous Kautskyist thesis according to which revolutionary ideology must be imported into the working class from outside. Whereas amongst the representatives of the leftist movement of the 1920s, some (Lukács, Korsch, etc.) propounded the thesis according to which the intellectuals should be rejected since the proletariat was its own intellectual, others (Rosa Luxemburg, etc.) failed to recognize the ideological role of the party. In short, the revolutionary ideology of the working class can exist only on the basis of a permanent critique of its spontaneous ideology by Marxist science. Such a critique presupposes a radical distinction between *ideology* and *science*, which cannot be made within the historicist conception.²⁰

(iii) THE MARXIST CONCEPTION OF IDEOLOGIES

In order to reveal the particular political function of ideologies in the case of hegemonic class domination, it is necessary to establish a scientific link between the three series of questions noted above, concerning the relation between the dominant ideology and the politically dominant class. To do this we must return to the status of the ideological.

Ideology consists of a specific objective level, of a *relatively coherent* ensemble of representations, values and beliefs: just as 'men', the agents within a formation, participate in an economic and political activity, they also participate in religious, moral, aesthetic and philosophical activities.²¹ Ideology concerns the world in which men live, their relations to nature, to society, to other men and to their own activity including their own economic and political activity. The status of the ideological derives from the fact that it reflects the manner in which the agents of a formation, the bearers of its structures, live their conditions of existence; i.e. it reflects their relation to these conditions as it is 'lived' by them. Ideology is

20. The fact that Gramsci always combated 'spontaneism' can be explained by the theoretical breaks in his own work.

21. See L. Althusser, 'Marxism and Humanism', *For Marx*.

present to such an extent in all the agents' activities that it becomes indistinguishable from their *lived experience*. To this extent ideologies fix in a relatively coherent universe not only a real but also an *imaginary relation*: i.e. men's real relation to their conditions of existence in the form of an imaginary relation. This means that in the last analysis ideologies are related to human experience without being thereby reduced to a problematic of the subject-consciousness. This social-imaginary relation, which performs a real practical-social function, cannot be reduced to the problematic of alienation and false consciousness.

It follows that through its constitution ideology is involved in the functioning of this social-imaginary relation, and is therefore *necessarily* false; its social function is not to give agents a *true knowledge* of the social structure but simply to insert them as it were into their practical activities supporting this structure. Precisely because it is determined by its structure, at the level of experience the social whole remains *opaque* to the agents. In class-divided societies this opacity is over-determined by class exploitation and by the forms which this exploitation takes in order to be able to function in the social whole. Hence, even if it includes *elements* of knowledge, ideology necessarily manifests an adequation/inadequation vis-à-vis the real; it was this which Marx grasped under the term 'inversion'. It also follows that ideology is not itself visible to the agents in its internal action; like all levels of social reality ideology is determined by its own structure which remains opaque to the agents on the level of experience. This brings us to the problem of the specific unity of the ideological, i.e. of its *structure* and its relation to the dominant class. This unity of the ideological is not derived from some kind of genetic relation to a class-subject and its class consciousness. It is derived fundamentally from the relation between ideology and human experience in a formation, and to the imaginary form which this relation takes on. As opposed to science ideology has the precise function of hiding the real contradictions and of *reconstituting* on an imaginary level a relatively coherent discourse which serves as the horizon of agents' experience; it does this by moulding their representations of their real relations and inserting these in the overall unity of the relations of a formation. This is certainly the fundamental meaning of the ambiguous metaphor of 'cement' used by Gramsci to designate the social function of ideology. Ideology, which slides into every level of the social structure, has the particular function of *cohesion*. It fulfils this function by establishing at the level of agents' experience relations which are obvious but false, and which allow their practical

activities (division of labour, etc.) to function within the unity of a formation. Consequently this coherence specific to the ideological differs from that of science precisely because of their different social functions. As opposed to the scientific notion of system, ideology refuses to allow a contradiction within it, but attempts to resolve any contradiction by excluding it.²² In other words the structures of ideological and scientific discourse are fundamentally different.

In this sense, if we abandon the conception of ideology as a *conceptual system* (in the strict sense of both of these terms) we can say that it encompasses what is often described as the 'culture' of a formation: provided, of course, that we do not fall into the mistake of ethnological culturalism which generally uses this term to cover a 'social formation' in its ensemble.²³ As Gramsci clearly realized, ideology encompasses not merely scattered elements of knowledge, notions etc., but also the whole process of symbolization, of mythical transposition, of 'taste', 'style', 'fashion', i.e. of the 'way of life' in general.

But the limits of this ambiguous metaphor of 'cement' must be pointed out. It must under no circumstances be applied to the agents of a formation, the bearers of structures, as the origin and central subject of these structures; nor must it be applied at the level of 'experience' to men as the producers of the unity of the ideology. This is because the coherence (unity) specific to ideological discourse, which is necessarily involved both in the imaginary form taken on by agents' experience and also in its function of masking real contradictions from scientific investigation, does not cause but rather presupposes the decentration of the subject at the level of supports. In fact the above considerations have demonstrated that it is necessary for the coherence of ideological discourse to be related to its social function, but they have not yet determined the principles of this coherence, i.e. of the *hidden structure* of the dominant ideology. Ideology, as a specific instance of a mode of production and social formation, is constituted within the limits fixed by this mode and this formation in that it offers an *imaginary coherence* to the unity governing the real contradictions of the ensemble of this formation. The structure of the ideological depends on the fact that it *reflects* the unity of a social formation. From this point of view, its specific, real role as unifier is not that of constituting the unity of a formation (as the historicist conception would have it) but

22. cf. Macherey, 'Lénine, Critique de Tolstoi', *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire*, Paris, 1966.

23. cf. R. Establet in *Démocratie Nouvelle*, June 1966.

that of reflecting that unity by *reconstituting* it on an imaginary plane. Hence, the dominant ideology of a social formation encompasses the 'totality' of this formation not because it constitutes the 'class consciousness' of a historico-social subject, but because it reflects (with those biases of *inversion* and *mystification* which are specific to it) the index of articulation of the instances which specifies the unity of this formation. As in the case of every other instance, the region of the ideological is fixed in its limits by the global structure of a mode of production and social formation.

We can thus determine the precise meaning of the relation between dominant ideology and politically dominant class in class-divided societies. In these societies the original function of ideology is over-determined by the class relations in which the structures distribute their agents. The correspondence between the dominant ideology and the politically dominant class is not due (any more than the specific internal coherence of the ideology is) to some kind of historico-genetic relation. It is due to the fact that the ideological (i.e. a given ideology) is constituted as regional instance within the unity of the structure; and this structure has the domination of a given class as its effect in the field of the class struggle. The dominant ideology, by assuring the practical insertion of agents in the social structure, aims at the maintenance (the cohesion) of this structure, and this means *above all* class domination and exploitation. It is precisely in this way that within a social formation ideology is dominated by the ensemble of representations, values, notions, beliefs, etc. by means of which class domination is perpetuated: in other words, it is dominated by what can be called the ideology of the dominant class.

In this way it can easily be understood that the structure (unity) of the dominant ideology cannot be deciphered from its relations with a class consciousness/world-view, considered in a vacuum, *but from the starting-point of the field of the class struggle*, i.e. from the concrete relation between the various classes in struggle, the relation within which class domination functions. Hence we can understand not only why the dominated classes necessarily experience their relation to their conditions of existence within the discourse of the dominant ideology, but also why this discourse often presents elements borrowed from ways of life other than that of the dominant class. Lenin points this out in an enlightening way: 'The *elements* of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in a rudimentary form, in every national culture . . . But *every* nation also possesses

a bourgeois culture, in the form, not merely of "elements" but of the dominant culture.'²⁴

The dominant ideology contains features from ideologies other than that of the dominant class, incorporated as 'elements' in its own structure; but we also find in capitalist formations true *ideological sub-ensembles* which function with a relative autonomy vis-à-vis the dominant ideology within a formation: e.g. feudal and petty-bourgeois sub-ensembles. These sub-ensembles are dominated by the ideologies of the corresponding classes – feudal, petty bourgeois – but only to the extent that these ideologies which dominate the ideological sub-ensembles *are themselves dominated* by the dominant ideology; we shall see below the form in which this happens. Furthermore these ideological sub-ensembles themselves contain elements stemming from ideologies other than those which dominate them, or other than the dominant ideology of a formation. This is characteristically the case in the recurring relations between the ideologies of the petty bourgeoisie and the working class.

(iv) BOURGEOIS POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Before a further examination of political ideologies in capitalist formations, it is necessary to point out one more important fact. Ideology itself is divided into various *regions* which can be characterized, for example, as moral, juridical and political, aesthetic, religious, economic, philosophical ideologies. Without going more deeply into this problem, it must also be said that in the *dominant ideology* of a social formation it is generally possible to decipher *the dominance of one region of ideology over the others*. This dominance is itself very complex and is manifested in the fact that the other regions of the ideology function by borrowing from the dominant region the notions and representations peculiar to that region; it can even be seen in the fact that the first steps of science are based on such borrowings.

It is not accidental that one ideological region dominates the others within the limits of the dominant ideology. The specific coherence of the dominant ideology which from this point of view is guaranteed by the domination of one ideological region over the others results from the fact that it reflects the unity of the structure, i.e. its index of dominance and over-determination, with the characteristic ideological effects of inversion and masking. *It could be said that the role of ideology here is not simply that*

24. 'Critical Notes on the National Question', *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 24.

of hiding the economic level which is always determinant, but that of hiding the level which has the dominant role and hiding the very fact of its dominance. The dominant region of ideology is precisely that one which for various reasons best fulfils this particular function of masking.

I shall briefly illustrate this. In a feudal formation the dominant role often falls to the political; but the dominant region of the ideological is not the juridico-political ideology but the religious ideology. Furthermore, as Marx stressed, the dominant role is often held by the ideological level itself. It could doubtless be shown that the religious ideology is precisely that region of ideology which, because of its specific structure, is best suited to mask the dominant role of the ideological itself, i.e. the direct class function specific to the ideological. The particularly 'mythical', 'obscurantist' and 'mystifying' function which the medieval Catholic religious ideology took on was due to a large extent to the fact that it often held the dominant role and that it had to hide its true function from itself. In the CMP and in a capitalist formation, where the economic generally plays the dominant role, we see the dominance of the *juridico-political region* in the ideological. But in particular at the stage of state monopoly capitalism, in which the dominant role is held by the political, it is the economic ideology (of which 'technocratism' is only one aspect) which tends to become the dominant region of the dominant ideology. *In short, everything takes place as if the centre of the dominant ideology is never in the place where real knowledge is to be sought; as if it carried out its masking role by altering the position, i.e. by deforming the object, of science.*

Before seeking the reasons why the juridico-political ideology is best suited to fulfil the role of masking the dominance of the economic in the CMP and the capitalist formation, we should provide some examples which demonstrate the dominance of this region. Let us first consider its direct dominance: the dominant form under which the bourgeois class experienced its first protests against the feudal order and experienced its subsequent conditions of existence, and which has permeated the ensemble of capitalist formations is the form of juridico-political discourse. Liberty, equality, rights, duties, the rule of the law, the legal state, the nation, individuals/persons, the general will, in short all the catchwords under which bourgeois class exploitation entered and ruled in history were directly borrowed from the juridico-political sense of these notions, as formulated for the first time by medieval legal theorists of the social

contract in the Italian universities. There is no better analysis of this dominance of the juridico-political in capitalist ideology than Max Weber's: he also showed how it was related to the formation of a caste of 'legal specialists'. We can sum up as follows: in western Europe the dominant ideology of the slave class was moral and philosophical, that of the feudal class was religious, and that of the bourgeois class juridico-political: it is not accidental that Marx, Engels and Lenin (especially Marx in *The German Ideology*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and *Capital*) studied this ideological region as the focal point and privileged object of their critiques.

Secondly, the dominance of the juridico-political region over the others is manifested not only by the fact that it is *distinct* from philosophical, moral and religious ideologies, but also by the fact that these latter ideologies borrow notions from the juridico-political, notions which enable them to think themselves or which they use as a reference point to establish their own notions.

a. Philosophical ideology: we need only mention the particular importance conferred on 'philosophy of right' and on 'political philosophy' by Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, etc. and the formation of the philosophical notions of 'nature', 'liberty', etc., in the French social contract theorists and also in Locke, Mill, Bentham, etc.²⁵

b. Religious ideology: we need only mention Weber's analyses of the impact of the juridico-political ideology on Protestantism, as related to what he calls 'rational-legal' legitimacy.

c. Moral ideology: we need only mention how the domination of the juridico-political ideology transformed the notions of 'individual' and 'person', of 'right' and 'duty', of 'virtue' (in e.g. Machiavelli and Montesquieu) and of 'love', which it turned into a true 'contract' of mutual recognition. In this case the moral is not simply subordinated to the political, but above all moral notions are constituted from a point of reference (often a point of *contrasting reference*) provided by the political. But furthermore, when a science is constituted, its notions are often formulated in or strongly influenced by the juridico-political ideology, such as the modern notion of 'law' as found in Montesquieu. The classical case of this is economic science, in which Marx criticizes the very name of '*political*' economy. Finally, the privileged discourse within which the

25. See M. Villey, 'Cours d'histoire de la philosophie du droit' in *Cours de droit*, Nos. 3 and 4.

dominated classes 'spontaneously' live their revolt against the bourgeois class is dominated by the juridico-political region of the dominant ideology: 'social justice', 'equality', etc.²⁶

These examples are intentionally simple and very schematic; by means of them I claim to do no more than indicate the problem. On the other hand, I shall dwell at greater length on the reasons for the dominance of the juridico-political region in the dominant ideology, linking that problem directly to the problem of its particular mode of functioning within the framework of hegemonic class domination.

It is apparent that the juridico-political ideology is the dominant region in bourgeois ideology because it is in the best position to fulfil the particular role of ideology in the CMP and in a capitalist formation. This is also closely linked to the specific role played by the real juridico-political level, i.e. the state and law. The 'cement' of ideology permeates every layer of the social structure, *including economic and political practice*. It has been seen above that in the CMP and in a capitalist formation, ideology manifests itself *vis-à-vis economic practice* in a particular effect, namely the *effect of isolation*: this effect of isolation can also be seen in the impact of the juridico-political level on socio-economic relations. In its various aspects, this effect of isolation is an indispensable condition for the existence and functioning of the CMP and of a capitalist formation. This is the real meaning of Marx's analyses of capitalist fetishism, as distinct from simple market fetishism, in the 'pure' CMP. The phenomena covered by the term 'fetishism', as well as the generalization of exchange, competition, etc., presuppose this particular isolation effect ascribable to ideology as the condition of their existence. Marx grasped this effect in a descriptive way in opposing it to what he called the 'natural ties' of pre-capitalist social formations.

In the case of capitalism, this effect of isolation is the privileged product of the juridico-political ideology, and more specifically of the juridical ideology. We could say that if the sacred and religious *bind together*, the first step of the juridico-political ideology is to *separate and untie* (in the

26. It is true that this dominance of the juridico-political region in the dominant bourgeois ideology takes on *different forms* depending on the social formations in question. This is what Marx meant when he said that: 'The Germans have a head for philosophy, the English for economics, the French for politics.' But in the context, this remark also indicates that this dominance of the juridico-political region of ideology is only a general rule and that it can be threatened in a given capitalist formation.

sense in which Marx says that it 'frees') the agents from 'natural ties'. Its functions include setting up political 'individuals-persons', 'subjects of law', who are 'free' and 'equal' one to the other; this allows the functioning of those juridico-political structures which permit the labour contract (buying and selling of labour power), capitalist private property (N.B. the role of this ideology as the *condition of existence* of the juridical relation of property), the generalization of exchange, competition, etc. Alongside this, in the various forms which it takes on in economic reality and by its retroactive effects on the ideological, this effect of isolation is the very basis which masks from the agents the real structures of the economic, its dominance in the CMP, class structures, etc. This is in fact the meaning of Marx's analyses of fetishism, of the role of competition in class relations, of the impact of ideology on classical 'political' economy, etc.

However, this is only one aspect of ideology's function in a capitalist formation. Although it plays the role of cohesion and liaison which belongs to ideology in general, it also in the capitalist formation has a *particularly important* role at the level of the agents. This importance is due primarily to the specific autonomy of the instances in a CMP and in a capitalist formation, reflected in a specific autonomy of the economic, political and ideological practices. It is also due to the effect of isolation produced by the ideological and to the cohesive role accruing to it from this isolation which, since the juridico-political level plays a part in it, is largely its own effect. The political role of the dominant bourgeois ideology, dominated by the juridico-political region, is to attempt to impose upon the ensemble of society a 'way of life' through which the state can be experienced as representing society's 'general interest', and as the guardian of the universal vis-à-vis 'private individuals'. These latter are a creation of the dominant ideology, which presents them as unified by an 'equal' and 'free' participation in the 'national' community, under the protection of the dominant classes who are held to embody the 'popular will'.

One of the particular characteristics of dominant bourgeois ideology is, in fact, that it conceals class exploitation in a specific manner, *to the extent that all trace of class domination is systematically absent from its language*. It is true that its very status forbids any ideology to present itself as the ideology of class-domination. However, in 'pre-capitalist' ideologies, class operations are always *present* in their *principles*, although they are justified as 'natural' or 'sacred'. Such is the typical case of feudal religious ideology, where the 'difference' between 'men' is present in the structure,

although it is justified by reference to the 'sacred' order.²⁷ Similarly in the moral or philosophical ideologies of social formations based on slavery, this difference is justified by reference to the 'natural' order. On the other hand the dominance of the juridico-political region in the dominant bourgeois ideology corresponds precisely to this particular masking of class domination. It is clear that the ideological region is thus especially suited to play this role, particularly when we recall the analogous absence of class domination in the institutions of the capitalist state and in modern law. Thus the impact of this region on the other regions of the ideological and the political role of the dominant bourgeois ideology consists not only in the fact that it justifies the direct economic interests of the dominant class but that above all it presupposes, composes or imposes the image of an 'equality' of 'identical', 'disparate', and 'isolated' individuals, unified in the political universality of the state/nation. It is in this context that we recognize the political implications of the ideologies of 'mass society', 'consumer society', etc. It is precisely by this specific masking of class domination that the juridico-political ideology best fulfils its particular cohesive role, which accrues to the ideological in the CMP and capitalist formations. In short, everything occurs here as if the region of ideology which is *the best placed* to hide the real index of determination and dominance of the structure is also in the best place to cement the cohesion of social relations by reconstituting their unity on an imaginary plane.

This specific masking of class domination, combined with the particular role of cohesion which accrues to bourgeois ideology, under the dominance of the juridico-political region of ideology, is precisely reflected in the close relation between ideology and the capitalist state. This is what Gramsci called the 'ethico-political' function of the state; it is seen in the capitalist state's take-over of education and in its regimentation of the cultural domain in general. The capitalist state's role relative to ideology is presented as 'organizational': this is merely the result of inserting the capitalist state's specific unifying role into the discourse which is itself constructed according to the particular role of the dominant bourgeois ideology.

Hence the specific efficacy of this ideology is constantly present in the

27. The constitution of classes as 'estates/castes' must be related *both* to the dominance of the ideological *and* to the dominance within ideology of the region of religious ideology. On this subject and on the 'desacralization' of politics in the 'modern state', see R. Balandier, *Anthropologie politique*, 1967, pp. 103 ff., 191 ff.

functioning of the capitalist state itself. Let us take the case of bureaucracy, the state apparatus, without however anticipating the specific problem of bureaucracy which will be discussed later. In his mature works, notably in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx drew attention to this role of ideology in the modern bureaucratic apparatus. This apparatus does not present itself directly as an apparatus of class domination, but rather as the 'unity', the organizing principle and incarnation of the 'general interest' of society. This manner of presentation has crucial effects on the concrete functioning of the bureaucratic apparatus: it produces a permanent masking of knowledge within this apparatus by relaying hierarchical and formal rules of jurisdiction, something which is only possible with the advent of the juridico-political bourgeois ideology. The 'formal rationality' of the bureaucratic apparatus is in fact possible only where political class domination in particular is absent from it, being supplanted by this ideology of organization.²⁸

Ideology plays a similar role in the concrete functioning of the *political scene* (an area specific to the capitalist state), the place in which political representation in the capitalist state is conducted: Marx, Engels and Lenin frequently characterize this area as the modern representative state. In it, parliament is seen as the 'representative' of the public will, the parties as the representatives of public opinion, etc. Ideology intervenes in the functioning of the state in order to provide the class actors with the veneer of representation by means of which they can insinuate themselves into the institutions of the general popular-class-state and under cover of which they can mask the divergences inevitable in the capitalist state between the actions of these actors and the classes which they represent. In his mature works Marx stresses this role of ideology in his analyses of the relations (i) between parties and classes and (ii) between the state and those classes which in the capitalist state have the specific function of being 'supporting classes' (as distinct from dominant classes): see his analyses of the role of ideology in the fetishism of power by the petty bourgeoisie, the small-holding peasantry, etc.

Bourgeois juridico-political ideologies therefore conceal their political significance in a very specific manner, which means that they have the

28. It is in this sense that we accept the relations established by Weber between bureaucratic 'rationality' and the 'rational-legal' type of authority, based on the 'general interest' of the nation.

following remarkable characteristic: they achieve this concealment by explicitly presenting themselves as science. Contrary to superficial analyses of this subject, we can see that the theme of the 'end of ideologies' (to use the current expression) is in fact the theoretical basis of all such ideologies. This is clear in the constitution of the political categories of 'public opinion' and 'consensus': they are related to the specific way in which the dominated classes accept these ideologies. In fact, the specific characteristic of these ideologies is not at all, as Gramsci believed, that they procure a more or less active 'consent' from the dominated classes towards political domination, since this is a general characteristic of *any* dominant ideology. What specifically defines the ideologies in question is that they do not aim to be accepted by the dominated classes according to the principle of participation in the sacred: they explicitly declare themselves and are accepted as scientific techniques. It is, in fact, in capitalist formations that the political category of public opinion²⁹ and the related category of consent, first mentioned by the physiocrats, make an appearance: in the discourse of the dominant ideology they are linked to the conceptualization of the relative autonomy of the political and of the economic in a capitalist formation. Hence they are related to a whole theoretical revolution concerning the concept of the political, which, until then, had remained faithful to the Aristotelian ethical tradition.³⁰

The theoretical break which appeared in Machiavelli and Morus, is carried on by the school which constitutes politics according to the model of apodictic knowledge (*episteme*) as exhibited in the concept of public opinion. This concept covers the field of the strictly political – of the public as opposed to the private; in the various forms into which it has evolved, it points to the need for the 'citizens' to have a 'rational knowledge' of the laws of the functioning of the political order, which was already deemed to be an 'artificial' order by Hobbes. The knowledge in question is knowledge of the conditions of their specific 'practice' (*techne*) which is henceforth seen as strictly political practice. Political ideology, in the form of public opinion, presents itself as a body of practical rules, as technical knowledge, as the citizens' 'enlightened consciousness' of a specific practice, as the 'Reason' of this practice. This is the underlying conception of the whole series of political liberties: of the freedom of

29. On this subject, see J. Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, 1965, pp. 65 ff.

30. On the concept of the political and of politics in the Greek philosophical tradition, see F. Chatelet, *Platon*, 1966, and J. P. Vernant, *Mythe et Pensée chez les Grecs*, 1966.

speech, freedom of the press, etc. Public opinion, which is a necessary factor in the functioning of the capitalist state and which is the modern form of political consent (consensus) cannot in fact function unless it manages to present itself and to be accepted in terms of 'rational' scientific technique, i.e. *in so far as it sets itself up in its principles in opposition to that which it designates and marks out as utopian*.³¹ It thus designates as utopian any representation in which the class struggle is present in any form whatsoever. We can also clearly locate in the same theoretical line those contemporary ideologies of 'mass society', of 'communication techniques', etc. which have created the ideological myth of the 'end of ideologies', the term ideology here being identified with 'utopia'. In fact in its political functioning bourgeois ideology has always presented itself as a scientific technique. It has done this by defining science by reference to a 'beyond' which it has termed 'utopian'.

The particular function of bourgeois ideology dominated by the juridico-political region, can also account for what has wrongly been called its 'totalitarian' nature. Modern political science has used this term in order to contrast contemporary political ideologies with 'liberal' political ideologies. In this usage, totalitarian political ideologies are characterized firstly by the fact that they destroy the barriers accepted by liberal ideology between the individual and the state, in advocating the 'total' assimilation of the individual by the state; and secondly by the fact that they are now invading every aspect of social practice. This is in contrast with liberal ideology which carries within itself its own limits, in that, for example, it recognizes domains exterior to itself (the economic) and insists on the non-intervention of the state in the economic and the ideological.

I shall return to my critique of these theories of totalitarianism, in so far as they also concern the way in which the contemporary capitalist state functions.³² For the moment I shall simply note that these theories grasp (in an ideological form) certain real problems posed by bourgeois

31. The link between this operation of public opinion and the specific ideology in which class domination is present by its very absence is described as follows by Habermas: 'Class interest is the basis of public opinion. This interest must however correspond at a certain stage to the general interest, in so far as this opinion must be able to be valued as "public", i.e. as mediated by public reasoning and thus as rational', op. cit., p. 100. See also on this subject, J. Touchard, *Histoire des idées politiques*, 1967.

32. See p. 290 n below for a bibliography of 'totalitarianism'.

ideology; these problems relate however to the particular function of ideologies in capitalist formations, and liberal political ideology is in no way an exceptional case.

A. Bourgeois political ideology's particular function of isolation and cohesion leads to a totally remarkable internal contradiction, sometimes thematized in the theories of the social contract by the distinction and relation between the *pact of civil association* and the *pact of political domination*. This ideology sets agents up as individuals/subjects, free and equal, and presents them as it were in a pre-social state, and so defines the specific isolation of social relations. This aspect which has been described as 'bourgeois individualism' is well known. But it is important to point out the other, perhaps right, side of the coin. These individuals/persons, who are individualized in this way, do not seem able in one and the same theoretical movement to be unified and attain their social existence except by means of gaining political existence in the state. The result is that the private individual's freedom suddenly appears to vanish before the authority of the state which embodies the general will. Indeed, for bourgeois political ideology *there can be no limit based on law or principle to the activity and encroachment of the state* in the so-called sphere of the individual/private. In the last analysis, this sphere appears to have no other function but that of providing a reference point, which is also a *vanishing point*, for the omnipresence and omniscience of the political instance. In this sense Hobbes appears to be the true anticipation of the theories of social contract and Hegel of their culmination: this is a complex case, but so are all theoretical cases. Rousseau's characteristic position should be noted: 'Man must be as independent as possible from other men and as dependent as possible on the state.' It is even clearer in the classic example of the physiocrats, fierce partisans of *laissez-faire* in the economic and equally fierce partisans of political authoritarianism: they called for the absolute monarch to embody the general will and interest. All this is also characteristic of liberal political ideology:³³ the best example is the clear but often misunderstood influence of Hobbes on Locke and on the classical British Liberal political school of 'utilitarianism', on Bentham, on Mill and, above all, on Stuart Mill.

In short, to use two equally ideological terms, the individualism of bourgeois political ideology inevitably goes hand in hand with (and only

33. See the important work of C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Oxford, 1964.

with) its totalitarianism.³⁴ We are concerned with the contradiction specific to the very *type* of bourgeois political ideology, the contradiction which stems from the particular character of the function which it performs. (We are not concerned with any particular form of that ideology, e.g. that of the present day.) In fact this juridico-political ideology operates as if in one stroke it has both founded that specific isolation which is individualization, and has also gained the means of maintaining its specific cohesion, thanks to the role it attributes to the political instance.

B. Bourgeois juridico-political ideology does not carry in its own structures limits to the intervention of the political instance in the economic or ideological, based on *principle* or *right*. This is the point being made when it is said that this ideology fundamentally recognizes only one plane of existence, the political plane, that it extends the domain of the political to encompass the whole of human life, that it believes that all thoughts and actions have a political significance and that consequently they fall within the sphere of political action.

What is exactly correct in this statement is that bourgeois political ideology, the dominant region of the dominant ideology, does not recognize *worlds which are by right outside* the intervention (to be distinguished from the place of constitution) of the political: this, *mutatis mutandis*, was not at all the case for the moral and philosophical ideology of slave society nor with the religious ideology of feudalism. We need only consider that advocacy of state interventions in the economic not only by the theorists of the French Revolution, but also by the classical liberal theorists, from Locke to the utilitarians (this advocacy must of course be distinguished from the real functioning of the state). This aspect of bourgeois juridico-political ideology in fact concerns the particular role of agent of unity devolving on the capitalist state, a role which here is invested in the discourse of the dominant ideology.

On the other hand, although it is true that the discourse of bourgeois juridico-political ideology penetrates and invades all social activities, including the economic, it is incorrect to consider this trait as specifying this ideology. In fact, it characterizes any dominant region of a dominant ideology. For example, economic activity is here *invaded* by juridico-political ideology just as it was by philosophical and moral discourse in

34. In spite of his general theoretical line and his very disputable conclusions, see on this J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, London, 1966.

formations based on slavery, or by religious discourse in feudal formations.

To conclude: the concept of *hegemony* as applied to the domination under hegemonic class leadership in capitalist formations here covers the above-mentioned specific characteristics of the dominant capitalist ideology, by means of which a class or a fraction manages to present itself as incarnating the general interest of the people-nation and thereby to condition the dominated classes to a specific political acceptance of its domination.

(v) THE PROBLEM OF LEGITIMACY

These remarks on ideologies provide the indispensable background for the question of the *legitimacy* of a political system, a vital question in modern political science. *By legitimacy of political structures and institutions we can designate their relation to the dominant ideology in a formation. In particular legitimacy covers the specifically political impact of the dominant ideology.*

This definition is important when we compare it to the meaning modern political science gives to this notion. According to it legitimacy (or 'political culture') generally indicates the way in which political structures are *accepted* by the agents of the system. After Max Weber, this notion was however incorporated into the functionalist problematic which is wedded to the conception of the historical subject and so discovers in the ideological language of a formation the aims or ends of the practice of the social actors. In this context, the ideological (i.e. the values, symbols and predominant styles of a formation) is given the sense and the theoretical function of the central instance of a social system: this is the conception of anthropological culturalism. Normative political models establish the framework for integration which specifies the expressive and circular form of the relations between the elements of a system, in the functionalist sense of the term. The legitimacy of political structures thus signifies their integration into the functionality of the system governed by its social ends, aims and values; it indicates their acceptance by the actors, integrated by means of this acceptance, into a social ensemble.³⁵ In the case where the

35. See G. Almond and S. Verba, *The Civic Culture*, 1963, pp. 3-78, where legitimacy is defined as 'orientation of political action'; and also the introduction to the important work of Almond and Coleman, *The Politics of Developing Areas*, 1960, pp. 3-64; Mitchell, *The American Polity*, 1962; Shils, *Political Development in New States*, 1962, and

political structures do not coincide with the normative models of a society, they are conceived as being dysfunctional, i.e. as constituting a badly integrated ensemble which specifies their illegitimacy.³⁶ Then by applying the general functionalist conception of the political system as the central integrating factor of a social system, the political system can be specified as the 'authoritarian distribution of values for the social ensemble' and the study of the political can be seen as the study of a process of legitimization of the relations of a social system.³⁷

I shall not go into a detailed analysis of the consequences of this theory: I shall point out only the more important ones which, incidentally, are often identical to those which stem from the historicist conception of ideologies:

a. An over-estimation of the ideological, in particular of the proper function of legitimacy. The dislocation between the political structures and the dominant ideology is not given a scientific status but is apprehended under the category of the dysfunctional which is evidently meaningless in the theoretical context of functionalism.³⁸ However, this dislocation (i.e. the possibility that illegitimate political structures may function) is perfectly well explicable by Marxist theory, the theory of a unity comprising levels which are dislocated up to the point of rupture. That is because, (i) this dislocation between the ideological and the political does not necessarily reflect a dislocation between the political and the economic or, in its complexity, a situation of rupture of the ensemble of the formation, and (ii) because the state apparatus of force and repression operates.

b. From this conception there follows a typology of political structures based principally on the types of legitimacy – a non-operational typology of these types; this was already the case with Weber's types of authority.

c. It makes it impossible to conceive in a rigorous manner, the co-

Towards a General Theory of Action, 1951; J. H. Kautsky, *Political Change in Underdeveloped Countries*, 1962.

36. e.g. L. Binder, in his important study, *Iran: Political Development in a Changing Society*, Berkeley, 1962, pp. 7 ff.

37. See especially D. Easton, in his two very important works already mentioned: *A Framework for Political Analysis*, 1965, and *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, 1965. I have pointed out the relation in Weber's work between the concepts of authority and legitimacy.

38. e.g. Binder, who is more conscious than anyone else of these difficulties, introduces the notion of *efficacy* or *effectiveness* of political structures, alongside that of *legitimacy*.

existence within a formation of several types of legitimacy and the participation of various concrete institutional structures characterized by such different types of legitimacy.

After saying this, it still remains true that the differentiation of political structures and institutions according to types of legitimacy is brought out in Marxist theory, by reference to the relations between the political and the dominant ideology. It is in fact correct to say that as a general rule political domination corresponds to a particular mode of acceptance and consent from the unity of a formation, *including the dominated classes*: this is clearly demonstrated by the relations indicated above between the dominant ideology and the unity of a formation. This does not, of course, mean that these classes are in some way integrated in this formation, that there is no class struggle: this fact is related to the very status of the ideological and *to the complex form in which the dominant ideology dominates the ideological sub-ensembles within a formation.*

The dominance of this ideology is shown by the fact that the dominated classes live their conditions of political existence through the forms of dominant political discourse: this means that often they live *even their revolt* against the domination of the system within the frame of reference of the dominant legitimacy. These remarks are of great importance since they not only indicate the possibility of a lack of a 'class consciousness' in the dominated classes, but they imply even that these classes' 'own' political ideology is often modelled on the discourse of the dominant legitimacy. This domination of the dominant ideology may present itself in various forms:³⁹ often it does not show itself simply by imposing the very content of its discourse upon the dominated classes; rather it is that this dominant discourse appears to these classes as a *counter-point*, as something which by its absence defines the difference between their ideology and the dominant ideology. For example, the attitude of the dominated classes towards 'political democracy' often takes the form of a demand opposed to 'other forms of political democracy'. This is still a way of participating in the dominant legitimacy which in this case is dominant precisely in that it constitutes a *referential model* for opposing it. In other cases the opposition sometimes manifests itself simply in a different *manner* of conduct vis-à-vis the signs and symbols imposed by the dominant legitimacy. Thus it is not at all surprising that in the working

39. See Pierre Bourdieu's work. Despite the reservations one must have concerning his conception of social classes, they are of major importance.

class we can sometimes observe not merely a classical reformist ideology which openly accepts the dominant legitimacy, but even the coexistence of a strongly articulated revolutionary ideology with an ideology subject to the basic frameworks of the dominant legitimacy. Besides, it should be unnecessary to stress that even when the revolutionary ideology of the working class extends to those classes which are sometimes supports of the state (e.g. the small-scale producers) it is received only in a complex relation to the dominant ideology.

Hence we can see that, just as in a concrete formation the structures of the state, under the dominance of one type of state, present structures depending on other types, these structures often, under the dominance of one type of legitimacy, participate in different types of legitimacy.⁴⁰ They participate for instance in ideologies which were previously dominant and corresponding to classes which are no longer politically dominant. For example, feudal legitimacy has not only often characterized feudal structures coexisting in capitalist states (a simple case) but even structures typical of capitalist states; this is the case with the modern executive body which frequently participates in monarchical legitimacy. In a concrete state, the relation of coexistence of structures depending on several types and of legitimacies depending on several types engenders a whole complex series of combinations of their relations. Lastly, in dealing with a concrete capitalist state we should not underestimate the existence of legitimacies which depend mainly on particular class ideologies such as those of the petty bourgeoisie or the small-holding peasantry.

This analysis could undoubtedly be extended. However, the above remarks on bourgeois political ideologies which correspond to a domination with hegemonic class leadership are sufficient to pinpoint what may be described as the bourgeois type of legitimacy, characteristic of the CMP and of a formation dominated by this mode. I shall simply have to return to the question of the distinction between the various forms of this type of legitimacy according to the forms of the capitalist type of state.

40. See M. Duverger, *Institutions politiques*, 1966, pp. 32 ff. The dislocation between the type of state and the dominant legitimacy in a formation (corresponding to different political forms) is particularly striking in countries in the process of de-colonization and development (e.g. in Africa), where the setting up of 'modern' states is constantly dominated by traditional ideologies; on this subject see, e.g. D. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, 1955, and R. Balandier, *Anthropologie politique*, 1967, pp. 186 ff.

3. The Capitalist State and Force

The particular place and function of the capitalist state also allow us to determine the way in which 'force', 'repression' or 'violence' function in the framework of this state. The state can in no way be reduced to a mere apparatus or instrument of force in the hands of the dominant class. This element of force appears as a *general* characteristic of the functioning of the class state. It is, however, unnecessary to insist on the fact that the institutions of class domination, far from being derived from any kind of psycho-social relation of force, are in fact what assign to this repressive force its concrete functioning in a determinate formation.

What is to be understood by repressive force and violence, which are vague notions and useless until they are made specific? *The term force in fact covers the functioning of certain institutions of organized physical repression, such as the army, the police, the penitentiary system, etc.* This repression is socially organized and is one characteristic of *all power relations*. Thus the notion of force cannot be theoretically isolated from power relations (in the notion of *might*, for example¹); nor can it be extended to represent in a general way (e.g. in the notion of violence) the positions of domination and subordination occupied by social classes in the relations of class domination. It is important therefore to grasp the concrete way in which organized physical repression functions in the case of the state corresponding to a hegemonic class domination. Gramsci pointed out this problem when he characterized this way of functioning as 'consent reinforced by coercion', seeing hegemony (consent to state 'leadership') as a 'complement' to state force, given that he wrongly included state structures in his concept of hegemony. These remarks indicate a question, but are far from providing an answer, since in fact, this 'consent reinforced by coercion' is a general characteristic of power relations. Because of the state's position in a formation (its ideological function, etc.), the political relations of domination present an aspect of legitimacy, which is precisely what allows the functioning of organized

1. See p. 107 above.

physical repression. What is often described as a *police state*, a term which indicates the particularly intense action of repressive institutions in certain conjunctures, does not in fact constitute a type of distinct domination corresponding to hegemonic class domination: when this sort of action appears within this framework, it must be related to the historically determined situation in which it functions.

Furthermore, these remarks of Gramsci's stem from a frequent conceptual confusion in his analyses. In them hegemony is not even on the practical level a concept locating a specific theoretical object (i.e. a type of political class domination) in its unity, but serves only to isolate the 'moment' of consent, of 'intellectual and moral leadership' and of 'organization' from the moment of 'force' and 'coercion', notions which remain vague and imprecise throughout his work. To grasp the relation between these two 'moments' he uses the significant term '*complementarity*'. From this stems a confusion of the areas in which hegemony is exercised, a confusion frequently encountered in his works, according to which, force is exercised by the state in 'political society', hegemony in 'civil society' by means of organizations usually considered to be 'private': the church, cultural institutions, etc. But the status of the distinction between hegemony and force, in so far as these cover respectively the economic and the political spheres, depends on the historicist conception of their relation. This distinction is the key to the model with which historicism apprehended the relations between the economic and the political: it saw the political (the class struggle) as the motor, *the force*, of the 'economic laws' conceived in a mechanistic fashion; in other words, politics is conceived as the motor of economic 'automatism' – an automatism which is indicated here by the 'moment of consent'.

In fact, the scientific examination of the capitalist state can mark out the place occupied by this element of 'force' in its form of organized physical repression. In this respect, this state's characteristic is *that it holds the monopoly of organized physical repression*, as opposed to other social formations in which institutions such as the church, seigneurial power, etc. have, parallel to the state, the privilege of exercising this power. Organized physical repression thus takes on a strictly political character. It becomes the exclusive prerogative of political power, and its legitimacy is henceforth derived from that of the state: it presents itself as a 'constitutionalized violence' and is subject to the normative regulation of the 'state based on right' (*l'état de droit*). In this sense the capitalist state holds the

monopoly of *legitimate* force, taking account of the transformations undergone by legitimacy in that state.²

This concentration of force in the hands of the state hence appears to correspond to (i) the autonomy of the instances in the CMP, (ii) the attribution of a public character to the state's political institutions, and (iii) the assigning, by the state itself, of a private character to the institutions exercising this force in other formations. The exercise of physical repression is henceforth legitimized in that it is presented as corresponding to the general interest of the nation-people; here legitimacy is related exclusively to the state. The repressive organization is deemed to be subject to the control of public opinion (see e.g. the institution of tribunals, juries, etc.) and it is not accidental that the first theoretical works on police organization are those which manufacture the concept of the 'state based on right'.³ In short, in the capitalist state, organized physical repression appears (in Marx's phrase) 'naked', stripped of its extra-political justifications and also inserted in the institutions of the popular-class-state.⁴ So the capitalist state's possession of the legitimate monopoly of organized physical repression is apparently linked to that specific autonomy of the instances characteristic of a formation dominated by the CMP which assigns its place to the state. Further, this characteristic of the capitalist state is *implied in the actual functioning of the CMP as described by Marx in Capital*. I say 'implied' because this characteristic of the capitalist state is also only sketched in implicitly. This 'pure' mode of production can function only so long as organized physical repression is not directly organized by the agents in the domain of the social relations of production, but is left to the state. It is in this sense that we should understand Marx's analyses of the CMP, in particular the 'absence of *violence*' in the economic

2. Thus we can accept Weber's thesis that one of the characteristics of the state is that it holds a monopoly of legitimate force, provided that the object of the thesis is seen to be the *capitalist state*.

3. See the work of R. Mohl, published in 1832, with the following illuminating title: *Polizeiwissenschaft nach den Grundsätzen des Rechtsstaates*.

4. I shall spend no more time on the relation between political structures and force, because this relation is brought out clearly in the Marxist conception of the political. It seems more important to attack the 'Sorelian' distortion which sees in force (in the vague sense of violence) the factor which creates political structures. It is, however, useful to point out that contemporary political science, in the main, allows that the characteristic of organized and legitimate physical force is a constitutive feature of political structures in general. On this, see Weber; also R. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis*, 1963, pp. 12 ff.; Easton, Coleman and Apter, *op. cit.*; Balandier, *op. cit.*, pp. 32 ff. and 144 ff.

level of this mode, and not, as is often believed, in the sense of the non-intervention of state repression in this mode's *social relations of production*. Such repression is in fact constantly present: it should not be confused with the state's intervention or non-intervention in the *structure of the relations of production*. This characteristic of the capitalist state does not itself therefore indicate any kind of lessening of repression: rather it indicates the real and important fact that in exercising the monopoly of repression, the state attempts to present itself as conforming constantly to the general interest of the people. Its repression is moreover frequently exercised within the limits of the constitution and the law, in the modern sense of the term.

4. The Capitalist State and the Dominant Classes

(i) THE POWER BLOC

In its specific structure and relations with the dominant classes and fractions the capitalist state presents a further particular feature, compared with other types of states. This is the problem of the 'power bloc'. The concept of hegemony may help us to study the functioning of the political practices of the dominant classes or fractions in the power bloc and to locate the relations between the state and this bloc.

In the case of this type of state, we note a specific interrelation between these classes or fractions to whose political interests this state corresponds. This fact permits us to locate the relations which hold between the forms of this type of state and the typical configuration presented by this interrelation between dominant classes and fractions in a stage of a capitalist formation.

I should first of all re-emphasize that the line of political demarcation between domination and subordination cannot be marked out from the viewpoint of a 'dualist' struggle between dominant and dominated classes, i.e. from a relation between the state and a dominant class: this is the instrumentalist and historicist conception of the state. A social formation is formed by an overlapping of several modes of production, which implies the coexistence in the field of the class struggle of several classes or fractions of classes and therefore, possibly, of several dominant classes or fractions.

But this characteristic is not in itself sufficient to explain the phenomenon of the power bloc which appears to be a phenomenon entirely peculiar to capitalist formations. At any rate, though this coexistence of several classes is a general characteristic of every social formation, it takes on specific forms in capitalist formations. In these formations we can establish the *relation* between (a) a specific institutional operation inscribed in the capitalist state's structures and (b) a particular configuration of the interrelations between the dominant classes: these relations, as related to the state, function within a specific political unity, covered by the concept of the power bloc.

A. The reasons for the appearance of the power bloc can already be found in the structure of the capitalist state. This structure presents the following particular feature: namely that it has as an effect the coexistence of the political domination of several classes and fractions of classes. Strictly speaking, by the internal play of its institutions, the capitalist state (in its relation to the field of the political class struggle, a relation conceived of as that which provides the limits to that struggle) makes the constitution of a power bloc *possible*.

Marx makes this point repeatedly. We shall take as our example of these institutions universal suffrage, the typical institution of a state which has gained autonomy from the economic and which presents itself as the incarnation of the general interest of the people: 'The *bourgeois monarchy* of Louis Philippe can be followed only by a *bourgeois republic*, that is to say, whereas a *limited section* of the bourgeoisie ruled in the name of the king, the whole bourgeoisie will now rule *on behalf of the people*.'¹ Marx presents universal suffrage as an institution which extends the relation between the capitalist state and the *particular simultaneous domination of several dominant classes and fractions of classes*: 'The first thing that the February Republic had to do was . . . to complete the rule of the bourgeoisie by allowing, beside the finance aristocracy, *all the propertied classes* to enter the orbit of political power. The majority of the great landowners . . . were emancipated from the political nullity to which they had been condemned by the July Monarchy.'² According to Marx, the function of universal suffrage is to circumscribe a particular space which he describes as the *political scene, sphere or orbit*, a class's presence in this scene being separate from its participation in the power bloc. But parallel to this, he conceives universal suffrage as that which locates a particular relation existing between (a) the state and (b) the relations which hold between the various classes or fractions in *power*. To grasp this relation, Marx uses the expression 'participation' in, or 'possession' of, political power, and thereby distinguishes this type of state from that which sanctions the 'exclusive domination' of one class or fraction. Universal suffrage is only one example amongst many, but it is one which illustrates especially clearly those characteristics of the capitalist state which permit the phenomenon of the power bloc to arise.

1. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire', *MESW*, 1970, p. 102.

2. 'The Class Struggles in France', *MESW*, 1958, Vol. I, p. 146.

B. The phenomenon of the power bloc is thus related to the field of the political practices of the ruling classes in a capitalist formation: it depends on the existence of a 'plurality' of dominant classes (and fractions) characteristic of this formation. This in turn depends on the general fact that in every formation several modes of production and hence several classes and fractions coexist. However, in the capitalist formations with which we are concerned this general fact takes on an *utterly particular* form, which goes back to the specific way in which the domination of the CMP was established in agriculture: this is the problem of the *big ground-rent landlords*. In *Capital*, Marx sometimes sees these big landlords as a separate class belonging to the pure CMP. But though his remarks here indicate the existence of a specific problem, they are inexact. Lenin clearly showed that landed property, private ownership of land, does not belong to the relations of combination of the 'pure' CMP. 'The assumption of the capitalist organization of agriculture necessarily includes the assumption that all the land is occupied by separate private enterprises; but it in no way includes the assumption that the whole of the land is the private property of those farmers, or of other persons, or that it is, in general, private property.'³ However, in the establishment of the CMP in agriculture under the political leadership of the 'nobility' or 'bourgeoisie' we can establish the following characteristics:

a. This establishment of the dominance of the CMP is *in fact* executed (for mainly political and ideological reasons) by the private ownership of land.

b. It is established through the concentration of big landed property. Here Lenin distinguishes *two paths*. In the case of a transition from *feudalism* to capitalism (despite certain major differences in the various examples) the big landowner always intervenes at the beginning of the process of capitalization of agriculture. This is for political reasons concerning the relations in the feudal mode of production between the feudal class of landed proprietors and the bourgeoisie. In that case in which feudalism in the strict sense is absent, the 'American path' prevails. The process is initiated by the middle and small independent landholders but leads eventually to big landed property.⁴

What then is the class of big ground-rent landowners which Marx incorrectly described as a distinct class of the pure CMP? In characterizing

3. 'The Agrarian Question and the "Critics of Marx"', *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 121.

4. Lenin, 'The Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy in the First Russian Revolution, 1905-7', *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, pp. 217-431.

it, politico-ideological determinations are decisive. It functions as a separate class in the transition from feudalism to capitalism and belongs to the feudal mode of production as transformed by the establishment of the dominance of the CMP: this was the case with Prussia. Or else it can function as a fraction of the nobility: as, for example, Great Britain. However, at the end of the process, precisely because of the *capitalization of ground-rent*, it is absorbed into the bourgeoisie and for a whole period forms part of this class as an *autonomous fraction* of it. In this case, its character as an autonomous fraction is dependent on: (a) politico-ideological factors going back to its tradition of belonging to the feudal nobility, (b) economic factors which stem from the fact that ground-rent is a particular mode of transfer of the social product and distribution of surplus value. It is this last factor which won the day, e.g. in France, where the bourgeoisie bought up big landed property and expropriated the nobility. Two principal factors led Marx to consider the big ground-rent landowners to be a class of the pure CMP: (i) the fact that the necessary transition from feudalism to capitalism was effected under the politico-ideological leadership of the nobility or the bourgeoisie by means of them, and (ii) the fact that they maintained their autonomy even after absorption into the bourgeoisie.

I have already pointed out the *decisive importance* of the ground-rent landowners as a separate class or autonomous fraction in capitalist formations. Its importance is related to the particular aspect taken on by the complex coexistence of several modes of production in a *capitalist formation*: it is in this way related to the plurality of dominant classes or fractions which is a characteristic feature of the power bloc. This plurality corresponds to the structures of the capitalist state which allow a characteristic 'participation' in power, either by the dominant classes of the dominated modes of production or by those fractions of the bourgeoisie whose autonomy depends on their relation to these modes.

C. Further, in the CMP, the class of the bourgeoisie appears as constitutively divided into fractions. The problem of fractions of a class is in fact rather complicated in Marx. It is important to point out that certain fractions of the bourgeois class, such as the commercial, industrial and financial, are not (as is often the case with fractions of classes in a formation) related simply to the concrete combination of the various modes of production, or to the particular effects of the political instance alone. In this latter case, the effects of the political instance (i.e. the classes

which result from the effects of the ensemble of instances on social relations) may produce fractions of a class in the field of political class practice alone. For example in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx says of the republican bourgeois fraction:

It was not a faction of the bourgeoisie held together by great common interests and marked off by specific conditions of production. It was a clique of republican-minded bourgeois, writers, lawyers . . . that owed its influence to the personal antipathies of the country against Louis Philippe, to memories of the the old republic . . . but above all to French nationalism.⁵

The commercial, industrial and financial fractions are, however, related to the very constitution of capital in the process of expanded reproduction, as a relation of production. Marx, of course, does not in *Capital* explicitly use the term fraction to designate mercantile, industrial and financial capital. These are grasped as 'forms of existence', though 'separated', of the same capital: 'The existence of capital as commodity capital [commercial capital] . . . forms a phase in the reproduction process of industrial capital, hence in its process of production as a whole . . . These are two different and separate forms of existence of the same capital.'⁶ Commercial capital, producing surplus-value in the form of interest, thus does not constitute an autonomous form of industrial capital, producing surplus-value in the form of profit. However: 'Whether the industrial capitalist operates on his own or on borrowed capital does not alter the fact that the class of money-capitalists confronts him as a special kind of capitalist, money-capital as an independent kind of capital, and interest as an independent form of surplus-value peculiar to this specific capital.'⁷ In short, this fractioning of the bourgeois class is related to the place occupied by these fractions in the process of production: the same is true of the big landowners once they become a fraction of the bourgeois class: 'What kept the two factions apart [the big landowners and capital], was not any so-called principles, it was their material conditions of existence . . . the old contrast between town and country, the rivalry between capital and landed property.'⁸

This presence of big landowners, the bourgeoisie and various fractions of the bourgeois class in a formation dominated by the CMP is one of the

5. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire', *MESW*, 1970, p. 104.

6. *Capital*, Vol. III, p. 268.

7. *ibid.*, pp. 376-7.

8. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire', *MESW*, 1970, p. 117.

important causes of the power bloc. The structures of the capitalist state and the existence of these classes and fractions, i.e. *the particular participation of several classes and class fractions in political domination*, enable us to discern the relations which hold between this state and the political organization of these classes and fractions in the power bloc.⁹

(ii) POWER BLOC, HEGEMONY AND PERIODIZATION
OF A FORMATION: MARX'S POLITICAL ANALYSES

The concept of power bloc is not then introduced expressly by Marx or Engels; *it indicates the particular contradictory unity of the politically dominant classes or fractions of classes as related to a particular form of the capitalist state*. The power bloc is related to the periodization of the capitalist formation in typical stages.¹⁰ The concept of power bloc covers both the concrete configuration of the unity of these classes or fractions in stages characterized by a specific mode of articulation and also a specific rhythm of the ensemble of the instances. In this sense, the concept of power bloc is related to the political level and covers the field of *political practices*, in so far as this field concentrates within itself and reflects the articulation of the ensemble of instances and levels of class struggle in a determinate stage. The function of the concept of power bloc is here analogous to that of the concept of the form of state in connection with the juridico-political superstructure.

9. Engels describes the concrete consequences of this situation in the following words: 'It seems a law of historical development that the bourgeoisie can in no European country get hold of political power – at least for any length of time – in the same exclusive way in which the feudal aristocracy kept hold of it during the Middle Ages' ('Socialism, Utopian and Scientific', Preface to the English edition, 1892; *MESW*, 1970, p. 389): or again, in the preface to 'The Peasant War in Germany' (1850): 'It is a peculiarity of the bourgeoisie, in contrast to all former ruling classes, that there is a turning point in its development after which every further expansion of its agencies . . . only tends to make it more and more unfit for political rule. . . . From that moment on, it loses the strength required for exclusive political rule . . . it looks around for allies with whom to share its rule, or to whom it can cede the whole of its rule, as circumstances may require' (*ibid.*, pp. 238–9). It will be seen however that (i) this term 'alliance' is inadequate to mark off this particular feature of the bourgeoisie, since, as Engels frequently noted, the feudal class also enters into alliances, and (ii) this is in fact a power bloc, within which the bourgeoisie neither 'shares' nor 'completely gives up' political power.

10. See pp. 147 and 153 above.

But this periodization is distinct from that periodization of the rhythm specific to the political level, in that the latter is particularly related to the co-ordinates of class *representation by the political parties*. Through a whole series of dislocations, this representation reflects the displacements of class contradictions (principal and secondary contradictions, aspects of the contradictions, etc.), displacements which are, however, situated within the limits of the power bloc characteristic of a stage. Concerning the state, this second periodization is covered by the concept of form of régime; concerning the political class struggle it is covered by a series of concepts which indicate class relations in parties, situated in that particular space generally described by Marx as the *political scene*, in which the direct action of classes operates. In this space we can precisely delimit the dislocation between (i) the field of political class practices (the power bloc) in a form of state and (ii) the representation of classes by parties in a form of régime.

Marx and Engels studied these problems in their political works: they are dealt with particularly in Marx's *The Class Struggles in France* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Because of the limited period considered in these works, the problems of periodization are not always clear, nor are the concepts implied in them always precise. But even so, as Lenin points out, the particular character of the period studied by Marx should not be overlooked: it presents in a concentrated way the stages of transformation of a capitalist formation: 'There is not the slightest doubt that these features are common to the whole of the modern evolution of all capitalist states in general. In the three years 1848-51 France displayed, in a swift, sharp and concentrated form, the very same processes of development which are peculiar to the whole capitalist world.'¹¹ It is in this sense that general indications can be extracted from these works, as well as some scientific concepts which, though refracted by the limited scope of their analysis, are valuable in the study of these problems.

In fact Marx's analyses of the *first* of these two periodizations (i.e. the periodization into stages) point out the following constant element: the specific contradictory unity of several dominant classes or class fractions, a unity which corresponds to a particular form of state. But what is lacking in Marx in order to grasp this unity theoretically, are precisely the concepts of power bloc and of hegemony applied to this bloc. This is what leads him to talk often of an 'exclusive domination' or of a 'monopoly of

11. 'The State and Revolution', *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 290.

power' by a class or fraction, although his analyses constantly demonstrate the political domination of several classes and fractions.

We shall take the case of the Restoration of the Bourbons, of the constitutional monarchy of Louis Philippe, and of the parliamentary Republic from the fall of Louis Philippe to the Bonapartist coup d'état, all of which Marx, despite certain reservations, takes to represent particular forms of the capitalist state. The Restoration is portrayed as the 'exclusive domination' or the 'monopoly of power' by the big landowners,¹² the constitutional monarchy as that of the financial aristocracy.¹³ However, Marx elsewhere says of this monarchy that it constitutes the 'exclusive domination' or the 'monopoly of power' by *two fractions*, that of the financial bourgeoisie and that of the industrial bourgeoisie.¹⁴ It is, in fact, their particular political unity which corresponds to the constitutional monarchy, here seen as a form of state. Let us now consider the parliamentary Republic: this latter corresponds, as a form of state, to the particular political unity between fractions of big landowners (the legitimists) and the financial bourgeoisie and the industrial bourgeoisie:

In the bourgeois republic . . . they had found the form of state in which they could rule conjointly.¹⁵

The parliamentary republic was more than the neutral territory on which the two factions of the French bourgeoisie, Legitimists and Orleanists, large landed property and industry, could dwell side by side with equality of rights. It was the unavoidable condition of their common rule, the sole form of state in which their general class interest subjected to itself at the same time both claims of their particular factions and all the remaining classes of society.¹⁶

It is at this point that the problems are posed. Marx does in fact establish the relation between a form of state and the concrete configuration of unity of several dominant fractions and, though he does not utilize the concept of power bloc to think this unity theoretically, he nevertheless assigns to it a particular place. *He does this by replacing the term 'alliance' by 'coalition', 'union' and above all 'fusion'.* The results of the lack of this concept of power bloc are the following: (i) Marx is sometimes unable to reveal the coexistence of several fractions in political domination; he thus makes one of them appear as the 'exclusively dominant' fraction while in

12. 'The Class Struggles in France', *MESW*, 1958, Vol. I, p. 189.

13. *ibid.*, p. 142.

14. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire', *MESW*, 1970, pp. 110-11.

15. *ibid.*, p. 110.

16. *ibid.*, pp. 151-2.

reality he is dealing with a unity of several dominant fractions, and (ii) when he locates and gives this unity a name the term which he uses is the totally inadequate one of 'fusion'. This frequently used term was openly borrowed by Marx and Engels from physics and chemistry, and it can, if employed incautiously, indicate an expressive totality composed of 'equivalent' elements. Thus this term can imply simultaneously both the conception according to which these elements *share* state power (i.e. a negation of the unity of the capitalist state's power) and also the conception of a circular unity of these elements, without a dominant instance, a unity in which they lose their specific autonomy:

The nameless reign of the republic was the only one in which both factions could maintain with equal power the common class interest without giving up their mutual rivalry. If the bourgeois republic could not be anything but the perfected and clearly expressed rule of the whole bourgeois class, could it be anything but the rule of the Legitimists *supplemented* by the Orleanists, the *synthesis* of the restoration and the July monarchy? . . . They did not comprehend that if each of their factions, regarded separately, by itself, was royalist, the *product of their chemical combination* had necessarily to be republican.¹⁷

Here we see the notions of complementarity and synthesis, both typical of the problematic of an expressive totality.¹⁸

The phenomenon of the power bloc cannot be thought by means of the notion of fusion: this is because the power bloc does not constitute an expressive totality of equivalent elements, but a complex contradictory unity in dominance. This is how the *concept of hegemony* can be applied to *one* class or fraction within the power bloc. This hegemonic class or fraction is in fact the *dominant* element of the contradictory unity of politically '*dominant*' classes or fractions, forming part of the power bloc. When Marx speaks of the 'exclusively dominant' fraction, while at the same time admitting the political domination of several fractions, he precisely attempts to isolate, within the power bloc, the hegemonic fraction. Thus in describing the Restoration and Louis Philippe's monarchy, Marx says that both of these gave the 'monopoly of power' to one of the

17. 'The Class Struggles in France', *MESW*, 1958, Vol. I, pp. 189-90.

18. In the chapter on social classes, in dealing with the under-determination of the classes of non-dominant modes of production, I described their dissolution and fusion with the classes of the dominant mode of production. However, the term 'fusion' was there being used to indicate that certain classes or fractions do not function in a formation as 'distinct classes' or 'autonomous fractions' with pertinent effects at the level of

fractions, but he adds immediately afterwards: 'Bourbon was the royal name for the predominant influence of the interests of the one faction. Orleans was the royal name for the predominant interests of the other faction - the nameless realm of the republic was the only one in which both powers could maintain with equal power the common class interest.'¹⁹ In fact, both the Restoration and Louis Philippe's monarchy corresponded to a power bloc of the *three* fractions in question (big landowners, financial bourgeoisie and industrial bourgeoisie), the power bloc of the Restoration being realized under the protection of the hegemonic fraction of the financial bourgeoisie.

The power bloc of the parliamentary Republic is in this respect typical. Does it, as Marx tells us throughout his analyses, constitute a domination with *equality of power*, a 'fusion', of these fractions? Not at all:

Our whole exposition has shown how the Republic, from the first day of its existence, did not overthrow, but consolidated the finance aristocracy. . . . The question will be asked, how the coalesced bourgeoisie could bear and suffer the rule [i.e. hegemony - N.P.] of finance, which under Louis Philippe depended on the exclusion or subordination [i.e. power bloc - N.P.] of the remaining bourgeois factions. The answer is simple. First of all, the finance aristocracy itself *forms a weighty, authoritative part* of the royalist coalition, whose common governmental power is denominated republic.²⁰

Here we see clearly that far from the power bloc of the Republic representing an *equal share-out* of power between the fractions constituting it, it rests on the hegemony of the financial fraction. In relation to the republican form of state this hegemony takes on a different form from the hegemony of the same fraction in the power bloc of constitutional monarchy.²¹

the political, i.e. they do not function as 'social forces'. Here, however, the term 'fusion' is used to grasp a type of unity amongst social forces.

19. 'The Class Struggles in France', *MESW*, 1958, Vol. I, p. 189.

20. *ibid.*, p. 209.

21. We can see the implications and consequences of using the notion of fusion in several contemporary works in Marxist political science. My article 'Marxist Political Theory in Great Britain', *op. cit.*, provides a critique of this concept as employed by authors such as P. Anderson and T. Nairn in their analyses of the evolution of capitalism in Britain. In this article I draw attention to Marx and Engels's concrete analyses of the 'power bloc' in Britain; these follow the same *theoretical* lines as Marx's analyses of the French case. We should note in passing that the particular *historical* feature of France in this respect was the almost constant hegemony of *financial capital* from the time of Louis Philippe onwards. Britain and Germany differ from France in that in them this hegemonic place is frequently taken over by commercial and industrial

In conclusion: (i) the power bloc constitutes a contradictory unity of *politically dominant* classes and fractions *under the protection of the hegemonic fraction*; (ii) the class struggle, the rivalry between the interests of these social forces, is *constantly present*, since these interests retain their specific character of antagonism. These are the two reasons why the notion of 'fusion' cannot give a proper account of this unity. The hegemony of a class or fraction within this bloc is not accidental; it is made possible (as we shall see) by that unity which is the particular mark of the institutionalized power of the capitalist state. As this latter unity corresponds to the particular unity of dominant classes or fractions (i.e. is related to the phenomenon of the power bloc), it precisely prevents the relations between the dominant classes or fractions from consisting of a 'sharing' of state power, with 'equality of power'. (This could however be the case in other types of state.) The relation between the capitalist state and the dominant classes or fractions pushes them towards *their political unity under the protection of a hegemonic class or fraction*. The hegemonic class or fraction *polarizes* the specific contradictory interests of the various classes or fractions in the power bloc by making its own economic interests into political interests and by representing the general common interest of the classes or fractions in the power bloc: this general interest consists of economic exploitation and political domination. In an illuminating passage on the hegemony of the financial fraction in the parliamentary Republic, Marx indicates how this hegemony is constituted:

In a country like France, . . . a countless number of people from all bourgeois or semi-bourgeois classes, must have an interest in the state debt, in the Bourse gambings, in finance. Do not all these interested subalterns find their natural mainstays and commanders in the faction which represents this interest in its vastest outlines, which represents it as a whole?²²

Another important fact must be pointed out. The process whereby the hegemony of a class or fraction is constituted differs according to whether this hegemony is brought to bear only on the other dominant classes or fractions (the power bloc) or on the ensemble of a formation, including the dominated classes. This difference coincides with the line of demarcation between the places of domination and subordination occupied by the social capital. On the reasons for this situation in France, see G. Dupeux, *La société française, 1789-1960*, 1964, pp. 39 ff., 132 ff.

22. 'The Class Struggles in France', *MESW*, 1958, Vol. I, pp. 209-10.

classes of a formation. The general interest represented vis-à-vis the dominant classes by this hegemonic fraction depends in the last analysis on the place of exploitation which they hold in the process of production. The general interest represented vis-à-vis the ensemble of society (and therefore vis-à-vis the dominated classes) by this fraction depends on the ideological function of the hegemonic fraction. We note however that the function of hegemony in the power bloc and the function of hegemony vis-à-vis the dominated classes *are generally concentrated within the same class or fraction*. This latter sets itself up in the place of hegemony in the power bloc, by constituting itself politically as the hegemonic class or fraction of the ensemble of society. On the parliamentary Republic and the hegemony of the financial aristocracy in the power bloc, Marx says that it was the only form of state 'in which their general class interest subjected to itself at the same time both claims of their particular factions *and all the remaining classes of society*';²³ and again: '*... the old powers of society had grouped themselves, assembled, reflected and found unexpected support in the mass of the nation, the peasants and petty bourgeois. ...*'²⁴ Marx also provides a whole series of concrete analyses of the process whereby the financial bourgeoisie is constituted as the hegemonic fraction of both the power bloc and the ensemble of society.

However, though this *concentration* of the double function of hegemony within one class or fraction is inscribed in the operation of the capitalist state's institutions, it is still only a general rule whose realization depends on the conjuncture of the social forces. Thus we may note the possibility of dislocation, dissociation and displacement of these functions of hegemony to different classes or fractions, one representing the hegemonic fraction of the ensemble of society, the other representing the specific hegemonic fraction of the power bloc: this has important consequences at the political level.

(iii) POWER BLOC, ALLIANCES, SUPPORTING CLASSES

The concept of power bloc must be distinguished from that of *alliance*.²⁵

23. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire', *MESW*, 1970, pp. 151-2.

24. *ibid.*, p. 101 (my emphasis).

25. On the concept of alliance, see Linhart's article on the NEP in *Cahiers de planification socialiste*, Paris, 1966. It is worth pointing out here that Lenin (as well as Mao) often stressed the limits of the concept of alliance by trying to mark off from it such specific concepts as that of the *united front*. I shall not discuss their analyses

The latter also implies a *unity* and a *contradiction* of the interests of the allied classes or of fractions of class in the alliance. The two concepts are distinguished by:

1. The *nature of this contradiction* relative to a 'form' of capitalist state within a stage. In the case of the power bloc we can make out a *threshold* beyond which the contradictions between the classes and fractions composing it can be clearly distinguished (relative to a *form of state and within a particular stage*) from the contradictions which exist between those classes and fractions and the other allied classes or fractions. An alliance can function either between the classes or fractions of the power bloc, or between one of those classes or fractions and another class or fraction outside the power bloc: see e.g. the frequent relation between the petty bourgeoisie and the power bloc.

2. The fact that the nature of the contradictions amongst the members of the power bloc and amongst the members of an alliance determines the *different characters of their respective unities*: an alliance generally functions only at a determinate level of the field of the class struggle and is often combined with an intense struggle at the other levels. For example, a political alliance between the power bloc and the petty bourgeoisie is often combined with an intense economic struggle against the latter; or again, an economic alliance with the petty bourgeoisie is often combined with an intense political struggle against its political representation.²⁶ On the other hand, in the case of the power bloc, there is a *relative extension of the unity* (and so of mutual sacrifices) at all levels of the class struggle: economic unity, political unity, and often also ideological unity. This, of course, does not prevent the existence of contradictions between the members of the power bloc: there is simply a relative homogeneity between their relations at all levels.

These differences between power bloc and alliance become very clear in the case of an important reversal of the relation of forces, or in the case in which either the power bloc or an alliance is dissolved. In the framework of the power bloc, such reversals correspond *as a general rule to a transformation in the form of state.* Marx, for instance, shows how the

because they centre on the dictatorship of the proletariat and the transition from capitalism to socialism and cannot therefore be directly applied to the capitalist formation. However, the fact that they find it necessary to employ the concept of the united front, as distinct from that of alliance, makes my recourse to the concept of power bloc legitimate.

26. 'The Class Struggles in France', *MESW*, 1958, Vol. I, p. 164.

power bloc of the parliamentary Republic was transformed relative to the advent of Louis Bonaparte.²⁷ On the other hand, in the framework of alliances such reversals do *not* coincide with a transformation of the form of state. Thus Marx shows how the dissolution of the alliance with the petty bourgeoisie (who exchanged the status of *ally* for that of *satellite*) occurring at the end of the first period of the parliamentary Republic, did not at all lead to this form of state being replaced by another, but (in the case in point) led to a transformation of the form of régime.²⁸

Thus the distinction between power bloc and alliance should not be confused with a *chronological* distinction (between long and short duration) which would, as it were, see the power bloc as a long-term alliance. In fact, class alliances can be observed which outlast the transformations of the power bloc: a characteristic example is the *permanent* alliance in Germany between the petty bourgeoisie (allied) and the financial bourgeoisie (member of the power bloc); Engels focused attention on this in *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*.

To generalize these remarks: the typical configuration characterizing a power bloc corresponding to a form of state in a stage rests upon the concrete combination of three important factors:

1. the class or fraction which concretely holds hegemony,
2. the classes or fractions which participate in this, and
3. the forms assumed by this hegemony, i.e. the nature of the contradictions and concrete relation of forces in the power bloc. A displacement of the index of hegemony of the bloc from one class or fraction to another; an important modification of its composition (the exit or entry of a class or fraction); a displacement of the principal class contradiction or of the principal aspect of the class contradiction either between the power bloc and the other classes and fractions, or within the very power bloc; any of these can, depending on the concrete effect of their *combination*, correspond to a transformation of the form of state. It is clear that the *typical configuration* of a determinate power bloc depends on the conjuncture, i.e. on the *concrete combination* of the factors outlined above: in any case it offers us a framework for deciphering the class relations typical of a *stage* of a determinate formation, by setting the *limits* of its typical form. Within the limits posed by this stage there is a series of variations of class relations

27. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire', *MESW*, 1970, pp. 151 ff.

28. 'The Class Struggles in France', *MESW*, 1958, Vol. I, p. 164; 'The Eighteenth Brumaire', *MESW*, 1970, p. 114.

and modifications of the power bloc, which do not however threaten its typical configuration and the form of the corresponding state.²⁹

Thus because of the complexity of the power bloc we can more easily locate its relation to alliance. In fact, its typical configuration, which corresponds to a form of state, allows a series of *variations* to manifest themselves in e.g. *displacements of the threshold* of demarcation between alliance and power bloc within the very limits of its typical configuration. According to these displacements, for example, an allied class may cross this threshold and become part of the power bloc, or, vice versa, a member of the power bloc may alter its status and become an allied class or fraction. When the displacements of this threshold are situated within the above-mentioned limits they do not as a general rule entail a transformation of the form of state. But when these displacements are due to a *combined* transformation of the factors producing the power bloc they do entail such a transformation.

To supplement these concepts of power bloc and alliance (still vis-à-vis the variations of the limits of a form of state and power bloc in a determinate stage), Marx employs another concept which covers a particular category of relations between the classes of the power bloc and other classes: these are the classes by which a form of capitalist state is 'supported'. Typical examples of these '*supporting classes*' are the small-holding peasantry and the *Lumpenproletariat* in the framework of Bonapartism, and the petty bourgeoisie at the end of the first period of the parliamentary Republic.

The support is differentiated from the power bloc, as well as from the alliance, (i) by the nature of the contradictions between the power bloc and (a) the allied classes and (b) the supporting classes and, (ii) by the nature of the unity between the power bloc and (a) the allied classes and (b) the supporting classes. The particular status of supporting classes or supporting fractions of classes has the following characteristics:

1. The support which they give to a determinate class's domination is generally not based on *any real political sacrifice* of the interests of the power bloc and of the allied classes in their favour. Their support, which is indispensable to this class domination, is based primarily on a process of *ideological illusions*. Marx demonstrates this in the case of the small-holding peasantry whose vital support for the Bonapartist state is based on a whole ideological context relying on 'tradition' and on the origins of

29. Concrete examples of this will be dealt with later.

Louis Bonaparte. The Bonapartist state, supported by these peasants, did not take any appreciable political measure in favour of their particular interests. It simply took certain measures of a *compromise* sort so as to continue to feed this ideological illusion at the base of this political support.

2. The particular support of the supporting classes is due *to the fear, whether real or imaginary, of the power of the working class*. In this case the support is, of course, based neither on a community of interests stemming from real mutual sacrifices, nor on an ideological illusion concerning this sacrifice, but on the political factor of the struggle of the working class. This factor is an essential element in the unity of the power bloc or in the unity of alliances of class domination; and it also becomes essential in the case of the supporting classes. It is the *exclusive* factor in their support for classes which eventually attack their interests, although to a lesser degree, real or supposed, than the working class would have done. The ideological illusion is not here concerned principally with the attitude of the state or of the dominant classes, but with the proletariat's attitude towards them. A typical case is the status of the petty bourgeoisie in certain conjunctures.

These factors which produce the support of the supporting classes and the nature of the contradictions which separate them from the classes of the power bloc and allied classes influence the nature of their unity with these latter. This unity does not as a general rule manifest itself in immediate class relations *but operates through the intermediary of the state*. The supporting classes' relation to the power bloc and to the allied classes manifests itself less as a relation of political class unity than as support for a determinate form of state. Ideological illusion, which is all-important in the case of the supporting classes, takes on the particular political form of *power fetishism* of which Lenin spoke. This is (i) the belief in a state above the class struggle which could serve their interests against those in the power bloc and allied classes; and (ii) the belief in a state as guardian of the *status quo*, as a barrier to the conquest of power by the working class. In both these cases, the particular ideological masking of the nature and function of the state, as well as of its role as mediator between (a) the supporting classes and (b) the power bloc and the allied classes, depends *on the degree of political under-determination, characteristic of the supporting classes*, and on their incapacity to achieve an autonomous political organization because of their specific place in the process of production. Their political organization goes through the direct mediation of the state, as in the classical case of the small-holding peasantry, and often of the petty bourgeoisie. In other words, the cleavage between (a) the power bloc and

the alliance and (b) the support, is also exhibited in the supporting classes' incapacity to achieve autonomous political organization. In this sense Marx said of the classes of small producers that:

They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above ('The Eighteenth Brumaire', *MESW*, 1970, p. 171).

Thus we can observe a whole series of *complex* relations depending on the concrete conjuncture between the classes and fractions of the power bloc, the allied classes or fractions and the supporting classes or fractions. The modifications of alliances and supports do not however generally correspond to a modification of the form of state in the framework of the periodization into stages, except when they are combined with modifications of constituent factors of the configuration of the power bloc.

(iv) POLITICAL PERIODIZATION, THE POLITICAL SCENE, RULING CLASSES, CLASSES IN CHARGE OF THE STATE

It is evident that these pointers provided by Marx are of vital importance for any concrete study of the relations between the political state superstructure and the field of the class struggle. However, the concepts just clarified must be supplemented by a series of other concepts which refer to a different periodization and space. The concept of the power bloc will emerge more clearly in this way.

In fact this concept is related to the general periodization of a formation into stages. Along with the concept of form of state, it covers the political level as related to the ensemble of the instances of a formation in a determinate stage and as characterized by a particular articulation of these instances. This periodization, marked by the relation between the time-sequences peculiar to each level, is distinct from the periodization concerning the specific time-sequence of the political level. The first periodization defines a stage's limits, as fixed at a determinate level of structures and practices; the second marks the particular rhythm of this level within these limits. But the time-sequence of a level depends on its own particular structures: this second periodization, particular to the political level, depends on the specific structures of this level in a determinate formation.

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx himself clearly brings out the distinction between these two periodizations. On the first he says:

Three main periods are unmistakable: *the February period*; May 4, 1848, to May 28, 1849: *the period of the constitution of the republic, or of the Constituent National Assembly*; May 28, 1849, to December 2, 1851: *the period of the constitutional republic or of the Legislative National Assembly*.³⁰

This is the precise periodization covered in the structures by the concept of the form of state, and in the field of the practices of the dominant classes, by the concept of the power bloc.

This general periodization is however to be distinguished from another one, as Marx shows in the following remarks on the period of the constitutional Republic, which naturally divides into three main periods, namely:

1. May 28, 1849, to June 13, 1849. Struggle of the petty bourgeoisie with the bourgeoisie and with Bonaparte. Defeat of the petty bourgeois democracy.
2. June 13, 1849, to May 31, 1850. Parliamentary dictatorship of the Party of Order. It completes its rule by abolishing universal suffrage, but loses the parliamentary ministry.
3. May 31, 1850, to December 2, 1851. Struggle between the parliamentary bourgeoisie and Bonaparte. . . . Passing of the parliamentary régime and of bourgeois rule. . . .³¹

In the structures, this periodization is covered by the concept of forms of régime, whose transformations cannot be directly related to those modifications of the relation between the political and economic which mark the transformations of forms of state. They relate rather to the structures peculiar to the capitalist state, to the coordinates of the system of party representation, to the institution of suffrage, etc.

More important here, however, are the concepts applied by Marx to the study of the specifically political periodization in the field of the practices of the dominant classes. It should be noted that Marx circumscribes the *particular space* of the field assigned to this second periodization; he calls this space the '*political scene*'. This expression covers a particular space at the level of political class practices in the formations studied by him: from a study of the whole range of his political texts it is apparent that this

30. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire', *MESW*, 1970, p. 100.

31. *ibid.*, p. 166.

space precisely contains *the struggle between social forces organized in political parties*. The metaphors of presence in the political scene, of the place of a class in this scene (whether in the forefront or not), etc. *are constantly related to the modalities of class representation by parties and to the relations between the political parties*. The entry and the exit of a class in the political scene depend on the concrete conjuncture which determines its *organization of power* and its relations to the parties. It is moreover precisely in this context that the relations which Marx establishes between the political scene and universal suffrage must be situated. This suffrage precipitates the formation of numerous classes in the political scene, precisely because, in the concrete circumstances studied by Marx, it constitutes one of the factors contributing to the organization of certain classes into parties.

However, in marking off this new space of the political scene, we pose certain theoretical problems, notably that of its relation to the space of political practices in general. In fact, the existence of a class or fraction as *a distinct class or autonomous fraction, i.e. as a social force*, presupposes its presence at the political level in '*pertinent effects*'. However, this presence at the level of political practices is distinct from presence on the political scene: this latter presupposes a class's *organizational power*, as distinct from its political practice. Lenin makes this distinction in his concept of open or declared action and this concept also existed in the practical state for Marx, who termed it 'true action'. Although the open action of social forces is not identical with the concept of political practice, we can say that in capitalist formations the political scene is a privileged place in which the open action of social forces can take place by means of their representation by parties.

So the space of the political scene has a very precise function for Marx: *it is the place in which we can observe a series of dislocations between (a) the classes' political interests and practices, and (b) their representation by parties and the political parties themselves*. The political scene, as the particular field of the political parties' action, is often dislocated in relation to the political practices and to the terrain of political interests of the classes, represented by the parties in the political scene: this dislocation is thought by Marx through his problematic of 'representation'.

The exact delimitation of the political scene (i.e. the field of the second periodization) has numerous consequences. For example, it allows us to establish the fundamental relations between the forms of régime and the field of action of the parties. We shall see later that the principal factor of

a typology of forms of régime (as certain contemporary theorists have shown)³² is the relation of these forms of régime to the concrete action of the political parties in the field of the political scene. As was the case with the relations between the forms of state and the power bloc, the forms of régime (a concept covering the specific periodization of political structures) are related to a concrete configuration of relations between parties of the dominant classes in the political scene (a concept covering the specific periodization of the political class struggle).³³ At this point we can show the usefulness of the concept of power bloc in the relations between (a) the dominant classes and (b) the action of these classes' parties on the political scene. The power bloc of a stage sets the limits of the various relations of the parties, relations which mark the rhythm of that stage in the political scene. These relations correspond to a form of régime, itself situated within the limits posed by the form of state corresponding to the power bloc. The power bloc and the relations determined by it between the dominant classes and fractions thus allows us to locate and decipher the real (class) significance of the strictly party relations within a stage, and after that to decipher their dislocation from political class relations.

In fact, anyone who restricts himself to the field of the political scene in order to determine class relations, reduces them to party relations alone and is inevitably led to errors which derive from a misunderstanding of these dislocations. For example, we often have to deal with situations in which a political class disappears from the political scene, although it remains in the power bloc. This can be due to its party's electoral defeat, to the disintegration (for various reasons) of this party in the field of the

32. See in particular Duverger, pp. 318 ff.

33. We shall deal more fully later with concrete analyses of this relation between the political scene (the place in which party representation takes place) and the typology of political régimes. Marx indicated this relation, and it was emphasized by Gramsci in his analyses of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, particularly in his text 'Observations on certain aspects of the structure of political parties in periods of organic crisis', in which he uses the term 'terrain of the parties' instead of 'political scene': 'At a certain point in their historical lives, social classes become detached from their traditional parties. In other words the traditional parties, in that particular organizational form, with the particular men who constitute, represent and lead them, are no longer recognized by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression . . . These situations of conflict between "represented and representatives" reverberate out from the terrain of the parties . . . throughout the State organism. How are they created in the first place?' (*Prison Notebooks*, p. 210). Given that Gramsci is here only examining the case of a crisis of the political scene, the important point to note is the relation which he points out between the 'state organism' and the concrete functioning of party representation.

political scene or to its exclusion from having party-type relations with the other parties of the dominant classes. However, this absence of a class or fraction from the political scene does not directly mean that it is excluded from the power bloc. There are many cases in which a class or fraction is absent from the periodization of the political scene, but continues to be present in the periodization of the power bloc. Such examples are plentiful in Marx's political works, the most characteristic being that of the industrial bourgeoisie under Louis Philippe.

Marx emphasized the importance of this case by clearly distinguishing between *politically dominant* classes or fractions, which are part of the power bloc, and *ruling* classes or fractions, whose political parties occupy the dominant places on the political scene. This dislocation between the place of a class or fraction in the field of political practices and its place in the political scene is of course accompanied by a series of transformations with respect to its party representation: these transformations relate to the composition of the parties, to the relations between them, to their degree of representativity, etc. The class or fraction's political interests are represented, certainly in a distorted way, by the parties of other ruling classes or fractions, so the above-mentioned transformations can be revealed only by elucidating the dislocations between political practice and the political scene. In this dislocation, the role of ideology becomes decisive. Furthermore, *the displacements* within the field of political practices are not the same as those within the political scene. A displacement of the index of hegemony from one class or fraction to another in the power bloc does not necessarily involve displacements of party representation in the political scene: it does not, for example, necessarily correspond to a movement from the background to the foreground of the scene. Further, it is possible for the *hegemonic* class or fraction in the power bloc to be absent from the political scene. The dislocation between politically dominant classes or fractions and ruling classes or fractions is here translated by a distinction between the actual hegemonic class or fraction and the ruling class or fraction: this is so, for example, in the bourgeoisie towards the end of the Bismarckian régime.

The hegemonic class or fraction which in the last analysis holds political power should also not be confused with the class or fraction which is '*in charge*' of the state apparatus. According to Marx, this latter class or fraction is the one from which the political, bureaucratic, military, etc., personnel is recruited and which occupies the 'heights' of the state. This

analysis is schematically presented in Marx's texts on the landed aristocracy in Britain, in which he states:

The Whigs are the aristocratic representatives of the bourgeoisie, of the industrial and commercial middle class. Under the condition that the bourgeoisie should abandon to them, to an oligarchy of aristocratic families, the monopoly of government and the exclusive possession of office, they make to the middle class, and assist it in conquering, all those concessions, which in the course of social and political development have shown themselves to have become unavoidable and undelayable. . . . The interests and principles which they represent besides, from time to time, do not belong to the Whigs: they are forced upon them by the development of the industrial and commercial class, the bourgeoisie.³⁴

It is sufficient for the moment to remark that these hegemonic classes or fractions, ruling classes or fractions, and classes or fractions in charge are sometimes identical and sometimes distinct. The hegemonic class or fraction may be both ruling and in charge of the state; but the ruling class or fraction may be in charge of the state without thereby being hegemonic. This was so in Britain after 1832, where the landed aristocracy occupied the political scene and provided the top bureaucratic-military personnel, whereas the bourgeoisie held hegemony. In this case, the landed aristocracy is the ruling class in the form of the Tory party; here Marx even uses the term 'governing' class instead of 'ruling' class, in stating that in England the governing class did not at all coincide with the class directing the state. The governing class was also the class in charge of the state, in the form of the Whig party: in fact Marx is here talking about different fractions of the landed aristocracy.

The concrete combination which is not a simple combinatory may go as far as a complete decentration of these three positions, each of which can be occupied by a different class or fraction. The ruling class or fraction (and *a fortiori* the classes or fractions in charge) may not only not be hegemonic, *but even on occasion may not be part of the power bloc*: a class whose status is merely that of being allied to this bloc may for a brief period be the ruling class. The clearest example of this is provided by the *radical* governments of the Third Republic in France before the 1914 war; the

34. See *On Britain*, Moscow, 1962, pp. 112-13. See also the texts on Palmerston, *ibid.*, pp. 204-11, 309-14. Engels's important analyses of this subject are found in the Preface to the first English edition of *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, 1892 (*MESW*, 1970, pp. 385 ff.) which also contains his incisive remarks on the periodization of the 'power bloc' in Britain.

financial fraction was hegemonic and shared with the industrial fraction the place of the class in charge, while the petty bourgeoisie, in a complex alliance with the middle bourgeoisie, appeared as the ruling class.³⁵ This sometimes occurs, although always with the *petty bourgeoisie*, in certain cases of *social democrat* governments, especially in France. In this case a characteristic dislocation between this class and its party representation is generally found: its party plays the role of 'clerk' for the hegemonic class or fraction or even for another class or fraction in the power bloc. The same holds for the class in charge of the state.

At a later stage we shall go more deeply into the numerous problems posed by this dislocation between political practice and the political scene. I shall here summarize the preceding analyses by pointing out that it is vital to mark the limits between political class practices and the political scene: in making this distinction we are opposing a *double confusion* in contemporary political science which reduces class relations to party relations and party relations to class relations. In following this distinction through logically, all relevant concepts must be specified so as to designate the relations between the elements on both these terrains. Thus the concept of power bloc (like the concept of hegemony) has as its object the field of political class practices: so it enables us to elucidate the relations between the dominant classes which underlie and set the limits to the relations between the parties (their effects) on the political scene; these class relations are often masked by the numerous variables of party relations. It is true that we sometimes use specific concepts which cover the two terrains. This is the case with the concept of ruling class or fraction, which covers (though only as a general rule) the role of the hegemonic class or fraction in the political scene. We can note once again the case of the concept of *bloc of parties* which often covers the relations between the parties of the classes and fractions of the power bloc in the political scene. Sometimes however we encounter non-specified concepts, such as that of *alliance*. In using such a concept, it is useful to make clear whether we are talking of a class alliance or a party alliance: otherwise we can agree to use different terms, e.g. to reserve the term alliance for class relations and to speak of an '*entente*' to indicate party relations. In fact, the dislocation between these two terrains constantly appears in all the concrete relations

35. See G. Dupeux, *La société française, 1789-1960*, 1964, pp. 182 ff. It should however be noted that since Dupeux does not employ the distinctions indicated above, he grasps this situation (though with some reservations) as a 'loss of political power' by the big bourgeoisie.

of their elements. For example on the political scene the power bloc can give rise to a bloc of parties, to an alliance of parties, or even to an open and declared struggle between the parties: see e.g. the frequently encountered case of a *parliamentary opposition party* (during a 'step' [*étape*] of the periodization of the political scene) which in fact represents a class or fraction of the power bloc (of a stage of a formation in which this 'step' is situated). Conversely, a party *entente* may mask an intense struggle in the field of political practices: see the frequently encountered case of certain exclusively electoral *ententes*.

A final remark should be made concerning the relations between the two periodizations which cover respectively the political and the political scene. The distinction between them cannot be reduced to a question of *chronology*, e.g. to considering the periodization of the political as a periodization of long duration, and that of the political scene as one of short duration. The distinction between them in fact depends on a difference of *field*, and it is only by starting from the theoretical distinction between these periodizations that we can understand the chronological divergences: for example, a party *entente* may last longer than a class alliance, in so far as a class may maintain its agreement with another through the intermediary of its party (or parties) on the political scene, even though they have effectively broken their alliance in the field of the class struggle. This is equally clear with respect to political structures: a form of régime (e.g. the two-party system in Britain) may effectively outlast a form of state.