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Classes, People, and Populism

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Ranabir Samaddar

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However, after their one heroic exploit of June, the bourgeois republicans had, from the front, to fall back to the rear of the "Party of Order"—a combination formed by all the rival fractions and factions of the appropriating classes. The proper form of their joint-stock government was the Parliamentary republic, with Louis Bonaparte for its president. There was a regime of avowed class terrorism and deliberate insult towards the vile multitude.

Karl Marx, Civil War in France (1871)

I

How to Study People and Classes in the History of Struggles and Revolutions

The postcolonial context is marked supposedly by lack of adequate industrialisation, hence lack of a numerically strong working class, by inadequate modern class formations, and un-clarified class struggles. Hence communists and Marxists have not with exceptions paid sufficient attention to Marx's historical writings on politics and political struggles, particularly his writings on France. As if, these writings belong to European history and are not relevant to the history of the class and national struggles of the postcolonial people. Such an attitude is evident in for instance India where the postcolonial theorists of passive revolution while discussing economic reforms, and the neo liberal transformation of the country, etc., have been remarkably silent on the class struggles in the two twentieth century decades of sixties and seventies.¹ These struggles had actually begun in the forties, when class and national struggles had meshed with each other resulting in a tremendous radicalisation of the national content of the anti-colonial revolution. The questions of class and people and by inference, class and nation had possibly raised their heads then for the first time in an emphatic manner.² Indian Marxists avoided the theoretical issue at stake in their discussions on the forties, generally emphasising one or the other, and refused to learn from Mao who in a somewhat similar situation was engaged in dialectically treating the relationship in the context of Chinese revolution. And now, with parliamentarianism submerging most of the Indian Marxists and the Left, the latter refuse to go back to what had had happened in the sixties and seventies of the last century, marked by acute unprecedented class struggles and attempts at revolution. I think even a cursory reading of the relevant material will make us aware of the problem of the interrelations between classes and the people that plagued the revolutionary history of those fifteen years (1965–1980). The question of this relation still haunts us, probably because the problematic of the relationship is laid

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bare only when political struggles become acute, and classes tear at each other in the form of the presence of people as an active political category. The writings of Karl Marx appear remarkably relevant to such situations, particularly a situation, characteristic of which is a sense of *lack*, as said already—lack of industrialisation, investment, growth, class formations, democracy etc. Wherefrom did the struggles come? How were they conducted? What were the political consequences? How did they demonstrate the dynamics of the relations among classes, people, and the nation? These abiding questions lead us back to Marx who also faced those questions and had to address the issue of *lack*.

There is every reason to read together Marx's three books on contemporary French history, the two we propose to discuss as the first part of this chapter and the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*,³ which he wrote between December 1851 and March 1852. Students of history know that on 2 December 1851, followers of President Louis Bonaparte (Napoleon's nephew) broke up the Legislative Assembly and established a dictatorship. A year later, Louis Bonaparte proclaimed himself Emperor Napoleon III. The "Eighteenth Brumaire" refers to 9 November 1799 in the French Revolutionary Calendar — the day the first Napoleon Bonaparte had made himself dictator by a coup d'état. In that work Marx traced how the conflict of different social interests manifested themselves in the complex web of political struggles, in particular in the contradictory relationship between the outer form of a struggle and its real social content. The workers of Paris were inexperienced in the struggle to win power; but to Marx and Engels, the experiences of 1848-51 would prove invaluable for the successful workers' revolution in 1871. *The Eighteenth Brumaire* is possibly one of the most discussed works of Marx. It is like an exquisitely polished diamond leaving no scope for even single extra comment by a reader. One has to read it again and again to learn how Marx wrote contemporary history which would stand the test of time. Shifting through available material Marx demonstrated how to read the roles of various sections of society and what is known as *people* in social and political struggles and thereby understand the roles of various classes. *The Eighteenth Brumaire* is a tract on counter-revolution, but it aims to cull out from these counter-revolution lessons in revolutionary politics. In this magisterial account *classes* appear as always the *other* site of formal politics conducted by the people. Marx showed throughout the book how to move between classes and the people, classes and the masses, class struggle and popular movements. It is a delicate exercise in dialectical understanding, which only great theoreticians can embark on and from which we can only keep on drawing political lessons. By comparison Marx's other two tracts, which are on revolutions happening at the time they were being written, are relatively direct and programmatic on the basis of a theory of class struggle that Marx developed through among others these writings.

Yet these other two works—*The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850* (written from January to October 1850 as journal entries in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung Revue*) and the next one *The Civil War in France* written twenty years later (between July 1870 to May 1871 as addresses to the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association and notes)—are not just books on contemporary history that have stood the test of time, they are some of the finest polemical pieces on politics, outlining in historical terms some of the essential aspects of what has now come to be known as revolutionary socialism or communism.⁴ *Civil War in France* particularly became popular in the next two decades among workers' circles. On the other hand *Class Struggles in France* is an essential reading in order to understand the method and techniques of class analysis in a living situation. Therefore there is ground to bring these two works back to discussion from the recent historical oblivion among scholars, activists, Marxist pundits, and theorists with regard to them. Lenin, who of all twentieth century revolutionaries had possibly the sharpest programmatic eyes, not without reason

gave highest importance to these two books. To give just one instance, his *State and Revolution* was inspired heavily by what Marx wrote in *Civil War in France*.

As every common reader of Marx knows, *Class Struggles in France* deals with the defeat of the workers in the 1848 June revolution, and the exclusion from power also of the petty bourgeoisie. In the words of Marx

The *petty bourgeoisie* of all gradations, and the *peasantry* also, were completely excluded from political power. Finally, in the official opposition or entirely outside the *pays légal* [electorate], there were the *ideological* representatives and spokesmen of the above classes, their savants, lawyers, doctors, etc., in a word, their so-called *men of talent* (Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*, Part 1. Italics in original).

Marx also linked the fate of the French working class to a European social revolution. There was an international dimension of the idea of the Revolution from the beginning. This is clear also in the *Civil War in France*. Marx connected revolution with war, nation with social emancipation, national with the international, class with people, and democracy with revolution, precisely because these connections were and are not most of the time obvious and apparent. Class divisions are not always clear till clarified by social struggles and political conflicts and upheavals. In the case of postcolonial societies, this is all the more true; hence is the greater significance of these writings for postcolonial struggles for social transformation. Marx ended the first section of *Class Struggles in France* with these words

The Paris proletariat *was forced* into the June insurrection by the bourgeoisie. This sufficed to mark its doom. Its immediate, avowed needs did not drive it to engage in a fight for the forcible overthrow of the bourgeoisie, nor was it equal to this task... (T)he time was past when the republic saw any occasion to bow and scrape to its illusions, and only its defeat convinced it of the truth that the slightest improvement in its position remains a utopia *within* the bourgeois republic, a *utopia* that becomes a crime as soon as it wants to become a reality...

By making its burial place the birthplace of the *bourgeois republic*, the proletariat compelled the latter to come out forthwith in its pure form as the state whose admitted object it is to perpetuate the rule of capital, the slavery of labour. Having constantly before its eyes the scarred, irreconcilable, invincible enemy – invincible because its existence is the condition of its own life – bourgeois rule, freed from all fetters, was bound to turn immediately into *bourgeois terrorism*. With the proletariat removed for the time being from the stage and bourgeois dictatorship recognized officially, the middle strata of bourgeois society, the petty bourgeoisie and the peasant class, had to adhere more and more closely to the proletariat as their position became more unbearable and their antagonism to the bourgeoisie more acute...

Finally, the defeat of June divulged to the despotic powers of Europe the secret that France must maintain peace abroad at any price in order to be able to wage civil war at home. Thus the peoples who had begun the fight for their national independence were abandoned to the superior power of Russia, Austria, and Prussian, but at the same time the fate of these national revolutions was made subject to the fate of the proletarian revolution, and they were robbed of their apparent autonomy, their independence of the great social revolution. The Hungarian shall not be free, nor the Pole, nor the Italian, as long as the worker remains a slave! (Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*).

Marx went on to show the significance of the *republic* as a bourgeois form of rule. Again in Marx's words

February 25, 1848, granted the *republic* to France, June 25 thrust the *revolution* upon her. And revolution, after June, meant: *overthrow of bourgeois society*, whereas before February it meant: *overthrow of*

the form of government. The June fight was led by the *republican* faction of the bourgeoisie; with victory political power necessarily fell to its share. The state of siege laid, gagged Paris, unresisting, at its feet, and in the provinces there prevailed a moral state of siege, the threatening, brutal arrogance of victorious bourgeoisie and the unleashed property fanaticism of the peasants...No danger, therefore, from *below!* (Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*. Italics in original).

He concluded the analysis of the trajectory of the class struggle with these words, “On December 20 only one half of the constituted bourgeois republic was in existence: the *President*; on May 28 it was completed by the other half, the *Legislative Assembly*. In June, 1848, the constituted bourgeois republic, by an unspeakable battle against the proletariat, and in June, 1849, the constituted bourgeois republic, by an unutterable comedy with the petty bourgeoisie, engraved their names in the birth register of history. June, 1849, was the nemesis of June, 1848. In June, 1849, it was not the workers that were vanquished; it was the petty bourgeoisie who stood between them and the revolution that were felled. June, 1849, was not a bloody tragedy between wage labour and capital, but a prison-filling and lamentable play of debtors and creditors. The party of Order had won, it was all-powerful; it had now to show what it was” (Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*).

We have to read Marx in these passages closely and carefully in order to see how he analyses the classes and their political conduct in the template of struggle marked by the interplay of the two categories, *class* and *people*. There also remained the category of the nation.

When the French Republic attacked Rome, Marx noted its implication in terms of committing aggression on other peoples and nations. Two comments:

One, Marx’s analysis of republic as a form of rule has to be seen in the context of the theory of separation of powers and the bourgeois liberal doctrine of prevention of despotism, in the context of Montesquieu in particular. He opened Part 3 of the same book with these words

On December 20 the Janus head of the *constitutional republic* had still shown only *one* face, the executive face with the indistinct, plain features of L. Bonaparte; on May 28, 1849, it showed its second face, the legislative, pitted with the scars that the orgies of the Restoration and the July Monarchy had left behind. With the *Legislative National Assembly* the phenomenon of the *constitutional republic* was completed, that is, the republican form of government in which the rule of the bourgeois class is constituted, the common rule, therefore, of the two great royalist factions that form the French bourgeoisie, the coalesced Legitimists and Orléanists, the *party of Order*. While the French republic thus became the property of the coalition of the royalist parties, the European coalition of the counterrevolutionary powers embarked simultaneously upon a general crusade against the last places of refuge of the March revolutions. Russia invaded Hungary, Prussia marched against the army defending the Reich constitution and Oudinot bombarded Rome. The European crisis was evidently approaching a decisive turning point; the eyes of all Europe were turned on Paris, and the eyes of all Paris on the *Legislative Assembly* (Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*).

Two, his analysis of constitutionalism where he argued that the attack on Rome was an attack on the constitution; the attack on the Roman republic was an attack on the French republic. The President of the French Republic employed the French army against Roman liberty. By 361 votes to 203, the National Assembly resolved to pass on from the bombardment of Rome to the next item on the agenda. Thus, Marx argued that the Republic led to Bonapartism. Party of freedom became the party of aggression. That is how capital progressed (Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*). Engels wrote in his preface to *Class Struggles in France*

With the exception of only a few chapters, every important part of the revolutionary annals from 1848 to 1849 bears the heading: *Defeat of the revolution!* What succumbed in these defeats was not the revolution. It was the pre-revolutionary traditional appendages, results of social relationships which had not yet come to the point of sharp class antagonisms—persons, illusions, conceptions, projects from which the revolutionary party before the February Revolution was not free, from which it could be freed not by the *victory of February*, but only by a series of *defeats*. In a word: The revolution made progress, forged ahead, not by its immediate tragicomic achievements but, on the contrary, by the creation of a powerful, united counterrevolution, by the creation of an opponent in combat with whom the party of overthrow ripened into a really revolutionary party. To prove this is the task of the following pages (Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*).

All these lines and pages echo heavily in the postcolonial context of democracy, constitutionalism, formal democracy, wars upon other peoples, and the progress of capital through the change of forms of bourgeois rule.

One may ask, was it purely a political analysis, an analysis of a contemporary event? Was there no economics? Thus we have to recall how he concluded his analysis of struggles.

The same symptoms have shown themselves in *France* since 1849... The Parisian industries are abundantly employed and the cotton factories of Rouen and Mulhouse are also doing pretty well... The development of prosperity in France was, in addition, especially promoted by the comprehensive tariff reform in Spain and by the reduction of the duties on various luxury articles in Mexico; the export of French commodities to both markets has considerably increased. The growth of capital in France led to a series of speculations... A swarm of companies have sprung up; the low denomination of their shares and their socialist-coloured prospectuses appeal directly to the purses of the petty bourgeois and the workers, but all and sundry result in that sheer swindling...

The most striking proof of restored prosperity is the Bank's reintroduction of specie payment by the law of 6 August 1850... Its note circulation, including that of the provincial banks, amounted at that time to 373,000,000 francs (14,920,000 pounds). On November 2, 1849, this circulation amounted to 482,000,000 francs, or 19,280,000, an increase of 4,360,000 pounds, and on September 2, 1850, to 496,000,000 francs, or 19,840,000 pounds, an increase of about 5,000,000 pounds... That the Bank was thus placed in a position to increase its circulation and therewith its active capital by 123,000,000 francs, or 5,000,000 pounds, is striking proof of the correctness of our assertion in an earlier issue that the finance aristocracy has not only not been overthrown by the revolution, but has even been strengthened... These facts, the continual increase in the circulation, the concentration of the whole of French credit in the hands of the Bank, and the accumulation of all French gold and silver in the Bank's vaults led M. Proudhon to the conclusion that the Bank must now shed its old snakeskin and metamorphose itself into a Proudhonist people's bank. He did not even need to know the history of the English bank restriction from 1797 to 1819; he only needed to direct his glance across the Channel to see that this fact, for him unprecedented in the history of bourgeois society, was nothing more than a very normal bourgeois event, which only now occurred in France for the first time...

In spite of the industrial and commercial prosperity that France momentarily enjoys, the mass of the people, the twenty-five million peasants, suffer from a great depression. The good harvests of the past few years have forced the prices of corn much lower even than in England, and the position of the peasants under such circumstances, in debt, sucked dry by usury and crushed by taxes, must be anything but splendid...

Just as the period of crisis began later on the Continent than in England, so also did prosperity... Hence when crises on the Continent produce revolutions there first, the bases for them are always laid in England. Violent outbreaks naturally erupt sooner at the extremities of the bourgeois body than in its heart, because in the latter the possibilities of accommodation are greater than in the former...

Such a revolution is possible only in periods when *both* of these *factors* — the *modern forces* of production and the *bourgeois forms of production* — come *into opposition* with each other...
A new revolution is only a consequence of a new crisis. The one, however, is as sure to come as the other." (Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*, Part 4. Italics in original).

The problematic is in one sense then: Revolution of the people, but struggles of a class or classes, hence also the question, a class revolution or a people's revolution? Marx addressed the twin problematic of political struggles in this way. Economic crisis affects most of the society; power is concentrated in the hands of the financial oligarchy; workers are still not fully developed for the struggles they have launched; the workers moreover will be soon jettisoned by the republican bourgeoisie; and above all democracy may soon invade other peoples and nations, destroy their freedoms, and create a condition when emancipation of the working class may be possible only with national freedom.

The crisis is a revolutionary crisis, because it has affected all sections of society, particularly various sub-strata composing the *people*, and at the same time urging the working class to move on. It is thus never a simple question of workers wresting power from the bourgeoisie, but one of various classes, their sub-strata, and the crisis affecting all, but differentially, that is, in different ways and to different degrees. In one word, a revolution is launched for which the revolution is not fully prepared. Workers show class spirit, but the people may not be ready, while the workers' revolution will not be victorious till it appears as a people's revolution.⁵ The class therefore will not have the most singular life even when or particularly when it is living, a pure identity to itself. Its inside will be always immersed in the phantasmagoria of the *people*.

As we move on to *Civil War in France*, we find the problematic posed in an even sharper manner. These two books handle in the only proper way possible, namely the dialectical way, the historical question of relations among classes and groups, and the relationships among various population groups, forged, challenged, and re-forged through class struggles. By dialectical method we mean three things: (a) locating contradiction at the heart of relationship; (b) looking at the process of unity of the opposites; and finally (c) grasping the meaning of negation, the principle of negation operating by various means such as displacement, mediation, interpellation, resolution, transference, extinction, transformation, transcendence, etc.

To locate the problem of revolution in an analysis of the question of the people, we must therefore see how Marx continuously moved in these writings from the terrain of class to that of the people and returned. In this way he analysed the composition of a class or the people at a given point of time, as a concretely determined and a concrete determinant. He was therefore always alluding to the organic composition of class from the point of society, economy, and politics—all that make a people. In the same way he was analysing the organic composition of people from the point of class, and thus from the point of production relations. This was how he related to state, government, organs of power, modes of power, army, police, militia, and other institutions of governance and rule.

II

Citizens, People, and the Political Moment

To understand the theoretical significance of what Marx did in these two books let us take a short detour. Ever since the rise of the "people" as a category in late Middle and early modern time, which

in the West is referred to as the “Machiavellian moment,” there is this idea of an organic connection between the emergence of the people as a collective political actor, the ideal of republicanism, and revolution that will make the people “citizens.” The classic work expounding this idea is of course the book *The Machiavellian Moment* by J.G.A. Pocock (1975), a work of intellectual history, which posits a connection between republican thought in early sixteenth century Florence, English Civil War, and the American Revolution. Machiavellian moment is the moment when a new republic first confronts the problem of maintaining the stability of its ideals and institutions. Machiavellian thought was a response to a series of crises facing early sixteenth century Florence in which a seemingly virtuous state was on the cusp of destruction. In response, Machiavelli sought to revive classical republican ideals. The republican story tells us thus that all the revolutions from the early modern time faced similar such moments and offered related sets of answers. The Machiavellian moment has come to represent the so-called republican synthesis, which holds that revolution gives birth to a state marked with a fear of corruption and a desire to promote classical virtue.

Now, like all myths, the republican myth had also some truth in it. The republican moment brought in the political world along with it a cluster of concepts associated with the notion of the people and the popular, such as: sovereignty, legality, governmental power. These concepts began to be discussed mainly in circles of political and legal theory, though to be sure in the second half of the last century there were significant researches in laying bare the historical evolution of these ideas and their forms in real life. Yet in tracts on actual political struggles and manifestoes we have had little discussion on the significance of these as problems of popular politics, problems that popular politics have to encounter and surmount in order to develop into a constituent power that will not reproduce the power it in the first place had sought to replace. Nobody could discuss any more “people” or various problems for popular politics without relating the concept to sovereign power, legality, and governmental power. It also meant discussing (a) supremacy of authority or rule as exercised by a sovereign or sovereign state; (b) rank, authority, or power; (c) complete independence and self-government; and finally (d) a territory existing as an independent state. The idea of *people* thus made us confront the issues of the right and power to command, decide, rule, or judge, in other words, authority, command, control, domination, dominion, jurisdiction, mastery, might, prerogative, sway, autonomy, freedom, independence, liberty, self-government, and freedom/un-freedom. Yet, the interesting point is that while with the emergence of the *people* these questions became important for politics, the struggles were actually led by classes and conducted among classes. Revolutions therefore had therefore two registers: on one hand, *classes* as actors forced these questions to the fore, yet on the other hand these questions could be posed only in the frame of the *people*.

Certain questions therefore posed within a revolution and overwhelmed by the republican myth were: Do people make an undifferentiated category? With economy becoming increasingly the most crucial component of life since the late seventeenth early eighteenth centuries, even more important became two other questions: first, do all sections of people have the same stake in revolution, and does the revolution mean the same for all? And, second if the Machiavellian moment is one of anarchy and a void, does it not mean that a revolution is connected to what came to be known since the Westphalian century as “inter-state” or “the international.” So, the question that Marx faced and set out to historically investigate and resolve was: What was the meaning of a revolution with respect to people and with respect to the world?⁶

We know now through these two books how he conceptually treated the two terms “people” and “class” as alter realities in discussing the revolution. We can also see how he demonstrated that the conditions of the republican constitution were all material.⁷ If we can sum up these conditions as a crisis, we can say after Marx, rupture is a law of development; as the latter’s

positive mark it is immersed in world's materiality, which in turn always provokes it to make it happen.⁸ But then it also means, as we shall see when we take the argument forward that this rupture is also of the bond between *class* and the *people*. It will mean further a process of dislocation of power from the abstract terrain of general will (representing the union of class and the people) to the concrete terrain of law and wealth legally defined in the form of property (which means that the unity is now broken). It will mean therefore that the advance of constituent power is now reflected in society through the manifestation of the divisions on which the society is founded. This is the time of temporal subjectivity when the time of the class is paralleled and finally dominated by the time of the society, the people, in whose name power has now been constituted. Social space starts dominating over political space. The right of the permanent exercise of the role of masses to constitute politics becomes the nightmare at the moment of the constitution of the republic. Masses dissolve into *people*, a legal category. Labour (as the core of the class) no longer defines historical subjectivity, law (as the core of the people) becomes the historical subject. Yet we must not make the mistake that in these three historical writings Marx constructed the solution of the closure in terms of *society versus the state* or *constituent power and constituted power* or *social versus the political* or even *class and the people*. The reason is that Marx wanted to avoid the line of *civil mediation* as the solution. For him the line was always constructing a revolutionary resolution, and thus the ever present possibility of practical criticism.

What we begin to perceive here is the absolute role of crisis as the singular moment of production and constitution. It is crisis that forces labour, the producing machine, into constituting itself into a subject. Without crisis, as Marx would say, "In so far as capital is a relation, and specifically a relation to living labour capacity, the worker's consumption reproduces the relation" (Marx 1971: 676). The dialectical process is opened up not by God but by the contradictions of material life.

But we must also see in this connection how Marx analysed another process of mediation and interpellation, namely, the way the idea of the nation worked as an interceding factor in the relation between the people and the world, the *inter-state*, the *international*. Thus *Civil War in France* is a commentary also on the beginning of the Franco-Prussian war, Prussian occupation of France, capitulation of France and the setting up of the reactionary government of Thiers. The contradiction then, as Marx pointed out, while people may become the political actor classes with their respective stakes remained. The rights of man invoked in the revolution would now become thorns in the flesh of a society. There is thus also a reversal of sort—from general will to classes and class divisions.⁹ The republic manipulates the rights because it becomes a form of bourgeois class rule, and thus increasingly takes an imperial form. Nation can become an empire like formation. Thus republican France attacks Italy, and Prussia moves from a strictly defensive war to occupation and then cedes power to the French bourgeoisie and not to the Commune. Marx therefore repeatedly remarked in *Civil War in France* that the French Empire was not like its predecessors, the Legitimate monarchy, the Constitutional monarchy and the Parliamentary Republic. It was both its most complete and its ultimate political form. It was the state power of modern class rule.¹⁰ While Michel Foucault (2007) has described in details the ways in which governmental thinking evolved in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries amidst the permanent reality of war—both international and civil—and thus compelled the three realities to be bound together in their respective destinies, namely security, territory, population, I believe what remains absent in his analysis is the mutability of forms of rule. For that we have to go back to Marx.

One of the complaints against Marx has been that he focused on state only and neglected government; hence he discussed classes and people and not classes and populations, the products of

modern governments and politics. Apart from the fact that the work *Capital* itself is a demonstration of how a certain rationality (the rationale of capital) produces categories of population, such as the worker, the merchant capitalist, etc., and thus the word *people* often becomes an empty reality, *Civil War in France* actually deals with governments at work: the government of Versailles, the government of Paris Commune, the conduct of other cities, Assembly of the Rurals, government of the counterfeit Empire, etc., their differences, and their respective class roots, connotations, and significance. Indeed all the three books on class struggles in France of his time address the inter-related realities of people, classes, government, and the state in a dynamic format.

Yet there is a point in this discussion, which will enable us to read them differently today. Lenin, who was no believer in an omnipotence of the category *people*, and wrote early in his political life the famous tract, *What the Friends of the People Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats* (1894), showed how the connection with propagating a bright future of the village commune with socialism was extremely thin. He wrote

The socialist intelligentsia can expect to perform fruitful work only when they abandon their illusions and begin to seek support in the actual, and not the desired development of Russia, in actual, and not possible social-economic relations. Moreover, their theoretical work must be directed towards *the concrete study of all forms of economic antagonism in Russia, the study of their connections and successive development; they must reveal this antagonism wherever it has been concealed by political history, by the peculiarities of legal systems, or by established theoretical prejudice. They must present an integral picture of our realities as a definite system of production relations*, show that the exploitation and expropriation of the working people are essential under this system, and show the way out of this system that is indicated by economic development (Lenin, CW 1978, 1. Italics in original).

Thus by discussing population categories one is able to point out the frequently vacuous nature of the category *people*. Michel Foucault showed, precisely when the Machiavellian moment was gathering strength, there was something else at work, the vivisection of that category, its exhaustion, the emergence of its counter-figure, that of population tied to government, in as much people were tied to state; likewise, population tied to policy and people tied to sovereignty; population tied to government and people tied to democracy. But Foucault left out the question of how these two levels worked in historical dynamics, and in leaving this question out he was possibly guided by the idea that revolution was past as a chapter of modern history, and now the time was for governments and populations. He therefore had no space for classes in his analysis. All were creatures of an ever mutating policy game. We must realise then the contradictory significance of the people/population binary, and read Marx's treatment of the problem.

To combat the liberal myth of the people, critical thinking has emphasised in recent years another concept, *multitude*. Already Friedrich Engels in *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* had noted the emptiness of the concept, *people*, and had remarked (in "The Great Towns")

A town, such as London, where a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end... is a strange thing. This colossal centralization, this heaping together of two and a half millions of human beings at one point, has multiplied the power of this two and a half millions a hundredfold; has raised London to the commercial capital of the world... The masses of buildings, the wharves on both sides, especially from Woolwich upwards, the countless ships along both shores, crowding ever closer and closer together... all this is so vast, so impressive, that a man cannot collect himself, but is lost in the marvel of England's greatness before he sets foot upon English soil. But the sacrifices which all this has cost become apparent later. After roaming the streets of the capital a day or two, making headway with difficulty through the human turmoil and the endless lines of vehicles,

after visiting the slums of the metropolis, one realises for the first time that these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature, to bring to pass all the marvels of civilization which crowd their city; that a hundred powers which slumbered within them have remained inactive, have been suppressed in order that a few might be developed more fully and multiply through union with those of others. The very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other, are they not all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy?... And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one, that each keep to his own side of the pavement, so as not to delay the opposing streams of the crowd, while it occurs to no man to honor another with so much as a glance. The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest, becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space... The dissolution of mankind into monads, of which each one has a separate principle, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme. Hence it comes, too, that the social war, the war of each against all, is here openly declared...What is true of London, is true of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, is true of all great towns. Everywhere barbarous indifference, hard egotism on one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, every man's house in a state of siege, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law, and all so shameless, so openly avowed that one shrinks before the consequences of our social state as they manifest themselves here undisguised, and can only wonder that the whole crazy fabric still hangs together (Engels 1969: 57–58).

Walter Benjamin cited this remarkable passage in his work on Baudelaire and Paris of his time while reminding us of how Marx had analysed Paris and its crowd: the bohemians, conspirators, mass leaders, the vagabonds, the petty bourgeoisie, and the workers (Benjamin 2006: 181–182).¹¹ *Civil War in France* gives us this disaggregating view of Paris, while also narrating how Paris presented to the society in face of reaction and war a *general will*.

The present currency of the word *multitude* is said to have drawn inspiration from Spinoza who used the term in the sense of common man and had said

The multitude of Jews and gentiles, to whom the prophets and apostles preached and for whom they wrote in ancient times, understood the language of the prophets and apostles. This knowledge of the language enabled them to grasp what the prophets meant, but not the reasons for the doctrines that were being preached... My method of interpretation doesn't imply that the mass of people had to trust in the testimony of interpreters, for I point to a multitude that had experience of the language of the prophets and apostles, whereas Maimonides doesn't point to any multitude that could do the reasoning that was needed (according to him) for a grasp of the intention of the prophets and apostles. What about the general mass of people today? ...This grasp is what the multitude trusts, not the testimony of interpreters. And in respect of the other things—the ones that are not needed for salvation—the general mass of people are in the same boat as the learned (Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*: 71).

He had said earlier in the same text

... The true purpose of laws is usually evident to only a few. Most people are hardly capable of grasping it, and don't come anywhere near to living according to reason. This has led legislators, wanting to put the same restraints on everyone, to set up another end 'or purpose', very different from the one that necessarily follows from the nature of laws. Specifically, they have identified what the multitude most love (x) and what they most fear (y), and have promised that the defenders of the laws will get x, and threatened law-breakers with getting y. By this wisely chosen device they do their

best to restrain the multitude, like restraining a horse with a harness (Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*: 36).

Spinoza's suggestion of what multitude could be finally comes towards the end, in the last chapter. "Following the Pharisees' example, everyone has been driven by the same madness, which they call zeal for God's law (how far each man takes this depends only on how much of a hypocrite he is). Everywhere they have persecuted men who are distinguished for their integrity and famous for their virtue, and therefore envied by the mob—publicly denouncing their opinions and inflaming the savage multitude in their anger against them" (Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*: 148). Besides Spinoza Machiavelli and Hobbes are the other authors of the concept. With Hobbes we get the idea of the two opposite concepts of *people* and *multitude*. The former reflects the phenomena of stability, organicity, responsibility, and compactness, while the latter reflects anarchy, disaggregated state, unruliness, and danger posed by a crowd. Multitude in this argument remained the other of people, as population remained the other in the above-mentioned train of thought. It is strange that Paolo Virno in his famous *A Grammar of the Multitude* (2004) does not mention the uses by Marx of this term.

It is difficult to see how the concept of multitude can be used in a class-context, unless we also bring up for discussion the idea of people and the class/people question as the route through which we get back to this early modern idea, which probably signified something like lower orders or lower depths. Paolo Virno does this in the context of Hobbes, but this remains inadequate because while he dissects the notion of people, his treatment of class as an element of the relationship (class/people) remains inadequate.

In *Civil War in France* Marx refers to multitude in a dialectical way. Marx wrote in the "Third Address" (Chapter IV, "Paris Workers' Revolution and Thier's Reactionary Massacres"), "Thiers opened the civil war by sending Vinoy, at the head of a *multitude of sergents-de-ville*, and some regiments of the line, upon a nocturnal expedition against Montmartre, there to seize, by surprise the artillery of the National Guard. It is well known how this attempt broke down before the resistance of the National Guard and the fraternization of the line with the people" (Marx, *Civil War in France*. Italic mine). And then in the "Third Address" (Chapter V, "The Paris Commune"), "However, after their one heroic exploit of June, the bourgeois republicans had, from the front, to fall back to the rear of the 'Party of Order' – a combination formed by all the rival fractions and factions of the appropriating classes. The proper form of their joint-stock government was the Parliamentary republic, with Louis Bonaparte for its president. Theirs was a regime of avowed class terrorism and deliberate insult towards the vile *multitude*." And then again in the same address,

The Paris of M. Thiers was not the real Paris of the vile multitude, but a phantom Paris, the Paris of the francs-fileurs, the Paris of the Boulevards, male and female—the rich, the capitalist, the gilded, the idle Paris, now thronging with its lackeys, its blacklegs, its literary bonhome, and its cocottes at Versailles, Saint-Denis, Rueil, and Saint-Germain; considering the civil war but an agreeable diversion, eyeing the battle going on through telescopes, counting the rounds of cannon, swearing by their own honour and that of their prostitutes, that the performance was far better got up than it used to be at the Porte St. Martin. The men who fell were really dead; the cries of the wounded were cries in good earnest; and, besides, the whole thing was so intensely historical (Marx, *Civil War in France*).

Multitude does not replace class here; it does not replace people also; it does not replace population either. In its plural composition it is subject to bourgeois power in as much as precisely

because it is plural and speaks of the lower depths of society it is vile to the bourgeoisie and a factor in revolution.

How much can we then conflate the two terms—class and people—in this concept, *multitude*? Or, three words to be precise, class, people, and population in this concept? In Marx, who was aware of the potency of the usage, we do not find any attempt to conflate the three concepts; we only find their inter-relations described historically, contingently, predicated on several conjunctures. It is as if the relations are one of a situation of conjuncture; as if one is always conjuring up into existence the presence of the other in such contentious situation. We can also say, in one we have the real presence of the other, which is to say, the other where we have the real presence of the one, the opposition of the effective to the ineffective, again which will be to say, a historical temporality made of different presents contemporary to themselves yet not identical to each other. The organic is thus operative through the conjuncture rather than disappearing into it. Thus class and people remain tied to each other not by tending to merge with one or the other, but by becoming conjunctured elements of a situation.¹² In this co-presence of class and people (and if you like population) there is a dangerous radicalisation of events, a sort of speed up, which this co-presence gives birth to. It is a co-presence that always depends on conjuring up the other and thereby creating the co-presence. It is a situation, where the presence of class will always bring back the people, and the presence of people will always conjure up the spectre of class. In this displacement caused by and resulting in the invocation of the double, the other, we also witness the contradiction between the two temporalities—of the people and the class (general time and the accelerated time)—resulting in an anachronistic situation known as *conflict, the time of crisis*. Anachrony to Marx was striking difference. Thus the important question put to us will be: Can the language of class be translated into one of people? How will revolution resolve the spectral presence of the other (class vis-à-vis people or vice versa). And is this not at the heart of the postcolonial problematic of social transformation, and thus the great problematic of transcendence, in which the revolution-inducing strains are at once displaced and fulfilled? The problematic of transcendence is thus constitutively tied to the Marxist question of antithesis—the moment of radical rupture that the situation attempts to repress, yet that bursts through the existing order.

III

The Multitude

Let us proceed further with one more related question: Does the concept *multitude* herald the end of the *nation*—another translating terrain in the two way passage of class, people (the other terrain being the inter-state or the international), in as much the concept of *population* seems to herald the death of the nation? Let us see how Lenin and Gramsci—two of the major twentieth century revolutionaries—grappled with the question. Lenin for instance in “Theses on the National Question,” written in June 1913, stood in defence of the national question, and argued that the question was still relevant, that it was at the heart of the democratic issue. However, he differentiated the national question from the fundamentalist stand of cultural autonomy of every group or section, and said that proletarian politics was not against national self-determination; and this manifesto grounds itself in the dialectical relation between the nation, the inter-national, and the class (Lenin *CW*, 1977). In Leninist politics, people of the colonial world figured in this way. Antonio Gramsci invoked the national question to a greater extent. Though he did not speak of the colonial question, the *national* in Gramsci had within it the Southern question (dimensions of geography,

underdevelopment, peasantry, etc.). Faced with the same contradiction, Gramsci spoke of the “national-popular,” at times people-nation, mainly to argue that national-popular is the product and the agenda of socialist hegemony, mainly cultural, and without establishing hegemony the proletariat would not achieve revolution and revolutionary transformation of society (Gramsci 1996).¹³ In the 1920s and 1930s, with the rise of fascism and the failure of the Western European working-class movements to stop fascism Antonio Gramsci began to ask: why was the working class not necessarily revolutionary, why did it surrender or at least yield to fascism? He argued that class struggle must always involve ideas and ideologies, ideas that would make the revolution and also that would prevent it; hence he argued that politics had to be more “dialectical” than “deterministic”: and for this reason a revolutionary theory that recognised the autonomy, independence and importance of culture and ideology was of critical importance. Hegemony was needed to bring the backward sections of the proletariat, other classes such as the peasantry, petty producing masses, and the petty bourgeoisie in general. Hegemony represented a “historic bloc” (Gramsci 1996: 418, 421f). We have been witness to two historical consequences of such a strategy to deal with the contradictory relations between class, people, and the nation. First, the pursuit of hegemony has proved to be riding a tiger; it has led to many compromises without any specific revolutionary political objective. Second, it has subjected the politics of revolution to a politics of cultural gradualism. And finally when this national-popular was achieved in the form of *people-nation*, the bourgeoisie was found to be back on the centre stage of politics. Of course one can argue that notwithstanding these historical deficiencies, the Gramscian idea of hegemony at least helped in great way the socialist defence against fascism, because above all it reminded those pursuing the politics of class the salience of two inter-related realities – *people and the nation*.

Marx in *Civil War in France* again and again invoked the nation. Thus in the chapter “Prussian Occupation of France,” he wrote, “Let the sections of the International Working Men’s Association in every country stir the working classes to action. If they forsake their duty, if they remain passive, the present tremendous war will be but the harbinger of still deadlier international feuds, and lead in every nation to a renewed triumph over the workman by the lords of the sword, of the soil, and of capital” (Marx, *The Civil War in France*). And then, in the chapter “The Paris Commune” he wrote, “The unity of the *nation* was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, to be organized by Communal Constitution, and to become a reality by the destruction of the state power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence. ... Opposed to this new world at Paris, behold the old world at Versailles—that assembly of the ghouls of all defunct regimes, Legitimists and Orleanists, eager to feed upon the carcass of the nation—with a tail of antediluvian republicans, sanctioning, by their presence in the Assembly, the slaveholders’ rebellion, relying for the maintenance of their parliamentary republic upon the vanity of the senile mountebank at its head, and caricaturing 1789 by holding their ghastly meetings... There it was, this Assembly, the representative of everything dead in France, propped up to the semblance of life by nothing but the swords of the generals of Louis Bonaparte. Paris all truth, Versailles all lies; and that lie vented through the mouth of Thiers” (Marx, *Civil War in France*).

In this age of scepticism of the idea of revolution and revolutions that happen but often end in defeat, where do we stand today on this? As a tentative reply, two more issues remain to be referred to before we end this discussion: recent hopes on the idea of the *multitude* in the light of the political lessons of the two works by Marx, and second, the specifics of the post-colonial reconstitution of the inter-relations.

Is *multitude* a dissolution of classes or an expression of a multi-class composition? Does it indicate something that Mao termed as the united front? Thus a multi-class, multi-group

embodiment, which is crucial to every revolution that the proletariat wages? Does revolution achieve the conflation of the three: class, people, and population? The answer is perhaps so, because at that hour of revolution the multitude achieves the organic character, which transforms it into a people. But clearly we cannot overlook the federal character and the dialogic composition of this re-composed people, which Marx speaks of repeatedly in *Civil War in France*, namely the strategy of the Commune to dialogue with others. Not only that, as Engels later pointed out on the occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Paris Commune that Blanquists behaved in the most transparent and merciful way in the conduct of the Commune, while the Proudhonists went on to reorganise large scale industry with autonomous workers' association.¹⁴

The re-composition of the organism is also something that Marx had indicated in *Capital*, where besides presenting the picture of labour working as part of a collective bodily organism running like a machine, he also spoke of the individual being divided up by capitalist operation, and questioned the presumed unity of the body. He suggested a way to an alternative conception of the body in which any unity that the body may possess is never fixed. In Chapter 14 of *Capital*, volume 1, in the midst of his discussion of the division of labour, he alluded to “the absurd fable of Menenius Agrippa, which presents man as a mere fragment of his own body” (Marx 1990, 1: 481-82). The fable tells how the parts of the body conspired together in an ill-fated plan to overthrow the tyranny of the stomach, by starving it into submission. For Marx, the fable served as an illustration of the way the individual had been “divided up” by the increasingly specialized work imposed by capital. However, it also served as an illustration of the way Marx conceived class unity and of the “collective working organism” formed under capitalism in terms of bodily unity (Marx 1990, 1: 481). We have to note that the reference to the story of Menenius Agrippa comes at the end of a passage cataloguing the depredations inflicted on workers by the capitalist division of labour in the process of production. Referring to the capitalist character of manufacture, Marx wrote, “It converts the worker into a crippled monstrosity by furthering his particular skill as in a forcing-house through the suppression of a whole world of productive drives and inclinations just as in the states of La Plata they butcher a whole beast for the sake of his hide or his tallow. Not only is the specialized work distributed among the different individuals, but the individual himself is divided up, and transformed into the automatic motor of a detail operation, thus realizing the absurd fable of Menenius Agrippa, which presents man as a mere fragment of his own body” (Marx 1990, 1: 481).¹⁵ Elsewhere, Marx commented caustically that “Agrippa failed to show that you feed the members of one man by filling the belly of another” (Marx 1969: 6–7).¹⁶ For Marx, the fable was simply absurd and the plebeians were duped by Agrippa’s specious argument.

However we shall lose this dialectical attitude if we efface the difference between the three concepts—class, people, and multitude—and try to collapse them in one. Hardt and Negri (2004: 103) think that the multitude is being regenerated out of the twin decompositions of class and identity politics and emerges out of the new, twenty-first century conditions of global capitalism. “Multitude is a class concept” not restricted to waged workers but extending to the “potentially infinite number of classes that comprise contemporary society based not only on economic differences but also on those of race, ethnicity, geography, gender, sexuality, and other factors.” In short, the multitude is comprised “of all those who work under the rule of capital thus potentially as the class of those who refuse the rule of capital” (Hardt and Negri 2004: 106). The multitude “refuses the organic unity of the body” and is fundamentally different from past Marxist notions of a unified class in that “the multitude cannot be reduced to a unity and does not submit to the rule of one” (Hardt and Negri 2004: 162, 330). We have thus suggestions of an alternative body architecture of corals and other more complex bodily metaphors of roots and rhizomes, the last invoked by

Deleuze and Guattari. Hardt and Negri wrote in 2004, “One of the most surprising elements of the events in Seattle in November 1999 and in each of the major such events since then is that groups we had previously assumed to have different and even contradictory interests managed to act in common—environmentalists with trade unionists, anarchists with church groups, gays and lesbians with those protesting the prison-industrial complex. The groups are not unified under any single authority but rather relate to each other in a network structure” (Hardt and Negri 2004: 86). Paolo Virno in *A Grammar of the Multitude* (2004) wrote, “Post-Fordism is the communism of capital.” Post-Fordist economy is thus productive, it does away—almost—the state, old classes, people; and in Virno’s concluding words,

If we can say that Fordism incorporated, and rewrote in its own way, some aspects of the socialist experience, then post-Fordism has fundamentally dismissed both Keynesianism *and* socialism. Post-Fordism, hinging as it does upon the *general intellect* and the multitude, puts forth, *in its own way*, typical demands of communism (abolition of work, dissolution of the State, etc.). Post-Fordism is the communism of capital. Following on the heels of the Ford era, there was the socialist revolution in Russia (and, even if defeated, an attempt at revolution in Western Europe). It is appropriate to ask which experience of social unrest served as the prelude to post-Fordism. Well, I believe that during the 1960’s and 1970’s there was, in the West, a defeated revolution—the first revolution aimed not against poverty and backwardness, but specifically against the means of capitalistic production, thus, against wage labour. If I speak of a defeated revolution, it is not because a lot of people were blathering on about revolution. I am not referring to the circus of subjectivity, but to a sober fact: for a long period of time, both in the factories and in the lower income urban areas, in the schools as in certain fragile state institutions, two opposing powers confronted one another, resulting in the paralysis of political decision-making. From this point of view—objective, serious—it can be maintained that in Italy and in other Western countries there was a defeated revolution. Post-Fordism, or the “communism of capital,” is the answer to *this* defeated revolution, so different from those of the 1920’s. The quality of the “answer” is equal to and opposed to the quality of the “question.” I believe that the social struggles of the 1960s and 1970s expressed non-socialist demands, indeed anti-socialist demands: radical criticism of labour; an accentuated taste for differences, or, if you prefer, a refining of the “principle of individuation”; no longer the desire to take possession of the State, but the aptitude (at times violent, certainly) for defending oneself from the State, for dissolving the bondage to the State as such. It is not difficult to recognize communist inspiration and orientation in the failed revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. For this reason, post-Fordism, which constitutes a response to that revolution, has given life to a sort of paradoxical “communism of capital.” The concept of multitude was meant to demonstrate that a theory of class need not choose between unity and plurality. A multitude is an irreducible multiplicity; the singular social differences that constitute the multitude must always be expressed and can never be flattened into sameness, unity, identity, or indifference (Virno 2004, ch. 6).

Yet beginning from this unobjectionable intention, the contemporary theory of the multitude has moved quite a bit from Marx. At least one reason for the over-theorisation of the idea of the multitude is the unrealistic notion of these western authors of a general post-Fordist global economy, which has supposedly done away with industrial capital, manufacturing, primitive accumulation, etc. However global capitalism is incomparably broader and complicated than what it appears in the West. In China, India, and several other countries we see all the aspects of global economy present; and entire societies with their non-capitalist sectors to being subjected to capitalist laws in unforeseen ways. Governments too are developing new techniques for governing societies. The global situation perched on a combination of neo-liberal capitalism and postcolonial capitalism presents us with the need for thinking once again on the relations among people, population, and

multitude; and at the same time owing to the postcolonial nature of present capitalism we cannot forget the ever present realities of *class* and *nation* acting as the translating medium of these notions. Indeed the great anti-colonial revolutions did not end the nation, but reconstituted it. These great popular revolutions have not given birth to unified, organic, undifferentiated people-hood, but multiple, variegated multitude whose composites are not just population groups subjected eternally to governmental policies and operations of capital, but unique singularities acting often in unison through a dialogic mode. The reason is that class has not died out, not in the time of the anti-colonial revolutions, not even in these times post-colonial capitalism. This then is the reason why we must re-read the three tracts of Marx to learn how the reality of class operates in times of great changes. In the words of Engels, “Of late, the Social-Democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” (Engels, 1891 Introduction to *Civil War in France*).

As hinted at the beginning of this chapter, the link between the two tracts, *Class Struggles in France* and *Civil War in France*, is the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. Engels was unduly harsh on himself and Marx when he said that he and Marx had been over-optimist when they had hoped for the victory of workers’ insurrection in 1848. For, later on the occasion of a new edition of the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, he wrote

The fact that a new edition of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* has become necessary, thirty-three years after its first appearance, proves that even today this little book has lost none of its value... Immediately after the event that struck the whole political world like a thunderbolt from the blue, that was condemned by some with loud cries of moral indignation and accepted by others as salvation from the revolution and as punishment for its errors, but was only wondered at by all and understood by none—immediately after this event Marx came out with a concise, epigrammatic exposition that laid bare the whole course of French history since the February days in its inner interconnection, reduced the miracle of December 2 to a natural, necessary result of this interconnection and in so doing did not even need to treat the hero of the coup d’état otherwise than with the contempt he so well deserved. And the picture was drawn with such a master hand that every fresh disclosure since made has only provided fresh proofs of how faithfully it reflected reality. This eminent understanding of the living history of the day, this clear-sighted appreciation of events at the moment of happening, is indeed without parallel. But for this, Marx’s thorough knowledge of French history was needed. France is the land where, more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a decision, and where, consequently, the changing political forms within which they move and in which their results are summarized have been stamped in the sharpest outlines. The centre of feudalism in the middle Ages, the model country of unified monarchy, resting on estates, since the Renaissance, France demolished feudalism in the Great Revolution and established the unalloyed rule of the bourgeoisie in a classical purity unequalled by any other European land. And the struggle of the upward-striving proletariat against the ruling bourgeoisie appeared here in an acute form unknown elsewhere. This was the reason why Marx not only studied the past history of France with particular predilection, but also followed her current history in every detail, stored up the material for future use and, consequently, events never took him by surprise. In addition, however, there was still another circumstance. It was precisely Marx who had first discovered the great law of motion of history, the law according to which all historical struggles, whether they proceed in the political, religious, philosophical or some other ideological domain, are in fact only the more or less clear expression of struggles of social classes, and that the existence and thereby the collisions, too, between these classes are in turn conditioned by the degree of development of their economic position, by the mode of their production and of their exchange determined by it. This law, which has the same significance for history as the law of the transformation of energy has for natural science - this law gave him here, too,

the key to an understanding of the history of the Second French Republic. He put his law to the test on these historical events, and even after thirty-three years we must still say that it has stood the test brilliantly (Engels, Preface to *The Eighteenth Brumaire* 1885).

With *The Eighteenth Brumaire* as the passage between the two times, 1848 and 1871, we know now how in the time of revolution/counter-revolution the proletariat learns to fight anew. Once again to quote Engels

With the exception of only a few chapters, every important part of the revolutionary annals from 1848 to 1849 bears the heading: *Defeat of the revolution!* What succumbed in these defeats was not the revolution. It was the pre-revolutionary traditional appendages, results of social relationships which had not yet come to the point of sharp class antagonisms—persons, illusions, conceptions, projects from which the revolutionary party before the February Revolution was not free, from which it could be freed not by the *victory of February*, but only by a series of *defeats*. In a word: The revolution made progress, forged ahead, not by its immediate tragicomic achievements but, on the contrary, by the creation of a powerful, united counterrevolution, by the creation of an opponent in combat with whom the party of overthrow ripened into a really revolutionary party (Engels, Introductory note to *The Class Struggles in France* 1895 edition).

Anyone familiar with the postcolonial context will know the dominant presence of what we call as popular movement in the contemporary history of social and political conflicts, the endless invocation of people and the popular, and the almost apologetic attitude of the communist leadership in such situation when asked, whatever has happened to class in these conflicts? Marx's historical writings are important as they tell us how to read and analyse the dual issues of class and people in situations when the living ghost of one imposes itself on another—ideologically, fantastically, automatically so much so that the effect is deeply destabilizing. This is what happened in the militant movements in India in the 1960s and '70s, the two decades of the last century referred to earlier. One has constantly subverted the other, till the ontological and the critical have merged to bring about a transformation in political consciousness. Marx not only did not deny ontology, and thus the presence of different phenomena (class, people, nation, etc.) in order to develop critique, but took them into account as shown in his historical analyses (including his analysis in all the three volumes of *Capital*) in order to develop critique. In the postcolonial condition we need this dialectical unity. People is more of an ideological representation, yet as Marx argued right from *The German Ideology*, these representations, in this case people arising from the empirical world of classes develops into an entity that is not only conceived, but confronts the classes as something objective precisely because the representation known by the term people has now become part of consciousness, internal to it, in order to become finally self-consciousness. The challenge of critique is double therefore, because critique not only has to work on the margins, but work on the phenomenon itself. That is how Marx developed critique of capitalism by working on capital. The rebellious consciousness produced out of the sixties and seventies in India in the last century embodied that unity of the two: ontology and critique, and thus has remained relevant to both the politics of class and the discourse of people.

Mao Tse Tung, the theoretician of people's democracy, was clear on this question. The basis for him always remained the analysis of classes in Chinese society, the class composition of peasantry in China, similar analysis of Chinese bourgeoisie (Mao, *SW* 1, 1965).¹⁷ On this analysis he built the notion of united front, and when he expounded the theory of new democracy or people's democracy, he had secured it with class content (Mao, *SW* 2, 1967).¹⁸ Following Marx, in this case also, the analysis and theorization was a product of class struggles, class conflicts, and great revolutionary

upsurges. In other words, the union of class and people happen in the midst of a revolutionary struggle and mass upsurge when people emerge as a radical category propelling the struggle forward (Mao, *SW* 2, 1967).¹⁹ The united front of classes achieves a critical dialogic formation. The experience of popular fronts in Europe has to be studied in this light. It has to be investigated also why in so many West European countries popular fronts did not culminate in socialist revolutions, and how class lost out to the *popular, the people*.

In other words, we are confronted with one difficult question: How can the proletariat become the *universal class*, which will not only mean that the proletariat is able to speak for the society, known as the *people*, but also dissolve itself so that it can represent the society, and thereby become universal? In *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels suggested that the proletariat would liberate itself by abolishing competition, private property, and all class differences by liberating the society. Lenin followed the same argument, namely that bureaucracy, characteristic of the bourgeois state apparatus would become so simplified and divested of special privileges and special recognition that it would resemble a post office job. Lenin's exact words were

We, the workers... shall reduce the role of state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, modestly paid foremen and accountants... Such a beginning, on the basis of large scale production, will of itself lead to the gradual "withering away" of all bureaucracy, to the gradual creation of an order, an order without inverted commas, an order bearing no similarity to wage slavery, an order under which the functions of control and accounting, becoming more and more simple, will be performed by each in turn, will then become a habit and will finally die out as the special functions of a special section of the population. A witty German Social Democrat of the seventies of the last century called the postal service an example of the socialist economic system. This is very true. At the present the postal service is a business organized on the lines of state - capitalist monopoly. Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organizations of a similar type, in which, standing over the "common" people, who are overworked and starved, one has the same bourgeois bureaucracy. But the mechanism of social management is here already to hand. ... We shall have a splendidly equipped mechanism, freed from the "parasite," a mechanism which can very well be set going by the united workers themselves, who will hire technicians, foremen and accountants, and pay them all, as indeed all "state" officials in general, workmen's wages. Here is a concrete, practical task which can immediately be fulfilled in relation to all trusts, a task whose fulfilment will rid the working people of exploitation, a task which takes account of what the Commune had already begun to practice (particularly in building up the state). To organize the whole economy on the lines of the postal service so that the technicians, foremen and accountants, as well as all officials, shall receive salaries no higher than "a workman's wage," all under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat that is our immediate aim...(Lenin, *CW* 25).²⁰

Hence the following poser remains always crucial: Who are the people? What do we mean when we say popular?

As we rush towards concluding this discussion, we must recall the well-known term *populism* that has embodied in a sort of perverse way this unity. We shall now turn to a discussion on that in order close this chapter.

IV

Populism

The history of engagement of Marxism with populism is long and tortuous. There have been no people without an ideology of the people (often representing the worldview of the petty bourgeoisie and the associated unorganised sections of society), which we can term as populism. The dominant characteristic of populism has been its political expression along with certain cultural specifics. Its economic content is often meagre, and when not hollow it tries to reach welfare to the people without seriously disturbing property relations. Yet while its economic possibilities are limited, its political possibilities have been quite noticeable. Populism has various forms, agrarian populism being one of the widely prevailing forms.²¹ Agrarian populism has ranged from a belief in the salience of the old commune system in land as in pre-revolutionary Russia to limited land redistribution as the way to escape an agrarian crisis as in West Bengal in India to various other limited sops to the peasantry. Populism has had cultural expressions besides ideological attributes such as faith in strong leadership, distrust of all mediating institutions between the ruler and the ruled, a plebiscitary mode of conducting politics, and a spiritual rediscovery of the nation. In the process *people* representing the lower orders of society becomes the elect idea, because it is able to submerge class differences between the workers and other petty producers, and is able to produce a society out of a given or defined people.

Proletarian history shows that the working class evolves;²² the working class is not a solid, homogenous crust of material to be preserved in a museum. Many of the formal features of capitalism such as formal free wage agreements may not be enough to understand neo-liberal capitalism, which is marked by an enormously heterogeneous/complex composition, and one of the effective routes to understand the heterogeneity is to see how gender, caste, race, age, territory, occupational holds, and skill act as fault lines in the said composition. These fault lines point to not only the borders and boundaries of capital/labour, but also how migration of labour acts as the *deus ex machina* of modern capitalism to cross those borders.

Neo-liberal capitalism has made obsolete many of the past debates on continuation of peasant societies, stages of growth, iceberg formation of the economic structure, centre-periphery model, un-remunerative productive activities, subsistence activities, commodification versus colonisation, forced labour versus free labour in the small and unorganised sites of production, etc., precisely because neo-liberal capitalism thrives by quizzing these distinctions and by incorporating all that was known as the *informal, colonised, the South, gendered, non-productive*, etc.²³ While these debates have now a quaint air to them,²⁴ they tell us the ground on which debates on populism have been conducted in postcolonial capitalism. With the march of neo-liberalism, what Marx would have called *the different moments of primitive accumulation* now distribute themselves more or less in an analysable order: practising internal colonialism based on core-periphery relations, national debt, various modes of taxation, financialisation of economy primarily of land and other extractive commodities, rise of the new forms of credit capital, flexibilisation of labour, co-mingling of organised and unorganised forms and structures of production, variegated supply chain, zoning of production activities, corridors of supply, various forms of protectionist wall combined with a world trade regime, and violence. In this milieu of extreme dispossession the world is witnessing populism whose social basis is the lower order of society. In other words, populism can be right wing, but it can be of the poorer classes also. It is important not to suspend the class criterion and not to ignore the social basis of the populist response to the crisis. In many ways we shall see a remarkable similarity between populisms

of the nineteenth century and the ones of our time. Is it not then strange that populism is often treated with sweeping observations (such as populism is fascism and Nazism, or charitably it is nihilism) without making concrete historical investigations?

In the postcolonial context already marked by the neoliberal turn of capitalism it is all the more important to notice and analyse the all-round institutional crisis of the liberal democracy in order to have a dialectical understanding of lower order populism. In a situation marked by the collapse of all welfare functions of the state, populism signifies the intense craving of the poor masses for public protection, public authority, public assistance, and public power – a kind of displaced site of *social justice*.

We can recall Teodor Shanin's *Late Marx and the Russian Road* (1983). It was enthusiastically taken by sociologists all over the world as if it was a testimony to the perseverance of a peasant mode of production and peasant economy. Yet Shanin was careful in not presenting the case as one of backward country versus a developed capitalist economy. He did not counter pose the supposed model of Marx's *Capital* (volume one) with later writings of Marx, but showed how the writings of Russian populist revolutionaries contemporary to Marx (mainly Nikolai Chernyshevskii) and Lenin (we have to recall in this respect first his *Development of Capitalism in Russia*) resembled Marx's own thoughts on the "Russian road" developing in the last ten years of his life. Shanin noted that Marx liked the populist idea of Russian labouring classes waging war against the state that represented to the greatest degree in Russia the capitalist order of exploitation, and the labouring classes consisted of "peasants, part time workers, and wage workers" (Shanin 1983: 9).²⁵ The persistence of agrarian populism neither suggests the resilience of the peasant mode of production, nor its demise in the wake of capitalism. Whether peasant society exists, whether peasant labour is actually multifarious labour (that is combining other forms of labour, such as artisanal mining) is beside the point here and after some time meaningless. Such debate unnecessarily valorises a sociological category and ignores the central question under capitalism, namely what happens to *labour*?

In India the discussion of peasant mode of production in academic debates around the question of mode of production happened in the wake of the peasant struggles in the decades of the sixties and seventies in the last century.²⁶ And as happens with academic debates, while peasant struggles in the old form slowly gave way to other forms of struggles, academic debates hovered over dead or dying issues. Partly our obsession with the transition question was responsible for it, and our Marx was kept confined to issues of two transitions: from feudalism to capitalism and transition from the division of labour under artisanal production to factory based organisation of labour (Custers 2015). That they could co-exist and that a new capitalist reality could incorporate artisanal arrangements into a global economy was something we have taken some time to fathom. We are now in a time, which is not only the time of capitalism, but also marked by what can be called a *production complex* consisting of the artisanal, manufacturing, large scale factory organisation, and the technologically automated production chains. Populism has re-emerged in this new condition, where it has become at times the immediate defence of the poorer classes against the debilitating effects of globalisation. One may also recall the famous words, "... it is the sigh of the oppressed" (Marx, Introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*).²⁷ Thus in countries of Latin America, Africa, and in several countries of Asia including India, populist politics has resurfaced. The situation forces us to note its class basis.

In India we have seen right wing populism in Indira Gandhi's time; on the other hand we are witnessing in West Bengal now another story of populism whose social basis is the poorer sections of society. In the period of 1965-75 there were widespread agrarian unrest, workers' strikes culminating in the 1974 general strike of the railwaymen, food riots, student revolts, Bangladesh War, massive

civil disobedience, and economic crisis.²⁸ The decade of crisis was marked by two simultaneous developments: worker and peasant militancy and an authoritarian rule, which in order to neutralise the popular upsurge adopted populist measures, and finally imposed the National Emergency (1975-77). In West Bengal there was a similar social crisis in 2001-2011. In that decade, food production, poverty reduction, and public distribution of essential commodities suffered. The situation was aggravated by forcible acquisition of land of the peasants for the benefit of the monopoly bourgeoisie and agrarian unrest in various parts of West Bengal.²⁹ This time the decade of crisis (on a lower scale) resulted in lower class populism. It is important therefore to understand the specific historical context and the specific mode of populist politics in order to make out the ways in which class and people are relating to each other. From that angle, we may say with some exaggeration, populism is the mediating ground of two different phenomena: class and people.

We can now see specific relevance of post-colonial experience to the problematic of populism. The post-colony is no post-colony if it does not symbolize and relate to us the rich experiences of populism which have left their heavy imprint on the democratic question in the post colony. We are still to analyse the enormous experiences of populist politics with which the post-colonial countries have resisted the bourgeoisie and a very authoritarian institutionalist straightjacket of democracy. In the time of neo-liberal globalization if democracy is the path of passive revolution and capitalist development, populism remains one of the principal weapons in the hands of the lower classes to defend their existence threatened by ruthless corporate interests. Populism evokes the links between the classes and masses, between petty producers and workers. It accepts all the prerequisite of the bourgeois democracy as eternal forms but wants to eliminate this bourgeois order as the basis and the consequence, reminding us of what Marx remarked of Hodgskin against Ricardo (Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*). It is the *other scene, the displaced site, the corrupt site* of what the communists following Chairman Mao used to call once upon a time the united front (Mao, *The Question of Independence*). Populism is to society what the petty bourgeoisie is to classes. With destabilisation of the market economy in the last ten years or so, populism represents the political monuments of the bourgeoisie in ruins even before they have completely crumbled. In some way then it represents an unstable historic bloc in the time of neo-liberal crisis. It is a response to crisis. Since precarious life is the general post-colonial condition, populism retains an abiding reference to it. In the absence or weak presence of communist movement populism is the weapon of the weak. Populism enables popular forces to articulate demands of the people against indebtedness, precariousness, and governmental austerity measures; it raises the discourse of rights to a new contentious level, and heightens the awareness that in the time of crisis people feel the need of a government which can protect them at least to some extent, and for that it can throw away bourgeois institutional and the conservative discourse of responsibility, and make a case for defending a society under attack. If the social movements in Europe aim to conjure up a form of politics on the basis of social assemblies and assemblages, populist movements in the post-colonial world aim to conjure up a society on the basis of populist politics—a society fractured into classes, groups, fractions, strata, caste, ethnicity, gender, and many other identities to be reassembled on the foundations of some popular perceptions of claims and justice. It has a healthy disrespect for the institutionalist-authoritarian version of democracy. It can to that end become personality-centric, assimilative, coalitional, tactical, and issue-oriented.³⁰

Not without surprise, repeated crises in Europe have produced many populist movements (much like in the post-colonial world, which is marked by precariousness and austerity as general condition), both of the right and left variety. Here is a recent history to ponder. In 2010, a good five years before a Left-popular coalition government was formed in Greece then EU President Herman

van Rompuy had called populism “the greatest danger for Europe” (*BBC News*, 25 April 2012). Since then many establishment voices have done the same, warning against populism, while remaining vague on the exact meaning of the word. Donald Tusk, the European Council president, has warned that the Greek crisis is helping to fuel a “pre-revolutionary atmosphere” in Europe. Tusk, who brokered the Greek bailout deal, was reported to have told, “For me, the atmosphere is a little similar to the time after 1968 in Europe. I can feel, maybe not a revolutionary mood, but something like widespread impatience. When impatience becomes not an individual but a social experience of feeling, this is the introduction for revolutions” (Khan 25 July 2015). It is this ideological and political contagion that really worries the European political class, not just the financial contagion that Greek crisis may cause.

We have to note that those who have voiced this warning against the supposed omnipresence of populism are mostly the parties and persons in power. In the neo-liberal discourse populism is a pejorative word. It is to be denounced because it is a form of politics that combines demagoguery, charismatic leadership, rhetoric, and lower culture.

While the neo-liberal denouncement is based on false reading of a particular form of politics, it is true that populism will like the society to be seen as composed of two separate entities—the people and the corrupt, anti-people elite. In this sense it aims to replace the old bipartisan politics (right/social democratic and left) with a new one (rich, urban rulers/people). Thus larger political agenda, such as an alternative vision of economy or politics, is not the concern of populist politics. Populism is thus neither inherently the true content of democracy nor its negation. All that we can say is that to a great extent it is anti-liberal democracy. It can be illiberal, but in many other cases it can be pluralist. It is thus neither to the right nor to the left; or can be both. Perhaps it is more on the Left in European South while more to the right in the European North. In Eastern Europe, agrarian populism had a remarkable history. Racist and anti-immigrant parties later embraced populist politics and language.

In Europe, the Populist Right in the 1980s beginning with Belgium, France, spread to Austria, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Finland, Netherlands, and some other countries. The rise of populism took place in the preceding twenty years when decision-making powers were increasingly transferred from the political to the economic sphere, and economics began dominating politics, and key institutional choices went outside popular control. On the top of these, the uniformity of approach of left, social democratic and conservative parties to political and economic questions became clear for all to see. Populism according to some became the “new face of the right” in this period (Musto 28 December 2015). Euro-skepticism and new national identity became populist planks. In France the National Front shot up to 17.9 per cent in the 2012 presidential elections, became the largest French political party at the 2014 Euro-elections, carried away one fourth of the vote at the departmental elections in March 2015, and has finally scored 27.7 per cent at these regional elections. In UK, the Independence Party topped the Euro polls in 2014 with 26.6 per cent. In many East European countries such parties exercise governmental power. In Poland, the populist Law and Justice Party won the presidential elections in May 2015 and scored 37.6 per cent at the legislative elections in October 2015. Its programme highlights promises to increase social spending, improve wage levels, and lower the retirement age. In Hungary however there is a different kind of populism. After the Socialist Party government had imposed severe austerity measures at the behest of the Troika (Central European Bank, IMF, and European Council), causing severe depression, the Hungarian Civic Union assumed power. In 2012 it purged the judiciary and brought the mass media under control, and introduced a new constitution. In Greece, Golden Dawn secured 9.4 per cent of

the vote in the European elections of 2014 and 7 per cent in the general elections of 2015. It is the third political force in the country.³¹

Here is the relevance of the post-colonial experiences of populism. Its relation with democracy, particularly with parliamentary democracy, is much more complex and contentious. Even though it abides by the rules of democratic governance, it is cynical about these rules, almost bordering on a healthy disrespect. At heart it knows that democracy has an essential populist side to it (precisely what Aristotle had taught us), and there is no democracy that does not have a populist dimension to it. Thus under populist politics in post-colonial countries allusions to people have proliferated dramatically, if newspapers are to be believed, though to be historically faithful, democracy was always in some respects a business of putting the demos on stage. Filthy talks characteristic of daily life, its coarseness and masculinity, threats, words of coaxing and cajoling, beating into submission, coupled with spontaneous dialogism, all that we associate with the daily life of the lower depths make their marks in populist politics.

As in several post-colonial countries, the language of politics changes with the entry of lower classes in mass parliamentary politics. Stakes in politics become high for them. Civility can wait. In as much as the earlier civility of language had no reference or equivalence to the administrative methods of law and order, today the barbarity of language has little relation with the amount of actual administrative coercion. Whatever doomsday prophets tell, life in the post-colonial world is not necessarily nasty, brutish, and short, though post-colonial world's share of global violence cannot be denied. Cities, small towns, and villages are not burning in the post-colonial world, where the coarse language of populist world signifies something else. Power is now exercised in a different way, at different scale, and at different speed. This is where the demos come to play. Previously power was exercised in the name of birth, lineage, education, status, caste, patrimony, etc. Now with parliamentary democracy and regular votes, power must be exercised finally in the name of demos.

Yet populism is a double edged source. This is what Ernesto Laclau forgot when he wanted to identify a reason, *popular reason*.³² Gramsci on the contrary spoke of *common sense*³³ and Mao spoke of *from the masses to the masses*.³⁴ In the former there is complete abdication of revolutionary critical judgment and practice; in the latter there is an admission that there are ideas and sensitivities below, which require deliberation and judgment through collective and critical procedure to become a revolutionary step. Ideas of people cannot be ignored, they cannot be defied. They must be the raw material of communist political work, the essence of what Mao repeatedly called, *mass line*.

Hence, there is nothing called good populism and bad populism. The crucial thing is that its nature has to be understood in the specific historical context in which it emerges, and aims to combine the thesis and the anti-thesis of the time. For the problem of populism is precisely that it embraces a range of diverse and often contradictory political beliefs; reciprocally, movements as varied as fascism and Peronism, or "leaders as distinct as Margaret Thatcher and Hugo Chávez, have all been described as populist in one way or another. Populism thereby does not become hopelessly vague or imprecise. The distinctiveness of populism is that it gathers together disparate ideological positions or political demands, and stresses their equivalence in terms of a shared antagonism to a given instance of political power or authority. In other words, populism should be defined by its form rather than its content: it tends to divide (and so simplify) the social field into two distinct camps, championing the 'people' " (Beasley-Murray 2006: 363). Populism is not destined by some law of nature to be fascism, which the conscientious, responsible, and theological Leftist friends tend to forget, though populism may slide into the latter. There will be grounds to fight populism in defence of the rights of the people, lower classes of people in particular, when a populist government becomes xenophobic, subservient to big, autocratic forces, and serves corporate interests. To the

same extent, if and when a populist government helps the people with populist measures, howsoever small duration these measures may be, the Left, who claim to be leaders of the people, must support them. Populism becomes at times a thorn in the body of neoliberal governmentality. We have to remember that “neoliberal governmentality consists of the fact that it construes neo-liberalism not just as ideological rhetoric, as a political-economic reality... but above all as a political project that endeavours to create a social reality that it suggests already exists.... Political economy relies on a political anatomy of the body. We can decipher a neo-liberal governmentality in which not only the individual body, but also collective bodies and institutions (public administrations, universities, etc.), corporations and states have to be ‘lean’, ‘fit’, ‘flexible’, ‘reasonable’, and ‘autonomous’....It highlights the intimate relationship between ‘ideological’ and ‘political-economic’ agencies... This enables us to shed sharper light on the effects neo-liberal governmentality has in terms of (self-) regulation and domination” (Lemke 2000). Populism upsets the neoliberal calculations by always producing two rival jurisdictions through its play of the double game: the jurisdiction of the poor, the immigrant, and an insistent urge for some indefinable justice and that of the citizen, formal democratic institutions, and law.

We need thus a more discerning view. In the age of post-colonial globalisation, liberal democracy may come and go. Populism as a distinct form of politics marked by the presence of the lower classes will remain. That will be the biggest challenge for the Left in coming years in shaping anti-capitalist strategy. If the account of the populism offered in the preceding pages is even remotely correct, then clearly the challenge of populism will not be resolved by any sudden new discovery of how things really are or by ideological postures. It will be decided, if history allows us the leisure to decide such issues, only by a slow and painful choice between alternative self-images of the Left.³⁵

The challenge of populism is conceptually at a deeper level also. By suggesting in one and single form the politics of class as well as politics of people (rights, claims, urge for an indefinable justice and a just government) populism indicates a deeper feature of modern emancipative politics—the continuous coming together of the two trajectories of liberty and equality.³⁶ Yet as is clear from experiences of populism the world over, they never come together; class struggle and the poor people’s urge for justice never completely merge. It is not so much a conceptual paradox as it is produced by history and actual life, derived from specific historical conditions and with determinate, real-world consequences. Such a politics is always discrete and incomplete. It always calls for a dialectical negotiation.

The need for such a dialectical negotiation is all the more today given the fact that radical postcolonial thinkers had engaged with Antonio Gramsci in the hope that his analyses of Italy would have closer historical bearing with the postcolonial world. They had interpreted Gramsci in a way that accorded the primacy of the context over historicity. A dialectical negotiation will enable us to rediscover a method of analysis that exceeds the tyranny of context. Concepts such as class, people, population, mass, multitude, and populism co-exist in a non-conflated (and therefore non-identical) yet interlocked relationships in a situation of conjuncture, which means that the existence of one always conjures up the presence of the others in a contentious manner. It implies that to treat these relationships as non-causal is always a matter of revolutionary analysis, a political-categorical act. It is a moment of pulling apart those diversely situated conjunctural elements in order to decide which aspect of which contingent configuration is to be emphasized in political analysis. Thus, defining populism is mostly a categorizing moment. Hence the destiny of populism remains open, and perhaps, because of its inherent elasticity to move around diverse ideological and political ecologies, it remains conceptually unruly.

Why it is that parliamentary Marxism could never scientifically analyse populism, even though at times it itself practised populist policies? Why it is that it could never dialectically engage with the simultaneous existence of class and the masses, or class and the people? Two answers: First, the parliamentary Marxists sacrificed dialectic long ago. For them dialectics meant in a narrow sense some kind of method, that need not form the essence of reasoning. They forgot Hegel's teaching developed by Marx through his entire life long work, namely that dialectics is not only a matter of method, an artifice of investigation, it had simultaneously three aspects - an abstract aspect, a dialectical aspect or "negatively rational" aspect, and finally "a positively rational" aspect.³⁷ The second is more a political reason, namely that the political the parliamentary Left has brought in this world has a bourgeois history. That history proves insurmountable for them (Karitzis 22 March 2016).³⁸ They cannot leap over this history. The autonomy of politics they have practiced has been only for newspapers. They cannot arrive at a different political without having traversed the full course of the journey they undertook long ago. Probably, that moment has arrived globally, which is why populism is having a revival.

Notes

¹ Asok Sen, in his article "The Frontiers of the Prison Notebooks," (30 January 1988 argued for plurality of subjects and the problem of mediation, the perspective was never the on-going class struggles. See also Sudipta Kaviraj, "A Critique of the Passive Revolution," (1988). Kaviraj introduced the essay with these words, "The story of Indian politics can be told in two quite different ways, through two alternative but mutually reinforcing constructions. One of these would tell the story of structures—of the rise of capitalism, the specificities of transition, the formation and maturation of classes, the internal balance and architecture of the social form, the making and breaking of class coalitions, etc. The other story would have to be constructed in terms of actual political actors, suspending the question of more fundamental causalities for the time being; it must be told in terms of governments, parties, tactics, leaders, political movements, and similar contingent but irreplaceable elements of political narratives. The second story would be related to the successes of Indian capitalism and its failures, but is not entirely reducible to them...." (p. 2429). Noticeably Kaviraj too misses the central point that only on the terrain of class struggles the two meet. The exception to this passive understanding of the Indian Marxists was perhaps Ajit Roy who frontally brought in the question of classes and class conflicts while discussing the independence of 1947. See Roy (November 1982).

² I have written on this elsewhere. See Samaddar (2007, 2001).

³ Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. The note to this edition says at the beginning, "Written: December 1851–March 1852; Source: Chapters 1 & 7 are translated by Saul K. Padover from the German edition of 1869; Chapters 2 through 6 are based on the third edition, prepared by Engels (1885), as translated and published by Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1937; First Published: First issue of *Die Revolution*, 1852, New York." We shall follow this edition while referring to this book.

⁴ Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*. The note to this edition says at the beginning, "Written: by Marx, January - October 1850 for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung Revue*; published: as a booklet by Engels in 1895; Source: *Selected Works*, Volume 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1969." We shall follow this edition while referring to this book.

Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*. The note to this edition says at the beginning, "Written: July 1870 - May 1871;

First Published: 1871; Source: English Edition of 1871." It further adds under Publication Information that *The Civil War in France* was originally published by Marx as only the third address (here comprising Chapters 3 through 6) separated into four chapters. In 1891, on the 20th anniversary of the Paris Commune, Engels put together a new collection of the work. Engels decided to include the first two addresses that Marx made to the International (Chapters 1 and 2), in this way providing additional historical background to the Civil War; Marx's

account of the Franco-Prussian War (July to September, 1870). In this publication, basic titles have been provided for each chapter in brackets, to give the unfamiliar reader a basic guide to the historical events each chapter discusses. Also, Engels' 1891 introduction has been separated into two parts: an introduction (below) and a postscript. We shall follow this edition while referring to this book.

⁵ It is important to recall the way Marx drew the lessons from French revolutionary history: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under the circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." Thus the past is appropriated, but appropriated as dead, while appropriation remains a living process. Marx repeatedly invokes the disparity of the two times—past and present, dead and living, unprepared present and a revolutionary future, stymied condition and the process of the blocked condition being suddenly opened up by a knife. It is a phantasmagoria. Therefore, "And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle-cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language." The class is thus always facing the spectral presence of the people appearing as past, images of the society in which the working class is living, and trying as one "who has learnt a new language to translate it back to his mother tongue" (Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* in Marx & Engels 1979, 11: 103-05). Class struggle will be thus always caught in two modalities, two temporalities—the relation between class and the people being one of the crucial registers of these two modalities and two temporalities.

⁶ We should note that Marx's concern with the nation and the international in view of the class struggles he was studying was clear from his *Secret Diplomatic History of the Eighteenth Century* (also known as *Revelations of the Diplomatic History of the 18th Century*) written between 1856-57 and published serially at that time. The editorial note in Marx-Engels Collected Works (MECW), (1975-2004) says, "In the 1850s, while studying the foreign policies of European states and endeavouring to disclose the inner springs of these policies, Marx often turned to the history of diplomacy. Working at the British Museum, he discovered, in the collection of an English historian and writer, William Coxe, a mass of eighteenth-century documents, including letters from English ambassadors in St. Petersburg. This find served as an immediate stimulus for writing the *Revelations of the Diplomatic History of the 18th Century* which he conceived at the beginning of 1856, when the Crimean war was still in progress... The *Revelations of the Diplomatic History of the 18th Century*, which Marx wrote from June 1856 to March 1857... was published from the very beginning without any abridgements, as the text was sent in by Marx, from August 16, 1856 to April 1, 1857. The published text was, in Marx's own words, only an introduction to a projected work that was never written. ... The *Revelations* was never reprinted during Marx's and Engels' lifetime. After Engels' death this work, like some other works written by Marx and Engels in the 1850s, was prepared for the press by Marx's daughter Eleanor. It appeared in London under the title *Secret Diplomatic History of the Eighteenth Century* after Eleanor's death in 1899.... Later publications, as a rule, reproduce or are based upon the 1899 edition but restore the concluding pages of the fifth (fourth in the original) chapter omitted in that edition. In this volume the text of the book is reproduced from *The Free Press* collated with the 1899 edition..." (1986, 15: 25); the edition referred to here is titled, *Secret Diplomatic History of the Eighteenth Century* (Rome: Editora Griffio, n.d.).

⁷ This is also true with regard to the moment of republican constitution of India (1945-50).

⁸ As we know, Marx's concept of crisis is strongly related to the particular effects of the rise and fall of the rate of profit.

⁹ Etienne Balibar has written, "This is in the end the aporia, or in any case the difficulty, of the politics of the rights of man: the risky putting into the balance of the power that makes and unmakes constitutional orders through the invention of new rights, or the extension of rights, at the limits of democracy." See Balibar (1994: 224).

¹⁰ For instance, Marx wrote in *Civil War in France*, "It is generally the fate of completely new historical creations to be mistaken for the counterparts of older, and even defunct, forms of social life, to which they may bear a

certain likeness. Thus, this new Commune, which breaks with the modern state power, has been mistaken for a reproduction of the medieval Communes, which first preceded and afterward became the substratum of, that very state power. The Communal Constitution has been mistaken for an attempt to break up into the federation of small states, as dreamt of by Montesquieu and the Girondins, that unity of great nations which, if originally brought about by political force, has now become a powerful coefficient of social production. The antagonism of the Commune against the state power has been mistaken for an exaggerated form of the ancient struggle against over-centralization. Peculiar historical circumstances may have prevented the classical development, as in France, of the bourgeois form of government, and may have allowed, as in England, to complete the great central state organs by corrupt vestries, jobbing councillors, and ferocious poor-law guardians in the towns, and virtually hereditary magistrates in the counties.” “The Third Address, May 1871.”

¹¹ His essays, “Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century” (pp. 30-46) and “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire” (pp. 46-133) are replete with references to Marx’s analysis of Paris and French politics.

¹² Antonio Gramsci wrote, “A common error in historico-political analysis consists in an inability to find the correct relation between what is organic and what is conjunctural. This leads to presenting causes as immediately operative which in fact only operate indirectly, or to asserting that the immediate causes are the only effective ones. In the first case there is an excess of ‘economism’ or doctrinaire pedantry, in the second an excess of ‘ideologism’. In the first case there is an overestimation of mechanical causes, in the second exaggeration of the voluntarist and individual element.” Gramsci (1971: 178). One has to note further that the conjunctural appears and accelerates in the time of a crisis. Thus Gramsci further explained, “A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity), and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts (since no social formation will ever admit that it has been superseded) form the terrain of the ‘conjunctural’, and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organize.” Marx wrote of such a situation – France in 1848.

¹³ The entire book *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* is strewn with expositions on hegemony; see for instance, pp. 270-276.

¹⁴ “And in both cases the irony of history willed—as is usual when doctrinaires come to the helm—that both did the opposite of what the doctrines of their school proscribed”(Marx, *Civil War in France*).

¹⁵ The fable of Menenius Agrippa to which Marx refers can be found in Livy’s *History of Rome*. It can also be found in Plutarch as well as a wonderful re-telling in Act 1, scene 1 of Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*. It even reappears in Charlotte Brontë’s 1849 anti-Luddite novel, *Shirley*. Each of these versions adds something to our reading of Marx. Livy tells us that on the occasion of a plebeian revolt among the rank and file in the Roman army “a great panic seized the City” certainly at least in the patrician neighbourhoods. In an effort to regain control, the Roman Senate sent Menenius Agrippa, a Roman consul of plebeian birth, to speak with the soldiers and he is supposed to have won them back over by telling them the following fable of “The Belly and the Limbs.” Livy writes: “Back in the days when the various parts of the body did not necessarily all agree with each other, as they do now, but each had its own ideas and its own voice, some of the parts began to think that it was unfair that they should have to worry and toil to provide everything for the belly, while the belly just sat there in their midst with nothing to do but to enjoy the bounty they brought to it. They therefore conspired together, and agreed that the hands would no longer carry food to the mouth, the mouth would no longer open for food, and the jaws and teeth would no longer grind up what they received. The belly growled and tossed about in protest; but the limbs remained steadfast in their angry resolve to starve the belly into submission. Soon though, they began to feel weak. Their fatigue grew worse and worse, until they, the belly and the entire body nearly perished from starvation. Thus, it had become clear that even the seemingly idle belly had its own task to perform, and returned as much as it received; by digesting the food brought to it and returning nourishment to the limbs via the blood” (2.32). Thus, the plebeian revolt against their patrician masters was supposed to have been averted with a silver tongue scoring a victory over strong arms. On this see Stanovsky, “Organising Marx’s Multitude.”

¹⁶ Marx's exact words were: "Citizen Weston illustrated his theory by telling you that a bowl contains a certain quantity of soup, to be eaten by a certain number of persons, an increase in the broadness of the spoons would produce no increase in the amount of soup. He must allow me to find this illustration rather spoony. It reminded me somewhat of the simile employed by Menenius Agrippa. When the Roman plebeians struck against the Roman patricians, the patrician Agrippa told them that the patrician belly fed the plebeian members of the body politic. Agrippa failed to show that you feed the members of one man by filling the belly of another. Citizen Weston, on his part, has forgotten that the bowl from which the workmen eat is filled with the whole produce of national labour, and that what prevents them fetching more out of it is neither the narrowness of the bowl nor the scantiness of its contents, but only the smallness of their spoons"(Marx 1969).

¹⁷ The context of the essay "Analysis of Classes in Chinese Society" has profound relevance for us. The editorial note says, "This article was written by Comrade Mao Tse-tung to combat two deviations then to be found in the Party. The exponents of the first deviation, represented by Chen Tu-hsiu, were concerned only with co-operation with the Kuomintang and forgot about the peasants; this was Right opportunism. The exponents of the second deviation, represented by Chang Kuo-tao, were concerned only with the labour movement, and likewise forgot about the peasants; this was 'Left' opportunism. Both were aware that their own strength was inadequate, but neither of them knew where to seek reinforcements or where to obtain allies on a mass scale. Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out that the peasantry was the staunchest and numerically the largest ally of the Chinese proletariat, and thus solved the problem of who was the chief ally in the Chinese revolution. Moreover, he saw that the national bourgeoisie was a vacillating class and predicted that it would disintegrate during the upsurge of the revolution, with its right-wing going over to the side of imperialism. This was borne out by the events of 1927." Mao himself opened up the essay with these words, "Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution. The basic reason why all previous revolutionary struggles in China achieved so little was their failure to unite with real friends in order to attack real enemies. A revolutionary party is the guide of the masses, and no revolution ever succeeds when the revolutionary party leads them astray. To ensure that we will definitely achieve success in our revolution and will not lead the masses astray, we must pay attention to uniting with our real friends in order to attack our real enemies. To distinguish real friends from real enemies, we must make a general analysis of the economic status of the various classes in Chinese society and of their respective attitudes towards the revolution."

Apart from the fact that Mao placed the question of classes in the framework of determining friends and foes of revolution, therefore never proposing any non-class theme of *people*, one has note also the way he used the word "people." He used the word 15 times, never in the sense of people as a composite category. He used it mostly in the sense of "persons," and in the sense of people belonging to certain class. Indeed, it will be a worthwhile effort to see how the concept of people evolved over the years in Mao's writings.

¹⁸ Mao Tse Tung, "On Policy," 25 December 1940. Here again significant is the way he introduced the theme of united front (note, this was a question of policy, hence of specific nature and not ideology): "In the present high tide of anti-Communist attacks, the policy we adopt is of decisive importance. But many of our cadres fail to realize that the Party's present policy must be very different from its policy during the Agrarian Revolution. It has to be understood that in no circumstances will the Party change its united front policy for the entire period of the War of Resistance against Japan, and that many of the policies adopted during the ten years of the Agrarian Revolution cannot just be duplicated today. In particular, many ultra-Left policies of the latter period of the Agrarian Revolution are not merely totally inapplicable today in the War of Resistance, but were wrong even then, arising as they did from the failure to understand two fundamental points—that the Chinese revolution is a bourgeois-democratic revolution in a semi-colonial country, and that it is a protracted revolution. For example, there was the thesis that the Kuomintang's fifth 'encirclement and suppression' campaign and our counter-campaign constituted the decisive battle between counter-revolution and revolution; there was the economic elimination of the capitalist class (the ultra-Left policies on labour and taxation) and of the rich peasants (by allotting them poor land); the physical elimination of the landlords (by not allotting them any land); the attack on the intellectuals; the 'Left' deviation in the suppression of counter-revolutionaries; the

monopolizing by Communists of the organs of political power; the focusing on communism as the objective in popular education; the ultra-Left military policy (of attacking the big cities and denying the role of guerrilla warfare); the putschist policy in the work in the White areas; and the policy within the Party of attacks on comrades through the abuse of disciplinary measures. These ultra-Left policies were manifestations of the error of 'Left' opportunism, or exactly the reverse of the Right opportunism of Chen Tu-hsiu in the latter period of the First Great Revolution. It was all alliance and no struggle in the latter period of the First Great Revolution, and all struggle and no alliance (except with the basic sections of the peasantry) in the latter period of the Agrarian Revolution—truly striking demonstrations of the two extremist policies. Both extremist policies caused great losses to the Party and the revolution" (*SW* 2: 441-442). The editorial note says it was an inner-Party directive written on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

¹⁹ Mao Tse Tung, "The Question of Independence and Initiative within the United Front," 5 November 1938. The editorial note to this publication is of significance. It said, "This is part of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's concluding speech at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the Party. At the time, the issue of independence and initiative within the united front was one of the outstanding questions concerning the anti-Japanese united front, a question on which there were differences of opinion between Comrade Mao Tse-tung and Chen Shao-yu. In essence what was involved was proletarian leadership in the united front. In his report of December 1947 ('The Present Situation and Our Tasks') Comrade Mao Tse-tung briefly summed up these differences: 'During the War of Resistance, our Party combated ideas similar to those of the capitulationists [referring to Chen Tu-hsiu's capitulationism in the period of the First Revolutionary Civil War], that is, such ideas as making concessions to the Kuomintang's anti-popular policies, having more confidence in the Kuomintang than in the masses, not daring to arouse and give full rein to mass struggles, not daring to expand the Liberated Areas and the people's armies in the Japanese-occupied areas, and handing over the leadership in the War of Resistance to the Kuomintang. Our Party waged a resolute struggle against such impotent and degenerate ideas, which run counter to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, resolutely carried out its political line of "developing the progressive forces, winning over the middle forces and isolating the die-hard forces," and resolutely expanded the Liberated Areas and the People's Liberation Army. Not only did this ensure our Party's ability to defeat Japanese imperialism in the period of its aggression, but also in the period after the Japanese surrender when Chiang Kai-shek launched his counter-revolutionary war, it ensured our Party's ability to switch smoothly and without loss to the course of Opposing Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolutionary war with a people's revolutionary war and to win great victories in a short time. All Party comrades must keep these lessons of history firmly in mind.'"

²⁰ V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution* (1917). Lenin drew heavily on Marx's observations in *The Civil War in France*. It is clear that in Marx and Lenin the universal becomes universal only in a concrete way—the emergence of the concrete universal. Thus for both the universal role of the working class has always an attending act of self-dissolution in terms of fulfilling its historical destiny as a class. *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital* vol. 1 are replete with this dialectical approach.

²¹ Industrial populism has been often in the form of a belief and strategy of building workers' cooperatives as owners of factories and workshops, and trying to make them market viable. Yet in the time of recession and attacks on the workers by the capitalists this has been one of the main defence of the workers. This shows once again the double nature of lower class populism and populist strategies based on aspirations of lower classes.

²² For a reflection on the evolution of the working class on a global scale, see Schmidt (March 2014: 1-22).

²³ The new situation in case of labour is brought out clearly in the global overview by Christien Van Den Anker and Ilse Van Liempt (eds.), *Human Rights and Migration: Trafficking for Forced Labour*; see also Boris and Parrenas (2010), particularly articles by Briggs (pp. 49-62), and Parrenas (pp. 132-147). The thin line between freedom and un-freedom of labour that the migrant worker is brought in all these writings.

²⁴ Samita Sen indicated this when she wrote, "Our immediate context begins in the 1980s, which quickened in the 1990s, with the advent of New Economic Policy in India, but is related to wider global trends which dismantled Fordist regimes of industry, ushered in a new international division of labour and witnessed a hunt

for cheap labour across the world by an unprecedentedly mobile industrial and finance capital. In the age of multi- or trans-national corporations, the dismantling of stable labour regimes (which had complemented Fordist industry) has become the key to profit-making. In this economic environment, organised labour has seen the erosion of its hard-won political stake and an assault on precisely those regulative mechanisms which was productive of (or desired to produce) an enclave of a stable labour regime. In the last three decades, thus, we have witnessed the slow dismantling of regulative regimes, more direct and violent confrontations between labour and capital and the undercutting of organised labour. A major aspect of the changing labour scenario is the expansion of the 'informal', which is now appearing as appendages within the erstwhile 'formal' sector as well as reaching higher and lower within the economic spectrum. Thus, even government supplements administrative staff by 'contract' workers; while in the upper reaches of the informal sector, lucrative wages/salaries offset the disadvantages of impermanency. How do we understand these new processes of a new kind of casualisation of labour? It is my contention that placing the process of casualisation we are witnessing today in the historical context I have sketched briefly and in skeletal outline here will help us understand better both the process itself as well as its wider social ramifications" (Sen 2012: 6).

²⁵ Teodor Shanin (ed.), *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the Peripheries of Capitalism*. Note that Shanin kept within quotation marks the words *Peripheries of Capitalism* as sub-title. Shanin also commented, "The label 'populist' like that of 'marxist' is badly lacking in precision; the heterogeneity of both camps was considerable" (p. 8); on Chayanov, dubbed as neo-populist, see Shanin (2009: 83–101). On Chayanov's own views on the resilience of peasant economy, see Chayanov (1986); see also the notes on "The Chayanovian Alternative," <http://jg.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/Peasants/theory09.html>; <http://jg.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/Peasants/theory10.html>; and <http://jg.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/Peasants/theory11.html>; for a critique of Shanin, see Heartfield, (n.d.); and Anderson (November 2007).

²⁶ On this see Patnaik (1991); see also Patnaik and Moyo (2011).

²⁷ The memorable words of Karl Marx quoted innumerable times all around the globe, "Religion is, indeed, the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself, or has already lost himself again. But *man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is *the world of man* – state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an *inverted consciousness of the world*, because they are an *inverted world*. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification... *Religious* suffering is, at one and the same time, the *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people... To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to *give up a condition that requires illusions*. The criticism of religion is, therefore, *in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo*" (Marx, Introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Italics in original).

²⁸ On the crisis in the 1970s I have written in details elsewhere. See Samaddar, *The Crisis of 1974* (forthcoming).

²⁹ On the contentious politics of the time and popular protests, see Samaddar (2009: 153-179).

³⁰ On this my reading of populist movements and politics in the post-colonial world veers away from Ernesto Laclau's reading in *On Populist Reason* (2005) as well as his and Chantal Mouffe's thesis on radical democracy, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985). See Hancox (9 February 2015).

³¹ Information taken from Musto (28 December 2015) and Mudde (12 May 2015).

³² Therefore Ernesto Laclau could never analyse the "people" as a material category or even state analytically what he thought of the term "people" except that it was a linguistic product (hence away from the shadowy notion of *class*, a term absent from the book); see Laclau (2005), particularly chapter 4, "The 'People' and the Discursive Production of Emptiness," pp. 68-128. Class struggle appears only 8 times in the book. He wrote, "So we can say that progress in understanding populism requires as a *sine qua non*, rescuing it from a marginal position within the discourse of the social sciences – the latter having confined it to the realm of the non-thinkable, to being the simple opposite of political forms dignified with the status of a full rationality" (p. 19).

Populism is thus to Laclau a question of reason/unreason to be debated by social sciences; it has nothing or less to do with class and people, class/people, and the relation.

³³ Common sense may mean normal, “native” intelligence, sound practical judgment, independent of special knowledge and training. Antonio Gramsci theorised common sense as the embedded, incoherent and spontaneous beliefs and assumptions characterising the conformist thinking of the mass of people in a given social order. All people and not only specialist professional intellectuals are philosophers, wrote Gramsci, but while their spontaneous philosophy may contain an element of practical, empirical knowledge (which may be termed as good sense)—the germ of an alternative world-view—common sense is in the main composed of superstition, folklore, simple religious beliefs, and the deposits of previous philosophy. Gramsci made clear, common sense is established by a process of consent to ruling class attitudes and interests which are thereby accepted by society at large as being in its own general interests. What is specific and partial is therefore universalized, what is cultural is naturalized to the point of being taken for granted in a view of the world as simply the way things are. Common sense in this way becomes crucial for the maintenance of economic and political hegemony. However, common sense is not unchanging. It is the task of intellectuals to criticize, Gramsci argued, the chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions comprising common sense, and help develop new popular sense, a new common sense, and thus a new culture and a new philosophy. This requires conscious political work and education to engender criticism of established common sense and thereby articulate a coherent philosophy which will be the foundation of an alternative hegemony. This will be the philosophy of praxis, by which Gramsci meant Marxism. Gramsci’s ideas on common sense are strewn throughout his *Prison Notebooks*. See in particular Gramsci (1996: 323-333, 419-425).

³⁴ Mao Tse Tung wrote, “In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily “from the masses, to the masses”. This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action. Then once again concentrate ideas from the masses and once again go to the masses so that the ideas are persevered in and carried through, and so on, over and over again in an endless spiral, with the ideas becoming more correct, more vital and richer each time. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge” (Mao, *SW* 3, 1966: 119).

³⁵ I am clearly here alluding to the lines with which the late Richard Rorty (1982) ended *Consequences of Pragmatism*.

³⁶ Etienne Balibar has made famous the concept, “equaliberty”. See Balibar (2010).

³⁷ Hegel wrote in *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Part One* (1830), “In point of form Logical doctrine has three sides: [a] the Abstract side, or that of understanding; [b] the Dialectical, or that of negative reason; [c] the Speculative, or that of positive reason.” (Section VI, “Logic Defined and Divided”, paragraph 79); in the “Introduction” (paragraph 11) he had said, “To see that thought in its very nature is dialectical, and that, as understanding, it must fall into contradiction—the negative of itself—will form one of the main lessons of logic.”

³⁸ Even in Greece this happened. On the populist composition of the politics the Syriza practiced in Greece, see Karitzis (22 March 2016). Andreas Karitzis wrote, “Based on the premise that the framework in which politics is being performed hasn’t changed significantly, SYRIZA did what the traditional way of doing politics dictates: supported social movements, built alliances, won a majority in the parliament, formed a government. We all know the results of such a strategy now. The real outcome was totally different. There was virtually no change of policy.”

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