

ROBERTO MANGABEIRA UNGER

FALSE NEW EDITION NECESSITY

Anti-necessitarian social
theory in the service of
radical democracy

With a new introduction
by the Author

Volume 1

FALSE NECESSITY

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*Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory
in the Service of Radical Democracy*

from
POLITICS

A WORK IN CONSTRUCTIVE SOCIAL THEORY

ROBERTO MANGABEIRA UNGER



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Introduction to the New Edition

WORDS WITHOUT ECHO

This book is an effort to understand why contemporary societies are organized as they are, and to imagine how we can reform them to empower humanity – all of humanity. How can we make ourselves greater, individually and collectively, we who live in a restless peace, after the slaughters and the crusades, the catastrophes and the posturings, the illusions and the disillusionments, that filled the twentieth century? How can we make ourselves greater, when an unforgiving skepticism has shaken or destroyed our inherited faiths?

The book has two themes. The first theme is false necessity. We can understand ourselves and our history without imagining ourselves to be the objects of a law-giving fate. We can recognize the shaping power of what we ordinarily take for granted: the deep structures of institution and belief established in the societies to which we belong. As we recognize the shaping power of such structures, we can, however, cast off the assumption that laws of change govern their history and limit our freedom.

In this way, we can carry to the hilt the idea that the organization of society is made, that everything is, in a sense, politics. We can acknowledge this truth without giving up on ambitious explanations of social and historical experience. We can rebel against the worlds we have built. We can interrupt our rebellions, and settle down for a while in one of these worlds. We can explain what has happened and what might happen, giving due weight to the reality of constraints on the transformative will, without either diminishing our explanatory ambition or surrendering to the illusions of false necessity.

The second theme is empowered and empowering democracy. The present organization of society in the rich North Atlantic democracies is not the natural and necessary content of some abstract category like capitalism or the regulated market economy. It is, like any other institutional and ideological settlement in history, makeshift and unique in content, powerful in influence, and stubborn in survival.

After the collapse of its one major rival, communism, this way of

organizing society and justifying its organization speaks throughout the world with unmatched authority. Its critics, chastened, hope at best to humanize it. The humanization of the inevitable has become the limit of transformative ambition.

This established institutional and ideological settlement is not, however, the last word. It should not, it need not, and, in the end, it will not be accepted as the best available form of life under democracy. It imposes unjustified and unnecessary restraints on the practical progress of humanity, as well as on the reconciliation of our basic longings for empowerment and connection.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, progressives wanted to combine American-style economic flexibility with a salvageable residue of European-style social protection. In political economy, the European and northeast Asian alternatives to the form of a regulated market economy established in the United States had proved both costly and unjust. Costly because they imposed burdensome restraints on the capacity freely to combine people and resources. Unjust because they were built, to a greater or lesser extent, on a division between insiders and outsiders.

Thus, the governments and citizens of many of the richer countries began an effort to reconcile greater economic flexibility with the commitment to defend the individual against the extremes of economic insecurity and inequality. They began to prefer the forms of social protection that depend less on group prerogatives than on individual endowments and capabilities, and less on the power to stop new initiatives than on the ability to take part in them. The poorer countries tried to lift themselves, by copying the institutions of the richer countries and opening up to a world economy governed by the latter. They hoped that good behavior would be rewarded with rapid convergence first to the practices and then to the prosperity of the better off.

The central argument of the second part of this book – the part developing the theme of empowered democracy – is that there is a better way. It is not a third way. It is a second way, given that only one way, softened or not, is now on offer in the world.

We cannot achieve even the limited reconciliation of economic flexibility and social protection within the established institutional framework. We cannot accomplish it, for example, by accepting the present relation between the advantages individuals receive (or fail to receive) from their families and the rights and resources they get from society, or the terms on which the decentralized allocation of capital takes place, or the ways in which groups are allowed to organize outside government to improve their circumstances, or the extent to which politics is organized to facilitate reform.

We are unlikely to challenge and change this framework unless

we are moved by fears and hopes more intense than the desire to strike a better balance between social welfare and economic freedom. Once we begin to reimagine and remake our institutions, the ties between our ideals and interests and their familiar moorings in the practical arrangements of social life loosen. The attempt to reconcile economic flexibility and social protection, with a minimum of institutional reconstruction, then begins to seem incomplete as well as ineffective.

Economic freedom is only part of the larger ambition of empowerment: to lift the burden of infirmity, drudgery, and weakness, of incapacity and indignity, that continues to lie so heavily on mankind; to seek light in the shadowy world of the commonplace; to give practical effect to the central teaching of democracy, the doctrine of the greatness of ordinary men and women. Social welfare falls short of the more inclusive goal of creating societies that lower the price of depersonalization and subjugation that we must all pay for our engagement in group life. How can we make ourselves more fully empowered and connected?

A message of this book is that a piecemeal but cumulative change in the organization of society is an indispensable — if insufficient — condition for the accomplishment of this task. The program presented here, under the name empowered democracy, wants to deepen democracy, democratize the market, and equip the individual. In one sense, it is a radical liberalism, sacrificing the liberal dogmas about political and economic institutions that liberals have traditionally espoused to liberal hopes about human possibility. In another sense, it is a nonstatist socialism, giving distinctive and controversial content to the now empty idea of a market economy remade to fit socialist principles.

History, however, is not the unfolding of an idea, nor the upgrading of a machine. It is a dark and open struggle, to a degree that the most influential forms of social theory and social science have failed to acknowledge. The idea of false necessity is to show that we can recognize this truth without paralyzing the effort at general explanation in our accounts of societies and their history.

Precisely because we are not fully contained in the social worlds we make, precisely because there is always more in us than there is in them, we can see a little bit beyond them, thinking the thoughts and doing the deeds they do not countenance. History is vision, because history is also fighting.

The themes of false necessity and empowered democracy are tightly linked. The practice of explanation that I propose here extends the way people acting in history do or can think, in the midst of their contests and compromises. It is the continuation and the deepening

of the insights revealed to us by action and resistance: our resistance to the structures of society and culture, and their resistance to our transformative will. It is not the privileged insight of an observer who discovers and reveals, after the fact, the hidden logic of an accomplished itinerary. Thus, one of my aims is to approach social and historical experience from a perspective that enables the programmatic imagination to feed, more voraciously, on ordinary experience.

So long as we lack a credible view of discontinuous structural change – of how we can and do remake the institutional and discursive orders we inhabit – we find ourselves driven back to a surrogate standard of realism in the evaluation of proposals for the reform of society. A proposal will seem realistic if it remains close to what exists, and utopian if it is distant from what exists. As a result, every proposal will be made to appear either trivial or utopian. This false rhetorical dilemma is the consequence of our lack of a believable account of how, piece by piece and step by step, we can and do reorganize society.

The connection between the themes of false necessity and deepened democracy also runs in the opposite direction. The developed conception of an alternative, promising a way to realize more fully our interests and ideals, puts the will on the side of the imagination. The illusions of false necessity arise because we surrender to the social world, and then begin to mistake present society for possible humanity, giving in to the ideas and attitudes that make the established order seem natural, necessary, or authoritative.

By wanting and imagining something else, in a way that lets us see how the something else could arise out of the here and now, we dispel this hallucination. We bring our ideas about society into closer relation with what we repeatedly discover in natural science: that to understand a state of affairs is to grasp its transformative possibilities, seeing the actual in the light of the possible.

The central difficulty in our understanding of ourselves and of society is that we cannot mark out the limits of the possible. The possible in society and history is not a well-defined, closed set of transmutations within which actual historical experience has developed as a subset. The possible is just what we can do next, getting there from here. However, so long as we make a living connection between our ideas about how we got here and our ideas about how we can get to the next place, we do not need to stare at what exists and to represent that stare as insight. We can imagine what exists as the resting place and the starting point that it always really is.

When this book was first published, nothing happened! Many authors have the experience of seeing a book fall on deaf ears. Three

mismatches aggravated the deficiencies of the work. One of them is remediable, up to a point. The other two are not. They are worth considering as warnings about the dangers and the opportunities faced by any attempt to think, in a circumstance like ours today, about false necessity and deepened democracy.

First, there is a mismatch between the message and its form. This book argues for thinking about the next step without knowing the outer limits of change, either now or later, as well as for changing the context of thought and action without having to change it all at once. One of its recurrent motifs is revolutionary reform – the piecemeal but motivated and directed reconstruction of the institutional arrangements and the enacted beliefs that we ordinarily take for granted.

Revolutionary reform in politics has, as its counterpart and ally, revolutionary reform in thought. In thought, as in politics, we can narrow the gap between the extraordinary acts by which we change our institutional or discursive setting and the ordinary ones by which we presuppose and reproduce this setting. We can reorient our practices so that we can pass more readily from our context-preserving to our context-revising activities.

Such a reorientation is to be desired as a means to practical ends: it serves our practical interests in technical innovation and economic growth, as well as our moral interest in the emancipation of the individual from rigid class and role divisions. It is also desirable as an end in itself. It exhibits and strengthens our core human capacity to move beyond the boundaries of a shared situation. The more we succeed at narrowing the gap between the routines by which we reproduce our world and the countless little rebellions by which we change it, the further we generalize the practice of revolutionary reform.

You might then expect this book to offer, in its explanatory part, a toolbox of fragmentary reconstructive moves in criticism and thought. Instead, it appears to present a general theory, replete with historical examples and defensive polemics, in the grand old European mode. Any such theory may seem a white elephant. Who needs it?

The answer is that we never need a discourse in the form of a general theory. We always need a way of thinking through our presuppositions – not all the way through, but just through to the next step.

Sometimes, as in this book, we can try to think down to the next step by developing a general approach. Such an approach bears a misleading and dangerous resemblance to an old-fashioned, imperialistic rationalism. At the cost of its estrangement from experience and action, that rationalism presumes to be capable of reaching all

the way down to its own ultimate assumptions. (See my discussion of "super-theory" in *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*.)

Sometimes we reach for the next step by developing fragmentary practices of intellectual subversion and reconstruction. Such practices show, for each problem of social explanation and each illusion of false necessity, how there is a way to explain what exists that does not make it seem natural, necessary or rational. (See my discussion of "ultra-theory" in *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*.)

The solution is neither the reinvention of general theory nor its substitution by a guerrilla warfare of the intellect. The solution is to wage the campaign against false necessity through many forms of thought. The most ambitious in generality of scope is, on the surface, the most traditional in style. Its work is nevertheless indispensable: to show how the attack on false necessity changes how we explain society and history, rather than diminishing how much we can explain. We need general theory to combat the domestication of criticism and disrupt the alliance between skepticism and resignation, and to show how particular strategems of intellectual subversion can fit together into a different way of thinking.

The second mismatch is between the geographies of ideas and those of political inspiration. The places in the world with the academic resources for the production of works like this one are the very places where the institutional reconstruction of society, on any scale, has begun to seem an archaic and romantic fantasy. The places where the need to find another way seems most urgent are the places where the tools, the time, and the people for such productions remain scarce.

This book was written, over years of anxious peace and political frustration, in the garden of the United States academy. In this garden, anything that spoke against the idea of worldwide convergence upon the best available ideas and practices seemed at best a message for another day.

The concerns that motivated me, however, were rooted in the experiences of another country, Brazil. In that country, as in much of the world beyond the North Atlantic and its outposts, the problems of development and democracy had not been solved by the combination of economic globalism with institutional copying. The ruling ideas nevertheless continued to speak in two languages of fatalism, replete with the illusions of false necessity: the language of a fossilized and truncated Marxism, and the language of applied, positive social science, in the styles then established in the universities of the United States.

The debate about false necessity and empowered democracy,

about the reinterpretation of what exists and the imagination of what might be, applies as much to the richer countries as to the poorer ones. It is a single debate, for all countries have now been drawn into the same worldwide repertory of problems and solutions.

The mismatch between the places where such ideas can be produced and the places where they can speak most directly to a recognized predicament is real and, to some extent, unavoidable. The best way to deal with it is to insist that the whole world has now become the theater of the contest.

The third mismatch is the most serious: the contrast between a set of ideas emphasizing transformative opportunity and the experience of an age of limited alternatives. The fall of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe and its near-abandonment in China, as well as the waning of many of the distinctive features of European and northeast Asian capitalism, have narrowed the range of living options in politics and political economy. The most ambitious transformative aspirations have taken refuge in the labyrinth of subjectivity, the escapist dreams of high and popular culture, and the experiments of individuals and their immediate communities.

In such a circumstance, social thought seeks to reconstruct as reason what history has created as contingency. It takes the established organization of society as its setting until the next crisis occurs, and treats the world before the crisis as if it were for keeps.

The consequences of such an approach for the practice of thought can be exemplified by a standard, post-Keynesian way of dealing with the problems of political economy. The economist interested in the real economy and its relation to politics and culture studies the relation between large-scale aggregates, such as the levels of employment, investment, and savings. He attempts to establish lawlike regularities among them. He may readily admit, when challenged, that the persistence of such regularities depends on a host of detailed background institutional conditions. A change in any of these arrangements, or in the beliefs and behaviors accompanying them, can alter the supposed regularities. A weakening of labor rights, for instance, might reshape the relation between unemployment and inflation.

If, however, the institutional background remains largely unchallenged and unchanged, the economist can disregard in his practice the concession he made under challenge, and go back to what he was doing before. The regularities he attempted to specify will begin to look like laws. Their lawfulness will become stronger if he also presents the institutional background as the natural and necessary content of a type of economic organization such as capitalism or the market economy, rather than as a ramshackle and ephemeral compromise.

The idea that the whole world is slowly converging upon the same set of best available practices and institutions makes this claim seem plausible. It diminishes the felt difficulty of inferring detailed practices and institutions from abstract conceptions like democracy or the market.

Political quiescence will continue to support rational reconstruction until there is trouble in the real world. It need not be big trouble, like a major world war or depression. It may be simply a little crisis, like the international financial instability of 1997-99. The trouble will nevertheless shock the rationalizer into rethinking part of his causal conjectures and assumptions. He needed a real-world crisis to weaken the stranglehold of the superstitions of false necessity on his ideas.

This relation between reason, routine, and external trauma, repeated in every field of social thought, reappears in the practical thinking of politicians and bureaucrats. They pride themselves on a politics of fixes and deals, eschewing both the dangerous heat of popular mobilization and the false clarity of large alternatives. The paradoxical result of their antipragmatic pragmatism, however, is to produce a politics incapable of changing almost anything that matters. It is to make public life sink into a swamp of deadlock in the deals among powerful organized interests that, in opposing one another, share a common interest against disorganized majorities.

A different relation between structure and crisis requires the repeated practice of revolutionary reform: the piecemeal and gradual, but potentially cumulative, reconstruction of some part of the basic structure of institutional arrangements and enacted beliefs. In modern history, such reconstruction has rarely come without external shock in the form of military conflict or economic collapse. Thus, in practical politics, as in social thought, transformative insight waits upon disaster. Can we change only by first being ruined?

In modern history, the crises of war and depression have indeed served as the midwives of change. However, the dependence of change upon calamity is not an invariant feature of history. We can rearrange our institutions and our practices to diminish the dependence of transformation upon ruin. In so doing, we not only serve our interests in practical progress and individual emancipation. We also change our relation to our social circumstance. We begin to create a world that recognizes us for the context-shaped but also context-transcending agents we are. Such a world is safer and better for spirit, if by spirit we mean our power to transcend the established orders of society and culture, and all the particular determinations of our existence.

Another way to understand the central point of this work is to define the central image of politics it invokes, an image already foreshadowed in these pages by the idea of revolutionary reform. (By politics, in this setting, I mean both the narrower concept of struggle over the winning and use of governmental power, and the broader sense of conflict, controversy and compromise over all the terms of our practical, emotional and cognitive access to one another. In between these two poles of meaning lies the middle meaning so central to the argument of this book: practical and spiritual action to reproduce, refine, reform or replace the institutional arrangements and enacted beliefs that shape the routines of a society.)

Two types of politics have dominated modern history. There has been an exceptional, revolutionary politics of comprehensive institutional change, often guided by leaders who help energize disorganized majorities in moments of great crisis, like war and economic collapse. Far more often, we have had a normal politics of marginal redistributive adjustments (sometimes accompanied by governmental decisions to take sides in some moral, religious, or cultural contests of the day), negotiated by professional politicians among the powerful organized interests (always a minority of the population), under conditions of business as usual.

The practitioners of this normal politics now run the world. Contemptuous of ideology and dismissive or despairing of popular mobilization, they flatter themselves on their practicality. Yet they seem forever unable to deliver the goods: solutions to the central problems of their societies and the fulfillment of the conditions that would make the promises of democracy more real for more people. The unavailability or dangerousness of the first type of politics becomes an alibi for the necessity of the second type, thus helping to reinforce the view that our best hope is to humanize the inevitable.

We need a third type of politics, transformative politics, freed from the illusion — an example of false necessity — that real transformation requires the replacement of a supposedly indivisible system like capitalism by an equally indivisible and fantasmagorical alternative like socialism.

Transformative politics changes, part by part and step by step, the context of institutional arrangements and enacted belief that shapes the practical and discursive routines of social life. It combines negotiation among the organized (minority) interests with the engagement of energized but disorganized popular majorities. It dispenses with disaster as a condition for change, and makes do with the run-of-the-mill crises that the affairs of nations keep bringing our way.

Transformative politics is not a good in itself. It need not serve empowered democracy or any other version of democratic experimentalism. Nevertheless, it has a special affinity with democracy, for democracy cannot progress without extending the tools and the opportunities for its exercise.

For the democratic experimentalist, transformative politics counts three times: first, as the way to take the next step; second, as the practice that we must generalize in social life if we are to make our societies both more democratic and more experimental; and, third, as a way to give practical effect to the truth about ourselves: that we immeasurably exceed, in our powers of insight, invention, and connection, all the systems of social and cultural organization that we have established or will develop.

The third type of politics responds to an opportunity of our time. Reconsidered from another angle, transformative politics amounts to a variation on a theme that must become ever more central to societies valuing individual capacities and economies organized around knowledge and its use.

The third type of politics is the counterpart to the most advanced and experimentalist forms of economic activity: those that turn production into collective learning and permanent innovation, breaking down the rigid contrasts between cooperation and competition, as well as those between supervision and execution. In this form of production, people redefine their tasks in the course of executing them, and treat the idea of the next step as a permanent style of action. Here is the economic equivalent to the habitual practice of revolutionary reform, man and machine together as practical reason turbinated.

Advanced, experimental production and transformative politics ring changes on the theme of practical reason and its translation into social arrangements. For vanguard production, the key question is whether it will remain stuck within the network of advanced economic sectors that has become the commanding force in the world economy, or will begin to penetrate the economy as a whole. It cannot, as we shall see, expand its hold on social life unless we reform the arrangements by which people gain access to capital and capacity.

For the third type of politics, the central question is: *where to?* In taking one direction of democracy and experimentalism rather than another, it will also help determine whether, how, and with what effect we manage to broaden the hold of economic vanguardism on social life. In this sense, transformative politics is not just one more example of practical reason on the march. It is the master activity. It pushes all the other forms of empowerment and experimentalism

along one path or another, determining how they will come together.

We do not now live under transformative politics. The third type of politics is a permanent possibility and an occasional reality. It is not, however, our familiar experience.

We were not born free. Far from representing the natural and necessary outcome of a struggle to reconcile popular self-government with the development of the practical powers of mankind, our established political, economic, and social arrangements were once a breakthrough and are now a prison. They impose powerful, unnecessary and belittling restraints on our ability to make the pressure of our aspirations prevail over the fate imposed by our institutions.

We must explain society and history in a way that takes the fate institutions impose on society and on us as decisive but not definitive: for real, but not for keeps. Then we shall already be doing transformative politics in the mind even before we have begun to do it in society.

This introduction addresses three themes: the two that are central to the argument of the book – false necessity and empowered democracy – and a third that remains in the background but is nevertheless crucial to the argument – who we are, and how we can and should remake ourselves. The living person lies at the center of these ideas as the agent and the result, the subject and the object of history. We should accept no proposals for social understanding and social reconstruction that fail to respect our nature, or make false assumptions about how and how much we can change.

In dealing with each of these themes, I seek to accomplish four tasks in this introduction. The first task is to redescribe, in a nutshell, the distinctive character and direction of the ideas developed in the book, the better to pass judgment on them, and to correct or complete them.

The second task is to place the ideas in a context that helps to explain and evaluate them. Sometimes this context is intellectual-historical, a background of ideas more fully explored in *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*. Sometimes the context is social-historical: the hidden record of breakthrough, setback, and disappointment to which the ideas of this work respond.

The third task is to present both the explanatory and the institutional proposals as special cases of larger families of ideas. The reader may sympathize with much of the intention of the arguments, recognizing the force of the problems they address. He may nevertheless conclude that the book fails adequately to realize its

intention. I propose here to help him rescue the intention from its realization.

The theses of false necessity and deepened democracy worked out in this book represent not only special but also limiting cases of broader sets of intellectual and practical possibilities.

In false necessity, the argument exemplifies an extreme of comprehensive, abstract theorizing about society. It also illustrates an extreme in the radicalization of the thesis that "it's all politics." What seems to be given and presupposed is merely what we have temporarily refrained from challenging and remaking.

However, we can accept the importance of formative institutions and beliefs in social life, discard the baggage of necessitarian assumptions with which this recognition has ordinarily been associated, and deepen our insight into the fatefulness, the contingency, and the revision of our institutional and ideological assumptions without going to these extremes. We can refuse to speak in the voice of systematic, abstract social theory, or to treat the structure of society and of culture as simply frozen politics.

The argument of false necessity carries to an extreme the idea that institutional innovation is the master tool of transformative politics. It also takes to the hilt the commitment to loosen the privileged stranglehold on the resources – of economic capital, political power, and cultural authority – by which we make social futures within the social present.

However, we can embrace the larger aims of democratic experimentalism – its effort to reorganize society in the area where the conditions of practical progress overlap with the requirements of individual emancipation – without treating the permanent acceleration of transformative politics as either possible or desirable. We can commit ourselves to the empowerment of individuals and communities without supposing that the main action of human invention must go on in society as a whole, rather than in the lives of those individuals or the experience of those communities. We can deepen democracy without embracing the program of empowered democracy as the best expression of such a deepening.

The point of correcting for the one-sidedness of the ideas in this book is less to take something back than to put something more there: to show that the rebellion against false necessity and relative democracy can take many forms. In the development of social thought, these multiple forms are equivalent, although each is better at doing some things than at doing others. In the practice of politics, however, these alternative directions amount to decisive choices. They encourage some forms of individual and collective experience and discourage others. The institutional arrangements we establish

touch us to the core, although never so completely that we lose the power to overthrow them.

The doctrines of false necessity and empowered democracy, and the ideas about human nature and its ennoblement that underlie them, are therefore special cases of something else. What that something else is, this introduction attempts to state.

The fourth and last task this introduction takes up is to bring out the deep and unmastered difficulty with which we must deal in our efforts to overcome false necessity, and radicalize democracy and experimentalism. In each instance, the difficulty reveals more clearly what is at stake in my explanatory and programmatic proposals, and what they can and cannot accomplish. However, I do not claim that the difficulty reveals the outer limits of our thinking or action, because I do not believe we can know what these limits are. Just as the transformative politics I explore is a politics of the next step, so are these ideas about the understanding of society and history a suggestion of the next step to take in our thinking about society.

In the final part of this introduction, I show how the campaign to overcome false necessity and deepen democracy can lead us to see our basic human predicament in a changed and clearer light. For although we cannot see beyond the next step in politics or in thought, we can form a view of the permanent and universal consequences of this constitutional incapacity of ours. Having formed such a view, we go on to explore its implications for the conduct of life as well as for the organization of society.

Two approaches to the historical experience of humanity that have often seemed antagonistic to each other are here united. There is the recognition of permanent incompleteness, perennial conflict, and inescapable choice. This is the truth that the argument of false necessity enables us to see more fully and comprehensively, as a condition rather than a limitation of insight into social reality and possibility.

There is also, however, an acknowledgment that the organization of society helps to shape the most intimate history of mankind: the history of our ways of imagining and treating one another, individual by individual and encounter by encounter. The influence of the institutions and practices of society reaches all the way down to the most secret affairs of the heart, fostering some human possibilities we have reason to value and hindering others. In choosing, collectively, to travel one path rather than another, we also choose to press more strongly against some of the limits of present humanity than against others.

The trouble is that our ways of thinking and talking about alternatives and about their creation, through conflict and compromise,

have long been entangled in fatalistic myths. When we think we have freed ourselves from their hold, we turn out only to have exchanged one version of fate for another.

THEORY AGAINST FATE

Two types of fatalism have dominated our understanding of society. Each has spoken in a very different voice, and has often appeared to speak against the other. Both have nevertheless converged to associate the explanation of the organization of present-day society with the vindication of its necessity. This necessity may be qualified. As in Marxist social theory, the apparition of fate may describe a temporary – albeit unavoidable – stage in the evolution of humanity. Every deficit in necessity is, however, a diminishment of explanatory power. As the necessitarian claims shrink, the explanatory ambition diminishes.

One of these types of fatalism is rooted in the tradition of classical European social theory from Montesquieu to Durkheim and Weber. Marxism has been its most relentless and influential exponent. The other type of fatalism is represented by the contemporary positive social sciences, particularly as they have come to be practiced in the universities of the United States.

The core claim of the argument about false necessity is that we have a better way of understanding our social and historical experience: one that imagines the actual by also imagining the possible. This alternative carries to the extreme the paradoxical idea that the settled order of society at any given time “is just politics” – a created order that, because it never represents the inevitable outcome of practical limits and lawlike forces, can always be refashioned. The result is not to deny the weight of the constraints upon transformative action. It is to see such constraints in a different way.

The greatness of classical social theory arose from its recognition that society is made and imagined rather than just given as a natural fact. Classical social theory, however, compromised the power of this idea by combining it with certain other conceptions that seemed to be required by any ambitious practice of social and historical explanation.

The chief source of error in the tradition that culminated in Marxism has often been said to be the commitment to functional explanation: the style of explanation that accounts for the emergence and diffusion of a state-of-affairs by the power of its results. For example, a functional account may explain the triumph of a form of social organization, and of the class system accompanying it, by

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invoking their contribution to the expansion of production and the improvement of productivity.

If, however, we pursue the example of Marxism, we see that the defect lies less in the appeal to functional explanation than in (1) the particular causal conjecture to which Marxist theory gives the star role; and (2) the combination of functional explanation with certain repeated intellectual moves characterizing what I call "deep-structure social theory." Whereas the first element may be peculiar to Marxism, the second is characteristic of a much richer and varied tradition of thought.

The need to ensure coercive surplus extraction is supposed to have been, for much of human history, the main reason for class society. The different modes of production, as Marx called the major institutional types of social organization, were supposed to represent the style of coercive surplus extraction suited to a particular level of the development of the productive powers of humanity.

The forced extraction of a surplus, however, has been the overriding constraint and condition of material progress only so long as humanity remains poor and resourceless. It has played a subsidiary role even in the historical societies that Marx and other classic social theorists studied, and its importance steadily diminishes. Otherwise, for example, we could not explain how the level of saving could have been higher in Ming-Ch'ing China than it was in England on the eve of the Industrial Revolution, or why Britain went on to lead an upsurge in the productive powers of mankind while China vegetated in relative economic stagnation.

The withholding of resources from immediate consumption has long been overridden in significance by the power that comes from an ability to innovate in ideas, organization, and technologies. If there is a functional advantage that has ceaselessly increased in importance, it is plasticity rather than frugality: the capacity to remake oneself, and therefore also the institutional setting in which individuals and nations act, for the sake of worldly success.

Plasticity enables us not just to change our institutions, practices, and assumptions, but also to change how we relate to them. It requires that we bring them under our vision and control, diminishing the distance between the ordinary acts that take them for granted and the exceptional ones that challenge and change them.

We have an interest in the narrowing of this distance that transcends our stake in practical progress. For it is only by narrowing this distance between the reproduction and the transformation of society that we create arrangements more friendly to the freeing of the individual from rigid roles and classes, and more respectful of the infinite, context-overflowing life within us.

From these facts arises a possibility of the greatest importance to

us: the possibility of advancing in the area where the conditions for economic growth and technical innovation overlap with the conditions for the emancipation and empowerment of individuals under democracy. A subset of the institutional requirements for individual freedom and empowerment may also serve practical progress. A subset of the institutional conditions for economic growth and technical innovation may also support the freeing of the individual from oppression and the enhancement of his capacities.

The liberals and socialists of the past were wrong to believe in a preestablished harmony between practical progress and individual emancipation. We must reinterpret their idea to replace necessary convergence of these goods with their possible reconciliation. To accomplish this task, however, we need to be able to think and talk about alternatives in the organization of society.

To think and talk about alternatives, we need to extirpate the mistaken ideas in the history of social thought that have limited and undermined insight into the fateful – but not fated – character of our institutional and ideological presuppositions. I give the name “deep-structure social theory” to these concessions to necessitarianism. It is to them rather than to functional explanation – or, rather, to the way in which they shaped the use of functional explanation – that we owe the disastrous false steps in the most influential social theories of the last two hundred years.

Now that this great tradition of thought is nearly dead, venerated and disregarded as a closed and unapproachable canon, or as the prehistory of latter-day social science, we find that its illusions have survived its insights. Those who claim to have repudiated the central tenets of theories like Marxism continue to speak and think as if they remained in their thrall. How else can we explain the use of concepts like capitalism to designate a type of economic and social organization with a detailed, distinctive, and indivisible institutional content? Or the assumption that, in any given society, the interests of a social class have a fixed meaning that clashing views of how society and its class divisions might change are powerless to influence?

Deep-structure social theory recognizes the importance of the basic institutions and beliefs of a society. However, it presents each such formative context as an example of a general type, like capitalism or the market economy. It sees the type as an indivisible system: all its elements stand or fall together. The types are arranged into a closed set or a preordained sequence of historical possibilities.

According to such a view, our deliberate action is the largely unwitting agent and accessory of a historical script we are unable to rewrite. This script is the touchstone of general explanation. We

retrench on our explanatory ambitions every time we are forced, by learning and experience, to weaken our appeal to the recurrent, indivisible type, and to the lawlike forces supposedly governing its realization.

The very tradition of thought most responsible for developing the conception of structural discontinuity in history, and for recognizing the role of our institutional and ideological presuppositions, ended up undermining its central insight. Making peace with an idea of fate, it disturbed the transformative imagination it had also aroused.

If the first set of ideas informing the argument of false necessity is the polemic against deep-structure social theory, the second element is the criticism of contemporary social science. Here I am thinking of those social sciences – like economics, political science, and sociology – that deal with the organization of society rather than the shape of culture.

The practice of these sciences has repudiated the necessitarian assumptions of deep-structure social theory; the ideas of indivisible institutional systems, and of the ineradicable and determinate constraints ruling their history. However, in freeing themselves from these habits of mind, the positive social sciences have also emptied of explanatory force the idea of a society's framework of institution and belief.

Sometimes, like the conservative economists, they have done so by claiming, directly and confidently, that a specific set of institutional arrangements represents the time-tested best version of some abstract institutional concept such as the market economy. Sometimes, like the pure analytical economists, they have solved the problem of how to think about the formative structure by avoiding it. They then see their role as the formulation of an analytical apparatus innocent of empirical and normative assumptions, purchasing neutrality at the cost of emptiness or tautology. Sometimes, like the post-Keynesian macroeconomists, they have reached a similar result by acknowledging the role of the framework in principle while proceeding to disregard it in practice.

The truth is that no market economy can create its own presuppositions. All three styles of economic analysis deploy strategies accounting for the market-defining institutions by analogy to the way they explain rational decisions taken within an established market framework. There are three objections to this procedure; any one of them would be fatal. Together, they illustrate the nature and consequences of the blindness to structural discontinuity and transformative possibility in the contemporary positive social sciences.

A first flaw is the failure to acknowledge the extent to which the concept of the market is institutionally indeterminate: a market economy can be organized in many different ways, with radically different consequences for social life. This fact was the most important discovery made by legal theory over the last hundred and fifty years. Yet it never fully penetrated economics. Its implications must have seemed too troubling to the science as well as to the statecraft of the economy.

A second objection is that the arrangements of the market, like other economic institutions, form part of the institutionalized life of a people. If there were a collective mind capable of choosing these arrangements of practical life, it could not and would not choose them just for the money. To see them as a solution to problems of production and efficiency, and to separate them from the rest of social life, is to misunderstand them.

A third complaint is that there never is a unique and uncontroversial way to translate maximizing decisions made within a framework of economic institutions into decisions about the framework itself. The choice among alternative sets of market institutions can never yield to a simple idea of allocational efficiency, because every such idea can be made to produce results only when we have already stipulated a particular institutional background. It is a problem that fails to trouble the analyst only when he mistakenly identifies the abstract concept of a market economy with distinctive and contingent arrangements: those that stand triumphantly in the present as the last, best word on what a market economy can be.

Some of these institutions may work better than others. They may be better, for example, at reconciling the need to give people security in a haven of vitally protected interests and capacities, with the contrasting need to shake them out of their ruts. Consequently, some sets of market arrangements may also do more than others to promote economic innovation and growth. Here, however, we have fallen into a world of contestable causal conjectures and uncertain institutional alternatives, far removed from the empty certitudes of allocational efficiency within a fully constituted market framework.

Whatever the strategy by which a positive social science like economics evades the specificity, the contingency, and the decisive effect of the institutional arrangements defining an institutional abstraction like the market economy, the consequence always remains the same. It is a weakening of our capacity to understand how the basic arrangements and beliefs of a society get established, challenged, and changed. We begin to see this fundamental structure as simply the residue of countless episodes of compromise among simple interests or of imperfect solutions to complicated problems, improved by grinding convergence to best practice.

It is a one-dimensional view, explaining every structure by extension from the way we account for what happens inside it. From this one-dimensionality, this reduction of poetry to prose and of tragedy to comedy, the disciplines of culture, with their focus on shared, constructed, and contested meaning, offer limited relief. At times, they carry into the realm of consciousness the prejudices of deep-structure theory, as when they rely on the idea of a coherent form of consciousness or ideology inhabiting the indivisible institutional systems that are the main protagonists of deep-structure theory.

Even when they are free of such prejudices and aware of the vital disunity of culture, however, they remain powerless to explain the two-way relation between spirit and structure, belief and institution. The sign of this impotence fully to connect meaning with power, and consciousness with order, is a fascination with spiritual possibilities that seem incapable of being translated into collaborative action: such possibilities are the fantasm of a mind perplexed and defeated by practical constraint. The study of consciousness turns into just what both high and popular culture have often become in the rich North Atlantic democracies: an escape from realities we are no longer able to imagine or to change. This turning of a counter-attack into a retreat further demobilizes the programmatic imagination.

The two ruling forms of social thought – the remnants of classical social theory and the practice of positive social science – now speak together as two voices of destiny. Sometimes, their assumptions and vocabularies are jumbled up. At other times, the theories of Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and others are treated as the prehistory of today's social science.

Whatever the particular form of their coexistence, the consequence is to present the existing organization of society as the end result of a halting advance toward the best available practices and institutions. A right-wing Hegelian conception – the actual in history as a fitful but stubborn convergence toward the rational in thought – underlies much of this thinking. It is a view that remains plausible only so long as nothing much happens – nothing that might shake the routines of the established world.

One of the many corollaries of this view is a sharp distinction between the limited knowledge accessible to the agent in history and the deep insight into necessity available – albeit only retrospectively – to the theorist and the scientist. No such clear-cut contrast exists. Our theoretical knowledge of society can never amount to more than a deepening and an extension of what we already know as agents.

Imagination anticipates the work of crisis. We imagine so that we

need not be forced by calamity to confront the unsuspected limits of our understanding.

I develop here an alternative view in two steps: initially, through an account of the institutional genealogy of contemporary societies, and then as a general approach to social and historical explanation.

The genealogy has both a major and a minor point. Its major point is negative: to show that the institutions now established in the rich North Atlantic countries are not the natural and necessary realization of practical imperatives and ideological commitments, summarized in the triumph of representative democracy, the market economy, and free civil society. They do not represent what a regulated market economy, under the circumstances of mass production and its more flexible knowledge-based sequels, has to be like. They do not provide the inevitable form of representative democracy in large societies. They do not represent the form free civil societies with heterogeneous populations must take. These institutional arrangements – a second nature, a provisional fate – are better seen as the strange and surprising products of a history of practical and ideological conflict.

The minor point of the institutional genealogy is the reevaluation of a suppressed theme in the history of the modern Western world: the limits and prospects of a petty-bourgeois alternative, centered on small-scale, cooperative production and direct democracy, to what became the major institutional route taken by the successful powers of the North Atlantic world. The concerns driving this suppressed alternative have gained new pertinence as a result of recent developments. These developments range from the supersession of Fordist mass production to the interest in combining elements of direct and representative democracy.

However, the defeated petty-bourgeois alternative cannot be resurrected, and could never have prevailed, in its conventional form. It can be made feasible and attractive only if we radically reconstruct the institutional repertory with which it has traditionally been associated. The isolated smallholder, in any branch of production or knowledge, has no future. The standard forms of cooperativism are insufficient to save him.

We can reinterpret the institutional form and the social meaning of that defeated project. In so doing, we enable it to solve a problem that has become urgent in our own world: how to extend advanced, experimentalist practices of production beyond the frontiers of the high-technology, knowledge-intensive sectors of production in which those practices remain confined.

Behind the negative preoccupations of the institutional genealogy lies a positive message. Once we free ourselves from the impulse to

see contemporary institutions as the outcome of a narrowing funnel of possibilities, we can begin to find in our institutional history hidden resources for reconstruction.

The genealogy foreshadows and exemplifies a general way of understanding how the basic institutional arrangements and ideological assumptions of a society are established and remade. This approach has three main elements. Together, they define a way of imagining structural discontinuity, and therefore also of informing the programmatic imagination.

The first element in this approach is sequence. We work with the institutional and conceptual materials generated by an earlier succession of conflicts and compromises, and enlarge only slowly the repertory of solutions they produced. To the extent that we succeed in diminishing the distance separating our ordinary, context-reproducing activities from our extraordinary, context-changing initiatives, we limit the power of sequence.

The second element is the advantage conferred on a set of arrangements by its relative plasticity: the degree to which it lays itself open to challenge and change. The plasticity of the institutional arrangements is in turn causally linked to the plasticity of the social relations themselves: the ease with which people can reorder their relations to one another and to their resources for the sake of effective innovation. It is this second element that justifies the use of functional explanation, and accounts for the parcel of truth in a quasi-Darwinian approach to the evolution of society. We free this evolutionary idea from necessitarian connotations by severing its link with the assumptions of deep-structure social theory.

The third element is the provisional but powerful force acquired by an institutional and ideological settlement, once conflict over its basic terms has been temporarily interrupted. The order produced by conflict and compromise becomes the template for understandings of group interests and identities, for the way techniques and technologies are adapted to an established set of working relations among people, and even for beliefs about social reality and possibility encoded in the practical and professional discourses of society. Superimposed on the settlement, these forces lend it a second-order necessity. Thus, what began as a truce ends up looking like the way things have to be.

The dominant styles of thought play a part in conferring on any institutional and ideological settlement its appearance of necessity. A political-economic discourse and a practice of legal analysis both play prominent roles today in this transposition of brute force and contingent compromise into reason and piety.

The political-economic discourse is a tax-and-transfer-style social democracy. Its intellectual background in the political economy of

the second half of the twentieth century was the attempt to wed the requirements of a countercyclical management of the economy with a commitment to popularizing consumption opportunities. Its philosophical expression has been a redistributive theory of justice focusing on resource outcomes rather than on institutional arrangements, and on equality rather than on empowerment or greatness.

The legal discourse is a practice of legal analysis determined to put the best face on the law, and thus on the institutional arrangements the law works out in detail. This analytic practice rationally reconstructs law as the flawed but approximate expression of principles of general application and policies responsive to the collective welfare, rather than as the contingent compromise among conflicting interests and visions that law really is. By this "noble lie" it hopes to make things better for the people who are worst off. However, it does so at the cost of idealizing institutions and disempowering citizens, to whom the legal notables announce the secret and better meaning of the laws.

Thus, piety takes the place of insight. Repeated and ornamented, the second nature of a society begins to look like its nature. Tired of struggle and uncertainty, people prefer to make the best of what they have.

How does the antinecessitarian view developed here apply to the understanding of a particular country like the United States? It is an example of particular interest for two reasons.

The first reason is that institutional convergence is taking place under the hegemonic influence of the United States. Globalization has become a euphemism for Americanization.

The second reason is that Americanization is so close to the proposal of this book: democratic experimentalism, translated into the institutional program of empowered democracy. So close, and yet so far away. For this program tries to give greater practical effect to an idea of the self that holds a central place in the public culture of the United States: the idea that the terrors of seemingly intractable problems yield, step by step, to the practical ingenuity of ordinary men and women. When these people are properly equipped and freed from the burdens of disrespect and disempowerment, the rule becomes: the sky's the limit. The doctrine of this book, so close to the dominant American creeds, nevertheless remains far away from them in crucial respects.

The United States of today is a less democratic society than it would have been had it not so soon abandoned the attempt initiated through the Freedmen's Bureau, in the aftermath of the Civil War, to combine the economic and educational advancement of the freed

slaves with their civil emancipation. The subsequent decision to treat the racial problem as a threshold issue, to be addressed before the country could deal with problems of class injustice, had lasting effects. It helped produce policies that, to the present day, sit uncomfortably between two missions. These policies accomplish neither mission fully, and make the execution of the one seem a hindrance to the achievement of the other. One goal is the struggle against racial discrimination. The other is the improvement of the circumstances of a racially marked underclass.

The confused, half-hearted policies that have come to sit between these two goals produce some benefits – captured disproportionately by the black professional and managerial class – and countless resentments – felt by the white losers, real or imagined. The result has been to help prevent the development of the transracial progressive majority the country needs if it is to keep the promises of democracy for the majority of its working people.

The way out would be to reopen a road closed long ago. Americans would need to distinguish the prohibition against discrimination from the commitment to rescue the most disadvantaged groups, whether racially stigmatized or not, from forms of exclusion and incapacity they are not able to escape solely by their own efforts. Americans would then be able to lighten the burden that the class structure of the United States – the overwhelming influence the hereditary transmission of wealth and educational opportunity continues to have on the life chances of individuals – imposes on their ideals of equal opportunity and self-reliance.

In other ways, however, the United States is a more democratic country than it would have been had Americans not been so successful in two campaigns that played a large part in the politics of nineteenth-century America. One was the campaign to organize family farming on the basis of a partnership between the family farmer and national and local governments, as well as one of cooperative competition among the farmers themselves. The other was the campaign to decentralize the banking system, making credit available to the small and medium-size producer.

These were not efforts to contain the market economy, or to regulate it, as the timid conservatism of a later age pretends. They were attempts to organize the market in a less hierarchical way. The question they posed was less *how much market?* than *what kind of market?*

We cannot deduce these institutional compromises from an abstraction like democracy or the market economy. Yet it is precisely the accumulation of compromises like these that has given American democracy the shape it has, and imparted a unique quality to even its most elusive attitudes and preconceptions. Our ideals

and interests, no matter how noble and ambitious, are nailed to the cross of the practical arrangements that represent them.

Another, later example shows how the institutional design that has been America's second nature kept being redrawn.

In the great crisis of the 1930s – economic collapse followed by war – the Roosevelt administration proposed two major sets of institutional reforms. They met different fates. Some of the reforms – like the Social Security program – were intended to ensure people basic entitlements protecting them against extremes of economic insecurity. These reforms took hold.

Another set of initiatives – exemplified by the Industrial Recovery Act – was designed both to raise the level of economic activity and to democratize economic opportunities. The central tool of this second set of programs was a series of partnerships between government and private enterprise, regulating competition and favoring labor and small business. They applied to other sectors of the economy a principle that had succeeded spectacularly in the organization of American agriculture. This second project failed to achieve the support necessary to be tried out. Its central piece of legislation was declared unconstitutional.

With the Second World War, however, what had been rejected came to life. The New Deal reorganized elements of the market economy. It failed, however, to master the Depression, which recurred savagely in 1937–38. What raised the level of economic activity was no proto-Keynesianism practiced by the American government, but the collective effort of war. In the course of that effort, the country took up and carried out the second, repudiated set of reforms.

Under the conditions of a war economy, Americans practiced, with a vengeance, the coordinated mobilization of resources and people by government and business that their dominant ideology intransigently rejected. Not only did they do much that the ruling ideas claimed to be impractical or self-defeating, but they did it better than it had ever been done before. They classified these innovations, however, as sacrifice for war rather than as the wartime anticipation of arrangements that might be perpetuated in peace.

Once the war was over, Americans returned to the earlier version of their market institutions, now amended by the commitments to protect against extreme economic insecurity, to manage the economy countercyclically, and to broaden consumption. It is this practice that was codified as the core of an increasingly worldwide consensus about what a market economy required and allowed. It had, however, less to do with the supposed logic of a general type of economic organization than with a singular history of compromise and concession, innovation and reaction.

These events in political economy have been powerfully influenced by institutional arrangements and attitudes in politics. Americans revere their Constitution. For better and for worse, they treat it as a more or less permanent fix, inseparable from the identity of the Republic. When they need to change it, they prefer to change it by pretending that it means something else rather than by amending it outright. It is easier, however, to apply reconstructive interpretation to some areas – like fundamental rights – than others – like the detailed set-up of government. The commitment to the Constitution as a once-and-for-all fix imposes an interpretive bias toward the reappraisal and reassignment of rights, and away from outright institutional change.

In the design of the American Constitution, the liberal aim of fragmenting power has been linked, unnecessarily but enduringly, with the conservative goal of slowing politics down. The Madisonian scheme of “checks and balances” establishes a rough correspondence between the transformative reach of every political project and the severity of the obstacles it must overcome to be executed. A progressive might want to keep the liberal commitment while ridding himself of the conservative device.

Thus, the occasional reinvention of American democracy during the history of the country has occurred against a background of arrangements and ideas that make crisis an indispensable prelude to the transformative use of politics. The attitude toward the Constitution – make the best of it through idealizing interpretations couched in the language of principle and policy – has been exported to the whole of law. In the name of American exceptionalism, Americans have exempted their institutions – but nothing else in their society and culture – from the pressure of American experimentalism.

This American story of compromise unfrozen only by crisis and institutional superstition is unique only in its particulars. It shows the extreme limits of an attitude now widely reproduced throughout the world, with less happy results. We cannot discover how to act on suppressed transformative possibility, in the United States or anywhere else, until we have developed a way of understanding society and history that is freer from the illusions of false necessity. Such a view would replace the retrospective rationalization of an institutional and ideological settlement by a recognition of its singularity, its contingency, its strangeness and, above all, its susceptibility to reimagination and remaking.

The failure to democratize the country more fully, combined with the illusion that the founders of the American Republic had hit upon the natural and necessary institutional form of a free society, help to explain both the resilience and the relative invisibility of the class system in the United States. This system is now as

straightforward in social fact as it is misdescribed in public discourse. The main classes are a professional and managerial class, a small business class, a working class – with white- and blue-collar segments – and an underclass. There have been massive episodes of social mobility in the history of the United States: the transformation of the children of millions of farmhands into industrial workers, and of their children, in turn, into service workers. However, these episodes either happened long ago, or amounted to a move from one part of the working class to another.

Nevertheless, for much of this history the class system of the United States has remained veiled by a pretense of unlimited opportunity and relative classlessness. Real but untypical experiences of individual enrichment, the false idea that the United States had found in its free institutions a definitive escape from the old European history of classes and ideologies, the racial poisoning of working-class politics, and the difficulty of acting politically on the diffuse desire to resist class injustice, except under the stimulus of national crisis, all contributed to this result.

The history of the American imagination of personality and politics is no mere by-product of this institutional trajectory. However, by according their institutions a relative exemption from the reach of their experimentalism, and deluding themselves into thinking that they had found the ultimate institutional road to freedom and prosperity, Americans set the stage for the great moral triumphs and failures of their civilization. They came to draw in the wrong place the line between the unchanging conditions of our existence, which we are bound to accept, and the alterable circumstances of society, which we must continue to challenge and change if we are to escape idolatry and subjugation.

By failing to recognize the extent to which they could deepen democracy, democratize the market, and spur the self-organization of civil society, Americans failed to acquire some of the practical and conceptual tools they needed to reform their country. They sold themselves short on the possibility of finding alternatives to the exhausted options of their progressive tradition, like the choice between corrective redistribution by the federal government (in the manner of Franklin Roosevelt) and support for small against big business (in the spirit of Louis Brandeis). They denied themselves the means with which to give more effective public expression to their combination of ingenuity and generosity. They surrendered to corporate power because they could see no alternative that would maintain the energy and freedom of the market. They prevented themselves from attacking, or even fully recognizing, the severity of the burdens their class system imposed on the principle of equal opportunity.

At the same time that they diminished themselves by shrinking politics, and made the corrigible seem inescapable, Americans rebelled in large numbers against the limits of human existence. They gave themselves over to attempts at individual self-preservation, self-enhancement, and self-salvation. In the name of honoring the value of self-reliance, they failed to see how individual capability requires the guarantee of educational and economic endowments to the individual, a social inheritance liberating people from dependence on inheritance through the family.

Here was a deviation, a heresy, in the development and realization of the belief lying at the core of democracy: the doctrine of the genius of ordinary men and women. It is not simply a political error; it is a spiritual perversion, a replacement of the effort to find the infinite within us by an attempt to deny the finitude of our powers and our lives. It carries the mistaken and dangerous message that each of us can save himself.

False Necessity develops a set of ideas that makes it easier to distinguish the way – the democratic and experimentalist commitment to enlightenment, emancipation, and empowerment – from the perversion of the way. It is not enough to want such a result. We must have the habits of mind, the methods of thought, and the understandings of society with which to reach it and keep it. Because these ideas are an argument against the present, Americanized form of globalization, they are also an argument with the United States and its creed.

How do the explanatory proposals of *False Necessity* relate to the dominant ideas in social and historical thought today? The effort to acknowledge the set-up of contemporary societies as a defeasible fate has left traces in many present-day approaches to society and history. A defeasible social fate is one that combines in its constitution functional advantages with accidental materials and unique compromises, and is therefore capable of being reconstructed in the imagination and remade in politics.

Some such approaches to the discovery of transformative opportunity are specialized and empirical. Others are comprehensive and speculative. All remain incomplete: they fail to connect a general way of thinking about our social experience with a vision of transformative opportunity. Thus, by default, they leave the field open for the view that our basic social arrangements must either be taken as given, or humanized through compensatory redistribution and welfare assistance.

One of the consequences of such a view is to move the frontier of energy and experimentalism to the biographies of individuals and the contradictions of culture. If our chains are the institutions of

society and our songs are the achievements of spirit, we are left to sing in our chains. The reunion of institutional reality with transformative possibility and ambition seems to await the next crisis, as if the will and the imagination needed a violent interruption of the routines of present-day society to make the sense of transformative possibility real for us.

The internal criticism of social and historical thought and the bitter promptings of experience keep reminding us that the present organization of society is contingent as well as imperfect. The attempt to understand it as the natural and necessary expression of some abstract institutional category, like capitalism or the market economy, with its different elements indissolubly connected and driven forward by irresistible laws of reproduction and change, fails the tests of historical learning and practical action. As soon as we begin either to study such a "system" or to struggle with its reform, the semblance of it all hanging together, and having to be what it is, begins to dissolve.

What is recognized to be contingent, however, need not be experienced as actually revisable by us. We may feel ourselves deprived of both the practical opportunity to reorganize society and the intellectual means with which to grasp its transformative possibilities. This combination of acknowledged contingency and elusive transformation taints our present experience of society and infects, to a greater or lesser extent, all contemporary forms of social and historical study.

How do we progress from the acknowledgment of contingency in the arrangements of society to the imagination of feasible alternatives? We must combine a way of understanding ourselves as unexhausted by our institutional and cultural contexts with a way of thinking about society and culture that shows how, at each moment, to get from here to the next step, with the limited and accidental materials at hand.

We have in contemporary social science and social theory many of the elements, truncated and incomplete, of such an undertaking, but not the undertaking itself. It is as if we continue to need to have our hands forced, and our eyes opened, by events that shake the ground under us.

Consider three examples of the incomplete rebellion against necessitarian social thought.

In the study of industrial organization, there is a growing body of work about the sequels and alternatives to mass production, to its rigid technologies and production processes, its stark divisions between supervisory and executory roles, as well as among executory jobs themselves, and its exaggerated contrasts between the domains of social life assigned to cooperation and to competition.

This body of work sees the emergence of a more flexible style of production, providing for customization, flattening hierarchical ladders, jumbling up specialized tasks, and mixing up cooperation and competition – all in the interest of accelerated collective learning.

Some who cultivate this genre hope to relive, in diminished and more plausible form, a Marxist illusion: that democratic experimentalism can ride the horse of practical convenience or necessity. More democracy and more experimentalism would result from the spread of this logic of permanent innovation, expanding from its headquarters in the advanced sectors of industry to ever larger sectors of the economy. They forget that every practical advantage can be realized, with more or less equivalent practical success, through alternative sets of arrangements, with very different results for the way people live and the life chances they have.

Will the new practice of permanent innovation be confined to islands of privilege? Or will it be opened to a broader part of humanity? The answers depend on ideas and institutions, democratizing the market and deepening democracy. We cannot get from here to there by relying on the sheer practical superiority of more egalitarian and socially inclusive institutions. Democracy has no free ride on efficiency. All we can hope for is to encounter no insoluble contradiction between our stake in economic growth and technical innovation and our stake in social inclusion.

The study of emergent forms of flexible production may reveal opportunities to reconcile these interests. It can even suggest the deep affinity existing between the subversive experimentalism on which all practical progress depends, and the emancipation of individuals from scripted and hierarchical roles, to which democracy must aspire. It cannot, however, generate the institutional content of ways of organizing markets, democracies and civil societies that would move us toward such goals. Nor does it show how to think correctly about the relation between institutional options and practical constraints or opportunities. It is not the germ of an antinecessitarian social theory. It is simply another incitement to its development, or another pretext for its avoidance.

History-writing has seen renewed interest in counterfactual history: what might have been. (See the discussion of counterfactual historical explanation in pages 337–40 below.) The point is to develop a method of historical analysis that disassociates the recognition of accident and possibility from the antipathy to structural explanations – explanations that take into account organized institutions and beliefs as well as ephemeral individuals and events.

The central paradox of counterfactual analysis is that once it penetrates beyond the surface of personalities and events, it begins to play fast and loose with our assumptions about why things

happen as they do. We suspend some of our causal conjectures without wanting to discard, all at once, the more general explanatory ideas in which those conjectures are embedded. To keep intellectual control over this partial revision of our causal thinking, we need a program for the reformation of our explanatory practices. One such program would show how the relation between constraint and contingency becomes itself a subject of action in history. It is not just a given. We can change this relation. Indeed, we must change it if we are to reconcile more fully our interests in practical progress and individual empowerment.

Every way of organizing society appears to be determined many times over: by what came before, by what powerful interests and ruling preconceptions are willing to countenance, and by what must be done to carry out the practical jobs of society, as defined by those same interests and preconceptions. By a wonderful paradox, however, this overdetermination turns into an underdetermination: alternative solutions and trajectories can always meet the triple test, with equivalent prospect of success. As a result, events and encounters, temperaments and illusions, have their chance to shift the course of action.

We ordinarily act with almost everything in our practical and discursive setting taken for granted. We work inescapably with the institutional and conceptual materials that past, loosely linked sequences of social and cultural change have fashioned for us. Thus, we seem to alternate between being slaves of circumstance – objects of the overdetermination – and brats of will – victims of our idiosyncrasies of vision and temperament. However, we can begin to escape this double thralldom. To win this freedom, we must so arrange our institutions and our discourses that they invite their own correction rather than surrounding themselves with a fog of naturalness and authority.

Democracy is the attempt to reach toward such a goal for the generality of mankind, rather than for a select group within it. Its moral attractions are reinforced by its practical advantages: we stand a better chance of making a practical success out of social life when we develop arrangements that take advantage of everyone's energy, and go further toward inspiring energy in everyone.

It is by reliance on such a view that we could learn to acknowledge the possibility of sharp reversals and fateful accidents in history without abandoning the attempt at comprehensive explanation. We would then have begun to solve the paradox of counterfactual analysis: its equivocations with our established causal conjectures. Counterfactual analysis, like the study of the alternative arrangements for industrial production, does not replace such a project. It merely foreshadows its content and encourages its development.

A third example of movement in the direction of the approach espoused in this book is of a different order. It is the attempt to develop a fundamental view of social life that does justice to the merger of representation, calculation, and passion in the encounters that form the building blocks of social life. In recent years the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu has offered the most developed example of such an approach. Its closest philosophical forerunner is early Heidegger: the Heidegger of the first part of *Being and Time*.

The proponents of this view believe in the need to find special words with which to describe the exemplary encounters and experiences from which we build our life in society. They are mistaken. No special vocabulary can rival in range, subtlety, and suggestiveness the words provided by the natural languages we speak. For if it is true that these languages bear the imprint of all the theoretical fatalisms of the past, they also contain all the safeguards against false necessity that a first-hand experience of life in society provides.

A vocabulary drenched in our ordinary social experience protects us against an unwarranted focus on either power or meaning, reminding us that power speaks in tongues and meanings are wielded as axes. The words of everyday life also bear witness to the obscurity and the limitlessness that rank among our godlike attributes. No wonder they can help us – in Marx’s phrase – “ascend to the concrete.”

It is a principle of the approach to social and historical explanation I develop here that no major discontinuity exists between what we can understand as agents and what we can discover as theorists. Theory works to filter, purify, broaden, and deepen the insights available to those who act. The emphasis falls on the affinity between action and imagination; fatalism is an attitude before it is a vision.

The cradle of fatalism is inaction; it is the hypostasis and the hallucination encouraged by a contemplative or somnambulant passivity. Hope, on the contrary, has an affinity with imagination. It is more the consequence than the cause of action. Thus, it helps form the possibilities it envisages rather than predicting them, as we might natural events, from a safe distance.

The superiority of natural languages to any technical vocabulary as sources of the words needed by an antinecessitarian and antinaturalistic view of the person and society helps to account for the contrast between the reach of insight in the novel and the flatness of the positive social sciences. In compressing the imagination of structural discontinuity and transformative possibility, these sciences entice and irritate the mind with a false clarity. They picture things in the disguise of people.

Although we do not require a technical vocabulary to develop a fundamental view of the person in social context, we do need this view. We need it to avoid a naturalistic picture of people as the products of the social and cultural worlds they inhabit, and of the forces determining the constitution of these worlds. However, we cannot rightly develop or assess such a view until we have combined it with ideas about how these social worlds get made and remade. We must find out how we can reform the arrangements and beliefs that constitute them. We must discover how, as we reform these practical and ideological presuppositions, we can change the quality of our relation to them. We can forfeit our freedom to them, or win our freedom back.

Until we have accomplished this task, we cannot know to what extent the view of man as the maker of himself is a realistic description or an inspiring myth. Having affirmed, in principle, the made character of the human world, we risk bringing back the fatalism and naturalism we supposed ourselves to have escaped. That is what would happen if we treated our own constitution – “human nature” – as the invariant element in history, enabling us to understand and to judge all the rest.

The truth, however, is that we, too, are on the line. The idea of our power over context is neither true nor false, but a possibility on which we can make good, and make good in different directions and to different effects. Until we have formed a view of the making and remaking of these contexts, we are entitled to no firm ideas about ourselves, only to provincial accounts, couched as universal theories.

The educated professional classes in the rich North Atlantic democracies have come to share low expectations of politics. The search for alternative forms of social organization seems discredited by the catastrophic ideological adventures of the twentieth century, and rendered superfluous by the comparative good times in which these same groups now bask. High culture tells them what they already believe in their hearts: that the places for adventure are business and art, unconnected with proposals to reshape the public world.

In such a circumstance, the conception of man the maker in social thought and philosophy is likely to confirm the story told in the wider culture: frontier-breaking is for the entrepreneur and the artist; sober service to the collective imperatives of efficiency and decency suits the public servant and the social activist.

According to this point of view, a micropolitics of reform and resistance in professions and in businesses, in schools and in families, and in our direct encounters with one another becomes the only space in which larger transformative opportunity survives. To defeat

false necessity, we must recognize the continuing connections between personal and collective possibilities, and the dependence of both upon the reimagination and the remaking of social arrangements. A picture of the person as maker needs to include an account of the present order of society, and a vision of its possible transformations.

In each instance of the footholds for antinecessitarian thought in contemporary social studies I have just reviewed, we see an example of interrupted movement. In each, there is the truncated beginning of an approach to society and history that would break with the twin fatalisms of deep-structure: functionalist and evolutionary social theories like Marxism, and naturalistic, normalizing social science. It is as if the imagination were too weak – too uncertain of its authority to suggest possibility on the basis of actuality – without the help of a crisis in the real historical world. It is both the force and the fragility of a book like this one that it resists the spirit of the time, and wants to make imagination do the work of the missing crisis.

At the core of the explanatory ideas of *False Necessity* lies a view of the imagination. This view radicalizes pragmatism, rejecting the domesticated pragmatism that serves as the philosophy of the age.

Three tenets play a central role in all versions of pragmatism, domesticated or radicalized. These ideas imply an approach to social explanation.

The first pragmatist tenet is the underdetermination of our social understanding by a detached, disinterested representation of social facts. Our experience is so many-sided, and our ideas about what is and what might be the case are so dependent on each other, that we can never close the circle of understanding by a pure representation of social phenomena. We should and must take into account our practical and moral stakes in the truth of some views of the facts rather than others.

The underdetermination of right belief by external reality holds in all areas of belief and action. However, it applies with special force to our understanding of society. That is because our beliefs about social reality and possibility help to shape, within uncertain limits, what the realities and possibilities are. Social reality is not there for us as a collection of natural objects. It is drenched in belief.

Every large set of ideas about society shares, so long as it remains in contact with the most recalcitrant and disturbing aspects of our experience, a self-fulfilling prophecy. By acting on such conceptions, we help to make it true – up to a point. The acknowledgment of this self-realizing aspect of our ideas about ourselves in society is no license for wishful thinking.

When and where do the self-fulfilling prophecies become the wishful thoughts? We do not know, and cannot know for sure. We can proceed only empirically, by approximation and analogy, at the vital periphery of our biographical and historical experience. One reason to prefer a view is that it authorizes and illuminates changes in the organization of society that empower us to perform such tests more frequently and more radically.

A second tenet of pragmatism, domesticated or radicalized, is that we cannot sharply distinguish the method of our ideas from their content. We cannot hold a framework of thought – for example, the “scientific method,” the modal categories of necessity and contingency, or the distinction between “analytic” and “synthetic” truths – constant as our beliefs about the world change. Everything is on the line to the extent that anything is – only some things are more directly and quickly on the line than others.

The third tenet of pragmatism, domesticated or radicalized, is that our collective history makes us. It makes us by forming the arrangements and preconceptions of each society. These organized, shared forms of life and discourse play the role that we are unable to assign to an invariant framework of thought. There is no super-space in which we can stand, and from which to pass judgment on them. They enjoy the shaping role – if anything can – that invariant frameworks and methods of thought are unable to perform.

What is the relation between this third tenet – our dependence upon a historically generated and collective context of institutions and beliefs – and the first tenet – the place our practical and moral stakes properly occupy in the choice of our views of society? Can we correct and improve our contexts deliberately, and do so with some assurance about the rightness of our choices?

The domesticated pragmatism that is the ruling philosophy of today answers these questions in one of two ways. Although these two answers may seem to differ sharply in the authority to which they lay claim, they have similar implications for our transformative work. Both of them deride and diminish our power to create difference in the world: to make different worlds and to make ourselves different in the process.

The relativist version of domesticated pragmatism denies that we have a context-transcendent basis on which to criticize and remake the organized forms of life to which we belong. The most we can hope for is to turn some elements of our context against others, putting the best face on a tradition on which we are not entitled to pass judgment. It is a view that leaves the occurrence of fundamental reinventions, reconstructions, and conversions unexplained and unguided. It serves as the comforting creed of those who believe themselves lucky to belong to the best tradition.

The objectivist version of domesticated pragmatism sees all contexts as open to gradual correction, and therefore convergence, through the trial-and-error discovery of better or best practices and institutions. Such superior arrangements excel at tests we have no right to disregard – like the ability to produce more goods and services with less labor and drudgery, or the capacity to support powerful systems of national defense, or the ability to educate and train masses of people, and to reconcile their conflicting points of view in large and diverse societies.

The most important species of this objectivist variant of domesticated pragmatism is the convergence thesis. According to this thesis, the whole world is now converging, with uneven speed and success, upon the same set of best available institutions and practices. Differences of national culture will survive. However, they will be increasingly disembodied from institutional variations. They will become folklore.

False Necessity is, among other things, a polemic against this idea. In claiming that humanity can develop its powers and possibilities only by developing them in different directions, it also argues for the superiority of a particular family of institutional and national initiatives. These initiatives move in a direction I call democratic experimentalism.

This doctrine, and the view of society and personality from which it emerges, are incompatible with domesticated pragmatism in either of its versions. They reject the objectivist version of pragmatism by insisting on the possibility and the value of cumulative institutional divergence in the service of empowerment and on its reconciliation with solidarity. They repudiate, however, the relativist version, because they emphasize our ability to turn the tables on our organized institutional and discursive contexts – not just by ephemeral acts of rebellion, but by an enduring shift in the balance of power between us and our contexts.

The centerpiece of a radicalized pragmatism is a connection established between the inexhaustibility of the mind and the reformation of society, its institutions, practices, and discourses. We cannot reduce our power of insight and invention to a closed set of rules. There is always something we can discover or produce that these rules – our established criteria of justification and inference – will not countenance. The moment comes when we say: so much the worse for the rules.

The infinity of the mind is the model for our relation to all the social and cultural worlds we build and inhabit. There is always more in us – more in each of us individually as well as more in all of us collectively – than there is in all of them put together, the past and present orders of society and culture.

This inexhaustibility is the most important fact about us. It is inscribed in the plasticity that characterizes the human brain and makes us into language-speaking and culture-producing organisms. Its deployment is the most important instrument of practical progress as well as of scientific discovery. (See another volume in this *Politics* series, *Plasticity into Power: Comparative, Historical Studies on the Institutional Conditions of Economic and Military Success.*)

The imagination is the faculty by which we put the actual under the light of the possible. Our capacity to do so, however, is conditioned by our power to see and think more than our institutional and discursive systems can allow. By giving voice, through the imagination, to the inexhaustibility of the mind, we are able to recognize the inexhaustibility of the real around us: seeing it as irreducible to what is now manifest.

If we were to envisage the possible as limited, according to principles we can discover, and the actual as one of a number of possible variations in a limited and well-defined set of feasible actuals, we would recognize this irreducibility of the real to the manifest to only a very limited degree. However, if we cannot determine the outer limits of the possible, we can imagine the possible only by analogical extension from what we know to have existed. The intellectual discipline informing our practice of such extensions must then in turn be guided by the interaction between particular discoveries and general ideas. We must advance on an assumption of affinity between the character of the imagination and the nature of the real.

If our inability to delimit beforehand the limits of the possible is one feature of a reality that has affinity with the imagination, another characteristic is the decisive importance of sequence. Whatever may ultimately be possible, everything that has happened was once just the next step, shaped by its place in the path of change. History matters all the way down.

The physical universe may or may not conform to this picture of the relation between the actual and the possible. The human world does – or so we have reason to hope. However, it does not conform equally at all times. We can make it conform more. We have a many-sided stake in making society conform more. Part of the stake consists of the desire to find a world in which we can be recognized, inspired, and supported as the inexhaustible originals, the context-defying and -transcending agents, we know ourselves to be. Another part of the stake lies in the causal connection I claim in this book to exist between our interests in material progress and individual emancipation, and this reshaping of our arrangements and practices into something more closely resembling the imagination.

Because of this special affinity between the human world and the

imagination, our study of society and of ourselves is not a lesser science. Rather, it is the exemplary science, the one that has the world on its side – or, at least, can bring the world closer to itself.

The natural sciences, by contrast, are more susceptible to a divergence between the character of the imagination and the constitution of physical reality. From such a divergence arise the fundamental antinomies in our ideas about nature. Our discoveries of what is the case may, in the future, resolve some portion of these antinomies, but what portion we cannot yet know.

Of these conundrums, the one of greatest interest to social theory has to do with time and causation. Suppose that time is an illusion. Then we can make no clear sense of our causal conjectures. Causation cannot mean what we think it means if time is unreal: we cannot detach from sequence, and hence from duration, our idea of causation or our practice of causal explanation. Our causal conjectures would have to be translated into a noncausal language of simultaneous but distinct relations.

At first, it may seem that such connections might resemble those of reciprocal causation. Such a resemblance, however, is merely apparent. For this proxy for causation in the form of simultaneity would have to preserve the possibility of distinct and measurable influences of one part of reality upon another. We could dispense with the idea of such influences only by abandoning, together with time, belief in the reality of the distinctions among the objects or states-of-affairs constituting reality.

Suppose, on the other hand, that time is real. Then we may be able to retain our belief in the reality of causal sequences. We shall, however, have created another problem for causal explanation. If the whole universe exists in time, if it has a history, if this history includes the possibility of its having a beginning and an end, then we must ask whether the laws – the connected causal regularities governing it – are themselves historical, and subject to change.

Is there some part of this history within which these laws hold, with jumping-off points in the early and late histories that we are not yet able to fix? Or are the regularities described by the laws changing all the time, only too slowly to be as yet noticed or understood by us? How can we reconcile the idea of a history of nature with the conception of causal laws?

Are we entitled to suppose that a higher-order set of laws governs this history, determining which sets of laws hold at each of its periods? It seems a fiction designed to please our desire to secure belief in a law-governed universe. Moreover, if such higher-order laws existed, they would dilute the reality of the first-order laws that occupy our scientific endeavors.

At the end of the day, we face an ineradicable antagonism between history and comprehensive causation. If there is a way to reconcile the historicity of the universe with its causal lawfulness, we do not know what it is. Our conventional ideas of causation are built upon dangerous equivocations about time: as if we could take time as real, but not entirely, or not all the way down.

In the social theory presented here – the kind of social theory a radicalized pragmatism requires – causation is real because time is real. For time to be completely real, however, causal explanation must be acceptable only in forms compatible with the recognition that everything about us is susceptible to change in history: only some things are more susceptible than others, and some at a faster pace than others. It is another way of saying that we are unable to establish the limits of possible individual and collective experience.

The very nature of our institutional and mental presuppositions is also open to change in history: the extent to which they are entrenched and relatively unavailable to challenge and revision. They exist more or less. It is not just that they must live in the imagination to live at all; it is that they resist or invite, in varying degrees, the transformative work of a will informed by an imagination. In this sense, they are – unlike natural objects – more or less there.

By insisting on a practice of social explanation built around the affinity between an inexhaustible mind and a reformable society, we free ourselves from dogmas that weaken the transformative will and confuse the programmatic imagination. Such a practice keeps in touch with the consciousness of an agent: he who acts, in however small a dimension, knows that time is real and irreversible, and full of decisions and events whose occurrence is surprising and whose consequences are fateful. We may seek, out of fear, to escape this awareness of unruly danger and possibility. Or we may lack the ideas with which to preserve it and develop it into a comprehensive understanding of our situation. To furnish these ideas is the task of an antinecessitarian social theory.

Can we be sure that the ultimate nature of the world does not render false the picture suggested to us by our consciousness of action? Time may indeed turn out to be unreal. Or, if it is real, the idea of a humanity seeking empowerment and solidarity may prove to be the philosophical expression of a ruse our animal nature plays on us. This ruse may rescue us from the paralysis of will that an unforgiving realism would induce.

We cannot know for sure. All we can do is to advance, in a clearing of limited insight, toward ideas conforming to our experience of will and imagination. We can continue advancing so long as nothing in what we find out about the natural or social worlds

says: no, this cannot be. We can and should move forward in this direction both because we have a stake in making society safe for the imagination, by making it more like the imagination, and because nothing in what we yet know about the natural world provides a strong enough reason to give up.

In this state of anxious hopefulness that is the next best thing to the perfect insight we are denied, we must look around for opportunities to carry on the work. Right now, in this age of disbelief in great alternatives, there are such opportunities: in the development of practices of permanent innovation through collective learning in successful businesses and schools; in the attempt to reinvent national differences and give them the content they are rapidly losing; in the struggle against the vast inequalities of life chances that the present world economy imposes upon humanity; in the first stirrings of a rebellion against a way of organizing the world order that is built upon an extreme contrast between freedom for capital to cross borders and imprisonment of labor within the nation-state; in the inadequacy of the private sublime – our personal experiments with tastes and feelings, diversions and euphorias – as a basis for the development of strong individuality.

To seize these opportunities, however, we must have a way of putting the actual under the light of the possible. In representing the possible as an open collection of next steps, we must remember our interest in carrying forward the experiments in human emancipation and empowerment that the disasters of the twentieth century threaten to discredit and the present form of globalization threatens to suppress. We must, as always, think against our time.

The translation of a radicalized pragmatism into a practice of social analysis, which is the explanatory program of this book, confronts two formidable problems. One is the world's fault. The other is the author's fault. Each requires a compensatory maneuver by the imagination of the reader.

The problem that comes from the world is the continuing dependence of transformation upon crisis. The limited countertendencies to fatalism in contemporary social thought are not enough. The basic reason why it remains so hard to advance toward a comprehensive antinecessitarianism in our ideas about society is that contemporary experience seems to teach the lesson of constraint. We undergo unreasoned constraint, constraint unfounded in a deep logic of lawlike forces, constraint open to disruption by accident and bereft of confidence in a deeper, intelligible order, constraint with diminished authority, but constraint nevertheless. The aping of an explanatory practice attributed to the natural

sciences is both a further consequence and a secondary cause of this situation.

The institutional arrangements and discursive practices that now shape our experience are partly entrenched against challenge, and partly open to deliberate and cumulative tinkering. They have lost part of their thing-like character, but not all of it. We have gained part of our context-transcending freedom, but not much of it – outside the islands of productive and educational experimentalism where collective learning and permanent innovation already rule. The translation of what we have learned to do within these islands into a large-scale scheme of order and belief for all society remains restricted by a narrow repertory of institutional arrangements and ideas. The most prestigious styles of social analysis and professional practice rationalize these limits rather than subverting them. Trouble in the world still seems necessary to arouse us from this staring and dozing.

The required response to this defeat is a sustained and reasoned defiance. We must seek to demonstrate the power of the imagination to anticipate some of the subversive work of crisis, until we succeed in making society more closely resemble the imagination.

The other problem, however, comes less from the inertia of society than from the execution of the argument. Radicalized pragmatism appears here in the form of a suspect genre: general theory. In this form, it may seem reminiscent, in its generality, of the theories, like Marxism, that gave necessitarianism its most powerful voice. We can turn theory against fate. Nevertheless, theory, in this relentlessly ambitious and abstract form, should never become the normal explanatory practice of a radicalized pragmatism. It is only the limiting case.

The normal practice of a radicalized pragmatism must consist in a set of a negativistic ideas – vindicating the possible against the actual; partial accounts – doing justice to the resilience of the present order without giving it the last word or imputing to it a deep necessity; and focused programmatic arguments – exploring the many and different next steps by which we would first realize and then redefine our interests and ideals.

However, we cannot dispense with theory. It must open up the conceptual space within which we can develop such freedom-enhancing practices while resisting the temptation to diminish or deflect them. If we do not have the general ideas that a radicalized pragmatism requires, we shall continue to rely, implicitly, upon some residue of the general ideas that pragmatism seeks to overthrow. So it happens, for example, with all who purport to disbelieve in the claims of Marxism while continuing to deploy

categories like capitalism or making assumptions about the prepolitical objectivity of class interests that depend on those tenets.

This is an unavoidable but dangerous concession to the claims of intellectual ambition in social study. Theory can make the strange seem natural, even when it is out to make the natural appear strange, inhibiting the will it sought to strengthen and spellbinding the imagination it tried to arouse.

What is the solution? To do everything at once: aggressive theorizing and its opposite. What is in this book, together with what is not.

THE SECOND WAY

The radicalized pragmatism of *False Necessity* stands in the service of an attempt to open up a way for democracy and practical experimentalism to go forward together. By attacking the necessitarian superstitions inhibiting the imagination and the will, the argument of the book wants to show that we can, and should, continue to reorganize society.

To what end? In the short run, to realize our recognized interests and professed ideals more fully, without having to take established arrangements as the framework within which we must define and fulfill these interests and ideals. In the long run, to reconcile empowerment with solidarity, and greatness with love, and to strengthen our powers in ways that affirm rather than threaten our responsibility for one another.

The starting point of this argument – and one of the most important links between the explanatory and the programmatic arguments of this book – is an approach to the narrow range of ways in which contemporary societies are organized. We should not view this tight institutional repertory as the natural and necessary expression of a commitment to some institutional abstraction like capitalism or the regulated market economy. At the level of detail on which they help to shape and explain our practical and discursive routines, as well as the strategies we deploy on their basis, the prevailing arrangements cannot be inferred from such abstractions.

Nor can we attribute the ways societies are now organized to the winnowing out of less successful solutions, under the pressure of administrative and economic efficiency. Such forces operate, and their operation justifies the presence of a functional element in social and historical explanation. However, they work together with the limiting effects of sequence, selecting or extending materials produced before. They are tested in local conflicts: one solution compared only to the other available ones. To triumph, the winning

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solutions temporize with the most powerful interests, which take what they can and sacrifice only what they must.

It is a simple point, but one of great practical significance. What we have around us is not a system founded on a rational plan. It is not a machine, built according to a blueprint we are able only partly to divine. It is just an institutional and ideological settlement, a partial and temporary interruption of fighting, a compromise not just among group interests but also between group interests and collective possibilities, followed by a series of small-scale crises and minor adjustments, and full of hidden contradiction and transformative opportunity.

The discovery that we are dealing with a ramshackle settlement rather than a lawlike system has uncertain significance. It immediately invites a question and reveals a problem. The question is: What is the alternative? The problem is that the small part of humanity that can more readily participate in the discussion of alternatives is the part least likely to feel the need for them – unless it, too, becomes caught up in upheavals it is unable to master by the devices available to it. We cannot solve the problem simply by answering the question. However, until we have begun to answer the question – until we have shown that there are answers – we cannot even take the problem seriously.

To resurrect the programmatic imagination, we must struggle against two approaches to the future of society that have divided between themselves our ideas about the reformation of society. There is a view that sees big, systemic alternatives, like capitalism and socialism, overcome or inaugurated in great moments of sweeping change. In this view, we have either a revolutionary politics of systemic change, or a reformist tinkering with the established system.

Then there is the view that change consists simply in the accumulation of practical solutions to practical problems and feasible compromises to unavoidable contests of interest and vision. When there is trouble, the adjustments become more far-reaching, and the conflicts over their directions become more intense. But there is no basic difference between the smaller changes and the bigger ones, because there are no systems, only problems and solutions, conflicts and compromises, constraints and opportunities. If routine politics is the politics that sees social life in this light, then, according to this view, routine politics is the only politics there really is.

To bring the programmatic imagination to life, we must jumble these attitudes up. We must associate the recognition that all change is fragmentary with insight into genuine alternatives of direction. Each pathway of cumulative institutional change develops the powers of humanity in a different way, and encourages some forms

of experience while suppressing others. However, we cannot think in such a manner just by wanting to; we need an approach to social explanation that teaches us how.

The project of deepening democracy and radicalizing experimentalism, and of advancing in the zone in which the conditions of material progress overlap the requirements of individual emancipation, takes its shape from what it most directly opposes. Its immediate adversary is the effort at institutional convergence toward the set of arrangements now established in the rich North Atlantic democracies.

After the collapse of communism, only one political-ideological project seems to survive in the world: the attempt to marry American-style economic flexibility with a residue of European-style social protection. The limited German and Japanese variations on "capitalism" have lost some of their distinction and much of their appeal, as costly attempts to place stability and security above opportunism and innovation. The policy arsenal and the institutional repertory of traditional social democracy have fallen under the suspicion of being too expensive, too restrictive and too unfair.

Too expensive because, transmuted into vested rights, they cannot easily be reduced when, in periods of economic slowdown and stress in public finance, it becomes necessary to reduce them. Too restricted because, translated into group privileges, they help to hold the willingness to cooperate hostage to the slowing or confinement of innovation. Too unfair because they are often predicated on a division between insiders and outsiders: the domestic contrast between workers in stable and unstable jobs, in the setting of an international contrast between capital free to roam the world and labor imprisoned in the nation-state.

According to the dominant view, the marriage of economic flexibility and social protection must be accomplished by diminishing the burden of group prerogatives, while strengthening the educational endowment of the individual. We must ensure everyone a minimum of economic security, affording special assistance to the most vulnerable and the least capable. All these reforms are to be effected by a large number of marginal adjustments rather than by any concerted and cumulative reorganization of economic and political institutions.

This plan is a plan to make the world safe for a very particular version of the market economy, while humanizing the result. Such a humanization is to be achieved without any major enlargement of the institutional toolbox with which we now build representative democracies, market economies, and free civil societies. No schemes radically to decentralize access to productive resources and oppor-

tunities. No initiatives to replace the sleepy, low-energy democracies of the present day with political institutions that would favor a higher level of organized civic engagement while encouraging the acceleration of reform experiments. No effort to rebel against arrangements that leave part of civil society organized, and much of it unorganized, and therefore relatively impotent.

Behind the determination to render the existing institutional order both more flexible and more humane – but only so humane as is compatible with its being flexible – lies a commitment to a way of living. It is a way that banishes great transformative adventures from politics, and consigns them to private life and to culture. Politicians reorient themselves to the stewardship of efficiencies and decencies, achieved by brokering group deals and solving practical problems.

The societies that have accepted this view of politics remain, in fact, divided into three ranks, reproduced from generation to generation by the transmission of property and of differential educational advantage through the family. Individuals may escape their class position, or fall from it. For the most part – and with significant variations among the richer countries – they do not.

There is a cadre of managers and professionals who get not only most of the money but also most of the fun at work. They have passed through the elite educational institutions, and grasp the structure of power and advantage in their country. They take the important decisions and make the things that matter – or supervise their making. Their jobs afford them some room for discretion and creativity. They are in uncontested possession of the sectors of advanced production that have now, in concert, become the commanding force in the world economy. A narrow group among them participates in a power elite, running the major corporations and staffing the upper reaches of the government and of the not-for-profit organizations.

Then there is a large mass of people who are lifted above poverty but locked out of the elite world of wealth, power, and adventure at work. They remain excluded from the network of advanced sectors of production and thought. They do routinized work, or provide non-routinized personal care. Their chief consolations are the family and the fantasies of media entertainment. They know a great deal about their immediate worlds, but little about the way power and advantage are exercised and distributed at the commanding heights.

A working class, with both a white-collar and a blue-collar segment, forms the largest group in this mass of people. In a country like the United States, in which the impulse to deny the class structure of society is strong, and the pressure to color all social

relations with pseudo-intimacy and cheerful impersonal friendliness is great, they may describe themselves as a "middle class." They are workers with bourgeois identities.

They are increasingly divided between a minority with stable, long-term jobs in established businesses and a majority without. Protected against poverty, this majority must nevertheless live with insecurity.

In this majority of people who are neither poor nor powerful, the secure and the insecure working class live alongside a small-business class. These small-business men and women create much of the wealth and a majority of the jobs. In many countries, they exercise a distinct and powerful influence upon national politics. They do so, however, as outsiders to the organizations and the activities responsible for setting the direction of society.

At the bottom of the class structure is an underclass of workers who hold the lowest-paying unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. Often members of racially stigmatized minorities, they live in a world apart, organized – when it is organized at all – by churches and community groups.

The richer countries differ strikingly in the economic inequality, as well as the cultural diversity, among these three main classes of society. They also differ in the extent to which meritocracy – the career open to talents – penetrates the class structure and facilitates mobility: across generations, from one class to another. In all of them, however, society remains divided into these three castes. For they are castes, more than just classes, in that the division between them is both largely hereditary in origin and sanctioned in principle by that most powerful of contemporary religions, the religion of technical and economic necessity. Despite the influence of meritocracy, the hereditary transmission of economic and educational privilege continues to restrict the life chances of individuals.

As the institutional scheme that supports this tripartite division of society has become the only surviving plan of social life, the division itself now seems the best fate to which mankind can aspire. Little by little, it is hoped, the underclass will cease to exist, and the abyss separating the propertyless and powerless middle class from the professionals and managers will be narrowed.

The rest of humanity, as it slowly ascends the evolutionary ladder of comparative economic advantage, will have to endure a long period in which large masses of people remain stuck in a position even worse than that of the underclass in the richer countries, while an internationally oriented elite of the educated and the propertied joins the worldwide network of advanced sectors.

The civilization sustained by these social compromises and institutional arrangements prizes individual self-fulfillment. It slowly

undermines hard hierarchies of gender and race. It broadens the scope of meritocracy, and therefore increases the influence of education upon the life chances of individuals. It is antiheroic, even antipolitical.

More than advocating a market economy, this civilization accepts, albeit half-heartedly, a market society: one in which consumption serves as a partial surrogate for social connection, and sacrificial devotion is banished to the most intimate recesses of private life. What it offers amounts to more than an answer to the practical problems of society, together with a way of interpreting and reconciling the claims of efficiency and equity. Like every other institutional and ideological compromise in history, it gives humanity a view of what it can hope for, and a path on which to go forward.

The programmatic argument of *False Necessity* is a polemic against the wisdom of taking this path, now hailed as the one true way. The polemic takes to heart the ready refrain of the skeptics – what is the alternative? – and explores the direction in which we can start to build such an alternative with the materials at hand.

Nevertheless, the constructive effort begins with a critical argument. The criticism moves at several levels, all the way from the argument that the dominant project fails on its own terms (a relatively internal line of criticism) to the claim that we should not accept as sufficient the authority of the goals toward which that project works (a relatively external line of criticism). The insufficiency of the goals is both so extreme and so laden with consequence that we cannot correct the project simply by adding to it what it has slighted. We must rethink and reorient it in its ends as well as in its means.

The contrast between criticisms from the inside and criticisms from the outside is one of emphasis rather than of kind. In attacking the institutional devices favored by a large political-economic endeavor such as the one that now holds sway in the world, we end up undermining the ideal conception at its core. The reason is the reciprocal connection (in a certain analytical vocabulary, the “internal relation”) between our understanding of our ideals and interests and the practical arrangements to which we entrust their realization.

Part of what we mean by the interests we recognize and the ideals we profess lies in their habitual forms of realization. Another part transcends these forms, pointing to inchoate anxieties and aspirations that the institutions and practices never fully satisfy. So long as the potential divergence between the two sets of references remains muffled by resignation, habit, and sheer cluelessness about what else to do, we are seduced into embracing our collective fate

– the fate of that second nature that every ordering of human life imposes on us. However, as soon as we begin to see the potential for divergence between the two references – the reference to the floating fears and hopes and the reference to the accustomed social forms – we start to gain a freedom that we may at first experience as disorientation and danger.

The ruling project – the commitment to achieve a combination of American-style economic flexibility with European-style social protection through recombinations and adjustments of the practices and institutions now established in the rich North Atlantic democracies – is pursued in a space defined by two rejected extremes. One extreme is a blind trust in the market – identified with the current, especially the American, version of market institutions. The other extreme is the rearguard defense of social democracy at any cost – identified with the achievements of the European welfare state, and with the rights and wage levels won by the labor movements that have supported that state. The implicit background is the acceptance of a form of life in which class and caste hierarchies are to be only slowly moderated by the advance of meritocracy as well as by the universality of basic social and civic entitlements, while great adventures and experiments are to be relegated to culture and business, if not to the most intimate realms of subjective life.

Transposed into a global economic order, marked by the relative freedom of capital and the relative unfreedom of labor to move across national frontiers, this project begins to seem like a universal fate. To embrace this fate or to languish in poverty and despotism appear to be the sole options open to the vast majority of humanity, in the developing and postcommunist countries.

The best we can hope for is to humanize this fate as we embrace it. There are several forms of humanization. One device of humanization is to see to it that every individual citizen and worker will be able to command a minimum of economic and educational endowments, ensuring him the chance to gain the capacities required for him to thrive in the midst of economic and technological innovation. Universal endowments, backed up by a limited redistribution of assets as well as by the customary devices of tax-and-transfer, must increasingly stand in the place of the group prerogatives that slow down growth and innovation, separating insiders from outsiders and denying jobs to many while securing benefits for some.

Another device of humanization is to direct special effort to the most vulnerable part of the population. To educate it, to rescue it from the condition of unskilled labor, to prevent it from falling into an imprisoning destitution. For the able-bodied and able-minded,

these efforts to help should always be linked to a requirement of readiness to train, to work, and, more generally, to accept individual responsibility and self-reliance.

Yet another form of humanization is the determination to preserve the hard-won status of dignified and organized labor in the rich countries against a free-for-all of global economic competition that would turn the rights of labor into a competitive disadvantage. For free competition to thrive, we must not allow it to pit the poorest workers and countries against an organized labor force that struggled for generations to increase the wage-take from national income, to establish guarantees against extreme job insecurity, and to prevent the triumph of the market from undermining all obligations of solidarity.

According to the humanizers, the way to reconcile more worldwide free trade with a preservation of standards of fairness for labor is to insist on minimal basic rights and conditions for workers worldwide, while allowing broad latitude in competition on the basis of wage levels. It is to reject the crude economic idea that the distinction between the aspects of a working person's status that are counted in money and those that are not is arbitrary.

Must we humanize the "inevitable"? Or can we defy and remake it? Must we settle for this limited spiritualization of the ends of a commercial society? Can we indeed humanize and spiritualize it, even to the limited extent it promises, without also reorganizing it? How can we hope to reorganize it without being able to count on calamity as the midwife of change? Can we make ourselves big by making our politics little? Is there any program for the remaking of our arrangements that deserves, after the discrediting of statist leftism, to trump both neoliberalism and institutionally conservative social democracy? Are eight generations of occasionally catastrophic ideological adventurism enough, or must we prepare for more? How can this more come to be a collective accomplishment of humanity rather than the imposition of a self-anointed vanguard? How, once we abandon the view that history has a script waiting to be acted out, can each of us reconcile the long historical time in which this drama of danger and empowerment must be played out, with the brief biographical time each of us is given? What should we fear more — imparting to politics the imaginings of religion, or reducing politics to the reckonings of economics?

The most immediate objection to the one true way is that the effort to reconcile American-style economic flexibility with European social protection, with only limited and localized institutional adjustments, proves impractical.

To equip and endow the individual, we must create a counter-

weight to the shaping of his life chances by the transmission, through the family, of economic and educational advantage. We may begin by seeking to give each individual a minimal pool of resources – a social inheritance, in the form of an individualized social endowment account on which he can draw for crucial initiatives in his life. The minimum may be topped up according to the two contrasting principles of special compensation for individual need and extraordinary reward for exceptional demonstrated capacity.

Soon, however, we find ourselves in a struggle. First we must guarantee, by an increase of taxation and a redirection of public spending, the resources needed to make this endowment significant. Then we need to give the masses of ordinary, working-class youth access to an education centered on the development of core analytical capacities. Without such educational opportunity, social inheritance remains little more than a shrinking shield against poverty, rather than becoming an instrument of enterprise. Next, we have to ensure that the social-endowment accounts are held in a way that protects their value while tapping their potential for productive investment. Finally, we must limit the vast competitive advantages that continue to be funneled to the children of privileged families.

These complications are not objections to the program of individual endowment. They are simply objections to any attempt to realize that program without beginning to reorganize more broadly the arrangements by which people acquire economic and educational opportunity. The closer the program of individual endowment comes to offering a latter-day version of a static and isolated transfer of assets – on the model of the nineteenth-century commitment to guarantee the yeoman worker “forty acres and a mule” – the easier it will be to reconcile with institutional conservatism. However, the less effective a corrective to the tyranny of inheritance over opportunity it will prove to be. Not the isolated small-scale producer but the empowered worker and citizen, available for cooperative initiative on a larger scale, should be the purpose of the endowment.

The same contradiction between a professed commitment and its institutional assumptions applies to the goal of economic flexibility. That goal cannot be realized adequately through the decentralization and reform of big business. It requires not only the engagement of small business but also the economic empowerment of teams of small-scale entrepreneurs and skilled workers who perform services and move in and out of business, under contractual forms rather than corporate regimes. For such groups to gain access to the capital, the expertise, and the technology required by advanced production,

we may need to invent new forms of decentralized allocation of productive resources and opportunities.

Such an innovation may begin with decentralized and experimentalist forms of partnership between government and private enterprise. The point would be to help lay the economic, legal, and educational basis for networks of cooperative competition among small enterprises as well as among short-lived teams of professionals and service workers. These networks would serve their members as means of access to the practices of collective learning and permanent innovation that have come to define the most innovative styles of production. They would begin to develop among themselves, and with the public or private funds and support centers on which they relied, different ways of breaking up and recombining the faculties that constitute the property right. From such experiments, alternative regimes of private and social property would eventually emerge.

Both the innovations required to equip the individual for effective initiative and those needed to expand access to capital, credit, and technology depend, for their development, upon changes in the organization of politics, government, and civil society. To be established and sustained, they would require political arrangements supporting a high level of organized civic engagement, constitutional provisions favoring the rapid resolution of programmatic deadlock (for example, through referenda or anticipated elections), and a combination of legal facilities and fiscal favors encouraging voluntary action and association by the disorganized interests in society, and ensuring the resources with which to act.

Without a readiness to reorganize society, the supposed synthesis of social protection and economic flexibility will end up meaning what it has thus far meant in fact: the sacrifice of some of the inherited net of social protection to a dogmatic version of economic flexibility. Once we start to reshape our social arrangements, to realize the promised marriage of flexibility and protection more effectively, we begin to see the promise with different eyes. Our understanding of group interests and professed social ideals begins to change, as the underlying ground of practices and institutions shakes and shifts. We face choices of direction we had never envisaged until then.

Consider now a second level of argument against the one true way – a level that is neither entirely internal to its conception of its own work, nor wholly foreign to that conception or reliant on an independent view of human possibility. It is the most telling level of argument, because it appeals to concerns that must motivate, guide, and justify any progressive alternative.

There are, on this most significant plane, four connected but distinct complaints that humanity has against the commitment to

converge, worldwide, upon some version of the economic and political institutions now entrenched in the rich North Atlantic world.

First is the argument from the insufficiency of acquiescence in the present distribution of comparative advantage as a condition of growth.

For one thing, no version of the market economy is capable of guaranteeing its own preconditions. The most important of these requirements is the formation of educated citizens and capable workers. Nor can we expect the benefits of economic growth to feed spontaneously back into the development of such workers and citizens. Creating them may mean challenging powerful interests and hallowed prejudices. It may, for example, require forcing some people to make greater sacrifices for the sake of other people's children.

For another thing, national governments always tilt the scales of comparative advantage and disadvantage in the world economy. The outright subsidies that so disturb the conventional economist are simply one of the cruder and more quantifiable forms of this tilting. (War has been the other crude, and less measurable, form.) What may look like a subsidy from this standpoint, however, may from another perspective look like an early move in the opening up of the market to more people and greater organizational variety.

The tilting is likely to be the more effective the more it combines the experimental anarchy that is the genius of the market economy with a wealth of cooperative practices. Among such practices are strategic coordination between government and business, and the pooling of resources and ideas by businesses that otherwise compete. The project of the one true way, and the dogmatic ideas inspiring it, freeze us into arrangements that prevent us from joining the benefits of decentralization and teamwork more fully together. No country, other than a city-state, has ever risen to wealth and power by kowtowing to the gospel of patience and passivity.

Next comes the argument from inequality. The program of the one true way treats retrospective tax-and-transfer, together with investment in education, as sufficient to redress extreme inequality and exclusion. But what if, as in much of the world, the turn to the market takes place in conditions of extreme social division and hierarchy? And what if, as today, these local conditions are aggravated by characteristics of the global economy such as the decisive influence enjoyed by a worldwide network of advanced sectors of production, and the sharp contrast between the grant to capital of a right to cross national frontiers and the denial of the same right to labor? Under such circumstances, the turn to the market is likely to

mean the dictatorship of a minority that enjoys access to the market over a majority that does not.

The dominant project trusts “social safety nets,” financed by tax-and-transfer, to redress these inequalities in the short run. It trusts education to prevent them in the long run.

Historical experience fails to support either hope.

A simple thought experiment reveals why tax-and-transfer is not enough. If massive inequalities are rooted in structural divisions between advanced and backward sectors of the economy, compensatory transfers would also have to be massive to redress them. Given the real structure of disadvantage and the alliances between political power and propertied interest, such massive corrective redistribution is very unlikely to take place. If it did occur, the result would be to begin disorganizing the incentives and arrangements shaping the favored, organized, internationalized, and advanced economy. It would begin to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.

The logic of the thought experiment also applies to investment in education. For the only investment in education that would be capable of redressing and reversing the evils of extreme inequality would be expensive in terms of cost, and radical in terms of reach. It would either not occur, or occur as part of a broader attempt to establish the institutional foundations of a popular market economy and a high-energy democracy: one that favors a heightening of organized civic engagement and a quickening of transformative politics.

Retrospective and compensatory redistribution has worked, even in relatively more equal societies, as an accessory to structural reform in economic and political institutions, not as a surrogate for such reform. The reforms that matter most today are those that would narrow and begin to overcome the gap between the vanguard and rearguard sectors of the economy. Such reforms would compensate for the lack of labor mobility that played so important a role in the earlier, late-nineteenth-century episode of globalization.

A third objection to the project of the one true way is the argument from the unstable relation between economics and politics. The reform enterprise laid out on paper, in the pronouncements of its theoreticians and operatives, is an economic undertaking that no real politics can serve. To become feasible, it must be either retrenched or radicalized, becoming either much less or much more than the enterprise those pronouncements describe.

The real neoliberalism, as distinguished from neoliberalism in books, is selective. It does not carry the market program to the point of undermining the monied interests. It merely forces this interest, in the name of adaptation to the new realities of the world economy, to make sacrifices in return for compensations.

The business elites of each country will have a chance to join the global network of productive vanguards. Meanwhile, the state, reduced in its power to defy the financial markets or to formulate and fund an alternative, rebellious strategy of economic growth, must ensure the conditions of social peace. It must avoid the extremes of social suffering, and prepare the working-class population for its gradual and progressive incorporation into the globalized economy. Working men and women must wait.

However, they will not wait. Like their propertied bosses, they live in biographical rather than historical time. They want to be rescued now. They will seek in politics a revenge against economics. If they see no other way out, they will elect leaders and movements that promise immediate solutions, even if those solutions amount to a self-defeating populist nationalism that retreats from integration into the world economy and tries to correct the inadequacy of compensatory redistribution by insisting on more of it. Thus, political economy degenerates into a pendular swing between an exclusionary orthodoxy and a self-subverting populism. The swing is repeated in more limited form in the political-business cycle of the rich economies.

To be applied, in very divided and unequal societies, without selective compliance in favor of the well-off, and in accordance with its official teaching, the dominant project needs a broad popular base. However, it can gain such a base only by offering to do more for the working-class majority. It must democratize the market economy in the interest of the ordinary worker.

It must ensure that government has the resources, abilities, and powers necessary to equip him with knowledge and capacity, and protect him against economic insecurity and physical infirmity. It must even begin to give him a measure of social endowment, financed by a redistribution of assets, to make up for the lack of family inheritance. And to accomplish these tasks, it must be able to rely on political institutions that encourage civic engagement, facilitate reform, and advance the more inclusive organization of civil society.

Thus, in the course of its application, the orthodox program becomes either less or more than it professes to be. It can be applied according to its letter only in relatively more equal societies, transformed by generations of class conflict and ideological struggles that have helped to reduce the most savage inequalities of circumstance and opportunity. Must every country relive these sufferings and commotions before it can safely tread the one true way?

The combination of a generations-long period of equalizing conflict with a liberal/neoliberal aftermath is not a combination on which we could or should act. It is as much a mirage as the

canonical doctrine of neoliberalism – the teaching of the one true way – is a fiction. The work of a progressive alternative is to replace this impossible combination.

The fourth complaint against the dominant program is the argument from the emptying out of national differences. The intended outcome of the project is institutional convergence: all the countries of the world begin to converge upon the same set of best available practices. Differences among cultures survive as style, disembodied from institutions.

As countries emulate one another, receiving and recombining, for the sake of survival and success, practices and institutions drawn from the richest and most powerful societies, and as the revolutionary gospel of personal fulfillment spreads throughout the world on the wings of Western popular and high culture, real differences diminish. The collective identity of each nation becomes detached from a richly textured set of traditions and arrangements.

The will to national difference, however, survives the waning of actual differences. As nations begin to resemble one another in much of the practical organization of life, as well as in the aspirations of their people for individual consumption and liberation, this will to difference may be excited rather than quieted. Two nations, close together and becoming more alike, may even come to hate each other for their similarity. The more bereft of a presence in social practices and institutions this will to difference becomes, the greater the dangers it presents. Intransigent and absolute, because empty and disoriented, it turns into a scourge.

We have both a negative and a positive reason to value institutional divergence. The negative reason is to prevent the separation of the will to difference from actual difference. Civilizations live in institutions. They remain or become themselves only in the institutional forms they forge. The positive reason is to develop the powers and possibilities of humanity in the only way they can be developed: in contrasting and communicating directions.

A world of democracies is a world that must strengthen rather than weaken such divergence. It must do so less on the basis of the collective differences we have inherited than of the collective differences we can develop. We can build only with what we have. Nevertheless, under democracy, prophecy speaks louder than memory.

From this vantage point, worldwide institutional convergence represents both an error and an evil. Humanity must continue to try out different forms of life, clothing each in different institutional orders. However, if the ideas animating the argument of this book are right, mankind should let no order survive that fails to provide its participants with the means to question, correct, and reinvent it.

Nor should an acceptable international regime force an individual to remain forever trapped in a form of common life that violates his nature. He should be free to escape his country. A condition of the benefit of institutional divergence is the gradual establishment of what must become a universal right: the right of the individual to leave his country and join another.

False Necessity explores one route to the advancement of democracy and experimentalism. The premise of the argument for this pathway – labeled here “empowered democracy” – is that the present institutional settlement in the rich countries imposes costly and unnecessary restraints on our recognized interests and professed ideals. It restricts both the practical progress of society – socially inclusive economic growth and technological innovation – and the development of independent personality – the creation of individuals capable of directing their own lives and of cooperating, from a position of strength, with others.

The established settlement, even as refined and perfected by the project of worldwide institutional convergence, restricts the possibilities of practical progress. It does so by narrowing access to productive resources and opportunities, and by denying to vast numbers of ordinary people the means to develop their capacities. At the same time, it fails to push forward the subversion of class privilege and class hierarchy. Class is now precariously balanced, in the richer and relatively democratic societies, with meritocracy.

We can have more scope for the organized practical anarchy that is the genius of the market economy, and more emancipation of the individual from rigid roles and hierarchies. Not only can we enjoy more of each of these goods, but we can also diminish – although we cannot abolish – their interference with each other. However, we cannot achieve these goals within the limits of present arrangements. We must reshape our institutions and practices, and reform the beliefs that help support them.

In the organization of the economy, the central idea of the program of empowered democracy is to move toward a property regime disaggregating and recombining, among governments, independent funds, and ultimate capital-takers, the component elements of the traditional property right. This regime increases both our access to productive resources and opportunities, and the ways in which they can be deployed and combined.

In the organization of politics and government, the guiding aim is to forge a high-energy politics. Such a politics requires and encourages a high level of organized civic engagement. It develops the plebiscitarian potency of some of the fixtures of contemporary politics – like the presidency under a presidential regime – while

favoring the rapid resolution of deadlock. It joins elements of direct and representative democracy. It disassembles and reinvents the institutional repertory of conservative constitutional liberalism, clinging to the liberal commitment to fragment power while repudiating all the devices that were designed to slow politics down.

In the organization of civil society, the goal of empowered democracy is to encourage association outside the state by devices that either reform or complement traditional contract and corporate law. To this end, we must develop the legal devices as well as the fiscal and financial bases of a realm of social life that is neither political nor commercial, that is public but not statist.

In the design of rights and the endowment of the individual, empowered democracy seeks to strengthen our experimental capacities – our ability to try out alternative arrangements among ourselves. To experiment safely and effectively, we must be secure and feel secure in the possession of safeguards and tools that are not forever at risk in the midst of this quickened pace of collective innovation.

The central concern of this program is the lifting of the ordinary lives of ordinary people to a higher level of capacity and intensity. This recognition of the genius of ordinary men and women is the core doctrine of democracy. It is a doctrine requiring from us a continued readiness to renew the institutional structure of society and therefore, also, the conceptions of possible and desirable human association that any such structure embodies.

The campaign to find and nourish greatness in ordinary humanity can be translated into both a narrower and a broader commitment. The narrower effort is to advance in the zone where the institutional conditions of material progress, including economic growth and technological innovation, intersect with the institutional conditions for the further emancipation of individuals from rigid positions of caste, class, and role. The surrender of people's life chances to the degrading logic of such schemes of social hierarchy and division is one major aspect of the evil from which democracy would deliver us.

We must not replace the dogmatic optimism of belief in a preestablished harmony between practical progress and individual emancipation, so characteristic of the liberal and socialist doctrines we inherited from the nineteenth century, with an equally dogmatic belief in a tragic conflict between these goods. Both the meaning of each of these two sets of goods and the extent to which each either reinforces or threatens the other depend on the detailed institutional forms of each. We are entitled to hope that, by reforming our practices and institutions, we can reconcile them more fully without ever suppressing the tension between them. This hope is reasonable,

because both practical progress and individual emancipation depend on the acceleration of collective learning, and on greater freedom to recombine people, ideas, and resources.

Some sets of institutional conditions that would sustain practical progress fail to favor individual emancipation. Some ways of organizing society that promote individual emancipation represent obstacles to economic growth and innovation. We need to identify the area of possible overlap between the institutional bases of each of these families of goods, and to move forward in that area. Instead of acting according to a blueprint, we advance along a trajectory defined by a sequence of changes that can be described at many points, some close to present reality and some distant from it. The programmatic argument of *False Necessity* works out one such alternative, described at a point relatively distant from the present organization of the rich Western democracies.

The effort to raise the powers of humanity, and therefore the experience of life, to a higher level of intensity also looks up from the marriage of practical progress and individual emancipation to the reconciliation of greatness and solidarity, transcendence and connection. It is a response to our basic existential predicament, as well as an attempt to seize an opportunity for empowerment. Once we reconsider the goal in this light, we can begin to give a partial answer to the question: What are this intensification of experience and this strengthening of capacity for, and to what end should we use them?

The claim of democratic experimentalism rests in part on its promise to contribute to the achievement of interests like those invoked by the earlier objections to the contemporary consensus. These interests range from our stake in the preservation and reinvention of national differences to our desire to avoid extreme social inequality and insecurity, and they culminate in the two great goods of practical progress and individual emancipation that we must seek to reconcile.

We also, however, have another, less tangible reason to recognize the authority of democratic experimentalism and to undertake the continuing institutional experiments it requires. That reason is to be able to live and act in the world as the persons we really are. Our humanity is defined both by our connection to one another and by our transcendence over the settled systems of life and discourse in which we pass our lives.

We face two basic problems that no social reconstruction can solve. (I return to them at the end of this introduction.) On the way we respond to each of these problems, as individuals and as societies, depend our chances of becoming our own masters without

experiencing this mastery as unbearable terror, a terror from which we would seek to escape into a new form of servitude.

We make ourselves into full individuals through our practical, cognitive and emotional attachments to others. Through these attachments, we develop our powers and make ourselves human. Without them, there is no freedom, only silence and weakness. Yet these attachments also cast a net entangling us in dependence, forcing us to act out roles in a preestablished script, and robbing us of ourselves.

The progress of democratic experimentalism is therefore important to us because, in promising to advance in the area of overlap between the conditions of practical progress and individual emancipation, it also seeks to make the ordinary person greater. The signs of this achieved greatness must be many: the willingness and ability of the individual to unprotect himself (because unprotection is the antidote to mummification and the road to more life); the capacity to connect a more effective pursuit of our material and moral goals with the piecemeal reconstruction of the framework of arrangements and beliefs within which we normally live our lives (because mastery over our presuppositions brings consciousness, freedom, and power); an awareness of the singular, dramatic, and irreversible quality of each life, and of the historical events in which each life is enmeshed (because a narrative momentum lends our experience the unquenchable intensity, the fullness of meaning and possibility, that allegory and fatalism would deny it); an ability to unite wholehearted engagement in our undertakings and communities with the intellectual power to pass judgment on them and the practical power to overthrow and replace them (because there is always more in us, individually as well as collectively, than there is in them).

We must recognize one another as the radical originals, the context-transcending individuals, that we all know ourselves ultimately to be. This recognition, premised on the capacity to imagine other people more than on the suppression of self-interest, becomes, at its focal point, love. However, we are not yet fully such beings able to overstep our stations in life. We must make ourselves into such beings. As we make ourselves into them, we give practical reality to the bond between the ideas of love and spirit, connection and transcendence. This is the horizon of longing to which the secular and prosaic enterprise of democratic experimentalism points. It is the most important link between the concerns that have driven the Near-Eastern salvation religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the ideals lying at the center of the democratic creed.

The programmatic argument of *False Necessity* suffers from four defects. They may seem to be failures of completeness rather than

mistakes. Nevertheless, the attempt to redress them suggests how much the campaign of ideas conducted in this book needs to be developed before it can achieve its goal of vindicating a second way.

The first and most basic deficiency of the argument is that it too easily lends itself to being interpreted as a dogmatic blueprint. What we need instead is a way of recognizing emergent transformative possibilities, of seizing on them, and of developing them in a direction that conforms to our interests and ideals. It is a problem closely allied to the failing with which I deal next: the absence, in the main body of this book, of a transition program, connecting empowered democracy to the circumstances of present societies.

However, the idea of a transition program already implies that it is rewarding to think many steps ahead to a sequence of reforms and a different institutional order. Such an effort – so goes the objection – represents a dangerous return to the rationalistic adventurism of an earlier epoch. What we really need is a view of the direction to take, and of the next step. We can then affirm our powers of reconstruction without surrendering to the illusion of being able to master a distant future. A program for that future may fortify the will, but only at the cost of corrupting the imagination.

Read the argument in favor of empowered democracy in the light of the argument of false necessity, and of the radicalized pragmatism underlying it. Reading it in this light, do not take it as a blueprint. Take it as an example of how, at a moment neither very close to us today nor very far away, we can deepen democracy and generalize experimentalism through the renovation of our practices and institutions.

We remain in the grip of an institutional settlement that we increasingly recognize as both contingent and restrictive of our interests and ideals. We do not know how to produce or imagine a different settlement. We continue to depend on calamity as the condition for remaking society – even as the condition for reimagining it.

Part of the solution is to develop another way of thinking and talking about society: a way that enables us to understand both the fateful character of our practices and institutions – the sense in which they have made us who we are – and our power to resist and revise them: to use the alliance of thought with politics as an anti-fate.

Such an understanding will not lead us to explanatory agnosticism about society and history. On the contrary, it will increase the power and generality of our ideas. To vindicate this claim is the goal of the argument of false necessity.

Another part of the solution is to renovate, in the setting of this reoriented understanding, our programmatic imagination: our ways

of thinking and talking about alternatives and the future. A consequence of the long-standing domination of social science and social theory by necessitarian thinking has been to make our explanatory practices antagonistic to our programmatic ambitions.

As we overcome this obstacle, through the reform of our ideas about society, we discover another obstacle. There is no privileged genre of programmatic discourse. We can propose locally or globally, for the next step or for a sequence of loosely connected reforms, marking out a certain direction of change.

As we move from the local to the global, and from the next steps to the forward movement, our thought becomes more tentative and speculative. However, we cannot confine ourselves to the next step without emptying a direction of any real content. If we limit ourselves to the local setting, we fail to do justice to the constraints and opportunities presented by the chain of analogies now binding humanity together.

We must therefore seek to occupy the whole space of programmatic discourse: from the local to the global, from the near to the far, from the practical to the prophetic. Much of the programmatic argument in this book moves toward several different limits of this imaginative universe: the global, the far, and the prophetic, albeit in the graceless language of law and doctrine. The true meaning of this talk at the limits becomes apparent only when we place the talk alongside all the other, more contextual discourses that should occupy the remaining and greater part of the imaginative space.

Only then can the programmatic imagination make its peace with emergent, local possibilities. Only then can it do so without falling into the error of supposing that such possibilities are already pregnant with particular futures. Emergent possibilities need to be fertilized with ideas if we are to increase our mastery over time and circumstance. Each such possibility is indeterminate in its institutional form, and therefore in its social consequences as well. Standing unaccompanied, the program of empowered democracy invites a misunderstanding from which this insight into its intention must rescue it.

A second defect is the absence of an argument showing the steps of possible transition between the proposed outcome of empowered democracy and the here-and-now of any contemporary society. Every programmatic proposal worth thinking about marks out a path leading from where we are, in some desired direction, through a succession of steps. A deterministic social theory, and one embracing the idea of indivisible institutional systems succeeding one another according to a preestablished script, leaves no room for thinking about alternatives; necessity occupies the space of proposal.

If the defeat of such a determinism is followed by explanatory

practices diminishing or denying structural discontinuity in history, our imagination of transformation will be left disoriented. We shall find ourselves forced back to a surrogate and false standard of realism: a proposal will seem realistic insofar as it approaches what exists, and utopian insofar as it departs from present reality. Thus arises the false rhetorical dilemma that has come to disorient and discredit our contemporary attempts to think programmatically: a proposal distant from established practice is derided as utopian; a proposal close to present arrangements is dismissed as trivial.

Programmatic thinking, however, is music, not architecture. It lives in sequence. Once sustained by a credible image of change in the formative contexts of social life, it enables us to explore a pathway of change at many different points, all the way from the next step to the far-removed moments of a sequence. The direction matters, not the relative proximity.

To establish, in the wake of the ruined determinisms of classical social theory and the conservative evasions of contemporary social science, a credible conception of structural change is the whole object of the explanatory argument of this book. However, the proposal for reconstruction that follows this argument, and finds support in it, rests at a point deliberately remote from the present institutional settlement, the better to reveal the direction in which the proposal goes.

Such a program needs to be complemented by many forms of thinking that connect back to present realities as well as to established discourse. The closer we come to the here-and-now, the more contextualized in particular circumstances such an argument must become. To come closer, we require less the plan of a fixed sequence of reforms described, in lockstep order, in a single mode of discourse, than a whole repertory of different ways to explore the next step, and the next steps after that.

A third defect of the programmatic argument of *False Necessity* is that it fails to recognize the diversity of plausible directions that the deepening of democratic experimentalism can take. The conception of empowered democracy marks one such direction: a direction shaped by the interaction between arrangements that establish a high-energy politics and reforms designed to loosen all privileged strangleholds on the key resources of wealth, power, and knowledge.

An acknowledgment that democracy has alternative futures cannot be reduced to a theoretical afterthought, a concession of principle, no sooner made than robbed of practical effect. To emphasize this diversity is to recognize the falsehood of the liberal idea that we can separate the right from the good, establishing institutions that remain neutral among defensible possibilities of

experience. The mirage of neutrality gets in the way of a realistic commitment to openness and experimentalism, and invites the paralyzing equation of a particular institutional system with the definitive form of a free society.

By moving in one of these directions, including the one called here empowered democracy, we discourage or even sacrifice forms of human experience that have irreplaceable value. Each direction has its flaws – a built-in agenda of problems. Each gains greater authority and power by the way it masters these problems.

A fourth defect of the programmatic argument of *False Necessity* is its failure to explore, in its polemic against the one true way, the relation between the theme of the second way and the theme of the many ways. This failure is in turn related to another one: the failure to confront the weight of the national differences that survive, weakened but aroused, in the contemporary world.

Is the alternative to the one way a second way, or at least a small group of second ways? Or should we seek the alternatives, instead, in the many ways that must be built with the materials provided by the clashing traditions and civilizations developed in the course of world history?

Every country must now stand ready, for the sake of practical success and survival, to give up part of itself, recombining practices and habits of its own with others it imports, imitates and adapts. In such a circumstance, what should our attitude to the differences among nations be?

I now discuss the transition problem, the alternative futures of democracy, and the relation of the many ways to the second way.

There is a program mediating between empowered democracy, or its rival versions of the second way, and the present institutional settlement. Although any transition must take account of the circumstances of the particular society in which we attempt to execute it, we can envisage such a program in a manner responsive to the circumstances of a broad range of countries. Only the poorest will be excluded. Even at this level of limited development, the transition program can exhibit enough distinctive detail to mark its difference from the humanization of the inevitable to which most progressives have now reduced their hopes.

Capable Governments and the Conditions for Rebellious Strategies of National Development

The first element in such a transition program is to ensure the government the human and financial resources with which to lift up ordinary people. Such a government grants people the educa-

tional and economic means for independent self-development and cooperation. It helps them to free themselves from drudgery and repetition. It makes it possible for them to develop forms of life that are suited to spirit – that is to say, to a being overflowing its circumstance and towering over its station in life.

Such a government does more than invest in the economic safeguards and educational capacities of its people. It also serves as the occasional partner of a multitude of would-be small-time entrepreneurs, through vehicles such as the funds and support centers mentioned below. And it either gives people, or helps people to get, the capital and knowledge they need to initiate and to innovate at turning points in their lives.

For all this, the government needs money and cadres. It also requires a certain margin for maneuver: an ability, for example, to defy the whims of international finance or the sacrifice of the needs of the real economy to the fear and greed of any narrow circle of money-men.

Such a government enjoys a high tax take, and spends it on making people people. In the conditions of the contemporary world, no society has been civilized – that is, respectful of the potential of the ordinary person – if its government fails to take at least 30 percent of GDP as taxes.

How can a high tax take be ensured with a minimum of costly trauma to established economic incentives and arrangements? In the early stages of the transition we may need to rely heavily on regressive taxation: for example, the transactions-based taxation of consumption through a relatively neutral device such as the comprehensive flat-rate value-added tax.

The justification for such a reliance on regressive taxation lies in the lessons of comparative fiscal experience. These lessons contain a paradox: a tax system that appears to respect progressive taxation regularly turns out to preserve inequality in the circumstances and opportunities of social life, while a tax system that appears to turn its back on the progressive principle favors redistribution in the direction of greater equality.

The explanation of this apparent paradox lies in the relation between the economic consequences of increases of the tax take and the role of social spending, financed by a high tax take, in moderating inequalities and enhancing capacities. In the short run, the level and character of social spending carry greater weight than the relative progressivity of taxation.

A system that is relatively progressive on paper – like that of the United States, with its heavy reliance on progressive personal income tax – proves regressive in practice. In the circumstances of the contemporary democracies – all of them relative democracies –

direct, redistributive taxation cannot yield enough public revenue to make a difference. It cannot do so without reaching a level that would start to disrupt the incentives and arrangements that make possible rapid and sustained economic growth. By harming the present incentives to save, work, and invest, it would then begin to jeopardize the established setting of productive activity without putting another one in its place.

By contrast, a tax system like the French one, that seems relatively regressive, because it is reliant on the indirect taxation of consumption, may in fact prove more progressive. It will prove more progressive if the higher social spending yields a higher tax take, with less economic trauma, and if this higher social spending is in turn used, effectively, to fund redistributive social spending. Redistribution through tax-and-transfer is always subsidiary to the redistribution that results from structural reform. The progressive effect of such a tax system therefore depends, most of all, on the broader framework of economic and political institutions. It depends on the extent to which those institutions decentralize access to the resources and opportunities of production.

No country that wants to be a democracy has reason to accept such a shift to regressive taxation, supporting a higher tax take, unless both these conditions are met. The higher take must be used by a government willing and able to spend it on greater opportunity and capacity for the masses of ordinary working people. And it must be seen as an element in a broader movement toward the democratizing of the market, so that more people can access the means of production and deploy them in more ways.

Once we have made more money available to the government with less trauma, through the indirect and regressive taxation of consumption, we can begin, at a later moment, to reintroduce into the tax system the progressivity we had sacrificed.

A system of progressive taxation has two major targets: the hierarchy of living standards, generated by the unequal ability of individuals to spend the resources of society on themselves, and the exercise of power, produced by the use of capital to command labor. Having ensured the government a high tax take, we can hit the first target by a tax falling, with steep progressivity, on the difference between individual income and individual saving (the Kaldor tax). We can hit the second target by a tax on capital, beginning with the progressive taxation of family gifts and family inheritance.

To equip the government with a high base of revenue is only half of what we need to make it capable of initiative. The other half is to develop an elite bureaucratic cadre, well paid, well respected, and well trained, and recruited in both early and mid-career. It is

just as harmful to lack an elite civil service as it is to allow such a civil service to serve as a surrogate for political decision in the name of an antipolitical conception of expertise.

To the financial and human resources that make for capable government, we must add the conditions that enable the country as a whole to pursue a rebellious path of national development, one that places the demands of the real economy above the prejudices of high finance. To this end, the country must be able to count on a system for the mobilization of national resources. Such a system requires both a high level of domestic saving and a tightening of the institutional links between saving and investment.

It is true that saving has been shown to be much more the consequence than the cause or condition of growth. It is also true that – contrary to one of the many false assumptions of Marxist thinking – the extraction of a surplus over current consumption now matters far less than a capacity for permanent innovation as a basis for economic growth.

The real reason to seek, in most circumstances, a high level of domestic saving is to increase our ability to finance the initial stages of a distinct pathway of national growth, established on the basis of redesigned market institutions, without having to curry favor with those who, in the world economy, exercise the greatest influence on the comings and goings of capital. It is to strengthen our power to avoid sacrificing the needs of the real economy to the interests and prejudices of rentiers and their agents.

The point of the gold standard in its late-nineteenth-century heyday was to make the level of economic activity depend on the confidence of the business interests, thus keeping governments on a tight rein. We must now defeat every attempt to establish a functional equivalent to the gold standard. For those who persist in such attempts, the narrowing of the margin for governmental initiative and for national deviation in the strategy of economic development is not the problem; it is the solution.

However, a high level of domestic saving will be dangerous if it fails to be accompanied by a tightening of the institutional links between saving and production. It is true that we must reject the vulgar Keynesian idea that we can spend our way out of slumps independently of the context through which consumption raises the level of economic activity and the productive capacity of the economy. In rejecting it, however, we should not return to the pre-Keynesian dogma that thrift is a good in itself, or that its translation into productive investment occurs as a matter of course.

If supply fails to produce its own demand, making low-level equilibria possible, demand may also fail to create its own supply, through an inadequacy of the response of investment and innova-

tion. Or it may be dissipated in a rise of imports that the domestic economy soon finds itself unable to sustain.

Only when we lose sight of the institutional indeterminacy of a market economy – the plurality of institutional forms into which we can translate the abstract idea of a market economy – can we reduce to a terminological equation the contingent relation between saving from consumption and investment for production.

The progressivity temporarily sacrificed in the design of the tax system can be recaptured in the provision of compulsory saving for retirement, steeply proportional to income. Such a scheme would combine a principle of mandatory saving for all who earn above a certain threshold with a minimum guaranteed income for all who fall below another threshold but, in falling below, stand ready to work and to be trained for work. Individualizing saving accounts, it would nevertheless redistribute from the richer accounts to the poorer.

Part of this money would be channeled into a range of public and private funds both within and outside the traditional capital markets. Some such funds would establish a more direct link between saving and production outside those markets, undertaking the work of venture capital by investing in start-up enterprises. Others would multiply and deepen the connections between the more advanced and the more backward sectors of the economy, and help open the economic rearguard to credit, technology, expertise, and innovation.

The Endowed and Equipped Individual

The second major platform in the transitional program of a second way is a commitment to strengthen the economic and educational endowment of the ordinary worker and citizen. It is the effort to guarantee the ordinary person the means for effective initiative and cooperation.

The individual worker and citizen must be able to stand on his feet and, from this position of self-possession, work with others. He must be able to enter into these cooperative activities with the practical strength and self-confidence that protect him from abject dependence.

The central idea underlying the effort to ensure a basic economic and educational endowment to each individual is that both a democratized market and a deepened democracy require an agent – the free, capable individual – that neither the decentralization of economic opportunity nor the energizing of political democracy suffices to create. A related idea is that the individual's ability to participate effectively in the collective practices of accelerated inno-

vation, and to tolerate without fear the dangers and threats to which it gives rise, depends on an experience of self-possession. He must feel secure and be secure in a haven of vital interests and abilities.

The withdrawal of the rules defining these interests and abilities from the scope of short-term politics is a limitation on democratic experimentalism that gives democratic experimentalism greater vitality. (Remember the analogy to the relation between the love the parent gives the child and the child's adventures in self-making.)

By giving the ordinary person a stake in the social order and a chance for greater mastery over his immediate circumstance, we give greater practical effect to the demophilia motivating democracy. We act on the idea that the class structure of society imposes an unnecessary and intolerable constraint upon the power of humanity and the greatness of the individual. We allow this action to be guided by the conjecture that one condition for the overcoming of the class system is to grant every person a social inheritance of economic and educational resources. There are other conditions.

A second condition is the decentralization of effective access to capital and the other means of production. A third condition is the organization of politics and civil society in ways that make it easier to identify, to challenge, and to change, piece by piece and step by step, the established institutions and practices. The second and third conditions are the concerns of the remaining parts of this transitional program.

We secure the economic endowment of each citizen by granting him, as soon as the level of social wealth and the state of public finance allow, a social-endowment account. Such an account is a fund of cashable resources, on which the individual can draw at certain turning points in his life: for example, when he begins higher education, starts a family, makes a down payment on a house, or launches a business. The basic account can vary upward according to two countervailing criteria: compensation for special need, according to predetermined criteria, or reward (and incentive) for extraordinary ability, demonstrated through competition.

An emphasis on the limited redistribution of assets replaces, in this transitional program, the social-democratic preference for limited compensatory income transfers. Neither asset redistribution nor income transfers can achieve their intended effect unless they take place in the context of institutional innovations designed to democratize the market and energize democracy. In such a context, the development of a principle of social inheritance through the economic endowment of the individual helps to re-create, under present conditions, the archaic ideal of a "yeoman democracy." Small-scale property was supposed to support independence in life choices and political commitments.

To renew the life of that ideal, we must rescue it from its exclusive reliance on isolated property. We must think of the social endowment as the fragment of a solution rather than the solution itself. The solution depends upon a combination of arrangements that cleanse our cooperative activities of the taint of domination and subjugation.

Educational empowerment provides the complement to economic endowment. Two points are crucial. The first point is that the government guarantee to all a high educational minimum in early life, with the option to extend it in later life. The second point is that the content of education affords the individual the intellectual means both to work within the present order and to pass judgment on it, from an imaginative distance.

The guaranteed minima must include both a minimal educational investment for each child and a minimal educational performance by each school, independently evaluated. The guaranteed achievement of such minima is incompatible with a rigid federal system or with a reliance, within such a system, on purely local finance for public schools. If local finance plays a role, there must be provision for topping off, through redistribution among localities, the educational resources available to the poorest communities. At the extremes of deprivation and wealth, this redistribution should become more aggressive. One possible standard is that the amount distributed to each community be inversely proportional to its per capita income.

Rather than remaining rigidly separated, municipal, state, and federal governments should combine in transfederal collegiate bodies to supervise the execution of the minima. Such bodies would intervene, in a temporary and localized way, when the minima failed to be satisfied. Aggrieved citizens would find in the courts, or in a fourth branch of government, affirmative relief when the transfederal bodies failed to guarantee the realization of these minima.

In poorer countries, or even in the poorest classes and regions of relatively rich countries, such publicly guaranteed minima of educational investment and performance would not suffice. It is not enough to ensure that the school be available to the child. The child must be available to the school: it must receive, through the school and its supporting network of community organizations, the material help it needs to stay in school and profit from education. We should generalize this principle beyond the limits of education.

The residue of enduring value in the social-democratic welfare state is the responsibility of society, through government, to make up for the deficit of background conditions the individual requires

to become an effective worker and citizen. Extreme and rigid inequalities are to be feared more than any rigid standard of equality is to be desired. Such inequalities amount to a form of entrapment of the individual, and defeat the major aims of the democratic and experimentalist cause.

Entrapment is the supreme social evil from which democratic politics must rescue the individual. It suppresses the expression of the context-defying, transcendent power that is the sign and badge of spirit. In so doing, it also poisons our cooperative activities. We cannot cooperate without imposing or suffering subjugation. We cannot affirm and develop our powers of resistance and originality without appearing to betray some of the group loyalties that have shaped us. We face a contradiction between the requirements for self-affirmation that denies us the prospect of greatness.

Just as important as the provision of education is its content. The task of the school in a democracy is to rescue the child from its world. It must give each child the intellectual means with which to grasp and to judge the world into which it was born, according to the level of talent it may possess.

Two elements are therefore central to basic education. The first is mastery of a core of generic analytic and practical skills. The priority we must accord to the acquisition of such skills is incompatible with an encyclopedic focus in education. It requires contrast and depth rather than superficial completeness and coherence: a selective investigation of nature, society, and self.

From the earliest stages, learning should be, wherever possible, cooperative. It should be guided according to the central principle of the imagination, which is to penetrate the actual by reconsidering it from the vantage point of the possible.

By a countervailing movement designed to ensure freedom to the mind, and to open it further to discovery and surprise, such a practice of learning must resist drawing outer limits to the possible in any region of insight. Any claim on behalf of such limits deserves to fall under the suspicion of representing the unwarranted generalization of local circumstance and provincial prejudice.

This subsumption of the actual under the possible, accompanied by a reluctance to prescribe the limits of the possible, is the overriding characteristic of the practice of social explanation developed and defended in this book. It is also the heart of the practical experimentalism that now remains quarantined within the advanced sectors of production established throughout the world. To free this practical experimentalism from its confinement in these isolated sectors, and to propagate it throughout the economy, is part of what it means to deepen democracy.

The Democratized Market Economy

The third axis of this transition program is the effort to democratize the market. The working assumption of this part of the transition program is that we can and should reorganize the market economy, rather than merely regulating or compensating its unequalizing results through retrospective redistribution.

The crucial conceptual assumption is that the market economy, like representative democracy or any other abstract institutional conception, is institutionally indeterminate: it lacks any single natural and necessary institutional form. The narrow repertory of variants of the market economy now established in the rich North Atlantic economies is made up of institutions and practices that have shown themselves more innovation- and growth-friendly, and more hospitable to free political institutions, than many others now or once on offer.

Nevertheless, we read the lessons of experience wrongly if we suppose them to teach that these arrangements represent the inevitable outcome of a halting but relentless convergence toward the necessary, or even the best, form of the market. They are the distinctive products of unique conflicts and compromises. In interrupting these struggles and making these deals, people had to make do with the limited available stock of ideas and arrangements. At every turn, the outcome was influenced by the desire of the most powerful interests to achieve whatever accommodation to the imperative of reform required the least sacrifice and the least change.

Instead of seeing every disturbance of the present course of market-oriented reform as the trumping of the market by a non-market-based form of resource allocation, we must learn to recognize in some such disturbances early moves in a campaign to reorganize the market. In the transition program, we try to prevent the turn to the market from meaning the dictatorship of a minority who hold the keys to the market over a majority who do not. We attempt to do more generally what nineteenth-century Americans did for particular parts of the economy when they decentralized and democratized agriculture and banking.

The effort to democratize the market, in the early steps of a program like this one, moves between a minimalist and a maximalist ambition. The minimal goal is to redesign the market economy, as it now exists, for the purpose of ensuring broader access to its practices, resources, and opportunities. The maximalist goal is to achieve this broadening of access in a way that also weakens the division between the advanced and backward sectors of the economy. Such a movement gives more people the means with which to combine cooperation and competition, undercuts the contrast

between supervision and execution, and transforms innovation into a habit.

Both the minimalist and the maximalist aims require the organization of cooperative activity among small and medium-size producers who also compete with one another. Both the minimalist and maximalist objectives demand the development of decentralized and experimentalist forms of partnership between government and private enterprise.

We should not have to choose between the American model of government as simply the arm's-length regulator of private enterprise, and government as author, through a bureaucratic staff, of a centralized trade and industrial policy. The former is incapable of creating the conditions that would enable outsiders to the market, or to its advanced sectors, to gain effective access to them. The latter risks sacrificing the discoveries of decentralized experiment to the dogmas and interests of remote mandarins.

The solution is to initiate, between the government and established or start-up firms, an intermediate level of enablement and support: of funds and centers that would serve as the financial hubs and the strategic cores of networks of cooperative-competitive businesses. Sometimes such entities would provide financial and technical support themselves, acting at the outset as public but independent – and ultimately self-financing – venture capital funds. For this purpose, they might receive and reinvest some of the money from compulsory pension saving. At other times, they would perform the more limited role of opening up access to capital, technology, and expertise.

Some of them would focus on the development of the products, services and technologies favoring tighter links between the vanguard and rearguard sectors of the economy. Others would seek to propagate the most successful practices within the less advanced sectors of the economy. Others yet would work with cooperative-competitive networks of small and medium-size companies to develop trade and production strategies. We would reject the cohesive, top-down industrial and commercial policy formulated and implemented in the northeast Asian economies. We would also turn away from the agnosticism about concerted action preferred in the American model of the market economy. Funds and support centers – private, public, or mixed – would practice a pluralistic, experimental version of strategic coordination between government and business.

Some of these organizations would have intimate relations with the businesses, or the teams of people, with which they dealt. They would serve as devices by which to pool material and conceptual resources and to ration them out, according to negotiated criteria.

Other such organizations would keep greater distance from the ultimate producers and capital-takers, allocating resources, in the manner of a venture capitalist, to those offering the best risk-adjusted returns. In between these two extreme methods, intermediate methods would also flourish.

Alternative regimes of private and social property would gradually develop from such different types of dealings between firms and funds. Each such regime would decompose and recombine, in a different way, the components of the traditional unified property right. And these regimes, like the alternative versions of strategic coordination, would also coexist experimentally within the same democratized market economy. The simple, unconditional property right, giving nearly dictatorial powers to the entrepreneur who uses it and enabling him to embark on an adventure, would be one of these alternatives. At this point, the transition program joins the economic proposals in *False Necessity*.

The attempt to democratize the market economy, renovating its institutional form, should be paralleled in all but the richest and most equal, or the poorest and most equal, countries by efforts to increase the share of national income that goes to labor. It should also be reinforced by a determination to impose "capitalism" on "capitalists."

The upward tilt to returns to labor requires devices preventing the benefits from being captured by a cadre of relatively secure and privileged workers. By using such devices, we overcome or prevent hardened divisions between insiders and outsiders.

The reason to desire such a tilt is both economic, and moral or political. The economic reason is to sustain pressure to ascend the ladder of technological innovation and productivity, while popularizing consumption opportunities and deepening the market. The moral or political reason is to strengthen people's chances for modest prosperity and independence, while affirming the dignity of labor and the value of initiative.

The instruments for producing the tilt are circumstantial, and likely to differ among levels of the wage hierarchy as well as among countries and times. For example, at the lowest levels of the wage hierarchy, the emphasis may need to fall on engagement in publicly supported community work projects, with a skill-enhancing component. It may also require the recognition of legal security and economic value to endowments, like land in possession, that provide the propertyless with assets and collateral. At the middle levels of the wage hierarchy, the best tool may be a labor-law regime (like the one described in this book) that prompts the stronger and more organized segments of the labor-force to represent as well the weaker and less organized segments. At the upper levels of the wage

hierarchy, the most promising solution may be partnership and participation in profits. This solution may gradually become applicable to most employed labor.

It is a dogma of conservative economics, equivalent in many of its illusions and implications to the sound-finance doctrine of the early twentieth century, that real returns to labor cannot successfully exceed the rate of productivity growth: otherwise, nominal wage rises will undo themselves in inflation. This dogma echoes the old Marxist belief in convergence in the rate of "surplus value" among "capitalist" economies. If this dogma were true, we could not explain the vast differences among countries at comparable levels of economic development in the part of national income that goes to labor. Even when we discount the role of different factor endowments and different natural resources, vast gaps remain. The source of these gaps is politics, speaking through institutions.

The core methodological point is that the relation of capital to labor, like the relation of saving to production, is less a natural fact subject to universal economic laws than it is a political fact shaped by contingent institutional arrangements and assumptions. The accumulation of all such facts is the fate of a society, its second nature. The work of transformative politics is to master this fate.

If the valuing of labor is one counterpart to the democratizing of the market, the imposition of "capitalism" on "capitalists" is another. One aspect of this commitment is the radicalization of competition and meritocracy. This commitment must be limited by rules that preserve a space for regimes of cooperative competition, as well as by arrangements that guarantee people a minimum of security and capacity-supporting economic and educational endowments. Another aspect of the commitment to impose "capitalism" on "capitalists" is the effort to ensure the ascendancy of the interests of producers and workers over the interests of rentiers. This ascendancy should be qualified only by the need to preserve the integrity and vigor of the cycle of saving and productive investment.

Implicit in these programmatic ideas – those of the transition program as well as those of the main body of this book – is a vision of economic growth. Reduced to its simplest elements, this vision offers an answer to the question: What causes economic growth? In the short run, it is the relation between the real rate of interest – taken as a proxy for the cost of putting to use the factors of production – and the opportunities for gain. In the long run, it is the level of knowledge: how-to-do-it knowledge, translated into practices and technologies, as well as the deeper imagination of the possible – of the next steps – into which such knowledge can develop.

In the medium term, however, what causes economic growth is

the level of cooperation. We know something about the first factor, the relation of cost to opportunity. We even know a little about the third factor, the level of knowledge. We know almost nothing about the second factor, the level of cooperation – or, rather, what we do know remains both buried and divided in many specialized disciplines.

Without cooperation, the short-term and long-term causes of growth cannot do their work. Institutions – social and political as well as economic – form the skeleton of cooperation. Ideas, attitudes, and dispositions provide its blood. It is in this area that the dominant English and American tradition in economics most clearly betrays the limits imposed by its poverty of institutional imagination.

Economists often represent cooperative practices as responses to market failures: people cooperate when they cannot trade. The opposite is closer to the truth: the market is a simplified form of cooperation among strangers. A market economy flourishes only in a setting that is congenial to cooperative practices and a minimum of trust. Markets may be unnecessary when there is high trust. They are impossible when there is no trust. Trust and cooperation do not easily mix with extreme inequality. The defense of privilege, the development of techniques for the control of subordinates, and the resistance mounted by the underlings against their masters hold the place that should be taken over by cooperative experimentalism.

At the core of this second condition of economic growth lies the paradoxical relation between cooperation and innovation. Social progress, economic or otherwise, depends on both. The trouble is that although cooperation and innovation depend on each other, they also interfere with each other.

To have practical effect, every innovation – organizational, technological, or even conceptual – must be translated into shared work activities. Every new technology, for example, must be combined with human labor. The anticipated and desired combination already influences the design of the machine; every innovation can be developed in different directions, according to the style of cooperative work in which it will be realized. Practical reason must become common labor, and, in the detailed arrangement of collaboration, see revealed its own hidden possibilities and limitations of development. People must work together, willingly or under duress, to give the innovation life.

Nevertheless, every innovation puts cooperation at risk. It threatens to disturb the collective structure of settled expectations and vested rights in which every variant of cooperation is embedded. Some participants in the present form of cooperation will stand to win and others to lose by the innovation – or so they will believe. From the disturbance, conflict results: resistance to the innovation,

or fighting over its realization. The struggles accompanying the course of the innovation may threaten to overwhelm the established regime of cooperation without putting another one in its place.

All institutionalized forms of cooperation, however, are not equally brittle. Some are friendlier to innovation than others: they are better designed to encourage experiment and to receive novelty. They give their participants security in the possession of basic safeguards and in the enjoyment of developing capacities. They establish procedures for negotiating how the benefits and burdens of change will be shared. They distribute the stakes of success and the costs of failure broadly. They disentangle cooperation from a system of rigid, group-specific privileges, enlarging the collective freedom to recombine people and resources according to the promptings of circumstance.

This fact is a special application in the economic realm of a truth often cited and studied in this book: the institutional orders of societies differ in their availability to challenge and change. They differ in the extent to which they are just there, as a second nature, a naturalized fate; or there, instead, as an artifact to be reimaged and remade.

The naturalization of the context denies something fundamental about us: that there is always more in each of us individually and in all of us collectively than there can ever be in these orders of society and culture. This denial harms our interests in practical progress and individual emancipation. It insults and suppresses the greatness, the memory of the infinite, that is the greatest ornament of our humanity.

Part of my criticism in this book of the present institutional settlement is that this settlement freezes into place an unnecessarily and unacceptably restrictive version of the marriage of cooperation and innovation. The transition program outlined here, and the project of empowered democracy worked out in the main body of *False Necessity*, suggest a way to lessen the mutual interference of innovation and cooperation, strengthening our productive and creative powers.

High-Energy Democracy

The fourth element of the transition program is the commitment to a high-energy democracy: one that invites a greater expression of popular political energy and encourages a more repeated practice of basic reform than now exists in the sleepy democracies of Western Europe and North America. This change in direction would cast away a burden that continues to crush us under the weight of a

creed mistaking worldliness for wisdom, resignation for peace, and a diminishment of cruelty for the achievement of justice.

The situation of the European peoples now provides the clearest instance of this predicament. They devoted much of the first half of the twentieth century to slaughtering one another, and much of the second half to drowning their sorrows in consumption. They put themselves under the care of bureaucratic politicians who taught the poisonous doctrine that politics must become little, for individuals to become big, and then they fell asleep. If, in the first half of the twenty-first century, they fail to awaken, they may well remain rich. However, they will also be less free, less equal, and less great.

In such a world, everything with the potential to challenge and transform society is locked up in the individual imagination. Nevertheless, the privatization of the sublime, embraced by the apologists for this order, finds its limit in an intractable fact: all strong visions and impulses seek expression in forms of common life. To reconcile this imperative of public and practical expression with the openness, the toleration, the diversity that do us so much material and moral good is the task, not the danger.

A major claim of the more narrowly political part of the programmatic argument in *False Necessity* is that the organization of government and politics that came to prevail after the misadventures and disasters of the twentieth century has been shaped by two distinct sets of arrangements and ideas. The first set helps to maintain society at a relatively low level of political mobilization. The second set associates the liberal goal of decentralizing and diversifying power with the conservative one of making structural change hard to produce.

Sometimes this conservative goal is achieved directly, as through the bias toward delay and deadlock built into the Madisonian system of "checks and balances," under an American-style presidential regime. Sometimes it is realized only indirectly, as through the hobbling, by a stalemate among powerful organized interests, of our capacity for decisive action that a pure parliamentary regime seems to offer.

All these arrangements lend plausibility to an idea of party politics. Deriding both popular mobilization and ideological contests, this disenchanted idea of politics sees its work as to strike compromises with powerful interests, the better to solve disparate practical problems. It imagines the existence of a range of "issues," each of them calling for sober solutions that respect the constraints of political as well as technical feasibility. Although it recognizes the existence of a relatively disorganized and uninformed majority, it believes it can defend majority interests only by first making a deal with the "special interests." Once established, this conception of politics in

turn bestows a halo of realism on the arrangements and practices that made it plausible in the first place.

The votaries of this deflationary view of politics flatter themselves on their own realism. They believe that they have discarded the dangerous romantic illusions of an earlier age. They pride themselves on their practical attitude. Nevertheless, the outcome of their false practicality is to leave politics paralyzed, and the basic recognized problems of each society unsolved.

The reason for this apparent paradox is simple. The fundamental problems of a society – both those it acknowledges and those it does not – are entangled in its organization, and in the ideas that represent and sustain it. We cannot solve such problems until we reorganize some of the established arrangements and revise some of the entrenched assumptions. We do not need to reorganize them altogether, or all at once; in fact, we never can. If, however, we treat politics as no more than an exercise in interest-balancing, devoted to finding discrete solutions to separate problems, we never reach the presuppositions. We remain too captive to the limits of our situation to become true realists. From this captivity, calamity alone can release us.

To reach the presuppositions, we must imagine them: thus the need for a transformative political practice to be informed by a conception of structural discontinuity and institutional alternatives. To change the presuppositions, we must, both as democrats and as realists, engage large masses of people in political concern and activity: to have transformative force, changing institutional arrangements and ideological assumptions, politics must rise in temperature, and find the institutions that can organize and perpetuate its intensity. To make the change of presuppositions last, we must embody reform in institutions. To diminish the dependence of transformation on crisis and radicalize democratic experimentalism, we must energize politics. To energize politics, we must adopt arrangements that keep society at a higher level of organized civic engagement, and favor the rapid resolution of impasse among branches of government and the repeated practice of structural reform.

Thus, the transition program should include initiatives designed to raise the level of organized political mobilization. If popular participation in politics were to be heightened by mass campaigns and personal leadership, in a manner that bypasses intermediary entities, the result would be a personalist or Caesarist populism. We would have raised the temperature of politics without extending the organized forms of political freedom to encompass and channel the new energy. We would endanger old freedoms without creating a lasting basis for new ones.

It is a conceit of conservative political science, characteristic of social science in the university system, that political institutions and political mobilization are inversely related: the more of one, the less of the other. The truth is that political institutions differ markedly in their support for popular participation – just as, more generally, institutional structures and discursive practices vary in their openness to revision.

Among the initiatives that would encourage such a heightening of organized political participation in the circumstances of contemporary societies are: rules of mandatory voting (sanctioned by fines and qualified by a privilege to abstain); the public financing of political campaigns; extended free access to the means of mass communication in favor of political parties and organized social movements; and diversification of forms of cooperative or social property in the media. A particular electoral system, such as proportional representation limited by a threshold of electoral success, may serve the goal of raising the temperature of politics, while deepening the organization of political society. Whether it does so or not depends, however, on the circumstances and the history of each country.

The choice of the form of government is equally circumstantial. We must reject the idea that abstract institutional concepts, like concepts of a presidential or a parliamentary regime, have an inherent essence and a permanent effect. Small institutional changes, eluding the grasp of such concepts, can produce vast practical consequences.

We must begin with the narrow range of constitutional schemes available and intelligible today. From this starting point, at least two different roads can lead to constitutional regimes that quicken the tempo of politics, reversing the bias against limited but repeated structural reform. Each of these two paths represents a different way of holding fast to the liberal goal of decentralizing power while ridding ourselves of the conservative habit of treating programmed stalemate as a solution rather than a problem.

One path is the development of a semi-presidential regime in which the plebiscitarian potency of presidentialism is combined with an antidote to the characteristic defect of a presidential regime: its tilt toward the perpetuation of impasse under divided government. The greater the reform commitment of the president, the bigger the chance that he will encounter decided and effective opposition in the legislative branch.

The solution is to equip the presidential system with mechanisms for the rapid resolution of impasse. One of these mechanisms would be a provision for impasse-breaking plebiscites or referenda (a special case of the more inclusive effort to combine elements of direct and

representative democracy). Another such mechanism would be anticipated and simultaneous elections for both political branches that either of these branches could call on its own initiative. By such devices we reverse the political logic of the presidential system, and turn it into a means to accelerate politics rather than to slow it down.

The effect would be to establish a constitutional regime similar to that of the Fifth French Republic. However, instead of the alternation between a fast time (when president and parliamentary majority coincide) and a slow time ("cohabitation," when president and parliamentary majority diverge), such a regime would have only a fast time.

The other road to the acceleration of politics would best suit those countries where a strong party system already presents meaningful alternatives to the electorate. It would give force to the potential for decisive initiative that is characteristic of a pure parliamentary regime. We can combine such a regime with rules and practices designed to heighten the level of sustained and organized political mobilization. We can also ensure the mutual reinforcement between experimentation at the political center and room for independent initiative in local government. Thus, we may begin to change the effect of the constitutional arrangements by reforming the context in which they operate.

The deepening of representative democracy has a direction. The direction is the development of a political life that multiplies the ways in which people can participate directly in decisions about the contexts in which they live and work. As we energize political democracy, we also narrow, little by little, the distance separating it from the participatory management of public affairs.

The horizon toward which we should move is only partly captured by the idea of connecting and combining representative and direct democracy. The aim is also to end the long-standing estrangement of republican ideals from everyday life. We should not seek to end this estrangement, as many have proposed, by placing ourselves under the spell of an inhuman and impoverishing ideal of selfless civic virtue, as the votaries of an imaginary Sparta or Rome have wanted. Instead, we should seize on the emergent possibilities presented by the new forms of collective learning in firms and schools, of open coordination and permanent innovation, supporting them and helping to propagate their most successful instances. To the extent that we succeed, we make practical life safer for democracy. We turn democracy into an incitement to the development of our practical powers. The democratizing of the market economy and the deepening of democracy then begin to reinforce

each other, to intersect, to overlap, and to work together for the reconstitution of society.

Five characteristic moves define this experimentalist practice of open coordination. The first move is for people to change their situation – little pieces of the institutional and ideological setting of collective action – as they do their jobs. The second move is the revision of task definitions and work plans in the course of their execution and in the light of emerging opportunities. The third move is the negotiation and definition of common goals and goods, as well as of their implications for group interests and identities, as a regular incident of working together, rather than as a product and sign of crisis. The fourth move is the dialectic between routine and repetition as a principle of economy of effort (delegated whenever possible to machines) and the production of novelty as what this economy makes possible. The fifth move is the refusal to fasten a group of co-workers to any particular regime for the relation between cooperation and competition, and the willingness to combine such regimes and to shift among them.

Together, these five moves put a radicalized pragmatism to work. They enable democracy and experimentalism to penetrate more deeply into practical life, and promise to end the estrangement of politics.

The Self-Organization of Civil Society

The intensification of civic engagement and the inauguration of constitutional arrangements favorable to the rapid resolution of impasse are not enough. They cannot produce their effect if society remains disorganized, or only very unequally organized. Organization is power.

A disorganized society cannot formulate alternatives or act upon them. A society that is very unequally organized is delivered into the hands of selfish factions struggling with one another. Its politics easily degenerates into a practice of inconclusive bargaining among them. Two distinct evils mark such a practice: the evil of sacrificing the interests of the disorganized majority, and the evil of the paralysis induced by the multiplication of mutual vetoes.

In many countries, the development of the caring economy, alongside the production system, offers the best and most immediate chance to generalize the independent organization of civil society while addressing the troubled relation between productive labor and social solidarity.

To understand both the problem and the opportunity, consider a radically simplified picture of one of the richest and most egalitarian European social democracies today. Imagine that the economy of

this country has three sectors: the new economy (knowledge-intensive, flexible firms), the old economy (mass-production industries, struggling to master new styles of work, production, and innovation, in response to world competition and international benchmarking) and the caring economy. By the caring economy I mean the activities by which people take care of one another outside the family: for example, in day-care centers, old-age homes, and hospices.

The caring economy expands with the ageing of the population, the narrowing and breakdown of the family, and the pressure by government to find jobs for people who cannot get them in either the new or old economies. Government extracts resources to an increasing extent from the new economy and to a diminishing extent from the old economy. It attempts to support the reformation of the old economy and to pay for services in the caring economy.

There is a financial problem: the heavy burden weighing on a powerful but limited engine of economic growth. There is also a moral problem: the weakening of the social bond under the new conditions of work.

In the old world of mass production, there were generalists (managers as well as bureaucrats and high-level professionals) and specialists (workers). The generalists needed the specialists, and the specialists needed the generalists. They were bound together, and knew each other. The new economy, however, is a world the generalists have all to themselves. At the limit, it has no specialists, only generalists, or specialists trying to become generalists.

Consequently, the inhabitants of the new, old, and caring economies cease to encounter and to know one another. They become strangers, connected only through the tax-and-transfer operations of government. This is too thin a basis of shared experience to support social solidarity.

The ultimate ideal of social cohesion, as of the moral life, is not altruism – the willingness to limit self-interest, with or without insight into the other person. It is love – the capacity to imagine and to accept the other, lifting, haltingly, the wall of defense with which we protect ourselves against him.

If the world were to succeed in reforming itself in the image of the model of social and economic organization it now most admires – European social democracy – it would share more directly in this predicament. Even if it fails, or chooses other paths – as I argue in this book it must and should – it will share in the broader problems and possibilities the predicament exemplifies.

The solution to the practical and spiritual problems caused by the reciprocal estrangement of the three sectors comes in two parts. One part of the solution is to broaden the social base of entrance

into the new economy while attenuating the division between the new and old economies. It is a task requiring for its execution the development of a range of forms of decentralized coordination between government and business. One of the goals of such forms should be the diffusion of the most successful practices of collective learning and open coordination. The other part of the solution is to develop and reform the caring economy.

A promising route to such development is the partnership of national and local governments with community groups, encouraged to organize around the practical work of caring, supported by government. A crucial aspect of such reform is to encourage or even require the broadest number of citizens to participate, either simultaneously or sequentially, in both the production system and the caring economy. One way to achieve this goal is to fashion legal arrangements that facilitate the division of work time between the production system and the caring economy. Another way is to impose a duty of social service, both in youth and later in life.

The practical organization of the activities by which we care for one another, outside the narrow bonds of family love and loyalty, may serve, in the conditions of many countries today, as the most powerful trigger to the deeper and more general self-organization of civil society. This trigger, however, is likely to prove insufficient. We must supplement it by renewing the legal forms through which civil society organizes itself.

We should refuse to treat the existing forms of contract and corporate law as if they amounted to a natural language capable of expressing any or all of the associational thoughts of society. In its real setting, this vocabulary of private law serves a truncated form of free association. The organizations capable of carrying a general message for society (political parties, clubs, foundations, churches) lack a foothold in practical, everyday life. The organizations that enjoy such a foothold (firms, unions) convey no such message.

There are two routes to the more inclusive self-organization of civil society. We can call them private law plus and public law minus. They are not alternatives to each other; they offer convergent and complementary means to the same end.

Private law plus means keeping the established repertory of private law while changing its meaning. One way to change it is to expand the resources available to self-organizing groups in civil society. An example of such a reform would be to reserve part of the tax favor received by tax-protected charitable gifts to independent social trust funds, administered by trustees drawn from different walks of life. Groups in civil society could apply to such funds for grants, as they now do to private foundations. We would have expanded the resource base of voluntary action.

Public law minus means establishing a structure of nonstate public law for the independent organization of civil society outside government. Such law would provide for the organization of civil society outside the state and independent of any governmental tutelage.

An example is labor-union organization. We may take from the contractualist regime the principle of complete independence of the unions from government, and from the corporatist system the idea of automatic unionization of all workers. Different labor movements, associated or not with political parties, could compete for position in this unitary yet pluralistic structure, just as political parties today compete for position in a unitary or federal government.

We would secure the freedom ensured by independence from government and by the pluralism of labor movements. However, we would combine that freedom with a powerful counterweight to the segmentation of the labor force. The dynamic of such a system pushes toward a greater measure of wage solidarity among different groups of workers. It favors greater capacity by organized labor to deal with the broader political and institutional context influencing the proportion of national income that goes to wages, as well as the empowerment of workers in their firms.

We can also give territorial expression to the same principle of a facilitative public-law organization of civil society outside the state. An example would be a provision for a system of neighborhood associations, set up as organizations parallel to local government, to participate in the design and implementation of local-government programs. Alternatively, we can give the principle a functional expression. An example would be a system for the organized participation of groups of interested parents or patients in the provision of education and healthcare.

Whatever the form of the public, nongovernmental structure, people should be able to opt out of it. They should enjoy the right to create an alternative, voluntary and deviant structure of association, chartered according to rules of their own devising. The right to opt out makes this solution into public law minus.

Without this faculty of opting out, the plan for the greater and more equal organization of an independent civil society would not be truly liberal. It would not deserve a place in a program that is, in one sense, a superliberalism, sacrificing to liberal ideals the fossilized institutional conventions with which latter-day liberalism has allowed itself to become identified.

The right to opt out should not be unqualified, lest it be abused. It cannot be exercised among people or groups who do not themselves stand in a circumstance of relative equality *vis-à-vis* one another. Nor may it be used to entrench a little citadel of subjugation.

tion and exclusion. It should represent an experiment in freedom, not in the rediscovery of despotism under the guise of liberal ideas.

This transition program is neither moderate nor radical. It represents a possible first step on what could become a path of cumulative reform of the institutional arrangements now established in the very countries that hold themselves up as models for the rest of humanity. It takes the project of empowered democracy to a level of further, deeper reconstruction.

Who are the possible agents of such a transition program, and what motives and forces may encourage them to embrace it? A thesis about the relation between interests and agents following directly from the antinecessitarian social theory laid out in the early parts of this book suggests an answer.

In a theory like Marxism, one that invokes deep-seated requirements for the development of productive forces and claims to reveal the translation of such requirements into a system of class interests, politics remains a surface phenomenon. The more intense class struggle becomes, and the longer it lasts, the more clearly are people forced to recognize the objective content of their class interests. Utopian dreams, as well as apologetic ideologies, fall victim to the harsh realities of class warfare.

Each class has an interest shaped by its place in the institutional relations defining a mode of production. Only when the development of the forces of production makes possible the introduction of a new set of institutionalized social relations can the content of class interests change; a relatively oppressed class then becomes both the initiator and the most direct beneficiary of the new order.

The social theory for which I argue turns this view of class agency and structural change upside down. As controversy and conflict over the basic terms of social life broaden in scope and deepen in intensity, class interests become more ambiguous. The plurality and uncertainty of the social future are reflected back into the present understanding of interests. The questions: *who am I*, and *what are my interests as a member of this or that group*, lose their specious clarity. They become inseparable from the questions: *what now are the alternative paths of social reconstruction*, and *how would my understanding of my interests and identities change under each of them?* These supervening questions have as many answers as there are alternative directions in which cumulative reform may lead. We are forced to abandon our groundless confidence in the clarity of the distinction between the actual and the possible.

There are always alternative plausible ways to define and defend a group or class interest. Some strategies are socially exclusive and institutionally conservative. They identify the interest with the

defense of an existing niche in the social division of labor, casting the closest groups or the ones directly below as the rivals to be defeated. They take the existing institutional settlement for granted, and help reproduce and reinforce it.

Other approaches to the definition and defense of group or class interests are socially solidaristic and institutionally transformative. They see the closest groups as the best allies, and seek to achieve common goals by changing parts of the present order. A practice of revolutionary reform, informed by a programmatic imagination, must seize on this ambiguity in the understanding and advancement of group interests as its greatest opportunity.

In such a view, there can be no privileged founding agent, like the bourgeoisie for capitalism or the proletariat for socialism, no group whose blind pursuit of its own interest brings greater power and insight to humanity as a whole. Nevertheless, there can – and must – be groups that can begin to reinterpret their own identities, interests, and ideals in the light of a broadened sense of collective possibility.

The transition program I have just outlined depends for its inauguration on an alliance between elements of three classes that play major roles in contemporary societies: an underclass, often of racially stigmatized or second-class citizens; a blue-collar and white-collar working class (called in the United States the “middle class”); and the knowledge workers and professionals of the vanguard sectors of industry. For such an alliance to exist, political connections and programmatic ideas must intervene, resolving the ambiguity of interests in a solidaristic and transformative direction.

Part of the underclass must come to recognize, through its leaders, that it cannot escape its fate without a reform of the economy that democratizes opportunities rather than just distributing compensations to the losers. It must also discover that it cannot achieve such a reform without fighting to reorient and reorganize national politics.

Part of the manual and clerical working class must move beyond the narrow defense of its privileges. It must see that, in the new world of work, the frontier between security and insecurity has become ever less stable. It must rebel against being reduced – in everyone else’s eyes, and ultimately in its own – to just one more special interest clamoring for itself. The defense of the corporate interests of narrow groups must give way to an attempt to find a new basis for practical collaboration and independence. On this foundation, the old difference between an organized working class and a class of independent small business people would wane.

In its place we would begin to create a society of teams of people who are able to come together for practical undertakings in a whole

range of forms occupying the intermediate space between a one-shot contractual transaction and an enduring corporate entity. Such a form of economic life – the intended outcome of a democratization of the market economy – resembles the old idea of a “petty-commodity production,” of a society of independent small-scale producers, in the emphasis it places upon the synthesis of cooperation and self-possession.

However, it differs from that nineteenth-century ideal by abandoning the old fixation on isolated, small-scale property as the vehicle for the attainment of this objective. It also differs in its acknowledgment of the dependence of this regime of cooperative independence upon the reinvention of the relations between government and private enterprise. It requires decentralized partnerships between public action and private enterprise, evading the choice between government as arm’s-length regulator and government as master strategist of trade and industry.

With our technological liberation from drudgery and routine, more people must devote more time to our caring for one another, and particularly to caring for the young and the old. Rather than conceiving of this responsibility as the task of a separate cadre of specialized workers, we should increasingly come to think of it as everyone’s work. It is a goal we can now best achieve through the development of a caring economy, supported by partnerships between government and community groups. We can accomplish it as well through voluntary or mandatory social service.

The professional and business class of rhetoricians, negotiators, and managers can find in such a world greater opportunity to combine gain with adventure than in an economy still organized by large firms and their hierarchies and cabals. They, too, can begin to experience greater ease of movement between professional work and caring for people, and a less rigid distinction between work and leisure.

What, if not the sufferings of war and ruin, could drive people to begin opening up such a path? The stakes in achieving more economic and educational opportunity for larger numbers of people will not suffice. In the comparison of a flawed present with an uncertain future, the risks of uncertainty will almost always seem more fearsome than the burdens of the established order.

Two forces must come to the aid of the argument from interest, and do part of the undesired work of calamity, in opening the way for a progressive alternative. One force is insight into the illusions of false necessity. From the no we must teach ourselves to draw a yes. If the sense of alternatives has disappeared in the form we knew – the contrast between abstract categories of capitalism and socialism, always fake and now found to be empty – we must re-

create the alternatives from the bottom up. We must show how the small-scale variations now available in the world can serve as starting points for the development of larger differences. To this end, we must turn some of the social disciplines, like legal analysis and political economy, into practices of informed institutional imagination.

A second force must help insight in its support of interest. This second force is revulsion against belittlement as well as against injustice. The alternative cannot triumph unless it is also understood and experienced as an incident in the spiritual rebirth of humanity.

Thus, prophecy must join calculation. The votaries of the progressive alternative must speak not in tongues, but in two tongues. They must continue to appeal to people's present understanding of their identities, interests, and ideals. However, they must also invoke a changed world, in which ordinary humanity, raised in its powers and aroused in its ambitions, can discover that it is not so ordinary after all.

The content of the prophecy, not its many and surprising forms, is what matters most. It is a vision of the energizing of the ordinary lives of ordinary men and women; the raising up of our powers, making possible the magnanimity that depends on the strength of self-possession; the overcoming of the contrast between the sleep-walking in which we pass so much of our lives and the exceptional moments of full alertness and engagement. It promises intensity without war and zeal without illusion. It cannot be the creation of politics alone; it requires a change of heart. Before lifting our powers, such a change must raise our expectations.

The spiritual context in which the cause of democracy and experimentalism is gaining ascendancy throughout the world is one shaped by an idea first and most powerfully expressed in the Near-Eastern salvation religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Affirming the radical originality and potential depth of each individual, the reality of the distinctions among phenomena as well as among people, and the dramatic, singular, irreversible and fateful character of both biographical and historical time, it turns each human life into a trial and a revelation.

The prophecy of democratic experimentalism is that we can give this idea an expression that is more real because it is more social. The people described by the salvation religions do not yet fully exist. We can make ourselves into such people, if we understand correctly the link between individual and collective self-transformation.

Empowered democracy, beginning in the transition program just outlined and leading toward the arrangements and experiences more fully explored in the main body of this book, is not the sole feasible

and compelling direction the deepening of democracy can take. There are others. By acknowledging their existence, we emphasize the distinctive character of empowered democracy. It is no less fateful a choice for being a choice inspired by a rebellion against fate. It is fateful in the sense of working out in practice a vision of human value and possibility that cannot be reconciled with all views of what life in society should be like.

This vision values the good of catholicity, of openness to the possible. It refuses to mistake that good for the illusory and ultimately idolatrous goal of neutrality. No set of practices and institutions can be neutral among conceptions of the good or possibilities of experience. The openness to diversity of experience, and to multiple opportunities for correction, is nevertheless one of the most important measures by which to judge a social world. This is the indispensable and real good that the false good of neutrality superficially resembles.

The high-energy democracy explored in the programmatic argument of this book imagines the theater of contest as the great theater of the nation-states of the world. It envisages society-wide experiments in the development of different forms of life, as well as experiments in the lives of individuals and in the activities of groups. It refuses to treat the largest setting – the setting of the nation-state or of the world as a whole – as a dim, low-energy background, meant to ensure the enabling conditions for creating the new through the initiatives of individuals and of groups.

Like every reconstructive program, this one comes with its own characteristic risks. It develops and defines itself by the way it manages them.

One such danger is that empowered democracy may fail properly to economize on political virtue, carrying energy out from our private pursuits in family and career to the society-wide contests and experiments it wants to intensify. To replace our many-sided and particular interests, our weaving in and out of the corners of existence, with an all-consuming devotion to public life is neither possible nor desirable.

It is not possible, because no institutional reordering of social life can change us radically or suddenly; it can give only a tilt to the development of our powers. It is not desirable, because the many-sided and contradictory nature of our concerns – and the pull between the great theaters and the little ones – form irreplaceable elements of our humanity. In clinging to them, we live simultaneously different experiences of time. We also unite, in a more inclusive and androgynous ideal, perceptions and emotions habitually associated with the man and the woman.

The other overriding risk in this program is that the dialectic

between safeguards for the individual and energy for politics will be disturbed. Empowered democracy extends liberal commitments rather than repudiating them; it claims to be a superliberalism rather than an antiliberalism. It depends for its integrity on a package of protections and powers enabling the individual to thrive, securely, in the midst of heightened innovation. The rules defining these powers and protections must be withdrawn from the short-term agenda of politics.

For empowered democracy to work, the enhancement of individual security and capability, and the energizing of collective innovation, must complement one another. However, they may not. No perpetual-motion machine of politics, no mumbo-jumbo of sacrosanct natural rights, can prevent the possibility that new initiatives will invade and weaken the vital safeguards and endowments. There can be no uncontroversial or permanent definition of the scope of these fundamental rights and powers, no setting in which to define them other than that of democratic politics itself.

In advancing along this road, we therefore gamble on the fact that the formation of stronger individuals, in the climate of a deepened democracy, will provide a sufficient bulwark against such a regression. I claim that this is a reasonable gamble, but it is a gamble nonetheless, and one in which the outcome remains hostage to the waverings of insight and will.

The two risks attending the program of empowered democracy are connected. Suppose that the integrity of these institutions depends on an unsustainable level and length of civic engagement. A failure to reach this measure of popular participation and vigilance, and the resulting tiredness and disenchantment with politics, may allow the forces temporarily in power to turn the temporary advantages of their supporters into vested rights. Thus, the overtaxing of political energy may set the stage for a weakening of individual safeguards.

The deepening of democracy can advance in at least two other directions, starting with the same ideological and institutional materials available to the architects of empowered democracy. (Each of these directions is explored more fully in another book of mine, *What Should Legal Analysis Become?*, Verso 1997.) One program places the central locus of innovation in what individuals, newly equipped and inspired, can do in their own lives. It is a radicalized and individualistic version of social democracy. The other program sees communities – defined by shared concern and commitment, if not by a common genealogy – as the chief scene of action. It is a liberal communitarianism, a radical polyarchy.

Both these alternatives reduce the role of national and supranational politics. The most important innovations would take place

elsewhere. National politics would be cold, the better for individual and group experimentalism to become hot. Or – to change the metaphor – politics, understood as a contest over the mastery and uses of governmental power, would become little, so that individuals, or the communities they form, could become big.

The strengthening of the individual, in the first of these two alternative directions, would take place through an enhancement of the economic and educational resources at his command. It would also result from a weakening of those forces of transmission of educational and economic advantage through the family that restrict the triumph of meritocracy and reproduce class divisions.

A characteristic initiative of such a program would be a qualified but progressive redistribution of assets, funding a social-endowment account on behalf of each individual. It is an arrangement, like many others, that this extended social democracy would share with the program developed and defended in this book. Another initiative would be the broadening of educational opportunities: both in an early education, devoted to developing core conceptual and practical capacities, and in a continuing, lifelong education, designed to sustain the abilities to withstand insecurity and profit from innovation. Redistribution among classes and territorial units would have to go as far as necessary to maintain high thresholds of educational investment and performance.

Among the features of the background needed to sustain these arrangements would be the radical restriction of the hereditary transmission of property and the gradual expansion of the right of labor to cross national frontiers. Without such a right, and despite all its practical risks, the raising up of the individual promised by this radicalized social democracy would remain incomplete. Unless he can escape his own country, and join a society established on different principles, realized in different arrangements – unless the world continues to abound in clashing possibilities of social life, and unless people can seize on such possibilities, across oceans and continents – the freedom and power of the individual are not fully real.

Such a program of social reconstruction faces two central difficulties. They are the conundrums of a social order that, in fragmentary and compromised form, already exists in the richest, most self-satisfied parts of the globe. The first difficulty is the tension between the reconstructive ambition of this energized social democracy and its institutional conservatism. We cannot contain the commitment to shape strong individuals within the narrow bounds of boosts to individual endowments, and restraints on the right of inheritance.

To ensure the individual a space for effective self-creation, we

may, for example, need to reinvent the arrangements defining the market economy, the better to decentralize access to productive resources and opportunities. Similarly, we may have to reshape and enlarge the devices by which civil society can organize itself outside the state, developing a body of public but nonstate law of association. To be inaugurated and then sustained, such changes in economic and social institutions may in turn require a higher-energy politics – one that is more conducive to organized political mobilization and more biased toward repeated structural reforms than the narrow, low-temperature politics now practiced in the rich democracies.

We can reach the same disturbing conclusion if we begin with a tension in this radicalized individualism that is psychological rather than institutional. Our desires and impulses are relational in character. We want to manifest them in forms of common life and common discourse when we do not turn them inward, as the forces of an intense but destructive narcissism. We cannot succeed in forming individuals who have such strengthened powers unless we also allow the clash and dialogue of these forms of shared life to deepen. We cannot expect more of people by expecting less of politics.

Another alternative to empowered democracy would place the main seat of innovation and energy in the experiences of particular communities. To qualify as a deepening of democracy, this must be a liberal communitarianism. Its key groups and communities must be neither all-inclusive of the lives of their members, nor rigidly exclusionary toward outsiders. Each person must belong to many such groups, and be able to move among them. Most of the groups must be based on shared concern and commitment rather than common descent. They must bear witness to the principle that under democracy, prophecy speaks louder than memory.

Under such a regime of radical polyarchy, the state becomes a residual facilitator, responsible for policing the minimal background of coordination among groups and communities. These would be the real protagonists of the regime. Among them would be worker-owned and worker-managed firms or cooperative-competitive networks of small businesses, cooperative organizations for the provision or supervision of healthcare, education, and nursing of the old and incapable, and all the common-interest organizations that could be expected to proliferate in a decentralized but more equal society.

We must devolve power from the top to the bottom of society, and from government to organized communities. In so doing, however, we must also organize society so that it can receive these devolved powers and exercise them. Devolution without organiza-

tion would mean a surrender to the preexisting private powers. When we dismantle or retrench government, we do not transfer the abandoned powers of the state to a prepolitical, self-constituting social order. We hand them over to the armed interests that have been shaped by the whole previous course of politics.

We can realize this formula only on the basis of a more thoroughgoing equalization of circumstance than now exists in even the most egalitarian and prosperous of contemporary societies. No sooner do we begin to realize it than we find that it leads to an intractable conundrum.

We cannot get out of the rollercoaster of history. Suppose the rules governing the devolution of power, and the organization of civil society to receive these devolved powers, represent a once-and-for-all fix, to be changed only rarely and with difficulty. Then we must contend with the rise of new, unforeseen, and even unforeseeable forms of inequality. People may find themselves unable to escape such inequalities by the ordinary forms of political and economic action available to them in everyday life. The inequalities may be all the harder to challenge because the great device by which to counteract them – the power of the state – will have been diminished. For if governmental power can entrench private privilege, the absence or weakness of that power can entrench privilege even more.

Suppose, by the other horn of this dilemma, that we can change easily and often the rules governing the devolution of power and the organization of civil society. We shall have dealt with the problem of inequality only by relinquishing some of our polyarchic ambition. We shall have reinstated a society-wide politics as a focus of contest and a target of energy.

By managing threats like these, each of the alternative routes to the deepening of democracy and the radicalization of experimentalism defines its historical character. As soon as we began to deal with such problems, we would probably see the differences among the alternatives start to narrow. In seeing the programs together, we discover that they share common themes and recurrent tensions. These themes and tensions introduce us to perplexities that are like prophecies.

Among the evils supported by the ideas sustaining the doctrine of institutional convergence upon the one true way is the evil of the weakening of national diversity. In a world of democracies, nations organized as states can develop in different directions the powers and possibilities of mankind. We can know and develop ourselves only through contradiction. A mark of higher civilization is the

collective ability to experience contradiction without war, and to make peace without sameness.

Strong difference, difference capable of alternative forms of humanity, requires the marriage of spirit and institution in the organized life of a people. Consequently, the many ways would seem to be the proper antagonist of the one way. However, the argument of this book seems to propose less many ways than another way, a second way.

The alternative futures of democracy I have just considered are not true instances of the idea of the many ways. They are, rather, rival candidates for the role of second way. They lack a strong connection to local circumstance. They suggest alternative directions for humanity. Although they require to be reinvented in the light of national realities – because nation-states remain the major theaters of politics in the world – they speak across these theaters.

Recognizing that there are alternative plausible candidates for the second way attenuates the contrast between the second way and the many ways, but does not abolish this contrast.

The idea of the many ways is that a progressive alternative – one that is market-friendly and growth-friendly, but also socially inclusive, limiting of inequality, and conducive to the deepening and merger of participatory and representative democracy – can best arise through the combination of local heresies with elements of the established economic and political orthodoxy. Such heresies must be inspired by the realities of each country and culture.

Before considering the idea of the many ways as an alternative to the idea of the second way, it is important to understand that both conceptions converge in their implications for the reform of the arrangements governing the world economy.

Their central, shared implication is that these arrangements should be made far more hospitable than they now are to a broad range of national and regional development paths.

The organizations of the Bretton Woods system (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, now joined by the World Trade Organization) must not be allowed to continue operating as the long arm of the dominant neoliberal program and the American hegemony. Insofar as they exercise worldwide responsibilities under universal rules and standards, their functions should be minimalist. For example, they may help keep the world trading system open through the development of clearing rules and payment mechanisms. They may even make short-term loans on the basis of simple criteria, with little discretion.

However, insofar as these organizations become engaged in the work of selective national turnaround and development assistance, they should be broken up into separate entities, or into competing

and independent teams within the shells of the existing entities. Their job should be to assist national experiments, not to suppress them. Thus, universalism should be associated with minimalism, and maximalism with pluralism. Funding should best come from a relatively neutral device, such as a surcharge on the national value-added tax take, or on the closest proxy for it, calculated at a few rate levels, reflecting the place countries hold in a gross hierarchy of per capita income.

Similarly, the rules of the world trading system should be reformed. A basic, default trading regime should repudiate any built-in bias toward the maximization of world trade. Its aim should be to support each country in its own project of national development, and to diminish the interference among the contradictory demands that different national projects place on world trade.

The basic regime should favor a range of solutions encouraging the connected and gradual development of more transnational mobility for capital and labor, rather than leaving capital free and labor unfree. It should allow countries to compensate for the presence of development-inhibiting market failures through the use of subsidies, including investment subsidies. It should apply a restrictive presumption to expansive definitions of property rights, especially intellectual property rights.

This change of direction in the trading regime should be complemented by an expansion of rights to opt out of the regime. All such options must be explicit, and they must be exercised through multilaterally agreed upon procedures. Rich countries must not be allowed to treat an exemption, such as the one granted to first-world agriculture, as a blind spot in the general rules. They must be required to treat it as the object of a right explicitly to opt out, under the arrangements governing escape from the basic trading regime.

How is such a diversity-supporting reform of the world economic order to happen? One possible path to it would pass through the following steps. First, some of the continental, marginalized countries – China, India, Russia, Brazil, and Indonesia – persist in rebellion against the neoliberal program and move toward one of the many ways or the second way. Then, under such pressure, the international regime opens up to a broader set of alternatives. Finally, the reform of the international regime enables national diversity to advance further. Into this more ample space, many other, smaller countries follow.

The story incorporates a complaint. No freedom without struggle – nonviolent struggle, we hope, but struggle nevertheless. The leaders of the dominant powers, and their bureaucrats and professors, will not give us this freedom. We must win it. The pressure must

come from below. It must be motivated by an overpowering desire to undertake a course of action that the established international regime suppresses. It must rely on the national mobilization of resources (including the heightening of domestic saving) to increase the range of maneuver in the early stages of national heresy. And it must be informed by a programmatic imagination. It must, in other words, be both strong and clear-sighted, making use of both heat and light.

The idea of the many ways may seem almost irresistible in its combination of intellectually modesty with respect for national and cultural difference. It faces, however, three related problems.

The first problem is that a local heresy may be insufficient to counteract a universal orthodoxy.

The second problem is that the practical and spiritual unity of the world may be reaching a point that makes unrealistic the idea that societies develop in their distinct trajectories, like planets moving in their orbits.

The third problem is that in a world of democracies, the capacity to create difference – albeit with the materials presented by history – may and should matter more than the ability to perpetuate inherited difference. This collective capacity to develop and invent difference, under conditions of deepening democracy and generalized experimentalism, may require contemporary societies to pass through a gateway of shared innovations – the second way. The second way – this relatively narrow gateway – may be needed to make the many ways possible.

Consider each of these objections in turn.

Proposals for all humanity – like Christianity, liberalism, and socialism – have changed the world. They have informed and inspired, for better or for worse, the promptings of local circumstance.

Today, as well, a proliferation of local heresies may not be enough to resist the universal orthodoxy of neoliberalism, with its message of convergence toward the practices and institutions now established in the rich North Atlantic democracies.

If the heresies are rooted in practical calculations, they may be abandoned at the first sign of trouble, unable to resist the gravitational pull of the orthodox solutions, established in the dominant powers and reinforced by international rules and organizations. If they are anchored in the defense of a collective identity, especially based on religion, they may resist this gravitational pull. However, they are also likely to lose communion with democratic and experimentalist ideals.

An additional reason why local heresies may fall short is that they cannot do justice to two striking features of our situation: the deep

analogies between the problems now faced by richer as well as poorer countries, and the very restricted nature of the institutional repertory with which we must now confront such problems. The power to expand the repertory – even to expand it in very different directions – has certain requirements. An ambition of the doctrine of the second way is to explore the institutional form of these requirements. (See my book *Democracy Realized: The Progressive Alternative*, Verso 1998.)

Thus, we come to a third objection to the adequacy of local heresies: the need to rid ourselves, for the sake of democracy, freedom, and enlightenment, of a perversion that may easily hide behind such heresies – the conceit that the differences most valuable to humanity are already present in the different cultures of the world, and in different nations as bearers of these cultures.

The power to create collective difference – to create it, not just to perpetuate it in the form we have inherited – is both cause and consequence of democratic experimentalism. Like every other aspect of our social situation, this power to produce difference depends on ideas and arrangements.

However, we now witness the spread of a poisonous version of the will to difference. The different nations of the world value their differences all the more for seeing them weaken. Rarely has a country willingly exchanged the semblance, memory, or promise of difference, protected by sovereignty, for money, translated into higher standards of living. Each nation has been compelled to tear out part of itself to sacrifice on the altar of worldwide practical and spiritual competition. Our collective identities are emptied out of their traditional concrete content in customary forms of life.

Yet the will to difference is aroused rather than quieted by this emptying out. The nations have a will to be different, and hate one another all the more when this will to difference has to coexist with the reality of increasing sameness. They rage, out of a collective impotence in the making of real difference. These nearly empty and absolute collective identities cannot be negotiated; there is almost no content left to negotiate and revise. Such hollow identities become, because of their hollowness, objects of intransigent faith.

The greatness of common humanity requires the strengthening of our collective power to make collective differences. No proposal can count as one to deepen democracy if it fails to strengthen this power.

The differences that matter in this world of democracies, however, are more those we make and invent than those we remember and preserve. The future matters more than the past, and prophecy triumphs over memory.

To be sure, we build with our inheritance. We must also accept

our collective memories of suffering, achievement, and difference as part of our incarnate humanity: no practice of collective invention and prophecy can be securely founded on forgetting and self-denial. Even common descent, the nation as a larger family, may continue to carry weight in shaping a collective identity and task. Nevertheless, the emphasis must change: the inheritance becomes the point from which to depart rather than a map of the way.

A by-product of success in this work of strengthening our powers of collective originality is that we become better able to put real difference in the place of willed difference. As a result, we free ourselves from the self-deceiving and violent clash of empty collective identities, the battle of fleshless and heartless idols to which a disoriented humanity risks surrendering.

A commitment to strengthen the power by which nations make themselves different has its basis in a dialectic central to all versions of the deepening of democracy. This dialectic is the reciprocal reinforcement between a broadening of the range of social life open to effective experimentalism and the strengthening of the equipment, the endowment, and the safeguards of the individual.

The rules defining these individual powers and protections must be withdrawn from the agenda of short-term politics. Some things must be taken away from the scope of collective experimentalism for the sake of collective experimentalism itself. In this way, we honor the individual power to transcend context. This power is the good enshrined in our experimentalist practices.

A privilege against constant revision in the course of day-to-day politics is the procedural residue in the pseudometaphysical language of fundamental rights. The substantive residue is the insight that availability for a humanizing life of risk and self-creation depends on both power and security. The relation between what we hand over to experimental freedom and what we assure to the individual resembles the relation between the parent's love for the child and the child's willingness to undertake the moral adventures — the partial lifting of the defenses, the acceptance of heightened vulnerability — on which our practical and spiritual empowerment depends.

The most hierarchical forms of social life, those that entrench and sanctify an ordering of castes and estates delimiting what each individual may do and feel, confound the definition of individual security with the detailed shaping of a form of social life under the sanctity of custom. Every violation of the customs therefore appears to be an assault on individual security. In our relative democracies, these two principles have been partly disentangled: there are spheres of fundamental rights and spheres left open to the experimentalism of business, culture, and politics.

It remains, however, a limited disengagement, characteristic of a circumstance of limited freedom. We can, we should, we must push this disengagement further. We can do so only by renovating the practices and institutions to which our professed ideals and recognized interests continue to be fastened. All versions of the deepening of democracy make a claim that we can have more experimental freedom and more individual power and security at the same time. All say that we can have more of both only by changing our institutions and revising the ideas by which they operate.

A moral dream animates this shared project. This dream fixes the point of deepest contact among the alternative ways of advancing democracy and experimentalism. It is the dream of an intensification of human life that brings our prosaic circumstance into greater conformity to our divine self-image.

For all these reasons, the doctrine of the many ways – the idea of combining local heresies with elements of the present global political-economic orthodoxy – is inadequate, for the moment. We should opt instead for the second way, represented here by the combination of the program of empowered democracy, worked out in the main body of this book, with the transitional program outlined in this introduction. This presentation of the second way has the advantage of being specific and the corresponding disadvantage of seeming unduly restrictive.

The idea of the second way must be qualified by an awareness of the contestable and provisional character of any proposal to state its content and the existence of rival proposals, by knowledge that each of the requirements it specifies can be realized by alternative combinations of institutions and practices, by recognition of the need to reconsider and reinvent its forms with the help of styles of programmatic discourse emphasizing emergent possibility in local contexts, and by insistence on the unique and ephemeral character of the predicament to which the program of the second way responds.

The second way is not a definitive alternative to the many ways. It is a road to the many ways. It describes conditions for strengthening the collective power to make collective differences while remaining in touch with democratic and experimentalist ideals.

The doctrine of the second way is nevertheless doubly paradoxical. The first apparent paradox is to believe that a capacity for greater divergence, in a world of democracies, must today pass through a broad but nevertheless limited gateway of shared innovations in the form of democracy, of the market economy, and of free civil society. The second seeming paradox is to affirm that the strengthening of plasticity, of negative capability, may now turn out

to have particular implications for the reform of society as well as for the reorientation of thought.

The sense of paradox diminishes, although it does not dissipate, when we realize that the claim made on behalf of the second way is a claim about a transitory historical circumstance – our circumstance – rather than a universal claim about humanity and its future.

We should not flatter ourselves into believing that we have already found the formula of freedom, and possess the most valuable differences. We remain unfree, and are becoming less different.

EMPOWERMENT AND VULNERABILITY

The program of democratic experimentalism has motives that go beyond politics. The themes of false necessity and empowered democracy – the explanatory and the programmatic concerns of this work – lie, all around, on the surface of the argument. The vision of human life and its transformation, underlying these themes, remains only partly expressed. It is nevertheless the overriding concern. From that vision, once made explicit and persuasive, must flow much of the authority of the ideas. From the longings the vision mobilizes, and seeks to interpret, must come much of the energy for the changes in societies and in people that these ideas propose.

Every political project pushes human experience in certain directions, encouraging some possibilities of life and discouraging others. This ineradicable tilt characterizes even the programs that value, as all versions of democratic experimentalism should, diversity and novelty, recognizing the many forms of human greatness.

We cannot separate two sets of elements in our experience – those that constitute a supposedly universal and invariant human nature, and those that exist as creatures of history, culture, and politics. The wall between these domains always crumbles. Even the most intimate recesses of our personal experience remain hostage to the course of politics. Conversely, no great transformative enterprise can achieve either the clarity or the energy it requires, unless it communicates with our innermost longings – the very longings that ruling dogma and established organization refuse to countenance.

There is a vision of the best response to the problems of human life that has reappeared in the moral history of many civilizations, under countless forms. Its hallmark is the quest for invulnerability. It sees us chained, by the marriage of illusion and desire, to an ordeal of disappointment, suffering, and pain. From this ordeal we can escape, it teaches, by a combination of insight and practice.

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We must cast away the illusions that support this endless cycle of futile and restless searching. We can then achieve communion with the unchanging, undivided, and universal reality to which we in fact belong. Having evaded vain distraction and longing, we can cast a spell on ourselves – not of fantasy and trickery, but of understanding and acceptance. From this hard-won vantage point, we can practice acts of self-possession and compassion, informed by our discovery of the trials we share with all men and women, or even with all living creatures.

The goal of this conversion of the self, and the sign of success, is invulnerability to the disappointments to which the marriage of our strivings to our illusions condemns us. Serenity, expressed in independence, opening up toward kindness to others, and an embrace of fate – our fate and the universal fate – is the great gift we are to obtain from the achievement of invulnerability.

A story meant to counteract our illusions anchors this response to the human predicament in a larger view of reality. According to this story, the distinctions among phenomena in general, as well as among individuals in particular, are superficial. Only when we take this sham world of distinction seriously do we get hooked on frustrated desire and compulsive striving.

A characteristic version of this idea is the moral and psychological practice recommended by Ancient Greek Stoicism. We can secure independence by overcoming distraction. Engaged fully in the present, undisturbed by remorse or longing, we can realize, through this possession of the moment, communion with universal and undivided reality.

The vision of human possibility to which the arguments of false necessity and empowered democracy contribute, and from which they arise, reverses the ethic of invulnerability and rejects the beliefs on which that ethic depends. Consider, first, the rejection and replacement of the beliefs.

The imagination finds itself in a world marked by the reality of differences, the depth of individuals, and the once-and-for-all, irreversible, and decisive character of historical events. In this world, the differences among things and among people are for real. Among individuals, these differences are deep as well as real.

From every individual person, for all the sameness-producing forces that grind down upon him, can grow an original, someone unlike anyone else who has ever existed. We all live as individuals in historical as well as biographical time: incomplete, mutilated (in a sense I shall soon explore), with a surfeit of possible capacity hovering over our straitened circumstances, and plunged into history, the experience of the events that keep deciding and undeciding

our fate, and might not have happened, or might have happened differently.

History is our fate – not because it had to be or needs to be what it is, but because it threatens to make each of us into something little and particular, a bit actor in a script we never wrote and barely grasp, rather than the protagonists of our own lives. We begin to master history by beginning to resist it. By resisting its fatefulness, we make ourselves more human. We demystify and disrespect the naturalized world of practices and institutions, pieties and dogmas, the better to respect people. Then we can worship one another as the context-resisting, -revising, and -transcending agents we really are.

We can no more grow in self-possession by denying and evading this world of time and individuality, of dim insight and lopsided striving, of accident and absurdity, than we can comprehend something by staring at it. The will needs less to put itself under a spell of quietude and resignation than to make common cause with the imagination. By placing the actual under the aegis of the possible, while refusing to corral the possible within a perimeter it can circumscribe, the imagination rescues the will from the choice between blind routine and aimless rebellion, and enables it to find possible next steps instead of reasonless repetition of present practices or blind rejection of the established order.

The essence of moral wisdom is unprotection. To avoid the anticipated death that occurs when we lose contact with the imagination of the possible – and therefore also with the dark, unrealized part of the self – we must throw down our shields. We must be prudent in the little things, but only the better to be foolhardy in the big ones. From our experiments in unprotection comes the possibility of surprise, and hence of self-transformation.

The most important instance of this life-giving unprotection is our acceptance of heightened vulnerability to other people. It is in the zone of heightened vulnerability that we are more able to imagine and to give, receive, or refuse love.

In everyday life, the chief expression of the practice of unprotection is the willingness to endure the risks that every innovation imposes on the established form of cooperation, and the determination to press for a higher form of cooperation: one that is more hospitable to repeated and accelerated innovation, and to the narrowing of the gap between the activities that take the context for granted and the activities that challenge and change it.

Our reward is a style of cooperation that wages no war against plasticity. Because plasticity and cooperation are the two great conditions of practical progress, and their interference with each other is the most burdensome constraint on our emancipation from

poverty, infirmity, and drudgery, no achievement is more important to the improvement of our material circumstances.

The doctrine of unprotection for the sake of vitality and plasticity must, by an apparent paradox, include the acknowledgment of a need for security. We must be secure in a domain of core safeguards, identities, and endowments. Not to turn this need for protection in the service of unprotection into an excuse to mummify character or society is a major task of statecraft and moral prudence.

The idea of unprotection as wisdom opposes the quest for serenity through invulnerability. However, both that idea and this quest respond to the same experience: the torment in which we are placed by the beginning of freedom and of insight, as soon as we have started to loosen the bonds of custom, routine, and conventional imagery. The revolutionary alliance of science and democracy has accelerated this loosening, and brought to a head the great contest between the ethics of serenity and vulnerability.

The aim of the institutional experiments and the moral adventures embraced by those who reject the search for serenity through invulnerability is the carrying of ordinary experience and common humanity to a higher level of power: not just practical capacity (although that as well) but power to transcend the insights and products of established society and culture. This residue, this surfeit, used to be called "spirit." Power to the spirit, so that it can go further toward reconciling itself with others and create a world less hostile to its impatience and its ambition, is the object of the undertaking.

Democracy – based on demophilia, on the tearing down of the false barriers and rigid hierarchies between us, and on the consequent multiplication of ways of working together not predetermined by blueprints of social division and hierarchy – is an important part of the path toward this goal. However, it is only part of the path: neither the whole path nor the destination. In this part of the path, a rigid equality of circumstance matters less than greater opportunity for capable action and self-development. The egalitarian distribution of resources remains secondary to the breaking of all privileged strangleholds on the future-making resources of productive capital, political power, and educational equipment.

The destination is our raising up from the littleness that prevents us from connecting with others without, as the condition of connection, surrendering the claim of spirit: the claim that there is always more in us than there is in all the social and cultural orders we build and inhabit. We claim – each of us individually as well as all of us collectively – to be out of place in a world that refuses to recognize this power in us, and continues to treat each of us as a

doomed and specialized worker in the execution of an inhuman plan.

We must distinguish the attempt to radicalize democratic experimentalism, especially through the path here labeled empowered democracy, from the self-defeating effort to put an imaginary selfless citizen in the place of the real, embodied individual, who pursues distinct interests in different domains of experience. No program based on so one-dimensional a view of personality, and so out of sympathy with the vast expansion of subjectivity, individual freedom, and practical capacity we enjoy in our anti-Spartas, could be feasible or worthy of realization. We must develop these programmatic ideas in a way that secures them against the charge of failing to economize on political virtue and making war on what we are now like. We must be sure that they recognize our contradictory dispositions and our justified resistance to the all-encompassing claims of public life.

The effort to deepen democratic experimentalism should not be identified with the sacrifice of privacy and subjectivity to civic virtue. Similarly, the raising up of the powers of humanity that effort serves should not be mistaken for a self-making and self-empowerment that denies or understates (in the tradition of Rousseau, Emerson, and Nietzsche) the passage of empowerment through accepted vulnerability and intensified connection. Such a view perverts, by its one-sidedness, the truth about us. Its mistake is to fail to represent correctly the relation between our connections with others and our transcendence over context, between our intersubjectivity and our infinity. Its consequence is to freeze an adventure into a posture. It is a posture we are unable to maintain without paying a life-denying price: the denial of opportunities for self-correction.

Once distinguished from this perversion, the ideal of finding light in the shadowy world of the commonplace, and doing justice to the genius of common humanity, can be disentangled into three sets of elements. They span the distance from a practical ambition to a visionary commitment.

The first element is the desire to strengthen our capacities to realize the particular goods of human life, beginning with the material and moral interests we already recognize as ours. Humanity continues to be bent under the yoke of poverty, ignorance, infirmity, and drudgery. Vast multitudes of men and women find themselves without the resources and skills to combine meaningful and respectable work with the provision of their basic material needs, and unable to care for themselves and their families.

The experience of today's richer democracies has shown that it has been possible to lift the vast majority out of destitution without

embarking on the course of institutional and spiritual innovation for which I argue here. However, only small and culturally homogeneous countries, with a long history of equalizing reform, culminating in an inclusive regime of social protection, have been able to moderate the division of society into the three great classes of the idea-manipulating supervisors, the poverty-free but powerless and routine-bound workers, and the downtrodden underclass. The rest of humanity cannot hope to reproduce their circumstances by imitating their arrangements.

Many believe that the extension of property rights, as now designed in the North Atlantic world, the continuation of global economic integration in its present form, and greater, more effective investment in education will suffice to heal the rifts in the richer countries, as well as to cure the evils of extreme world inequality. Here I argue that they are mistaken. We can generalize opportunity and capacity only by insisting on the practice of revolutionary reform: the piecemeal and gradual – but nevertheless cumulative, and therefore ultimately radical – reshaping of our arrangements and assumptions. This is a view that may seem compromised by its association with the theoretical dogmas and political calamities of a recent past.

It nevertheless embodies an indispensable truth that we must rescue from these associations. This truth expresses a matter of fact about the conditions for the achievement of certain practical forms of individual empowerment under the circumstances of contemporary societies. It speaks as well to something deep and permanent about us.

Our interests and ideals, and we ourselves, always remain hostage to the established institutional and ideological settlement. It is not enough to humanize that settlement through compensatory redistribution. We must humanize ourselves by changing the character as well as the terms of the settlement: its relation to the power by which we resist and reform it.

The second element of this aim of doing justice to the greatness of common humanity is the effort to contain the tragic conflict between the enabling conditions of personality. Every feature of our self-development, from the most elementary and material to the most ambitious and spiritual, depends on social bonds. Connections, however, impose chains, subjecting us to the two great oppressive forces of social life: its hierarchies of class and its stereotypes of role. Thus, every advance in connection becomes a surrender to this outer fate. In concert with our inner fate, the rigidification of the personality in a character, this outer fate immobilizes us until time destroys us.

Every attempt to rebel against the external fate of class and role

amounts to a betrayal of loyalties and a threat of isolation. Torn between our need to connect and our impulse to break the chains imposed by social connections, we face a rift in the central requirements of self-assertion.

A variant of this rift with decisive consequence for material progress is the tension between the requirements of cooperation and innovation on which all practical progress depends.

Another variant of the same rift is the burden that our belittlement by the divisions and hierarchies of social life places on our ability to give and receive love. Philosophers have told us repeatedly that in love we can most fully acknowledge one another as the context-transcending originals each of us really is. This fact helps to make love rather than altruism – the imagination and acceptance of the other rather than the restraint on self-interest – the organizing center of moral life.

However, we have not yet become these beings – not fully. We must make ourselves into them by all the acts of collective and personal self-transformation with which the arguments of this book are concerned. Our moral and political histories engage each other.

Beyond the strengthening of particular capacities to realize the particular goods of human life, we must seek so to arrange society that we lower the price, in subjugation and depersonalization, that we must pay in order to connect. By diminishing the tribute we must pay to class, role, and routine, we limit – although we can never abolish – the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion. By moderating this conflict, we enlarge our freedom. We become better. We become more.

The third part of the goal from which this program draws its authority and its light is the effort so to reimagine and remake the world – the secular world of society we inhabit – that it becomes less unsuited to us, as beings who, by virtue of the most important and godlike attribute of our humanity, exceed any particular world. An order that recognizes and nourishes our capacity to judge, to resist, and to reform order is what we must have if we are to engage without self-denial and self-belittlement. We can then live out the truth about ourselves, more fully and single-mindedly, and find it confirmed by daily experience, rather than confined to our fantasy life of escape and adventure.

The conception composed of these three sets of elements, each supervening on the one before, is a normative vision, informed by an understanding of transformative possibility. This normative vision resists being grasped in the vocabularies of rule, virtue, or happiness.

Not rule – because the conception allows no translation into a closed set of norms. It contains, on the contrary, an antinomian

impulse, suggesting the provisional and conditional authority of any system of rules.

Not virtue – because all the would-be virtues matter less than the alliance of the imagination and the will. This alliance enables us further to lower our shields and better to reconcile the clashing requirements of self-assertion. It allows us to sacrifice serenity to vitality. It will not always be clear, in this change of heart and of course, when virtues amount to vices and vices to virtues.

Not happiness – because in abandoning the ideal of invulnerability, we court sufferings and joys that force the connotations of that word. Once tasted, they must seem irresistible to a being that is infinity imprisoned in the finite.

In stating this vision, we have reason to worry. Are we falling back into a romantic-heroic view of life that takes inadequate account both of our embeddedness in the societies and cultures, the races and the roles, the families and the jobs that define us, and of the many-sided and contradictory character of our interests and anxieties? Are we shifting onto politics and the historical world a weight that they cannot bear, and that only intimate experience and personal connection and commitment can support? And do we not then fail to take to heart the terrible lesson about the alliance of evil, illusion, and hope that history keeps teaching us?

Every vision of human possibility and the reshaping of social life must be tested by its ability to distinguish rightly between the inalterable conditions of existence, which we must accept, and the reformable order of society, which we must improve.

The countries that now present themselves as models to the rest of the world fail both these tests. In the present hegemonic power, for example, there is a widespread reluctance to subject institutions to the scrutiny and testing that Americans have lavished on other aspects of their experience. The rigidification of institutional arrangements contrasts with the popularity of practices of physical, psychological, and spiritual self-help that sometimes deny both our interdependence and our mortality. An individualistic Pelagianism coexists with an institutional idolatry.

Two species of the failure to hold the alterable conditions of social life to account that play an important role in the argument of false necessity are institutional fetishism and structure fetishism. Institutional fetishism is the failure to understand that abstract institutional conceptions like “representative democracy” or “market economy” lack any single, natural or necessary expression in a set of rules, practices, and institutions. Structure fetishism – the higher-order equivalent to institutional fetishism – is the failure to acknowledge that we can change the quality as well as the content

of the institutional and ideological orders within which we move: their relation to the power by which we challenge and change them, and thus the sense in which they are there, entrenched and imposed on us as natural facts.

In diminishing the discontinuity between the normal activities by which we reproduce an order and the exceptional ones by which we change it, by making our revisionary work an extension of our everyday jobs, we not only strengthen our capacity to realize particular goods; we also express and develop our most creative freedom: the freedom to master the context of action.

Easier said than done: institutional and structure fetishism turn out to be imprinted on the most influential traditions of social thought, including those that have guided the left. We continue to use the words and concepts of these traditions while professing to disbelieve in the rigorous theoretical assumptions that would support their use. We are less disillusioned than confused.

Our confusion helps to justify our institutional conservatism. Supposing, mistakenly, that real institutional change (as opposed to reformist tinkering) would mean the replacement of one indivisible institutional system by another (e.g. capitalism by socialism or socialism by capitalism), we conclude that such change is now neither feasible (in this age of relative peace) nor desirable (on the evidence of the calamitous consequences of revolutionary institutional change in the past century).

The generic character of the evil produced by the failure to challenge and improve what can be changed in the practices and institutions of society is entrapment. When we are entrapped, we cannot properly worship one another as the context-transcending beings we really are: our worship becomes misdirected from people to the arrangements and assumptions in which people are sunk. Our task is to deny reverence to the structures, the better to revere people.

There is entrapment in a divisive and specialized order of society and culture. That is the form of entrapment that the radicalization of democratic experimentalism most directly undermines. The concepts of institutional and structure fetishism describe two of its more important manifestations in our ideas. They show how we become accomplices to our own enslavement.

We are also entrapped, more generally, by the naturalization of the social world through repetition. Repetition in society and culture is a kind of incantation, leading us, through our inability to produce or endure permanent novelty and to be ever new, to accept a habitual form of life as a second nature. We spring the trap by changing the relation between repetition and disruption. We must so reform our arrangements and practices – including our practices

of discourse in technical disciplines like legal analysis or political economy – that the very activities by which we reproduce our second nature create opportunities and provide tools for its fragmentary, but motivated and cumulative remaking.

Such practices will not suffice to create their own agents. We must form these agents. We must educate them in a high-energy politics. We must endow them with resources that guarantee each individual an independent stake in the activities of a democratized market. We must develop schools that rescue the child from its family, its class, its culture, and its historical epoch. Such a school insists on being the voice of the future within the present. It treats every child as an ignorant and tongue-tied prophet.

By springing the trap – both the manifest trap of entrenched social hierarchy and division and the hidden, omnipresent trap of unthinking repetition – we change the conditions of engagement in social life. We make it possible to go further in distinguishing entrapment from engagement. The great sadness of the historical world has been the practical difficulty for the individual of separating them in his everyday life, not just in the moments of joy or compassion when he experiences himself as most godlike.

In struggling with our second natures, to prevent them from containing and killing us, we must nevertheless accept the inalterable conditions of existence. We can reject these conditions only by giving ourselves over to some self-destructive and isolating illusion.

What are these unchanging circumstances? And what role can the advance of the overthrow of false necessity and the advance of democratic experimentalism play in our response to them? In what spirit does a man who wrestles with his second nature embrace his condition?

The first inalterable circumstance is death, imposing on each human life the shape of an irreversible and unrepeatable course, subjecting what we hold dear, and our very selves, to the destructive work of time, and establishing a daunting contrast between the preciousness of the span we are allotted and the banality of the misdirected efforts with which, for the most part, we fill this span.

All societies and cultures conspire to arm us against the dread we feel at the prospect of this absolute limit, which not only annihilates our identities in a moment but also denies us the second chance we all think we deserve. The engagement in work and in love that makes the approach of this limit tolerable remains shadowed by the intimation of a disaster we are powerless to prevent.

This disaster is not just the disappearance of the self; it is our inability to control the effect of time on everything and everyone that matters most to us. Thus, in gaining a greater collective context

in which we act and think, we are forced to remember that this context is placed within a universal reality whose future we are unable to direct, whose purposes and end we are unable to discern, and whose meaning for us we are unable to settle.

The first and most fundamental response we must give to this situation is to accept it. All attempts at escape, through efforts at self-salvation and denials of death, harm the good of understanding and living a human life in the light of its dramatic limitedness and irreversibility. They weaken our hold on this good without delivering us from the evil of annihilation. As a result, we diminish our ability to devote ourselves to tasks and attachments. That devotion alone confirms us in the sentiment of being and the reality of freedom.

The second response to death and finitude supervenes on the first, and is shaped by it. It is the effort to establish the social arrangements and practices allowing more people to resolve, more fully and more often, the conflict between the enabling requirements of self-assertion: the need for connection to others, without the surrender to a social and cultural script marking, for each of us, the limits of experience and vision. Every aspect of the campaign to deepen democracy and radicalize experimentalism contributes to this end.

Even the hero, the genius, and the saint cannot solve this problem for themselves, except imperfectly: the works of heroism, genius, and saintliness look outward to other people, the non-heroes, non-geniuses, and non-saints, from whom, however, they also separate the protagonist. Because he can never adequately answer the question: where are the others?, he cannot solve the problem of how to live as mortal and embodied spirit.

The third response to death and finitude, extending the second under the circumstances of contemporary life, is to replace war by service as the collective occasion for the overcoming, through sacrifice, of banality and belittlement. Life is nothing if not sacrificial, and no life can be judged fully lived unless a person has been able, at certain times, to give himself to something greater than himself, and has felt the spirit within him beat against the cage. No one, rich or poor, famous or unknown, should have to go down into the grave without having lived these moments of self-transcendence, and felt the force of the fire within.

In the past, war has been all too often the collective occasion for such experience. Mandatory as well as voluntary social service can take the place of war as the shared opportunity for sacrificial devotion. Everyone, everywhere in the world, should have to spend a year or two of his life, in young adulthood, serving the needs of the needy. If he is professionally educated, he can work in the area

of his specialty. If he is not, the commitment to serve can become an occasion for remedial training in a skill that is useful to those who require help – from education to health, from homebuilding to care for the sick and the old. Every country, rich or poor, should send part of its youth to do social service in other countries, rich or poor, learning languages and understanding differences in the process.

A vast increase in our powers of compassion, sustained by practical arrangements nourishing our ability to imagine the otherness of other people, to raise them up, to recognize and respect the god within, is what we need. In this climate of broadened imagination and magnanimity, the rest will also become possible.

If the limit imposed by death and finitude is one of the inalterable conditions we must accept, the other condition is the shape taken by a human life under the pressure of this limit and in the circumstances of embodied spirit, no less embodied than spirit. We begin like hapless gods, discovering as children a world in and against which we need not yet struggle. From this paradise of imagination, we are exiled into a world of striving. We must cease to be everyone, and become someone.

This someone is the product of a mutilation, a cutting away of human possibilities, for the sake of effective engagement in a world that resists and frustrates our striving. The mutilation we undertake for the sake of fecundity of action leaves us separated from the selves we can no longer be. What is, and can and should be, our relation to these suppressed and unrealized possibilities of life we see reflected back to us in the lives of other people?

As we grow older, a mummy may form around us. Rather than dying all at once, we begin to die many small deaths. The mummy forms both from without and from within. From without, it is the second nature of our station in society, and of the routines and repetitions of daily life. This adaptation drives us into a funnel of narrowing possibilities. From within, it is the second nature of our character, which is the rigidified form of a personality: the repertory of our habits of thought and action, translated into a way of living and of feeling among other people.

Just as each of us begins to become his station, so – even more intimately and completely – he becomes his character. The two second natures work together to undermine the condition of spirit, which is surfeit and incongruity. They suppress contradiction and simplify possibility, delivering death by installment.

Combined, the two second natures are our fate, and we would be right to hate them if we could not change their place in our lives. We would be right to hate them as the little and masklike

version of our self that has kidnapped and imprisoned the bigger self each of us really is.

We cannot lift the imperative of mutilation. We must accept it as part of the price of embodiment and engagement. However, we can work to change the relation of the mutilated self – the self we became – to the selves we left aside. We can keep the frontier between the realized and the abandoned, or not yet achieved, selves open. We can teach ourselves to feel the hurt at the point of amputation, and to experience the ghostly movement of the missing limb. Then we can learn to use what we have lost.

We do so in one way, through the advance of democratic experimentalism, by weakening the hold of the outer second nature, the logic of the social station we occupy, on our capacities for initiative and connection. We do so in a second way, through the ethic of accepted vulnerability, by struggling against the dictatorship of our inner second nature, the personality frozen into a character. And just as the influence of an ethic of accepted vulnerability helps, from a distance, in the struggle against the outer second nature, so the deepening of experimentalist practices and democratic institutions helps to form the people who are strong enough to deny the last word to the inner second nature.

The point is not to prevent repetition, nor to deny the role of habit, as a principle of economy in action and accumulation in virtue. It is to form the capacities and the ideas, and to multiply the situations, that enable us to pierce the wall between the one self each of us has become and the range of experience from which he had to turn away.

In a world of democracies, each nation develops in a different direction the powers and possibilities of humanity, as culture and as institution. Each makes prophecy gain ascendancy over memory. Each allows the individual to escape, thanks to what must become his universal right to live and work elsewhere. Each must so value diversity and contradiction in its internal life that every rift can serve as an occasion to incorporate, reinterpret, and reconstruct what some other nation has worked out. Thus, tinkering through recombination, the daily bread of a practical experimentalism, is made to serve the purpose of a larger diversity. Each nation, in making itself different, sees itself partly reflected in other nations.

By analogy, we must imagine the same solution in the world of individuals, struggling through and against their own characters to form these characters, yet also periodically to put them under pressure, to shake them up, to bring into view and grasp possibilities of experience of some of the selves we forswore. In this way, we rip up the mummy from the inside, and make sure we die only one death.

We turn against ourselves. This work of self-disruption has two sources.

The first source of our attack on ourselves is our ambivalence toward one another. What we want from one another has no limit: nothing would ever be enough to assure each of us that he has a place in the world, or to console him for finitude and death. As a result, everything we receive from one another, even the most selfless acts of love and devotion, seems like a down payment on a transaction that cannot be completed. For how could it ever be completed, if it demands unconditional companionship and acceptance from others who share with us the same divine attributes of inexhaustible uniqueness, depth, and obscurity? If we try to protect ourselves by standing under the cold light of distance and indifference, we can neither reap the full benefits of cooperation nor win the yet greater riches of love.

As we move closer together, drawn by need and attraction, we pass by steps into an experience of two-tongued passions, of violent reversals, of hidden reservations. Infinitely needy of one another, we can never either give or receive enough.

Imprisoned in our individual minds and wills, yet finding in contact with other minds and wills that we cannot get answers to our questions, we try to place ourselves under spells and restraints. We accustom ourselves to prudent degrees of distance. Then we rage and rebel against our own stratagems of self-protection.

The second source of our turning against ourselves is our inability either to accept the particular worlds we build and inhabit, or to do without them. Just as we are ambivalent to one another, so we are ambivalent to our created worlds of society and culture, raising them up and smashing them, in big and little ways, and uncertain whether to revere or defy them.

Without a particular place, a home for action and belief, we are powerless and lost. How could any place do justice to us? There is always more in us, in each of us as well as in all of us collectively, more that we have reason to want, to do, and to feel, than there could ever be in any place, than it could ever allow. So we must turn against it, and, in turning against it, turn against ourselves. The godlike excess of the person and his mind, his excess over all rule and structure, makes the conflict inescapable.

Together with the natural facts of death and loss, this ambivalence of ours toward one another and toward our shared worlds and works, this relentless self-overturning, gives us our untold sorrows. It multiplies opportunities for evil, arising from distance, difference, and fear. It opens us to the new experience and to the other person, making possible imagination and love.

This turning against ourselves is the problem and the solution,
our ordeal and our salvation.

Roberto Mangabeira Unger
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The Nature and Intentions of the Argument

EXPLANATORY AND PROGRAMMATIC THEMES

False Necessity presents an explanatory theory of society and a program for social reconstruction. The theory works toward a radical alternative to Marxism. The program suggests a radical alternative to social democracy.

As an explanatory theory of society, *False Necessity* seeks to free social explanation from its dependence upon the denial of our freedom to resist and to remake our forms of social life. It offers a relentlessly anti-necessitarian view that nevertheless generates a broad range of social and historical explanations: some comprehensive and abstract, others focused and concrete. It carries to extremes the thesis that everything in society is politics, mere politics, and then draws out of this seemingly negativistic and paradoxical idea a detailed understanding of social life.

As a program for social reconstruction, *False Necessity* shows how we may carry forward the radical project of freeing our practical and passionate dealings from the constraints imposed upon them by entrenched social roles and hierarchies. It argues that the best hope for the advancement of this radical cause – the cause that leftists share with liberals – lies in a series of revolutionary reforms in the organization of governments and economies and in the character of our personal relations. The explanatory and programmatic ideas of the book are closely connected: each supports the other, and each expresses an aspect of the vision that both share.

This vision takes the last and most surprising step in the itinerary of modern historicism. For it recognizes that the quality of our relation, as context-revising agents, to the institutional and imaginative contexts we establish and inhabit is itself up for grabs in history. We can construct not just new and different social worlds but social worlds that more fully embody and respect the creative power whose suppression or containment all societies and cultures seem to require. In this way we can break a little farther out of the tedious, degrading rhythm of history – with its long lulls of collective narcolepsy punctuated by violent revolutionary seizures. We can lift a little higher the burden of social division and hierarchy that weighs upon our efforts to gain practical, emotional, and cognitive access to one an-

other. And we can do a little better at finding the limited circumstances that somehow express our inconformity with limited circumstances.

Explanatory Themes

The guiding concern of the explanatory theory can be described in several equivalent ways. Most of the comprehensive and influential social theories advanced in the last two centuries suffer from an internal tension. The tension is especially noticeable in the doctrines – Marxism preeminent among them – that have provided the left with its intellectual tools. All these theories, whether or not radical in their intentions, see society as an artifact. They treat every organization of social life as made and imagined rather than as given in an eternal pattern by human nature or social harmony. They therefore also emphasize the stark discontinuities among forms of social life, recognizing each such form as the expression of a different way of being human.

Yet these theories repeatedly betrayed their understanding of society as artifact by the fashion in which they turned this understanding into a concrete practice of social explanation. They pinned their theoretical ambitions to the development of a supposed science of history and society. This science presents man as the product of an evolutionary logic, or of deep-seated economic, organizational, or psychological constraints, that he is unable to alter. The weakening of the intention in the execution may be justified by the sense that without this hedging, we would fall into theoretical agnosticism, and transformative politics would lose intellectual guidance. As a result, we would become all the more subject to the influence of the social worlds we inhabit.

But the explanatory theory of *False Necessity* is meant to show that we can resolve this apparent dilemma. We can carry to its ultimate conclusion the view of society as artifact. Moreover, we can do so without abandoning ourselves to theoretical nihilism and without weakening our ability to resist the established social order. Thus, one way to describe the explanatory theory of this book is to say that it pushes to extremes the idea of society as made and imagined. It argues that when we go to these extremes we find theory rather than no theory.

On a second interpretation the book represents an attempt both to take sides in a dominant though largely implicit debate in modern social thought and to change the terms of this controversy. On one side of this controversy stand people – conservatives, leftists, or centrists – who claim that the currently available forms of social organization reflect deeply rooted constraints or a logic of social

development. Alternatively, these people explain the institutions of each society as the cumulative outcomes of many episodes of interest accommodation or problem solving. Such outcomes, they hold, are shaped by objective facts about actual interests and possible accommodations, actual problems and possible solutions.

What do the opponents of these people mean when they claim that everything is politics? At a minimum, they mean to deny that the established forms of social organization reflect such impersonal and irresistible forces. Instead, these critics direct our attention to the particular sequence of practical or imaginative conflicts from which, they claim, established arrangements have emerged. The conflicts they have in mind are first and foremost the struggles over the uses and mastery of governmental power (politics in the narrow sense). But these conflicts also include the disputes over all the other material or intangible resources with which we make the social future within the social present. By denying that current social arrangements reflect a higher rational or practical necessity, the critics mean to argue that these arrangements can be reimagined and remade.

The slogan that everything is politics is nothing if not deflationary of the traditional claims of social theory: the received style of generalization in social thought and historical writing explains conflict by reference to institutional or imaginative structures, the fighting that goes on in all societies by reference to the framework within which it takes place. Thus, the adversaries of the people who say that everything is politics can plausibly claim that the endeavor of those whom they criticize is self-defeating. For we cannot act to change society in radical ways unless we have ideas that lay bare the pattern of constraint and opportunity in our historical situation and that illuminate the probable effects of our actions.

The explanatory theory of *False Necessity* takes sides decisively with those who say it is all politics. But in taking sides the argument of the book asserts that we can develop the everything-is-politics idea into a comprehensive set of explanatory conjectures and explanatory practices. The resulting theory remains faithful to everything the critics want, except perhaps to their characteristic hostility to comprehensive theories. But this hostility, I argue, is misplaced. Social theory can be cleansed of the qualities these antitheorists find so objectionable, so long as we are willing to accept a fundamental shift in our sense of what it means to explain a state of affairs. Indeed, the attack on the equation of prevailing social arrangements with practical necessities *must* be armed with a theory if it is to avoid trivialization and paradox.

There is yet a third way to define the main point of the explanatory theory of *False Necessity*. It may be the most telling of all these statements because it addresses permanent puzzles and concerns

rather than the development of a specific theoretical tradition or the resolution of a particular contemporary controversy. The explanatory view of *False Necessity* tries to give its due to two aspects of our experience of social life that seem hard to reconcile.

In every social circumstance much of what takes place can be explained as the product of the institutional and imaginative context (order, structure, or framework) within which routine activities and conflicts occur. Wherever we look in history, we can identify a small number of basic arrangements and preconceptions that mesh together to exercise an overwhelming influence over social life. Often, we seem to be mere puppets of these frameworks or of the forces that generate and sustain them.

But our social experience also shows another face. We sometimes put these frameworks aside. We think and act, incongruously and surprisingly, as if they were not for real, as if we had merely pretended to obey them while awaiting an opportunity to defy them. We cannot live without a set of formative institutional arrangements and enacted ideals of human association, nor can we ever completely override the contrast between the things that are up for grabs in our ordinary conflicts and activities and the things that are not. But we can disrupt these established structures. We can replace them if not all at once, then piece by piece. We can even diminish the force with which they constrain and imprison us. Most importantly, this structure-disturbing and structure-inventing activity is not itself governed by a system of lawlike constraints and tendencies, certainly not by the evolutionary logic or relentless practical imperatives that the most ambitious modern social theories have traditionally invoked.

The explanatory practice developed in *False Necessity* suggests a way of imagining ourselves in society and history that does justice to these two contrasting aspects of our experience. We cannot accomplish the task merely by juxtaposing the two sets of observations – the constraints of structure and our powers of structure-disturbance – for we do not know how much credit to give each of them in any particular instance. We need a developed and supported view. A sign of the power of such a view is that it can criticize and help change both the structure-obeying and the structure-defying sides of particular societies.

The explanatory social theory developed in this book takes no stand on ultimate controversies about free will and determinism. So long as we treat all issues in social theory as reducible either to the most general problems about knowledge, reality, and value or to narrow factual and normative disputes, we cannot hope to reorient our approaches to society and history in any but the most haphazard and unselfconscious way. For we cannot resolve the metaphysical conundrums. We must try instead to factor out from the traditional

metaphysical agenda the most tractable and urgent problems. Nowhere is this maxim more imperative than in the discussion of free will and determinism.

The framework-revising freedom that occupies so central a place in the social theory of *False Necessity* may be illusory from certain physicalist or theological perspectives. But it is one thing to deny this freedom in the name of forces internal to our social descriptions or explanations, and another thing to concede that these descriptions and explanations may be misleading or illusory in a view remote from our everyday experience. Our freedom remains in jeopardy until we have a normal discourse that both respects it and clarifies its sense.

False Necessity develops an antinecessitarian approach to social and historical explanation through an attempt to solve a particular explanatory problem. This problem is the origin and basis of the cycles of reform and retrenchment that characterize both the Western industrial democracies and the communist countries of the present day. Again and again, we find that partisan conflicts and attitudes about the uses of governmental power with respect to major issues, such as the direction of economic policy, move among a small number of familiar options. Thus, national governments in the industrial West oscillate between bouts of halfhearted redistribution and attempts to rekindle economic growth by concessions to big business and organized labor. Similarly, communist regimes regularly alternate between periods of economic centralism and decentralization, each swing of the pendulum complete with a detailed set of well-tried techniques and recurrent difficulties. Each traditional option is generally conceded to be a second-best solution by all the major contenders in the dispute. Only rarely is an option added to the list or subtracted from it. Why should policy keep returning to proposals that inspire so little hope? Some attribute the compulsive rounds of governmental politics to the mutual resistance of organized interests in highly fragmented societies that lack any single coherent plan of social division and hierarchy. Others emphasize the inescapable psychological, organizational, and economic imperatives that doom all imaginary alternatives to impracticality. But these comforting explanations do not work, and their failure reinstates and deepens the initial puzzle. The stubborn, mysterious cycles represent a permanent insult to societies whose official culture claims to base fundamental social arrangements upon the wills of free and relatively equal citizens and rightholders rather than upon blind drift or coercive authority.

The riddle presented by these contemporary cycles of reform and retrenchment in contemporary societies is only a special case of a far more pervasive characteristic of our social and historical experience. Wherever we look in history we see that the conflict over the use of

the resources that determine the future shape of society has always moved within a narrow ambit. Prominent among the subjects of such conflict is the ongoing controversy over the relation of governmental power to social privilege and over the nature of the reforms needed to protect the established social order against its foreign and domestic enemies. But these routines of social reproduction also include all the other collective activities by which the economic or cognitive resources of society are mobilized to perpetuate or transform current social arrangements: the range of available forms of work organization or economic exchange and of acceptable moves within moral, political, or legal argument. When, for example, we consider the scope of live options in the high governmental politics of institutional reform, we find even the most powerful, determined, and clairvoyant rulers and politicians insistently returning to a small set of unpromising strategies, always unable to accomplish what they themselves consider necessary. They act as if they were in the thrall of unseen and irresistible compulsions. (An example discussed in detail later on is the repeated but futile attempts by the leaders of the agrarian-bureaucratic empires to preserve an independent class of smallholders, capable of providing the central government with a direct source of taxes and soldiers and therefore also of diminishing the government's financial and military dependence upon great landowners and warlords.)

Why should the scope of active and recognized possibility be so narrowly defined in all these theaters of conflict and choice? Explanations that appeal to the constraints of practical necessity or the balance of interests and opinions characteristically prove both too little and too much. They prove too little because the social arrangements that might satisfy basic practical needs always seem far more numerous than the institutional solutions that are actively considered; a persuasive social theory must show how and why the subset of live options gets selected. They prove too much because the range of options is sometimes abruptly enlarged, and the enlargement retrospectively deepens the puzzling quality of the previous narrowness. The attempt to understand the forces holding the cycles of reform and retrenchment in place can serve as a vehicle for the theoretical enterprise described at the outset of this chapter. For these cycles merely exemplify the more general experience of arrested and diminished possibility: the fabulously compulsive and somnambulant character of history, the long narcoleptic seizures of routine and repetition, punctuated by interludes of surprising social invention.

As the argument of *False Necessity* advances, the explanation of these narrowly defined options resolves itself into a study of the influence and the character of what I shall call the formative contexts, structures, or frameworks of social life: the basic institutional ar-

rangements and imaginative preconceptions that circumscribe our routine practical or discursive activities and conflicts and that resist their destabilizing effects. A successful social theory must recognize the influence of these contexts. Yet it must also account for our ability not only to rebel against them but to diminish or intensify the force by which they constrain us. It must do justice to the mutual reinforcement of the institutions and beliefs that compose them. Yet it must also testify to the looseness of their internal relations. It must provide us with a way of understanding how such contexts get made. Yet it must acknowledge our inability to discover nontrivial laws, constraints, or tendencies that can explain their actual content and history.

The explanatory strategy of this book is therefore essentially simple. To explain the cycles of reform and retrenchment – and, more generally, the repetitious quality of ordinary social conflict – we need a theory of formative contexts, of how they are composed and made. An adequate theory of formative contexts, a theory capable of explaining experiences such as our experience of these reform cycles, turns out to be the theoretical enterprise I earlier described in three equivalent forms.

Given its scope, the explanatory argument of this book is largely speculative. The main purpose is to suggest a way of understanding society rather than to uncover particular facts or to test isolated conjectures. Inevitably, the discussion relies heavily on empirical work influenced by the very traditions of thought that it seeks to revise. The main test of such an explanatory argument is ultimately its ability to inspire detailed explanations more successful than the explanations made possible by current forms of social analysis.

The standards for what constitutes a successful explanation are neither unchanging nor easily malleable. They are neither an Archimedean vantage point towering above particular theories nor a subject for arbitrary stipulation by each theory. Our ideas about what constitutes a successful explanation change, slowly but significantly, as the substance of our explanatory ideas shifts. The explanatory argument of this book proposes a change in our received beliefs about what adequate social and historical explanations should be like.

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the descriptions and explanations of this book are open to verification or falsification only at a second remove. The argument cuts across many problems and many disciplines. It advances conjectures about particular situations, processes, and events. It invokes facts, enlists familiar and less familiar learning, and proposes changes of emphasis and of approach in the understanding of many detailed affairs. Along this extended periphery of empirical implication, it remains open to more direct empirical assessment. The cumulative evaluation of these nu-

merous and connected hypotheses casts light on the explanatory promise of the core theoretical project. Throughout, I reject any stark contrast between formulating a view and confirming it, or between considerations of theoretical coherence and appeals to scholarly research or to common experience.

Those who are wary of ambitious theories in social and historical study may feel their fears confirmed by this admission of the speculative character of the argument. But there are no uncontroversial alternatives. *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task* – the critical volume that introduces the present constructive work – argues that the seemingly modest practice of cumulative induction preached by much of contemporary social science cannot give its due to the central distinction between the formative institutional and imaginative contexts and the formed routines of social life. It cannot help us understand how these contexts are internally constituted, how they get remade, and how they inform a richly textured life of practical and argumentative routines. This explanatory failure has practical consequences. It disarms us before our social contexts by blinding us to their influence, their specificity, and their revisability. It tricks even the skeptical, the learned, and the disillusioned into not recognizing the makeshift, pasted-together, and alterable character of the social worlds in which they live.

The sole real alternative to the kind of comprehensive view developed here would be what the introductory volume labeled ultra-theory: a set of critical and constructive practices carefully crafted and militantly wielded to preserve their antinecessitarian power. This alternative intellectual style is not inherently better or worse than the theoretically aggressive strategy that *False Necessity* adopts. It merely presents a different mix of difficulties, dangers, and opportunities. Moreover, if this ultra-theoretical practice is to remain truly distinct from the prostrate, falsely modest versions of social science, and if it is to deal with the central distinction between formative contexts and formed routines, it must be just as bold and controversial as the unabashed theorizing practiced in this book.

Programmatic Themes

A program of social reconstruction accompanies the explanatory theory of *False Necessity*. The program addresses both the major institutions of social life – the large-scale organization of governments, economies, and workplaces – and the fine texture of personal encounters and social roles. The programmatic argument deals most directly with the practices and circumstances of the same contemporary countries that provide the explanatory theory with its focus.

Yet that argument develops an ideal and a method that may take forms very different from the proposals advanced here.

The guiding theme of the program of social reconstruction is the attempt to imagine institutional arrangements and social practices that can advance the radical project beyond the point to which contemporary forms of governmental and economic organization have carried it. By the radical project or the project of the modernist visionary I mean the attempt to realize the many forms of individual or collective empowerment that result from our relative success in disengaging our practical and passionate dealings from the restrictive influence of entrenched social roles and hierarchies. The influence of such schemes of social division and ranking depends – as the explanatory theory seeks to show – upon institutional and imaginative contexts that remain unavailable for revision in the course of ordinary social life. The program suggests how our contemporary formative contexts might be disentranced, that is to say, how they might be more fully opened to challenge in the midst of our routine conflicts and therefore also how they might undermine or prevent rigid forms of social division and hierarchy. Against the background of almost universal disappointment with the communist revolutions of the twentieth century, the program suggests that current institutional arrangements represent merely an imperfect, initial step in the attempt to weaken the extent to which an established scheme of class, communal, gender, and national distinctions constrains our experiments in practical collaboration or passionate attachment. The weakening of the influence of this prewritten social script is to be valued not only negatively, as an occasion for a broader range of choice, but affirmatively for the forms of empowerment it makes possible. Moreover, the disruption of the script implies no lack of formed institutions or practices; it requires the invention of practices and institutions that possess certain qualities.

The empowerment that the program is meant to foster is in part the development of our practical productive capabilities. But it is also the freedom resulting from what we most prize even in current versions of democracy and community: the promise of forms of social engagement that save us from having to choose between isolation from other people and surrender to them and that describe modes of attachment that are also exercises in self-assertion. Finally, it is the empowerment that consists of conscious mastery over the institutional and imaginative contexts of our activities. The programmatic argument shows how these varieties of empowerment connect, and it explores their implications for the detailed reorganization of social life.

The commitment to advance human empowerment through institutions and practices that loosen the stranglehold of fixed schemes

of social division and hierarchy over our practical and spiritual access to one another is hardly idiosyncratic. It has supplied the unifying element in the great secular modern doctrines of emancipation: liberalism, socialism, and communism. But in all these doctrines the pursuit of this aim suffers the effect of unjustifiably restrictive premises about social possibility. Just as I want to free the central insight of classical social theory – the insight into the artifactual character of social life – from its scientific incubus, so too I want to detach the radical project from the dogmatic assumptions about possibility that represent the counterpart to this incubus. The most important of these confining assumptions are those that impoverish our sense of the alternative concrete institutional forms democracies and markets can take. Much of the programmatic argument in *False Necessity* describes ways of organizing markets and democracies that can be more useful to the radical project, and even more responsive to our received ideals, than current modes of economic and governmental organization.

The real meaning of our social ideals is largely defined by our often implicit assumptions about the institutional arrangements and social practices that realize these ideals. When, for example, we speak about democracy or community, our abstract principles and fighting words may be less telling guides to what we mean than the practical forms that realize these ideals. If someone proposes to us, or if we discover on our own, an alternative version of democratic institutions or communal life, we may be forced to confront a previously unsuspected ambiguity in our received ideal conceptions. In choosing between the alternative versions of democracy and community, we shall in effect be deciding what really matters most to us in our democratic and communal aspirations. And what holds for the understanding of ideals such as democracy or community applies to whole movements of political thought and sensibility. For the meaning of these movements also depends on the practical arrangements they are assumed to require.

The forms of governmental and economic organization proposed and defended in this book emphasize the development of practices and institutions that prevent factions, classes, or any other specially placed groups from gaining control over the key resources of a society (wealth, power, and knowledge). These same institutions and practices diminish the gap between routine conflicts within a framework of social life and revolutionary struggles about that framework. The explanatory theory of *False Necessity* explores the connections between the disruption of the mechanisms of social subjugation and the development of social arrangements that lay themselves more effectively open to challenge. The institutional proposals make good on these connections. Only from the perspective offered by these

theoretical and practical ideas can we arrive at the broader understanding of the radical project that I earlier mentioned. From the vantage point of this understanding, the struggle for social equality – the most familiar aspect of radical concerns – can be seen as a fragment of a more inclusive and complex endeavor.

The modernist criticism of personal relations and the leftist criticism of collective institutions have remained only fitfully and obscurely connected. This parting of the ways in the cultures of leftism and modernism has been amplified in political experience. The attack on stereotyped roles in personal relations has often proved strongest where the politics of institutional reinvention are weakest. The separation between these two cultures and these two transformative movements – the most powerful of all found in the modern world – has been destructive to both. It has helped deprive leftist practice of its ability to reach direct social relations and to change their fine texture. It has also threatened to degrade the politics of personal relations into a desperate search for gratification.

The generalized understanding of the radical project presented in this book both incorporates and criticizes the personalist politics of modernism. This understanding recognizes the attack on stereotyped social roles as yet another facet of the attempt to achieve empowerment by subverting entrenched social division and hierarchy. And it finds in the commitment to imagine a freer and richly detailed form of social life an antidote to solipsism and selfishness.

The Explanatory and Programmatic Themes Related

The explanatory and programmatic ideas of this book connect at many different levels. The most superficial link is the historical circumstance that both arguments address. The explanatory view develops a theory of social transformation in the course of attempting to answer a particular question: Why do the cycles of reform and retrenchment in contemporary societies have the shape and the tenacity they do? This question quickly turns into one of how to represent the formative institutional and imaginative contexts that keep these cycles going. To understand the influence of such contexts and to discover how it may be resisted we must understand how such contexts are made and what holds together their component elements. The programmatic parts of the book advance proposals designed to replace the same institutions and practices that account for the contemporary reform cycles.

There is also a more general and significant relation between the explanatory and programmatic arguments of *False Necessity*. The prevailing forms of social analysis leave no room for programmatic thought. Consider the comprehensive social theories, like hardcore

Marxism, that draw on an evolutionary and functionalist determinism. Such theories distinguish a small number of possible frameworks of social life, often ordered sequentially in a few possible trajectories of social evolution. They appeal to an inexorable logic of social transformation or to economic, organizational, and psychological constraints that are supposed to underlie this logic. For such systems of thought, programmatic argument can at best anticipate the line of historical evolution or compare the benefits and dangers of the few possible futures that lie before us. Alternatively, many forms of conventional social science deprive programmatic argument of its mission by failing to focus on the discontinuities among the institutional and imaginative frameworks that circumscribe our routine activities. Programs of social reconstruction amount to more than exercises in routine problem solving or interest accommodation, for they deal with the structures within which such exercises take place. Programmatic thought can be secure only against the background of a style of social and historical analysis that does not treat the institutional and imaginative molds of social life as inevitable or as determined by an irresistible dynamic of change.

We must develop such a style of analysis in order to possess a credible view of transformation. Until we formulate such a view, programmatic argument has no role. It is also deprived of the sense of reality that might enable it to distinguish feasible and utopian endeavors. The lack of such a sense shows in the bastardized and paralyzing criterion of political realism dominating so much contemporary ideological debate. People treat a plan as realistic when it approximates what already exists and as utopian when it departs from current arrangements. Only proposals that are hardly worth fighting for – reformist tinkering – seem practicable.

There is yet another and deeper link between the explanatory and programmatic ideas of this book. Both sets of proposals present mutually reinforcing variations on an old and central theme of our civilization: that we are an infinite caught within the finite. The finite, in this instance, is the open series of social worlds – the formative institutional and imaginative contexts – that we construct and inhabit. The infinite is the personality. It is also an inchoate, open-ended fund of the forms of practical collaboration or passionate attachment that may bind people together. Central to the whole argument of *Politics* is the notion that no one context can be our permanent home: the place where we can institute all the varieties of practical or passionate connection that we have reason to want.

The explanatory theory of society making presented here develops this theme by suggesting how we can imagine ourselves as both controlled and not controlled by our institutional and imaginative

frameworks. The programmatic argument elaborates the theme by asking how we can make these finite worlds a more suitable habitation for context-revising and context-transcending agents. The explanatory theory shows how the institutional and imaginative frameworks of social life differ in the extent to which they aggravate the distinction between framework-transforming conflict and framework-respecting routine that perpetuates schemes of social division and hierarchy. Contexts may be increasingly designed to soften this distinction and undermine such schemes. The view of transformation concluding the explanatory part of the book describes the influence of such a change upon a range of forms of human empowerment. It also probes the conditions under which such a progression can occur. The programmatic argument takes up these suggestions by detailing a set of institutional arrangements and social practices that take this shift further than it has yet been carried, and do so for the sake of the many forms of empowerment that may result.

The critic may always object that he does not sympathize with this generalized version of the radical project and does not desire the varieties of empowerment it seeks. However, he must then possess either an alternative vision of social reality or a different approach to the relation between factual and normative judgments. Taken together, the programmatic and explanatory arguments of *False Necessity* illustrate the view that the relation between factual and normative issues is far more intimate than any relation the mainstream of modern philosophy since Kant and Hume has been inclined to allow. Consider the results such a view may achieve by both incorporating and changing familiar modes of prescriptive argument.

The visionary element in our ideas about self and society must ultimately always take one of two directions. It may invoke a single, authoritative arrangement of social life and human emotions. This is the direction followed by the most influential social doctrines in world history. It usually culminates in a system of sanctified social roles and ranks, echoed and sustained by a conception of hierarchical order among our faculties and dispositions. Alternatively, the visionary drive may appeal to the transcendent personality or to the opportunities of human connection that are constrained and betrayed by fixed divisions and hierarchies within humanity and by rigid rankings of subjective experience. The modernist radical or visionary prefers this second path. From this path one route leads to the "endless labor of negation": the creed of those who believe that contexts will be contexts and that true freedom lies solely in perpetual defiance to all stable institutions and conventions and in perpetual flight from one context to another. The other route, on this fork of the modernist visionary road, is the one traveled by those who argue that some

contexts improve upon others in their ability to respect and to encourage the context-making and the context-transcending qualities of the self. This is the direction of *False Necessity*.

Such an intellectual enterprise must deliberately transgress the boundaries traditionally separating the intimate, the evocative, and the prophetic from the prosaic concerns of detailed explanatory conjectures and programmatic proposals. The task of making discourses that more fully combine realism, practicality, and detail with visionary fire, the moves inside the context with the moves about the context, is an integral part of the radical project. We have to strive for this confusion of discourses at every opportunity: in our most ambitious efforts at social understanding as well as in our particular practices of legal, moral, and party-political controversy.

The Explanatory Themes in Their Implicit Polemical Setting

The introductory volume (*Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*) presented the critical diagnosis that constitutes the point of departure for the explanatory and programmatic theory of *Politics*. In *False Necessity*, the first part of the work, this polemical setting remains almost entirely implicit; I offer here an affirmative view. In order, however, to fix more clearly the scope and the intentions of this constructive argument, it may help to make some aspects of the concealed controversial setting explicit, highlighting ideas the preliminary book left undeveloped.

Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task distinguished two types of social analysis that jointly define the current predicament of social and historical studies: deep-structure theory and positivist (or empiricist or conventional) social science. Let me recall briefly the characteristics of each.

Deep-structure analysis represents the major though by no means the exclusive element in many of the comprehensive social theories that come down to us from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – the theories that contemporary social scientists often deride as “grand theory.” Marxism is the most coherent and influential statement of the deep-logic style, although we can easily find in the works of Marx and his followers many ideas that not only resist assimilation to deep-structure thought but contribute to its reconstruction. Three recurrent explanatory practices distinguish this tradition of social thought.

The first characteristic operation of deep-structure analysis is the effort to distinguish in every historical situation the routines of practical and imaginative conflict from the basic framework, structure, or context that shapes these ordinary disputes while resisting their subversive effects. Deep-logic theories define such frameworks to

include institutional arrangements, imaginative preconceptions, or some combination of both. The second defining operation is the identification of this framework as an example of an indivisible and repeatable type of social organization: indivisible because its elements stand or fall as a single piece and repeatable because it can emerge at different times in different societies (even if it always occurs at the same point in a sequence of stages of organization). The third typical move of deep-structure analysis is the effort to explain the identity and the realization of these indivisible and repeatable types on the basis of lawlike tendencies or deep-seated economic, organizational, and psychological constraints. These constraints or tendencies yield a list of possible social worlds or a compulsive sequence of stages of social organization. Notice, then, that this threefold description of deep-structure analysis embraces both evolutionary and nonevolutionary styles of theorizing. Marxism stands preeminent among the former. The latter has never had an elaborate statement, although economics (which has since become the model for chief variants of positivist social science) once promised to supply it.

The later history of deep-structure theories is one of attempts to deal with the difficulties of reenacting these three key mental operations in the face of inconvenient facts and resistant experience. Two related difficulties stand out; they refer to the second and third deep-structure moves. On the one hand, there does not seem to be a finite list of possible types of organization or a small number of possible trajectories of social evolution. On the other hand, the alleged lawlike tendencies or determining constraints fail to explain the actual identity and sequence of frameworks for social life. The explanatory failure of the would-be laws is obscured only when they are left so vague that they can be made, retrospectively, to explain anything.

The proponents of deep-structure social analysis deal with these difficulties by diluting their original claims. They may, for example, replace a unilinear evolution with the idea of a small number of alternative trajectories of social change. But each such loosening turns out to be both too much and not enough. It is too much to safeguard the earlier, stronger theory against a slide into vacuity. It is not enough to meet the initial objections or other objections in their spirit. The theorist finds himself driven to ever greater concessions. He holds on for fear that if he did not he would fall into theoretical nihilism and lose the intellectual basis for a critical perspective on society. The leftist experiences an additional reason for reluctance: the canonical status to which socialist movements raised Marxism often makes a repudiation of Marxist premises seem like a betrayal of the leftist cause.

The other major component of the contemporary situation of social thought is positivist, empiricist, or conventional social science. This

mode of analysis sees social life as an interminable series of episodes of interest accommodation and problem solving. It denies the primacy of the contrast between the shaping context and the shaped routines and therefore also slights the discontinuities among contexts. The practical consequence of this denial is the weakening of our ability to see a whole institutional and imaginative ordering of social life as something connected, distinctive, and replaceable.

But the problem of social frameworks and of their influence upon the routine conflicts that take place within them cannot easily be avoided. Even the most prosaic activities of collective problem solving or interest balancing assume limits on acceptable solutions or compromises and procedures for identifying and ranking problems or interests. In short, they assume, under other names, the existence of a framework. The main variants of positivist social science can therefore be distinguished by the explanatory practices that enable them both to acknowledge the problem of the framework and to confine the implications of this acknowledgment.

The strategy of agnosticism (evident, for example, in the most austere branches of microeconomics) is to offer an analytic apparatus, free of independent causal content, and designed to serve disciplines expected to possess their own, independently justified explanatory conjectures. But the responsibility to come up with a view of contexts, of their genesis and internal constitution, does not go away; it merely shifts to another discipline.

The strategy of idealization treats the choice of a framework by analogy to the choice of optimal solutions or accommodations within a framework. Thus, the more propagandistic, overtly ideological forms of right-wing economics identify particular economic institutions with the free market and treat this particular version of the market as the device that makes efficient resource allocation possible. But the pure logic of maximizing choice can apply to all market or nonmarket orders, and market systems can take any number of concrete institutional forms, some of them far removed from the arrangements the conservative economists have in mind. The point can be generalized: we can never explain the making and transformation of contexts by the same relatively straightforward and uncontroversial means with which we explain decisions and outcomes within these contexts.

The strategy of hollow concession recognizes this last point in principle but fails to draw out the consequences of this recognition for the actual practice of explanation. Thus, the neo-Keynesian macroeconomists may concede as trivial that relations among aggregate economic phenomena such as inflation and unemployment depend upon particular institutional arrangements: say, the form and depth of trade unionism or the relation of national governments to

organized labor and central banks. Yet the content of their discipline continues to be an analysis of economic movements against an institutional background taken as given rather than an inquiry into the interplay between economic facts and institutional constraints. Protracted stagnation in institutional reform may perpetuate certain relations among economic phenomena. It may therefore also invite the misleading conclusion that these relations are lawlike constraints, inherent in very general and vaguely defined types of economic organization, such as a regulated market economy. In fact these apparent laws depend upon very detailed and relatively ad hoc institutional configurations. As soon as any element of this institutional framework begins to change, the supposed laws start to break down.

The explanatory theory of *False Necessity* represents the constructive sequel to a polemic against both deep-structure social analysis and positivist social science. But the methods and insights available for the execution of this task come chiefly from the self-criticism and self-correction of these same two traditions of social thought. The materials and even the principles of a more tenable view are already at hand.

Neither deep-structure social analysis nor positivist social science can solve the problem that provides the point of departure for the explanatory argument of this book: the problem of explaining the content and the persistence of the cycles of reform and retrenchment in contemporary societies. Positivist social science cannot do it because the force of practical constraints and the tension among organized interests fail to explain the tenacity and the substance of these cycles until we also take into account the restrictive influence of the framework of institutions and ideas within which those interests and constraints operate. But positivist social science denies us a way to understand such frameworks: their internal composition, their genesis, and their influence upon the routines that they shape.

Deep-structure social analysis is equally powerless to elucidate the cycles of reform and retrenchment. As soon as we define the formative institutional and imaginative contexts with enough detail to explain the routines of conflict and policy that take place within them we discover that these contexts are too detailed – too mired in historical particulars – to exemplify plausibly an indivisible and repeatable type of social organization. The inability of deep-logic social theory to come to terms with the problem of the reform cycles is merely a symptom of its difficulty in squaring historical research and practical experience with belief in a list of types of social organization, ruled by an evolutionary dynamic or by deep-seated economic, organizational, or psychological imperatives.

The explanatory theory worked out in this book recognizes the shaped or structured quality of social life: the distinction between

the routine moves within an institutional and imaginative context of social life and the more radical conflicts about this context. Because it takes this distinction seriously it also emphasizes the distinctiveness of the forms of social life these contexts support. But it describes and explains these contexts without resort to the ideas of a list of possible social worlds or of possible pathways of social evolution. Nor does it invoke the tendencies or constraints that might generate such a list. Though acknowledging the power that connected sets of institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions exercise over us, it does not turn this acknowledgment into an occasion to treat history as the enactment of a prewritten script and to treat society as a product of unmade laws. Thus, this theory accepts the first characteristic move of deep-structure analysis while rejecting the other two moves: the subsumption of the framework under an indivisible and repeatable type and the search for general laws governing the identity, the actualization, and the succession of such types. The outcome is not to abandon generalizing social and historical explanations but to transform them in content and character. The proposed view is at least as comprehensive and aggressive in its claims as the original, hardcore version of a deep-logic system such as Marxism.

Unlike positivist social science this theory recognizes the ubiquity of the contrast between transformative and routine activity. But unlike deep-structure analysis it also affirms that we can diminish the force of this contrast and enlarge the sense in which an institutional and imaginative order of social life stands open to revision. We can efface this contrast by the right social inventions. Unlike positivist social science this theory insists upon the connectedness of the elements that make up a formative context of social life. But unlike deep-structure thought it does so without falling into the prejudice that each framework exemplifies one of a series of possible social worlds or of necessary evolutionary stages. Unlike positivist social science it gives weight to the influence that entrenched institutional and imaginative contexts exert upon ordinary action and petty conflict. But unlike deep-logic theories it also does justice to our astonishing ability to act at times as if these contexts were powerless and our allegiance to them a mere ploy we were waiting to cast aside. Like deep-logic analysis it proposes a way of representing and explaining the transformation of routine-shaping or rule-producing frameworks. But unlike deep-logic argument it does not portray such changes as if they were themselves governed by a rule-bound structure. In all these ways the theory does more than offer a different explanation; it revises our received sense of what explaining a state of affairs means.

Only a theory that satisfies these demanding criteria can draw out

of a view of human activity that emphasizes our ability to revise our imaginative and institutional contexts a detailed understanding of society. Only such a theory can allow us to integrate theory and historiography without forever diluting the former and distorting the latter. Only such a theory can overcome the illusory contrast between the perspective of the theorist or the historian and the quality of lived experience, a quality that includes both an awareness of messy constraints reflecting no higher rational order and a constant rediscovery of the surprising transformative opportunities that emerge in the very midst of these same constraints. Only such a theory can teach us how we may empower ourselves, and cleanse social life of some of its taint of domination and depersonalization, by gaining greater mastery over the contexts of our activity. Only such a theory can avoid the betrayal of this teaching that occurs whenever we present empowerment or equality as the predetermined outcome of a relentless historical progression.

The Programmatic Themes in Their Implicit Polemical Setting

The explanatory theory presented in *False Necessity* stands in close connection with a program for social reconstruction. The argument of the book should therefore also be read against the background of an implicit programmatic controversy. It is customary to criticize normative political theories from the angle of the substantive ideals that they enshrine and of the justificatory arguments that support these ideals. One of the many reasons why such debates are so often frustrating, and the claims of the contending doctrines so unpersuasive, is the lack of clarity about the translation of these commitments into particular institutional arrangements and social practices. We hear an ideal attractively though vaguely described. We wonder what it will actually be like when realized in a going form of social life. We hear another ideal disparaged as unrealistic because it falsely promises to reconcile all good things and fails to acknowledge the tensions between, say, freedom and paternalism, or autonomy and community, or heartfelt engagement and critical self reflection. We wonder to what extent these tensions are indeed intractable and to what extent they may respond to changes in the practical arrangements of social life. There is good reason for our doubts.

Our accepted rhetoric tells us less about the content of such ideal visions than does the background of institutions and practices we implicitly imagine to realize these visions in practice. So long as we traffic in the ruling dogmas of society our doubts are kept to a minimum. If someone talks about political democracy we *know* what he means even if his litany of slogans and theories leaves us unenlightened. We can refer to a specific tradition of constitutional ar-

rangements and of party-political rivalry that is visible in the world we inhabit. But the more ambitious the ideal vision, the farther it departs from current solutions, the less self-evident the relation between the proposed model of social life and its practical form becomes. A theoretical understanding must then supply what established reality fails to provide. This understanding belongs at the center of normative debates and cannot be relegated to a subsidiary, informative role.

The implicit programmatic polemic of this book deals with the major modern political doctrines from the underemphasized but crucial perspective of their institutional assumptions. The conservative and centrist political movements in the Western industrial democracies usually take for granted inherited ways of organizing democracies and markets. Yet these current forms of market and democratic organization *can* be replaced. In their present forms they vitiate the very aspects of the conservative or centrist message that carry the widest and most powerful appeal.

The leftist criticism of contemporary societies, and especially of bourgeois democratic and market regimes, fails to appreciate the extent to which both markets and democracies can be radically reorganized. Preoccupied with the hierarchy-producing effects of inherited institutional arrangements, the leftist reaches for distant and vague solutions that cannot withstand the urgent pressures of statecraft and quickly give way to approaches betraying his initial aims.

The main point of the polemic may be restated in a way much more fully developed in Chapter 5 of this book. Sooner or later the conservative, centrist, and leftist parties that now exist in the prosperous democracies must resolve the tension between their programmatic commitments and the governmental and economic arrangements they normally take for granted. If the right-wing free marketeer, or the centrist communitarian, or the left-leaning redistributivist accept the established institutional order they find themselves repeatedly frustrated in the accomplishment of their professed goals. They can realize these goals only in compromised forms, and they are reduced to claiming that their proposals have never been given a fair chance. But if, on the other hand, the proponents of these movements of opinion do opt for an institutional reconstruction they tread a path for which their previous habits of thought, bolstered by the dominant styles of social analysis, have left them unprepared. They must develop elaborate institutional alternatives, a strategy for putting them into effect, and a view of social transformation to inform both their programmatic and their strategic ideas. They must also redefine their guiding ideals and their conceptions of the relation of these ideals to the aims of their political opponents. For if the real

meaning of an ideal depends upon its tacit institutional background, a shift in the latter is sure to disturb the former.

These general points can now be made more concrete. The following remarks compare and contrast the programmatic orientation of the argument in *False Necessity* to some of the major familiar positions in the conflict of modern political opinions. Throughout, the central idea remains the subversive effect a disabled institutional imagination exercises upon our normative political ideas. Only a credible account of social transformation – that is, of how the formative institutional and imaginative contexts of social life are made and reconstructed – can free us from this disablement. Assumptions about the relation between our explanatory and our programmatic ideas envelop the controversy over substantive social ideals.

Consider first the classical liberal doctrine, in the form it took during its nineteenth-century heyday. The program set out in *False Necessity* shares with classical liberalism a belief in the connection between economic decentralization and political democracy. The ceaseless recombination of workers, machines, and organizational forms of production and exchange may be achieved by a centralized authority. It is certainly possible to design arrangements that render this authority accountable. But if the central power is to make and enforce allocative and recombinatory decisions, and to resist the pressures to maintain established jobs and firms and to make consumption increase faster than output, it must enjoy a considerable measure of autonomy. The combination of this discretionary authority with the direct control of matters vital to the security of the entire population makes it likely that economic centralism will first overshadow and finally undermine political pluralism.

But the program worked out in this book differs from classic liberalism by its refusal to equate political democracy and market organization with the institutional tradition of the contemporary North Atlantic countries. The traditional version of democracy combines distinctive constitutional techniques, characterized by a devotion to the dispersal of power and the distancing of mob influence, with a style of partisan conflict and organization that came into its own only several generations later. The traditional version of the market economy relies upon the more or less absolute property right – absolute in permitted usage and absolute in its temporal duration – as the primary device of economic decentralization. But I argue here that though these governmental and economic arrangements influence our whole understanding of the liberal ideal they also frustrate its realization. They help prevent a more thoroughgoing fragmentation of social divisions, hierarchies, and roles. They contribute to a social circumstance in which the principles of a liberal vision are

more fully expressed in the practice of partisan politics – with its crosscutting coalitions of relatively ill defined and transitory interests – than in the quality of ordinary social life. Each person's opportunities and experiences continue to be powerfully influenced by his place in a resilient scheme of social stations.

There is a different institutional ordering of markets and democracies that further weakens the hold of collective categories over individual experience. The conflict over the mastery and uses of governmental power may be so arranged that it provides an occasion to subject every feature of the established order of division, hierarchy, and roles to the pressure of challenge. Once these alternative arrangements are worked out, in practice or in imagination, they in turn suggest a broadening of the original liberal vision. The goal of freeing men and women from subjugation can be reinterpreted as a particular aspect of what I earlier described as the project of the modernist visionary: the search for individual and collective empowerment through the dissolution of the prewritten social script. It hardly matters whether we describe the result as an extension of the liberal doctrine or as a replacement of it. The point is that we have disengaged the inherited message from its implied institutional setting and transformed its content in the process. You can already see how a similar analysis might be applied to the other familiar options of contemporary political thought.

Consider the extreme variant of classical liberalism sometimes known as libertarianism. The libertarian seeks to re-create society as a world of maximally independent agents whose collaborative relations all arise from freely bargained contracts. He wants to see government reduced to a residual role as a mutual-protection association. The program of empowered democracy defended in *False Necessity* shares with the libertarian the aim of freeing individual experience to the greatest possible extent from the overbearing influence of predetermined collective categories of class, community, or gender. But the programmatic argument of this book also reflects the belief that the way in which the libertarian proposes to accomplish this objective is misguided in two crucial respects.

For one thing, no neutral uncontroversial system of private rights is capable of defining the pure case of a market, maximally free from interference. We must choose among an indefinitely wide range of alternative sets of rules and rights, of alternative arrangements for decentralized production and exchange. Which of them are most decentralized, or most conducive to political pluralism, or even most likely to promote economic growth – these represent empirical questions that cannot be answered by the mere analysis of the concepts of a market economy or of a private order.

For another thing, the libertarian errs in his attempt to solve the

problem of social coordination by in effect bombing out the state and all other large-scale or inclusive institutions. In order to increase dramatically both the decentralization of economic decisions and our freedom to experiment with the institutional arrangements for production and exchange we must devise institutions that subject capital allocation to more explicit collective deliberation and control. We can achieve this accountability of capital without abandoning the principle of market decentralization. Thus, for example, absolute property rights, still the primary device of economic decentralization, may be replaced by a rotating capital fund from which conditional and temporary disbursements or loans might be made to teams of worker-technicians and entrepreneurs. Then, government and the conflict over governmental policy would have to be arranged in ways that prevented this more deliberate method of capital allocation from serving as a tool for oppression, clientalism, or the perpetuation of vested interests. The key idea here is that we cannot come closer to the libertarian's dream of a less oppressive form of social coordination by allowing an allegedly natural private order to emerge as social interference recedes. We can more fully realize that dream only by inventing ever more ingenious institutional instruments for our objectives. There is no escape from artifice. New artifice must cure the defects of past artifice. We pursue a mirage when we seek the pure, undistorted system of free interaction. This pursuit must end either in an embittered disillusionment or in the apologetic identification of a particular market system with the abstract idea of a market.

The program advanced in *False Necessity* can also be compared and contrasted to a view that has traditionally had a more modest presence in the English-speaking countries than in other parts of the Western world. This view identifies the great wound of modern societies as the disruption of communal bonds that place each individual securely within a network of reciprocities. The wound is to be healed by the development of organizations intermediate between the individual and the state, organizations that can serve as a basis for communal life. This program is centrist in that it characteristically emphasizes the improvement of hierarchy through loyalty and self-restraint rather than through the radical subversion of hierarchical bonds. It is sometimes corporatist because the intermediate bodies, which may be productive enterprises as well as territorial entities, are to occupy a recognized place in the organization of the society. This place allows them to operate as veritable extensions of government.

The program of *Politics* shares several aspects of the centrist communitarian vision. It imagines a set of social arrangements that promise to help us reconcile more fully the enabling conditions of self-assertion: the need for engagement in group life and the effort to avoid the dangers of dependence and depersonalization that attend

such engagement. Indeed, the whole program can be read as a vision of the forms and conditions of human community.

The centrist and corporatist program, however, remains ambivalent toward current institutional arrangements when it does not wholeheartedly accept them. Its proponents speak as if the existing productive and bureaucratic organizations could serve as the suitable vehicles for the communal ideal, with only minor adjustments. Workers, for example, should be given job tenure, they should participate in enterprise policymaking, and they should deal cooperatively with their employers. But the result of this acceptance of the underlying institutional framework is to both jeopardize and impoverish the communal ideal. The jeopardy consists in the intertwining of community and subjugation: so that the struggle against dominion, or even the imperative of practical innovation, is made to require the betrayal of present communal bonds. The impoverishment lies in the representation of community as a protected haven from which conflict is banished rather than as a zone of heightened mutual vulnerability in which people may entrust themselves more fully to one another, whether they conflict or agree.

A version of community less susceptible to the apology of dominion or the superstition of false necessity in social life can flourish only in an institutional framework that disrupts more effectively than current institutions the mechanisms of dependence and subjugation in the society. Such a framework must invite conflict rather than suppress it. It must weaken all the stable forms of social division and hierarchy and all the canonical sets of social roles that support community in its old, restrictive sense of a nonconflictual sharing of purposes and values. In preferring this revised institutional structure the programmatic argument of this book therefore also opts for a conception of what really matters most about community. The argument identifies this element as our ability to experiment, in a climate of equalized trust, with varieties of practical collaboration and passionate attachment that more fully reconcile the enabling conditions of self-assertion. The communitarian who begins by attempting to construct a more suitable institutional vessel for his commitments discovers that he has pushed the received communitarian ideal in a particular direction or resolved its internal ambiguities in a certain way.

Consider finally the relation of the programmatic vision of this book to the institutional program of the left. The radical left has generally found in the assumptions of deep-structure social analysis an excuse for the poverty of its institutional ideas. With few exceptions (such as the Yugoslav innovations) it has produced only one innovative institutional conception, the idea of the soviet or conciliar type of organization: that is to say, direct territorial and enterprise

democracy. But this conception has never been and probably never can be worked into detailed institutional arrangements capable of solving the practical problems of administrative and economic management in large countries, torn by internal divisions, beleaguered by foreign enemies, and excited by rising expectations. Thus, the conciliar model of popular organization has quickly given way to forms of despotic government that seem the sole feasible alternatives to the overthrown bourgeois regimes.

The program of this book is a leftist program. It seeks the individual and collective empowerment that can result from the creation of institutional arrangements that undermine the forms of dependence and domination, and that do so in part by effacing the contrast between routine and revolution. Like all leftist views, it holds that only such an institutional transformation can realize in practice our ideals of freedom and community. But it differs from the mainstream of radical leftist programmatic ideas, so influenced by Marxist social theory, in several important respects. First, it assumes a background of explanatory ideas that makes the development of detailed programmatic proposals possible, legitimate, and significant. Second, it refuses to equate the market economy and the representative democracy with the particular institutional forms these principles have hitherto assumed. On the contrary, it sees in the development of alternative forms of democracies and markets the best hope for the accomplishment of leftist as well as liberal aims. Third, it draws heavily upon a tradition of institutional thought and experimentation to which the main current of leftist theory and practice has been implacably hostile: the tradition of petty bourgeois radicalism.

Thus far I have compared and contrasted the programmatic directions taken in *Politics* to a few of the major familiar positions in modern political thought. But the most significant implicit normative polemic in this book addresses an actual tendency of social transformation rather than the doctrines of a political movement. The single most attractive emergent model of social organization in the world today – least oppressive, most respectful of felt human needs, and therefore also most likely to attract the most diverse support of the most thoughtful citizens – is social democracy. The supporters of social democracy do not paint it as utopia, nor do they claim that all countries are equally ready for it. They recognize how hard it may be to achieve amid the extremes of poverty and ignorance when its achievement remains precarious in even the most favorable circumstances. They merely affirm that social democracy is the best that mankind can hope for, for an indefinite time to come. The great political issue before us is whether they are right.

As both an emergent institutional system and a familiar institutional proposal social democracy combines the following character-

istics. The social democrat accepts the particular institutional versions of market economies and representative democracies that have come to prevail in the course of modern Western history. He pursues his ideals of redistribution or participation within the broad outlines established by this framework. He favors the welfare state. He wants to see the satisfaction of basic material needs guaranteed. He supports redistributive policies designed to redress gross inequalities of wealth and income. He is committed to see people more actively engaged in self-government in the places where they live and work.

But when you view social democracy as a practical experience rather than a programmatic commitment you see that these redistributive and participatory goals characteristically get realized within very narrow limits: the limits imposed by the economic and governmental arrangements that the social democrat accepts, if only because he views them as superior to all feasible alternatives. Thus, for example, the control that relatively small groups of investment managers continue to exercise over the crucial flows of investment decisions may require welfare-state programs to be repeatedly sacrificed to the demands of business confidence.

Finally, the social democrat sees the weakening of inclusive ideological struggle over the basic structure of society as something between an inevitable outcome and a desirable goal. The world of social democracy is a world where people can at last devote themselves to their practical concerns, by which the social democrat means, again, the form that people's perceived practical interests assume within the established institutional order of social life. Demobilization becomes, in this vision, the counterpart to realism and decency. Once the great ideological fevers have been spent, people can settle down to the prosaic but primary task of taking care of one another and making a practical success of their life in common.

This book can be read as an argument that social democracy is not enough and that we can establish something better than social democracy. The explanatory ideas of *False Necessity* provide an understanding of society that presents the institutional arrangements on which the social democrat relies as the relatively contingent and revisable outcome of a particular sequence of practical and imaginative conflicts. More generally, these explanatory arguments support a view of social reality within which the rejection of social democracy seems reasonable. The programmatic ideas propose an alternative to social democracy that realizes more fully the ideals that the social democrat can only imperfectly achieve and radically redefines these ideals in the course of realizing them.

But what is wrong with social democracy? The narrowest objection is that the social democrat cannot go beyond a certain point in making good on his promises of redistribution, participation, and

mutual caring. He cannot go beyond the point set by his institutional assumptions and in particular by his assumptions about how market economies and representative democracies can be organized. His project, like those of the centrist communitarian or the conservative free marketeer, suffers from an incurable internal instability. The perpetuation of its institutional premises restrains the realization of its defining ideals while the reconstruction of the institutional framework invites a radical redefinition of these ideal aims.

When we view social democracy from the vantage point provided by the explanatory and programmatic ideas of this book, we can identify its key defect as the constraint it imposes upon the means of emancipation and empowerment. Once again, the constraint results from the forms of economic and governmental organization that social democracy presupposes and perpetuates. These organizational forms circumscribe our opportunities for practical innovation by limiting economic decentralization and economic plasticity. They prevent us from devising institutional means to free the practices of practical collaboration or passionate attachment more completely from the structures of dependence and domination in which these practices so easily become entangled. They keep us from affirming a more deliberate mastery over the institutional and imaginative contexts of our collective existence. We are too little under social democracy.

The force of these criticisms depends on the availability of alternative institutional arrangements that do indeed more effectively promote these connected dynamics of emancipation, arrangements described in *False Necessity* under the name empowered democracy. The objections all come down to the thesis that social democracy makes the liberal project of the enlightenment – the cause of liberty, equality, and fraternity – unnecessarily hostage to a transitory and replaceable institutional order. Once the liberal cause enlarges its sense of institutional possibility it merges into a revised and generalized version of the project of the modernist visionary and the leftist radical.

You may protest that it is perverse to hold up the image of empowered democracy when social democracy already seems a distant dream for much of mankind, abandoned to poverty and despotism. The program of empowered democracy may seem an open invitation to repeat with even more disastrous consequences the old leftist temptation to pass from a crude stage theory of social transformation to a disregard for the consequences of backwardness. But remember that many third world countries seem likely to achieve a measure of economic equality and political freedom only through the organized militancy of masses of semiemployed workers, agrarian laborers, smallholders, and radicalized petty bourgeois. Not only must they

organize but they must stay organized. They and their leaders must forge institutions that sustain in the midst of routine social life a degree of civic engagement and grassroots activism that the existing democracies witness only at times of war and national crisis. The forms of economic and governmental organization developed by the Western industrial democracies do not lend themselves to this task. Designed to sustain only relatively modest levels of mobilization and conflict, they usually meet one of two fates in a third world setting. On the one hand, they may provide new ways in which to carry on the ancient game of patronage and clientalism. On the other hand, they may be used as the basis for a style of radical partisan conflict whose intensity and scope they cannot accommodate. Then, in the language of American political science, participation outruns institutionalization, and the society falls into a dissension that can end only in dictatorship or in a burst of institutional invention. Thus, the argument from backwardness may be turned on its head. For many contemporary nations social democracy may be the unrealistic choice. These countries may be able to escape governmental and social oppression only by catapulting beyond the social-democratic heritage to a style of democratic politics and of economic organization that more successfully effaces the contrast between structure-preserving routine and structure-transforming conflict.

The world looks different if you believe in the existence of an attractive and realistic alternative to social democracy. For our understanding of every historical situation expresses our tacit conception of possibility: our view of what things might become when subjected to varying degrees and forms of pressure. The explanatory alternative to deep-structure social analysis and positivist social science informs the programmatic alternative to social democracy. The ideas that inform and support the program of empowered democracy in turn advance our insight into the arrangements this program is meant to replace.

In developing the program of empowered democracy I seek inspiration in an aspect of modern Western political practice that until very recently has met with derision from centrists and leftists alike: the tradition of petty bourgeois radicalism. Historical research has produced mounting evidence of how much of the radical challenge to the emerging dominant forms of governmental and economic organization, throughout nineteenth-century Western history, came from skilled workers and artisans, technicians and professionals, shopkeepers and even petty manufacturers, rather than from the proletariat or the lumpen that have played so prominent a role in traditional leftist historiography. The program of this petty bourgeois radicalism was chiefly articulated by publicists who earned the pejorative label "utopian socialists." These publicists championed

one or another version of what Marx called petty commodity production: the coexistence of a large number of relatively equal small-scale producers or productive enterprises as the mainstay of economic organization. The petty bourgeois radicals concerned themselves with the methods of cooperative production or distribution that might sustain such a system. And they sought to extend to the organization of government the same principles they applied to work and exchange.

Though the radical petty bourgeois alternative was everywhere defeated and repressed, its defeat and repression were both less complete and less directly attributable to inherent practical deficiencies than historians, entranced with a stereotype of modernization, industrialization, or capitalism, have generally supposed. Many of its proposals were in fact realized as deviant or subsidiary arrangements within economies mainly organized on different lines. These arrangements continued and continue to exercise an important economic role in the most innovative as well as the most retrograde sectors of industry. Moreover, these bids to establish a different form of industrial society were rarely put to a test that would make it possible to assess their advantages and drawbacks. Their proponents lost a long series of political and ideological wars; they did not fail at an impartial economic examination.

The practical objections to petty commodity production, shared by hardheaded centrists and radical Marxists alike, can be reduced to three main criticisms. First, petty commodity production is economically regressive. It does not permit the economies of scale and the market organization that encourage technological dynamism. Second, petty commodity production is economically unstable. The more successful petty entrepreneurs would soon drive the less successful out of business and reduce them to the condition of wage laborers. Only a corrective system of redistribution can prevent such an outcome. But such a system would then become the real economic order, and it would disrupt or dwarf the economic calculations of small-scale producers. Third, petty commodity production is politically unstable. The national governments capable of supporting such an economic regime would always be either too weak or too strong. The government, resting on a population of independent proprietors obsessed with their little worlds of property and family, might be starved of the resources that would enable it to administer and defend the society. On the other hand, if the government did obtain these resources it would soon overpower a social order bereft of large-scale organizations capable of counterbalancing its own authority. To these considerations, and to others like them, we may attribute Marx's confidence that petty commodity production is at best a transitional or a satellite mode of production.

These objections do indeed weigh against the unreconstructed version of petty commodity production: the version that presupposes economic decentralization through absolute property rights and representative democracy through the constitutionalism of checks and balances, the institutional solutions that in fact came to prevail in the course of Western history. The advocates of petty bourgeois radicalism can be faulted for having failed to appreciate the destructive implications of the emergent or established institutional order for their programmatic aims. They never entirely escaped the obsession with the thinglike image of independent, small, absolute, and permanent property, which was the downfall of petty bourgeois radicalism as of so many earlier dreams of yeoman commonwealths.

But suppose a form of economic and governmental organization that attempts to relocate a program of radical economic decentralization, social solidarity, party-political pluralism, and civic engagement within an alternative institutional framework. Such a framework might, for example, put a system of conditional and temporary claims upon a social capital fund in place of absolute property rights (the same solution anticipated in another passage of this chapter). But then to prevent the administration of this fund from serving as a means for bureaucratic domination or social conservatism, this new institutional structure would provide a far broader range of forms of accountability and participation, and of opportunities to try out radical social experiments on a large scale, than are permitted or encouraged by the inherited constitutional forms of representative democracy.

Such an institutional program might well be repudiated by the champions of petty bourgeois radicalism for giving up on the essentials of independent and eternal property. In assessing the program they would be in the same situation as all who ask themselves whether the proposed translation of an old ideal into a novel institutional form preserves what ultimately attracts them to that ideal. The program of empowered democracy can justly claim to respect the more intangible and enduring aspect of the radical, petty bourgeois cause, the aspect less tainted by the transitory experience of a particular class. For it combines respect for a sphere of vital individualized security and immunity with a promise of opening society more fully to unplanned experimentation.

The pressure under which the advanced industrial nations now find themselves to shift from an emphasis on the traditional mass-production industries to the development of more flexible and innovative enterprises, with their characteristically closer association of task-executing and task-defining activities, can provide one of many occasions to work out this alternative institutional framework. For like all shifts in organizational and technological style, this change

can be accomplished in ways that either minimize or maximize the reform of established arrangements and of the vested interests they support.

The reconstructed version of petty commodity production, newly suited to the concerns of the day, can now be recognized as an inspiration to the invention of institutions that carry the radical project, the project of the modernist visionary, beyond the limit of social democracy. And the mechanism of the change – the recasting of deviant and repressed solutions as new, dominant principles of organization – is one that *False Necessity* presents as typical of the way in which we remake our contexts.

Plan of the Book

Chapter 2 of *False Necessity* begins with the analysis of an exemplary problem: the cycles of reform and retrenchment that characterize the rich Western democracies and the communist countries. Because these cycles must be understood by reference to imaginative pre-conceptions and institutional arrangements that are kept relatively constant, the attempt to explain them poses the question of how to think about the internal composition and the transformation of formative contexts of social life. We can then compare the contexts responsible for these particular cycles to other past or imaginary forms of social life that represent lesser or greater degrees of emancipation from false necessity. This comparison provides categories that can later be deployed in a theory of context making, and it suggests, surprisingly, a way to understand how the elements of such institutional and imaginative orders connect (Chapter 3). I then go on to analyze the genesis of the particular formative contexts identified in Chapter 2. The analysis starts with a highly schematic and interpreted narrative that both anticipates and helps justify a view of social invention (Chapter 4). The argument then turns to a program of empowered democracy, justifying the programmatic turn with a view of normative practice and of its relation to our understanding of personality and society (Chapter 5). This chapter describes and defends an institutional reconstruction of the contemporary social world that would carry farther the project of emancipation from false necessity, which is also the radical project or the project of the modernist visionary. It shows the changes in the institutional forms of markets and democracies that this advance requires. It suggests what implications the ideas that animate the institutional program have for a reordering of the fine texture of social life: the quality of direct practical and passionate relations among people. Thus, what began as an effort to free the understanding of society from superstition ends as the invocation of a form of social life that accords more fully

with our character as beings who cannot be counted on to obey the rules and routines of the social worlds we make and inhabit.

A PROTO-THEORY

The Sense of a Proto-Theory

The whole social theory worked out in this book may well be seen as a development of the conception of human activity outlined at the beginning of *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*. The following pages restate this conception briefly.

We must always settle down to particular social or mental worlds, the collective settings of discourse and human association. We cannot forever act as if everything were up for grabs. But neither are we justified in treating any particular mental or social world as the definitive, uncontroversial face of reason or civilization. No context can accommodate all the discoveries about the world that we might make or all the practical and passionate relations we might have reasons to establish. We can never resolve the tension between the need to accept a context and the inadequacy of all particular contexts. We can nevertheless diminish this tension by our success at inventing contexts that give us the instruments and opportunities of their own revision and that thereby help us diminish the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-transforming struggle.

This diminishment of the imprisoning quality of our contexts not only offers a partial solution to the problem of contexts but also enables us to deal with the other basic difficulty of our predicament: the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion. To sustain and develop ourselves we must participate in shared forms of life. Yet all such engagement constantly threatens us with subjugation to other people and with the impersonal constraints of a social role or station. The creed of the visionary modernist is that the same practical and imaginative devices that strengthen our mastery over the established frameworks of social life also help us deal with the problem of human solidarity by purging group life of some of its evils of dependence and depersonalization.

I have shown in another book (*Passion: An Essay on Personality*) how this conception of our relation to our contexts can serve as a point of departure for a study of our intimate life of encounter and how this study can in turn inform a distinctive moral ideal or existential project. *False Necessity* develops the same basic conception in the direction of an explanatory social theory and of a program of social reconstruction.

Before the detailed explanatory and programmatic argument of *False Necessity* begins, it may help to suggest the elements of a ru-

dimentary approach that links this abstract conception of our relation to our contexts to the social theory advanced in this book. This connecting set of notions amounts to a proto-theory: less the outline of a single, coherent theoretical system than the description of ideas that can supply a basis for many different theories. This proto-theory (i.e., not quite a theory) in turn represents but one controversial direction among the many directions that the basic view of human activity mentioned earlier can follow when applied to the explanation and criticism of social experience. Yet the proto-theory really does link the particular proposals and explanations of this book to a general view of human activity: the conception of our relation to our contexts can inspire a basic understanding of society, and this understanding can inform a social theory. The final, detailed results are what matter most.

The statement of this proto-theory serves two independent purposes. First, it elaborates the thematic and polemical introduction set out in the earlier parts of this chapter, suggesting how these ideas can begin to take shape as a coherent view. Second, it provides one way to distinguish the intention from its execution. You may reject much of the actual explanatory and programmatic argument of this book while continuing to sympathize with the rudimentary ideas sketched in the next few pages. Then, all you need do is turn the proto-theory into a theory better than the one offered in *False Necessity*.

Theses of the Proto-Theory

The initial idea of the proto-theory that anticipates the argument of this book is the existence, in every social situation, of a distinction between a set of formative institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions, on one side, and the routines that this formative context helps shape, on the other side. Once the elements of this institutional and imaginative context are in place, they reinforce one another. Most importantly, they bias the forms and the outcomes of the ordinary practical and imaginative conflicts through which we determine the social future within the social present. They do so in the first instance by giving different groups – classes and communities – a privileged measure of control over the means of society making: mastery over capital and productive labor, access to governmental power, and familiarity with the discourses by which we reimagine society and govern nature.

None of the routines perpetuated by a framework of social life are more striking or puzzling than the stubborn cycles of reform and retrenchment, the hapless, bungling alternation among recognizably second-best solutions to the absorbing practical problems of the

day. Again and again, we find rulers and governments resorting to policy options in whose adequacy they themselves disbelieve. Practical constraints are rarely enough to account for these disheartening compulsions until their effects combine with the restrictive force of an entrenched institutional and imaginative order.

The most formidable statecraft is therefore always the one that can enlarge the range of possible solutions by changing this context. At its most ambitious, this transformative political art does not merely replace one set of institutional and ideological assumptions with another system of the same kind. It inaugurates a framework that is permanently more hospitable to the reconstructive freedom of the people who work within its limits.

Every formative context of habitual social life arises from the containment of conflict. It results from a particular, unique history of practical and imaginative struggles. It becomes entrenched, indeed it exists, only to the extent that it gains immunity to disturbance from the rivalries and challenges of day-to-day social activity. These frameworks of social life do not exist in the manner of the atomic structure of a natural object, open to observation and measurement. Nor do they merely depend upon beliefs that a changed understanding might dispel. They subsist in a practical sense, through the resistance that they oppose to a transformative will or to the back-and-forth of our petty group rivalries.

A framework of social life becomes stable only when it is reimagined as an intelligible and defensible scheme of human association: a set of models of practical or passionate human connection that are meant to be realized in the different areas of social existence. Until society has been thus reimagined, people cannot settle down to a definite context. They cannot even understand one another except as the exhausted veterans of a perennial war.

The stabilized social world that results from a containment or interruption of conflict depends for its continuance upon certain practical or conceptual activities. These activities – which go all the way from group rivalry and party politics to moral and legal controversy – constitute the most important of the routines shaped by a formative context; they renew its life and connect it with the concerns of everyday life. Yet each of these context-reproducing activities can escalate under favorable circumstances into context-disturbing conflicts. No stable, clear-cut, and rigid line separates the routine from the subversive. The basic reason why escalation cannot be precluded is the inability of any institutional and imaginative structure of social life, or even of a closed list of such structures, fully to inform our practical and passionate dealings with one another. Nothing can entirely reduce us to the condition of puppets of a formative context or of the

laws and constraints that might generate a limited set or a compulsive sequence of such contexts.

One of the most important differences among formative contexts lies in the extent of their immunity to disturbance. Some formative institutional and imaginative orders make themselves relatively more open to revision than others. Some strengthen while others weaken the force of the distinction, which never entirely disappears, between the conflicts that they shape and the conflicts that shape them. Some therefore also broaden and others narrow the distance that must be traversed before a context-preserving activity turns into a context-subverting one.

The variation of formative contexts on this scale of revisability or disentanglement appears unmistakably in the character of social hierarchies. For example, hereditary castes, corporately organized estates, and social classes mark the presence of institutional and imaginative frameworks increasingly open to challenge and revision. Beyond the social class lies the movement of opinion, organized or not as a political party. In societies distinguished by class hierarchies and by unorganized communal (i.e., ethnic) divisions, the political party has a double nature. It is both the voice of particular classes or communities and an alliance of people whose shared commitments cannot be adequately explained on the basis of their membership in particular classes or communities. In a society placed yet farther along the spectrum of disentanglement, the party of opinion might become, in its own right, the primary form of social division. That is just what it temporarily does become whenever escalating conflict disrupts people's assumptions about collective identities and social possibilities and therefore also about their individual and group interests.

This distinction among frameworks of social life with respect to their availability to transformation accounts for only a small part of the qualities that may otherwise distinguish them. But the distinction nevertheless holds extraordinary interest for us because of its close connection with a host of ways in which we empower ourselves and make ourselves more fully available to one another. As a formative context of social life becomes more revisable or disengaged the range of experience open to the recombining activity of practical reason broadens. The resulting development of our productive capabilities represents one sense of empowerment. Moreover, the disentanglement of formative contexts undermines any stable plan of social division and hierarchy or any rigid system of social roles. It thereby enables us to reconcile more fully the conflicting conditions of self-assertion: the need to participate in group life and the effort to avoid the dangers of subjugation and depersonalization that attend

such engagement. This more successful reconciliation of the enabling conditions of self-assertion represents another side of empowerment. But the most straightforward sense in which the disentanglement of formative contexts empowers people lies in the greater individual and collective mastery it grants them over the shared terms of their activity. Because this range of forms of empowerment is achieved by creating formative contexts that soften the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-transforming challenge, it might be called negative capability.

People can act as more or less intentional developers of negative capability. One reason they can do so is that the achievement of a greater measure of negative capability may be implicit in the satisfaction of more particular material or ideal interests, interests more closely connected with other varieties of empowerment. Moreover, the intentional pursuit of negative capability does not imply the invention of formative institutional and imaginative contexts with fewer or less determinate characteristics, hence a leap into anarchy or pure negativity, but rather requires the creation of formative contexts with certain specifiable features. Some ways of organizing governments, economies, and families – to mention only the most obvious concerns of a formative context – lie farther along the spectrum of disentanglement, and succeed better at producing negative capability, than others.

The advance toward negative capability can be cumulative, either because its fruits of empowerment are intentionally sought or because the social orders that favor it are more likely to survive and triumph in the competition with their rivals. However, this advance is neither irreversible in its continuance nor determinate in its implications. It is at most a possible progression, and at any given level of its development it may take an indefinite number of institutional forms. Moreover, it always interacts with another, very different type of cumulative, long-term historical causation. Each formative context not only reproduces certain routines but also makes certain trajectories of context change more accessible than others. Much happens just because of what happened before, and the more or less intentional pursuit of negative capability has to share its influence with the power of mere sequence.

A view of context making represents always just the reverse side of a conception of the internal relations among the elements that make up a context. A theory of long-term change that focuses upon the interplay between the influence of sequence and the attractions of negative capability implies a particular approach to the internal constitution of social frameworks. These frameworks are not indivisible packages that stand or fall as a single piece. They cannot be placed on a predetermined list of possible types of social organization

or assigned to a stage in a master process of historical evolution. But neither are these formative contexts random juxtapositions of freely recombinable or replaceable elements. The arrangements and preconceptions that constitute them can coexist stably only when they represent similar levels of negative capability. Moreover, the institutional or imaginative materials that compose these frameworks can be harder to combine when they are drawn from very different historical sequences of context making.

Programmatic Implications of the Proto-Theory

Though the theses that define this proto-theory are extremely abstract, they have far-reaching implications for social explanation, social reconstruction, and even party-political strategy. The proto-theory suggests a way to break once and for all the link between our ability to understand ourselves and our denial of our freedom to smash and remake our contexts. This theory gives a central explanatory and programmatic role to the very fact that seems to represent the chief source of difficulty in our efforts to develop a general understanding of social life. We often seem to be helpless puppets of the institutional and imaginative worlds we inhabit. The social theorist is tempted to see in this diminishment of our freedom the condition of explanation. But the proto-theorist introduced in the preceding pages recognizes that we can always act in ways that violate the rules and assumptions of our established settings. Though some circumstances are certainly more favorable to these transgressions than others, no storable list of structures or of underlying laws and constraints can fully govern our structure-revising and structure-transcending activities. The proto-theorist invites us to take these activities as a topic for speculation and as a source of insight rather than as a limit to our explanation. The theorist who follows in his steps shows that the relation between the freedom of the agent and the constraints of structure is not a constant but itself a subject of conflict and change in history. He even argues that our ability to form contexts more congenial to our freedom is involved in all our particular efforts to empower ourselves individually and collectively and to cleanse social life of some of its evils of subjugation and depersonalization.

Such a social theory incorporates the first characteristic operation of deep-structure social analysis: the identification of a difference between the routines of conflict, exchange, or communication and the structures that shape these routines. But the significance of this operation undergoes a drastic shift when combined with the rejection of the other two characteristic moves of deep-structure thinking about society. The proto-theory points to a social theory that does

not try to present each structure, framework, or context as an example of a general type: as a member of a closed list of possible social worlds or as a distinctive stage in a worldwide process of social evolution. Nor does the proto-theory invoke the kinds of developmental laws and hidden economic, organizational, or psychological constraints that could yield such a list or such a process.

The aggressive methods of deep-structure social theory have often seemed an unavoidable basis for social and historical generalization. The sole alternative has appeared to be the framework-denying practice of positivist social science, with its failure to acknowledge the importance of the contrast between routine and structure and the discontinuities among structures. The fact-battered skeptic is inclined to think that the errors of deep-structure social theory can be cured only by diluting its claims or by retreating to a posture of modest theoretical agnosticism. But the strategy of theoretical modesty turns out to be both incoherent and unnecessary. The proto-theory suggests an explanatory practice no less general in its scope and no less rich in its implications than the deep-structure theorizing it rejects.

This approach to the contemporary predicament of social thought has a special meaning for the leftist. Marxism has served the left as its main tool of explanation and criticism. And Marxism is also the clearest example of deep-structure social theory, though many of the devices that help us escape that theoretical tradition can be found in Marx's own writings. All too often, radicals have felt able to overcome the procrusteanism of a theoretically rigorous but very restrictive version of Marxism only by watering it down into a loose series of concerns, categories, and attitudes.

The argument of *False Necessity* follows a different tack. The aim here is to carry the self-transformation and dissolution of Marxism all the way, in the conviction that the outcome will be another and more defensible theory rather than a theoretical collapse. The result bears a complicated relation to Marx's own ideas, as well as to the teachings of other classic social theorists. In some ways, the view developed in this book represents an effort to vindicate the original spirit of Marxism and, indeed, of all classical European social theory – the effort to see society as made and imagined rather than as given in the nature of things – against the letter – the scientific, necessitarian apparatus that betrayed the radical intention in the name of carrying it out. In yet other ways the theory of *False Necessity* salvages and reinterprets a wide range of Marxist ideas by taking Marxism as a special case of a more general and tenable account of social experience.

The explanatory aims of *False Necessity* are linked to its proposals for social reconstruction and political practice. The approach anticipated by the proto-theory gives programmatic thought a secure place. If our ability to explain social and historical facts depended

upon the moves of deep-structure social analysis, proposals for social reconstruction would be both misguided and superfluous. History could be counted on to take care of itself; its protagonists could do little but recognize more quickly or slowly where things were heading. On the other hand, by denying us any credible view of long-term trajectories of transformation, the conventional social-science alternatives to deep-structure social theory fail to provide programmatic thought with the sense of realistic transformative possibility it requires. As a result, we are led to a bastardized and paralyzing conception of political realism: a conception that dismisses far-reaching reconstructive ideas as utopian fantasies and immediate, partial reconstructions as reformist tinkering.

The social theory developed here has a more intimate relation to programmatic thinking about social institutions than the preceding remarks may have suggested. This theory affirms that the cause of our empowerment requires us to devise institutional arrangements that advance our negative capability and that further rid social life of its mechanisms of domination and depersonalization. And it denies that current forms of social organization can be adequately understood and justified as an unavoidable stage on the road to greater negativity and empowerment.

The argument of *False Necessity* supports and develops these suggestions, drawing out their significance for the reconstruction of society. The radical project, the project of the enlightenment, the project of empowerment through the making of institutions that encourage and perpetuate the breakdown of social divisions and hierarchies, has bogged down in the face of many disappointments. The most important of these disappointments has been the failure of the twentieth-century communist revolutions to offer an attractive alternative to the institutional solutions that happen to have triumphed in the course of modern Western history. And the stultifying effects of this disappointment have been aggravated by the lack of a believable view of social transformation. Such a view is needed to account for the resiliency of contemporary forms of social organization and to supply a perspective from which to assess the realism of programmatic proposals.

We can reimagine present governmental and economic regimes, and the forms of social organization they help support, as incomplete realizations of the radical project. We can explain their stability without treating them as the necessary expressions of deep-seated economic, organizational, or psychological constraints. We can acknowledge the replaceability of inherited institutions without giving credence to the idea of a foreordained sequence that predetermines what can or must come next. Most importantly, we can formulate programs of social reconstruction that push farther the effort to

achieve empowerment through the weakening of social division and hierarchy. These programs include ideas about the reorganization of governments and economies and even of our intimate life of personal encounter. They provide a basis on which to connect the leftist criticism of institutional arrangements with the modernist criticism of personal relations.

The programmatic ideas indicate an approach to political action. This approach seeks to identify opportunities for a style of political practice committed to generating small-scale or transitional versions of its more comprehensive goals. The ends must be prefigured in the means for their achievement. Nevertheless, in conformity with its rejection of deep-structure social theory, this approach denies that any one social group bears primary responsibility for the advancement of the radical endeavor. It rejects the belief that any particular class alliances or antagonisms are inherently necessary or impossible. It proposes a way to take an established logic of group interests seriously while recognizing that escalating practical and imaginative conflict weakens and shifts the influence of preexisting group interests.

The argument of *False Necessity* is doubly hopeful. It sees a hope of surprising insight in what appears to be a situation of intellectual entropy or confusion. It discovers a hope of social reconstruction in what seems to be a circumstance of blockage and disappointment. These two hopes connect. To follow this connection through its many vicissitudes in the stuff of our social experience and visionary aspirations is the central concern of this book.

The Making of Society Through Politics

Routine Without Reason

THE PROBLEM

IN the vast majority of historical situations, the struggle over what society will become – tomorrow or far in the future – takes the form of a tiresome repetition. Individual or collective contests over the use of the resources – of governmental power, economic capital, or technical expertise – that enable some people to set terms to other people's activities fall into a small number of set patterns. For example, political parties that remain or rotate in power constantly rehearse a small number of options in the uses of governmental authority. Even the struggle to gain office in the first place habitually falls within a narrow range of alternative strategies.

The people in such a situation may have little active awareness of constraint. They may feel an enormous gap between positions that, to an outside observer, seem barely to differ. They may detect in minor variations occurring from one moment to another cumulative changes that break the cyclical pattern. They may believe that the repertory of policies and conflicts with which they are familiar represents civilized life at its best. But the broader their knowledge and the more radical their transformative intentions, the greater will be their sense of imprisonment and even futility.

They will then search about for explanations: explanations of why the list of closed options is not bigger or smaller or just different from what it actually is, explanations of what it would take to rewrite the list. But the same insight that puzzled them in the first place is likely to undermine their confidence in accounts that show, in any strong sense of necessity, why the options have to be just the way they are. Their confidence will be undermined because it is in fact unfounded.

The problem of inexplicable routine gained its sharpest edge in a particular historical circumstance marked by the simultaneous availability of certain imaginative and practical activities. This was the circumstance of a society in which people had long become accustomed to see social life transformed through conflict. They had seen every feature of the practical or imaginative life of their society changed, even if in ways that no one had wanted or expected. People

had even begun to consider everything that happened anywhere in the world as an experiment potentially relevant to actions that might be undertaken anywhere else.

Society did not cease to have a certain structure: a system of powers and rights that constantly regenerated a practical plan of division and hierarchy and expressed an enacted vision of the right and possible forms of human association. But this order had been repeatedly disturbed. Its repeated shaking had laid the basis for a special kind of insight.

Such insights and experiences invited a new understanding of society that would do more than hold up the mirror to society. It would not merely inspire men and women to seek the best possible version of the established social order. It would show people that the terms of collective existence can be remade and reimagined, more or less consciously, and that even the most stable social situation was only the temporary and precarious quieting of an endless dispute – a dispute over truth and right as well as over power and advantage. Such an approach to society confirmed and extended the experience that had originally inspired it.

Aspects of this circumstance of discovery and confusion, so favorable to an appreciation of the problems of reasonless routine, have existed at many moments in history. But the only time when it existed fully, complete with its theoretical interpretation and with the sense of collective experiments on a world scale, was in the period of the Western material and ideological assault upon the world, of the emergence of democratic mass politics, and of industrialization promoted at any cost to established ways of life. Yet the insights to be gained have long remained masked by necessitarian social theories.

Suppose you approached contemporary experience with a willingness to abandon, one by one, all the distinctive commitments of these theories. You saw social order as frozen politics. But, at the same time, you recognized that most real political situations, in both the large and the narrower senses of politics, continued to appear as the endless enactment of a small number of well-rehearsed variations. The forms of governmental and social organization that existed in the civilized countries of the world fell within a relatively narrow range of familiar alternatives. But why just these alternatives and not more? And why should each alternative present its rulers with a relatively narrow range of options for reform or retrenchment?

Where did all this constraint come from, and what kind of history did it have? In each society, it repeatedly defied both visionary intentions and practical ambitions. Its real content in any given situation and its transformation throughout world history could not derive from the formal analysis of markets and exchange systems. Nor – if the earlier criticism of deep-logic social theories is right – could it

be inferred from the compulsive evolution of social forms and collective conflicts. Whatever the solution, the problem touches every period of history and every aspect of social life.

We find a similar story in societies at other times in history. Over long stretches of time, for example, the agrarian-bureaucratic empires dominating so much of world history witnessed the recurrence of certain characteristic crises and attempted solutions. These patterns reappeared so relentlessly, with so clear a felt contrast between the politically possible and the politically futile, that sometimes nobody could see them for the extraordinary restraints they were.

At any given time and place, people's enacted vision of society also turns repeatedly within a narrow area. The ordinary course of legal, political, and moral controversy stays within a set structure and stakes out familiar alternative positions. These imaginative routines help shape the course of practical conflict. To study the perpetuation and revision of such practical and imaginative constraints – and to study them where they are most striking and mysterious – is to appreciate a distinctive quality of historical experience.

In this chapter the burden of example and argument falls upon routine and cycle in the conflict over the uses of governmental power and upon the transformation of the formative contexts within which these routinized struggles take place. The main subjects discussed are twentieth-century societies where the susceptibility of social life to reinvention has been repeatedly demonstrated and recognized but nevertheless contained. People have marveled at the toughness of routines whose strength defied both explanation and effort. In the end, the argument returns to the general issue of contexts and their remaking.

The problem of routine without reason is, after all, just the same problem posed by the contrast between normal life or normal discourse and transformative conflict or transformative insight. It is the problem of trying to understand the implications of the contextual quality of our activities: we always come to rest in a provisional realm of practice or imagination but none of these resting points are the real thing – the true face of reason or of ourselves.

We cannot adequately understand the history of the remaking of such contexts through a style of analysis that explains their genealogy in the light of lawlike constraints and developmental tendencies. All the deep-logic social theories attempt just such explanations. By simplifying the pattern of suppressed and emergent deviation, of convergence and divergence, they miss the source of theoretical fascination and bafflement. But neither can we understand all the routinized settings of conflicts as variations on a total realm of possible social worlds that we can define, strongly and interestingly, beforehand. To do that, would be to treat the variations among routinized

contexts as a higher-order counterpart to the variations within them: the same cyclical movements and repetitious constraints projected on a vaster scale. Any conception of possible social worlds turns out either too indeterminate to matter or too arbitrarily dependent upon a limited range of collective and personal experience.

To grasp what goes on in society and history we need a different imaginative scheme: a view of transformative variation that is no longer parasitic upon the hypothesis of convergent and infeasible sequence or upon the definition of possible social worlds. This conception of imaginative work must show its power by generating concrete explanations. The testing ground chosen here is the explanation of the genesis and reconstruction of the contexts of routinized conflict over the uses of governmental power in contemporary societies.

The effort to address the problem of routine without reason has a practical and moral as well as a theoretical interest. Every attempt to carry out an ambitious program of social reconstruction implies an ability to identify and understand formative contexts of routine politics, in both the small and large senses of politics – the focused conflict over the winning and exercise of state power and the total struggle over the reproduction and reinvention of society in every aspect of social life. The problem takes on a higher significance from the standpoint of the vision of human freedom set forth in Chapter I. A central theme in that vision is the progression toward a form of social practice that overrides the distinction between moving within the context and fighting over the context. This advance imparts to ordinary social life something of the quality of the imagination: its capacity to defy all sets of rules that can be formulated prospectively. Thus, the problem of routine without reason concerns both how we should imagine society and how we may recast it in the mold of the imagination.

A FIRST SETTING FOR THE PROBLEM: REFORM CYCLES AND FORMATIVE CONTEXTS IN LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY SOCIETIES

The Western Reform Cycle

Consider the experience of cycles of reform and retrenchment that took place in the rich Western democracies during the generations immediately after World War II. In each country, the struggle over governmental politics had its own forms. But all also shared to a greater or lesser extent in an experience of cyclical struggle over the uses to which state power could be put. Similar policy options were constantly exercised or combined. The endless rounds of conflict

over state policy occurred against the background of a relatively stable way of organizing production and exchange that had spread to all these countries.

It was easy, at the time, to forget just how recent was this set of policy routines – and its background in the organization of production and exchange. Some of the underlying circumstances that held it in place had a long history. Nevertheless, these institutional or imaginative presuppositions had been under dangerous attack as late as the period between the two general wars of the twentieth century. They had gained a higher measure of stability only after a new arsenal of domestic and international forms of economic stabilization was built up during and immediately after the second of those wars. Until then, parliamentary democracy had not become securely established in many of these countries. Where it had, the typical policy options had not yet been clearly defined. Even the background style of industrial organization, which played a major role in the overall arrangements of the economy, was a relatively recent development. The characteristic forms of assembly-line work and of corporate organization were still being developed and diffused up to the middle of the century. Once all the formative institutional elements came together, they set the stage for routinized struggles over power. The cycles of this stabilized world proved tenacious. They resisted reform. They even defied available explanations.

One way to describe the characteristic content of this sequence is to recount the events that have habitually followed the accession to power of a political party committed to massive redistribution of income and wealth as well as to major reforms in the institutional contexts of power and production. Imagine, for example, that these reforms included attempts to gain some measure of political control over the basic flows of investment – a theme whose importance will quickly emerge from the analysis. A party with such an aim might be a labor or socialist party in a European setting.

Such a dramatic reformist intention, seriously held rather than rhetorically proclaimed by a party in power, remained a rarity in the historical circumstance I describe. For one thing, previous rounds of disappointment and defeat had already taught would-be reformers the price of vaunting transformative ambition. For another thing, the electorate's own sense of interest and opportunity had solidified in ways that made it easy to impose a majoritarian veto on any major transformative project. The political party with serious transformative intentions found itself readily pushed into an electoral ghetto. It broke out only by sacrificing, in fact, the greater part of its reconstructive aims and resigning itself to marginal redistributive adjustments. Why this happened is something my later argument must try to explain. But surely part of the reason lay in the influence the

very cycles of reform and retrenchment I am now beginning to describe had upon the way people defined their interests and their best available political options.

Other facts, however, converged to create opportunities for the occasional transformative assault. One of them was the element of reconstructive fervor that had passed into the programs of the leftist parties from the wider conflicts of an earlier day. Another was the wedge opened up by the state's active subsidization of the economy in a setting of economic slowdown. Whatever the form of state support, it would create both the pressure and the occasion to assert some corresponding form of public control. This would be especially true when the subsidized were not primarily – as they had been in government-supported agriculture – a numerous mass of petty entrepreneurs.

As soon as the reforming party in office had begun to press its programs, it found its plan undercut by parallel and ultimately convergent developments.

There were relatively small numbers of people who made the major investment decisions. Any major threat of redistributionist and reconstructive reform would shake business confidence. The people with a say over major investment decisions would, then, exaggerate their habitual policy of caution and preemptive security. They would disinvest. They would promote capital flight. Or they would simply fail to undertake the bolder, riskier, and more long-term initiatives with a chance of bringing about quick and repeated breakthroughs in the overall productive capacity of the economy. All this was sure to happen quite apart from the preventive or reactive struggle that the outraged business interests might wage through their influence upon the agencies of the state and the means of communication. As soon as the economic reaction began, it exercised a destructive effect upon the designs of the people in power. It brought economic downturn. The downturn caused disillusionment in the electorate and dissension among the party militants. The politician who jumped too quickly to the conclusion that what was good for General Motors was not good for the country would soon learn the price of his exaggeration.

Another restraining process was likely to have been under way for a long time. The uncertainties, fears, and controversies that surrounded a serious reform threat would only hasten this process. Different groups in the working population would jockey for relative advantage. The better organized sectors of the work force would try to advance their wage claims: to keep ahead of an inflation already in course and to seize the opportunity, or parry the threat, posed by the transformative design. The managers would often give in to wage demands whenever they thought they could get away with it on the

market: they understood the importance of a stable core work force. They could hope to survive in a product market where demand was often relatively insensitive to price and in a labor market where every group of the working population kept trying to leap ahead.

Each segment of the work force, in that sector of the economy, and eventually in the economy as a whole, would fight to keep up if it could not move forward. Some would lose. These were the less organized – the petty entrepreneurs and independent professionals and the unstably employed underclass – and the less lucky – the people stuck in declining sectors of the economy. But their economic loss would not be the end of their story. They might hope to reverse, through everything from political pressure and criminality to the very spectacle of their wretchedness, the verdict of economic defeat. The losers cried out for immediate rescue and relief: they could not wait for the state to redo society.

At the source of these problems lay an endless and uneven capacity to inflate the power of interests through organization. Both the endlessness and the unevenness were crucial to the outcome. Managers, investors, and workers alike could diminish their vulnerability to market fluctuations and change their market positions by organizing: in one case, through unions; in another case, through corporate enterprises with well-developed strategies of protection against uncertainties of the product, labor, and financial markets. But some workers and entrepreneurs could do this better than others. The inflation of interests then took a second lease on life: the interests devalued within the market could seek to revalue themselves outside it. Like the armies of Henry V at Agincourt, they could refuse to abide by the heralds' verdict of their defeat and go on fighting till victory.

Low-risk investment and unresolved bickering slowed growth, fueled inflationary instability – through both the preemptive wage contest and the pressure for governmental relief – and turned each group's attention from longer-run aims to the effort at survival and triumph in the race. Economic trouble brought political danger. The party in office might find itself out of power before it had a chance to put any of its initial program into effect. The chastened reformers or the new rulers might then turn to more modest aims: consensus over the basic lines of economic policy – and especially over wage differentials – in order to regenerate economic growth and finance the expansion of welfare services.

But whether or not the consensus they sought took the form of an articulate agreement brokered by government (an "incomes policy") or an outright wage-price freeze, it always came up against an intractable dilemma. This dilemma reflected another aspect of the inflation of interests. If the consensual or compulsory solution ben-

efited business and labor groups according to their actual ability to disrupt the production system, the less organized would reject the deal and strike back outside the market. If the solution tried to disregard or counterbalance economic power without in fact undermining it, it would be attacked or circumvented in the marketplace. In either case, the deal would lack the show of moral authority: if the experience of minute and uninterrupted conflict did nothing else, it taught people that power, of one kind or another, produced advantage. It worked against the constant tendency to treat the frozen power relations as embodiments of fair distribution because it kept them from freezing completely.

In this climate of disappointment and decline, each group tried to look out for its own. All but the most unfortunate and disinterested withdrew into the resentful defense of privilege and possession against rivals and the state. A party now swept into office that promised to give the investors and managers whatever they wanted and to renounce, once and for all, the destabilizing reformist programs. The trouble was that the government could never quite give the businessmen enough: not enough to compensate for union militancy or the threat of future political reversal or the newfound prudence of the managerial class itself. Soon the audacious reformers might have a chance to start all over again. Their chance was increased by the coexistence of economic slowdown – aggravated by repeated group conflict – with the lesson of the transparent connection between advantage and power, which that same conflict had taught.

Nor could the entire cycle of reform and retrenchment be bypassed by a far-reaching breakup of concentrations of economic power. Any strategy of competitive decentralization radical enough to break the reform cycle would represent a transformative threat at least as severe as the effort to seize political control of the basic investment decisions. To break up big business and curb organized labor (so as not to save the economy from the control of the former only to leave it in the hands of the latter), the constitutive powers of the property right would have to be disintegrated and redistributed. The free accumulation of capital would have to be replaced by devices that made capital provisionally available to self-regulating enterprises and that continuously broke up concentrations of wealth as they emerged. The abstract idea of a market as a system of decentralized economic decisions would have to be given a new institutional form.

In what sense were the different elements of this formative structure a single piece? Some parts of the total structure were closely connected. All had to be at least compatible. Each bore the marks of its coexistence with the others. Nevertheless, the formative structure was not a system that stood or fell as a whole. The change of any of its elements had an immediate effect on the content of the

reform cycles, an effect that differed from the familiar change of position within the structure. But many elements that made up the total context might be replaced by an indefinite number of alternatives without fatally disrupting the coexistence of the rest. Each part of the whole had a history of its own. I shall argue later that this looseness of connection had remarkable theoretical and practical implications. These implications amounted to much more than the embarrassment of the deep-logic social theorist.

The Communist Reform Cycle

The same style of analysis just applied to the rich Western democracies of the late twentieth century could readily be extended to the communist countries of that same time. You might understand their characteristic reform cycles by emphasizing the boundaries that separated the outer limits of normal politics from the exceptional deviations that threatened to undermine the system, once it had taken form.

Imagine the communist regime at a moment of relative concentration of power. The whole economy stood under a coercively imposed plan. Suppose that the execution of the plan met with mounting resistance as the perceived inequities of treatment, the broken promises of leisure or consumption, and the disorienting misinformation about unrecognized bottlenecks and opportunities piled up. The rulers and planners now had two alternatives. One pushed them dangerously beyond the limits of routine politics. The other moved them toward the opposite pole of a well-known reform cycle.

They could exaggerate the centralist element and seize surplus, by brutal coercion, from any sector of the working populace that their masters had assigned to this sacrificial role. Then you had the war of the state against society. The only clear example – Stalin's war against the peasantry in 1929–31 and the years following – predated the emergence of the cycle of communist reform politics in the Soviet Union or anywhere else. It constituted part of the chain of events that had created this system of reform politics and that had helped close many alternative opportunities of social invention.

Once this routinized social world had been established, its rulers would not play lightly with the use of massive terroristic violence to impose a growth path upon a passive and frightened citizenry. State terrorism – extended to a large part of the working populace rather than limited to isolated enemies of the regime – had its own costs. It broke down communication and simple truth-telling within and outside the state. It forced the servants of the state to keep up relentless pressure at the same time they turned suspiciously against

one another. It spread throughout the country the obsession with self-defense and survival. More generally, the war of government against society always threatened to become one of those episodes of escalating conflict in which everything would be up for grabs as erstwhile partners in rule turned into rival warlords and demagogues.

Thus, the rulers were more likely to respond to the problems of the centralist moment by reaching toward a relative decentralization. They did so moved by the desire to enlist some measure of collaboration with the plan. A qualified consent would have to produce what a ruthless coercion would otherwise need to exact. But it took a very special kind of decentralization to remain within the limits of this specific reform cycle. The managers of particular enterprises received additional measures of discretion to trade and produce on their own initiative and for their own account. But the ultimate authority of the central rulers over accumulation and government remained intact. The workers themselves might be allowed a limited degree of collective decision. But this collective organization of the workers could not be allowed to undermine the basic contrast between task definers and task executors lest the whole of the apparatus of control by state-appointed managers be endangered. Though "socialist legality" might be strengthened, it would not be allowed to turn into a shield for institutionalized mass conflict: the contest among parties of opinion, all the way from the heights of state power to the internal life of neighborhoods and workplaces. Decentralization within such limits invariably meant a handout of power and advantage to managers, technicians, and local authorities. They would in turn make such concessions to their own underlings as were needed to keep things going.

The decentralized moment of the reform cycle could not then be mistaken for more radical "right" and "left" deviations. The former pushed decentralization to the point where the central government – or the groups who held it – might begin by losing effective control over accumulation and end by losing control over the contest for power. The latter represented the change of guided grassroots participation into unguided mass conflict; an event that might easily arise together with its apparent opposite in the topology of the reform cycle, the war of the state against society.

Both the right and the left deviations might result from a failure to manage the reform cycle. Their immediate occasion could be the escalation of conflict within among rival segments of the party elite, some of whom would appeal to broader popular support, inspired by a blend of doctrinal commitment and factional conviction. That these deviations were always live possibilities was shown by their having anteceded the initial formation of the reform cycle. (Consider the Soviet Union of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and of the

First Five Year Plan.) They flared up, periodically, in the generations that followed the consolidation of the Soviet-style system. (Take the rebellious movements in Eastern Europe as an example of the right deviations and the Chinese Cultural Revolution during the brief period in which its instigators ceased to control it as an instance of the left ones.)

But whenever and however they appeared, these crossings of the boundaries of the reform cycle threatened to upset the established forms of power and production. They jeopardized the prerogatives of the ruling groups and (at least in the case of resurgent leftism) of the technical intelligentsia. They were repeatedly crushed by the reaction of the endangered governmental apparatus, the hesitations of their own leaders, and the military intervention of other communist powers.

Suppose then that the swing toward decentralization stayed within the permissible limits. New problems arose. The low-level authorities used every additional measure of autonomy to become still more independent from their rivals or masters. They tried to turn into vested rights the advantages they had gained for their enterprises and for themselves. The whole economy sank slowly into a welter of factional privileges and self-defensive actions within the cumbersome and resented framework of the central plan. This was a dreamless apparatchik's version of the ancient regime: freedom through privilege. Unless things got completely out of hand, a countermovement toward the reconcentration of power began. The reform cycle started all over again.

EXPLAINING THE REFORM CYCLES: THE HYPOTHESIS OF A FORMATIVE CONTEXT

The Conventional Explanations

The very existence of the reform cycles represents both a theoretical riddle and a political embarrassment. In the contemporary Western democracies these cycles bring into focus a blunt conflict between pretense and reality. For the societies in which these repetitious oscillations of policy recur are societies whose reigning dogmas of legitimacy claim to base social arrangements upon the free and equal wills of individuals, as citizens and as economic agents. Thus, the will supposedly asserts itself as majoritarian rule in the public realm and as contractual freedom in the private sphere. At a minimum, institutions, practices, and relations merely imposed by tradition or reflective of privilege are supposed to lack authority.

But the set of options that constitute the reform cycle seem to represent no group's and no party's preferred solutions to the prob-

lems of governmental policy. Their overall effect may be to leave a particular order of privilege relatively undisturbed. Those who benefit most from this order nevertheless give every sign of favoring a less circuitous, unstable, and anxiety-ridden route to the defense of their interests. The reform cycles insult the primacy of the will.

The interest of the problem posed by these recurrent patterns extends beyond their challenge to a widely accepted conception of legitimacy. For the problem turns out to be only a special case of a pervasive feature of society and history: the existence of routines neither chosen nor determined by deep-seated economic, organizational, or psychological imperatives. This phenomenon of routine without reason draws attention to the nature of the social and mental contexts we devise and inhabit. Our interests in freedom and insight converge to give us a heavy stake in loosening the restraints these contexts impose upon our efforts at individual and collective empowerment. But to loosen these constraints we must understand them and to understand them we must reject the choice between refusing to acknowledge them and attributing them to laws of social organization or social change.

Traditional explanations of the reform cycles characteristically try to reconcile them with the idea that current institutional arrangements for economic decentralization and electoral representation provide a flawed approximation to an uncontroversial mechanism for summing up individual preferences. These explanations are compatible with the recognition that current arrangements may be imperfect ways of adding up choices. The imperfections may be said to result, for example, from concentrated market influence or from the underorganization and underrepresentation of certain groups in party politics. But such efforts to reconcile legitimacy based upon choice with facts that seem to deny choice can play only a subsidiary role in an approach — like the one developed later in this chapter and in this book — that emphasizes both the formative influence of certain institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions upon our practical or argumentative routines and the makeshift, revisable character of those preconceptions and arrangements.

Two strands of thought seem to reappear with the greatest frequency in the conventional accounts of the reform cycles. They usually come together: each takes explanatory pressure off the other and makes it that much more plausible. Let me discuss them separately and call them the argument from interference and the argument from constraint.

According to the argument from interference the options that recur in the course of the cycles of reform and retrenchment should not be viewed as a list of the top preferences of groups and parties. Instead, they represent the relatively haphazard outcomes of many

different group or partisan tendencies, coexisting in tension with one another: the resultants of the vectors that are the goals sought by the different groups. Thus what seems to be unchosen is in fact the outcome of the mutual interference among choices. For all their frustrations, the reform cycles bear witness to the vitality of democratic pluralism.

Notice that this argument can easily be reconciled with a recognition that the current forms of democratic rivalry and representation are very imperfect means for summing up individual and group interests. Some groups may be systematically underrepresented. Thus, the skeptical progressive tempers the argument from interference with an awareness of skewed representation. But the argument and the awareness can go hand in hand, qualifying each other in a familiar way, so long as the progressive believes that underrepresentation can be cured without any major overhaul of the current institutional forms of democracy.

The other strand in the conventional account of the reform cycles is the argument from constraint. According to this argument the contours of the reform cycle reflect a compromise between what individuals or groups want and unyielding practical constraints. Given current desires, expectations, techniques, and resources there are a small number of recurrent problems that policy must face and a small number of ways to deal with them. Every institutional system must come to terms with such imperatives. When the options continuously rehearsed in each cycle of reform and retrenchment are not deliberate attempts to satisfy these imperatives, they result from the futile, self-defeating attempts to disregard or escape them.

On an intellectually ambitious variant of the argument from constraint, practical requirements do not merely limit what each institutional system can do once it has already emerged. They account for the major institutional systems that exist in the contemporary world, notably the regulated market economies and representative democracies of the Western industrial countries and the economically and governmentally centralized Soviet model. Each of these systems has complex and detailed operational requirements, reflected in the reform cycles.

The argument of this book develops an alternative explanation of the reform cycles and of the many social and historical facts to which these cycles may be analogized. The centerpiece of this alternative explanation is the attempt to use the distinction between the influential frameworks of social life and the routine activities that they shape while disengaging this distinction from the necessitarian assumptions with which it has traditionally been associated. On this alternative hypothesis the reform cycles are largely shaped by the same formative institutional arrangements and imaginative precon-

ceptions that mold many of the other routine activities and disputes of the societies in which they occur. These arrangements and preconceptions are loosely and unevenly connected. They resist disturbance by the ups and downs of the deals and conflicts they influence. But they nevertheless form a makeshift, pasted-together order rather than indivisible units. The collection of such past and future orders is not a closed list or a predetermined sequence, governed by lawlike constraints or tendencies. To understand the internal constitution and the occasional remaking of these orders requires a style of social analysis that breaks with the assumptions of deep-structure social theory and positivist social science. Until such an alternative mode of thought penetrates the specialized social disciplines, we cannot hope adequately to grasp the reform cycles or, indeed, any part of our practical and argumentative routines.

The alternative explanation does not deny all force to the arguments from interference or from constraint. But it demotes these arguments to a subsidiary position. Groups choose and conflict on the terms established by an institutional and imaginative structure that cannot be persuasively understood as an unbiased and therefore uncontroversial mechanism for adding up preferences. This framework determines the occasions and the instruments of organized social conflict. At a further remove, it influences the assumptions people make about collective identities – the groups to which they and others belong – and social possibilities – the alternative forms that collective action can give to social life. Through its influence on these assumptions, the framework helps shape beliefs about group interests.

The argument from constraint suffers a similar downgrading at the hands of the alternative hypothesis. There are indeed practical responsibilities to be met by any contemporary state and practical constraints on the effective ways of meeting them. But the implications of these responsibilities and constraints for policy acquire a semblance of determinacy only when we take for granted a host of institutional arrangements and assumptions about what relations among people can or should be like. These arrangements and assumptions cannot themselves be derived from practical imperatives. For though no social framework may survive unless it enables people to respect certain loosely defined practical constraints, previously untried and even unthought ways of meeting the same tests appear all the time.

In general, the more determinate the institutional implications of a practical requirement seem to be, the more reason we have to suspect that this requirement is less a test that a successful state or society must pass in order to satisfy its citizens and beat out its rivals than a restatement of what it takes to reproduce current arrangements

in their present form. For example, the task of defending mass-production, "smokestack" industries in the contemporary Western democracies and of protecting the unionized labor entrenched in these industries may be shown to have implications for policy. But the exhibition of these implications begs the question of whether economic growth and the empowerment of labor (more inclusive and institutionally indeterminate goals) may not be better served by radical reforms in the organization and output of industry.

There is no simple way to show the superiority of the alternative hypothesis over explanations that play up the arguments from interference and constraint. In fact, no clear distinction exists between confirming the alternative and developing it. The appeal to the influence of a formative institutional and imaginative context does not differ sharply from notions that find a place in the repertory of confused, conventional, and unthreatening beliefs about society. That appeal gains its punch only by being connected with many other ideas to form an approach to the problems of social explanation that enables us to escape the embarrassments and equivocations of deep-structure and positivist analysis. The comparison of approach to approach rather than of isolated hypothesis to isolated hypothesis must occupy first place in a speculative work like this one.

Criticism of the Conventional Explanations

For the moment, let me outline four sets of reasons to prefer the alternative conjecture to the accounts of the reform cycles that emphasize the argument from interference and the argument from constraint. Some of the themes of this outline are worked out in detail in this or later chapters. Others are mentioned only in passing.

Criticism of the argument from interference. The established institutional forms of representative democracies and market economies do not constitute even a crude approximation to an unbiased system for adding up individual and group preferences. The first and most familiar reason why these current institutions cannot justifiably be so viewed regards access to the state. They enable certain groups to do better than others at deploying governmental power in the defense of their privileged relations to other groups. The reform cycle itself represents an example of this bias. For though reformers may periodically threaten the interests of the most privileged classes of society the overall effect of their deeds is to leave the threat largely unrealized. The existence of the reform cycles cannot, however, show that the underlying institutional arrangements favor certain outcomes and privilege certain group interests. The bias, if it indeed exists, may result from the forces adduced by the arguments from interference and from constraint, either through the direct effect of those

forces upon feasible outcomes or through their more circuitous influence upon the institutional arrangements that produce the outcome.

The criticism of the argument from interference depends on the combination of a close study of the reform cycle itself with several other lines of analysis and research. One form of inquiry emphasizes the conflictual and makeshift character of the events that led to the formation of contemporary democratic and market institutions. The more these institutions are shown to be the outcomes of many loosely connected sequences of practical conflict and doctrinal controversy, intimately related to struggles over relative advantage, the less credible becomes the claim that they represent an approximation to an unbiased system of choice, or at least to the most unbiased system that practical necessities permit. The initial part of Chapter 4 pursues this theme. A second line of study uses comparative and historical analysis to explore the correlation between changes in basic institutional arrangements and changes in the distribution of group advantages and in the content and character of party-political and business cycles. (This form of research is mentioned but not developed in this book.) A third form of argument is programmatic. It shows that an alternative set of governmental and economic arrangements, with at least an initial claim to practicability, would in fact come closer than present institutions to realizing the ideal of a decision procedure unbiased among the occupants of different social stations. Here is one of the many connections between explanatory and programmatic arguments.

Criticism of the argument from constraint. The idea that practical constraints can almost always be met, and practical tasks executed, by many alternative technical and organizational means has become a commonplace of social and historical analysis. But this idea almost always takes the form of a belief in the existence of a well-defined set of solutions to a practical problem. Thus, in a society's institutional history there may be said to be branching points at which the society may adopt one of a number of clearly defined institutional responses to the practical challenges it faces. Having chosen one of these paths, the society moves down the road to the next branching. The trouble is that there rarely seem to be compelling reasons to restrict the class of feasible solutions. No wonder the theory of branching points works far better as a rationalizing retrospective gloss than as a guide to transformative practice. No wonder the set of practicable alternatives has to be constantly enlarged as new facts are discovered about the past and new solutions tried out in the present. And no wonder the idea of the multiple pathways so easily turns into a more subtle justification for the idea that history has a script although a script with many different versions.

Later in *False Necessity* I experiment with an explanatory style that dispenses in a more radical way than does the idea of the branching points with both the notion of the script and the deep-structure assumptions that guide its use. The experiment takes the form of both a schematic institutional genealogy and a view of context change inspiring this historical account. A major theme in the genealogy is the difficulty of understanding the actual content of current institutional arrangement as the product of successive approximations to an ideal of practical efficiency or of successive choices among well-defined sets of feasible responses to inescapable challenges. A major theme of the view of context change is that by ridding ourselves of the idea of the script in general, and of the conception of the branching points in particular, we increase rather than undermine the prospects for bold and comprehensive explanations in social and historical study.

The lessons of substitution. If it is true that makeshift institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions give a reform cycle much of its force and content, a change in those formative arrangements and preconceptions can be expected to change the cycles. If we could alter the character as well as the content of the basic institutions and ideas – the sense in which they resist transformation – we might even be able to diminish the place that unchosen compulsions such as the reform cycles occupy in social life.

A series of thought experiments begins to make the point. Suppose central governments remained tied to the gold standard or otherwise committed to sound-finance doctrine. They could not then promote redistributive measures in the distinctive mode that characterizes the particular reform cycle described earlier. The abandonment of the gold standard and the intellectual tolerance of deficit financing has in fact had a significant impact upon policy cycles and business cycles alike. (Remember Kalečki's remark that the effect of the doctrine of sound finance was to make the level of employment directly dependent upon the state of business confidence.) Suppose, on the other hand, that democratic governments had a way to prevent disinvestment or capital strikes through a more direct and less rebuttable influence upon basic flows of investment decisions than they now possess. In this event, the moments of retrenchment that characterize the particular reform cycle described previously would not exist or would assume very different form.

The changes in institutional arrangements and in business or policy facts that these thought experiments explore are not wholesale, revolutionary shifts, like the succession of modes of production in Marxist theory. Yet neither can they be assimilated to the repetitious patterns of a reform cycle. They are the stuff of what people fight about and of what they take for granted.

The Idea of a Formative Context

In every extended social situation we can distinguish a formative institutional and imaginative context that shapes ordinary deals, arguments, and conflicts while remaining largely indifferent to their destabilizing effects. The formative context – which I also call an order, framework, or structure of social life – exerts a major influence upon the form and course of social routines, including routines as important to the future of a society as the reform cycles described at the beginning of this chapter. Yet one of the hallmarks of a formative context is that it is itself hard to challenge, to revise, and even to identify in the midst of everyday cares.

A formative context of social life is partly made up of extended sets of institutional arrangements, some of them organized according to explicit norms, others less articulate. Prominent among these institutions and practices are those structuring the conflict over governmental power and the allocation of capital. A later section of this chapter discusses extensively one such group of institutions: those that help explain the particular reform cycle described previously. Chapter 4 presents a polemical genealogy of these institutional structures. The genealogy anticipates a theory of context making.

The other component of a formative context is imaginative. It consists in a set of enacted preconceptions about the possible and desirable forms of human association: assumptions about what relations among people should be like in different domains of social existence. For example, a particular conception of private community, emphasizing reciprocal loyalty, shared purposes, and the exclusion of conflict, might be seen as properly realized in the life of the family. The analysis of the formative contexts of late twentieth century Western democracies in this chapter sets this imaginative element aside. But later parts of the argument discuss its connection with the institutional aspect of a social framework.

A formative context puts a particular version of society in place of the indeterminate possibilities of social life. It shapes a complex texture of practical and argumentative routines that gain, by their continuance, an aura of naturalness and necessity. By far the most important of the routines it shapes are the conflicts over the possession and mastery of the resources that establish the terms of people's access to one another's labor and loyalty and that enable the occupants of some social stations to control the activities of the occupants of other social stations. The key resources that serve as objects of such conflicts are governmental power, economic capital, technical expertise, and the ability to enlist widely accepted ideals and normative arguments in the defense of particular interests and opinions.

A formative context guides these conflicts over the resources for

society making by discriminating the occasions on which people deal and fight and the practical or imaginative tools with which they do so. It exercises a more subtle and diffuse effect by its influence on people's assumptions about social possibilities, collective identities, and group interests. The ideas about group interests that animate a set of group alliances and rivalries depend both upon people's identifications of themselves with different groups (their collective identities) and upon the agenda of live options for society, the range of social alternatives that seem to be within reach. The sense of active social possibility in turn draws life from the alternatives practically available to people: the division between what they can effectively challenge and what they must ordinarily take for granted. Similarly, collective identities need to be reaffirmed in routines of practical life, routines that an institutional and imaginative structure of social life favors or discourages.

By molding conflict over the mastery and use of key resources and by penetrating assumptions about social possibilities, collective identities, and group interests, a formative context helps sustain a set of social roles and ranks. The distinctive content of a system of social division and hierarchy depends upon the particular content of a social framework. It may seem far less obvious that the relative force of a system of social roles and ranks turns on the relative entrenchment of a formative context. By the force of a plan of social division and hierarchy I mean both the distinctness of its internal gradations and the power of its influence over people's life chances and mutual relations. By the entrenchment, immunity, or character of a formative context I mean the extent to which it resists challenge, revision, and even identification in the course of practical and argumentative routines.

A simple intuitive idea stands at the center of the conjecture that the force of a scheme of social roles and ranks depends on the relative entrenchment of the formative context that underlies it. This idea is the belief that seclusion from destabilizing conflict is a necessary if not a sufficient condition for the perpetuation of the differential allocation of advantage and the restraints upon possible action that an order of social division and hierarchy implies. The low-level animosities, rivalries, and disagreements that attend all our context-preserving activities can always escalate into conflicts that transform the context and thereby change the divisions and hierarchies it supports. For these hierarchies and divisions to be stable, things must be so arranged that the escalation is less likely to occur.

If a scheme of roles and ranks is one product of a formative context, another is a detailed set of practical and discursive routines. These routines are not just loosely defined activities. They are recurrent patterns of economic, party-political, or governmental activity like

the reform cycle, or typical moral and legal arguments. Once again, the content of a formative context governs the content of the routines. The relative entrenchment of the context determines how compulsive these routines are: the extent to which they are unchosen and the degree to which they are even mistaken for the natural thing to do, the result of impersonal practical constraints, or the commands of an uncontroversial moral order.

An institutional and imaginative structure of social life gives rise to a distinction between structure-preserving routines and structure-transforming conflicts. But some frameworks generate more of a distinction than others because some make themselves less readily available than others to resistance and reconstruction.

A scheme of social roles and ranks and a detailed series of accepted, even compulsive routines are therefore the two main by-products of an institutional and imaginative framework of social life. The effects follow so directly from the cause that they could just as well be considered part of its definition. The occurrence of a detailed texture of routines, roles, and ranks is much of what it means for a formative context of social life to exist.

We should therefore expect to find that the two effects are also closely and universally linked. A stable system of social divisions and hierarchies flourishes together with a series of relatively unchallenged practical and imaginative routines like the reform cycles. The force of the former must be related to the compulsiveness of the latter, for both depend upon the relative immunity of the formative context on which they rest. These connections may seem unsurprising so long as they remain vague. Later arguments put them to a variety of uses and tests and give them a basis in a more inclusive approach to problems of social and historical explanation.

Implicit in this definition of a formative context is a methodological thesis with far-reaching implications. The institutional and imaginative frameworks of social life are the hardest of social facts: not because they are easy to measure but in the sense that they are both the most resistant to transformation and the richest in the range of their effects. They may be taken as exemplary social facts: for almost everything in a social situation belongs to such frameworks, to the routinized activity that they influence, or to the anomalies of behavior and thought that resist their influence. Such anomalies often represent either residues of a past framework or raw material for making novel arrangements and preconceptions.

These exemplary social facts do not exist in the same sense as the atomic structure of a natural object. They are not just there, waiting to be identified, surveyed, and measured. Whether they exist or how much they exist is not clearly distinguishable from the facility with which they can be disregarded, resisted, or overturned.

Neither are formative contexts merely mental prejudices that survive because certain groups credit them with a specious authority. They are artifacts, and makeshift ones at that, but they are not just factitious entities that cease to exist as soon as people stop taking them seriously. They may not long be able to survive a decisive withdrawal of consent. But they can often induce in those whose life chances and daily routines they shape a blank and despairing resignation that muddies the clarity of the distinction between consent and coercion.

The primary sense in which a social structure exists is practical. It exists both because and in the sense that people cannot easily disturb it in the course of their ordinary activities. It is relatively (though never completely) out of reach, and from this position of relative immunity it exercises its wide-ranging influence on social life. Again, the quality of immunity to disturbance is not just an attribute that a formative context picks up; it results from the particular content of the arrangements and beliefs that compose it.

Formative contexts differ not only in content but in character: that is to say, in their relative degree of entrenchment or immunity to disturbance. The more entrenched they are, the sharper become the contrasts they establish and uphold between routine and transformation and the steeper, more rigid, and more influential the social divisions and hierarchies to which they give rise. Formative contexts enjoy degrees of existence. This variation matters: the disentanglement of formative contexts is bound up with many of our most basic efforts at individual and collective empowerment.

The idea that the sense in which social structures (and social facts generally) exist is the sense in which they become relatively unreachable and unassailable, shedding some of their artifactual quality, has never been entirely forgotten by a tradition of social thought that sees society as made and imagined. But for this idea to come into its own it must enter the basic categories of social description and explanation. It must combine with the awareness that structures vary in the extent to which they provide for their own remaking.

Criteria for Membership in a Formative Context

How do we know whether a particular institutional arrangement or a belief about the possible and desirable forms of human association should be included in the definition of a society's formative context? The preceding discussion suggests two overlapping and complementary criteria. To show how each element in a formative context satisfies these criteria is also to provide a partial justification for the idea of a formative context by demonstrating that it can carry out some of the explanatory work it is meant to do.

One criterion for the inclusion of an arrangement or belief in the definition of a formative context is subjective or strategic. This standard refers to the perspective of the social actors themselves. A practice or a preconception deserves to be included within the definition of a formative context if it is regularly presupposed by the strategies with which individuals or groups advance their recognized interests and by the arguments with which they defend their goals. "Presupposed" here means taken for granted as among the conditions that an agent treats as relatively fixed when he calculates how best to promote his aims.

Consider how this subjective standard applies to the discussion of the reform cycles. From the standpoint of the social actors the reform cycles appear largely as a series of conflicting but mutually reinforcing strategies and as a set of constraints and opportunities that these connected strategies must face. The important point is what the agent does rather than what he says, for he may claim to oppose an institutional arrangement with whose indefinite continuance he actually reckons as he goes about choosing the most effective way to further his objectives.

Thus, for example, both the attempts of big business and organized labor to protect themselves through deals with each other, and the effort of the unorganized working class and petty bourgeoisie to undermine or circumvent these deals through direct pressure on governments or social conscience, operate on the same institutional assumptions. These assumptions include the beliefs that the economy and the polity represent distinct though intersecting arenas of conflict, that victories in one of these arenas can be partly reversed by triumphs in the other, that both the control of labor and investment decisions in the name of consolidated property rights and the social and technical division of labor are largely immune to attack by public officials, and that governments can nevertheless distribute benefits according to influences and principles the organized and the privileged cannot fully control. More detailed accounts of the repetitious strategies these beliefs support make it possible to identify their institutional and imaginative presuppositions with increasing precision.

The applicability of the subjective or strategic standard rests on controversial assumptions. One assumption is that the institutional and imaginative premises of different activities in a society tend to coalesce. But what certain practical or argumentative activities take for granted may be for other activities the very object of attention and controversy. Thus, in a certain society, the institutional presuppositions about the relations between business and government that are regularly taken for granted by economic enterprises in their dealings with one another may be a regular topic of dispute in party-political controversies. Or the subjects taken as given in the routine

oscillations of business activity and public policy may be repeatedly subject to dispute in well-established forms of moral, legal, or "ideological" controversy. A related and equally controversial assumption of the subjective standard is that the strategic premises of different individuals and groups in the society tend to converge, not with respect to all institutions and practices, but at least with respect to the core set that makes up a formative context.

There is good reason to think that these requirements for the applicability of the strategic or subjective standard are often satisfied. Thus, for example, it would be hard for nongovernmental investment decisions and governmental policy to shift on the basis of radically different assumptions about which institutional arrangements must be taken for granted and which are up for grabs. The managers and investors would find their expectations regularly disappointed and their plans regularly upset by the policymakers, or the latter would have to forfeit any responsibility for maintaining the conditions of prosperity. Again, a society would repeatedly fall into a condition of Hobbesian strife if the classes and communities that composed it had little common ground about the institutional arrangements they took for granted and those they regarded as the very object of their typical conflicts. At a minimum, they would need to agree on the institutional procedures with which to settle their disputes.

The conditions for the application of the subjective standard may often be largely satisfied. But it is equally clear that they are never satisfied completely and that relatively stable societies differ widely in the extent to which they approximate these conditions. The subjective principle for the demarcation of a formative context occupies an important place in a social theory that draws no sharp contrast between the objective facts about society and the subjective experience of social life. But it needs to be complemented by another, more objective criterion.

This objective standard merely restates the terms of the earlier definition of the idea of a formative context. An arrangement or preconception belongs to an institutional or imaginative framework of social life if its substitution affects either of the two main hallmarks and by-products of a formative context: the scheme of social division and hierarchy or the repetitious and cyclical conflicts over the mastery and use of the tangible and intangible resources of society.

If the conjectures put forward in the preceding pages are correct, the replacement of any of the institutions or beliefs that make up a formative context alters the plan of social division and hierarchy. It also changes the form, the course, and the outcomes of routinized deals and conflicts like the reform cycles described at the beginning of this chapter. A change in the relative entrenchment or immunity

of a formative context has a different effect. It weakens the compulsive force of the routines: the strength with which they drag us into the reenactment of a future we never chose. It also diminishes the degree to which our life chances and our practical or passionate transactions are molded by a predetermined order of social division and hierarchy.

Every change in the relative entrenchment of a formative context requires a modification in the distinctive institutions and beliefs that make up the context. But the reverse does not hold. There are an indefinite number of arrangements and beliefs, forming different social frameworks, that may stand at more or less the same level of relative entrenchment. They may alter the compulsive routines or the divisions and hierarchies of society without changing their relative force.

These many conjectured effects provide a way to determine whether an institution or belief belongs to the formative context of the society in which it exists. It belongs if its substitution causes any of the predicted consequences.

This discussion of the objective standard of inclusion assumes that formative contexts can be changed piece by piece. They need not be dealt with on a take-it-or-leave-it basis and replaced as indivisible units, in the fashion of modes of production in Marxist theory. Such partial substitutions amount to revolutionary reforms as opposed to either reformist tinkering within a formative context (e.g., one more move in a well-established reform cycle) or the revolutionary substitution of an entire social framework (a limiting case never more than approximated by any real-world situation). The view developed in this book sees revolutionary reform as the normal mode of context change. The thesis that contexts can be replaced part by part rather than as indivisible units immediately poses the question of constraints on the recombination and replacement of formative contexts. An approach to the problems of social theory that wants to dispense with the deep-structure assumption that such frameworks, structures, or contexts are indivisible would lose its credibility if it failed to explain why some arrangements cannot coexist stably within the same frameworks. An account of partial selective constraints on the replacement and recombination of the constituents of a formative context must be supported by a view of context making that makes sense of these constraints and holds up against historical experience.

An important qualification applies to the identification of revolutionary reform with the substitution of any part of a formative context. This qualification introduces a complexity into the use of the objective criterion for membership in a formative context. The replacement of an element in a formative context may sometimes have a restricted and focused effect – or, at the limit, no effect at all

— upon the roles and ranks, the tropisms and cycles, that a formative context shapes. Call such substitutes with marginal or narrowly targeted effects “functional equivalents.” There seems no way to tell for sure just when what seemed to be a revolutionary reform will turn out in fact to be a mere functional equivalent. The occasional occurrence of functional equivalents represents yet another consequence of the nonexistence of any closed list or sequence of social frameworks.

You can therefore distinguish three ways in which an event, an activity, or a conflict may relate to an institutional and imaginative order of social life. It may remain within a formative context and occupy one of the options that this framework produces. It may revise the structure, thus changing the content or force of routines, divisions, and hierarchies, and disturbing other parts of the framework. Or it may supply a functional equivalent for an element of the structure and leave everything important intact.

The availability of the subjective and objective criteria shows that the idea of a formative context can be given empirical content. But even if we can successfully put the idea of a formative context to work, we cannot show that views of how such frameworks are internally constituted and of how they get remade represent a fruitful focus for a descriptive and explanatory social theory. After all, a different problem might be chosen as pivotal. The vantage point offered by such an alternative might lead us to view the connections and transformations of institutional arrangements or enacted social dogmas in another way. The case for this focus rests on the explanatory power and the critical and constructive uses of the theory that the focus makes possible.

The restraints upon the will that make people reproduce the present even when they want to change it and that offer them a set of choices that nobody ever really chose are riddles posed again and again in the course of ordinary social life. The mystery thickens as the theories that try to explain it away by showing how these repetitions and constraints reflect deep-seated necessities are successively discredited. Because governmental power and economic capital rank high among the means by which people create the collective future within the collective present, the limits upon their uses constitute an especially important example of unexplained constraint. As the argument develops, it will become apparent that the same puzzle reappears in different areas of social experience and that all these instances amount to special cases of the same basic issue: the nature of the conditional forms of discourse and action that we devise and inhabit. Our stakes in freedom and insight converge to give us an overwhelming interest in making these forms more hospitable to our structure-revising freedom. But to change the character as well as the content of the

structures we must understand them, and to understand them we must reject the choice between refusing to acknowledge them and attributing their force and evolution to lawlike necessities.

Two Meanings of Reasonlessness

Before going on to the details of the analysis, it is worth pausing on a terminological issue. Routines like the cycles of reform and retrenchment discussed here are, I have said, reasonless. The slogan carries two distinct meanings in this book, connected in a way that helps elucidate the argument of this chapter.

The routines are reasonless in the straightforward sense that they remain unexplained. The available explanations fail to work. More precisely, the forms of thought that can identify the problem prove unable to solve it. The remedy for this brand of reasonlessness is simply the development of more successful ways of describing and explaining these closed circles of politics and policy.

Reasonlessness also carries here a second, more subtle meaning. The routines are without reason because, given current widespread beliefs, we have no good reason to acquiesce in them. Reasonlessness in this second sense may seem merely a corollary of reasonlessness in the first sense. Why – to continue with my example – should we give in to the reform cycles if we see them daily frustrate the aims of all political parties and if we cannot show that they necessarily have the form they do? Nevertheless, my argument not only severs the link between the two types of reasonlessness but turns the second type into the opposite of the first.

In the heyday of naturalistic forms of social thought, phenomena like the reform cycles were easy to accept as the perennial ups and downs of a single type of social organization. But in our time of partial emancipation from false necessity and disbelief in the sanctity of a particular hierarchical ordering of society, an explanation capable of inducing acquiescence in compulsions like the reform cycles falls into one of a few familiar patterns. Thus, it may explain the reform cycles as the undesirable consequences of something that we affirmatively desire: the outcomes of the reciprocal interference among the goals and the strategies that individuals or groups are free to pursue. The commitment to freedom of choice, the ease with which self-regarding actions check and frustrate one another, and the constraints on available resources and feasible institutions act together to bring about the result. Alternatively, an acquiescence-inducing account of the reform cycles may emphasize the influence of economic and organizational imperatives that defeat partisan programs. More ambitious explanations may present cycles in governmental policy or business activity as manifestations of the laws that govern the

reproduction of a particular stage or type of organization – late capitalism, industrialized and bureaucratic mass democracies, or whatever. Such laws seem resistible, if at all, only through revolutionary change.

All these styles of explanation, however, simply fail to do the explanatory job. To explain the reform cycles and the many recurrent compulsions they resemble we must refer to the clumps of institutional arrangements and imaginative preconditions that remain stable amid the bustle of ordinary social life. These formative contexts emerge out of many loosely connected sequences of invention and conflict.

Because the formative contexts arise out of numerous intersecting trajectories of change rather than from a single, overriding dynamic, deeply rooted in practical and psychological forces, we stand a better chance of changing them. We can see how easily many of these past sequences might have turned out in other ways. We can hope to redirect many of the sequences going on now. We can change the institutional and imaginative groundwork of our societies and alter the content and force of the routines it supports.

This hopeful, open-ended message might, of course, prove illusory. As soon as the reform cycles ceased to be reasonable in the first sense – because we have found out how to explain them – they might also stop being reasonable in the second sense – because, having explained them, we would understand their necessity. The more successful accounts would uncover the driving forces behind the loosely connected sequences of events that produce formative contexts.

False Necessity claims that we can indeed move beyond the skeptical reference to the fragmentary histories of formative contexts: there are general causes and explanations beyond these histories. But they confirm rather than revoke the claim that history is open and genuine novelty possible. The general explanations advanced by the later arguments of this book suggest that formative contexts, or the recurrences and compulsions they sustain, are not necessary in any strong and interesting sense.

Thus, there emerges a quite different relation between the two senses in which routines like the reform cycles are reasonable. As the routines cease to be reasonable in the first sense, because we understand them better, they become all the more reasonable in the second sense, because we shall have all the stronger cause to credit their availability for reconstruction.

The explanatory ideas developed later in this book amplify, revise, and refine our initial sense of openness. They show how a formative context gets made and changed. They suggest that we can diminish the force of closed sets of social options, not merely replace some

sets by others. They explore the nature of our interest in this achievement.

EXPLAINING THE REFORM CYCLES: THE ANALYSIS OF A FORMATIVE CONTEXT

A Simplified Description

The following pages turn back to the problem presented by the reform cycles. They offer a description of the particular formative context that helps explain these cycles. After depicting this formative context the argument explores two analogous settings that also pose the issue of routine without reason. Taken together, these explorations suggest both the importance and the difficulty of the attempt to disengage the distinction between formative structures and formed routines from the deep-structure, necessitarian assumptions with which this distinction has traditionally been associated.

Like the account of the reform cycles themselves the description of the formative contexts disregards significant distinctions among the basic institutional arrangements of different late twentieth century Western democracies. Nothing here turns on the validity of the idea of a supranational type. For the purposes of a simplified argument, designed to illustrate and develop a theoretical approach, it is enough to observe that these countries do indeed share to a very large extent the particular constellation of institutional arrangements I describe.

A more important qualification has to do with the exclusive focus on the institutional side of the formative context. A full account of the reform cycles would need to include the imaginative picture of society – the available models of possible and desirable association in the different areas of social life – that so deeply influence the course of collective conflict. The formative context must be mental as well as institutional. But to introduce this imaginative element into the analysis would be to raise the problem, right at the start, to the highest level of complexity. The view of institutional arrangements and the larger theory of transformation that this view deploys will therefore minimize references to the imaginative constraints upon action until the problem posed by these constraints can be reintroduced in a later section of this chapter.

Begin by distinguishing several clusters of institutional arrangements. The extent to which these institutional complexes depend upon one another is precisely one of the main questions to be answered in this analysis. My account of the formative context remains as general and indiscriminating as the earlier description of the reform cycle. The reason is not that the relevant institutional differences

among the advanced Western countries are insignificant, much less that the existing differences can be adequately understood as variations upon a coherent institutional type; the idea of a limited list of types of social organization, each with a built-in institutional structure, should be one of the casualties of this argument. The generalization here is simply a compromise with convenience. But the very crudeness of the simplifications strengthens one of the chief implications of the description: no matter how sketchy it may be, any description of the institutional order that can actually illuminate the contemporary routines of political and economic activity brings out the particularity, indeed the oddity, of arrangements we often misunderstand as the natural institutional form of markets and democracies.

The Work-Organization Complex

The institutional arrangements that most directly affect the organization of work combine two generative principles. The first principle is the overarching contrast between two kinds of activities and the two classes of jobs associated with each of them. On the one hand lies the definition of productive tasks and labor processes; on the other hand, the more or less repetitive and specialized operations that comprise the processes and execute the tasks. The contrast between task definition and task execution remains relatively clear-cut as do the distinctions among the different operational acts that execute the tasks. Any change in production plans or processes that may be suggested by operational experience must be initiated by the task definers themselves. Material rewards and opportunities for the exercise of discretionary judgment alike are concentrated in the task defining jobs. The central contrast between task definition and task execution is, in turn, expressed and supported by a dominant organizational and technological style. It is also sustained by the legal rules and rights that allow supervisors to exercise, in the name of the property norm, an authority that combines technical coordination with an ill-defined disciplinary power.

The second generative principle qualifies the first by showing how the sectoral organization of industry affects the contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities. The largest productive (as well as administrative and military) organizations present the contrast at its most inflexible. Though these organizations may employ only a minority of the labor force, their enormous concentrations of capital and their privileged relations to government enable them to shape markets and to dominate the mainstream of industry. The detailed institutional practices protecting these economic organizations include all the legal rights and economic strategems that allow them

to protect themselves against instabilities in the capital, labor, and product markets. (For a description of some of these devices see the section on *The Institutional Conditions for the Predominance of the Rigid Style of Industry* in Chapter 3.) They are peculiarly vulnerable to such instabilities because of the vast scale of their investments, the relative rigidity of their processes and machinery, and the standardized quality of their products. Outside this mainstream, however, in the vanguard of high technology or in the rearguard of shoplike enterprises, a vanguard and a rearguard often barely distinguishable, a much closer interplay between task-defining and task-executing jobs or activities often takes hold.

The Private-Rights Complex

A second cluster of institutional arrangements underlying this reform cycle defines the character of subjective rights – the rights of the individual against other individuals and against the state, particularly insofar as these claims influence the control of capital. More specifically, these arrangements define the institutional context of the market. The system of subjective rights that enters into this formative context has as its pivotal device the assignment of nearly absolute claims to divisible portions of social capital: absolute in temporal duration (e.g., unbroken succession by voluntary transfer or inheritance) as well as in scope (e.g., no second-guessing of the uses to which these portions of capital are put except when they run up against the outer limits of public policy). This device for assigning capital becomes, in this institutional model, both the major guarantee and the exemplary form of all entitlements. And the many analytically and historically heterogeneous faculties that compose modern property are thought to belong, self-evidently, to a single consolidated right.

This idea of property presupposes, and is presupposed by, a particular doctrine of contract and of the sources of obligation. This view systematically plays down the genesis of obligations out of complex, only partly articulated relations of interdependence and reliance. It emphasizes, instead, the fully articulated agreement and the imposition of a duty by the state. For to allow obligations to arise out of trust and reliance would be to undermine consolidated property and the general system of rights modeled upon it. Contract and property law, of course, have never been entirely penetrated by these principles; they have always and everywhere included anomalies or counterprinciples that, though restricted to narrow areas of the law, suggest a radically different form of market organization. But these counterprinciples are easily quarantined or forgotten when it comes to defining the institutional content of a market economy.

The spirit of these dominant institutional arrangements can be

defined in two complementary ways. On the one hand, the point is to measure out a prepolitical space, a set of social practices that, although theoretically open to legislative control and party-political debate, can in fact be at best marginally influenced by the course of electoral politics. This conception of a prepolitical framework of social life once received explicit support from one of the many corollaries of deep-logic theories of society: the conception of a repertory of forms of social organization, each with its built-in legal and institutional content. A country might choose, at a decisive revolutionary moment in its history, whether or not to commit itself to the combination of representative democracy with a market economy. But, once it had made this choice, the basic arrangements of constitutional, contract, and property law supposedly followed automatically. This conception has rarely been stated today as an explicit doctrine. But it continues to underlie, as an unacknowledged assumption, much of legal analysis and ideological debate. People speak of markets and democracies as if these abstract categories had a more or less self-evident institutional content.

Another complementary way to characterize the spirit of the prevailing form of contract and property is to say that this form connects a particular way of organizing a market, with all its effects of dominion and dependence, to the instruments by which the individual can defend his own sphere of autonomy. The link may be asserted self-confidently (e.g., nineteenth-century high liberalism), as when people claim that the availability of this specific style of contract and property rights belongs to the very definition of freedom. Or it may be affirmed more negatively and obliquely, as when people merely disbelieve that it is possible to organize a market on alternative principles without destroying freedom, efficiency, or both (e.g., the latter-day skeptical and disillusioned brand of liberalism). But one way or another, the fate of the idea of rights, as restraints upon what collectivities may do to individuals in the name of the collective good, is made to look inseparable from this particular style of market organization.

The importance of this institutional cluster to the reform cycle hardly needs comment. It gives bosses and investment managers the authority to organize labor in the name of accumulated property. It sets the basic terms on which disinvestment can frustrate reform. And it denies would-be reformers a tangible picture of an alternative style of economic organization.

The Governmental-Organization Complex

A third complex of institutional arrangements responsible for perpetuating the reform cycle defines the organization of government and of the conflict over governmental power.

Take first the organization of the state. The institutional arrangements that protect the individual against governmental oppression also keep the state from changing the basic arrangements of society. In particular, they prevent those in power from changing the formative context of power and production itself even when they were elected on precisely such a program. Any weakening of the restraints upon the state's reconstructive capabilities seems at the same time to endanger the basic security of the individual against oppression by his rulers. The constitutional arrangements that result in this formula for paralysis are chiefly those that constitute or extend the eighteenth-century technique of "checks and balances." These techniques characteristically multiply the number of independent centers of power that must be captured, or persuaded to consent, before state power can be effectively mobilized behind any transformative objective. Each source of consent constitutes a distinct arena of conflict with distinct procedures. And each focus of constitutional conflict creates opportunities for other quasi- or extraconstitutional restraints. Thus, the need to achieve consensus among independent powers within the state is reinforced by the need to conciliate any important bureaucratic faction or organized pressure group that may be a potential opponent. Departures from the constitutional techniques that disperse power and fragment choice seems to jeopardize individual freedom. That this link between the safeguards of freedom and the techniques of deadlock is nevertheless illusory can be directly inferred from the actual historical experience of modern constitutional systems. Thus - to take an example that will be explored later - many of the European constitutions of the interwar period were deliberately designed to enable a party in office to execute its program. Yet the traditional liberties often suffered no injury as a result. Indeed, they were sometimes strengthened.

Consider now the conflict over the uses of governmental power. The most striking feature of this conflict is the recourse to a rivalry among organized parties of opinion that is defined by the coexistence of three characteristics. First, the contest over who commands the heights of state authority remains only tenuously connected with the quarrels and concerns that occupy people in the midst of their day-to-day practical lives: partisan rivalries habitually fail to extend down into the institutions that absorb people's workaday lives. Within these institutions, people do not divide, nor do they see themselves as dividing, on the same lines that separate them when they act, episodically, as citizens.

A second characteristic of this style of party conflict is that the ideas around which parties rally are usually vague slogans, isolated moral issues, and promises of marginal material advantage to particular groups rather than serious plans for reconstructing the insti-

tutional context of power and production. This trait may seem to describe American parties of the later twentieth century better than their European counterparts. Yet the difference in the language of politics far exceeded the distinction in political practice: many of the categories and contrasts central to the language of European politics had been taken from those years after World War I when the fundamentals of social life were often genuinely up for grabs.

A third, less apparent, and more fundamental feature of this organization of the conflict for mastery of the state is the relationship it embodies and sustains between tangible material interests and programmatic opinions. In the societies whose party systems I am describing, the influence of the plan of social division and hierarchy has been weakened and the plan itself fragmented. The plan nevertheless survives, loosened but often all the more invisible and intractable. This shift in the character of social division and hierarchy – one of the many expressions of a partial break from false necessity – creates the circumstance in which the citizen typically behaves according to two contrasting logics.

First, he acts according to the logic of his place in the established plan of division and hierarchy. To this extent, he is moved by the interests and opinions of the classes, labor force factions, and ethnic, religious, or even regional communities to which he belongs. This logic is internally divided because his crude material interest as one who occupies a certain position in the division of labor may be redefined or overridden by his attachment to the ideals prevalent in communities that cut across job and class lines.

The citizen also suffers the influence of a second logic: the logic of his individual opinions, shaped by biography and character, by the voices he has heard and the options he perceives. This logic remains irreducible to the effects of his position in the hierarchical and communal scheme of his society.

The two logics constantly interfere with each other. At any given time, it is hard for the observer or the agent to tell whether generous slogans are being turned into the tools and masks of crude material interests, or whether, on the contrary, visionary aspirations are clouding the perception and pursuit of immediate material interests, and, if so, whether these aspirations derive from membership in a given group or from commitments that such membership fails to explain. Modern party politics take place in this daze of principled commitments superimposed upon opportunistic calculations. The novelty is not that this confusion should occur – for it reappears, more or less prominently, in every historical circumstance – but that it should so dominate the quality of ordinary political experience. The modern political party represents the clearest revelation of a historical circumstance in which the struggle over the state both

reflects a social order that governmental politics help reproduce and reveals the inability of the social order fully to determine the ideas and decisions of individuals.

The failure to acknowledge more clearly this dazed quality of modern politics can be credited to both a conceptual ambiguity and a theoretical preconception. The ambiguity is the multiple status of beliefs about the social good as assumptions that help shape the definition of crude material interests, ideals shared within communities that are not built around stations in the social division of labor, and movements of opinion that defy the lines drawn by class and communal divisions alike. The theoretical preconception is that reasons rarely count as causes in social explanation. And the most available way of explaining adherence to political opinions is to invoke class and communal position.

The styles of governmental organization and partisan conflict I have described combine to fashion a form of popular sovereignty that can coexist with the stability of basic social arrangements. Many of these arrangements – and in particular the formative context of power and production that reproduced the plan of social division and hierarchy – remains effectively protected against attack. Radicals and conservatives alike had hoped or feared that universal suffrage, as the consummation of mass politics, would establish a state permanently at war with social inequalities. But the emergence of the governmental-organization complex outlined in the preceding paragraphs proves that popular sovereignty can be made to revolve within a well-defined circumference. A common prejudice supposes that this accommodation of the people to the settled order of social life results from a series of stubborn facts: the crisscrossing membership of the same individuals in different groups, the unavailability of realistic alternatives to the current forms of social organization, and the sheer materialism of most people's desires. But in fact the constraints upon both the partisan struggle for governmental power and the transformative efforts of reform-minded parties help prevent these assumptions from being put to the test.

To develop this idea is to describe the importance of the governmental-organization complex to the reform cycle and even to its specifically macroeconomic aspect. If the style of governmental organization and partisan rivalry were yet more hostile than they are to social experiments with coherent programmatic visions, sustained by mass support, the investors could more easily have their way. Of course, this elitist turn would not necessarily be in the interest of the investors, not at least unless extremes of inequality in the distribution of income and wealth were avoided and the economy already enjoyed a favorable position in the international division of labor. Failing the first condition, underconsumption would limit growth unless cor-

rected by redistribution. Failing the second, national firms might find it all the harder to escape a subaltern place in the world economy. If, on the contrary, the style of governmental organization and partisan conflict were more hospitable to radical reform and collective mobilization than it now is, the reformers would not need repeatedly to bow before the investors. To be sure, this conclusion presupposes that the market and the democracy can be reorganized in ways that extend or perfect current democratic ideals. This possibility has certainly not been demonstrated by anything in the argument so far. But the first step toward supporting it is simply to grasp the distinctive character of present arrangements.

Alongside the work-organization, the private-rights, and the governmental-organization complexes, two other sets of institutional arrangements help compose the formative context of the particular reform cycle under discussion. These additional clusters reflect the combined effects of arrangements in the other institutional complexes, effects focused upon a particular aspect of social life. This is the sense in which they are derivative. But, characteristically, the combination depends upon social and intellectual compromises whose exact content could never be guessed from any amount of information about the other institutional complexes. For this reason, they deserve to be studied in their own right.

The Occupational-Structure Complex

This set of arrangements designates what classical social theory knows as the social division of labor: the distinctions among major occupational groups, distinctions connected on one side to the organization of work itself and on the other to the broader distribution of power and advantage in society. Consider some of the more general characteristics of the occupational structure in these societies.

First, the work force appears segmented in relatively distinct groups, each with its own more or less rigidly defined place in the division of labor. To a greater or lesser extent, each occupational group has a complex and cohesive social character: not only a given material standard of living and a distinctive experience of work but a set of collective self-understandings formed in a singular history of conflict and compromise. The first general characteristic of the occupational structure, therefore, is simply its surprising power to retain clarity and influence despite the absence of comprehensive religious and legal sanctions of the kind that support caste systems.

A second trait of this occupational structure is the rough but unmistakable correspondence between the place a group holds in the social division of labor and its position in the broader social distribution of power and advantage. The benefits of material rewards,

independence at work, and prestige tend to concentrate in the same hands, according to the biblical slogan: to those who have, more will be given, but from those who have not, even what they have will be taken away. Indeed, this concentration of advantage seems so natural that both radicals and conservatives tend to treat it as an automatic consequence of the social division of labor.

The first two general characteristics of the occupational structure suggest a single discontinuous hierarchy. The third feature qualifies this impression by calling attention to the overriding contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities, between the jobs that allow for the open exercise of reconstructive practical intelligence and the jobs that are supposed to involve the routinized exercise of a well-defined task playing a limited role in a plan that practical intelligence has devised. The highest benefits of salary and honor usually accrue to the task-defining jobs. The force of this contrast is complicated and confused by its subtle relation to the distinction between manual (blue-collar) and nonmanual (white-collar) jobs. The white-collar job, however lowly, shares in the prestige of the highest directing social tasks, as if removal from physical labor represented, in and of itself, a sign of the dominating role of free intelligence and ensured a corresponding salary level. But a large, and even increasingly large, part of the population, all the way from humble clerical personnel to middle managers, finds itself cut off from any real experience of practical revision and invention. Many, including the low-level white-collar workers, may even be denied the material perquisites that would confirm the belief that they hold positions in the social hierarchy far above blue-collar laborers.

What relation does the occupational structure marked by these three characteristics bear to the three major institutional complexes discussed earlier? Perhaps these characteristics can all be understood as the direct results of acquiescence in the work-organization complex and in an approach to rights and government compatible with that way of organizing labor. The acceptance of the work-organization complex would explain both the preeminent contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities and the rigidity of the distinctions among occupational categories. For, as execution becomes separate from planning, each job must consist in the repetitious exercise of a step in the plan; whatever revisions of the plan the experience of trying to execute it may suggest must come from the planners rather than from the executants. Indeed, even the close correspondence between place in the occupational structure and position in the broader social hierarchy can be seen as the mere confirmation of the preference for this style of work organization.

One of the attributes that strengthened this approach to work organization in the competition with its more egalitarian rivals was

precisely that it lent itself to accommodation with preexisting social hierarchies. The forms of private rights and of governmental organization that came to prevail in the course of modern Western history were compatible, as many other forms might have been, with this occupational structure. They both reflected and reproduced the social peace that guarded this structure against attack.

The view of the occupational structure just presented would deny this structure independent status as an institutional complex with an independent influence upon the reform cycle and make the occupational order appear, instead, a mere penumbra of the other institutional complexes. But this view is inadequate: it fails to provide a bridge to certain more particular characteristics of the division of labor that influence the course of routine politics and production in just the ways that merit the inclusion, in an account of the formative context, of the more or less institutionalized practices sustaining these characteristics.

The insight that underlies this initial, flawed view of the occupational structure is the thesis that politics create the division of labor. There is no self-directing history of professional techniques and organizational arrangements that could, by its own animating movement, define a system of job categories. The motion must come largely from the actions and beliefs of groups struggling over the alternative social forms that practical activity and practical progress may take. But the initial view of the occupational structure fails to take this insight far enough. The practical and imaginative strategies that generated this structure left their mark upon it. Thus, the division of labor in these as in all societies possesses further characteristics, each of which has a twofold status: the means for generating the structure, now remembered and rigidified, have become part of the structure itself. Each additional characteristic satisfies both tests for inclusion in the formative context: its continued existence is taken for granted by the habitual strategy of the parties to routine politics and exchange and its transformation would alter the content of those routines unmistakably. Consider four such features of the social division of labor.

The first characteristic describes the political transformation of artisans and of their ideological champions. For much of the nineteenth century, these groups represented a more formidable source of agitation than industrial workers. But their efforts to press for an alternative version of industrial society — a version that would give primacy to a more decentralized and fluid style of manufacturing and one less committed to the contrast between plan and execution — were repeatedly defeated. Some craftsmen turned into, or were replaced by, the skilled workers of mass-production industry. Others supplied personnel for the vanguardist sector of modern industry, the sector that allowed for more flexible production processes and

less hierarchical work arrangements and that continued implicitly to offer a countermodel to the dominant version of industrialism. Any weakening of the institutional constraints or the international division of labor that support this dominant mode lent renewed force to the countermodel.

A second trait of this division of labor is the existence of a professional-managerial cadre that organizes economic activity in the name of an amalgam of property entitlements and technical imperatives. This group embodies the contrast between intellect and execution. The supervisory cadres did not perfect their present character until several developments had converged: the defeat of the early attempts to create an alternative industrial system and the reallocation of the artisans; the provisional settlement of the boundaries between governmental authority and entrepreneurial discretion; and the merger of legal and technical justifications for the exercise of authority in industry.

A third mark of the occupational structure is the existence of an organized working class that combines a specific occupational position with habitual political attitudes. The occupational position is the set of skilled and semiskilled jobs in mass-production industry, jobs relatively protected by governmental policy and labor-management agreements. One habitual political attitude is the acceptance of the existing system of industrial organization. Another is the abandonment by organized labor of the attempt to present itself as the people, a faction against the elites, and its willingness to play the role of a faction within the people, anxious to exact marginal concessions from managers, politicians, and businessmen.

A fourth feature of the occupational structure complements this third characteristic. It is the existence of an underclass charged with the most unstable and unattractive work. The underclass inhabits the periphery of the industrial system, providing industrial workers with a buffer against the cyclical character of economic activity and the society at large with the only people willing to perform the most menial services. The peripheral status of these workers becomes apparent in the style of practical reason their work exemplifies. Rather than performing a routinized task within a fixed plan, the underclass worker often shuttles among a variety of indistinct and loosely supervised activities, connected only by their contribution to a desired practical result.

Some of these more detailed traits of the occupational structure depend upon legally defined institutional arrangements, such as the rules governing union organization or the stability of the employment relation. But many more are simply rigidified definitions of group identity and opportunity, no less tenacious and influential for being only obliquely related to the system of legal rights. The revision

of any one of these characteristics would suffice drastically to shift the course of routine politics. If, to take the most familiar case in point, the underclass disappeared, organized workers, compelled to face economic instability more directly, would find it harder to remain content with an industrial politics of marginal compromise. And the trade union movement as a whole, deprived of a subordinate population, would find it easier to present itself as a popular majority championing a nonfactional proposal for society.

THE HEART OF THE DIFFICULTY

I have argued that we can best understand the cycles of reform and retrenchment that characterize the governmental politics of the contemporary North Atlantic democracies as the product of a unique, richly defined institutional and imaginative order that remains largely undisturbed in the midst of ordinary social dealings. The persistence of compulsive routines like these cycles depends upon the existence of such a framework and upon its recalcitrance to challenge and revision. The particular content of the cycle turns on the distinctive content of the institutional and imaginative structure. And the relative compulsiveness of the routines in question – their unchosen quality – results from the extent to which the context remains beyond people's reach in the course of everyday practical and argumentative activities. The view that develops these related conjectures acknowledges that both practical constraints and tensions among interests affect the existence, the power, and the content of the reform cycles. But this view insists that institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions channel and focus the influence these additional factors exert upon the substance of policy change and partisan rivalry.

The hypothesis of the formative context, however, contributes to the solution of the intellectual problem and to the clarification of the ideological embarrassment presented by the persistence of the reform cycles only by deepening a larger puzzle. This riddle cuts to the quick of the central difficulties of social and historical explanation and confirms the inadequacy of received styles of social and historical analysis.

The arrangements and beliefs that make up a formative context are enormously important. We must consider them all the more important if we conclude that these same givens also exert a decisive influence upon other practical and argumentative routines – from the business cycle to the stock forms of legal argument. Not only are these formative institutions and preconceptions influential, they are also tenacious. They remain largely undisturbed by the rivalries, animosities, and aspirations unleashed by the conflicts they so pow-

erfully direct. Their occasional revisions, acts of revolutionary reform, represent turning points in the history of a society.

Each such formative context exercises then an immense influence over struggles that do not ordinarily bring it into question or put it in danger. Nevertheless, the elements that compose it do not form an indivisible package, nor do they result from a universal, recurrent, or irresistible evolutionary sequence. No invincible economic, organizational, or psychological constraints, for example, decree that the stark contrast in the workplace between task definers and task executors can survive only on the basis of a particular scheme of contract, property, and unionization. In fact, the history of contemporary communist countries shows the opposite.

The closer you study these formative practices and institutions, the harder it becomes to see their history as a procession in lockstep. The constitutional plan of the state and the view of democracy it embodied gained their characteristic modern shape from late eighteenth-century controversies and inventions, combined with forms of popular party politics that first took shape in the mid-nineteenth century. Or consider the corporate form relatively secluded from political control. Even in the countries (like the United States) that adopted it soonest and perfected it most completely, it had established itself surprisingly late (as late as the Civil War in America) against other, mixed public-private forms of enterprise. It resulted from a concrete history of struggle and diffusion. This history, and not some transparent economic imperative, had prevented the more democratic Western countries from carrying forward early experiments with the political control of accumulation. It had confined such experiments to more authoritarian states, like late nineteenth-century Germany and Japan. Or consider the process by which the mainstream of production and warfare came to be marked by a relatively rigid contrast between task definers and task executors while only the vanguardist forms of productive and military activity broke down the contrast. This process had begun long before, and it had continued well after, the legal forms of the enterprise and the state had been settled. Many of the forms of factory and bureaucratic organization that we now so confidently identify with modern industrialism had not been safely established before the middle of the twentieth century. It required an act of faith to see the Fordist assembly line or the multidivisional firm structure pioneered by American corporations in the 1920s as a necessary incident in the relentless development of an indivisible type of social organization.

How can institutions and beliefs so loosely connected to one another and so much the products of many loosely connected sequences of institutional and imaginative change nevertheless stick together so firmly, remain so recalcitrant to transformative pressure, and exercise

so far-reaching an influence upon social life? You can restate this larger puzzle in a way that lays bare its connection to the criticism of the contemporary situation of social and historical thought.

We cannot understand the events and conflicts that absorb most of the attention of a going social world without acknowledging the central importance of the contrast between routines and frameworks. For, like the reform cycles, each of these daily concerns draws our attention to institutional and imaginative givens that keep people acting or talking in set ways. To serve the purpose of explaining the actual content and the compulsive force of particular practical or argumentative routines, the givens have to be defined in considerable detail. The indispensable detail of their definition brings out the looseness of their connections and the complexity of their genealogy: their pasted-together and relatively accidental quality (accidental, that is, by comparison to any account that emphasizes lawlike necessities and rational justifications). The detail thereby also undermines the plausibility of attempts to understand a formative context as a flawed but nevertheless recognizable approximation to a rational norm: that is, to an uncontroversial logic of problem solving and interest accommodation. Much of conventional social science tries to dispose of the problem presented by the existence and influence of formative contexts in just this rationalistic manner when it recognizes the problem at all.

The very same reasons that make it hard for such a social science to explain the reform cycles and to imagine formative contexts also create insuperable difficulties for the tradition of deep-structure theorizing about society and history. The detail that enables the definition of a particular formative context to do its explanatory work makes it unsuitable for a role within the stories that deep-structure social analysis tells. The components of a social framework are too loosely and unevenly connected and they are too obviously the results of many loosely linked social and cultural changes to be persuasively depicted as forming one of a short list of possible types of social organization or one of a number of well-defined stages in a compulsive stage-sequence of social evolution.

Thus, for example, the particular formative context to which I attributed much of the content and force of the cycles of reform and reaction in the contemporary Western democracies is far too particular to exemplify the Marxist concept of capitalism. Attempts can be made to reconcile this particular institutional and imaginative framework with hardcore Marxist social analysis by defining it as a stage of the history of capitalism. But the difficulty persists: the revised, nuanced evolutionary story will never be detailed enough to capture the distinctive features of particular social frameworks capable of explaining particular routines until it becomes so detailed

that it turns into the retrospective description of a unique historical sequence rather than the lawlike explanation of a recurrent evolutionary pattern. The arrangements and beliefs that make up the formative context described earlier in this chapter are too obviously the products of surprising events (wars, revolutions, reforms, reactions) and of unlikely practical and imaginative compromises to serve as protagonists in a tale of irresistible tendencies and practical necessities.

Though the elements of a formative context, of a social framework, or of an institutional and imaginative ordering of social life do not make up an indivisible whole, they connect with one another. We need a practice of social explanation that allows us to understand the connections. Though social frameworks do not coalesce or succeed one another according to a master logic of transformation, they produce consequences, and they have causes. We lack a way to imagine how they get made and remade. Though institutional and imaginative orders are neither unbreakable packages nor the products of lawlike tendencies and constraints, they prove to be both prodigious in the range of their effects and astonishingly recalcitrant to disturbance in the midst of ordinary social conflict. We require a form of thought that shows how such structures can exert so powerful an influence and achieve so remarkable a stability despite their jumbled and trumped-up nature.

History is discontinuous because the routine struggles that take place within formative contexts only occasionally escalate into conflicts that remake the contexts. History is surprising because these frameworks do not come from a closed list of possible frameworks or succeed one another according to a master plan. To imagine society truly is to understand how these institutional and imaginative orders of routine social existence get historically made and how they are internally composed.

ANOTHER SETTING FOR THE PROBLEM: WORLDWIDE RECOMBINATION

The explanatory problem posed by the reform cycles takes us straight to central puzzles of social and historical explanation. I now explore these puzzles in two additional settings. Each supplementary exploration supports the claim for the exemplary status of the task of explaining the reform cycles. At the same time each exploration highlights a different facet of the explanatory task.

The first such additional setting concerns the experimental replacements and recombinations undergone by the institutional and imaginative orders of contemporary Western societies as these orders have been diffused throughout the world. By the middle of the nineteenth century, it seemed that the rich Western powers were

about to conquer the world militarily, economically, and spiritually. The non-Western or economically backward countries that had not fallen under the direct rule of the Western powers were drawn into the world economic order that these powers led. The ruling elites or counterelites of the backward nations understood that their own fortunes and the fortunes of their countries depended on their ability to master the productive and destructive capabilities the Western powers had achieved. The practical test came accompanied by a spiritual assault. The doctrines of liberalism, socialism, and communism all invoked forms of association more or less emancipated from any fixed background structure of hierarchy and division and assumed an unfamiliar measure of power to change society through politics. Before the middle of the nineteenth century, the Western advantage remained far from unequivocal. Military superiority – often restricted to naval warfare – had not yet been supported and magnified by an overwhelming industrial machine. Nor had there yet developed the full array of secular doctrines of emancipation.

At first the alien elites misunderstood the threat in two opposite ways. Sometimes they imagined that the style of governmental and economic organization exhibited by the intrusive and seductive powers constituted an indissoluble whole. They could take it or leave it, but they could not remake it. At other times, they thought that a desired technological capability could be achieved without promoting any major change in the country's institutional arrangements. These two misunderstandings offered particular examples of the two most basic mistakes that can be made about an ordering of social life: the belief that the framework represents a natural and indissoluble whole and the failure to recognize that there is a framework and that its elements are somehow connected.

But time taught another lesson. The elites of the countries that had been overtaken or left behind found they could survive only by refusing to treat the institutional systems of the advanced Western powers on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Capable reformers understood that many of the preexisting institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions of the society had to be given up for the sake of the development of productive and military capabilities. Instead of representing one-time innovations the most successful solutions increased the capacity to innovate repeatedly in ways of mobilizing resources and manpower, and they loosened the constraints that the established forms of privilege and rule imposed upon the organization of work and exchange. At the same time, they turned features of the backward country to competitive advantage by combining them with borrowed or invented arrangements. Typically, these redirected aspects of the "traditional" society were forms of group organization and group solidarity, like village communities, tribal associations,

family enterprises, or patron-client relations, incorporated into changed practices of exchange, production, or discipline at work.

Because institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions support schemes of social division and hierarchy, each of these institutional recombinations or inventions implied a shift in the structure of social division and hierarchy. For the nonrevolutionary elite faction that led such reforms, the trick was to find the particular measures that would combine several features, always in actual or potential tension: to develop the minimal basis indispensable to the introduction of Western-style machines and techniques of work organization; to lay the groundwork for continued technical and organizational innovation, increasingly free from the need to anchor the most advanced military or economic capabilities in the institutions of the then leading powers; and yet, for the sake of vested interests and inherited pieties, to minimize the impact of these changes upon the society's inherited structure of social division and hierarchy. If the elite was a revolutionary vanguard, with radical transformative intentions rather than self-defensive concerns, its task was to use the pressure to catch up as an opportunity to incite broad social conflicts and to establish an institutional order that permanently weakened the hold of rigid social roles and ranks upon people's dealings and life chances.

The Japanese institutional innovations practiced during the several generations following the 1868 restoration, the administrative and economic Ottoman reforms of the mid-nineteenth century (and, indeed, the Köprülü reforms of the late seventeenth century), and the Russian reforms of the early twentieth century all provide examples of efforts at institutional recombination, undertaken by a renovating elite, largely inspired by the desire to catch up with the advanced Western countries and to avoid the radical social instability and national humiliation that the failure to catch up might produce. It is easy to exaggerate, with the benefit of hindsight, the differences between the successful and the unsuccessful attempts. The Japanese solutions had to be hammered out over a protracted period that included the massive agitation and repression of the 1920s and 1930s. The Russian and Ottoman efforts might have prospered in a less vulnerable and violent geopolitical situation.

This same search for alternative foundations to comparable levels of practical capability now goes on at a quickened pace and on a planetary scale. Revolutionary and reactionary, pluralistic and authoritarian regimes alike devote themselves to the task. You may be tempted to say that these experiments in dissociation are limited in a simple way. Countries diverge far less in the immediate technological and organizational basis of economic and military advance than in the larger settings of social and governmental order within

which those bases were set. Everywhere you find not only similar machines but even kindred ways of arranging work in factories, offices, and military units. Everywhere the mainstream sectors of production or warfare are one thing, and the vanguard sectors another. It seems that the core complex of technology and enterprise organization resists dissociation more effectively than the larger setting of arrangements for the organization of government or the allocation of capital.

However, the value of this simple distinction between what can and cannot be dissociated is undercut by facts to which the argument has already alluded and later returns. Many of the characteristic Western forms of enterprise and work organization were invented and diffused when other aspects of the initial Western example had already been pulled apart and combined with alien practices in foreign lands. People had fought over these versions of industrialism in theaters of conflict as far apart as Western or Central Europe and the Soviet Union of the 1920s. No sooner did these institutional arrangements gain a measure of stability than they began to be challenged by deviant forms of organization under the pressure of forces that went from confused ideological crusades and abortive movements of mass mobilization (such as the Chinese Cultural Revolution) to market fluctuations and opportunities (such as the expansion, in advanced economies, like the Italy of the 1970s, of the vanguard sector of small-scale, experimental industry, with its own more flexible style of work organization).

As the dissociation, replacement, and recombination of the initial Western model of industrialism progresses, it may come to involve more and more of a formative context. At first, the technology and industrial organization may be imported almost wholesale from the pioneering countries but combined with approaches to governmental and economic organization unknown in the Western heartland of industrialism. At a next stage, the established forms of technology may be taken as given but combined with novel ways of organizing work and enterprises. Finally, even the principles of machine design may be revolutionized. In the end no part of the original structure is left safe from being disturbed by the experimental logic of recombination.

Where would it all end, this joining together of practices that seemed incompatible, this breaking apart of institutions that appeared inseparable? What made the worldwide experiment in dissociation so hard to understand was that it fit no apparent pattern of evolution or constraint. Many attempts at dissociation failed. Effortless and unlimited recombination described these events no better than the idea that there was a triumphant version of industrialism, with richly defined social implications, that everybody had to accept for the sake

of survival and prosperity. The varieties of industrialism – economies, war machines, and supporting social orders – that occasionally emerged to compete on a world scale could not readily be understood as contemporaneous examples of a cumulative, irreversible sequence. There were too many variations. The tests of their comparative success were too many-sided and inconclusive. But neither could these experiments be accounted for as minor adjustments of some single scheme of social organization. Dissociation had already been seen to touch, with greater or lesser force, every aspect of the initial Western model. It had already gone far. There was no telling where it might not go next. If such experiments disclosed general truths about society, these truths would not have the form of a convergent sequence. Nor would they demonstrate a tight link between a society's practical success and its commitment to a single, richly defined model of social organization. The truths would need to be both more particular – the making of a particular series of live options – and more universal – an insight into what failed and successful dissociation showed about the way society gets reinvented and about the relationship of its reinvention to cumulative developments in practical capability, moral discovery, and theoretical insight.

What is the relation of this experience of worldwide institutional dissociation and recombination to the central puzzle about formative contexts that is presented by the cycles of reform and retrenchment? Each new twist in the creation of an institutional setting for the development of the practical productive or destructive capabilities of society represents an episode of revolutionary reform and inaugurates a new formative context. The experience of dissociation demonstrates that not everything can combine with everything else within a stable social framework. Some combinations do not work. But no one has yet managed to show that the constraints upon recombination are of a sort that would be capable of singling out prospectively a list of feasible formative contexts, generated by lawlike practical constraints or developmental tendencies. Reactionary or revolutionary groups that allow their conduct to be governed by such notions soon find themselves left behind by their less blinkered rivals at home and abroad.

Of course, it could be that we just have not yet discovered the right laws of social evolution or of possible social worlds and are for that reason unable to come up with the correct prospective list of practicable contexts. But the discussion of the reform cycles and the criticism of deep-structure social theory already suggest that a more promising approach may be to search for a way of thinking that enables us to identify and explain constraints upon recombination without appealing to the idea of a list of feasible social orders and

without trying to find the laws or imperatives that can generate such a list.

ANOTHER SETTING FOR THE PROBLEM: CLOSED OPTIONS IN HISTORY

Generalizing the Idea of the Reform Cycle

Reform cycles and the formative contexts that shape them are no idiosyncrasy of twentieth-century societies. On the contrary, in most societies of the past such cycles and contexts prevailed even more strongly. They marked with special ferocity the difference between what could be expected and what could not be realized or even conceived in politics.

The study of the dissociation of the original Western formative contexts served to bring out an aspect of the problem posed by the reform cycles: the elusive quality of the constraints upon the replacement and recombination of the elements that compose an institutional and imaginative structure of social life. So, too, this further exploration draws attention to yet another feature of the theoretical puzzle first presented through an analysis of the oscillations of reform and reaction in contemporary Western democracies. This additional consideration is the apparent relation of the compulsive character of the reform cycles to the measure of oligarchic closure upon conflicts over the mastery and uses of governmental power. *False Necessity* argues that the degree to which a formative context stands immune to challenge and revision in the midst of practical and argumentative routines contributes decisively to the rigidity and the force of the social roles and ranks that the context supports.

Just how narrowly and mysteriously defined the constraints or conflicts over the mastery and uses of governmental power have often been becomes clear when you consider societies from the standpoint of would-be reformers who, having reached high office, were anxious to meet well-known dangers to the strength and prosperity of the realm. Over enormous lengths of time and in the most varied circumstances, they felt compelled to move among a tiny number of unsatisfactory policy options.

The more narrowly and rigidly defined the scope of these live policy options, the greater the contrast between normalcy and transformation and the less the formative context of powers-rights lay open to transformative practical or imaginative activities in the ordinary course of social life. No wonder the characteristic social thought of such a world identified the established order of division and hierarchy with the inner nature of society and personality.

One counterpart to the narrowed range of policy options was some relative exclusion of ordinary people from the routine conflicts over the terms of power and production. Any approach to mass mobilization disrupts the habitual range of options even when intended to protect them. For the relations among people in the larger, escalating struggle are not predetermined by the places individuals occupy in the established order of division and hierarchy. Each round in the widened conflict becomes an occasion to discover alternative possibility: a redefinition of the interests, the identities, and the weapons. Thus, a fundamental reason for the reformers' constant return to the same policy options and their unwillingness to pursue any one of them to its utmost consequences became the conscious fear and avoidance of a conflict that would pit reforming statesmen and an aroused populace against privileged classes.

These points can now be illustrated in detail by considering two series of policy options in two kinds of societies: the agrarian-bureaucratic empires and the ancient city-states of Mediterranean (but also Asiatic) antiquity. Together, these societies represent a large part of all the forms of social life that have existed in history; their experiments with the reinvention of social life, a major element in the experience of mankind.

Closed Options in the Agrarian-Bureaucratic Empires

Consider, first, politics in the agrarian empires of antiquity. (By empire, I mean no more than a large country with a central government.) There are two major power blocks: the autocracy and its household, on one side; the landholding magnates, on the other. The system has two outside limits: revolutionary despotism, by which the autocracy would ally itself with the peasantry against the magnates, and aristocratic factionalism, by which the imperial order would degenerate into the untrammelled and unstable sectarianism of magnate warlords. Revolutionary despotism is a manifestly unpromising venture: if the autocrat is not smashed by his lordly enemies, he will be undone by his own peasant allies. Aristocratic factionalism invites the foreign invader, opens the way to the seizure of central power by one of the contending families, and weakens the shared power and authority of the landholders over the peasants. Within the boundaries defined by these two limiting situations, the autocracy and the magnates must be reconciled. The number of possible deals is severely limited; the same compromises recur constantly, though in varying combinations, throughout the history of the large, enduring agrarian states. Looking at it from the viewpoint of the autocrat, there are only three choices.

First, recruit a bureaucratic staff from men below the magnate

class who will owe all to you. (This was a formative principle of Chinese statecraft at least since the rise of nonaristocratic officials in the centuries preceding the imperial unification of 221 B.C. It was also central to the Ottoman palace system and, in a radically different setting, to the state-building efforts of European absolutism.) You must then constantly shake up your own administrative apparatus in order to call up new levies of recruits; otherwise, the bureaucrats will merge with the magnates or become magnates in their own right.

Second, you may try to turn the magnates into a service nobility by involving them directly in the running of the state. By making land tenure dependent upon office, you bind them to yourself. But unless you are ever vigilant to beat them down, they will gain independence. In the end, to keep their allegiance, you will have to give them absolute dominion over the larger part of the country's land and labor. They rather than you will then be in direct control over what goes on in the countryside. An example is the gradual assimilation of *pomestye* land, held during a lifetime in return for service to the tsar, to the status of *votchina* tenure, inheritable and assured dominion, during the period from Ivan the Terrible to Peter the Great. Petrine absolutism was founded upon the consolidation of precisely the kind of ownership that Ivan's scheme had temporarily unsettled through his conditional land grants to the subaristocratic gentry. Early Yi policy in Korea suggests a variant of the same trend: at first, only the Merit Subjects, who had beholden themselves to the Crown by special services, were allowed hereditary land: as officeholders managed to wring agrarian privilege out of administrative power, this favor lost its exceptional character.

Third, you may set up a dual agrarian order. Alongside the large hereditary estates, there will be a special class of landholders who will owe you direct funds and recruits, or who will be granted claims to some parcel of the land tax in exchange for their military readiness. Remember the Byzantine military farms – *ktemata stratiotika*, the Ottoman timariots, the Mughal *zamindars*, and the Aztec military life-tenants. (This solution fades into the previous strategy to the extent that the nobility under that other policy is held to no more than occasional army service or assistance in tax collecting.) Or they may be village communities and smallholders who are expected to provide you with wealth and soldiers. (Think of the Byzantine peasant freeholds and military farms before the failure of Romanus Lecapenus and Basil II to save them had issued in the final triumph of military aristocracy and monastic landlordism.) Or they may be both powerful men with conditional land tenure and village communities with army and fiscal obligations. (The land policies of the Toba Empire and the sequel of experimentation with agrarian and military reform

during the early T'ang supply an example.) When the military or economic pressure on you mounts, and you try to increase taxes and recruitment, the magnates will be able to defend themselves unless you humble them; the brunt of the burden will fall upon the smallholders themselves. Impoverished and decimated, they will seek protection from the aristocrats, and, in the next round of the contest, you will end up worse off than you were before. (This engrossment of peasant land and labor became a familiar problem for the rulers of the late Roman Empire in the West; it had its counterparts in several periods of Chinese dynastic decline, in the subversion of independent peasant proprietorship during the final centuries of the Byzantine Empire, and in the collapse of the Abbasid regime, when the ruin of many small farmers helped the central government lose control of tax collection and military power alike.)

Each of the three strategies tends to break down. For one thing, in each case there comes a moment when the successful execution of the policy would require the autocrat to throw himself decisively against the magnates. This he cannot do without courting the dangers of revolutionary despotism. For another thing, the crucial requirement of success is unbroken vigor in statecraft. But the dynastic character of the state means that a weak will may succeed a strong one by the accidents of inheritance. The indispensable continuity of rule is likely to be interrupted by succession struggles during which the contenders dole out favors in exchange for support.

These facts explain why governmental policy tends to waver confusedly among the three options and why, despairing of the possibility of carrying any one of them to its final conclusion, it muffles each in the others. All the tactics of reconciliation reappear in most of the large agrarian states: the differences lie in the relative emphasis given to the options, in the tenacity and skill with which they are pursued and combined, and in the particular institutional arrangements used to promote them. The same forces that account for the wavering also suggest why the realm must search out a career of conquest: continuous expansion binds the privileged together in a common mission, all the more important when a conquering nation rules over alien populations; provides rewards for the faithful and aspiring magnates; and wins slaves and booty with which to finance further conquest without aggravating the burden on peasants and smallholders. When the conquerors are stopped by a foreign power, by their own domestic troubles, or by the sheer unwieldiness and expense of the imperial order, the internal dangers are multiplied many times over.

In such a world, there are only a few ways in which ordinary people rise collectively to the surface of history by dealing actively with the chief power blocks in the country.

First, they may appear as a privileged urban mob, distinct from other, larger segments of the population and country. This may happen when a city-state becomes an empire or, less often, when the rank and file of a conquering people settles down in the cities of the land they have conquered. The mob is entreated and bribed, and its privilege is at best a condition of favored enjoyment, backed by a threat of riot or a memory of shared power.

Second, there are the instances in which the policy of agrarian dualism has achieved some temporary balance. One way or another, the village community manages to keep a measure of independence from the magnates and to deal, in its own right, with the central government. The village, divided internally along hierarchical and communal lines, may have to put up a common front against the outside. Forced often to accept a collective military or fiscal responsibility, it redistributes tax and war burdens periodically in order to hold together under the weight it is made to carry. The greater the pressure upon it, the more likely it is to unify and equalize itself; whenever this pressure is relaxed, the village tends to break apart into factions and ranks. (Both the eleventh-century Byzantine and the nineteenth-century Russian village communities illustrate a measure of redistributive equalization and cohesion in response to external force. The role of village officers in the Southern Sung, of the headmen of peasant-held *raiya* villages in Mughal India, and of leading village families under the Tokugawa *bakufu* provide counterexamples of hierarchy when the burden imposed by an external landlord or ruler was less severe or when the outside authority strengthened the hand of already privileged insiders. Ongoing communal strife might then break out as well, whenever there was a basis for it, as in the multi-caste Indian village.)

Third, there are the occasions when despair launches the peasants into rebellion. Peasant rebellion is a normal incident of the tailspin that characteristically follows the failure of governmental policies and the disasters of foreign war. When the autocracy is forced to increase its demands upon the population and the peasantry is made to pay the price, the collapse of independent peasant proprietorship and the disintegration of village community create the atmosphere that favors insurrection. But, though the rebellious peasantry may play a decisive role for a brief moment and even establish a state for itself, it is more likely to serve as a tool of the brutal factional fighting that breaks out as the imperial order falls apart. For the peasantry to have a chance, the conditions of a regrouping of the elite power blocks must be shattered.

The agrarian empires constantly re-created, both through what their high politics did and through what it took for granted, the opportunity for maintaining societal divisions of hierarchy and com-

munal membership that enveloped almost the entirety of everyday life and carried the blessings of a more or less assured sense of reality and right. But this argument about agrarian empires is simply an example of a larger problem: it would be possible to formulate a similar description of the strict limits on politics for any particular society. In each case, the oligarchy effect – the constraints imposed on politics at the top of society by the need to keep the masses under control – reinforces the rigidity of the social order and helps the powerful understand the difference between reasonable and foolhardy policy.

Closed Options in the Ancient City-State Republics

The city-state republics of Graeco-Roman and Near-Eastern antiquity may often have come closer than the agrarian empires to the features of mass politics. For the most part, however, they also represented social worlds in which the contest for power was hemmed in by the oligarchy effect.

They too show the existence of compulsive cycles and routines that can be overcome only through the reconstruction of an institutional and imaginative order that cannot itself be understood as a product of lawlike tendencies or constraints. The most frequent principle of city-state organization was the existence of a double division between citizens and noncitizenry, and then, within the citizenry itself, between the rank and file and a relatively well-defined hereditary elite. The oligarchy effect therefore operated at two levels: in helping to maintain the division between citizen and noncitizen and in supporting the distinction between the elite and the mass of citizens. Though the inner circle of power may originally have had the character of a congregation of family elders, it was generally recast to reflect the prominence of a relatively small number of families. These concentrated in their own hands the instruments of wealth, constitutional prerogative, and religious leadership necessary to keep their fellow citizens in check. The crucial social distinction between the city-state and the agrarian empire was that a large portion of the country's inhabitants did have, as citizens, a claim to participate, one way or another, in the affairs of central government. Yet the political life of the city-states, like that of the agrarian empires, usually continued to move within a narrow space defined by two limits.

The first limit was the difficulty the oligarchy would have in disenfranchising the ordinary citizenry altogether. The nobles' attempt to throttle their fellow citizens created the danger that the oligarchic partnership would give way to the despotism of a single ruler or family; as long as each family could maintain its crowd of supporters and dependents, through the normal processes of political rivalry,

there was hope of staying the threat of a supraoligarchic tyranny. The elite had reason to fear such a tyranny as much as mob rule. The mob, after all, might be easier to placate and to seduce than the prince. Moreover, unless the disenfranchisement and impoverishment of the citizenry were part of a program of imperial expansion, which would put new strains on the civic constitution, the city would have all the vulnerabilities of its imperial rivals without sharing in their strengths. It could no longer easily elicit the ingenious and passionate loyalties of a citizen army, but neither could it count on an empire's vast resources of material and manpower; the safety of the patriciate would be endangered together with that of the commonwealth. Finally, both civil solidarity and civic freedom were intertwined with the civil religion: the sacred bond between the citizenry as a corporate whole and the tutelary gods of the city. This tie would be injured and altered beyond recognition if the citizen populace were denied any residual rights of participation in affairs of state.

The other limit to the system was the difficulty of abolishing the distinction between elite and mass within the citizenry. The course of factional rivalry within the city did indeed sometimes preempt or destroy oligarchic power and push the republic toward mass politics. But the practice of demagogic reform and agitation was usually full of surprise and disappointment. Though the constitutional structure was bound up closely and transparently enough with social privilege for its revision to provoke ferocious antagonism, it was not bound up so completely that its remaking could suffice to strike at the springs of domination and dependence in the organization of work, the distribution of land and learning, and the access to different occupations. A second layer of reforms, addressed to these latter issues, would have to follow up on the reconstruction of government. Though the reforming leadership might have the clearest of visions and the most magnanimous of intentions, it was apt to be overtaken, before it could reach this level of reconstructive politics, by the factional rivalries and the new despotisms of the insurrectionary period it had inaugurated. The would-be reformers were sometimes lucky to get away without blame for the doom of the republic they had tried to rescue.

Several courses of events often avoided or destroyed the distinction between masters and servants within the citizen body but almost always at the cost of some still more pronounced disparity between the privileged citizenry and a disenfranchised or enslaved mass. One such pattern marked certain aspects of Mesopotamian city life. The members of the enfranchised corporate elite who inhabited the towns seem to have been chiefly preoccupied with the maintenance of their dominance over lands and populations outside the city's walls; the

civic association remained a loose one and was ultimately overshadowed by the emergent forms of imperial and theocratic power centered in temple-palace complexes. Second, there was the Spartan example of a closely knit civic solidarity against a much larger subject population, a system that required the state to be on a permanent war footing against its enemies at home and abroad. Third, and most importantly, there were the conflicts characteristic of late-republican Rome and of many of the Greek city-states in their times of tyranny and democracy. Again and again, the circle of foreign conflict and domestic upheaval undermined the form of government and created opportunities for restorationist or revolutionary warlords to seize power. The attempt to gain international security, protect the trade routes, or enrich the public treasury and the private contractors, would overtax the military and financial strength of cities that had to rely upon armies made up of smalltime, independent proprietors. The disruption caused by war undermined the economic basis of the yeoman farm. The profit and plunder of conquest produced the money and the slaves with which to buy up the land and manage it in a new way. The displaced citizen mass came to town as a dependent and privileged mob or entered a professionalized army; either way, it became available for subversive political agitation. But agitation alone could not pay for the army nor could it satisfy the entrepreneurial backers of the factions in conflict, who needed the government to multiply, by warfare and patronage, their chances for enrichment.

The city-states of Graeco-Roman antiquity had no easy way of breaking out of this process once they had fallen into it. The Athenian response, which evaded much of the sequence, was predicated upon a unique array of strategies and circumstances: the destruction of oligarchic rule at home; the reinforcement of citizen privileges in exchange for relentless military obligation; the reliance on foreign commerce and navies as well as on disenfranchised or enslaved labor; the absence of large territorial expansion; the exaction of money, food, and soldiers from subordinate allies; and the failed hope that war would not be too frequent or last too long.

The other solution was Rome's transformation of the city-state into an empire where the policy choices characteristic of large agrarian states were complicated by the residues of republican life: pseudo-enfranchised urban mobs, the apparatus of constitutional rule, and the occasional corporate life of the cities. These residues could never alter the economic dependence of the cities on the countryside; the cities produced, when they produced at all, mainly for the class of officials and absentee landlords; and offered no serious challenge to the imperial order. Such an order could know only the forms of

popular agitation characteristic of the agrarian empire: the peasant rebellion, the urban riot, and the military putsch.

My agrarian-bureaucratic and city-state examples show the problem of routine politics projected onto a larger screen. To grasp how such systems of live options change is to understand how history happens. For ultimately, the only other history that goes on is a history of the subjective experience and the collective imagination of social life, and this history – it will turn out – is not only inseparable from that one in content and effect but exhibits the same puzzles of reasonless routine.

THE PROBLEM RESTATED

The problem of lawless repetition in history can now be restated more precisely. Once thus restated, it becomes a point of departure for an explanatory social theory.

According to the hypothesis of a formative context we can identify in every social and historical situation a formative set of institutional arrangements and of enacted beliefs about the possible and desirable forms of human association. These arrangements and beliefs shape a broad range of practical and discursive routines. They remain recalcitrant to challenge and revision in the midst of ordinary social conflicts, although formative contexts differ crucially in the extent of this recalcitrance.

A central task of a descriptive and explanatory social theory is to provide us with a way to imagine the making and the internal constitution of these institutional and imaginative orders of social life. Our ideas about how such orders get made and remade turn out to be just the reverse side of our ideas about how they hold together.

A theory of social contexts must do justice to the largely negative lessons we can infer from the experiences of unreasoned compulsion and equally surprising freedom examined in this chapter: the reform cycles that mark the governmental politics of the North Atlantic democracies, the practice of institutional recombination on a world scale, and the overriding importance of closed sets of live policy options in past societies. The lessons come in the form of puzzles. A persuasive theory must actually explain the puzzles rather than explain them away by denying the reality of the tensions they expose.

A defensible view of how formative structures hang together must account for the reality of constraints upon the replacement and recombination of their constituent elements. But it must achieve its aim without treating these social orders as indivisible units, each of which stands or falls as a single piece. An adequate approach to context making must respect the distinction between moves within

a context and changes of a context. It must identify and understand the influences and the forces that allow people to change the character as well as the content of their social orders: the extent to which these orders are presented as revisable artifacts in daily life. But it must do so without invoking laws that specify possible social worlds or necessary stages of social evolution.

Chapter 3 works out an account of constraints on the replacement and recombination of the arrangements and beliefs that compose contexts. The account develops through an attempt to formulate descriptive categories with which to compare institutions. Chapter 4 develops a view of context making, anticipated by a polemical narrative of the genealogy of contemporary institutional arrangements.

THE PROBLEM OF ROUTINE WITHOUT REASON GENERALIZED AND EXTENDED

The strategy of this chapter is to study the puzzle of the reform cycles as a special case of an issue central to our understanding and reconstruction of society. The argument concludes by generalizing the problem and extending the solution.

The Problem Generalized: The Roots of Reasonless Routine

To argue and to converse we make collectively certain assumptions about the procedures for argument and discourse. Each such set of assumptions, worked out in the discursive practices of particular human communities, puts a distinct repertory of forms of understanding and persuasion in place of the open-ended possibilities of inquiry and communication. So, too, to settle down into a social order and to deal with one another as more than belligerent or interrupted contestants in an ongoing war, we must substitute a particular, limited version of social life for the indeterminate opportunities of association.

The contrast between what we presuppose and what our presuppositions influence is never absolute. At any moment people may hit upon varieties of inquiry and discourse, exchange and community, that work although they transgress the presuppositions. If such transgressions fail to be crushed quickly, they may give us reason to change the assumptions they violated.

Though presuppositions – structures or contexts as I have called them – normally hold us captive in our everyday activity, they have a hodgepodge, pasted-together, trumped-up quality. We fail at every attempt to make one of these versions appear definitive and complete, or to enumerate higher-order rules that determine which structures

of discourse are possible or which sequences of such structures must occur. When the rules that govern such lists or sequences are strong enough to be interesting, they prove too strong to hold good.

The chief root for the generality and the importance of this relation between conditioned freedom and conditioning but contingent structures lies in the disproportion between our limit-breaking capabilities and the definite, limited examples of common life and common discourse that we can fashion. We never entirely fit into these contexts. Something is left over. We can use any part of the leftover to make things new.

The disproportion between our capabilities and our shared situations would be merely ironic or tragic if we were unable to diminish it. By doing so, we change, to our benefit, the quality of our relation to our cognitive or social assumptions. As a result, we also alter, to our advantage, the quality of our relations to one another. We put more of the infinite us into the finite worlds in which we live.

We have a practical interest in this achievement. It enables us to turn our societies into less alien, delusive, and imprisoning homes and to strengthen all our more particular forms of self-assertion. *False Necessity* argues for this thesis with respect to our social contexts while suggesting that it holds true for all our contexts.

Humanity takes a long time to understand its relation to its structures of discourse and sociability. People have usually mistaken the forms of inquiry and discourse, exchange and community, to which they are accustomed for flawed approximations to the true face of reason or society. More often than not, they have cast this prejudice aside only to replace it with a more modest, halfhearted reformulation of the same belief.

The most influential and long-lived reformulation is the idea of a small set of types of cognitive or social ordering among which individuals and societies must move, whether voluntarily or not. Thus, even those who pride themselves on having discarded the superstitious belief in a single, canonical model of social organization continue to rely upon a restricted typology of social possibilities. For example, they allow their ideological choices and debates to be governed by the assumption that there are market-oriented economies, command economies, and economies that combine command and market principles. Such contrasts acquire their force and their kinship with the superstitions that they seem to replace through the tacit identification of the innocuous abstractions with concrete historical arrangements. Thus, people speak of market economies, meaning not merely the principle of economic decentralization but the distinctive forms of contract and property, and the peculiar style of government-economy relations, that came to represent economic decentralization in the course of modern Western history.

Despite its appreciation of the made-up, fought-out character of social order, classical social theory gave a major place to elaborate versions of this neonaturalistic idea of types of social organization that succeed one another, or become actual, according to higher-order laws. It compromised, again and again, between its acknowledgment of the trumped-up character of social life and its prejudices about the style of explanation that a scientific understanding of society and history supposedly requires. As a result, it remained unable to resolve, or even adequately to identify, the problems of reasonless routine with which this chapter deals. Categories like "capitalism" were gross enough to mark plausible stages in a necessary historical evolution or to identify a plausible member of a list of possible types of social organization. But, by the same token, they were too gross to explain the content of a society's repetitious conflicts over its key society-making resources.

Only when the fallback positions from faith in a single, canonical mode of inquiry or association lost their credibility did the properly modernist ideas about our relations to our contexts come to prevail. These ideas have not yet worked themselves fully into our practices of social and historical explanation. They are nevertheless responsible for many of the most original achievements of contemporary culture.

One modernist response to the problem of our relation to our contexts is the negativistic, existentialist creed. This creed sees our accepted structures of conversation and association as both imprisoning and groundless. It identifies our sole hope of freedom in the ceaseless, repetitious rebellion against such structures. The motive of the rebellion is less the hope of introducing better structures than the belief that the rebellion, while it lasts, affirms our essential freedom: our freedom to overstep the limits of the mental and social orders within which we habitually move. By this rebellion we reaffirm everything in our individual or collective selves that remains disproportionately larger than the humdrum circumstances of daily life. But we can never undertake the rebellion against structure often enough or carry it far enough to avoid the need to continue living in the real, unregenerate world – the world where we continue to rely upon all the presuppositions that we violate in the moment of defiance.

The other characteristic modernist response to the problem of our relation to the presuppositions of our life in common is an ironic acceptance of our contexts, justified by the lack of any higher standard with which to judge them. The modernist skeptic grants that we have no good reason to choose among structures of discourse or society other than reasons that already depend upon a reasonless acceptance of one such structure. We have nothing to go on but the historical societies and cultures that actually exist.

The second move of this modernist skeptic, however, is to turn this ironic proviso upside down. Precisely because each "form of life" represents a law unto itself, it is futile to look for higher justifications or higher criticisms. All we can do is to think, live, and change by the standards of the society or the tradition that we choose – or that chooses us. Thus, the modernist as resigned skeptic sees no alternative to this submission other than the paralyzing attempt to avoid engagement.

The two modernist responses to the problem of groundless and confining presuppositions repudiate the attempt to sanctify particular social and cognitive structures or to judge them by structure-transcending standards. The modernist as rebel and the modernist as skeptic also share a take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward the constraining force of our discursive and social orders. We may be able, they implicitly tell us, to replace one such order by another. But we cannot change the quality of our relation to these frameworks. We cannot weaken their power to imprison us. Structures will be structures.

This implicit premise limits the extent to which its adherents recognize our contexts to be up for grabs in history. For the premise tells us that the character of these contexts – their relation to our context-conditioned but context-revising freedom – remains constant throughout history. This unjustified and unhistorical restraint on the principle of historicity reveals the residual link between the modernist approaches to our practical or mental assumptions and the naturalistic dogmas these approaches seem to defy.

The take-it-or-leave-it view of the confining character of structures shows in a psychological dilemma. This dilemma marks both the negativistic existentialist and the resigned skeptical solutions to the problem. It is the impossibility of combining in the same experience consciousness and engagement. When we engage wholeheartedly in shared forms of life and discourse we must somehow suspend or control our sense of their groundlessness and coerciveness. When we give free rein to this sense, we stand apart and alone, in skeptical disengagement or futile though uncompromising rebellion. But to be fully the masters of our contexts we must combine consciousness and engagement. *False Necessity* argues that we can combine them, that the conditions for combining them are the same as the conditions for increasing our freedom to challenge and revise our contexts in the midst of our everyday activities, and that these conditions overlap with the requirements for other varieties of human empowerment.

The problem posed by the attempt to understand the reform cycles – the problem of understanding the genesis and constitution of institutional structures that are both makeshift and decisive – turns out to be only a special case of the more general issue posed by our relation to our mental and social contexts. The attempt to deal with

this issue forces us to carry the attack on the idea of natural or uncontroversial presuppositions beyond the point reached by the familiar radicalisms of contemporary culture.

The Solution Extended: The Imaginative Side of Formative Contexts

If the problem of routine without reason is rooted in our basic relation to our contexts, we should expect to rediscover its presence in all areas of social life, not merely in the compulsive routines of conflict over the tangible resources of capital and governmental power. In explaining these practical routines the argument of this chapter has emphasized the institutional aspects of formative contexts. The institutional emphasis persists throughout this book: in the view of the internal composition of social frameworks, in the theory of context making, and in the proposals for social reconstruction that occupy succeeding chapters of *False Necessity*. The limited focus helps keep the complexity of the argument and the breadth of its themes under control.

But a formative context does include noninstitutional, imaginative components. And it does shape argumentative and discursive routines that are just as significant as the reform and business cycles studied in the earlier parts of this chapter. Material wealth and governmental power are not the only resources enabling the occupants of some social stations to set terms to the activities of the occupants of other social stations. One of these crucial resources for society making is the ability to enlist widely shared, authoritative conceptions of what the relations among people can and should be like – accepted ideals of human association – in the defense of particular interests and opinions. The stock forms of legal, moral, and ideological argument are the intangible counterparts to the routines of partisan conflict and economic exchange. The former show the same repetitiveness, the same perplexing movement among well-defined positions, as the latter.

To explain their constancy and their content we must look beyond them to the imaginative presuppositions they habitually take for granted. What are these assumptions like? What is their characteristic relation to the kinds of formative institutional arrangements that have concerned earlier parts of this chapter?

If the hypothesis of a formative context holds good, the argumentative routines depend very largely on the same institutional and imaginative assumptions that help account for party-political and economic cycles. The institutional components of a formative context influence more directly the cyclical conflicts over power and wealth. The standard forms of legal, moral, and policy discussion

suffer the more immediate influence of the imaginative elements of a framework: the accepted assumptions about standards to which relations among people should conform in the different domains of practical social life.

But these are distinctions of emphasis. To explain policy and business cycles the definition of the formative context must include dominant assumptions about the styles of sociability suitable to the different areas of social life. Institutional arrangements leave open too many possibilities: too many policy solutions to recognized problems and too many ways to define individual, group, or regional interests. Only when institutions combine with preconceptions about the possible and proper shape of dealings among people do the implications of the institutional arrangements become more precise. For example, in the contemporary North Atlantic democracies, both organized labor and middle-class electorates might well think, act, and vote differently if they believed that democratic principles could and should be extended to the workplace, not merely confined to the organization of government.

Moreover, the institutional arrangements that make up a formative context must be legally defined. They must draw upon rules and principles that can be authoritatively elaborated and applied in particular instances of conflict. Every extended practice of application of law demands recourse to tacit models of human association. The lawyer clears up the ambiguities of legal materials by referring to the basic principles that help organize and elucidate whole bodies of law.

But these principles are themselves characteristically ambiguous and contradictory. To every principle there corresponds a counter-principle that reverses its content and limits its application. Thus, the principle of freedom to contract, which establishes that people may voluntarily accept or reject a contractual relation, is qualified by a counterprinciple, which forbids people to use this freedom to undermine minimal notions of communal solidarity. It takes more basic pictures of human association to help structure the stuff of positive rules and doctrines and to determine the relative influence of particular principles and counterprinciples in each body of law.

The constitutional lawyer, for instance, relies on a conception of the democratic republic, of its defining principles, and of the parts of social life in which it is properly realized. Such a conception may remain tacit and vague. But the jurist who had no such assumptions to draw on would soon find himself at loose ends.

The following pages outline the distinctive way in which the imaginative elements fit into a framework of social life. The core idea is that a formative context includes, together with major institutional settlements, a moral geography of social life: a conception of how

people can and should deal with one another in the different fields of social practice. Sometimes, this scheme of social life consists in a single, overpowering model of sociability, meant to be repeated as a theme and variations throughout social life. In other cultures, by contrast, the authoritative scheme of human association assumes the form of distinct models of sociability, each set in contrast to the others. Thus, the most influential preconceptions about sociability prevailing in the contemporary North Atlantic democracies assign radically different standards of human association to government, family life, and economic activity.

For example, in all the societies whose reform cycles this chapter has discussed, people ordinarily consider family life appropriate for a small repertory of styles of private community. These styles vary across classes and communities and, most interestingly, across families themselves. But certain themes reappear persistently. The explicit slogans, the articulate beliefs, and the oft-told stories of everyday life and pop culture present the family as an area of social experience suitable to a distinctive blend of sentiment and hierarchy: power improved by emotion, emotion harnessed to the practical responsibilities of sustaining a life together.

The family these beliefs invoke depends on shared interests and values. It cannot easily accommodate conflict, bargaining, and sharply defined entitlements. It stands in stark opposition to the principles of contract and technical necessity deemed legitimate in practical working life, and to the principles of formal equality, episodic participation, and partisan rivalry that help make up the democratic ideal.

These more or less official images of the family are largely indeterminate and partly mendacious. We fix their effective social meaning by reading them against the background of collective habits that provide the daily fare of domesticity. Such habits fail to fit the neat contrasts of more simplified beliefs about family community. They include much of the rights-mongering, the strategic negotiation, and the ill-bounded conflict that such ideals of family life exclude. They nevertheless remain close enough to the articulate beliefs to make these beliefs half credible as approximate idealizations of an obscure, unyielding experience. The complicated, partial merger of belief and practice in a particular region of social life yields a model of sociability. The coexistence of a few such dominant models of personal encounter produces an imaginative mapping of society.

Society in the family gets thoroughly permeated by the expectations, the claims, and the readings of motive that such a richly textured conception of social relations supports. The resulting cues for a life in common fall far short of a code of rules; they leave much open to idiosyncrasy, innovation, and disagreement. But they are

also much more determinate than the generic idea of society. They enable people to settle into a recognized genre of social dealings, and they limit the uncertain appeal to intuition and inspiration.

No one-to-one relation holds between the institutional and the imaginative aspects of a formative context. The same institutional arrangements may be compatible with an indefinitely large number of alternative schemes of possible and desirable association. We must find the proximate explanations for the content of such a scheme in its unique history. The genealogies of the institutional components are only loosely connected; the histories of the institutions and of the beliefs must be even more loosely related.

The tightest link between the institutional and the imaginative aspects of a formative context consists in the rules and rights that largely define the major institutional settlements of a social order. For to reenact and to elaborate these rights and rules over long periods of time and extended bodies of social life, we must invoke a vision of social life.

Chapter 3 describes another, more subtle and inclusive connection between the institutional and the imaginative elements in a formative context. It argues that beliefs and institutions cannot long coexist unless they and the conceptual or practical activities that reproduce them remain comparable in at least one key respect: the extent to which they open themselves up to challenge and revision in the course of their daily use and reenactment.

To suggest more fully the character of such preconceptions about sociability and their place within a formative context, I return to the central idea of social orders as frozen politics. A simplified, fable-like version of this idea can bring out the main points. Consider the hypothetical moment when people interrupt or contain their broader struggle over the terms of human association. The settlements of this restabilized society would remain obscure and fragile if the former rivals continued to see them as mere truce lines and trophies in an ongoing social war. Exhaustion, not acceptance, would be the ruling principle of this superficially pacified social world. The disheartened but resentful or anxious contestants would continue to watch one another warily. They would view the surrounding quiescence as the barely veiled dissimulation of belligerence, as nothing more than the embodiment of a certain correlation of forces. As a result, they would lack any vision to serve as a code and a framework for their claims upon one another.

Moreover, the compromises that emerge from a bout of intensified social conflict are not just physical objects that persist, spontaneously, from moment to moment. People must patiently re-create and reproduce them in particular practical situations. A view of what the compromises signify must guide this re-creation and reproduction.

To treat the settlements as mere markers of forces is to sow disturbance as well as confusion. It is to invite people to continue the fight the better to test both what the settlements really were and what they have become.

But none of this programmed subversion really happens, at least not very long, very much, and on a very large scale. People settle down in the reordered society. They reinterpret the compromises and arrangements that emerge from a period of aggravated struggle as an intelligible and defensible blueprint for living together. They translate the indefinite idea of society into definite views of the relations and expectations suitable to the recurrent circumstances they encounter.

The reinterpretation is the easier to come by because the social war that marks the period of aggravated strife over formative arrangements is almost always partial – a revolutionary reform rather than a full-scale revolution. The converse of partiality in the war is partiality in the peace. People never resign themselves completely to the demands and the pretenses of the new order. They never entirely lose the sense that this settlement is the product of conflicts that may begin at any time. No sooner is established power jeopardized than the pieties of an inveterate prostration give way, suddenly and surprisingly, to defiance.

Each model of human association that helps constitute a plan of civilized life includes three elements: a group of ideals, slogans, and dogmas; a set of practices that, better or worse, stand for these ideals in fact; and an area of social experience to which the application of these principles remains confined. The sense of moral clarity about the fundamentals of social life depends upon the undisturbed coexistence of these three elements. This coexistence may be assailed from any of its three sides.

The most direct assault is also the rarest: an attack on the ideals that inspire and the slogans that describe a particular view of life in common, coupled with the prophetic presentation of an alternative. Thus, for example, we may repudiate an ideal of private community, held out as a model for family life, that emphasizes the exclusion of conflict and the sharing of values. We may reject this ideal as unfaithful to the deeper, inchoate, inarticulate longings that attract us to communal ideals in the first place: the hope of participating in human relations that diminish the conflict between our need for other people and our desire to avoid the threats they present to us.

The political prophet may hold up an image of community that addresses this yearning more directly: a style of communal attachments that recognizes the benefits of conflict and insists upon the priority of heightened vulnerability and mutual acceptance. In the name of this reconsidered communal ideal he may call for new forms

of family life and personal intimacy. He may advocate a breaking down of the rigid contrasts between the private, personal spheres of social life to which communal standards remain confined and the public, practical areas from which they are banished.

More often, the fit among ideals, practices, and areas of application comes apart from the last two, more concrete sides. Suppose, for example, a particular model of social relations extended deliberately into a region of social life to which it had been thought unsuited. Thus, imagine democratic principles introduced into the area of industrial organization. There, those principles must be realized through practical arrangements different from the institutions that translate the reigning democratic ideal into a way of organizing government. The machinery of branches of government and of methods for coordinating their activities simply fails to fit the problems of the workplace and the enterprise. People must come up with new solutions.

Characteristically, however, there are several plausible alternatives. For example, should we maintain clear hierarchies in industry but make superiors more accountable? Or should we insist that accountability is no substitute for equality and try to keep hierarchy to whatever limits may be truly required by organizational effectiveness? The choice brings us up short, forcing us to choose as well among conceptions of what matters to us most about democracy. Thus, what began as a mere extension of familiar ideals into untried territory forces us in the end to refine and revise the ideal conceptions of human association with which we had started.

We may pretend to find the solution in a more careful analysis of our inherited view of democracy. In fact, however, we must choose among possibilities. These possibilities remained indistinct and confused so long as we failed to test the relation between our received ideals and their practical forms. The test consists in assessing alternatives – or in having them forced upon us.

Yet the pretense of finding rather than choosing is not entirely illusory. We must, however, recognize as the real subject matter of this search our inarticulate longings rather than our prized dogmas. Because the dogmas never completely shape the longings we can enlist the latter in reshaping the former.

A scheme of authoritative models of human association assumes two distinct forms in all societies that have central governments and organized legal systems.

In one register, the map of social forms exists as a set of refined assumptions and doctrines. In this high-flown mode, the scheme of models of sociability guides the interpretation or elaboration of legal rules and rights. For every extended interpretation of rules and rights must resort to guiding images of human association. From the de-

tailed texture of rule, doctrine, and low-level analogy to the stock arguments that embody principles and counterprinciples and from these arguments to basic premises about the styles of association suitable to each area of social life – such is the itinerary of the law-applier as he moves outward from the uncontroverted to the perplexing. The last step of this trajectory may remain largely tacit in much of contemporary legal discourse. It is hard to reconcile the overt evocation of such models of sociability with the pretended contrast between restrained legal reasoning and freewheeling ideological controversy. But though it may remain implicit the final stage of the route continues to be indispensable. Without it, the lawyer loses the means to weight principle against counterprinciple in a given area of social practice or to prevent the inconclusive battle of clichés.

An argument from the need to allow government to regulate matters that condition the successful execution of its core constitutional responsibilities stands against an argument that a regime of rights requires governments not to overstep the boundaries of a tightly defined jurisdiction. An argument that security of transactions demands brightline rules is opposed by an argument that true predictability lies in the conformity of legal solutions to widely shared, flexible commercial practices. An argument that respect for the informal personalized loyalties of family life necessitates the intervention of the law in the internal life of the family runs up against an argument that people become most vulnerable and therefore most in need of protection in the intimate and unequal setting of the family. So it goes, on and on. Each of these characteristic deadlocks must be solved in practice by an appeal to detailed though largely implicit pictures of what democracies, markets, and families should be like. Such pictures combine current legal rules and doctrines with received ways of imagining society and of talking about its proprieties and possibilities.

A dominant scheme of possible and desirable association also exists in a second register, distinct from the refined though implicit dogmas of the law. In this second incarnation it persists as a set of diffuse, complicated, and even contradictory views of what society can and should be in the major characteristic situations of practical life. These preconceptions represent a silent subscript that informs people's claims upon one another and their expectations about society.

We never find a single, society-wide system of beliefs about the desirable forms of social coexistence, only the dominant ideals and the shared assumptions of particular classes and communities. Even these group-specific views fragment into countless individual life projects as people bend inherited prejudice and shared aspirations to the service of private anxieties. There are nevertheless unifying influences: the weight of established insitutional arrangements as well

as the privileged hold that certain groups and traditions have upon the mass culture. Social ideals begin in present experiences, shaped by the imposing realities of current practices and institutions.

What is the relation between the two modes of a society's dominant moral geography: the implicit dogmas of the law and the diffuse preconceptions entertained by particular classes and communities? In societies, like those taken as examples in this chapter, that are not governed by foreign conquest elites, there can be no definitive, stark contrast between the two aspects of the imaginative scheme. Each gives the other cues. People find the shibboleths of the law repeated in the acts of officialdom and the slogans of government. The officials and lawyers in charge of reproducing and reinterpreting rules and rights must in turn preserve the vitality and contain the ambiguities of the authoritative ideals of association by ceaselessly reconnecting them to the imagined popular experience of social life. No wonder we find in our practices of moral and party-political controversy versions of the imaginative scheme of human association that, by their characteristics, stand midway between official dogmas and implicit convictions.

A formative context is a set of institutions and beliefs that reproduce the compulsive routines of conflict about the material or intangible resources that enable the occupants of some social stations to set terms to what the occupants of other stations may do. The cumulative, biased outcomes of such conflicts help create the social future within the social present. Remember that some components of a formative context have an especially direct bearing on some types of conflict. Thus, the elaborate, high-culture versions of the imaginative scheme of social life perform a decisive role in shaping legal controversies over rules and rights. But what key conflicts owe their force and content to the other, popular mode of the scheme of possible and desirable human association?

An Imaginative Counterpart to the Reform Cycles: Fighting the Exemplary Social Danger

Consider one such instance of compulsive routine – the way a culture singles out as primary certain dangers to social coexistence. These widely shared beliefs about the exemplary social danger are dreams turned nightmares. We have only to study them in detail to see how they reveal finely textured assumptions about the proper and possible forms of sociability. It is an example worth developing in detail as a capstone to the argument about routine without reason.

For these repeated apprehensions show the pervasiveness in social life of the problem presented earlier through the cycles of reform and retrenchment. Here, in an area far removed from rivalries over

governmental power and policy, we encounter a similar, baffling compulsiveness. To explain this compulsiveness, we must uncover tacit beliefs about the right and feasible varieties of social life. This belief structure – closely associated with institutional arrangements – is too stable and influential to be confused with the routines that it helps form. But it is also too distinctive, too mired in a unique history, and too laden with a peculiar content to figure plausibly as a protagonist in a foreordained list of possible types of social organization or in a necessary sequence of such types. An understanding of the crucial assumptions requires the style of social explanation – different from both positivist social science and deep-structure social theory – that this book makes explicit.

In confirming the range of the problem of routine without reason, the following discussion of exemplary social anxieties also reveals how much is at stake in the effort to understand and to master the reasonless routines of our societies. Here, more clearly than in the experience of the reform cycles, we see how we rob ourselves of our context-breaking capabilities. As we witness the riddle of lawless constraint extended to the most impalpable aspects of social life we also discover where freedom begins. It begins, this discussion of overriding social fears suggests, when people seize on the transformative clues that both the routines and the frustration of the routines endlessly supply.

People share in preconceptions about the ultimate sources of danger to the communities they care about most. The effort to work these preconceptions out in practice and to mask or confront their failures then becomes another field for collective learning about what society is or might become.

From the Renaissance to the present day, major political doctrines have developed the idea of a civic order, animated by a particular spirit, sustained by a certain structure of institutions, and constantly endangered by a resurgent process of internal corruption that can result in subversive factionalism, bitter domestic discord, and weakness toward the foreign foe. Each major republican doctrine offers an explicit or tacit view of where the danger of corruption lies. Its institutional program responds to this peril.

The same way of thinking – the mutual adjustment between associative commitments and ideas of jeopardy – operates in our ordinary imagination of society. There is always an overriding danger and a master remedy. Each lends credence to the other, and more so as neither side is likely to be understood and described with clarity. It takes a great deal to jar people out of such presuppositions. Nonetheless, it happens, and it happens a little bit all the time.

Consider, for example, two characteristic patterns of enacted belief – one American, the other Russian – about the exemplary social

danger. Though unevenly distributed among classes and communities and constantly challenged by contrasting ideas, each pattern enjoys widespread popular influence. Each finds support in the talk of elites and the conduct of officials.

The Americans worry about the horror of personal dependence. To be directly subject to the will of another person represents their most persistent idea of unhappiness. For them, the ultimate in republican degeneracy is the gangsterish manipulation of constitutional arrangements. The manipulators are less likely to be a self-serving class or party (both classes and parties are supposed to be too flaccid to be threatening, unless things get really bad) than a coterie of shameless political adventurers who turn their fellow citizens into dupes. Americans often think that the most pressing task in every well-ordered association is to factor out the element of power and then clamp down on it. They want to withdraw from the reformed but continuing reality of power the sting and the peril of personalized dependence or domination.

They resort to two main solutions. One response is to appeal to impersonal rules, impersonally applied. The other method is to bathe all associative forms, with their largely unregenerate hierarchies, in an atmosphere of pseudointimacy and mock professional collegue-ship, a cheerful impersonal friendliness. By performing these two acts almost everywhere and all the time, the Americans think they are hitting the nail on the head. Once they have taken care of the main danger, they will be free to devote themselves to getting ahead in their jobs, living in their families, and, if they have done well enough, experimenting with their tastes and feelings.

Easier said than done. The move toward impersonality in the exercise of power fails to dispose of the practical costs and the social discontents of dependence. The forms of community and exchange and even the integrity of the electoral democracy itself suffer the influence of collective relations of power and advantage. But the organization of inclusive groups to fight over the structure of society might aggravate a factional bitterness with which the republic is ill-prepared to deal: a hostility of big classes rather than of crosscutting interest groups. Moreover, the use of governmental power to undermine private hierarchy may simply produce other, more formidable varieties of subjugation. That, at least, is a characteristic American apprehension.

Any entrenched advantage may yield the personalized power that Americans characteristically want to avoid. People may find it increasingly hard to believe that technical necessity or objective moral hierarchies account for the structure of social advantage. But where will the Americans draw the line between safeguarding equal opportunities in the great race and imposing equal outcomes? After all,

every little victory wins a reward that means an advantage at the next stage of the contest. Besides, how can the overriding concern with the avoidance of personal dependency be squared with the widespread, stubborn allegiance to the family as the most credible experience of a social life that has become free from rigidified form? In the family, power is personal when it exists at all.

It is not enough to put such paradoxes down to those creative tensions and those tragic dilemmas that the more bookish Americans talk about. The paradoxes represent the unexpected revelations of a particular way of imagining society: a vision that hopes to tame power through markets and technical imperatives in practical life, through elections and constitutional safeguards in the state, and through natural affections in the family. To endure, the vision must at least be reconcilable with existing institutional arrangements.

Now consider the Russians. They are more inclined to believe in the futility of any attempt to disentangle personal power from the other elements of social life. They often seem to think that every form of association, starting with the family, depends on a structure of constraint and command that mixes up exploitation, exchange, and mutual love. Though the mixture makes social institutions ir-retrievably imperfect, its absence might make them even worse.

Everywhere, there are going to be people on top making demands on you and wrapping themselves up – with partial but only partial justification – in the garb of practical necessity and moral order. These bosses alternately bludgeon and cajole you into going along with them, in your proper sphere. They are afraid things will break down completely. They want their superiors to leave them alone.

Against this background there is cheating everywhere. People try to get away with something, sometimes for their own advantage but more often to the benefit of a community of greater concern (the family, the work gang, the local enterprise) and to the detriment of a higher authority or a rival organization. Only some of this evasive effort amounts to outright illegal activity. Only some of it gets chastised as immoral. The cheating is incurable, corrupting, and redemptive. It arises from the convergence of ordinary egotism with close collective loyalties. And it benefits from the widely shared conviction that the official scheme of things is never more than a variation on some original mess from which people can never completely get out.

The attempt to suppress the spontaneous movement of the local group, if taken to the letter, would make a bad situation even worse. Things would just stop running. Exploitation would become intolerable. The cheating is the perpetual marginal adjustment in the relations among community, exchange, and power. It both disturbs and softens the colossal burden of institutions upon the people who have to live and work in them.

Three dangers recur with cheating. There is the risk it will go too far and push the practical arrangements of society into collapse. People fear the short-run material consequences of such a collapse. Fearing the surprises of war, revolution, and misery, they half accept the credentials of the established system to be the right order. The second threat is the total suppression of the cheating. The result would be the closing down of the area of spontaneous adjustment, collective gusto, and nonconfrontational resistance that makes life bearable and institutions effective. The third peril is that the relatively more benign forms of cheating may cast a shadow of license and confusion favorable to more violent and destructive deeds. The former may ease the proliferation of the latter. The latter may serve as an excuse for the attempt ruthlessly to suppress the former.

At any moment, the discrepancy between daily conduct and official order can get out of hand in one of these three ways. The trouble is that this discrepancy is both an ever-present danger and a saving grace. What is there to do but to remain watchful and to bear cheerfully the rack of existence and the pretensions of power? Life, they say, has a longer history than the police.

These widespread American and Russian ideas of the paradigmatic danger in society differ widely in their qualities of vision as well as in their detailed content. The American prejudice is more revolutionary, because more openly subversive of hierarchy. It is also more absurd in the crudeness of its reductions. The Russian view is more human, because more inclusive and realistic in its image of peril. It is also, in actual effect, more tolerant of the stifling of aspiration by power. Nevertheless, both sets of preconceptions illustrate features characteristic of formative beliefs about the nature of deep jeopardy to association.

Both the American and the Russian patterns lie in a twilight zone between craziness and lack of imagination. They exemplify the insanity of the commonplace. They have some of the ideational features of obsession: they interpret a large amount of material through a scheme both highly selective and recalcitrant to falsification. That much might be true of science. But the interpretation also regularly contradicts what sensible people know about life.

The impression of a proximity to madness is justified. Experiences of blockage or liberation in personal reconciliation are crucial to the distinction between sanity and madness. To be sane is, in part, to avoid an experience of flat conflict between self-assertion and participation in community. It is also to experience your character as something that defines your self but that is nevertheless capable of change.

These confirming patterns of belief and conduct about paradigmatic social danger make experiments in reconciliation and self-transformation harder to stage. They are themselves the expression of a

rigidified view of social possibility. Though they stop short of mental derangement, they survive on a diminished sense of reality and a lowered sense of the preposterous.

Both the American and the Russian *idées fixes* show how much beliefs about exemplary social danger take on a quality of self-fulfillment. People end up giving them a plausible though inadequate basis of fact by acting as if they were true. Their expressed ambitions and fears start to cluster around the ability to impose or to escape personal dominion, in the American style, or to avoid being duped in the course of manipulating the connection between allegiance and cheating, in the Russian experience. The limiting image gives rise to a second-order social reality. This reality confuses and demoralizes people even in their moments of insight or invention.

Each of these sets of beliefs about the paradigmatic danger in social life has a forgotten history. This history repeats in microcosm the birth of a social world out of concrete fights and failures to fight as the institutions and doctrines that are its frozen politics win a life of their own. In each instance the particular history of conflict sets its mark upon dogma and preconception though its exact translation into ideas about exemplary peril remains tortuous and obscure. It would be difficult to exclude any part of history from the history of such assumptions, for the evolution of our authoritative models of sociability and of our haunting social fears is bound up with the outcomes of particular struggles for power. Some events nevertheless stand out in the emergence of each of these views of the source of trouble in society.

In the American experience the dismantling of corporatist society played the crucial role. (The estate-like organization of classes had still been a possibility in the colonies.) During the first generation of the Republic these events culminated in the development of a constitutional order that, with the egregious exception of slavery, combined the disauthorization of all institutionalized relations of personal dependency with republican arrangements designed to smother conflict and to perpetuate deadlock. The ideal of the independent professional, businessman, or farmer turned into a central myth of self-reliance. This myth ran little risk of being effectively challenged by an underclass made up first of slaves and disorganized dependents. Nor would it readily be defied by immigrants who thought they were passing through a purgatory of enrichment on their way back home. In a Republic in which individuals were not to be personally subject to one another, all particular bonds would rest upon the will. The basic scheme of republican life was supposed to be a once-and-for-all invention.

The failure of the Russian peasantry to free itself collectively from subjugation and the ensuing confusion of communal forms with the

conveniences of governmental or landlord control had a fateful impact upon the development of the Russian idea of exemplary danger. There were few aspects of society except revolutionary agitation, religious devotion, and the subtleties of family life, in which communal attachments could significantly disengage from an entrenched hierarchical scheme. In this world of bungling centralism and broken rebellion nothing got done, beyond the daily survival of the household, that did not require the higher-ups at every rung of every hierarchy alternately to harass their underlings and to turn the other way. The inability of the Bolsheviki Revolution to preserve any vestige of soviet-type conciliar institutions or to allow for conflictual mass participation ensured the persistence of this way of doing things, though changing its distributional impact and its accepted sense.

Both the American and the Russian patterns reveal an inconsolable skepticism about the experimental transformability of social life, even if Americans more often see themselves as optimists. In one instance the most that can be hoped for is to escape the nightmare of personal dependence; in the other, to keep the adjustment between allegiance and cheating under control. The skepticism reveals itself in distrust, though the target of the distrust differs in the two situations.

Trust as the acceptance of vulnerability is more than an attitude; it is also a vision of unexplored and unrealized human opportunity. Like everything in a conditional social world, beliefs about exemplary social evil limit the pressure to advance in the refinement and testing of this vision. They put people under a spell. The half-forgotten terrors of a compelling collective history live on all the more stubbornly in a diffuse atmosphere of habit and preconception.

Though such ideas of exemplary danger diminish the opportunities of society they also trivialize its horrors. The conception of an overriding threat to social life belittles the indefinite and unlimited quality of mutual need and fear, longing and jeopardy. The triviality and the skepticism grow from a common root: the concealment of the gap between the open-ended idea of society and the given, limited stock of forms of human association.

The beliefs about society enshrined in the ruling conceptions of paradigmatic danger repeatedly prove themselves inadequate in the course of everyday life. Despite all the forces that keep people from coming to an awareness of this inadequacy and acting upon it, it presses itself upon them as a dull intimation and disquiet. At any moment this disquiet may help prompt an alternative view of social reality and possibility. Practical demands or spiritual aspiration can serve equally well as the initiating impulse.

An American manager in the late twentieth century, for example, may think he can get his workers to produce more willingly and effectively if he opens up opportunities for more independent team-

work in the production process. He may see such experiments as innovations that represent no real threat to the distribution of power and profit. He may also be moved by ideas that underline the horrors of unmediated personal subjection and the lure of pseudointimacy. Once in place, these modest reforms may serve as points of departure for conflicts and inventions that not only unsettle established social arrangements but enable people to imagine untried ways of working and living together. Such discoveries highlight the gap between humanitarian delicacy or bureaucratic impersonality and civic engagement and equality. They threaten to discredit the view of how things work implicit in the reigning images of exemplary danger.

A contemporary Soviet bureaucrat and politician may feel the best way to induce workers and enterprises to execute their part of the plan is to concentrate more authority in the hands of local managers. The central government can reassert control whenever this allowance for greater decentralized discretion permits a buildup of defensive positions of privilege. The Soviet ruler may be encouraged in this posture not only by a desire for reforms that leave the basic structure of hierarchy in place but also by the conviction that the timeless interplay of cheating and allegiance can become less destructive by being partly institutionalized. But these limited freedoms and initiatives may suggest the possibility of other, bolder reforms that change the character of the state and offer people opportunities of reconstruction rather than mere instruments of self-defense.

Nothing can stop people from experiencing disturbances that threaten their conventional ideas about the chief peril in society. If, for example, you read the high and low literature written by Americans in the two generations following World War II and studied their popular entertainments, you discovered that their fears were not as shallow as their dogmas. Americans worried about the difficulty of asserting control over the terms of their own public and private lives. They often considered themselves victims of forces they were unable to master or understand.

The less favored regarded themselves as locked into collective situations of isolation and disadvantage from which they could escape, if at all, only as resolute and lucky individuals. The more fortunate felt maddeningly defeated in their attempts at self-expression, in the midst of a heartless and hedonistic cult of personal experimentation. Many aspired to a material or spiritual power that would give the lie to the impotent privacy of their lives.

They did not find in frequent doses of the depersonalization of power or in the advance of professionalism and pseudointimacy satisfactory solutions to these problems. After the end of the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement, with a sense alternating between puzzled or cynical annoyance and fatalistic desperation, much of the

citizenry gave up expecting anything from the governmental politics of their country other than the avoidance of great disasters, the defense of narrow group interests, and the assertion of national power – but not its use to disrupt basic hierarchies of power and advantage. Innocence, rather than transformative imagination and capacity, became the highest ambition of the best. When they achieved it, it corrupted them. The ordeal of frustration did not overthrow the dominant view of exemplary danger, but it did make this view less credible. It suggested the need for different ideas about how society worked, how it changed, and what it might become. That is what always happens. The closed cycles and the enslaving obsessions of society yield the first clues not just to a different world but to a world of a different kind.

APPENDIX:
ECONOMIC POLICY, REFORM CYCLES, AND
FORMATIVE CONTEXTS
IN THE SOVIET-STYLE ECONOMIES

The following discussion extends the description and analysis of the communist reform cycles and explores their connections with the institutional settings in which these cycles occur. In so doing, it shows how the distinctive problems of contemporary economies depend on the institutional arrangements that also shape the reform cycles discussed in this chapter. The overlap between the institutional conditions of the reform cycles and of economic swings should not cause surprise. For one thing, the recurrent troubles of an economy become at once topics, causes, and effects of a reform cycle. For another thing, the economic difficulties have the same quality as the frustrating rehearsal of inconclusive policy response in the reform cycles – the quality of a compulsion resulting from a presupposition. The traditional economist may be tempted to protest that such are the punishments of those who seek to replace the market by other methods of allocation. But he fails to appreciate the width of the gap between the abstract idea of a market and any particular institutional arrangements for economic decentralization, just as his Soviet counterpart may identify the principle of political control of accumulation with the centralist devices he finds at hand. The same style of analysis exemplified in this appendix can readily apply to the contemporary North Atlantic economies. Chapter 5 of this book outlines such an application in the course of presenting proposals for revolutionary economic reform. The argument of *False Necessity* shows that the task of opening economic life more fully to innovation and renewal is inseparable from the larger effort to develop formative contexts

that bring framework-respecting routine closer to framework-transforming invention.

Consider once again and in greater detail certain features of the reform cycle in Soviet-model economies and politics. Some of these characteristics have to do with the seemingly technical economic difficulties that appeared at each moment of the cycle; others, with the class alliances that tended to emerge with each cyclical swing. By studying the operations of this system you learned that even the most seemingly technical phenomena of economic life became intelligible only against the background of institutional arrangements and ideas. These ideas and arrangements amounted to something much more specific than the vague idea of a planned or command economy. You also discovered that a particular relation between limits to the mobility of capital and constraints on access to governmental power played a crucial role in determining the economic and social content of the reform cycle.

Take the economic problems first and begin with the moment of maximum centralization. At such times, the communist economies were beset by the twin problems of hoarding and shortage. They were equally plagued by a tendency to exaggerate investment goals, to fall short in achieving them, and then to compensate for the difference by a series of stopgap measures that aggravated still further the simultaneous underemployment and shortage of resources. Remember the essentials of the institutional (and ideological) context within which these economic problems occurred: close control of governmental power by an elite that avoided occasions for mass militancy and mass-based partisan conflict; the claim to govern on behalf of and for the workers and, through both accelerated growth and the destruction of class privilege, to lay the basis for communism; the assumption by the central government of the authority to shape the allocation of resources (an authority that might be extensively qualified during the decentralizing moments of the reform cycle); prevalence in industry, administration, and warfare of a sharp contrast between task definers and task executors; and, consequently, the existence of managerial cadres clearly separated from the rank-and-file workers and more or less subordinate to the central rulers and planners and the entrenchment of different segments of the work force in well-defined and unequally advantaged places in the division of labor, an entrenchment subject only to the disturbances of the job hierarchy that the rulers or the managers occasionally provoked.

At the most centralized moments of this institutional system, hoarding and shortage served as weapons of managerial self-defense, closely connected to the overextension and underachievement of

planning goals that represented the other characteristic problem of the centralizing phase of the cycle. The exaggeration of planning goals, at all levels of the economy, had several convergent causes. Though one or another of these pressures might be contained, it was hard to reverse all of them without changing the basic institutional arrangements of the economy.

Planners set targets with the help of information collected from enterprise managers. The more prudent managers – the managers not out to build empires – might want to minimize the tasks ultimately assigned to them by the central plan. But even these cautious managerial bureaucrats had reason, at the early stages, to overstate both how much additional capital and manpower they needed to accomplish any given task and how much the planners could get from them by giving them the maximum of financial and labor support.

For one thing, the amount of capital and manpower entrusted to the manager was likely to depend upon the expected contribution of his enterprise to the total production plan. His relative share in capital and manpower represented both a standard of success and source of tangible material advantage. It determined what he would have to work with at the anticipated moment when he would need to scale his plans down and how well he could expect to do in the next round of planning allocations. For another thing, the managers knew that the planners could not let them go out of business nor react too violently to a failure in the execution of their assigned tasks. Less production was better than no production at all, and the workers and machines had to be kept busy.

The rulers, for their part, had independent reasons to bloat the plan by pursuing a policy of heroic industrialization. The minimal legitimacy of their rule depended upon visible material success and at least apparent victory in the competition with the West. As the governmental and economic order grew more centralized and approached the extreme limit of a terroristic war by the state against society, the implicit exchange of promises of wealth for passive acquiescence became more clear-cut. At times of more moderate centralization the overstatement of the plan then became a way to fudge embarrassing allocations of resources between production and consumption or among different sectors of the productive system. In this respect it played a role similar to that of governmentally fueled inflation in the contemporary Western economies.

When the execution of the unrealistic plan started to break down, the rulers and planners found themselves compelled to make concessions to the managers in order to avoid a disastrous, economywide downswing of production. These concessions could not themselves

obey any plan: their distribution remained in thrall to the sudden appearance of crucial bottlenecks that had to be broken quickly on pain of paralyzing broad sectors of the economy.

Once the plan went into operation, the motives that had encouraged the initial, heroic exaggeration of productive capacities were checked and superseded by other forces that led to underachievement. One of these forces was the recalcitrance of workers who were practically unremovable (because of job security), susceptible (because of the relative freedom to change jobs) to seduction by rival firms that promised easier working conditions, and yet incapable of being prodded forward by the promise of higher wages (because of the severity of wage constraints that resulted from the combination of job security with a commitment to avoid inflation).

Or consider the "ratchet principle," according to which future assigned tasks depended upon present performance. The pressure to underachievement that this principle generated was limited only by the fear of punishment and by the desire to keep and enlarge the quota of capital and labor assigned to the firm in the future plan. Like everything else in this tangle of problems the escape from the ratchet principle turned out to be harder and more momentous than at first appeared. To replace it the planners needed to base task assignments on long-term norms: relations of input to output for each enterprise. Suppose that such a system could have dispensed with the operation of an independent price system and that it had managed to evaluate cost and production in real rather than nominal terms. It would still have required each enterprise to be treated as an independent accounting unit that, to a larger degree, could succeed or fail on its own. Such a procedure implied decentralization with all the new problems that — as the next stage of the discussion shows — decentralization brought with it.

In Soviet-style economies the crucial constraints on additional investment lay in actual physical limits rather than in limits of effective demand. Resource constraints never exist as brute fact, somehow independent of the institutional arrangements of economic life: the scarcity you can ever actually see is always the one that a real economy, with all its defining institutional practices, has helped perpetuate. Nevertheless, the primacy of physical limits, institutionally shaped, served as one of the many links connecting the embarrassments of the bloated plans to the problems of hoarding and shortage.

Whether or not they were co-responsible for the plan's initial lack of realism the managers hoarded capital and labor. They had an unlimited thirst for resources with which to guarantee the ability to perform their assigned tasks. They therefore also had a powerful incentive to conceal, whenever possible, the extent of the resources at hand. For the size of his reserves in investment funds and man-

power determined the relative ease or difficulty with which the manager would be able to keep his bosses at bay and his underlings happy. Moreover, for the reason already recalled in the earlier allusion to the ratchet principle, extreme centralization could not readily be reconciled with an attempt to reward or punish enterprises on the basis of efficiency measured by a real relation between inputs and outputs. Given the relative lack of such a measure and the prudential value of reserves there was little incentive to reveal or let go underemployed physical or human capacity.

A number of secondary forces, similarly anchored in the motivational logic of the underlying institutional system, aggravated the twin problems of shortage and slack. Thus, for example, the command of capital became an excuse to demand more labor and the command of labor to demand more capital, for what good was one without the other? The commitment to job security, combined with the determination to exercise an anti-inflationary control over wage rates and an egalitarian resistance to wage differentials, meant that salary competition among enterprises could not be used to clear labor markets.

The pervasiveness of hoarding and shortages had disastrous economic and social effects. The social consequences aggravated the economic results. One important economic effect was the vulnerability of large areas of the economy to what – from the planners' perspective – looked like largely unforeseeable bottlenecks. Another economic implication was the pressure to break these bottlenecks by forced substitutions at the enterprise or economywide level: the replacement of one physical or human input by another because – as the result of pervasive hoarding and shortage – the input of choice had become simply unavailable.

Now consider the social consequences of shortage and hoarding. The central government found itself bedeviled by an extraordinary display of economic failures that weakened its authority in every theater of its activity. The ordinary citizen as consumer had to stand endlessly in line and undertake in his domestic economy the humiliating, farcical counterpart to the forced substitutions of the national economy. At the same time, the permanent scarcity of labor produced under the communist regime the exaggerated equivalent to a Western-style market under full employment: a sullen restlessness by workers who found themselves in a permanent seller's market for labor despite the severity of the constraints on freedom, wages, and consumption. Under conditions of governmental stability this restlessness imposed on both the central authorities and the enterprise managers the need to bargain, however implicitly, with the laborers. The sole alternative to placating the labor force was to carry centralization to the forbidding, risky extreme of a terroristic war of the

state against society. In a circumstance of divided and enfeebled governmental authority or inspired worker leadership, the restlessness could even flare up into an open defiance of government.

All these problems encouraged the rulers to attempt a form of economic decentralization that would harness the motivations of workers and managers alike to the goal of repeated breakthroughs in production and productivity. Such a decentralization was meant to take place within the boundaries of the basic institutional arrangements mentioned earlier. To satisfy this crucial condition it had to combine certain features. The managers gained a freer hand to invest and to organize. The enterprise became, to a significant though qualified extent, an independent unit for reckoning gains and losses. This entrepreneurial freedom in turn had to obey a series of restrictions. The workers, for example, could not be readily fired, though neither could they expect to trespass very far on managerial prerogative. Enterprise gains and losses might be translated into rewards or penalties for managers and workers. Those, however, who succeeded by skill or luck would not be allowed to go on building industrial empires. Those who failed could expect some governmental bailout, at least unless they were shown to be tangibly at fault.

The combination of the move toward decentralization with this particular pattern of institutional restraints reproduced the problems of slack and shortage in different form and elicited the same disruptive, ad hoc responses to them that these problems provoked at the moment of centralization. Take, as an example, the restrictive effect of job security. Severe institutional constraints circumscribed popular militancy for access to governmental power or economic advantage. At the same time the planners and their masters remained committed both to keep control of the basic relation between consumption and investment and to limit the inequality of incomes. For an increase in income inequality would discredit the government's socialist visage and aggravate destabilizing resentment and conflict among social groups. Both social peace and economic stability required wage restraint. Given wage restraint and the exclusion of popular power, a close to absolute job security seemed one of the few remaining ways to show the worker that he lived in a workers' state. (This inference was no more unavoidable than any other single feature of this institutional system. Thus, some Soviet-style economies, like the Chinese economy of the 1970s and 1980s, had accommodated to widespread unemployment and job insecurity.)

Once job security had been respected for a considerable time, it began to seem more like a vested right than a legitimizing expedient. Its denial to workers or managers might provoke an intense resistance that threatened to disorganize the economy and to endanger the ruling elite. To provide inclusive job security in such an institutional

setting the planners had to maintain prices at a level that would keep the least efficient enterprises going while also guaranteeing that these enterprises would be able to sell their products. The desire to ensure a seller's market, combined with the anti-inflationary commitment to price and wage restraint and with the quasi-inflationary device of allowing consumers' income to rise as a whole, generated a permanent market disequilibrium. Too much demand chased too few goods. Under this particular disequilibrium, in this unique institutional context, the consumers' dearth became the producers' shortage and slack. Enterprises could not get rid of superfluous manpower and did not need to. Every additional amount of capital or inventory could either be turned into a product with guaranteed sale or hoarded as an asset whose current productive uses were undervalued in the price-fixed retail market.

There was also a second-order set of reasons for shortage and hoarding at the decentralizing moment of the communist reform cycle. On the basis of their previous experience, the managers foresaw that a bout of recentralization would eventually begin. They therefore kept all the manpower and capital they could get in anticipation of the time when physical allocations would predominate over regulated competition within a partly free price system. Thus, all the causes of economic irrationality that operated in the more centralized economy continued to act in the more decentralized system, either because they were directly applicable or because they applied by anticipation.

So far my argument has been meant to show that in its two main alternative modes this Soviet-model economy suffered from problems that seriously damaged its productive effectiveness. Problems that seemed technically economic in nature arose in fact from particular institutional arrangements. An economic order committed to combine market decentralization with the social control of accumulation should avoid these institutional practices, if only for the sake of productive effectiveness. It will become increasingly clear that much more than economic efficiency is at stake.

The economic problems I have described were sometimes considered the unconnected consequences of particular, easily reversible errors of policy and, at other times, the inherent problems of a socialist or planned economy. Both views were mistaken. The difficulties could not be corrected by a change of policy unless the change amounted to the revolutionary reform of the underlying institutional structure: the substitution of at least some of the components of the formative context. This context, however, represented something far more particular than the idea of a planned or socialist economy, just as the corresponding problems of economic management in the industrialized Western economies of the time had to be attributed to

a series of practical arrangements that could not be derived from any analysis of the abstract idea of a decentralized or mixed economy.

Similar points can be made, much more briefly, about the social alliances and antagonisms that decentralizing reform encouraged. Again and again, two sets of alliances stood in opposition. The party bureaucrats and the ordinary, semiskilled workers regularly opposed such reform: the former, because it threatened their power and perquisites; the latter, because its logic of economic incentives and increased competition tended to widen the range of wage inequality. The technical intelligentsia, the managers, and the most skilled workers supported decentralization: each of these groups stood to gain from it in both power and money. This division of alliances represented more than the casual result of an easily corrigible distribution of benefits. It resulted from a convergence between the economic reforms that were feasible within the boundaries of established institutions and the collective identities and group interests these same institutions helped sustain. For a leftist the result was a Hobson's choice. For a leftist who adhered to the program of empowered democracy set out later in this book, the outcome represented a proof of failure: he wanted to find the institutional arrangements that would minimize the tendency toward the emergence of groups with entrenched places in the division of labor.

You can confirm the dependence of such economic constraints and cycles on particular institutions by performing a straightforward intellectual experiment. Consider how the embarrassments of Soviet-style economies change in a simplified version of the Yugoslav self-management system. Two key characteristics mark this alternative economic order: the transfer of property rights to the work force of each enterprise, turned into joint owners of the productive stock, and the exclusion of mass-based party conflict over the control and uses of governmental power. Thus, this approach differs from the Soviet-style economy by granting the enterprise and its work force more autonomy than they can hope to gain even in the decentralizing movement of the communist reform cycle. But it also differs from the alternative proposed in Chapter 5: first, because it keeps property rights largely intact and together, transferring them to a group of rightholders rather than dissociating the powers that compose the unified property right and attributing them to different agents and organizations; second, because it maintains central governmental power closely guarded.

The characteristic economic difficulties of such a system become apparent if you assume a more unqualified transfer of property rights to enterprise workers than the Yugoslav system in fact allowed.

That such a system cannot be reconciled with an extension and deepening of democratic ideals is clearly implied by its very defini-

tion. That it imposes severe constraints upon the mobility of capital and enables particular groups to hold capital indefinitely on terms only obliquely and sporadically related to their productive contributions is just as true though less obvious.

Imagine first a simplified version of this economy: one that pursues to the extreme the transfer of property rights to the work force of each firm. The current employees of each enterprise, benefited by almost absolute job security and with an almost unqualified power over the capital at their disposal, may produce, invest, and pay out in the way that seems best suited to their present interests. This prerogative can be exercised chiefly through two parallel though seemingly contrary policies, which might be called running up and running down capital.

To run up capital is to take advantage of past efforts and "undeserved" market windfalls so as to increase the capital intensity and therefore the labor productivity of the enterprise. This increase in turn makes it possible both to raise wages and to widen the wage differentials among segments of the national work force or regions of the country. The central government may impose limits upon the degree of inequality. But these limits cannot amount to much; the more significant they become, the more they appear to eviscerate the self-management scheme itself. Thus, even a progressive income tax is harder to accept in such a system than in the Western-style economies.

To run down capital is to pay out the maximum in enterprise earnings to the workers or supervisory personnel at the cost of further investment. (Assume, for the sake of simplicity, no major conflict of interest among managers, technicians, and ordinary workers.) When this process is repeated throughout the economy as a whole, it prejudices future generations rather than poorer workers or regions.

You cannot count on the running up and running down of capital to cancel each other out and thereby correct the effects of vested claims over capital. Successive market advantages, often completely unrelated to worker effort or managerial skill, may translate into both the capital-intensive investment that widens the gap in productivity and income among segments of the work force and a lower rate of output-expanding investment than would ensure continued growth or be preferred in any number of alternative institutional systems. To be sure, each of these processes may be counterbalanced by other institutional arrangements. For example, the conditions on which the enterprise can obtain needed external finance may prompt it to resist the temptation to excessive payouts. Even then, however, other consequences of the absolute control over capital by an entrenched group are sure to appear.

In its efforts to deal with these difficulties the central government faces constraints generated by the same institutional and ideological order that had created the difficulties in the first place. Self-management, on the basis of a comprehensive property right, assigned to the enterprise work force rather than to central government or private stockholders, serves to shape and legitimize this particular institutional form of economic decentralization. Any attempt by the central government to compensate the prejudicial effects of this system on the distribution of jobs and incomes or the possibilities of innovation and growth appears as an arbitrary attack on the crucial principle of decentralization. Such an attack is all the harder to condone in a society where economic decentralization has no other available instrument and where the exclusion of democratic party conflict and effective electoral accountability leaves self-management as the only visible token of popular power. Thus, here too microeconomic constraints connect to the limits upon macroeconomic management through a series of links that include expectations about the uses of governmental power and presuppose particular institutional arrangements.

The Making of Society Through Politics

A Spectrum of Social Experiments

THE IDEA OF LARGE-SCALE OPTIONS

THIS chapter links the analytical description of formative contexts to a theory of their genesis and transformation. It compares the major institutional complexes that make up the formative contexts of contemporary societies to some major institutional alternatives. The sum of these comparisons suggests a larger map of possible directions that the organization of society has taken or might take. The argument focuses on only two aspects of contemporary formative contexts: first, the system of private rights, especially as it addresses the relation between government and society, and, second, the organization of work. But a more complete version of the argument would take up every aspect of the institutional orders discussed in the preceding chapter and subject them to the same style of analysis.

The strategy is simple, though its intentions are complex. I place each of the institutional complexes discussed on a spectrum whose description conforms to a single principle.

The spectrum is meant to distinguish actual and imaginary variants of social life rather than to describe a necessary historical progression. At one pole of the spectrum the contrast between the routine reproduction and the revolutionary transformation of an institutional framework reaches its point of maximum force; there is a minimum of opportunity to challenge and revise the arrangements that make up an institutional structure. At the other pole of the spectrum the contrast between routine and transformation weakens to the vanishing point; to every aspect of formative order there then corresponds an ordinarily available activity that brings it into question and opens it up for revision.

Three central ideas are developed in the course of the chapter. The first is that extended sets of institutional arrangements and the formative contexts they make up embody different degrees of advance in the denaturalization of social life: in the emancipation of our experiences of practical or passionate connection from the constraints of an entrenched scheme of social division and hierarchy and in the

effacement of the contrast between fighting within a structure of social life and fighting about such a structure.

The second idea builds upon the first and constitutes the main concern of the argument. It is the thesis that the institutional orders of contemporary societies (i.e., of the North Atlantic democracies as well as of the communist regimes) represent no more than a partial move toward the denaturalization of society. We can imagine more complete realizations of the ideal of empowerment through denaturalization. The program of social reconstruction presented later makes good on this possibility.

The third guiding idea of the chapter develops the first two and represents the chief contribution of the argument to the explanatory theory of this book. Particular arrangements cannot easily coalesce within an institutional complex nor can these arrangements coexist over time if they embody very different degrees of the breaking open of society to politics. Thus, we can take a preliminary step toward a view that acknowledges the existence of constraints upon the recombination or substitution of the components of formative contexts without making these constraints depend upon the assumptions of deep-structure social theory. We can deny that these institutional and imaginative orders stand or fall together as a single piece without having to conclude that all institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions can be combined with all others. The thesis about the internal constitution of formative contexts justifies and develops retrospectively the descriptive approach taken in Chapter 2 toward the institutional and imaginative frameworks of routine activity. This thesis also anticipates a major theme of the view of society making to be developed in the next chapter.

Because the institutional arrangements compared and contrasted in this chapter represent different points in a spectrum of degrees of emancipation from false necessity, I call them large-scale options of social life. But notice that nothing in the following argument is meant to imply that the particular institutional arrangements discussed here represent the sole possible forms of the degrees of denaturalization they embody. By contrast to a social theory that relies on the conception of a closed list of possible social worlds (whether or not ordered in an evolutionary sequence), the argument assumes that each level of emancipation from false necessity can be realized through an indefinite range of distinct institutional forms. This variety is limited only by our institutional tradition and our reconstructive imagination. The particular forms of state-society relations or of labor organization selected for discussion in this chapter are chosen only because they are familiar. Because they are familiar, they also serve a subsidiary aim of providing categories for the comparative analysis of formative contexts. These categories are put to work in

the next chapter, which draws a theory of transformation out of a schematic historical argument about the genesis of contemporary formative contexts.

By contrast to the distinctively evolutionary forms of deep-structure social theory, I presuppose no relentless march toward an ever greater emancipation from false necessity. The view of context making worked out in Chapter 4 defends weaker claims. Among these claims are the ideas that a cumulative development toward such an emancipation is possible, that such an advance has often taken place, that this possibility has often been realized, though never flawlessly or irreversibly, and that its actualization constitutes the precondition for a broad range of forms of human empowerment.

The large-scale options of social life studied in this chapter might be thought of as experiments, in the sense of the experiments Galileo and his successors introduced into modern science. Each such experiment renders accessible a reality that would otherwise remain unavailable. Thus, Galileo wanted to determine free fall and projectile motion in a void. By so doing, he could put at the center of his theory concepts that united two features. They described the most general case of motion conceivable to the thought of the time – the uniform acceleration of a freely falling body. They also allowed for mathematical treatment by constructing a circumstance in which all the parameters and variables could be specified. To reach this goal, however, Galileo had to invent a series of ingenious arguments and practical situations that revealed what would happen in a void. These arguments and situations singled out the effect of the resisting medium and generated what, taken all in all, amounted to a substitute for the inaccessible void.

Each of the large-scale options of social existence discussed here represents an experiment, in a sense similar to the Galilean idea; an experiment from the standpoint of people whose immediate experience is governed primarily by one of the other options of social life. Memory and thought rather than practical manipulation may stage the experiment. For each of these alternative directions of cumulative change turns what would otherwise be minor or residual aspects of social experience into the central themes of an entire practical or imaginative ordering of life. Remembered and analyzed, they make accessible another world – a world that seems very different from the one we are in but that is nevertheless a commentary on us as well as on its own inhabitants. If we look hard enough, we discover in contemporary society the signs of this alien reality. The principle that underlies this imaginative possibility is the same that makes a person feel, as his own insight and originality advance, that what other people do and are is also a demonstration of what he too can become or already is.

All the large-scale options together represent experiments in relation to a larger whole: the general case, the truth about humanity and society. But here the resemblance to Galileo's experiments with the void stops. There is no set of situations that can exhaustively represent this general case, if only because historical experiments help construct what they also reveal. No closed set of lawlike forces governs this constructive activity, commanding its evolution and determining its outer limits.

My argument orders these large-scale options according to the degree and character of their departure from a limiting case. This limiting case is the circumstance that consists in the near exclusion of social experiments. In such a circumstance the arrangements and preconceptions that constitute a formative context remain only minimally vulnerable to transformative conflict. People then come closest to acting as if the social context of their life and thought were indeed the context of all contexts: the true face of civilization. They live almost as if the naturalistic premise were true.

You can then imagine several kinds of departure from this circumstance: some in the practical organization of government and workers; others in the established vision of right and possible association. Each departure emphasizes directions that particular societies have actually followed. Each also amounts to an experiment about the nature of our ability to keep going when we hit against the limits imposed upon us by our contexts.

EXPERIMENTS WITH THE STATE: PRIVILEGE AND RIGHT

Imagine now a series of greater or lesser departures from the limiting case of a society without experiments. Some of these departures will have to do with the life of the state and of its public order of privilege and right. By analyzing this life, we come to grasp some of the basic alternative forms of rights and of the constitutional arrangements that support these alternatives.

The System of Privilege

The first departure is hardly a departure at all; or rather it is a departure whose transformative uses are ordinarily contained as soon as they are realized. Central governments are the most powerful of all the instruments that can be used to transform society. But in the circumstance of minimal experimentation that I now describe, the state becomes little more than society constantly willing itself into existence. Position in the state and position in society become one and the same. A one-to-one relation must be established between

the exact form of each group's participation in governmental affairs, or of exclusion from them, and each group's power to set terms to the activities of other groups in the daily rounds of work and production. The basic form of right is then the participation in a status that directly links public office and economic privilege.

Defined abstractly, such a situation may seem to imply the thoroughgoing suppression of all transformative opportunities. The persistence of such opportunities, however, becomes apparent as soon as you consider how this restrictive correspondence between office and privilege has worked in practice.

On the one hand, there is the form of the city-state republic of Western antiquity. The citizens stand united against the foreigner and the excluded mass. A struggle goes on, however, within the citizenry. Some groups try to establish an inner civic oligarchy, and subordinate or even disenfranchise the ordinary citizenry. Other groups (the citizen people and their self-appointed captains) resist them in the name of civic condominium over the state and joint rights to the incalculable material and spiritual benefits of access to governmental power. The struggle may fall into the repetitious cycle of routine politics of city-state republics that I described earlier. But this recurrent conflict does create a permanent occasion for fighting over what society will be like. This fighting appears as a contest over the right to participate in central government, the institution that, more than any other, defines a version of civic life and defends it against all enemies within and without.

In the agrarian-bureaucratic empires, the link between public office and private privilege took the form of a hierarchy of ranks that included a ruling imperial household and a range of orders of aristocrats and notables. Such a hierarchy ties together, in the definition of each social rank, a certain measure and mode of access to governmental power, on the one hand, and particular privileged claims on social resources and human labor. But the tie-in and the hierarchy it supports tend to become indistinct and controversial at both the grass roots and the commanding heights of the social order.

The most forceful and perspicacious masters of the state strive to liberate governmental power from the constraining, destructive effect of magnate privilege. They make privilege into a precarious gift of central government, transferrable at will from one group, family, or one individual to another. In this way they try to turn both access to governmental power and privileged claims upon wealth and labor into benefits conferred from on high.

At the same time, the masses never completely participate in the order of ranks. Lacking regular access to governmental power and forced to serve as passive objects of the privileges of those who do enjoy such access, they remain outsiders to the corporate hierarchies

of their oppressors. If they are allowed to go too far, through popular rebellion initiated from below or revolutionary despotism led from above, the whole hierarchical order of society collapses. Nothing and nobody within that hierarchy remains safe. But if the material security and the organizational autonomy of the working people, especially of the small-scale independent property-owners, are totally destroyed, the realm falls under the dominion of rival magnates and the central state order begins to collapse, together with the commercial economy.

So long as these twin dangers of unraveling from the top and from the bottom were held in check, agrarian-bureaucratic societies survived. But even then the fighting went on, spurred by the interplay between a recurrent opportunity and an unbounded ambition. The opportunity was the periodic weakening of the realm. The people in charge of central governments found it hard to mobilize the resources needed to manage economic or military crises. For these rulers faced severe constraints upon their ability to use governmental power for transformative purposes or to appeal directly to the class of smallholders over the heads of landowning oligarchs. The unbounded ambition that helped refuel the characteristic conflicts of these societies was each group's and each family's effort to change place in an order whose design was seen to be a product of conflict even when it was proclaimed to be a gift from heaven.

Thus, each historical example of a tight correspondence between place in the state and place in society turns out to have more room for transformative conflict than appears on the surface. Far from being a form of the life of the state and its law that belongs to a superseded moment of history, it remains an active possibility at any moment. Thus, the revolutionary state in twentieth-century societies often fell back on a new version of the radical politics of privilege, as an analysis of the formative institutional contexts of contemporary communist countries suggests. But whatever new forms the politics of privilege may assume, the chance to fight about the institutional and imaginative framework of social life remains. It remains even in this, the style of legal and governmental order that most severely represses the remaking of social life.

The System of Power and Immunity

Now imagine a society that tolerates no direct, overt correspondence between liens upon the state and advantage in society. Governmental power wins a greater freedom to maneuver. The tie between access to government and social advantage loosens. The primary basis of individual or group prerogatives becomes a background system of entitlements that the state respects, upholds, and occasionally adjusts.

The true character of this direction of development comes out most clearly in the nature of its public order of right. This order becomes, at its heart, a system of powers and immunities: a vast array of loosely connected clusters of entitlements. Each cluster defines a social position. It does so by a technique with two inseparable aspects.

The cluster of entitlements creates an island of security against the predatory or reformist actions of the state, a haven in which some material or ideal interest, and the actual person who is its bearer, can hide. So long as it remains within its protected zone, the interest cannot be struck dead. Conversely, this operation immobilizes a parcel of the state's capacity to move and shake the social world.

At the same time, each cluster of entitlement – an immunity against governmental intervention – confers a power to set terms to other people's activities. It may confer this power directly by defining a social status with certain built-in entitlements to give orders to people in other specified statuses. But, more often, it will do so indirectly by creating devices through which some become dependent upon others. Thus, certain entitlements allow for the lifelong and hereditary accumulation of capital, others for the buying of labor, and others still for the power to supervise and to make investment choices and to control the actual organization of work. When these entitlements combine with a particular technical ordering of production, complete with a distinctive organizational and a technological style and with a routinized definition of collective interests and identities in a pacified political world, they generate recurrent social positions. They do so even if they describe rights universally available to everybody rather than a hierarchy of status and prerogative.

The twofold nature of the cluster of entitlements as immunity against the state and as power over others constitutes the core of property. We commonly think of property as either a specific form of control over capital, accompanied by the power to exclude others or as a synonym for the abstract idea of right. The first idea mistakes the special case for the general one. No self-evident stable or significant distinction exists between control over the physical commodities and the material products of labor, command over labor itself, and the power to dispose of nonmaterial rights. Legal analysis quickly spiritualizes any purely material conception of property. But the second idea of property – property as abstract right – betrays an ignorance of the very different forms that a system of rights can take. Some of these forms differ radically from the rights that modern property exemplifies: different types of rightholders, different ways of marking the boundary between what falls inside and outside the scope of an entitlement, and different ways of sanctioning rights.

The most useful conception of property – the one that escapes the

confusion of everyday usage while remaining in touch with the concerns and contexts of such usage – is the conception that defines property as the characteristic form of rights in the system of powers and immunities I have been discussing. The property owner, in this enlarged sense, is the person ensconced in a position in which an immunity against the state and its transformative designs is directly connected to a power to set terms to other people's activity.

The whole system of correspondences between immunity and power can pass through several levels of sanctification. It may operate through a pure state-defined legal order, subject to the ordinary forms of legislative revision. It may be embodied in constitutional arrangements, harder to change or to discredit. It may even be represented as a system of natural rights, supposedly rooted in the pieties of the collective tradition and in the highest demands of personality and immune against voracious majorities and irresponsible demagogues. Each succeeding tier of sanctification represents an additional measure of defense against the transformative powers of government and the modest surprises of routine politics.

Such a system of right can coexist with a severely restricted measure of participation in government – a restriction that may apply even to the groups benefiting most directly from the order of powers and immunities. The state may be largely in the hands of a monarch, his servants, and his closest allies in the higher ranks of society. And yet governmental initiative may be largely immobilized by the power and immunities of different ranks and communities – powers and immunities that may even be represented as barred against revision by the masters of the central governments. Such an approach to freedom as an order of status-specific powers and immunities was the single most important feature of the European absolutist state or *Ständestaat*. (The European prerevolutionary state, however, often had many of the features of the system of privilege described in the earlier section, just as the agrarian-bureaucratic empires had many of the marks of this system of powers and immunities.)

Again, the state may be in the hands of a dictatorial clique. Yet the dictatorship may exist alongside steep and stable social inequalities that use the instruments supplied by a system of formally equal and universalistic rights rather than the rank-specific prerogatives of an estatist society, whose legal form I described as the system of privilege. You can find examples in the postrevolutionary Bonapartist state and indeed all the latter-day forms of state absolutism that coexist with a private legal order similar to the kind recommended by nineteenth-century European liberalism. The crucial threat to the success of this coexistence is that governmental authority may become so far-reaching and untrammelled that the background structure of powers and immunities loses its reality. The narrowing of civic

participation in governmental politics must not become the occasion to leave the state unchecked in its programmatic experiments with the social order.

The same system of powers and immunities may come to exist alongside a broader measure of popular participation in the struggle over the uses of governmental power. We find this combination in the liberal democracies of the postrevolutionary West, including the democratic states whose formative institutional context Chapter 2 described. However, just as the survival of this system of powers and immunities demands that authoritarian governments remain heavily circumscribed in the exercise of their transformative capabilities, it also requires that more democratic regimes not go too far in favoring mass militancy and mass organization. The citizen participates. But he participates in a state whose ability to revise the terms of collective existence is highly limited. It is limited by the predominance of forms of protection against governmental oppression that serve, simultaneously, as devices for shaping other people's activity, for making others dependent and turning their dependence to advantage without becoming equally dependent upon them.

Thus, the stakes of conflict must remain. Even the entitlements that most directly shape recurrent social positions may be adjusted from time to time (e.g., changes in opportunities of worker organization, or in prerogatives of management, or in legal and constitutional safeguards for foreign underclass workers). But, at any given time, most of the structure of these entitlements must be held constant. If not portrayed as constitutional natural right, it must nevertheless be seen as an indispensable basis of republican freedom. The state must be arranged in ways that help keep routine politics on this narrow path.

Right Without Dominion

The definition of rights may take still another direction. But this third direction, unlike the other two, is hypothetical: it describes the imaginary extension of tendencies that appeared as no more than minor variations and programmatic aims in all the societies that had existed up to the end of the twentieth century.

Under such a regime, the individual's safety against governmental oppression and his guarantee of effective participation in the processes that set the collective terms of his own existence no longer rely upon devices that serve private oppression. It may be a guarantee expressed in the inviolability of his immediate personal interests: his right to a job and to a change of job, his right to the satisfaction of his basic material needs, as defined by the standards of his time and place, his right to share in the construction and judgment of culture, and his

right to engage affirmatively and safely in many forms of fighting about the arrangements of his social world, from the larger constitution of the society to the immediate organization of work, leisure, and family life. But none of these rights works through legal arrangements whose convergent effect is to confer an entrenched control over capital and labor or over any other basic aspect of collective existence. Therefore, nothing prevents the conflict over the uses of governmental power from touching on every aspect of the society's practical and imaginative order. The whole life of society is in fact then arranged so as to multiply the transformative practical and imaginative activities that bring every aspect of society's order into question and open that order up to conflict. The contrast between routine and transformative politics loses its force.

People who can readily put on their agenda the foundations of the world they inhabit must be haughty, high-spirited, and even reckless. They must be secure in an inviolable independence. Yet the instruments of this independence must not smother the struggles that constantly offer them visible images of the connection between the forms of their life in common and the activities from which these forms arise and that cultivate the sense of mastery suitable to men and women who are neither masters nor servants.

The movement in this direction is subject, by its very nature, to a catastrophic detour from which there is no guaranteed, automatic return. The system of powers and immunities may be followed by the overthrow of all the citizen's defenses against the state, a state whose structure of right need be no more than its own dream of absolute power. What results from this situation is never a continued terror of state against society. Such a terror would perpetuate the conflict over the fundamentals of social life, dissolve all settled contexts of power or production, and threaten to unseat and destroy the very people who brought it forth. This terror can occur only as an interlude, though a repeated and savage one, in the movement along the other two directions of state and right described earlier.

This violent interlude may end in a new example of the system of privilege, though accompanied by a greater real and rhetorical commitment to economic equality. Or it may be followed by the consolidation of clusters of entitlements that represent both defenses against governmental action and claims upon other institutions and individuals. This is a new example of the system of powers and immunities, though unaccompanied by broad-based participation in governmental decisions and though rendered precarious, at any moment, by the resurgent, recentralizing state. In this double movement toward the other directions of state and right, you have the outer limits to routine politics in twentieth-century communist regimes.

EXPERIMENTS WITH THE MICROSTRUCTURE:
PATRON AND CLIENT*The Character of Patron-Client Relations*

Now turn from the structure of government, with its order of privilege and right, to the detailed texture of relations among people – especially the way they deal with one another in the profane, workaday world. Under this microscope, society shows another series of departures from the polar circumstance of no experiment. Throughout history, the most common, and most limited, direction of departure has been the reenactment of an impersonal, rigid order of division and hierarchy as a series of personal, fluid deals between patrons and clients.

As patrons and clients, people excite one another's fear and gratitude in a world marked by continuing inequality. Their bond lies at some point between outright coercion and an unequal partnership. The patron and the client make a deal. The client gets some kind of protection: a bulwark against the brutal uncertainties of renewed social warfare. This guarantee begins with security in his job, his rank, or his land, but invariably includes a great deal more. The patron gets a committed laborer, follower, or hanger-on: extra hands to work, to fight, or glorify a name.

The terms of the exchange already entrench an inequality. The patron must remain the boss and leader, come what may. His is the quintessential form of rule: he offers the client a little social world from which fighting has been temporarily banished. Even when the struggle begins again in the larger world beyond – in any form from physical struggle to market fluctuations – the patron will keep it at bay. All he asks in return is obedience, industriousness, and fidelity, that lesser love.

Both exchange and dominion are transfigured by attachment. Patronage flourishes in the climate of trust. Neither patron nor client insists upon a short-term reciprocity. They refuse to exploit to the hilt their transitory advantages. They remain concerned with the long-term survival of their bond and recognize an obligation to come, in need, to each other's assistance. Their partnership, which is also a hierarchy, can never be fully codified as a system of entitlements. Thus exchange and power, confused with each other, also take on more than the color of community. To some limited and unequal but significant extent, the patron and the client put themselves in each other's hands. Their venture confirms spiritually as well as practically an authoritative form of life and the social places and activities which make that life what it is.

Thus, the patron-client tie sustains loyalties by satisfying tangible, urgent needs. But, in doing so, it assures each participant that he counts and that there is a place for him in the world. The deal he has struck acknowledges as well as threatens or bribes him. It brings out into the open the puns of calculation, mastery, and love that run through every aspect of social life.

The Core Instances of Patron-Client Relations

In certain common historical circumstances the explicit bond between patron and client became the basic form of relationship in society. These circumstances provide us with the exemplary cases of patronage: the empire-building warlord and his ex-nomadic followers who have put aside the traditions of a warrior people on the move without acquiring those of a settled agrarian oligarchy; the landowner whose dealings with his once enserved or enslaved peasants take place in the receding penumbra of an earlier form of domination; the notable who acts as mediator between a local populace and some center of power and culture. In many societies, all these modes of patronage have intermingled. Thus, the late Roman Republic shows us the relationship of the rival warlords to their cohorts, the tie between a master's relationship to his manumitted slaves (the core context of clientship as a technical legal idea), and the bond that connected an equestrian businessman to his protector in the *nobilitas* and every successful noble or equestrian to his horde of dependents. Each of these settings brought to the fore one of the typical forms of the patron-client tie in history: patronage as the generalization of a bond between the warlord and his follower, as the edge of a vanishing system of domination, and as the transmission of advantage from a higher sphere of society.

The circumstances in which these core instances of patronage arose, and continue to arise, share something in common. Once you grasp this common element, you can see why those instances are simply the more visible representatives of a more basic and unifying movement in the fine structure of social life.

In all these circumstances, the social ranks and communal attachments that constitute the order of hierarchy and division in society were neither overwhelmingly intense and immediate, nor diffuse and discredited. (In Chapter 1, I equated the relative strength of that order with the relative unavailability, in ordinary social life, of practical or conceptual activities that bring it into question and open it up to conflict.) When the scheme of division and hierarchy becomes too fragmented, obscure, or disrespected, the patron-client relationship loses one of its background conditions: the sharply unequal measures of control over force and wealth that enable the patron to

come forward as the petty despot and lord protector of a pacified social enclave. The confusion of exchange and community with each other as well as with dependence or dominion ceases to seem the natural form of social life. When, however, the order of division and hierarchy remains tangible, unquestioned, unified, and omnipresent, there is less occasion for the personal maneuvers of protection and service that represent the life of patronage and clientship. Deference, loyalty, and threat will not need to be daily reinvented in countless personal compacts that reenact the passage from uncontained fighting to the truce of mastery and surrender.

The bond between patron and client can become central and pervasive only when the social order is like a partly written script. The main plot has been given. But the details have to be improvised. This improvisation consists in constantly weaving, again, the ties of gratitude and fear. In this intermediate circumstance, the uneven reciprocities of the patron-client deal represent neither immediate reflexes of the parties' respective positions within a societywide hierarchy or a set of interlocking communal-corporate groups nor free-floating human ties only remotely connected to social rank and collective identity.

The script never is more than partly written. Every impersonal arrangement always must be turned into the small coin of personal relations. Every system of powers and rights must finally be enacted. If the order to be enacted is one that reproduces large-scale opportunities to start with, the little drama of the patron and the client will have its chance. When powers of command are exercised face-to-face over time, they invariably pass through the subtleties of a give-and-take that works upon the institutional shell and fills it with new content. Every letup in control, every uncertainty in the substance of entitlements and obligations, supplies another opportunity to play variations on the themes of the system of powers-rights. But these variations change from peripheral or illicit adjustments into the central constructive device of association only in that intermediate circumstance I described. The exemplary instances of the patron-client relationship to which I earlier alluded belong to an open list: open because every time we look in the past, we find new cases, and open because they can continue to occur in the future in novel forms with novel types of patrons and clients.

But for patronage to achieve this central role in the making of society, it is not enough that the order of hierarchy and division give way to an open space on which the personalized confusions of power, exchange, and attachment can be played out. It is also necessary that the open space not be occupied by a style of work organization, or by a vision of society, hostile to those confusions.

Every attempt to experiment with the organization of work carries

out some conception of the relationship between task definition and task execution. Every such experiment with the ordering of work requires that the dealings between people in the collective enterprise – the bureaucracy, the army, the factory – not be entirely predetermined by their hierarchical and communal places in the outside society. The organization must generate a new repertory of relationships that can serve its own purposes of coordination and control. From the standpoint of these organizational ideals, the patron-client relationship appears as a fatal corruption rather than a constructive device. It threatens to submerge the more impersonal links between superiors and subalterns in the rivalries of would-be leaders and protectors who turn the enterprise into a midget arena for petty animosities and deal out favors and threats according to their convenience. Whenever there emerged an organization whose internal arrangements stood in some tension to the forms of hierarchy and division in the surrounding society – like the Ming-Ch'ing, Byzantine, and Ottoman bureaucracies, the Roman Church before the Renaissance, or the Theravada sangha – its leaders had to wage an endless and often losing battle against its cannibalization by patron-client deals.

Thus, for the patron-client bond to play a major role in society making, the open space left vacant by the relative withdrawal of an impersonal order of hierarchy and division must not be taken over by organizational structures with which it is at war – structures whose nature will be discussed at greater length in the next subsection. Neither must the reigning vision of society be one that rejects as paradoxical or unjustified the convergence of power, exchange, and community that the patron-client relationship constantly reaffirms.

The Peripheral Instances of Patron-Client Relations

When the experiments in work organization coincide with the imaginative denial of the joinder of calculation, attachment, and dominion, the patron-client relation continues to appear in every nook and cranny of social life. But it appears as an illicit and shadowy, though perhaps useful and even indispensable, adjustment of other practices and ideals. It then serves as the reminder of a transformative direction that has not yet been – and never is – entirely foreclosed.

This was the way that patron-client relationships appeared in the twentieth-century countries whose reform cycles Chapter 2 discussed. Everywhere in those societies you could find people who acted toward one another as patrons or clients. The white-collar worker in one of the Western democracies might expect and receive from his superior a measure of studied informality and mock equality. Despairing of the chance of changing his situation in society or

the nature of his work, he looked for a boss who was also a sponsor and "friend." Outside the workplace, the underclass laborer might rely on bonds of fidelity to his protectors, bonds that gave vitality to what would otherwise remain a passive community of transients and victims. Even in his dealings with his own employer, he alternated between resentful indifference and anxious loyalty. In the communist countries of that time, countless ties of sponsorship and indebtedness paved the road to fortune and secured against the risks of disgrace. Workers teamed up with their immediate supervisors to ward off the pressures from above. The contestants for the highest offices of the state dealt in the coin of personal sponsorship and personal loyalty all the more heavily because they did not need to marshal a broader base of support in the name of impersonal policies and principles.

But though the pervasiveness of patron-client ties in all countries amounted to an open secret, it remained a shameful one: for the individual, a lesser evil; for the propagandist and reformer, a standing embarrassment; for the theorist, the mysterious reminder of something tenacious in social life.

An apparent paradox in my argument can now be resolved. The patron-client relationship, with its characteristic equivocations of power, exchange, and community, seems to be only the realization of what I described as the imaginative element in the limiting circumstance of a society without experiments. Yet I have presented the rise of patronage to a central role as one of the ways society can depart from that extreme condition of closure. Both theses hold good. The sense of their coexistence reveals the deep facts about society that are played up in this line of cumulative change.

The patron-client deal takes the order of division and hierarchy from the impersonal to the personal. It stands toward the rankings and communities of the social world as water to ice. It shows the fluid medium of personal relations from which those principles of social order constantly emerge and back into which they constantly melt, like a Buddhist aeon collapsing into its primitive moment of decay and radiance.

The replacement of the impersonal by the personal represents, whenever and to whatever extent it occurs, an opening of social life to conflict and invention. Order must now be endlessly rebuilt, through all the ploys of threat and ingratiating. The client may pit alternative patrons against each other and confuse emotions and calculations in ways that undermine his ties of allegiance. He may start by bickering over what seems to him a broken compact and end by rebelling against what he has discovered to be an unnecessary yoke.

But, so long as the patron-client relationship survives with its distinctive features, the experiment in departure from the limiting

circumstance of closure cannot go far. For patronage reenacts in the form of the personal bond the essential imaginative principle that underlies every version of the subordination of the form of exchange and community to an inviolable regime of power. This subordination represents the exemplary constraint upon people's efforts to remake society and to relativize the difference between the activities that generate a social world and the activities that go on within it.

The Logic of Patron-Client Relations

The patron-client relation dramatizes some of the most basic facts about society. It reveals the correspondence between impersonal arrangements and personal relations. In so doing, it also underlines the equivocations of attachment, exchange, and power that are forever resurfacing in social life.

Every scheme of social division and hierarchy and every imaginative vision of human association represent the more or less rigidly defined subset of an open set of instrumental or passionate relations among individuals. Social hierarchies and communal attachments, sustained by powers and rights, may place people in position to make demands, pose threats, and offer help. Though this positioning may seem to carry clear implications, it still has to be seized upon and turned to advantage. The large currency of rank and force must be changed into the small coin of alliances and followings.

When the order of division and hierarchy begins to dissolve, but when its dissolution fails to be accompanied by new ways of arranging work and imagining society, the patron-client relationship becomes the dominant form of social life. Hence, the unique feature of this direction of cumulative change: the impersonal order passes into a corresponding personal form; its principles are reaffirmed rather than denied by the device of association that takes its place.

This personalization of social division and hierarchy can happen only because another group of facts about society comes into play. These facts have to do with the easy passage between mastery and ingratiation. To become stable, power must stop depending on the constant application of the whip. The brutality of armed power must be softened by habits of settled exchange and gestures of paternal care. The former confuse the maintenance of the order of dominion and dependence with the need to satisfy urgent material wants. The latter equate it with a community in which people can allow themselves a higher measure of mutual, though unequal, accepted vulnerability.

A similar personalization may take its point of departure even from a relatively equal communal or exchange relationship. Take the way the exchange may pass simultaneously into a communal order and

power, until at last the same confusions I just described have been firmly entrenched in social life.

Consider these ties of alliance in their purest and simplest forms, as they may arise in relative isolation from adherence to a common cause or from some closely textured, preexisting community among the allies. At one extreme of possibilities, the catalyst of the relationship may be the posing of a threat, based upon an advantage, all the way from superior physical force to a preeminence of intellect or will. At the opposite pole, a person binds himself to another by doing him a favor and earning his gratitude.

In the first case, the starting point is mastery; in the second, ingratiation. Yet what begins in the climate of apprehension often moves into the atmosphere of gratitude, and the reverse movement is just as frequent. The ordinary condition of social relationships that call for active collaboration is the confusion of fear and gratitude. To explain why and how this happens is harder than it seems.

To be sure, the long-run stability of power requires that coercion be joined by justification. Concessions must be made to moral demands, including the demand for a measure of reciprocity between the strong and the weak – a prime instance of the spiritualization of violence. But this does not add up to an account of why, in the face of so many weapons and apologies of established hierarchy, there should also be such a forceful undercurrent reassertion of the claims of reciprocity, to the point of persistently giving rise to metaphors of paternal care and habits of settled exchange between masters and their dependents.

Again, the history of an exchange relationship that starts off on a footing of relative equality will redound to the advantage of some more than others; and the cumulative, self-reinforcing impact of these disparities is apt to produce a circumstance of hierarchy and fear. This does not, however, explain why the symbols and experiences of gratitude so often persist long after one party has asserted an indisputable superiority of power. Nor does it show why even a modest gambit of gift-giving, ingratiation, and partnership may well be met, beyond every ground for immediate suspicion, with an intimation, on the part of the supposed beneficiary, that some assault is being perpetrated against him, right then and there. These incongruous facts demand an analysis capable of tying such varieties of association to people's elementary concerns.

Start with the perception that every such alliance leads a two-sided existence. It is the outcome of precise and pressing wants. One person, for example, requires protection against constant risks to his life; another needs military followers and common laborers to safeguard his station against rival chieftains. The former offers the latter the protection afforded by membership in his cohort in exchange for

service and loyalty from the hanger-on (a crude image of the genesis of Western European feudalism).

At the same time, the relationship exists in another dimension, in which the performances sought after and traded are far less capable of definition. On this other plane, every encounter is a social parallel and extension of experiences of love and hate. The encounter has to do with the terms under which one individual can win acceptance from another for the fact of his existence, as that fact is revealed in his needs and wants. The provision of benefits and the imposition of harms matter both in themselves and as signs of this larger acceptance or rejection.

For an alliance among concrete individuals to attract and sustain loyalties, it must serve as an effective way to secure tangible, urgently desired advantages among the would-be allies. It must also, in the longer run, do so in a way that assures a participant, however inferior his role in the alliance may be, that he counts, that there is a place for him in the world, and that the deal he has struck acknowledges as well as bribes or threatens him.

A shift in the character of his needs must be taken into account, at least as long as it does not alter the fundamental alignment of advantage within the pact. Thus, even the most lopsided allocation of rights and duties will be overtaken by a residual element of reciprocity. The offer of gifts and bribes, when not justified by the presence of personal love or of some compelling duty of communal obligation, will itself be feared as a danger to the maintenance of this reciprocity.

Some smaller version of love is demanded of every long-lived assertion of power. This lesser love is the solidarity by which the stronger party concedes something to the demand for reciprocity and acts as if the weaker party's interests were, to some modest extent, his own.

It may often seem that the element of solidarity has been whittled down to the vanishing point or has never emerged in the first place; take every sort of enslavement, Eastern European and Japanese "feudalism," the regimentation of mass labor in a vast array of imperial states, and even the condition of the casually employed underclass in the North Atlantic societies of the present day. This will certainly be the case when we look to these countries with a view to the way the immediate disposition of power in and outside the workplace is firmly entrenched in general principles of social organization that seem beyond the reach of its victims or even its beneficiaries to transform. Both the routines of the small-scale human encounter and the patterns of encompassing social organization may operate with such overwhelming force and self-evidence that they largely dispense

with the effort to elicit loyalties and to soften the fist of straightforward coercion in the glove of reciprocity.

Even in these extreme though common cases, however, there will be intermediaries and messengers of power who, as they come into direct contact with their bosses and underlings, will be drawn into games of reciprocity. The bosses will need to count on their loyalties; they, in turn, will be able to argue that their authority over their subordinates depends upon their being treated and recognized as the forward, cutting edge of some higher order of power. Besides, each succeeding level of subordinates, down to the very lowest, will struggle to maintain a residue of group solidarity against the exactions of its masters; and the more effective it is in doing this, the more it will give rise to shadowy leaders of its own. Thus, if power becomes enmeshed in solidarity in the transactions between social ranks, solidarity must offer sacrifices to power within each rank.

This latter point draws us back to the general truth it illustrates: if one-sided dominion must give way to a dose of mutual deference, how and why is the reverse process just as universal? Offers of help and proposals of ingratiation may amount to a social metaphor of love, for they share with personal love the suggestion of accepting and valuing the other person. But they are also feared as traps.

The peril they offer has an obvious material aspect: that, in exchange for what he gets (such as military protection, salary, sponsorship, or even just some commodity he lacks), the beneficiary will be drawn into a circumstance of ever more marked subordination until he is wholly at the mercy of his alleged benefactor. The danger also has a moral side: the risk that the ingratiating initiative will not be accompanied, on the part of the putative gift-giver and seducer, by any real acquiescence in his own vulnerability. By receiving the gift, the recipient shows himself vulnerable and dependent – for he has needs that the other can satisfy – without himself being able to satisfy an equally pressing need of the giver's. The further the act of ingratiation moves away from love and trust, with their characteristic willingness to accept vulnerability, the greater this risk becomes.

When the immediate preoccupations of personal dealings are the minima of survival and security, these moral aspects of animosity and partnership may seem irrelevant or obfuscating luxuries. But this impression of superfluity comes from thinking of these anxieties about allegiance and dependence as mere additions to practical concerns rather than as yearnings that are always realized or frustrated in the way practical concerns are met. The tale about personality that is told by the down-to-earth realities of security and survival speaks more persuasively to the run of men and women than the books of their religion and laws.

Only when this ever-present reconvergence of power, exchange, and community has been avoided by forms of imagination and organization that resist it can the experimental reinvention of society gain a broader scope.

EXPERIMENTS WITH THE MICROSTRUCTURE: THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Clientalism and Rationalized Work

The patron-client relationship reaffirms the principles that underlie a pervasive order of division and hierarchy, and it does so in the very course of replacing or complementing that order. The need to organize collective work for practical tasks, however, may provide the occasion for cumulative changes in the fine texture of human relations that move in other directions. These changes may generate a scheme of relations at work that stands in some tension not only to a particular rigid order of division and hierarchy in society at large, but to any such order. In fact, there are at least two distinct directions of cumulative change: one of them far more subversive than the other in its effect upon the fixed order of society. As the argument is both abstract and complex, it may be helpful to summarize its main elements, though not its actual sequence, by way of anticipation.

Remember, first, some of the starting points of this view. Every impersonal, institutionalized ordering of human life in society enacts a certain version of human association. This enactment represents a selection from a larger, open set of personal relations. To the extent that fighting over the terms of people's material and moral access to one another has been interrupted or contained, this larger set appears only as a penumbra around the established order. Into this halo go the little involuntary experiments in collaboration and encounter that deviate from the institutions and ideas to whose stability, in the face of unexpected circumstance and unsatisfied need, they may nevertheless be indispensable.

The enacted version of human association always has two aspects, which correspond to the two faces of human sociability. There is the passionate aspect: the life of mutual confirmation or antagonism, in which people count for one another as more than means or obstacles to the realization of one another's ends. Its extreme associational form is the community, where people practice in their dealings a heightened vulnerability. There is the instrumental aspect: exchange and collaboration for the accomplishment of practical ends. Its extreme associational form is the work team, where personal relations are directed to the accomplishment of some practical goal. The two

aspects overlap: most obviously so in the case where the work is itself a community, and the value the co-workers place on their collaboration cannot be exhausted by their concern with its practical outcome. Nevertheless, the passionate and the instrumental aspects never fully merge. Their relationship remains a troubled one, both as a theme for theoretical understanding and as an object of practical concern.

The structure of personal relations at work enacts a conception of reason at the same time that it realizes a scheme of human association in its instrumental aspect. Ways of thinking and of doing pass into each other without a break. Every account of how to go about dealing with problems includes a view of certain steps and of standard sequences and combinations of those steps. Though this view may be defined most clearly in the area of "pure" theory, it will reappear even in people's practical ideas about the collective organization of productive manual labor. Each relation among concepts or stages in reasoning can be translated into a view of links among labor operations, at various levels of physical activity. The translation is as tricky as it is unavoidable. We have just as much reason to say that a particular practice of work "embodies" a conception of reason as to claim that a conception of reason mirrors and abstracts a practice of labor.

The machine turns the same practice conception of reason into a physical object. Both in the relationship among its parts and in the way it is inserted within a larger problem solving or productive process, it reproduces both a practice of reasoning and an approach to work. For this reason, it can replace both a step in reasoning and a stage in labor.

The conceptions of reason fundamental enough to be enacted into a way of working are not infinitely numerous. In fact, history has presented us so far with only a single such fully developed practice conception, though one that can move in two very different directions, as will soon become apparent. There are many equivalent definitions of this single scheme. One of them is the idea of an interplay between abstract projects (practical or theoretical) and concrete operations.

The work that realizes this practice of reason – rational labor – is labor that executes a general, relatively predefined task. Workers can then break the task down into distinct and more or less routinized operations. Besides saving time through controlled repetition and mounting skill, this decomposition also makes it possible to reduce complicated problems to simpler, hence more manageable ones.

Moreover, once the project is laid out as a series of tangible steps, directly seen and experienced, you can spot opportunities and obstacles that would otherwise have escaped you. In the short run, this

allows you constantly to improve upon your procedures for carrying out the task. In the long run, it sharpens and changes your view of what the task is: in the course of the execution you hit upon ways of redefining the project that allow you to achieve objectives you had either not articulated for yourself or dismissed as unattainable or impractical.

This practice conception of reason and labor can be seen as just a special application of the general idea of imagination. Both the task, problem, or perception, on one side, and the labor or reasoning process, on the other, undergo transformative variations in the mind or in actual activity. These variations constitute the keynote of imaginative effort. The double exercise is fully successful only when it does more than execute the task, solve the problem, or analyze the perception: it generates a changed task, problem, or image – one that lends itself to further practical or conceptual work.

This practice conception of reason and labor can develop in two different directions. The difference between the two becomes clearest in the setting of work organization. In one direction, the difference between task and execution, conception and operation, may be rigidly defined. The two kinds of activities can then be assigned to two categories of people: the task definers and the task executors. Call this the rigid variant. In another direction, the contrast between task, problem, or perception and the labor or reasoning process may be relativized. The latter is arranged and understood as a continuous revision of the former. The contrast between task definers and task executors loses its sharpness. Label this the flexible variant.

The flexible variant represents a more radical interpretation of the practice conception described; it impresses more fully upon reasoning and labor the quality of imagination. Insofar as either variant appears as a way of organizing work, it implies a departure from any established order of division and hierarchy in the society at large. At a minimum, there must be some opportunity for organizational experiment; the relations among people at work must not be entirely determined by their fixed ranks or communal attachments outside the workplace. But the flexible variant goes much farther afield than the rigid one. The rigid type can enter into some accommodation with a class order that it helps reshape. People's socially determined life chances outside the workplace help decide where they will fall in the contrast between the task definers and the task executors. Their place in that contrast in turn sustains their access to a host of advantages and prerogatives. Precisely because the flexible variant effaces the contrast between conception and execution and between the definers and the operators, it disturbs the social compromises to which its rigid counterpart lends itself so easily.

In the societies whose formative contexts of power and production

Chapter 2 analyzed, the dominant ideas and institutions of productive or military work exemplified the rigid variant of the practice conception. The flexible mode also appeared. But it remained quarantined within the vanguard areas of production and warfare: the sectors responsible for the most innovative and daring endeavors. Was this confinement a natural consequence of the inherent organizational demands and economic or technical constraints of different kinds of activities? Or did it represent just one more temporary truce line in an endless history of fighting?

The more detailed argument that follows will go through a sequence that differs from the anticipatory summation you have just read. The argument describes a whole complex style of organization, proceeding to more basic levels. Only toward the end of this account does the practice conception, with its two variants, emerge as the fundamental commitment. Like the outline that preceded it, the argument is largely unhistorical. I mean it less as the narrative of an actual history than as another element in the map of large-scale options.

Task, Operation, and Hierarchy: The Organizational Style

Start by taking the complex of projects, operations, and larger social hierarchies at its most superficial but also at its most visible: the predominance of a particular way of setting up the large-scale organizations charged with the tasks of production, warfare, and administration. The analysis of this organizational style can take us through three levels of mounting importance and depth even before we try to see how this style gets placed within the hierarchical ordering of society. Each level is paradoxically related by reinforcement and subversion to the one above it.

The first level is the outward setup of the big organization and of its personnel. Here, the crucial point is the relationship between the professionalism of the personnel and, especially, of the managers, and the emergence of a divisional structure that separates the staff and the line. Professionalism, in this context, just means that the people who perform the jobs – particularly the managerial ones – are expected to promote relatively well-defined organizational objectives and claim to have the talents and skills needed to do the work. Most importantly, the officers in charge of the organizations in fact enjoy a considerable amount of independence from supervision by outsiders, whether the outsiders be property-owning capitalists, a central governmental bureaucracy, or an overtly political power. The division between the staff and the line occurs when a distinction is established between the people who direct specific functional or regional units of an organization and the officers who stand at the

center, together with their advisors, assistants, and researchers, and are responsible for coordinating operations as a whole. The staff is not just the apex of the line – though it is that as well; it has distinctive responsibilities.

The staff is freed from day-to-day supervision of routine operations. It has the chance to step back and to contrast the actual layout of the enterprise with the definition of the overall tasks and with the analysis of surrounding opportunities and threats. In this way, it becomes the primary device for ongoing, deliberate reformation of the layout in view of the tasks and the circumstances, and for the redefinition of the tasks in view of the circumstances and of past experience with the working of the layout. The staff is the self-conscious spearhead of the belief that it is possible to seize the initiative of events and to subject them to the discipline of a well-informed will. In its execution of this purpose, it wants to make professionalism all the more serious a matter, for the professionalism of the staff is a claim to ally specialized knowledge and capacity with an insight into the principles that govern the way specialization gets defined within the organization and for the organization as a whole.

It is striking that the full-fledged development of these organizational characteristics in the areas in which they have developed most – armies and business – is extremely recent. The professionalization of officer corps – frequently limited, in any event, by the effort to keep high military rank in the hands of certain classes of notables – was not capped by an unequivocal distinction between staff and line in the major European armies before the turn of the century. And it took the multidivisional firm structure, pioneered by big American corporations in the 1930s, to introduce that distinction into the professionally managed business enterprise.

On the other hand, governments, which started to experiment with this combination of organizational characteristics long before armies and business, have always kept an ambivalent attitude toward those traits. Take the history of ministerial administration in Western Europe. From at least the fourteenth century on, after the thirteenth-century halt in administrative development, we find many forces collaborating toward professionalization of the high bureaucracy: the separation of narrower and narrower royal councils, distinct from the general aristocracy; the crucial role played by the secretaries of state, who acted as liaison between council and king; and the expert staffs put together by these high servants of government. It was a style of centralization that has to be carefully distinguished from the initial English tendency to use local gentry to do governmental work and from the early French tactic of multiplying lower bureaucratic offices. It was constantly limited by the need of strong and weak monarchs alike to compromise with the possessing classes, to involve

them in running the central government, and to allow them to turn to private use offices already defined as public. To grasp the real meaning of the continuing limit on professionalization even when the compromise with the possessing classes is eclipsed and the entire civil service professionalized, you have to understand what happened to the governmental counterpart of the staff-line distinction.

Here, too, a broad line of development can easily be discerned. The initial condition was one in which the functional powers of ministers of state were mixed up with responsibilities for particular territorial units, major affairs were dealt with by shifting groups of high-office holders, and the cabinet as a whole lacked ministerial solidarity. The end point is one in which the functional has been separated from the territorial, and collective solidarity coincides with individual responsibility. Together, these features transform the cabinet and its immediate auxiliaries into a staff distinguished from the line of regional or functional offices farther down the bureaucracy. But here the ambivalence of politics toward organization intervenes to check and, occasionally, to reverse this dynamic. The central power holders – princes, party leaders, mass politicians – both want and fear the transformation of the highest administrative offices into a staff. What the change brings to them in heightened resources of control, it seems to take away in an increased resistance of the high ministerial staff to political guidance from the center. This ambivalence comes to a head in the posture of presidents toward their cabinets (needed as an instrument for controlling the bureaucracy, feared as a screen between bureaucracy and president). But it is also crucial in the relationship of parliamentary cabinet governments to the high professional bureaucracy.

Standard Operating Procedures and Continuous Hierarchy

The division between staff and line and the professionalization of personnel turn out, from another standpoint, to be the preferred devices of a more intangible set of organizational ideals. These ideals are at best limits that are never reached, but it is impossible to understand the temper and the hesitations of large-scale organizations in our day without taking them into account. Again, the distinctive quality of these organizations consists not in their having invented the ideals but in having given them an unprecedented degree of free play and sustained attention.

One cluster of these deeper organizational aims consists in the effort to assimilate a major part of what the organization does to a group of standardized operating procedures. The spirit of the system of standardized operating procedure is best defined by contrast to ad

hoc instrumental judgments and rigid rules, on the one hand, but also to communities of shared purposes, on the other.

The standardized operating procedures represent a compendium of well-established ways of dealing with the recurrent demands faced by the people who hold different jobs within the organization. The procedures ride on a double justification: their responsiveness to the overall tasks and the changing circumstances of the organization – a responsiveness supported by past experience but subject to constant reassessment – and their ability to fit in with other standardized operating procedures in a way that respects the basic structure of power and coordination within which decisions are made. The second justification keeps the standardized operating procedures from falling apart into a medley of dissociated instrumental judgments about what to do and how to do it, made by each jobholder on his own initiative. The first justification is meant to keep the procedures from being petrified into a system of rules that have lost touch with their instrumental uses. For, when such dissociation occurs, the rules are taken as the basis of privileges that each specialized segment of the organization uses as shields with which to jostle against the other segments to the detriment of the organization as a whole. Viewed from this perspective, the devotion to formal rules, far from being the apogee of organizational efficiency, represents its decline into factional indiscipline and collective rigidity.

The other half of the spirit of the standardized operating procedures is highlighted by their relation to the alternative ideal of a community of purpose. An army or a party on the verge of combat may be able to act, under inspired leadership, at the motion of a widely shared and intensely felt set of aims. Even then, however, it must have another structure to fall back on when the doubts and the disagreements break out. A sign of the vitality of a system of standardized operating procedures would be its capacity to exercise a unifying influence in the absence of any significant sharing of ends; and it is on this capacity that the propagandists of this organizational ideal pin the hope of defeating communities of shared purpose at their own practical games.

Another major organizational ideal of the same importance is a conception of what hierarchy within the organization should look like – at least the hierarchical relations among those who stand at the upper rungs of the ladder. Call it continuous hierarchy. The subordinate should be allowed a significant though varying amount of discretion in the performance of his job. Yet, at each crucial juncture, he should be accountable to a vigilant supervisor. The interplay of supervision and discretion is meant to bring under control a familiar oscillation of organizational life: the swing between the subordinates' efforts to transform every measure of independence into an occasion

for developing vested interests and self-defensive habits, and the periodic lashing out of the supervisors in their half-futile attempt to quash the unruliness below.

In their more developed forms, the ideals of continuous hierarchy and of standardized operating procedures fit tightly together. The hierarchy helps keep the standardized operating procedures from being petrified into rigid rules without allowing them to fly apart into ad hoc instrumental judgments. The standardized operating procedures provide the practical criteria that allow the continuous hierarchy to work: the balance of supervision and discretion is set, in each case, by the needs of fidelity to the procedural system itself.

Even this summary account of the organizational ideals is enough to suggest that they have a paradoxical relation to the surface characteristics of professionalism and the staff-line distinction. In one sense, they bring these traits to fruition by suggesting how the impulses toward professionalism and planning can be translated into a way of going about the organization's day-to-day activities. But in another sense they can be read as a subtle, undercurrent condemnation of the distinction between the staff and the line within the commanding elites and, more generally, of the very distinction between the managers and the managed. For both these sets of distinctions impose constraints upon the responsiveness of the procedures to task and circumstance as well as upon the interplay of supervision and discretion throughout the hierarchy. The basic differentials of power are not treated as up for grabs in the same way that other features of the organizational setup are; they do not require renewed justification and experiment in the light of changing opportunity. Instead, they are taken as the horizon that defines a world.

This disturbance in the relation between different levels of the organization already serves to anticipate one of the ways in which the internal order of the enterprise links up with the surrounding hierarchy of the society. The shackles placed upon the free working out of continuous organizational hierarchy and standardized procedures of operation represent, from the standpoint of the organization, a requirement that derives its force and its authority more from that outside order than from anything that goes on within the organization.

Analytical Reason, Machine Production, and Rationalized Labor

Beneath these stubborn organizational ideals, there is still another level of formative influences: the overlapping spheres of analytical reason, machine production, and rationalized labor.

These large-scale organizations have been built in an age that has witnessed the triumph of a particular image of analytical reason and

the transformation of that image into a basis of practical as well as scientific activity on a worldwide scale. Understood in this light, the core of reason is a particular tie between analysis and abstraction.

At the most immediate level, abstraction means simply the attempt to break every comprehensive intellectual task into discrete, more manageable components until what seemed vulnerable solely to unproven inspiration can be mastered by careful probing. The more important side of analysis, however, lies in its tacit ontological message rather than in its explicit methodological program. Commonsense perception comes in conventional chunks, the traditional ways of viewing the world that are rooted in the relatively unmediated experience of the senses, the conveniences of everyday activity, the habits of language, and the vulgarized science of previous ages. Analytical reason insists upon disrespecting that way of dividing up the world and of understanding the relationship among its parts, for it denies the claim of that mental geography to be a testing point of reality. The disrespect goes in two directions. It moves toward the disintegration of those chunks of perception into smaller pieces or, in any event, into pieces whose boundaries fail to map those of the conventional world. The disrespect for the unexamined view of reality also moves toward abstraction – the reunification of these revised categories, descriptions, and explanations into wholes more comprehensive than the ones that convention and common sense might allow. These wholes can in turn be subject to analytical pulling apart, and the entire process begins anew. Because synthesis works through abstraction, it involves a widening gap between the richness of the concrete world of experience and the austerity of the simplified world of science. We cannot fill this breach by using science to both explain and conceal perceived differences among things in the world if only we were willing to go through the trouble.

The program of analysis and abstraction rests upon a willingness to treat the entire world as potentially homogeneous for the purposes of explanatory laws. We can, in principle, translate what we see and know about a certain level of explanation – biological, for example – into a more basic or general level – say, particle physics. We may still be interested in the more detailed and superficial modes of explanation because, by filtering out irrelevant information, they are less cumbersome. We may also, for one reason or another, be unable to carry out in fact the reduction from the more limited to the more generic. But, whatever the obstacle to practicing our principle might be, we forswear the possibility of its lying in inherent differences among kinds of things, differences that would in turn require distinct varieties of understanding, each untranslatable into the others.

The resolute break with the commonsense world and with the habit of conventional individuation may be distorted into a plot to

suppress alternative modes of reason. It may leave open the crucial question of the standards by which the success of analysis and abstraction is to be judged. But it promises a deeper understanding of reality and mastery of the secret forces of the universe.

To grasp the extraordinary social impact of this idea of reason, you must understand how it gets embodied in a special practical relation to the world. The chosen instrument of this relation is the machine; but less the machine as such than the machine as the model, the product, and the occasion of a certain type of working relationship among people. The solution of a production problem by mechanical means calls for two related tasks. The problem must be redefined in a way that lends itself to a mechanical solution; the inventor must hit upon a convenient abstraction. He must then build a device that decomposes the abstract task into a set or sequence of operations with maximum economy of effort. In fact, the two sides of the inventor's job may be all but indistinguishable. The definition of the mechanical task is guided by a presentiment of what is technically viable. Then, the actual machine presents a visible image of the decomposed task. As he watches the machine work, the inventor can get new ideas about how to have the same task performed more efficiently by introducing new elements or rearranging the existing ones. But he can also go farther and see in such rearrangements and innovations the stimulus to a redefinition of the projects to be accomplished.

This concept of the machine has an affinity to the idea of reason as analysis and abstract synthesis. Machines have existed long before that idea of reason gained its present degree of power and elaboration. But when analytical reason comes together with the mechanical transformation of labor, each is enormously strengthened by the other. The latter receives from the former a constant flow of projects to carry out. The former gets from the latter both a vehicle with which to transform its material environment and a way with which to test its dreams against the resistance of the world. The machine is reason's call to arms; it is analysis on horseback.

Analytical reason and machine production come fully into their own only when they enter into partnership with the practice conception of a rationalized collective labor. Collective labor is rationalized to the extent that the deliberate and constant interplay between project and operation – the formulation of tasks and the planning of execution – becomes the decisive influence upon the organization of work. The point to stress is, once again, the two-way flow of this interchange. The definition of jobs and, at the limit, the assignment of individuals to those jobs become conscious responses to programs and opportunities. Conversely, by seeing the work unit in motion, people (but which people?) learn to redefine the program themselves

in more practicable ways and to discern new opportunities for carrying them out.

The basic principles that underlie rationalized labor are the same as those that stand at the root of machine production. For this reason, it becomes possible to integrate human labor tightly with machines and to treat the question of which parts of work should be done by human hands and which by machines as entirely open to judgments of technical, economic, and social advantage. Indeed, the relative ease with which this substitution can be carried out is another mark distinguishing rationalized labor.

Rationalized labor never exists in more than a compromised position. Far from being transitory or peripheral, this compromise is an enduring and deeply set trait of the organization of work as it in fact exists in the contemporary world. Job definitions, for example, are shaped by the interests of managers and commanders in controlling the people under them as well as by the efforts of different sectors of the managed to preserve the job classifications they associate with security and fairness. But the impulse of rationalization is still there, however qualified it may be by functional calculations of power and profit, and it has a potentially subversive influence on the ordering of the work group.

The Rigid and the Flexible Variants of Rationalized Collective Labor

There is a central ambiguity in the concept of rationalized labor, an ambiguity best understood in the language of a spectrum rather than of sharp contrast. At one pole of this spectrum lies a rigid form of rationalized labor. A clear distinction is made between the work of defining the more or less abstract projects that are to be carried out by the group and the actual work of execution. The definition of the tasks includes decisions about the structure of jobs, hierarchies, and perhaps even material rewards within the organization as well as decisions about how to reassess both the layout of work and the understanding of the collective tasks in light of the group's concrete experience. The clearer the line between projects and operations, the greater the pressure to distinguish the operations (and the people responsible for them) from one another. Each element in planning has a counterpart in execution. These counterparts get their meaning and justification from their direct relation to the plan and, in principle, should be changed only when the plan itself changes. This rigid classification of operational acts, tied in with an independently defined plan, is the core contemporary meaning of routinization at work.

The rigid style of work organization can be realized by any number

of alternative institutional arrangements. Do not mistake the general scheme for any of its concrete instances. In the industrial organization of the countries whose formative contexts of power I described at the outset, the most familiar examples were the Ford-type and Taylorist assembly line arrangement of the plant and the multidivisional-firm structure of the enterprise. But these inventions, like the larger formative contexts themselves, had been invented and diffused relatively recently. Moreover, the organizational practices differed from country to country and from sector to sector of the economy. In some places (e.g., France) the contrast between conception and execution was reinforced, paradoxically, by the abundance of intermediate cadres of supervisors and foremen who transmitted orders and imposed discipline. In other countries (e.g., Germany), the contrast was softened by the relative absence of these cadres and the devolution of greater amounts of discretion and skill to bottom-level workers. Some of these variations arose from the particular settlements struck among sections of the work force and of the entrepreneurial classes. Some of them could be traced back to those imaginative ideas, enacted in personal relations and developed by abstract ideas, that we call national culture.

In warfare, you could find the typical instance of rigid rationalization in the standard infantry unit. The unit belonged to an army based upon semiskilled conscripts or hirelings commanded by a professional officer corps. And it was deployed in the confrontational style of fighting I soon describe. There were the officers and the men; the more or less fixed battle plans and the more or less familiar bag of tactical routines; and the clear assignment of distinct responsibilities to different segments of the army in motion. The same basic variations that existed in the industrial sphere reappeared in the military one and for the same general reasons.

Take now the flexible form of labor. It relativizes the difference between formulating tasks and executing them. The project becomes simply the provisional and sketchy anticipation of a collective effort. Each operational act represents the project on the march: an adaptation of the plan to circumstances that is also both a step toward greater detail in the understanding of what the project is and a proposal for its redefinition. Because the moments of formulation and execution tend toward merger and simultaneity rather than separation and sequence, the boundaries among operations are themselves more elastic. Each operative step gains meaning and guidance from its direct relation to the other steps as well as from its link with the provisional and progressively enriched plan. The foremost difficulty of organization becomes the need to maintain direction and unity without abandoning the impetus toward flexibility.

In the economies of twentieth-century societies, the major ex-

amples of the flexible practice conception could be found within the sectors most responsible for innovation. Sometimes the relevant institutions were separate units of an enterprise whose main body ran on principles of rigid rationalization. Sometimes they were smaller, independent firms. The designers of new processes and products had to collaborate closely with their customers, their skilled workers, and even with their own competitors outside their firms. They had to work with their customers to define practical needs in the light of opportunities for innovation and lines of innovation in the light of practical needs. They had to work with one another to pool resources and protect themselves against the effect of market instabilities. Most significantly, they had to collaborate intimately with their own skilled laborers. The skilled workers who made the new products with the help of fluid processes and general-purpose machines had to understand the objectives at close hand. To make the inevitable adjustments as they went along, they needed to distinguish the central elements in those goals from the peripheral ones. They found themselves in something like the position of a judge tied to the lawmaker by a community of purpose. The designer, for his part, had to reconceive product and process in response to the difficulties and opportunities people discovered when they actually set out to pull apart and rearrange existing products and the machines or processes for building them.

The kind of organization that flourished in these innovative enterprises had its numerous, less explicit counterparts in early forms of petty manufacturing and artisanal corporations. In these earlier experiments, the contrast between conception and execution had been softened, more often by the commitment to corporate-communal solidarity than by the demands of accelerated innovation.

Warfare also had its cases of flexible rationalization. The stock examples turn up in conflicts that fall under the greatest pressure to economize force and rely on maneuver such as tank warfare during World War II or revolutionary warfare and counterinsurgency in the years thereafter. It will soon become clear that the same style of fighting can be introduced – and sometimes has been – in almost any imaginable military circumstance, once an army overcomes certain barriers that are social and imaginative rather than technical.

When the distinction between the rigid and the flexible forms of rationalized labor is brought out into the open, you can trace parallel, but less obvious, ambiguities in the ideas of machine production and analytical reason.

The machine may be thought of as a tool whose uses are defined wholly from the outside, first by the inventor, then by the owner or the operator. The connections among its component parts are set,

and the lessons to learn from its operation are those that inspire the invention of new machines and the reordering of human labor. But the machine may also be a largely self-correcting device, able to make marginal adjustments and to switch the relations among its component parts. Such a machine reflects, in its conception and functioning, the flexible interpretation of rationalized labor. It also dramatizes that the distinction between abstract task and concrete operation may be less significant than another distinction that arises within the sphere of abstract tasks itself. This additional distinction is the contrast between choosing the presuppositions of work (what work is for and what relations among people it can legitimately adopt) and deciding how to go forward once these presuppositions are set. The self-correcting machine may do the actual work; it cannot choose the assumptions.

Similarly, there are two different ways to view the relation of particular intellectual tasks to an effort of understanding. You may draw a clear distinction between theorizing and modes of experiment, inference, and induction that are meant to probe the limits of established theory. But you may also, with greater fidelity to Cartesian precept, conceive these lesser acts of the intellect as small-scale theorizing, indistinguishable in kind from what goes on when more general hypotheses are strung together.

The whole cluster of analytical reason, machine production, and rationalized labor has an ambivalent relationship to the organizational ideals of continuous hierarchy and standardized operating procedures, just as these ideals themselves have a two-sided relation to the surface traits of professionalism and the staff-line distinction. Moreover, the nature of the ambiguity suggests other ways in which the internal structure of the organization may be linked with the larger hierarchy of society.

To the extent that the rigid form of rationalized labor – and therefore also of machine production and analytical reason – is preferred, methods of continuous hierarchy and standardized operating procedures seem to be reinforced. The continuous hierarchy has a basis in the need to distinguish project definition and reassessment from project execution and to separate the special skills required by definition from the more ordinary capacities demanded by execution. The standardized operating procedures are made relatively determinate: they must satisfy the need to preserve a certain kind of internal organization setup, to which the distinction between the task definers and the task executors is central, as well as the need to meet practical exigencies through coordinated effort. Similarly, political options in governmental politics become clear when the people who are able to act understand not only what practical demands have to

be met (e.g., fiscal and military strength) but also what form of state must be preserved (e.g., dynastic control of monarchic power in the course of maintaining a condominium of autocrat and magnates).

To the extent that the flexible variant of rationalized labor prevails, continuous hierarchy has no obvious support or apology. Even when it does, it loses the power to serve as an antidote to politics. Nothing is inherently a matter of task definition as distinguished from execution, except for the choice of the basic assumptions: the aims of work, the permissible personal relations through which it can be carried out, and the rewards it can win. That the layout of jobs depends upon, and in turn is shaped by, decisions about these matters reveals clearly the nontechnical element in work organization, and helps distinguish expert counsel, everyday supervision, and political choice from one another. The standardized operating procedures may now well be underdetermined: there are likely to be different ways to accomplish the practical objectives of the enterprise, depending upon the internal structure of the work group through which you want to achieve these aims. Because the structure is not given, because it is recognized to be a matter for group politics as well as for instrumental calculation, the ideal of standardized operating procedures becomes incomplete.

*The Institutional Conditions for the Predominance of the Rigid
Style of Industry*

My examples already suggest that the rigid and flexible variants of the practice conception in the societies whose formative contexts of routine politics I described at the start of this chapter appeared as, respectively, the mainstream and the vanguard of production and warfare. This disposition was the outcome of a particular history of practical and imaginative struggles, a history whose general character the next section of this chapter and the second part of this book investigate. This sequence of disputes shows both how the practice conception could take hold of the organization of work and how its more radical, flexible form came to be confined to the vanguard of industry. For the moment, you can understand the disposition of the mainstream and the vanguard, unhistorically, as the result of certain conditions. Whenever these conditions failed to be satisfied, the rigid variant lost its hold over the mainstream. The unhistorical and historical accounts can readily be translated into each other: the latter shows the sequence of conflicts that made it possible to satisfy, over a broad range of social life, the conditions described by the former. The very statement of the conditions already incorporates a compressed reference to the history. Take production and warfare, one by one.

The predominance of the rigid variant in the production system has both a technical-economic and a social basis.

The economic basis is the mass production of standardized goods. The machines are product-specific and the production processes are themselves rigid. Indeed, the production process and the machinery together very largely determine what will be produced. Changes in this productive structure are costly except when they involve no more than marginal adjustments or recombinations of a small number of elements. The organizational and technological apparatus absorbs successive infusions of capital. Very quickly, a stage is reached where the productive stock pays for itself only at high levels of production. The consumers make no specific requests, nor is there any close collaboration between the makers and users of products. People buy, passively, among batches of standardized products and are either unwilling or unable to pay large premiums for distinctive commodities.

Most importantly, perhaps, the relevant product, labor, and financial markets must be stable. Major and uncontrollable instability in any of these markets threatens the rigid and expensive production apparatus with disaster. In the communist states, the governmental control of accumulation and of access to consumption warded such instability off and thereby maintained the economic basis of the rigid variant. But in the contemporaneous Western economies, there had to be for each kind of instability a corresponding compensatory mechanism: the internal generation of corporate investment funds for financial instability; subcontracting or the hiring of unorganized underclass workers to reconcile product instability (variable levels of demand) with labor instability (the need to maintain a pacified, permanent, and proficient core labor force).

The destabilization of markets and of mass production does not guarantee the triumph of the flexible variant in any sector. The response to such destabilization may run from the relatively decentralized enterprise or plant to the despotically managed artisanal shop. Initiatives like these still represent variations on the rigid mode. In this sense, what I have described as the economic requirement of the flexible style is less a necessary or sufficient condition at all than a favoring circumstance.

But the hold that the rigid version has over the mainstream rests on a social as well as a technical-economic basis. The fulfilment of this social condition requires that both a negative and an affirmative task be accomplished. The negative work is to defeat, contain, or destroy the movements that champion an alternative organization of production. This defeat can never occur in the marketplace alone. It must occur also – and often previously – on a series of battlefields, domestic and international, practical and imaginative. Like the con-

quest of an agrarian empire by nomadic invaders, this is a victory that must keep being rewon. It was won every time an early modern European state suppressed minor guilds and petty manufacturers; won in the nineteenth century when artisanal corporate organization was more or less openly suppressed; and won in the Soviet Union of the late 1920s or the China of the late 1960s, in the course of violent factional quarrels that went from the oligarchies to the masses. Some of these deviations might have eventually altered the relationship between mainstream and vanguard more than others. But all had to be defeated before their societies could be made safe for the predominance of the rigid variant within the mainstream.

The affirmative task that must be performed in order to guarantee this safety is the creation of a system of powers—rights that enables the rigid variant to operate. That system must entitle certain people to occupy the role of task definers in the name of property, or of technical expertise, or of the government that appointed them. It must also shape and contain the routine contests over the uses of governmental power in ways that do not put that entitlement in constant jeopardy.

Even the relative stability of the product, labor, and financial markets and the availability of countermeasures to the instabilities that do occur depend upon that system of powers—rights. For though volatility in a market may occasionally arise from demographic or natural variations, it is the system of powers—rights that determines who will suffer and who may benefit from these oscillations.

More often, this dependence is still more direct: market instability turns out to be only another name for an unresolved conflict over the terms of powers and rights on which exchange will take place and labor will be offered up and controlled. This struggle may be fought among states, or among any combination of governments, entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers. The point is not that market forces fail to operate. It is rather that the kind of market that exists — and the system of legal entitlements and of extralegal but customary dependencies shaping that market — are never themselves the spontaneous products of such forces. The market-defining rights and practices exhibit and reproduce a particular social settlement. The distinctive contours of such a settlement can never be inferred from the abstract conception of a market.

The argument does not and cannot prove that the flexible approach to work, with its softening of the contrast between plan and execution, can apply to the whole economy. But the analysis does multiply reasons to believe that the actual boundary between the mainstream and the vanguard, and the relative importance of these sectors of the economy, depends upon struggles and resolutions

that "neutral" economic or organizational imperatives cannot persuasively explain.

The Institutional Conditions for the Predominance of the Rigid Style of Warfare

Now take the predominance of the rigid variant in the mainstream of warfare. There, too, you can identify a technical-economic and a social condition. The analysis of warfare turns out to complement neatly the argument about production. Where one is inconclusive, the other carries more weight; each covers the other's defects.

The technical-economic condition is the predominance of warfare as a direct confrontation of forces over warfare as indirect maneuver. Although both elements exist in all military operations, they may exist in strikingly different proportions. Moreover, although both styles of warfare require at some point an actual shock and resistance, each aims for a different kind of encounter with the enemy. Although both styles require intelligence as well as force, one requires more of it than the other – or rather it requires that the intellectual conception of the battle be related to the actual fighting of it in a more immediate way.

Warfare as confrontation looks to the measure of force against force. The enemy must be engaged on a broad front. The closer the struggle comes to being a "total war," the more this front involves the adversary's entire population and economy as well as the soldiers thrown into battle. On this broad front, the enemy will be worn down by cumulative infusions of manpower and materiel. Battle plans can be essentially simple. Tactics can be reduced to a well-defined repertoire of standardized procedures. The soldiery must be willing (in the circumstances) to stand up and fight. It must have the technical proficiency demanded by the weaponry. Beyond this, however, no great amount of discretion is required of the ordinary combatants.

In this confrontational style of warfare, the rigid variant can operate. The plan of battle can be distinguished, step by step, from the repetitive tactical procedures. Each battle plan will include, as one of its elements, a definition of the appropriate tactical mix. The makers and transmitters of orders can be relatively distinguished from the executors. The contrast breaks down only for the junior officers who must maintain the cohesion and morale of the small groups under their command while carrying out their part of the overall combat plan. Higher up in the hierarchy, everything may transpire in an atmosphere of managerial impassiveness or controlled anguish.

Contrast all this to the style of indirect maneuver. The goal here

is to win, through intelligence, precision, daring, and opportunism what cannot be secured by a clear superiority of resources. The enemy's more powerful forces – both his armies and their support structures – must be hit and disorganized before they can be brought to bear on focused, important points of encounter. Careful preparation, patient avoidance, the instinct for the vital weakness, the rapid strike, the dazzling movement, the relentless pursuit, often of a more numerous but disorganized and demoralized enemy – these make up the devices of warfare as indirect maneuver.

Under such conditions, the battle must be planned to take advantage of shifting opportunities and dangers on the field. The tactical repertory of fighting must be indiscriminate and open-ended. The commanders must communicate and coordinate in the midst of violence and uncertainty. But they must also allow the fighting crews in place to deviate and to improvise. The battle plan itself becomes a continuous interplay between the overall conception and these localized decisions.

An army that wages war in this fashion has its hierarchy of command. But it knows no firm contrasts between the definers and the operators. Its success depends upon the union of trustworthiness with tactical insight at the lowest rung of the ladder; its soldiers are small-time generals. Here the flexible variant must prevail.

Thus, the mainstream of warfare can be held by the rigid mode of rationalized collective labor only when direct confrontation predominates over indirect maneuver. But this predominance in turn depends on several circumstances, each of them indispensable. First, the fighting force must be able to count on decisive superiority over the adversary in manpower and materiel. Second, the enemy must not be in a position to respond successfully by employing the style of indirect maneuver. For example, his demographic and economic heartland may be threatened with invasion or destruction. Third, the struggle must not be so unlimited in scope and intensity that the ability to survive, to move, and to invent in the midst of inconceivable destruction becomes the paramount requirement of victory. Such destruction makes the conditions of struggle from one moment to the next radically different and unforeseeable and puts a premium on the capacity to re-create organization and momentum in the midst of this violence. The survivors – soldiers or civilians – must then act like members of an army committed to the indirect maneuver and to the interplay between conception and operation. It is the sort of circumstance that might follow an all-out nuclear war. But it also exists, in germ, wherever people find themselves shaken by violence.

If all these requirements can indeed be met, the style of direct confrontation has its advantages, especially for an army that, on other grounds, wants to adopt the rigid mode of rationalized collective

labor. It is a way to fight that minimizes risks, dispenses with exceptional ingenuity, and makes possible straightforward calculations. If it is prodigal in manpower and materiel, it economizes on command skills. Besides, it provides planners with a counterpart to rationality in a stabilized market: you invest each military resource in the way that maximizes the marginal return to the army's overall confrontational power.

But there is the danger that the preference will be carried over to the situations in which the requirements of success fail to be met. For they may indeed fail to be met not just in the periphery but in the center of the struggle. The apparent course of prudence will then spell disaster.

The reasons for believing that the flexible practice conception could pass from the vanguard to the mainstream of production are all inconclusive. Some have to do with the abstract analysis of organizational ideas; others, with the vagaries of the experiments that have taken place in history. But the parallel argument about warfare leaves much less room for alternative approaches. If military activity and insight have a core, it lies in the style of indirect maneuver, which realizes, to a higher degree than the confrontational approach to fighting, the economy of force through the primacy of intelligence. The warfare of direct confrontation can best be understood as the departure from this ideal that becomes affordable when circumstances relax the imperative to economize force. Once you accept the idea of a significant relation between indirect maneuver and the flexible practice conception, the confinement of the indirect style to the vanguard of warfare stops looking natural.

The provisional or special quality of the technical-economic conditions for the predominance of the rigid form are, then, clearer in the military theater than in the productive one. The reverse happens when you pass to the social conditions of that primacy. Even the rigid variant of rationalized collective labor in warfare presupposes a professional organization where superiors and subalterns can deal with each other in ways not fully shaped by an overarching social hierarchy and division nor easily reducible to the habits of patrons and clients. However, if conception and operation, task definers and task executors, stand apart in the economy, it may seem inevitable for them to stand apart in the army. The reproduction of this contrast will in turn reinforce its strength in its original or primary productive context. It is not only an aristocracy but a class of professionals, managers, and higher technicians who may appear as the natural source of an officer corps. Conversely, the broader application of the flexible mode in warfare, under the pressure of military emergency, may serve as a localized experiment that people can later extend to the economy.

THE SENSE OF THE LARGE-SCALE OPTIONS

The Institutional Embodiment of Negative Capability

Reconsider now, in the light of the comparative analysis worked out in the preceding pages, the three general ideas this analysis supports. The first thesis is that different institutional arrangements reflect varying degrees of advance in the denaturalization of society. Society becomes denaturalized to the extent that its formative practices and preconceptions are open to effective challenge in the midst of ordinary social activity; the gap between routine moves within the given framework and radical conflicts about this framework narrows. The concept of denaturalization or of emancipation from false necessity includes the idea of a weakening of rigid roles and hierarchies. It therefore also refers to the development of forms of production, exchange, and passionate attachment that are less marked by such rankings and divisions. The social theory that deploys the concept of denaturalization argues that these different senses of emancipation from false necessity are connected as a matter of empirical fact. I use the term negative capability to suggest the variety of forms of empowerment that denaturalization makes possible.

Not only whole formative contexts but the particular clusters of arrangements and assumptions that constitute them embody higher or lower levels of the development of negative capability. Only because of this fact does it make sense to claim that similarity in the level of negative capability can operate as a constraint upon the recombination or substitution of different practical or imaginative elements to constitute a stable formative order. Among the directions of labor organization compared in this chapter, the rigid form of rationalized collective labor is more experimental than either the patron-client relation or the more impersonal forms of division and hierarchy from which clientship descends. But it is less experimental than the flexible form of rationalized collective labor. Among the varieties of private entitlement compared here, the system of power and immunity – the classical style of modern Western contract and property rights – is less rigidifying than a system that grants to organized ranks or estates a distinctive measure of access to governmental power as well as to land or labor. But it is more rigidifying than another system – hypothetical yet capable of being constructed with institutional and conceptual materials already available – that would assign temporary and conditional claims to the divisible portions of social capital by means other than the consolidated property right.

The Intimation of a Greater Negative Capability

The second major idea supported by the argument of this chapter is directly related to the program put forward in the final chapter of this book. The particular varieties of private entitlement and work organization that characterize contemporary societies can be contrasted to other arrangements that represent a lesser measure of denaturalization. But they can also be contrasted to institutions that embody a yet higher level of the development of negative capability. These more experimental and emancipatory alternatives are in part imaginary orders. Their realism must be tested by practical experience and their formulation guided by a credible view of transformation. But these imagined alternatives also have roots in the anomalies of contemporary social experience. The arrangements that are more or less denaturalized than their modern-day counterparts do not represent extreme points on a finite spectrum of emancipation from false necessity; no such well-informed spectrum exists. Such comparisons draw a penumbra of remembered experience and anticipated possibility around present social reality. They never set limits to the possible variety of social life.

The same point about the availability of more denaturalized alternatives holds for the formative contexts of contemporary societies, not just for the particular elements of these contexts discussed in this chapter. The significance and justification of this point must await both the program of social reconstruction and the theory of context making presented later in *False Necessity*. The program develops the details of a more emancipatory alternative. The theory informs the programmatic argument while emphasizing the accidental, trumped-up quality of our inherited institutions.

Similarity in the Level of Negative Capability as a Constraint on Context Making

The third thesis of this chapter is that practices or preconceptions can combine to form a stable formative context only when they exemplify and offer a similar level of development of negative capability. This idea provides a direct link between the descriptive analysis of formative contexts in Chapter 2 and the view of context making presented in Chapter 4.

In the course of the argument of Chapter 2, it became clear that an adequate description of formative contexts, and therefore also of the repetitious patterns of conflict they help reproduce, must satisfy two distinct standards. It must recognize the existence of constraints upon the institutional or imaginative elements that constitute a form-

ative framework. Historical experience suggests that some juxtapositions just do not work. As we discover that more and more combinations can be made, we also gain new insight into the instability of other combinations. It is only because of such constraints upon recombination or substitution that the elements of a formative context can truly be said to reinforce one another or to stand apart from the routines they perpetuate. We must therefore recognize these constraints in order to overcome the distortions of conventional social science and naive historiography.

But it is not enough to acknowledge the constraints upon substitution or recombination. A tenable view must also deny that the elements of a formative context can stand or fall only as an unbreakable whole, or that there is a finite list of formative contexts. (The former of these denied theses might be upheld without the benefit of the latter, though not very persuasively: formative contexts would then be represented as an open-ended collection of Democritean atoms. But it is hard to see how the idea of a finite list of types of social organization can survive unless supported by a belief in the indivisibility of each of these types.)

Particular institutional arrangements (or imaginative preconceptions) cannot easily come together into a cohesive cluster of institutions nor can such clusters coalesce into a stable formative context if they embody very disparate measures of emancipation from false necessity. What gives this constraint its force? Institutionalized social arrangements must be reproduced by practical and conceptual activities. The extent to which the arrangements are disentranced – that is, available for effective challenge – influences the character of the activities that reproduce them. In the most general terms, the less entrenched or naturalized a set of arrangements becomes, the more the activity of reproducing these arrangements resembles the practice of subjecting them to permanent review and occasional transformation. There is no limit to the variety of practical forms that the denaturalization of any given domain of social experience may take. There is no predetermined set of possible institutional vehicles for any given level of negative capability.

Consider an example. A system of entitlements to capital, labor, and governmental power must be put to work by a conceptual activity, legal analysis. We can distinguish styles of legal analysis with respect to the naturalistic quality of their assumptions or effects even though we cannot explain everything about them in this way or determine in advance what forms a more or less emancipated style of legal analysis may assume. Thus, in many societies characterized by well-defended schemes of social division and hierarchy and by widespread acceptance of a particular exemplary model of human association, legal doctrine merged freely into theology and political

theory. The jurists made open use not only of low-level statutes, precedents, analogies, and of rationalizing policies and principles, but also of an explicit scheme of the possible and desirable forms of human association. In other societies, such as the North Atlantic democracies of today, legal doctrine scrupulously avoids explicit reference to this third level of analysis. It does so precisely because prescriptive models of social life have come to be seen as more radically controversial. To make legal analysis depend upon argument about such models of human association would be to undermine the cherished distinction between legal doctrine and open-ended ideology. This distinction is in turn justified by the equation of the legal standpoint with the judicial role and by the peculiar responsibilities that traditional liberal states assign to judges. But a different style of legal analysis, in a different institutional setting, might abandon the contrast to open-ended ideology and reincorporate argument about models of social life in an openly tentative and controversial manner.

The varied conceptual and practical activities required for the reproduction of different sets of institutional arrangements influence and invoke one another in several ways. They express ways of imagining society. Institutional arrangements that embody widely different levels of denaturalization also require operational activities that express incompatible views of what society is like and of what it can and should become. The clash is all the more likely to be destabilizing because these assumptions are not merely speculative hypotheses. They are urgent guides to practice that shape lived-out attitudes of submission or resistance to established social practices.

Now that the idea of similarity in the level of disentanglement, denaturalization, or emancipation from false necessity as a constraint upon context making has been made explicit, it is easy to see how this idea connects with the specific arguments and examples of this chapter. Consider first the variations in the organization of work, so often inseparable from the more general character of social life. A style of work organization that depends on the rigid form of rationalized collective labor can coexist, as it does now, with a market order that uses the absolute property right as its device of decentralization. It can also be reconciled, as in present-day communist regimes, with the replacement of proprietary prerogative by centralized bureaucratic control. But it cannot live together with the more entrenched and naturalistic style of legal entitlements – called in this chapter the system of prerogative – that directly and overtly arranges society into a hierarchy of corporately organized ranks, each with characteristic jobs and with a distinctive relation to economic resources and governmental power. For rationalized collective labor, as it has been defined in this argument, requires a relatively open space within which numerous economic agents can experiment with

the form of their practical, productive relations at work or exchange. Labor becomes rationalized to the extent that it provides a visible image of practical reason, trying things out, recombining, and renewing. Nor, conversely, can a microstructure of social life dominated by patron-client relations supply a basis for the system of classical property and contract rights, unless these legal entitlements remain mere slogans without effective application to social life.

On the other hand, the rigid form of rationalized collective labor would be hard to reconcile with a system of rights that establishes economic decentralization through institutional devices such as rotating capital funds that allow for more decentralization and plasticity than absolute property rights can permit. The classic proprietary route to economic decentralization enables the task definer to exercise an authority that merges a narrower task of technical coordination with a broader, disciplinary authority. The absolute property right is implicated in many of the particular devices, such as the internal corporate generation of investment funds, by which mass-production industry, organized according to the rigid model of labor rationalization, maintains its hold over the mainstream of the economy. The development of a decentralizing alternative to consolidated property facilitates more intense and open collective conflict by denying to limited elites of property holders and property managers (or to their bureaucratic successors) a veto over the terms of economic prosperity.

Consider, by way of further example, the relation of private rights to the organization of government. The style of contract and property rights that rose to prominence in the course of modern Western history can certainly coexist with the liberal democracies that owe their basic structure and techniques to the traditions of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century constitutionalism. These traditions established democracies committed both to an ideal of maximum representative legitimacy with minimal mobilization and to procedures that ensure accountability by encouraging deadlock. This same style of property and contract rights can also be reconciled with an authoritarian regime in which the power holders are not accountable to a mass electorate but in which they respect a private order founded upon principles radically different from the principles that shape the organization of government. Thus, the European absolutist monarchies provided the terrain on which modern contract and property rights first developed.

But these rights cannot live with a caste or estatist regime that closely links degrees of access to governmental power with degrees of control over labor and capital. Nor, less self-evidently, can this system of private entitlements combine with a mobilizational dictatorship or a mobilizational democracy. By a mobilizational dicta-

torship I mean a dictatorship that pushes an aggressive plan of social reconstruction rather than accepting a private order as more or less given; by a mobilizational democracy, the more effective subjection of ever wider areas of social life to broadly based collective challenge and conflict. (Empowered democracy, described and defended in Chapter 5, is such a regime.) Both the mobilizational democracy and the mobilizational dictatorship would be frustrated by a system of rights that effectively secludes a great deal of economic life from their influence and that drastically limits opportunities to innovate in the organizational settings of production and exchange.

These arguments and examples flesh out the idea that the pressure toward similarity in the extent of denaturalization or revisability acts as a constraint upon the substitution or recombination of the practices and ideas that compose a formative framework. But in order not to be misread, this thesis must be both extended and qualified.

The Constraints of Sequence and the Constraints of Negative Capability

I remarked earlier that a view of constraints upon the recombination or substitution of the elements that compose an institutional framework is always just the reverse side of a thesis about how these frameworks are made and revised. Thus, the theory of context making presented in the next chapter must show how a move toward institutional arrangements that embody greater degrees of negative capability can come about. The theory includes the thesis that people can act more or less intentionally to achieve the many forms of empowerment that more denaturalized arrangements make possible.

There is another, equally important form of historical causation, which is simply the influence that each formative context exercises upon the contexts that succeed it. By definition, a formative order makes certain moves easier than others; it facilitates the repetition of certain routines while hindering challenges to them. Less obviously, but no less importantly, it favors some lines of context revision over others. For one thing, the practical problems caused by the very repetition of the privileged routines become urgent and focus attention on the aspects of the institutional framework most directly involved in these problems. For another thing, some aspects of an established institutional and imaginative order may be more resistant to challenge than others. But because formative contexts can be replaced piece by piece (subject to the constraint that the newly combined elements do not represent widely differing degrees of negative capability) and because a given context can do no more than make certain paths of transformation more accessible than others, no context can predetermine its own sequel.

If some such theory of cumulative historical change is correct, similarity in the level of negative capability cannot be the sole constraint upon the joinder of formative institutions or preconceptions. Another constraint is the sharpness with which any new element departs from the sequence of previous formative contexts, the foreignness and unassimilability of the invention into a given tradition of ideas and practices. A particular institutional arrangement may be hard to accept and to fit with other established arrangements, not because it embodies a higher or lower level of negative capability but simply because it makes use of materials that resist translation into a familiar idiom of social understanding and practice. More specifically, the institutional innovation may fail because it cannot be grasped and dealt with as an intelligible transformation of remembered sequences or current arrangements. The interplay between the possible development of negative capability and the influence of sequence constitutes one of the major concerns of the approach to context making developed in Chapter 4. So, too, the interaction between these two forces is crucial to an understanding of how the elements of a formative context reinforce one another.

Constraint Without Deep Structure

The thesis that similar levels of negative capability impose a constraint upon the recombination or substitution of the elements of a formative context can easily be mistaken for a version of the belief in a limited list of possible social worlds. The analysis of institutional variations distinguished by the degree of negative capability that each group of institutions embodies seems to suggest the idea of a multidimensional map of social possibilities. The position a society occupies on one dimension of the map – its forms of right, its organization of work, the shape of its government, and the preconceptions about social ideals and transformative opportunities that accompany each of these – influences its position on the other dimensions. It seems that by making the map more and more detailed, you can end up with a short list of possible forms of social worlds. Thus, by a roundabout route, you would have returned to a stringent although nonevolutionary version of deep-structure social theory.

Such a reading would misinterpret the argument of this chapter. At any level of negative capability and with respect to any domain of social life, there are an indefinite number of possible institutional solutions. The feasible options are circumscribed by the difficulty of combining arrangements or preconceptions that reflect widely different degrees of emancipation from false necessity. The practical and intellectual materials generated by a particular tradition also limit the solutions actively considered. Thus, the institutional examples

just discussed all come from modern Western history. Nevertheless, even these two sets of constraints fail to yield the type of closed list that a theory of possible social worlds requires.

You have seen how the attempt to compare and contrast the institutional arrangements that make up the formative contexts of certain contemporary societies leads beyond itself to an account of how context change takes place and to a vision of the changes worth undertaking. This vision and this account – intimately connected – are the major themes of *False Necessity*.

The Making of Society Through Politics

Imagining Transformation

THE MAKING OF CONTEMPORARY FORMATIVE CONTEXTS: AN INSTITUTIONAL GENEALOGY

THE GENESIS OF FORMATIVE CONTEXTS AND THE THEORY OF CONTEXT MAKING

THE argument of Chapters 2 and 3 started from a particular explanatory problem: the attempt to understand the tenacity of the reform cycles that characterize the governmental politics of late twentieth century Western industrial democracies.

This problem led to an effort to understand how the formative institutional contexts that shape these reform cycles change and how they are put together. The analysis of one of these contexts suggested that neither the perspective of naive historiography and positivist social science nor the standpoint of deep-logic social theory would suffice to do the job. The one, by denying the distinction between structure-preserving and structure-transforming events, cannot even pose the question. The other, by insisting upon the idea of a limited list of possible social worlds or stages of social transformation, gives an answer that is implausible on its face: a definition of the formative contexts sufficiently detailed to account for the reform cycles also reveals their hodgepodge character and makes it hard to think of them as cohesive wholes occupying a predefined place in a catalogue of social possibilities or historical stages. Moreover, it soon became apparent that the riddle exemplified by the reform cycles can be found in every period and facet of social life: over and over again, we must understand routine by postulating a formative institutional or imaginative context that shapes it. Over and over again, we discover that styles of social thought insensitive to the shaped and compulsive quality of social life cannot account for either the internal composition or the historical making of formative contexts. Nor can either be elucidated by theories appealing to the idea of a deep structure that singles out types and stages of social organization. A social theory capable of satisfying these minimal, negative needs gives a concrete

form to the view of human activity presented at the outset of *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*.

Chapter 3 carried the argument forward by locating the formative institutional contexts of late twentieth century North Atlantic and communist countries on a map of large-scale variations in social life. The analysis showed that much in these societies and in the character of their formative contexts can be understood as marking an intermediate position between the maximization and the minimization of experimental freedom in social life, between the strengthening and the weakening of the contrast between transformative conflicts about the contexts and routine moves within them. At the same time the argument suggested a way to understand the constraints upon substitutions in the elements of formative contexts that does not presuppose deep-logic social theory. There is the constraint of sequence: an institutional or imaginative framework makes certain sequels easier than others. Indeed, if it makes sense to speak of such a framework having a point, this consequence is its point. But there is also another constraint irreducible to the effects of sequence: the difficulty of combining within a single institutional context elements that represent very different degrees of facility for revision. This suggestion can be justified, made precise, and properly distinguished from deep-logic social analysis only within a view of how social contexts get made and remade.

The present chapter develops an account of transformation that avoids the errors of naive historiography and deep-logic social theory, gives a social-theoretical interpretation to the modernist view of human activity, and seeks to explain the construction and revision of formative contexts. As the problem selected for intensive focus earlier was to explain the reform cycles in certain contemporary societies, the immediate subject matter of the theory of transformation is the genesis of the formative contexts that account for those same reform cycles. The argument advances by two large steps: a schematic and polemical history of the formative contexts of contemporary Western industrial democracies and the account of context making that this institutional genealogy foreshadows.

The historical narrative mobilizes both familiar and controversial knowledge in behalf of a view of transformation made explicit toward the end of this chapter. The explicit view of context making offered there gives a more precise theoretical interpretation and defense of the explanatory approach implicit in the narrative, but it is not the only plausible defense or interpretation. You can agree with the general form of the theory while finding its narrative realization faulty. Conversely, you can sympathize with the intentions of the narrative approach while rejecting the particular version of it represented by the theory. The narrative is both the loose anticipation of

a theory and the specification of a pretheoretical puzzle that requires a theoretical solution.

The historical argument focuses successively upon three of the major institutional clusters that compose the characteristic formative contexts of late twentieth century industrial democracies: the work-organization cluster, the private-rights cluster, and the governmental-organization cluster. For the sake of simplicity, I disregard the occupational-structure cluster. More significantly, the view of context making focuses on the institutional rather than the imaginative components of formative contexts. The final section of the chapter indicates the general way in which the theory of social frameworks and of their remaking would be altered by the reintroduction of this crucial imaginative element.

You can take as your topic any formative institutional structure at any moment of relative quiescence. The arbitrary termination point of the narrative – in this case, the situation of particular countries in the late twentieth century – determines how far back it makes sense to go. Moreover, the different elements of the formative context whose genesis you want to explain do not crystallize at the same rate. Thus, although the constitutional and administrative structure of contemporary Western democracies has been developing uninterruptedly since the High Middle Ages, the particular institutional practices I emphasize took their form during a very brief period: for the pioneering countries, the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. Before this time the work-organization or private-rights aspects of the institutional orders described in Chapter 2 had a degree of ambiguity of developmental possibilities they have rarely achieved since. Once the rules of party-political conflict and constitutional structure had been more or less set, the system of private rights and the organization of work became more fixed than they had been before. The attempt significantly to change them would now require a reform of the arrangements that define the structure of the state and the conflict over governmental power. The point can be generalized: the structure of society does not become secure until the relation between state and society has taken a defined form and social divisions have been entwined with degrees of government-supported privilege. Remember therefore in reading this narrative that the genealogy of the work-organization and the private-rights complexes might well have been broken up into two distinct phases, divided by the consolidation of the governmental-organization cluster.

The narrative argument takes as its target what it calls a mythical history of the formative contexts of contemporary Western societies. This mythical history, still so prominent in the historical and social-science literature, retrospectively rationalizes the emergence of cur-

rent formative contexts as the necessary expression of deep-seated economic, organizational, or psychological imperatives. Its liberal-conservative form is the belief in the triumphant emergence of market institutions and of the more efficient forms of economic production and the more democratic forms of governmental organization that supposedly accompanied those institutions. The proponents of this thesis characteristically acknowledge that the market is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of political democracy. They tacitly identify the abstract conception of a market with the particular market institutions that came to prevail in Western Europe and North America. The Marxist variant of the mythical history accepts all these beliefs while making them relative to a specific stage of historical development. For the Marxist, the mythical history becomes the account of the emergence of capitalism and of the types of bourgeois democracy or Bonapartist authoritarianism that the capitalist mode of production tolerates. Both the liberal-conservative and the Marxist formulations play up a particular stereotype of English history as the exemplary route to the unprecedented wealth and power of the world-conquering Western nations. Deviations from the English prototype are thought to require special explanations.

The polemic that my narrative conducts against the mythical history involves three main theses. The first thesis is that the mythical history drastically underestimates the variety of institutional forms that competed for acceptance in the course of the events with which it deals. Many alternatives, once defeated, came to occupy an important though limited place within the triumphant order. The second thesis is that of all these alternatives the most formidable and persistent rival of the now dominant institutional order was a version of what Marx disparagingly called petty commodity production. The critics of this alternative are right in claiming that it could not have succeeded within the institutional structures we now implicitly equate with markets and democracies. But they fail to appreciate that in a drastically revised institutional form the alternative not only had a promising future but continues to have one today. Thus, the historical argument presented here is frankly connected with a view of programmatic opportunities in the present. The third thesis is that to the extent certain institutional forms of economic and governmental organization did win out their victory cannot be credited to their inherent practical or moral superiority. They did not win thanks to a self-propelling dynamic of organizational, economic, and psychological imperatives. Their triumph resulted in large part from a much more complicated and accidental history of practical and imaginative conflicts, of missed opportunities and failures of information. Yet the way of exploring this largely negative thesis will already suggest that its point is less to emphasize accident, variation,

and particularity than to come up with an alternative strategy of generalizing explanation.

The highly schematic and polemical character of my narrative inevitably makes it to some extent unhistorical. There is no easy escape from partiality of perspective: a history of formative contexts is the greater part of history *tout court*, even with the drastic simplification involved in focusing on institutional arrangements rather than imaginative preconceptions. Occasional plunges to a level of richer historical detail offer only a limited corrective. There is, nevertheless, an important sense in which the historical authenticity of an argument has to do less with its wealth of detail than with its fidelity to the quality of lived historical experience. The prestige of the mythical history, endlessly elaborated in countless historical monographs, testifies to the difference between historicity and detail. Surely we lose the historical sense if we allow understanding to be controlled by the perspective of naive historiography, which cannot do justice to the sharp discontinuities between social worlds and between the types of subjective experience they harbor. And we lose the historical sense just as much if we surrender to deep-logic social analysis, which makes the possibility of explanation depend upon the denial of surprise and contingency and thereby opens an unbridgeable gap between the experience of living in history and the practice of explaining history. I want a more concrete historiography too, but I want one that does not have to rely upon bad, antihistorical theories.

A SKEPTICAL PROLOGUE: PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND GOVERNMENTAL POLICY

Before turning to the genesis of the major institutional complexes described, consider, by way of preliminary example and admonition, the history of a subordinate, derivative, and eclectic institutional practice: the division of decisional responsibilities between central governments and large-scale business enterprises. In one sense this division merely extends the private-rights complex: the corporate institution, relatively insulated from public control and public controversy, takes its place alongside the system of contract and property rights. But it is also closely connected both with a style of governmental politics that limits the assertion of collective control over the basic shape and pace of economic growth and with an approach to the organization of work that mixes technical coordination with a generic disciplinary authority and thereby makes possible a stark contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities.

The massive network of governmentally granted subsidies, incentives, and privileges, the overt partnership between government and

business in some sectors, and the domination of public enterprise in others, do not eviscerate the division between government and business of its force. Large concentrations of capital and labor are realized in the form of separate realms governed by managers in the name of the property norm. The mythical history would have us believe that this arrangement is a necessary consequence of the attempt to reconcile economic decentralization with economies of scale. But is it? A little bit of history suffices to make you wonder. Consider how this solution came to prevail in the country with which it is now most closely identified.

In early nineteenth century America, government and business stood in a multiplicity of relations, and many doctrines about the proper association between governmental and corporate power competed with each other. You appreciate this variety best when you focus on policy debates at the state level. The institutional situation was one in which enterprises under mixed public-private control and ownership played an important role; the right of incorporation, often closely guarded, became an instrument for bestowing and receiving illicit favor, and a justification for exercising a potentially high degree of control over the corporation in exchange for those powers of government (like the power of eminent domain) that were delegated to it. Three main doctrines of incorporation struggled for influence; the first, responsive to a populist vision, was hostile to all incorporation, invoking an ideal of individual enterprise; the second proposed to develop those aspects of the current situation that involved a major overlap of governmental and corporate powers and that therefore opened the internal structure and the external activities of the corporation to control by the agencies of government; the third view wanted to make the privilege of incorporation more readily available and to build a thicker wall between corporate discretion and governmental authority. By the start of the Civil War, this third doctrine had triumphed in practice, and its victory was consolidated by the 1880s. In the end, the corporate form became a device that allowed large concentrations of economic power over workers and markets to operate at a crucial remove from the risks of partisan democratic conflict. The reform movements of the late nineteenth and the twentieth century, from Progressivism to the New Deal, took the structure generated by the earlier contest for granted. Whether the theme of restraint upon business or that of organization in the service of business prevailed in these latter-day movements, neither the restraint nor the rationalization ever went so far as to endanger the fundamental screening of business from national politics that had been settled upon at an earlier date.

The facts that converged to this end were of very different kinds. One of them was the division of the forces opposed to autonomous

private incorporation between the populist critics of corporate business and the proponents of a broader overlap of the spheres of corporate and governmental power. Another was the economic influence exercised by the businessmen themselves: though cliques of insiders stood to benefit from the favoritism of closely guarded incorporation, a much larger group was anxious both to incorporate more easily and to rid their incorporated businesses of tight governmental interference. More often than not, they had the material means and the personal connections to translate this anxiety into political influence. Moreover, the self-operating, relatively unpoliced corporation might well seem to involve less of a break from established practice than the attempt to deepen the relations between government and business; the latter would force upon state institutions and party politics a mounting burden of responsibility. For that burden to be discharged the forms of political action and organization would, sooner rather than later, have to be transformed.

An additional decisive cause of the outcome, however, had to do with the ascendancy of a doctrine of freedom and efficiency, forged by lawyers and publicists who often regarded themselves, and were regarded in their own time, as hostile to the business interests whose legal and conceptual underpinnings they helped cement. The core of their conception of freedom was the unwarranted identification of the abstract idea of decentralized market decision with a concrete system of contract and property rights organized around spheres of absolute discretion in the control of labor and commodities. The core of the related idea of economic development was belief in the existence of an unbreakable natural link between economic growth – including repeated breakthroughs of the capacity barrier – and the security in vested rights that inheres in the chosen system of contract and property. This belief represented a double mistake: first, by supposing the existence of security *tout court* as distinguished from security for some against others; second, by failing to deal adequately with the constraints that vested rights impose on innovation. What these doctrines of freedom and development had in common was the effort to depoliticize the basic structure of rights and economic policy.

Once the earlier conflicts and uncertainties had been forgotten, their settlement took on a specious semblance of naturalness and necessity. The structure that emerged, however, was no more necessary and natural than the interests and the illusions, the tactical achievements and the tactical failures, that accounted for its initial consolidation and avoided its later disruption. An aspect of that structure was the definition of a tight stranglehold of powers over the flow of basic investment decisions: by the time mass party politics came into its own and the protective shield of sound finance doctrine

had been cast aside, a characteristic dilemma of macroeconomic policy emerged: the need not to surrender totally to business interests for fear of losing elections and even of undermining the conditions of prosperity itself; and the contrasting need not to forfeit business confidence entirely in order to avoid disinvestment. The emerging system also existed in the imagination: in the clear-cut separation between an area of social life, governmental politics, to which democratic principles applied, and a larger world of work and exchange, to which they did not apply. In the end, the weight of these richly textured though largely tacit conceptions of what ideals fitted where turned out to be more important than the naive doctrines of freedom and security that had once been their polemical spearhead.

The full significance of these developments becomes plain when they are placed in a broader comparative historical setting. Western countries, like the United States or Britain, that were to have a relatively ample experience of democratic conflict had chosen a growth path that accepted a strong barrier between business and government, each marked by contrasting principles of organization. On the other hand, later industrializing countries, like Germany and Japan, that experimented with a deeper mutual involvement of government and business did so in the setting of a more authoritarian national politics: for the commitment to economic growth and the chosen route to it were, in both Japan and Germany, part of a conscious strategy of building national power under the aegis of a revamped and reunified elite. The third option was missing: the combination of democratic mass politics with a close and varied net of relations between state and enterprise. The absence of this combination – easier to achieve perhaps in the pioneering instances of industrialization than in the cases when an elite could present itself as the custodian of a collective effort to catch up – was decisive for the whole later course of politics and economy in the West and in the world at large. Yet it never did follow any immanent, unstoppable logic.

This American episode suggests two points of more general interest. First, the controversy over the proper institutional form of economic decentralization may have characterized other aspects of economic history as well. Recovering the structure of this controversy may help us shake loose the misleading identification of the market form of economic order with the particular kinds of markets we know now. Second, as soon as we try to understand in greater detail the emergence of a particular institutional arrangement in a particular place we discover not the smooth operation of developmental compulsions and lawlike constraints but messy struggles, punctuated by surprising turns and conducted by people who often helped to frustrate their own confused objectives. We should think

twice before concluding that these events and personalities were just the unwitting agents of objective and inescapable imperatives, such as the imperative that supposedly determines a unique set of market institutions capable of combining economic decentralization with economies of scale. The invocation of such requirements may seem the only alternative to theoretical agnosticism. But we may find a way to save the appearances – the detailed texture of historical life – and to vindicate our reconstructive freedom while nevertheless continuing to explain the facts.

THE GENESIS OF THE WORK-ORGANIZATION COMPLEX

The Mythical History of Work Organization

The dominant form of work organization in the advanced Western societies is characterized by the prevalence of the rigid form of rationalized collective labor in the mainstream of industry and by the confinement of the flexible form to the industrial vanguard. Remember that the rigid form accentuates the contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities while the flexible form softens it. This allocation of approaches to the organization of work depends upon the prevalence of mass-production industry, manufacturing standardized products through rigid production processes, product-specific machines, and large, centralized concentrations of capital and labor. The prevalence of the mass-production style is sustained by favorable institutional conditions and by a particular international division of labor.

The point of much traditional historical, economic, and sociological work, conservative and radical alike, has been to show that this particular compromise of styles of economic organization was necessary whether or not, as the radicals claim, it represented only a necessary stage to something else. This explanatory aim is ordinarily pursued through an argument central to the mythical history of work organization. The argument claims that the English path to industrial growth – or, rather, what is commonly identified as the English path – represented the preferred if not the only road to early industrial development. The stereotype of the English experience includes the replacement of the small family farm and independent peasantry by large-scale agrarian businesses owned by aristocratic magnates or rising peasant proprietors who often produced for a foreign market; the eventual substitution of artisanal guilds by mechanized factories and corporate enterprises as the end result of a passage through ever more centralized versions of the putting-out system; the reorganization of work as a system of well-defined and repetitious tasks

within the new large-scale industries and their nonindustrial counterparts, all the way from bureaucracies to hospitals, in other sectors of practical life; and the reorganization of the entire world economy as a machine to reproduce this industrial style on a worldwide scale through the specialization of entire national economies.

This story forms the core of the mythical history of industrialized market societies and of that confused entity, capitalism, at once a historical universal and a historical particular. It is the trajectory of economic development exposed by *Capital* as a diabolical but providential drama and presented in numberless textbooks as the most natural thing in the world. The social counterpart to this path of economic growth has been the continued existence of prosperous families that have a good chance of bequeathing from generation to generation their privileged control over labor, capital, culture, and governmental power. The mythical history is therefore also a story about them and an assurance that their interests were on the right side of social evolution.

Here, as in later sections of this interpreted narrative, I argue that this view of industrial development drastically underestimates the degree of deviation from the mainstream that occurred even in such prize exhibits of the mythical history as the economic and social transformation of England. In fact the deviant forms reveal more of what was distinctive to the West and what made it incomparably revolutionary than do the dominant ones. I also claim that the traditional view gives a mistaken sense of the degree of prevalence that the more rigid type of work organization in fact achieved. According to the mythical history the deviations appeared for special reasons – the idiosyncracies of the regions where they arose – but failed for general ones – the inherent imperatives of industrial development. But there are grounds to conclude that the now dominant institutional form of Western industrial society won and maintained its preeminence over its rivals for reasons that have little to do with its intrinsic productive capabilities. One set of reasons for this conclusion has to do with the many ways in which state power was mobilized against the deviant forms and in support of the hegemonic ones. Another reason is the threshold effect of early and still precarious success. Machine design, organizational practices, and even technical and economic ideas began to consolidate around the emergent style of work organization and to bestow upon it a second-order necessity. Deep-logic social analysis itself and the historical interpretations it has inspired contributed to this fabulous bootstrap. For they helped form a restrictive view of historical possibility that aggravated rather than qualified the sense of naturalness that always surrounds victorious settlements and solutions.

One particular line of deviation from the mainstream of industrial

development stands out by its ubiquity. A discussion of it brings into focus the issues at stake in the larger controversy. In every period of modern Western history some controversialists denied that the canonical style of industrialization had to prevail, even as part of the transition to an alternative economic order. They took sides with those who defended an economy of family farms and cottage industry, of technological revolution and cheap production without armylike factories, of market decentralization without the license to concentrate wealth, and of more cooperative forms of labor and exchange. Their advocacy has been traditionally derided as the program of petty bourgeois sentimentalism, engaged in a losing debate with tough-minded radicals and conservatives. Their critics point out that the petty bourgeois alternative would have been both self-destructive and inefficient. It would have been self-destructive because the more successful petty enterprises would soon have expanded into large-scale businesses unless they were constantly restrained and dispossessed by a state that would have then become the real power in the economy. It would have been inefficient because the alternative system could never have accommodated the enormous economies of scale that made continued economic revolution possible.

But these critics turn out to have no larger a share of the truth than their petty bourgeois adversaries. The tough-minded are right in the sense that the alleged alternative would have been both self-destabilizing and inefficient *unless* it built for itself institutional arrangements for markets and democracies different from the arrangements that have in fact come to prevail. Petty commodity production had no long-term future within property-based market economics and American-type democratic institutions. It would have required a different institutional framework. And this framework would have radically altered its social meaning and consequences. But the petty bourgeois romantics are right to insist that their alternative has been repeatedly suppressed rather than defeated in an impartial Darwinian competition. They are also correct in claiming for their program the status of a feasible point of departure toward an alternative industrial society. They even have a point when they argue that in fragmentary form this alternative industrialism has played a much larger role in the actual industrialization of the West than the mythical history acknowledges.

This debate has practical importance because the alternative has never been definitively discarded. Continuously reasserted in the course of modern economic history, it remains today, in altered form, a serious possibility of industrial organization. The case for the alternative is of theoretical and practical interest because it suggests a different approach to modern economic history and prefigures

a theory of transformation free from the errors that beset deep-logic social thought.

My discussion advances in three stages. It begins with the early forms of industrial development, then turns to their agrarian counterparts, and finally takes up the latter-day manifestations of the contest between dominant and deviant variants of industrialism.

The Conflict over the Organizational Form of Manufacturing

The most powerful intellectual tool of the mythical history of manufacturing and agriculture in early modern Europe has been the proto-industrialization theory. The most significant polemical result of this theory is to define the petty bourgeois deviation as an unstable transitional form that turns into a blind alley of economic development when it does not quickly give way to the high industrial road. The main elements of the proto-industrialization thesis are the following. Because of the relative poverty of their soil or the pastoral character of their agriculture, certain regions started out with large amounts of underemployed labor. These regions were the star candidates for those early bursts of country-based industrialization whose uses and ultimate failure the proto-industrialization thesis purports to describe. The advance of agricultural techniques in the more fertile regions resulted in still greater underemployment in the poorer ones. The peasant household, like most economic agents in the preindustrial world, was more concerned to preserve a customary way of life than to maximize a rate of return. The peasants of the impoverished and overcrowded regions therefore clung to their land and sought additional employment. They provided the cheap labor that the putting-out system could exploit. Thus there began simultaneously in many regions of Europe a flurry of decentralized manufacturing activity, closely linked with agricultural work and held together by merchants primarily engaged in long-distance trade.

At first the merchant may have served merely as the commercial intermediary and the purveyor of raw materials to a household that continued to own the instruments of its own labor. But the residual independence of domestic industry was eventually doomed by the destruction of its agrarian base. The spread of small-scale rural industry undermined the Malthusian constraints upon early marriage. The resulting abrupt rise in the population of regions that already suffered from an impoverished agricultural base helped fragment peasant landholding. Peasants who had once been both smallholders and independent contractors often found themselves landless wage employees, working for an entrepreneurial landowner or merchant.

The story did not end there. From the standpoint of the merchant, now in charge of the production process, the rusticated industry of

the putting-out system suffered from several incurable defects. It confronted the master with formidable problems of control over the efficiency of workers whom he could not directly oversee. It ran into the resistance or unreliability of laborers who would work only the time necessary to safeguard their accustomed standard of living (a backward-bending labor supply curve). And its decentralized character imposed transportation costs that limited the expansion of putting-out networks.

These problems, the proto-industrialization argument continues, could be solved only by the concentration of workers in centralized factories. The factory system therefore preceded and made possible the mechanization of industry and the extreme, technical division of labor. The attempt to prolong the life of decentralized, rural industry either failed or generated satellites to the central form of productive activity. This central form became the mechanized, mass-production industry, operating against the background of a countryside emptied of most of its population and given over to large-scale agricultural business.

It is embarrassing to the broader social and historical ideas supported by the proto-industrialization thesis that many of the features we now regard as intrinsic to the dominant model emerged only recently and ran into trouble only a few generations after their original introduction. The Fordist, assembly line production process and the divisional structure pioneered by some of the large American corporations of the 1920s and 1930s may serve as examples. This belated development suggests that even after the events described by the students of proto-industrialization had run their course, the contemporary form of market organization was very far from being in the cards. For the moment, however, consider only how much the proto-industrialization thesis understates the degree of deviation and conflict in the history of early European industrialization. Most of the anomalous experiments and trajectories that the proto-industrialization argument fails to accommodate illustrate the career of that petty commodity variant of industrialization whose condescending dismissal by mainstream theory and historiography I earlier recalled.

In early modern European history many regions witnessed the development of manufacturing complexes that exemplify this alternative industrial path. These industrial ventures were distinguished by their relative smallness of scale, their resourcefulness in using flexible production processes to satisfy particular, varying needs rather than rigid processes to fulfill standardized needs, and their efforts to organize work in ways that allowed for a closer interplay between supervision and execution. In all these respects, these early industries were forerunners of what has since become the vanguard

sector of the advanced Western economies. Indeed, in many cases they survived to become part of the vanguard sector, though in others they either disappeared or assimilated to the dominant industrial model.

Among the instances of deviation were the woolen industry of the West Riding, the Birmingham hardware trade, the cutlery industries of Sheffield in England and Solingen in Germany, and the textile industry of Lyon. These and other experiences of industrial development have benefited from an increasing number of studies by both historians and social theorists. A close reading and comparison of these studies suggests an account of the reasons for the failure or success of these experiments that cannot be reconciled with the mythical history. The pattern of success and failure does not support the premise that most sectors of an economy are inherently more suited to what we now consider the mainstream or the vanguardist forms of production: the deviant experiments succeeded and failed in distinct sectors as well as in different regions and at different times. The deviations were more likely to flourish when governmental power was not used exclusively to institute legal rules and economic policies that consolidated the dominant model and when the deviant entrepreneurs themselves responded to periodic economic crisis in ways that exploited the flexibility of their enterprises.

Compare, for this purpose, the experience of the Sheffield cutlery industry with that of the Lyonnaise textile producers. The general line of governmental policy and market organization in England unequivocally favored large-scale merchants and manufacturers in their generations-long struggle against artisans and petty entrepreneurs and helped force these petty producers into the role of economic reactionaries or satellites. Against this already hostile background, the cutlery makers of Sheffield responded to the economic crisis of the 1870s and 1880s, to higher tariffs, and to competition from their more resourceful Solingen counterparts by the classic defensive maneuvers of cottage industry under attack. These maneuvers drastically restricted the potential economic significance of the deviant mode even when they ensured the marginal economic survival of the petty entrepreneurs themselves. A few of the cutlery makers found a niche in the narrow market for custom-made luxury goods. In this way, they gave up the battle to occupy a portion of major productive activity, resigning themselves to economic insignificance. Others switched to the economic, organizational, and technological methods of the dominant model. They began using product-specific machines, rigid production processes, and a more pronounced hierarchy of the supervisors and the supervised in order to make specialty steels. Burdened by the inflexibility of big business without its advantage

of scale or governmental favor, they became easy prey to the next changes in market conditions.

Contrast this outcome to the history of Lyonnaise textile manufacturing. There the manufacturing of textiles by artisanal cooperatives and petty entrepreneurs had been pursued, with occasional interruptions, from the seventeenth century onward. After having been disorganized during the years of the revolution, this style of manufacturing was reconstituted at the outset of the Orleanist regime. Its most characteristic organizational device was the subcontracting of weaving to master artisans.

Two successive shifts in taste jeopardized the textile manufacturing of Lyon. The first was the change from more intricate fabrics, prized for the texture and design of their weaving, to the cheaper cloths, admired for the vividness of their colors. This shift in demand resulted in a massive transfer of contract orders to less expensive and less proficient subcontractors, which in turn brought on, in the Lyon uprisings of 1831 and 1834, one of the great artisanal revolts of the nineteenth century. The second such change was the surge, during the 1870s and 1880s, of a taste for still cheaper cotton-and-silk-waste fabrics. This might well have caused the downfall of the Lyonnaise *fabrique* had the manufacturers and artisans not played upon the economic and technological ambiguities of their situation to draw strength out of weakness. The small-scale manufacturers used mixed fabrics and new forms of printing and dyeing. The high instability of demand in the textile markets, the diffusion of electricity as a cheap decentralized power source, and the relatively low wages of rural weavers all favored the *petite fabrique*. Moreover, the larger setting of French national policy had never ceased to be more congenial to the alternative style of manufacturing than its English counterpart. The survival of artisanal or petty entrepreneurial cadres in much of France, as in the other European regions where they flourished, found support in the vitality of independent smallholding agriculture. This vitality in turn reflected the continuing ability of French peasants and petty bourgeoisie, from the consolidation of absolutist government to the successive postrevolutionary regimes, to enlist governmental power in their own favor. At their most successful, the smaller entrepreneurs and proprietors mobilized governmental power not only to obtain narrow material advantages but to safeguard whole ways of life. By the 1960s, the cottage industries dominated the textile manufacturing of Lyon: 55 percent of weaving and 70 percent of spinning were in the hands of the *petite fabrique*. By a continuous series of self-transformations, punctuated by major crises and ingenious responses, petty commodity producers, the ridiculed reactionaries of industrial history, had secured a prominent place in the most advanced sectors of industry.

At a minimum, success stories like this one show that there is no natural allocation of economic activities to the dominant and the deviant types of industry, the rigid and the flexible forms of work organization. The kinds of textiles produced in Lyon by the latter-day version of cottage industry were made in many other parts of the world, from Great Britain to Taiwan, by mass production, with product-specific machines, rigid production processes, and stark contrasts between planning and execution.

The successful alternatives exemplify a continuity between artisanal manufacturing or petty commodity production and vanguardist industry. They suggest how national styles of industrialization, acquired capacities to enlist state power, and collective strategies influenced the boundaries between the two types of industrial organization. They even demonstrate a surprisingly frequent link between the artisanal rearguard and the high-tech vanguard of Western industrialization. But they do not prove that the alternative industrial type could have then, or can now, gain a dominant place in the economy and impart to it a different social character. Even the successful cases were, in another sense, failures: in no instance was the consolidation of the alternative style in one sector of the economy followed by changes in the defining institutional form of markets and politics that might have permitted a more drastic shift in the character of Western industrialism.

The attempt to assess the larger promise of the deviant cases must therefore be indirect. One approach is to study the dependence of the dominant industrial style upon a variety of extracultural institutional arrangements that were themselves subject to constant struggle. The study of this dependence could then be complemented by an attempt to imagine the institutional conditions under which the alternative industrialism could have flourished more widely. This is a theme pursued throughout this interpretive history of contemporary formative contexts as well as in later parts of *False Necessity*. Another, much narrower approach is to consider how the rivalry between the dominant and the deviant models relates to early modern struggles over agriculture and to contemporary conflicts about economic organization. In this way what has usually been seen as a highly localized and long-settled quarrel can be shown to be part of a general and continuing dispute.

The Conflict over the Organizational Form of Agriculture

The parallel to the deviant model in the history of manufacturing was a style of agricultural development that gave a preeminent role to the family farm and to cooperative relations among smallholders. The significance of the parallelism is hardly self-evident. Cottage

industry sometimes flourished, as in the heyday of the Birmingham and Sheffield metal trades, against a background of land concentration. Conversely, family-scale agriculture was occasionally accompanied by the near absence or the stagnation and involution of manufacturing activities, as in Piedmont, Catalonia, and some parts of the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the deviant agricultural style did have broader economic and social implications. The proto-industrialization thesis, put in its place, shows the economic implication: the destruction of small-scale ownership or tenancy played a decisive part in the particular trajectory of manufacturing history studied by the exponents of that thesis. Their mistake was only to see this trajectory as the preferred or even the necessary route to the maximum development of productive capabilities. The broader social implication becomes clear when you consider that the dominant and deviant models of manufacturing and agriculture favored, or injured, the same social groups. Cottage industry was quickest to escape the role assigned to it by the proto-industrialization thesis wherever there flourished a class of small-scale producers. Yet, factorylike manufacturing and land concentration never abolished this class nor did they create a polarized society of magnates and dependents. The large and rigid enterprises needed the buffer of small-scale production against economic instability. For reasons still to be discussed, the legal arrangements that defined these more concentrated market systems and the politics that protected them never allowed the repetition of the deadliest crisis known to the agrarian-bureaucratic empires of antiquity: the reduction of small-scale producers to servile status and the consequent shrinking of the market in labor and in goods.

Modern Western agricultural history supports two main conclusions about the practicability of relative agrarian decentralization. These conclusions illustrate the elements of falsehood and truth in the polemic against petty commodity production.

The first conclusion is that the family farm turned out to be as efficient, by the measure of acreage and even labor productivity, as the more concentrated forms of agriculture. This style of agricultural development prevailed in many of the regions that proved to be most successful in the earlier phases of the approach toward industrialization. Where ownership was concentrated, the form of agricultural exploitation often continued to resemble that of familial production in most other respects. And in many of the instances in which this productive style gave way to larger-scale units, tilled by laborers under centralized control, the active alliance of national governments with landowning magnates, exerted through law, policy, and calculated omission, was largely responsible for the result.

A second conclusion, however, qualifies this first one. In those instances where small-scale production flourished well into more

advanced stages of industrialization and agricultural mechanization, it proved to be unstable or else to depend upon a special deal between government and the family farm. This deal enabled the small producers to resist the risks of agricultural instability while cordoning off the agrarian sector from an economy largely organized on different principles. This second conclusion suggests once again that a more secure and influential place for small-scale agriculture would have required a change in the institutional character of markets and politics. The following paragraphs use a variety of allusions to European history to illustrate the first conclusion and the experience of nineteenth-century France and America to exemplify the second.

A comparison of agricultural regions in sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century Europe shows that the most flourishing areas were often the ones characterized by family-scale agriculture, whereas the concentration of ownership and management prevailed in many of the more backward regions. Piedmont and Lombardy in contrast to Sicily and Naples; Catalonia in comparison to the rest of Spain; Flanders and Holland as against Germany beyond the Elbe – all tell, in this one respect, the same story, though each brings out a distinct facet of the common problem. Thus, the history of Catalan agriculture clearly shows how access to governmental power (e.g., the Catalan representative assembly) and to a vital urban market benefited family-scale agriculture. And the example of Flanders, where highly specialized, labor-intensive farms coexisted with large grain-producing estates, demonstrates that smallholding could continue to flourish in a milieu of precocious industrialization.

The significance of these early modern European experiences comes out most clearly when they are placed in a world-historical context. The most populous and enduring societies before the revolution of techniques and ideas that radiated out of the North Atlantic were the great agrarian-bureaucratic empires. A characteristic crisis repeatedly jeopardized the prosperity and even the survival of these societies, narrowing markets, sapping the authority of central governments, and cutting off opportunities of advance toward irreversible commercialization and industrialization. Whenever unforeseen economic or military dangers required the central state to demand additional fiscal or military contributions, the landowning magnates, largely thanks to their control of local public administration, managed to shift the brunt of the burden onto the smallholders and other petty producers. These small folk, ruined by exactions they could not meet, then voluntarily sought, or were compelled to accept, a status of personal dependence upon the very potentates who had undone them. This surrender to lordly protection shook the most important support of market activity. The sphere of exchange narrowed to the dealings among larger domains that tended toward

economic autarky and hierarchical discipline. The central government, dangerously weakened, found itself even more beholden to the great landholders than it had been before. No wonder the most acute statesmen and reformers in these societies were obsessed with the attempt to preserve the smallholding and petty mercantile sectors as a basis for the government's fiscal and military strength.

Why they repeatedly failed, why Europe, less deliberately, escaped the destructive cycle of those empires, and why both questions can best be answered by an antinecessitarian social theory are issues to be taken up in another part of this volume. What matters for the moment is the suggestion that the most distinctively European form of agricultural development was the supposedly deviant and regressive agriculture of smallholders. The remarkable feature of the standard, "English" model of agrarian concentration – a feature that requires further elucidation – was its ability to move as far toward concentration as it did without provoking the market-destructive crises that had frequently accompanied superficially similar movements in other societies.

But given that the family-run farm represented a practicable alternative to agrarian concentration in the economic circumstances of early modern Europe, could it continue to play a progressive role in the era of industrialization and mechanized agriculture? The answer to this question lies – surprisingly – less in technical-economic considerations than in the uses of governmental power. In France – with its densely settled land and strong traditions of alliance between the state and the peasantry – legal rules and governmental policy helped safeguard the relatively labor-intensive tillage of middle-sized and small-sized farms. The resulting style of agricultural development was almost by definition less labor productive than its more concentrated English counterpart. Yet recent studies have demonstrated that, at least in the nineteenth century, the total economic effect was only negligibly prejudicial if it was prejudicial at all. If output per worker remained lower in French than in British agriculture, it was consistently higher in French than in British industry. And during the entire 1815–1915 period, commodity output increased at the rate of only 1 percent per annum less in France than in Britain. It seems doubtful that any significant portion of this differential could justifiably be attributed to a contrast in the form of agricultural organization. And to the extent that it could the difference might well be considered a low price to pay for avoiding British extremes in the destruction of peasant-provincial life and in the creation of a desperate urban mass.

By contrast, the nineteenth-century American family farm – located in a land of receding frontiers, less defined social classes, and more meager communal traditions – had to survive in a less protected

environment. From the 1830s and 1840s on, the farmer needed constant technical innovation and crop specialization to survive in his struggle to pay off the bank creditor and compensate for the unlucky harvest. The counterpart to a more highly mechanized and relatively larger farm was the emerging division between a successful rural petty bourgeoisie and a mass of landless laborers. The former provided a major market; the latter, the initial work force for the manufacturing sector. Only with the price-support and agricultural-extension programs of New Deal and World War II years was this style of family-run agriculture stabilized at a higher level of productivity than its French counterpart.

The French and American cases present contrasting but complementary examples. In the United States, competition leading toward concentration was allowed to go farther than in France. The American government took longer to settle with the small farmer, the whole period between the relatively ineffective Homestead Act and the much more effective technical and price-support systems. The less successful farmers were weeded out. The American and French experiences show that the critics of petty commodity production are right to this extent: given the general character of the politics and markets in which these farms have existed, competition produces concentration and empties out the land. For it is the large producer who can most readily mobilize capital, secure access to distant markets, and outlast a bad harvest. In both France and the United States, special governmental action was essential to preserve the family farm as the dominant form of agricultural production. And in both countries, this action took a form that drastically curtailed the exemplary significance of decentralized production for the economy as a whole while preserving it in its isolated, agricultural sector.

Governments did not reformulate the legal categories of property and contract in ways that might have ruled out absolute and permanent control over large accumulations of capital. Nor did they reorganize their own constitutional arrangements and methods of party-political rivalry in order to facilitate popular-democratic control over the main lines of investment and accumulation. They merely helped a particular form of productive activity survive despite the institutional conditions that, together with the inherent risks of agriculture, constantly threatened to destabilize it. In manufacturing, petty commodity appeared as either the rear guard or the vanguard of an industrial system organized on alternative principles. In agriculture, it emerged as an anomaly justified by its peculiar social charm and undeniable practical efficacy. In both areas, its potential significance remained fragmented and obscured, and its possibilities of development were sacrificed to a hostile institutional system.

Contemporary Debates

No institutional structure of governmental or economic activity emerged in the West that might have turned petty commodity production into a realistic form of social organization capable of carrying economics to ever higher levels of productive output. Nevertheless, the alternative possibilities signaled by the deviations in the history of early modern European manufacturing and agriculture continued to reappear at later moments in the social and economic history of the West. These later experiments with the basic form of work organization fell into two main clusters. The first group consists in the revolutionary attacks of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, typified by the 1848 revolutions and the years immediately after World War I. The second group comprises the recent forms of vanguardist industry. To understand the relationship between the early and the late deviations is also to take a first step toward seeing how closely connected the two latter-day types of deviations really are, despite the absence of an apparent connection.

There is a continuum between the simple despotism of the early factory and the advanced forms of assembly line organization. In this assembly line approach to work, the supervisors continued to exercise a disciplinary power that far outstripped the functions of technical coordination. This system served accelerated growth by its facility for appropriating surplus and for moving men and machines around. But its basic economic disadvantage – and the disadvantage of the institutional arrangements that sustained it – was to subordinate the opportunities of economic experimentation to the interests of economic privilege. A real relation also exists between the artisanal or family-farm team and the flexible, commando-type organization that characterizes the vanguardist sectors of modern industry, administration, and warfare. The essential shared trait is the fluidity of work plans. If the strength of the commando style lies precisely in its practical opportunism, its weakness is its difficulty in adapting to the requirements of scale and complexity.

In each of these parallel lines of economic and organizational development, the most recent phase – the Fordist plant or the vanguardist work group – represents the more rationalized one. It is more rationalized in the sense that the relations it creates among people at work embody more fully a conception of the interplay between abstract productive tasks and concrete operational acts. Each of the two lines of development – I have already shown – gives a different interpretation to this interplay.

But what of the link between the popular insurrectionary challenges to the dominant form of manufacturing and the axis that leads from artisanal shop to commando-style industry? To be sure, many

of the revolutionary movements were often fought out in the name of doctrines that derided these deviations as the sentimental or reactionary commitments of the petty bourgeoisie. Yet such slogans are belied both by the nature of the social forces that sustained many of the radical protests and by the actual content of many of the revolutionary experiments.

Contemporary historians have repeatedly emphasized the key role that skilled workers and sentimental petty bourgeois ideologists played in the insurrectionary movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Not only did these groups resist, more fiercely and consistently than any others, the development of the dominant model of industrialism but they often served as the chief organizers of revolutionary alternatives. Indeed, the classic form of these alternatives in the economy and the polity – the cooperative work group and the soviet or council-type of administrative body – can best be understood as idealized versions of the organizational forms that the petty producers and their sympathizers were trying to defend. This origin explains the striking mixture, in these experiments, of archaic and even neofeudal characteristics with visionary commitments. It also sheds light on the continuing failure of these insurrectionaries and ideologists to come up with schemes of economic and administrative organization capable of reconciling their aspirations with the requirements of large-scale production and administration. Thus, the revolutionary experiments repeatedly failed to bequeath the elements of an institutional scheme that might have provided a realistic alternative to the ruling styles and conceptions of industrialism and democracy. And this failure, with its sequel of smug or embittered disenchantment, contributed further to the entrenchment of the dominant approach to work organization.

To interpret the latter-day manifestations of the deviant style from this perspective is, once again, to deny that their extinction or confinement can be explained by the necessity of the institutional arrangements that they were meant to displace. But it is not, in any simple sense, to disprove that the proposed alternative was incompatible with social requirements for the accelerated development of practical capabilities of production (or of administration and warfare). For the alternative mode of economic organization remained incompatible with those requirements so long as its advocates failed to come up with institutions that would have perpetuated economic decentralization without permitting large and permanent accumulations of private capital and that would have established governments capable of supporting and administering these economic arrangements. Just what such alternative institutions might have looked like in the past or should look like in the future is a subject of Chapter 5.

You can now put together the elements of a way of accounting for the relative defeat of the deviant mode of work organization that rejects the mythical history and dispenses with the hypothesis of deep-logic social theory and with the prejudices of unreflective conservatism. Though this revised account is constantly strengthened by new historical findings and new social experiments, it expresses less a revolution in ground-level empirical studies than a reinterpretation of familiar but underplayed or misunderstood events.

Proceeding along this route, you would observe that the revolutionary experiments in work organization were all forcibly suppressed before they had been tried out for any extended period or revised in the course of their application. You would then go on to emphasize that the activists and theorists of these deviant movements were consistently misled by prejudices about possible class alliances and possible institutional alternatives to the existing or emergent forms of market and democratic order. These prejudices prevented them from using their brief moments of experimental opportunity to develop the elements of realistic alternatives. In this way, the would-be architects of a reconstructed society were defeated in part by their inability to free themselves sufficiently from the intellectual authority of the world they had set out to destroy. This inability often encouraged them to seek refuge in an ideological fantasy that merely turned upside down a reality it had failed to understand or to escape.

Turning to the exceptional status of the flexible vanguardist form of industrial organization, you would argue, along lines previously suggested, that the predominance of mass production is not the direct result of superior economic efficiency. Rather, this predominance depends upon the institutionally guaranteed ability to ward off instability in the product, labor, and financial markets as well as upon an international division of labor that prevents either cheap-labor or technologically innovative economies from disrupting stable world markets. If these conditions failed to be satisfied, mass-production industry, with its stark contrast of task-defining and task-executing activities, might not suddenly crumble in all sectors of the economy. But it could be expected to lose its secure hold over many areas of production.

Nevertheless, the resulting extension of the flexible, vanguardist type of industry might simply make way for a competition among new economic enterprises. The more concentrated businesses might once again evolve into new versions of the old mass-production industries and use their influence over markets and governments to protect themselves against economic instability and foreign competition. Indeed, such an outcome might be expected to follow as a matter of course unless the most fundamental economic arrangements of the economy had been revised: the arrangements that es-

establish an equivalence between the means for decentralizing economic decisions and the devices for concentrating capital.

Because such changes in the character of economic institutions might involve the overtly political administration of capital (e.g., a national rotating capital fund), they would in turn require changes in the organization of government and of the conflict for governmental power. An authoritarian, revolutionary state would merely create a class of people obsessed with the exercise of social control and with the interests of their own clients and creatures: bureaucrats, managers, and technical personnel. On the other hand, a demobilized liberal democracy would lack both the governmental structures and the civic militancy required to subject the basic form of economic accumulation to effective partisan rivalry.

This counterfactual fable has a double point. It shows how the problems confronted by the initial forms of petty commodity production – the inability to gain a more than peripheral place within the established institutional framework – might reappear as a dilemma faced by the distant but still recognizable counterparts of those early deviations. This lesson suggests another. The availability and the identity of alternative forms of work organization have depended largely upon the prospects for imagining and establishing alternative ways to organize markets and democracies. How should we understand the genesis of the forms of market and democratic organization that have in fact achieved primacy?

Note that the preceding argument does not deny force to technological and resource constraints. It does invoke and support the assumptions: (a) that at any given time those constraints significantly underdetermine the style of work organization; (b) that technological constraints are as much the result as the cause of social settlements, codified in institutional arrangements such as forms of work organization; and, more suprisingly than (a) or (b), (c) that we cannot comprehend either in advance or in retrospect the range of feasible organizational responses to technological or resource constraints. We do not need to define the range of possible alternatives in order to understand the history of economic organization. So, too, on a larger historical scale, we do not need to predefine branching points in the history of formative institutional contexts in order to understand how contexts get remade.

THE GENESIS OF THE PRIVATE-RIGHTS COMPLEX

Its Elements Reviewed

The private-rights complex consists in the arrangements that define the institutional character of the market. These arrangements are

largely sets of legal rights. One of their more striking features is the ability to structure the basic framework for non-economic dealings (other than those of party politics and public administration) in the very course of defining the market. But why should the legal categories that shape the market provide the model for all entitlements? The answer to this question is far from self-evident; it is one of the facts that an account of the emergence of the private-rights complex must explain.

Remember that the central feature of this complex is a system of property rights that ensures economic decentralization by distributing nearly absolute claims to divisible portions of social capital – absolute in scope of exercise and in continuity of temporal succession. The contractual counterpart to this property system is a structure of contract rights that denies legal force to those relationships of personal interdependence and mutual reliance that cannot be characterized either as the fully deliberate undertaking of an obligation by a rightholder or as the unilateral imposition of an obligation by the state.

The spirit animating this private-rights complex – it will be remembered – is the search for a pure, prepolitical logic of free human interaction. To a surprising extent the system of contract and property is presented – and, even when not so presented, it is implicitly understood – as the legal structure inherent in private ordering. Autonomous self-regulation may not, it is conceded, be good for everything. The main points of the private-rights system can be varied in many ways. And some people may be better placed to exercise their rights than others. But such qualifications do not prevent the identification of these private entitlements with the general project of setting up a system for private coordination. This identification is no mere theoretical afterthought. Nor can it even be adequately understood as simply a requirement of legitimation. It orients the understanding and application of private rights. It prevents people from asking anew, at each crucial turn in ideological or legal controversy, what institutional form the market in particular and private ordering generally can and should have.

There is a mythical history of the private-rights complex that seconds, in style and effect, the traditional way of accounting for the development of the work-organization complex. Few would subscribe to this historical approach in its crudest form. But, like the broader habits of social and historical study that it exemplifies, it continues to inform much of our actual thinking about legal entitlements and the institutional arrangements they define. A testimony to the authority of this conception is its influence upon liberals and Marxists alike. The liberals see the gradual development of a market structure – its gradual emergence from the feudal and neofeudal restrictions that so arbitrarily and expensively restricted the free play

of self-interested exchange. As the market order expanded only gradually into wider areas of social life, so too its inherent legal structure was discovered only step by step. This structure was made up in large part by the modern system of contract and property. Thus, liberals and Marxists alike view the private-law arrangements and ideas of early modern Europe as necessary points on the continuum that led to current contract or property law, a law that could in turn be seen as an indispensable prop to the market system. In its conception of the relation between this market order and political freedom, the dominant liberal view has spanned the gamut between the confident conviction that the two cannot be separated (for each is both the condition and the extension of the other) and the more negative and skeptical belief that any attempt to replace this market order entirely will produce arrangements that jeopardize freedom.

Marxists have traditionally dissented less than might have been expected from this additional element in the mythical history. The market economy makes three highly controlled appearances within Marxist-influenced left social theory. First and primarily it is the central institutional device of capitalism – a well-defined stage of world-historical evolution. Second, it supplies the institutional framework for petty commodity production, an unstable social order, destined to pass into capitalism or to perform a subsidiary role within it when it does not disappear altogether. In both these appearances, the basic market structure is assumed to be identical with the familiar contract and property system. Third, the market may reappear under communism, relieved of the burden of oppression and scarcity that has weighed upon it until now. But because communism represents less a well-defined program than the far beckoning culmination of class-ridden history, its institutional arrangements remain in the shadows. Its advocates fail to give practical detail to the idea of an exchange system that presupposes neither the traffic in human work nor a stable social and technical division of labor.

The Marxist ambivalence toward the market carries over into an ambivalence toward private rights, which appear sometimes as an incident in the commodified world of capitalism and, at other times, as a feature of any tolerable social regime. Thus, the Marxists, like the liberals, accept the fundamental tenets of the mythical history of private rights: the certainty that the development of contract and property institutions in modern Europe embodied the emergence of the market order as one of the necessary stages or permanent possibilities of social life. Liberals and Marxists differ only in how they propose to correct the defects of the market system: by combining it with alternative forms of allocation (planned social democracy) or by reducing it to a peripheral role.

The argument of the following pages attacks this mythical history

at its root premises, the premises that Marxists and liberals share. It pursues this attack by discussing three seemingly paradoxical features of the private-rights complex and its formation. To set these paradoxes side by side is to underline the specificity of our contract and property system. More particularly, it is to confirm that the dominant system of contract and property rights constantly struggled with alternative principles of social organization and that some of these principles even suggest elements for the successful institutional reshaping of petty commodity production. But the most telling implication of the view able to replace the mythical history is the suggestion that this system of contract and property could inform social life only by combining with arrangements that negated and even reversed the professed aims of the private-law order. Conversely, success in the attempt to bring practical economic life closer to the ideal conception of an exchange of goods and labor among free and deliberate agents would have required a radically different legal basis for economic decentralization.

The Paradox of Origin

The development of private legal entitlements in the specific form in which we have come to know them did not smoothly accompany the gradual formation of a society of free rightholders confronted with a submissive and accountable government. Those entitlements and theories emerged, instead, as part of a particular social settlement that included as one of its incidents or results the formation of an absolutist state. The contract and property rights fashioned and systematized by the jurists of early modern Europe supplied instruments for the familiar process by which the consolidation of absolute rights (especially in land) could advance hand in hand with the strengthening of a unified governmental sovereignty. Tax (as governmental finance) and rent (as the private rightholder's charge for the use of allodial property) became clearly separated. At the same time governments altered what had, up to that point, been their characteristic ways of dealing with gainful economic activity. Sometimes states had treated manufacturers and merchants (especially in long-distance commerce) as pliant victims to be milked for all they were worth. In more settled and ambitious empires, this predatory attitude gave way to the more aggressive tutelage of economic production and exchange with a view to maintaining the conditions of social harmony. This attitude characteristically prevailed in agrarian policy even when not applied to commerce and industry. In early modern Europe the most successful governments pioneered a new approach to economic activity: they deliberately manipulated governmental authority and military force, domestically and internationally, in or-

der to promote economic growth. Thus, the same pattern of retrenchment and partnership that characterized the relationship between government and allodial property in land carried over to public policy toward trade and industry. Ways were thereby found to protect wealth-making activities without stifling or starving them through the very devices of protection.

These institutional innovations were both the products and the instruments of a particular social compromise. In countless variations, a redefined elite of enterprising nobles and successful commoners gained a more unchecked control over land, labor, and movable capital while governments won greater administrative cohesiveness, broadened their area of maneuver, and deliberately subordinated the maintenance of harmony to the acquisition of wealth. Much in this outcome can be understood as the expression of a straightforward deal: the state would grant the elites a more untrammelled control over land, labor, and commercial wealth while the elites would in turn allow the managers of the new state – at once weaker and stronger than many of its counterparts in non-European civilizations – to dispose more freely of taxes and troops, to develop an aggressive administrative apparatus, and even to experiment with different approaches to the relation between the creation and the protection of wealth. The contract and property system represented merely the first half of the exchange, the half that permitted the consolidation of private control at the ground level. To recognize this deal is not to suppose that central governments were staffed by other than members of the elites or were devoted to nonelite objectives. You need only assume that, against the double background of a relative fragmentation of the elites and an irreversible commercialization of the economy, the masters and agents of the new-model state won the power to pursue their narrower aims more freely. They owed part of this freedom to having never had pervasive responsibilities or powers in the management of the national economy.

The uniqueness of this institutional solution can be inferred from a comparison with the experience of the agrarian-bureaucratic empires of antiquity. In those societies, the assumption by elites of a more unchecked control over land, labor, and commercial wealth typically signaled the decommercialization of the economy and the ultimate fragmentation of governmental authority. Thus, a superficially similar tendency possessed in context an entirely different meaning. For in the early modern West, this proprietary victory of the elites took place in a society that had already been transformed by the irreversible commercialization of the economy and the thoroughgoing diversification of the elites, phenomena that in turn reflected the relative success of Western European peasants and artisans in resisting complete subjection to great landholders and local po-

tentates. Although this resistance was less successful in some places than in others (compare again England to France or Catalonia to the rest of France), it was almost uniformly more successful in Europe west of the Elbe than in the great agrarian-bureaucratic empires of premodern and non-European history.

The argument about the paradox of origin permits a tentative conclusion. The contract and property system represented an important element in the emergence of a social order and a social vision radically at odds with the ideas we now attribute to this system. Of course, it might have outgrown these marks of origin. But this preliminary insight already suggests that contract and property rights are not what they seem. The remainder of the discussion shows that they could never close this gap between appearance and reality: the idealized market vision could be more fully realized only by legal arrangements that departed drastically from those that have come to define market regimes in modern Western history.

The Paradox of Specification

A second paradoxical feature of the private-rights complex generalizes and deepens the lesson taught by the first paradox. If we are tempted to dismiss the first paradox as having shown merely that the legal structure of the market has an incongruous origin, we now discover that this legal structure was constantly and mysteriously bound up with alternative principles of social order that altered, and even inverted, its apparent significance. This inversion reflects less an ideologically motivated dissimulation than the inability of the contract and property system to govern crucial features of the practical dealings among people without the help of arrangements antagonistic to the manifest spirit of that system.

The traditional Western form of contract and property has proven unable fully to penetrate at least two aspects of social life – one central and the other tangential to practical economic life. The central aspect is the actual organization of production, in particular the effort to coordinate labor in the pursuit of practical objectives. A practical organization cannot operate effectively if the relations among its members are predetermined by a regime of rigidly defined entitlements and obligations demarcating zones of unchecked discretion. The rationalization of collective labor means precisely that the work team can become a visible embodiment of practical reason, with its relentlessly opportunistic calculation of means to ends and its accelerated interplay between task definitions and operational acts. The strength of the flexible variant of rationalized collective labor is to carry to the extreme this opportunism and this freedom from the constraints imposed by any preexisting plan of social division and

hierarchy. Conversely, to bind every practical decision about the organization of production to the absolutes of right and obligation is to ensure practical failure. As soon as you concede the need for discretionary maneuverability, you face the problem of deciding who exercises the discretion and under which restraints. The pure system of contract and property provides no answer to this question because, though it may legitimate certain exercises of power, it remains in its form merely a legal structure of coordinate relationships.

The other aspect of social life that the modern regime of contract and regime cannot fully penetrate may be peripheral to much of productive activity in its most characteristically modern variants. But it has always been vital to our practical experience of society, and it has always persisted as an undercurrent theme in our workaday lives. This is the domain of communal relations where mutual ties are valued as ends in themselves, the effects of action upon one's fellows really matter, and an acceptance of heightened mutual vulnerability overtakes the punctilious reckoning of tit for tat.

Both practical and communal life resist the procrustean limitations of the classical rights-regime. The private-rights complex simply cannot go far enough in specifying these practical or communal arrangements without appealing for help to other methods of social organization. This demand for further specification creates the possibility of something we in fact observe: the private-rights order takes on an entirely different social significance once it operates alongside the ideas and arrangements that provide it with its necessary complement of specification.

Two main sets of complementary principles of social organization have, in succession, given private rights their indispensable wedge into practical social life. The first such body of principles simply generalized and restated the particular social settlement in which the modern system of contract and property originally figured. This was the corporate-estatist society (*Ständestaat*) of early modern Europe. This approach to social organization saw society divided into well-established divisions and hierarchies. A particular group or institution was visibly defined by the place it occupied in this social map, visibly because the communal-hierarchical unit often possessed an explicit corporate identity. The most notorious examples were the Church and the standing army – organizations that, together with many others, were considered to perform natural functions in society and to cement the social order. People had prerogatives – or duties – just by virtue of belonging to one of these corporate entities in their societies.

The mythical history of the private-rights complex would have led you to expect early modern legal doctrine to be overwhelmingly preoccupied with the single-minded defense of the canonical contract

and property system. And indeed you may find such a defense in the writings of later publicists like Bentham, Beccaria, von Humboldt, or Stuart Mill. But when you turn instead to the most influential jurists, such as Blackstone or Christian Wolff, concerned to systematize and justify the details of the institutional order, a different and more interesting picture emerges. Their major intellectual ambition was to synthesize or, when synthesis failed, merely to juxtapose the legal arrangements of the *Ständestaat* with those of the liberal contract and property system. Quite correctly, they viewed this reconciliation as a crucial element in the legal description of a defensible social order rather than as a tactical and temporary compromise between the archaic and the modern. The *Ständestaat* was no mere hangover of feudalism; it arose simultaneously with the rudiments of the private-rights complex. Thus, the favored classifications of rights in general and property in particular typically included both the rank-specific prerogatives of an estatist legal order and the formally universalistic rules of contract and property. Jurists repeatedly failed to develop a general conception of right capacious enough to include these two species of entitlement yet sufficiently narrow to exclude all others.

The second set of specifying principles of social order to have complemented the contract system consists in the extralegal techniques of order and control that characterize large-scale organizations in the societies where the private-rights complex continues in force. To a large extent these are the techniques intrinsic to the work-organization complex and supported by the distinctive links between state and society that the governmental-organization helps explain. Take the basic employment relation in the sectors of the economy marked by large-scale organizations. Even in those legal systems that continued to define employment contractually, individual contract was only the beginning in the regulation of labor. The individual agreement was first set in the framework of a system of collective bargaining meant to reestablish the reality of contract on a terrain otherwise marked by a contract-subverting degree of group inequality and personal dependence. The agreements that issued from this special contractual process could set only the most general terms for the exercise of supervisory authority. Even if submission to this authority could be treated as a manifestation of choice (what choice in a worker's world of few and similar jobs?), the actual process of supervising work could not, for the reasons earlier described, be fully turned into material for rigidly defined obligations and entitlements. It therefore became necessary to invoke, explicitly or implicitly, the technical necessity, the practical inevitability, of these work arrangements. And because everything, from the design of machines to the idea of rationality, had been influenced by this approach to the or-

ganization of labor, the claim acquired a semblance of plausibility. The mistake was only to credit the claim with an ultimate truth, a truth that transcended the actual sequence of conflicts and truces that had produced these results. The less well founded the appeal to technical necessity and the more the underlying social reality involved outright subjugation, the starker the contrast established between the picture of social life conveyed by the contract and property system and the daily reality of work.

A straightforward example of the conceptual and political embarrassments engendered by this contrast can be found in the legal issue known in American labor law as the problem of retained rights and familiar, under different names, in all modern Western legal systems. To what extent are the matters not covered by prior collective agreements a proper subject for collective bargaining and to what extent, on the contrary, are they properly reserved to managerial discretion (reserved rights of management)? To narrow the scope of retained rights is to enhance the applicability of the revised contract scheme (i.e., the framework of collective bargaining) at the cost of jeopardizing both the necessary practice of managerial discretion and the particular set of institutional arrangements (i.e., the work-organization complex) through which this discretion is currently exercised. Thus, the attack on these arrangements can be parried by the justified but only partly pertinent observation that a margin for discretion must be preserved in the interests of practicality. What routine legal and political thought cannot recognize is the distinction between the undoubted practical imperative and the contingent institutional means for satisfying it.

A great deal of legal-doctrinal argument in the advanced Western countries – perhaps most such argument in the area loosely known as private law – devotes itself to problems of the same order as the question of retained rights. By this I mean problems that arise from the attempt to reconcile the contract and property system with the actual institutional practices of exchange and production, practices perpetuated against the backdrop of highly developed links between social privilege and governmental power. This is Blackstone's and Wolff's task all over again; though the identity of the specifying complement has changed, its subversive force upon the private-rights order it completes remains the same.

The alternative to the mythical history gives rise to a readily testable hypothesis about the history of modern Western law and legal thought. The dominant legal controversies have been about what I have described as the danger of inversion through specification. The primary task the jurists set themselves was to reconcile the content and vision of the legally defined market order with alternative principles of social organization. These alternative principles were needed

for the private-rights complex to penetrate production and community and to accommodate the real institutional framework of society. Yet, in each of the major instances, the complement threatened to compromise and even reverse the original liberal message supposedly expressed by the private-rights complex. To manage this irreconcilability became the continuing preoccupation of legal doctrine. If this hypothesis is true we should expect to find the familiar, liberal version of private rights – the one that the mythical history sees as “rising” and “falling” throughout these events – most prominently displayed in the relatively brief interlude when statist principles were on the wane and contemporary styles of work organization had not yet crystallized. Even then we should expect the liberal ideas and arrangements to be stated more aggressively by propagandists and philosophers than by lawyers who had to make sense of the detailed structure of institutions.

The criticism of the mythical history gives rise to the suspicion that *no* complement of the private-rights system could do other than reverse its supposed significance. This suspicion would turn into a persuasive argument if it could be shown that an alternative legal definition of the market suffers from no such instability, precisely because it departs in certain specified ways from the received institutional definition of a market. To show that some elements of this alternative were prefigured in deviant aspects of past experience and that they escaped the instability is a step toward the explanatory goal and a concern of this institutional genealogy.

The Paradox of Superfluity

There is one final paradox to consider in the history of the private-rights complex: the classical theory of contract and property continues to be upheld although it accounts for increasingly less law. Consider the general theory of contract, the very model of analytic purity in modern Western law, the supreme technical achievement of the nineteenth-century jurists, and the part of legal thought that most perfectly expresses the assumptions of liberal political philosophy. What did classical contract theory still govern by the end of the twentieth century? Some of the limitations upon the applicability of core contract theory had been there from the start.

First, there were the exceptions to the dominant principles. Freedom to choose the contract partners and the contract terms had always been restricted by counterprinciples. The freedom to choose the partners would not always be allowed to operate in ways that undermined the communal aspects of social life. Thus, for example, reliance or enrichment in fact might generate legal obligations that had not been voluntarily assumed and the manipulation of the rules

and presumptions governing intent to be legally bound kept intra-familial relations from subjection to the logic of contract theory. The freedom to choose the contract terms hit against the limits imposed by the counterprinciple that unfair bargains would not always be enforced. The unfairness might consist either in a gross disparity of real values (including a disparity that arose from unexpected changes in market conditions) or in a measure of inequality and dependence that effaced the difference between a contract regime and a power order. No higher set of principles governed the relation between principles and counterprinciples. When principles and counterprinciples lost distinct institutional agents, such as courts of law and courts of equity, there ceased to be any simple way to draw the boundaries between the dominant principles and the exceptional counterprinciples; no one could or can say for sure just how far the exceptions reach.

The reach of the ruling contract theory had always been qualified by repressions as well as by exceptions. The categories of this theory were far better suited to one-shot, arm's-length transactions than to continuing business relationships that occupied a position midway between deals among strangers and the internal arrangements of an organization. Despite the importance of these continuing relationships to the real workings of the economies that contract law governed, they were left without adequate legal regulation. Part of the difficulty lay in the assumptions and implications of a contract law centrally addressed to extended and close business dealings. Such a law would have to deny the stark contrasts between contract and organization and between contract and community and to recognize partly articulate relations of interdependence as sources of obligations. This recognition would in turn imply a view of law and obligations dangerous to the idea that absolute property provides the very model of legal right, and incompatible with the view of law and obligations embodied by the private-rights complex.

Over time, the constant repressions and exceptions of classical contract theory were aggravated by outright exclusions. At the zenith of its influence, contract theory had appeared capable of absorbing the better part of the law. But one by one whole bodies of rule and doctrine were removed from its purview and subject to special rules and categories, incompatible with the general theory. These rejects included commercial law, labor law, antitrust, family law, and even international law.

Adding up the exceptions, the repressions, and the exclusions, classical contract theory seemed to have become, more than ever, an irrelevancy. There simply was very little of the law that it still actively informed. Such was in fact the trivializing conclusion drawn by the exponents of the mythical history: freedom of contract had risen and

then fallen, a victim to the twofold assault of legal skepticism and social democracy.

But this conventional explanation fails to account for two striking features of modern law and legal history: one explicit, the other subjacent. The subjacent trait supplies the key to an understanding of the former. The explicit feature is the persistent obsession with classical contract law: the excluded bodies of law continue to be worked out by opposition to the supposedly defunct model, without, however, generating any alternative general theory of the sources of obligation and the nature of rights. The subjacent feature is the negative significance of the classical contract theory: any alternative, systematic approach to private rights and obligations, even by judicial extension from the principles implicit in the specialized bodies of law that had been excluded from contract, would have threatened the established form of market organization. Thus, for example, to apply throughout the private-rights system even the limited revisionist methods of labor law would be to ask at every turn just when a given situation resembled a power order more than it did a contract regime. To revise contract bargains too often or too drastically, in response to an inequality of bargaining power, would be to replace contract by a noncontractual method of allocation. But not to revise them frequently or radically enough would be to court the danger that a vast range of contractual transactions represented merely a cover for allocation by command. Nothing guarantees that in any particular institutionalized version of the market the minimum of correction needed to secure the reality of a contract regime falls below the maximum of correction compatible with the decentralized decision making such a regime requires. It might well happen that, over a vast range of economic life, you could never correct enough by one criterion without correcting too little by the other. Even if the solution of labor law – the special framework for collective bargaining – were adequate on its own ground, it could not be generalized to the entire economy without drastically changing the institutional form of the market.

The point of the seemingly irrelevant contract theory was simply to occupy the space that might have been occupied by an alternative scheme of contract and property rights and therefore by an alternative institutional version of the market. In this ghostly and prophylactic role, contract theory did not merely fade away or merge comfortably with more progressive ideas, as the mythical history suggests. It stood there, and would continue to stand there, until a different market order had been developed. The shared assumption of its defenders and critics was that if it failed, nothing that rivaled it in generality could succeed.

Yet here lay one of the unrecognized dilemmas in the history of

modern law. The core of contract theory remained defensible only if many areas of law and social practice were excluded from its scope of application, while legal principles that opposed classical theory survived within the central body of contract as exceptional or repressed elements. But each of the exclusions, exceptions, and repressions showed in its own way that exchange and production might be set within a different institutional framework and conducted under different rules. Some of these deviant possibilities, once generalized, recombined, and reformulated in the course of the revision, might significantly diminish the degree of revisionary intervention needed to preserve the distinction between contract regimes and power orders. Contract law included deviant elements that pointed toward a private-rights order that gave legal force to relations of reciprocal dependence and confined both the fully articulated act of will and the unilateral imposition of a duty by the state to anomalous roles as sources of obligations. Other deviant tendencies changed the institutional identity of the bargaining partners or revised actual markets by reference to the operations of a preferred, imaginary market. But a real turning point would come if these particular deviations could be overtaken by a restructuring of the basic legal form and setting of decentralized economic decisions: a restructuring that could replace the absolute control of divisible portions of social capital with a mechanism of rotating, divided, or otherwise conditional access to capital. Without such a redirection the fundamental relation between the need to correct transactions and the need not to correct them could not be changed. Nor could there be hope of building an institutional framework that would interpret and develop the major alternative to the dominant form of work organization. Such an alternative would create the practical means with which to distinguish more effectively the conditions for scale and continuity in production from the circumstances that starkly contrast task executors and task definers, mass-production and vanguardist industry, the prerogatives of concentrated, self-reproducing capital and the claims of innovation and experiment.

THE GENESIS OF THE GOVERNMENTAL- ORGANIZATION COMPLEX

Its Elements Reviewed

Arrangements for the organization of government and for the conflict over governmental power make up a third part of the formative institutional context.

The chief feature of the constitutional structure of the state in this institutional order is its combination of popular sovereignty, through

representative democracy and universal suffrage, with devices that disperse power among different agencies of the state and different arenas of constitutional conflict. These devices limit governmental power and render it accountable only by subjecting it to constant deadlock. The opportunity for deadlock increases, under this constitutional regime, in direct proportion to the disturbances in the settled pattern of institutional arrangements and group deals that a proposed use of state power threatens to effect.

The central trait of this style of conflict over governmental organization is the method of competition among political parties or among factions of a dominant party. These partisan conflicts sometimes map and at other times disregard the major communal and hierarchical divisions of the society. From this ambivalent relation of partisan strife to social order – the mark of a society whose categories of division and hierarchy have been weakened, fragmented, and yet preserved – all other leading characteristics of modern party politics follow. The conflicts of party politics remain only tenuously related to the quarrels dividing people in everyday life. The issues on which these partisan conflicts get fought out are characteristically a hodge-podge of vague ideological commitments and cynical, mercenary promises to organized interests. Because these two components are only rarely connected by coherent and developed programs, it is often hard to tell to what extent a party platform requires or even intends a change in the formative institutional context. In the ensuing confusion the individual elector or politician may find it hard to know when his ideological slogans are serving to mask cruder and more immediate interests and when, on the contrary, these interests have been irretrievably confused by an ideological haze.

The confusion is no mere fault of insight or skill; it is rather the sign of a society whose experience of governmental politics is at odds with important features of its social order. Politics, in the narrow and traditional sense, have become largely a matter of shifting alliances among vaguely defined groups with crisscrossing memberships. But social life continues to be marked by a relatively stable and historically unique division of labor that resists disturbance and helps reproduce a scheme of social division and hierarchy.

These styles of constitutional organization and partisan rivalry produce a regime whose commitment to the free combination of free wills, though supposedly limited only in the interests of its own continuing freedom, is in fact powerfully restricted. Major areas of social practice and organizational life – including the basic form of the division of labor – remain secluded against the disturbances of party politics and reformist ambition. Meanwhile, a civically inactive populace, divided into stabilized classes and communities, expects from governmental politics little but occasional threats or sops to its

habitual standard of living or its received moral ideas. The skeptic will say that this circumstance is the best that can reasonably be hoped for and that it is far better than the most probable alternatives. Though historical understanding cannot refute him it may help shake some of the assumptions that make his view plausible.

Two Chronologies

The governmental-organization complex is the element of the formative context of contemporary North Atlantic societies with the longest unbroken history. The style of constitutional organization just recalled, if not the method of partisan rivalry with which it was eventually combined, had been developing continuously since the late Middle Ages. The formation of central chancelleries, the emerging contrast between territorial and administrative specialization, the relation of central governments to a fundamental law they could adjust but not radically disturb or disrespect, and even the distinctive characterization of the administrative, judicial, and legislative bodies – all this formed part of an institutional tradition that new doctrines of popular sovereignty took as an unavoidable starting point.

In another sense, however, the governmental-organization complex has the shortest history of any component of the formative context. It developed in brief and distinct spurts from the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century. The first spurt was the development of liberal constitutionalism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These constitutional schemes sought to grant rule to a cadre of politically educated and financially secure notables, free from both clientelistic dependence and untrammelled factionalism and fully able to safeguard the polities they governed against mob rule and seduction by demagogues. Thus, this early liberal constitutionalism added to its techniques for the dispersal of power and the fragmentation of conflict, methods for filtering out unwanted or excessive popular or demagogic influences. These methods, often justified by the desire to keep civil life in the hands of independent people, included restrictive suffrage, a prodigal use of intermediate levels of representation, and a variety of precautions and prejudices directed against the emergence of popular factions capable of disrupting local notable leadership.

The second major spurt of institutional inventions occurred in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century in leading Western countries – notably Britain, France, and the United States. Its distinctive feature was the replacement of the filtering-out techniques by universal suffrage and by a new practice of mass-based political parties. These parties rarely approached the condition of mass movements. But neither were they merely electoral syndicates, enlisting

popular support opportunistically the better to succeed in a fight for access to privilege-sustaining governmental power. They were simultaneously fragile alliances of office seekers and spokesmen for the recognized interests and ideals of particular classes and communities, simultaneously such spokesmen and advocates of causes that joined people across class or communal lines. No institutional artifact expresses as perfectly as the modern political party the paradoxes of a partial freeing of social life from rigid division and hierarchy.

Among the decisive events in this second spurt were the realignment of voting rules and party organization in the period of the two English reform bills, the development by Martin van Buren and his contemporaries of a doctrine and practice of party politics, and the change in the character of national and local contests for governmental power brought about by such associates of Napoleon III as Persigny, Ollivier, and Morny. The special interest of the late nineteenth century German experience is to show how extensively the new party-political practice could be realized even though the first moment of liberal constitutionalism had remained drastically truncated.

Why did this remarkable shift take place? Credit must be given to the continual demoralization of overt hierarchical exclusions in societies that had already tasted a relative disengagement of governmental power from a hierarchy of social ranks and that had experimented, in all the ways described by other parts of this institutional genealogy, with the partial emancipation of society from false necessity. Against this background the normal temptation of an elite faction to promise more power to the people in exchange for greater popular support became harder to resist. An additional cause of the shift toward a new style of party politics was the pressure to secure mass loyalty and to transcend regional rivalries in a period of national conflict, a pressure that increased dramatically when the system of limited wars began to break down. But it is hard to think these causes could have produced such rapid and decisive effects if the ruling and possessing classes had not discovered that the filtering-out techniques and the prerogatives of notables could be abolished without giving way to all-out social agitation and to the radical redistribution of wealth and power. This discovery was surprising, in fact the single biggest surprise in nineteenth-century political history. What we still mean by representative democracy is the outcome of this unforeseen merger of an earlier constitutional scheme with a set of mid-nineteenth century innovations. Like all the other achievements with which this institutional history deals, this merger may seem the uncontroversial outcome of an irresistible progression. Yet it was a cut-and-paste job if there ever was one.

The products of these two quickly paced moments of institutional invention, and the dogmas that made them intelligible and authoritative, eventually spread throughout the rich Western world. The consolidation of these institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions greatly altered the terms of conflict over the other aspects of the emerging formative context. Before this change, the work-organization and the private-rights complexes had been far more effectively up for grabs than they became after it. The new way of arranging governmental power and partisan conflict effectively channeled institutionalized disputes away from more radical threats to the institutional framework and to the plan of social division and hierarchy that this framework helped reproduce. It lent a semblance of authority to the most influential half-truth of modern politics: the need to choose between reformist tinkering and all-out revolution. A successful attack against other parts of the formative institutional context now came to require a prior reckoning with the governmental-organization complex: if not its all-out replacement at least its partial displacement by unorthodox styles of collective organization and collective conflict. It is on this shorter and more dramatic, rather than on the longer and more subtle, chronology of the government-organization complex that the following sections concentrate.

The Mythical History of Democracy

A mythical history of modern representative democracy goes side by side with the mythical histories of industrial organization and private rights. Once again, liberals and Marxists share its key elements though giving them very different senses. The view of the outcome colors the understanding of the process. The exponents of the mythical history combine curious anecdotes and allegedly unavoidable developments to tell how the masses were gradually incorporated into politics and how freedom-guaranteeing constraints came to be imposed upon governmental power. The actual forms of constitutional organization and party conflict that made this result possible had a tangled and often surprising history. But, according to this mythical history, the trials and errors of modern political experience, and the undoubted failure of many proposed alternatives, have confirmed that the emergent institutional solutions were much more than flukes. They represented the strongly determined and perhaps even necessary compromise among the main constraints of size, complexity, administrative efficacy, legal restraint, and popular accountability that a contemporary democracy must satisfy. For all practical purposes, they *are* the real meaning of democracy.

The ideal outcome of this democratization is the circumstance in

which all major social arrangements fall under the control of simple or qualified majorities acting through elected representatives and competitive political parties. Though some minorities may be effectively excluded from the political nation, their apprenticeship in familiar methods of group organization and group pressure may suffice to draw them in. At a minimum, in this view, the contest among elites and parties for control of the state must be crucially influenced by the relative success with which each group elicits mass support. Of course, if the majorities use their power to undermine the system for combining free and equal wills – by destroying, for example, the method of rotation in office – democracy ceases to exist; the democratic republic is a definite structure, not just the popular verdict.

Why, if social life under democracy tends toward such an outcome, do we so often find stability and even stagnation in democratic politics? Why does governmental policy characteristically revolve in such a narrow circle through all the reversals of electoral politics? Why, in particular, do relatively deprived majorities not use the suffrage to award themselves the wealth and the power that remain so unequally divided in their societies? To these questions, the mythical history and the view of democracy it supports give one of two answers. The first answer claims that the live options of current policy represent, in fact, the solutions with the best chance of commanding majority preference, albeit a preference formed reluctantly, in the light of disappointment with many unrealistic and dangerous alternatives. The second available answer is that, though these active options would not head any particular faction's list of preferred policies, they describe the resultants of many vectors of deliberate group or individual choice, the unintended, movable compromise among many group interests coexisting in tension with one another.

A view of the relation between democracies and markets completes the mythical history. This view recognizes that market economies and the richly defined systems of private right that accompany them can develop outside a democratic framework. They have often been reconciled with limited authoritarian regimes that respect the contract and property rights of the citizenry. But the mythical history tells us that the reverse does not hold. Democracies have never survived and cannot persist without markets. For the allocation of goods and services by central authorities or princely overlords would undermine the independence indispensable to the authentic exercise of democratic citizenship. Nothing in the standard versions of this thesis is necessarily incompatible with a recognition that markets and the entitlement systems that define them might assume forms entirely different from the forms that have in fact come to prevail. But the practical force of the argument depends on the assumption that the market system that democracy requires is the same market system

that has in fact prevailed in the course of modern Western history. The thesis that democracy depends upon markets, like so much else in the mythical history and in the broader social ideas this history exemplifies, turns out to be true only in senses very different from those in which it is usually intended. The emergent style of democratic politics did and does depend upon the existence of some kinds of market organization just as it was and is incompatible with other market systems. A more radical democracy – one that carries to a further extreme the authority of combinations of will over social arrangements – would also have to give a large role to decentralized economic decision. But it would do so under different institutional auspices.

One approach to the criticism of the mythical history is to attack the mythical characterization of the outcome: the idea that current forms of democracy approximate the ideal of government by free combinations of free wills, or, at least, that they offer no insuperable obstacle to an approach toward that ideal. The discussion of the reform cycles that set the stage for the present analysis has already explored this task. Another approach is to dispute the actual picture of the genesis of democracy that the mythical history paints. This is what I now do by examining two aspects of the developments of modern representative democracies that the traditional historical account cannot adequately explain.

*Objections to the Mythical History:
The Surprise of Universal Suffrage*

The mythical history fails to accommodate the surprising effect of universal suffrage. The central assumptions underlying the mythical history might lead you to sympathize with the view, common to most nineteenth-century conservatives and radicals, that universal suffrage would revolutionize society. The vote, it was feared or hoped, would give the mob and its leaders the means with which to wreak havoc with the established structure of authority and advantage in social life. Both the moderates (classical liberals, modernized conservatives, and outright cynics) and the radicals came up with explanations for why this expected result did not in fact occur. These explanations made only minimal dents on the mythical history, and they revealed just how many assumptions the radicals share with the moderates. But the explanations do not work. Their failure indicts the ideas they were meant to save.

Thus, the moderates emphasized that, with the economic success of the advanced countries, increasingly large sectors of the population had won a stake in the preservation of the established order. The moderates underlined the fragmentation of estates and classes into

countless factions composed of overlapping and incompatible memberships. They reasserted the nonexistence of realistic alternatives to existing institutional arrangements. The primary test of realism here became simply the interaction between constant human desires and the inherent organizational requirements for satisfying and reconciling these desires at given levels of scientific knowledge and technical capability.

Before examining the merits of these attempts to deal with the consequences of electoral democracy, remember that the early radicals and conservatives were not entirely wrong about the vote. They were at least more right than our anachronistic sense of the inevitability of present forms of democracy can readily acknowledge. In many of the advanced countries, the incorporation of the masses did turn out to be full of danger: it often seemed that deprived or resentful electorates, entranced by right-wing or left-wing demagogues, would use the party pluralism of liberal democracy to advance partisan causes and popular leaders subversive of the liberal-democratic system. The ultimate defeat of these threats was due less to the foreordained triumph of democracy than to the forcible defeat of these rightist and leftist alternatives, a defeat imposed in the course of the civil wars and the world wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

But, though the remembrance of these events serves as an important corrective to a contrived sense of natural progression, it is neither here nor there on the basic theoretical issues at stake in the present controversy. The moderates will still want to claim that once these perils are met, democratic republics have an inherent institutional structure, although one that only collective trial and error can reveal. And they will still insist on explaining the relative tranquillity of these democratic republics in ways compatible with the basic conception that such an inherent structure exists and that it ensures to the extent possible (even if it is a modest extent) the government of society by free combinations of free wills.

The traditional explanations for the surprise about universal suffrage run up against two objections — one, crude and seemingly straightforward; the other, more subtle and controversial. The force of the former, however, depends on the truth of the latter. The crude objection begins by conceding that the lower orders may be satisfied by the gradual rise of their material standard of living and that each individual hopes to escape, through himself or his children, from his place in the social hierarchy. But the objection states that even these admissions fail to explain why electoral majorities continue to tolerate the extremes of inequality in wealth, income, and power that have persisted through the age of mass politics. This passive majoritarian response would begin to appear reasonable or natural only when the

hope for material advancement is combined with the disillusionment with the practicability and the benefits of alternative forms of social organization.

The more subtle and controversial objection to the traditional attempts to reconcile the surprises of the suffrage with the mythical history of democracy addresses precisely this experience of disillusionment. It is one thing to accept a series of options as the only ones readily available in a historical situation. It is another, entirely different matter to attribute to these options a deep practical necessity and to treat them as the sole possibilities that economic, organizational, or psychological imperatives make practicable. On the first of these two interpretations the task becomes to explain how these limiting options acquired and maintained their force, an inquiry that proceeds from assumptions already antagonistic to those of the mythical history. But the second interpretation, with its invocation of unyielding practical necessities, implies a thesis that much of this interpreted narrative and indeed much of this book has been meant to criticize.

Marxist and non-Marxist radicals alike have often shared much more than might be expected of this mythical-historical gloss on the tamed suffrage. They have often attributed the stability of partisan conflict to "false consciousness." In this view, people live under the spell of ideas that make the established institutional order intelligible and authoritative; they mistake the regularities of a pacified social order for the eternal laws of society and human nature. But perception and sensibility are never as completely at the mercy of established preconception and power as they would have to be for the false consciousness argument to explain the taming of universal suffrage.

Once open conflict over any element of a formative context has been contained or interrupted the pacified order begins to win a second-order necessity; the routines that it shapes influence people's assumptions about the possible and the real. To this extent the false consciousness thesis is correct. But the proponents of the thesis go wrong whenever they forget that this influence over people's assumptions is never stronger than the framework of institutions, practices, and preconceptions on whose continued stability it depends. The order, I have argued, is subject to an endless stream of petty disruptions that can escalate at any moment into more subversive conflicts. Indeed, as soon as this escalation begins, people may abandon with surprising alacrity the pieties that until then had seemed to bewitch them. This observation applies with redoubled force to the disturbed and only half-trusted formative contexts that can subsist in the age of mass politics, world politics, and enlarged economic rationality. We therefore need to explain why the sense of possibility in modern democracies continues to be so narrowly constrained and

why the context-preserving quarrels so rarely grow into context-disturbing struggles. If the general argument of this essay is correct, a satisfactory account must not rely on the notion that the context resists transformation because it embodies built-in necessities of social organization or historical evolution.

The more extreme the false consciousness thesis, the harder it becomes to distinguish it from the liberal approach to the surprises of universal suffrage. These extreme views still see the live options that dominate political experience as direct expressions of individual or group preferences rather than as the unintended consequence of the reciprocal interferences among organized group interests. Only the choices are now thought to be made under the influence of compulsions the agents themselves barely grasp. These compulsions supposedly establish a sharp contrast between the illusions of the participants in historical struggles and the insight of theoretical observers.

The radical steeped in Marxism, in the tradition of deep-structure social analysis, and in the habitual practice of the European left will characteristically assert that only a very different institutional system could truly embody the free combination of free wills. But the idea that social systems are inseparable wholes, the belief that each of these wholes represents a moment in a foreordained sequence, and the polemical opposition of true and false consciousness – the paralyzing legacies of deep-logic social theory – collaborate to deny constructive programmatic thought the resources it needs. On these inherited radical assumptions, the inauguration of an authentic democracy appears to require an all-or-nothing, cataclysmic regeneration of society, perhaps even of all societies throughout the world. The actual institutional proposals, though laying claim to “scientific” foundations, often turn out to be little more than an imaginative reversal of existing institutional arrangements. This reversal puts direct democracy in the place of parliamentary representation, and a strenuous all-encompassing political life in the place of the reluctant and episodic activity of the modern citizen. Its characteristic product is the soviet or conciliar style of organization that has been constantly re-created, and just as constantly abandoned, in the course of modern insurrections. This attempt to construct through mere inversion is less an exercise of programmatic thought than a manifestation of despair at the ability to think programmatically. It remains overawed by the very social reality that it pretends to escape. Its implicit intellectual conservatism is the reverse side of a disengagement from a social reality whose transformative opportunities are mixed together with resistances to transformation.

*Objections to the Mythical History:
Parties and the Conditions of Stability*

Another embarrassment to the mythical history refers to the relation among the assumptions that normative democratic theory makes about the conditions of governmental stability. This argument against the mythical history connects with the earlier argument focusing on the failure to explain the domestication of the vote. For both objections develop the implications of the divergence between actual social life and the promised subjection of social arrangements to the will. Moreover, a crucial part of this second line of criticism builds upon the conclusions of the earlier line.

Throughout the early modern period, as indeed in much of earlier Western political history, the organizations and movements most closely resembling modern political parties remained objects of intense suspicion. This suspicion went beyond the residual but vague belief that partial interests were inherently dangerous and illicit. It expressed the belief that all such factions would be nefarious in one of two ways. On the one hand, these factions might be no more than predatory syndicates of office holders, of seekers after office, and of hangers-on, organized to pillage the state or to prostitute its authority to the syndicate's private interests. On the other hand, the faction might participate in an all-out struggle between large social classes or confessional groups. Such a struggle would inevitably prove incompatible with the minimal conditions for stability in society as well as in government. Though Machiavelli had seen the running quarrel between patricians and plebeians as a source of strength in the Roman Republic, his view remained more persuasive as a criticism of the simpleminded equation of communal cohesion and social strength than as an analysis of the relation between partisan conflict and institutional continuity.

In the liberal democracies of the modern West both popular sovereignty and the restraints upon it worked through the rotation of political parties. A major task of the fabulous history of democracy therefore became the attempt to show how political parties had ceased to be mere predatory syndicates without becoming the instruments of ferocious social or religious warfare. It was also important to show that this result had come about in a manner compatible with the government of society by the free combination of free wills – or at least that it had come as close to this ideal goal as could reasonably be hoped for.

To these ends, three conditions had to be satisfied. First, the parties had to adopt programs for the exercise of governmental power. These programs had to be animated by ideal conceptions of public

policy, social welfare, or the content of rights as well as by promises to accommodate the narrowly selfish interests of particular groups. The programmatic element distinguishes the modern party from a gang of pillagers. The second condition to be satisfied was the privatization of religion. Religious differences had to become matters for the intimate forum. Confined there, they had to lose some of their intense and immediate relevance to secular conflicts over the structure of society. The third condition was the creation of a more fluid and fragmented society, made up of groups who select their membership on criteria that overlap at some times and are incompatible at others. Each group – a segment of the work force, ethnic or national collectivities, regional cultures – influences only a limited part of the lives of its members. And the total array of groups fails to generate any cohesive system of social divisions and hierarchies.

The third condition, operating in conjunction with the first, does for class differences what the second condition is meant to do for confessional antagonisms. Religious antagonisms cannot be murderous because they have been privatized. Secular ideological contests cannot be destructive because the stark class oppositions that might make them dangerous have been defused by a far-reaching change in the character of society.

But suppose that the account of this change – that is, of the events alleged to satisfy the third condition – is so exaggerated as to be largely false. Suppose, more specifically, that this account confuses the quality of party politics in modern democracies with the characteristics of actual social life. A truth that radical social theorists influenced by the idea of the epiphenomenal character of “politics,” have always had trouble acknowledging, but that ordinary experience and empirical study have regularly confirmed, is that electoral behavior, party affiliation, and professional-political divisions very often defy any obvious logic of social order. To study an election in, say, the America of Jackson or the America of the late twentieth century is to discover the severe limits of the attempt to understand partisan differences as the predictable results of particular social stations. Even when you move beyond class analysis to include considerations of ethnic origin, religious persuasion, and regional milieu, the explanations characteristically suffer from a retrospective, make-shift quality; the next coalition at the next election discredits it. And this shifting and unreliable quality of divisions in the electorate is usually accentuated in the realignments of the parties or party factions and of the professional politicians who lead them. Only the idea of politics as epiphenomenal could explain the facility with which these familiar characteristics of party-political rivalry are attributed to society itself.

But the actual divisions and hierarchies of contemporary Western

societies are hardly the mirror of liberal party-politics. Class positions, ethnic identities, and segmentations of the work force are often a great deal more stable than the electoral antagonisms and alliances of liberal-democratic politics. To take seriously the idea that liberal society is like liberal politics we would have to see existing social life as marked by an easy freedom of movement among social stations that were themselves subject to constant revision. But though such a view may occasionally be implied by the self-congratulatory rhetoric of conservative politicians, it accords neither with ordinary experience nor with the common assumptions and conclusions of empirical social study.

The argument of this book suggests an explanation of the disparity between the quality of politics and the character of social life. The practices of party politics in the advanced Western democracies belong to a distinctive style of governmental organization and partisan rivalry. Rather than embodying, together with the market, a pure method for the free combination of free wills, this style helps reproduce a distinctive organization of society, rich in particular divisions and hierarchies and committed to a particular scheme of possible and desirable association. Parts of the explanatory argument in *False Necessity* are designed to show this constraining influence at work, while other parts emphasize the relatively accidental character of the underlying institutional settlements. The programmatic arguments complete the attack by presenting an alternative better suited than existing liberal institutions to traditional liberal ideals. Thus, liberal society differs from liberal politics (in the narrow and traditional sense of the term politics) precisely because liberal politics are what they are. To recast society in the image of liberal politics, we would have to change political life; liberal-democratic society can become what it is supposed to be only if liberal-democratic politics become different from what they currently are.

This argument requires no radical revision in our ordinary observation of social life. Apart from its closeness to a social theory free from the assumptions of deep-structure theory and positivist or social science, its strength is simply to account for a disparity between the acknowledged qualities of partisan conflict and social life. The major available liberal and Marxist approaches to politics deny this disparity by reducing one of its terms to the other.

In the light of these considerations the reconciliation of partisan conflict with indispensable stability becomes an embarrassment to the mythical history of democracy and to liberal-democratic theory. The contest among parties of opinion that share an ambivalent relation to the system of social divisions and hierarchies works both to open society up to democratic politics and to put society beyond the reach of democratic politics. Many of the fundamentals of the

social order remain relatively immune to the types of conflict and controversy that this established regime permits.

The skeptical, minimalist liberal may acknowledge these points while trying to avoid their force. He may claim that the partial deflection of conflict from basic arrangements and preconceptions, even from those generating social divisions and hierarchies, is necessary to secure the degree of individual freedom and economic efficiency that is realistically possible. A satisfactory response of this defense ultimately requires a discussion of the possible alternative forms of economic and governmental organization. The institutional program presented in Chapter 5 promises to secure individual liberties and civic peace through a style of governmental organization and party strife that helps weaken both the hold of rigid hierarchies or roles and the contrast between context-respecting routine and context-transforming conflict.

But there is one aspect of this debate with the skeptical democrat that can be separated out for early, tentative treatment. This aspect is the problem presented by the idea of stability, which from the outset has been the guiding theme in the debates about party politics. One of the assumptions of the original hostility to parties was that fundamental disagreements about society destroy the indispensable minimum of civic peace because such disagreements cannot be compromised. The latter-day defenses of party politics have drawn novel conclusions from this premise only because they have seen practical possibilities for the reorganization of state and society that had previously gone unrecognized. Thus, the optimists who view society in the mirror of liberal politics claim that with the privatization of religion and the supersession of entrenched hierarchies and divisions fundamental disagreements have been made superfluous. The skeptics are content to observe that to design politics for more fundamental disagreements would be to court an intolerable level of strife.

But the underlying equation of the nonnegotiable with the fundamental (which we can now interpret as all those matters that have to do with the formative institutional or imaginative context of social life) gains its plausibility from a further, untenable assumption. This assumption is the idea, characteristic of deep-structure social theory, that social systems (restrictively interpreted, once again, as formative contexts) represent indissoluble wholes. They stand or fall as a piece. Moreover, the identification of the fundamental with the non-negotiable conflicts with an ordinary political experience. Comprehensive approaches to social reconstruction are a great deal harder to combine or compromise when stated as abstract doctrines than when translated into concrete strategies of transition or detailed social practices. The very same institutional devices that might make the

dispute over fundamentals more readily available in the course of ordinary life might also root that dispute more firmly in the immediate concerns of ordinary life. Such devices might therefore weaken the conditions that leave fundamentals resistant to compromise and recombination. The programmatic argument of the next chapter follows up on these suggestions. The final vindication of a different view of stability and conflict would be actually to relate stability and conflict in ways that current democratic theory and practice rule out.

THEMES OF THE INSTITUTIONAL GENEALOGY

Provisional Conclusions

This section gives a provisional summary of the argument about the genesis of the formative and institutional context of the rich North Atlantic democracies. The view of context making worked out in the second half of this chapter makes the sense of the account more general and precise.

The basic, minimal theme has been negative and cautionary: the claim that the dominant forms of industrial society to have emerged in the course of Western history cannot be correctly understood as required by the inherent constraints of practical organization or economic necessity. At successive points in the history of these institutional arrangements, solutions containing the elements of alternative institutional schemes were proposed or tried out. The deviations emerged repeatedly; each step toward the consolidation of a dominant style of economic or governmental organization created new opportunities to break away from it. There is no end in sight to the rearrangements nor – if the general view of society developed in this study is correct – can there be. One of the most important reasons for this continuous recurrence of alternatives is that no set of institutional practices or conceptions of social life ever wins a complete victory. More often than not, the deviations persist. They reach an accommodation with the victorious organizational arrangements, which they both complement and jeopardize, and assume a subsidiary or anomalous role within an order constituted on other principles. At any moment these anomalies of organization or belief may be treated as points of departure for fundamental reconstruction. Thus, the imagination may find in current reality the materials it needs for even its most subversive efforts.

What I have described as the vanguardist sector of industrial organization presents an instructive example. Vanguardist industry has traditionally operated outside the areas of the economy in which the institutionally guaranteed stability of product, labor, and financial

markets, on a domestic and a world scale, makes mass production profitable. Nevertheless, both the early and the late forms of this rearguard and vanguard sector suggest an alternative way of organizing the entire economy and of relating the economy to government.

This minimalist, negative theme of the narrative may seem too modest and commonsensical to deserve objection or approval. It merely insists upon the relative contingency of the particular forms of industrial society that happen to have carried the day up to now. The student of society may be content to hold on to the remnants of a theory of necessary historical sequence or possible social worlds while diluting it until it ceases to appear controversial. Attractive as this solution may appear it would remain vacuous if it did not derive partial meaning from the intellectual-historical setting in which it is proposed. Contingency and necessity are conceptions that lack a self-evident content; they merely summarize the picture of reality and the strategy of explanation presented in a body of thought. An emphasis on the contingency of the prevailing forms of industrialism indicates a willingness to depart from inherited, deep-structure versions of social theory. This willingness does not in itself produce an alternative basis for theoretical understanding. Yet my polemical narrative contains, more or less implicitly, the rudiments of just such a basis.

To anticipate the main lines of this theoretical conception, consider a second, more specific and controversial theme of the narrative. This theme is the thesis that the dominant mode of industrialism, which resulted in the formative contexts discussed in Chapter 2, had a major rival. This rival was the style of economic organization I have described at various points as the revised version of petty commodity production or the system of decentralized and flexible production and dissociated property. At the outset this alternative pathway would have represented little more than an exaggeration of the forms of petty commodity production that reappeared, with varying prominence, through modern Western agrarian and industrial history. To survive, however, such a system would early have had to undergo a major institutional redefinition. The necessary changes would have required, among other things, an extension into the mainstream of industry of the forms of industrial organization that characterize the vanguard of industry, an alternative style of market order (i.e., dissociated property and its contractual counterparts), and a version of representative democracy that would have allowed central governments to be intimately involved in the management of the economy without crushing the new market forms under new orders of privilege. Though such an industrial society has nowhere emerged as a cohesive system, fragmentary elements toward its construction have regularly reappeared in modern history.

In assessing the practicability of this rival style of industrialism, two different objections must be distinguished. In one view, the alternative could never have arisen in the first place; the real conditions of European society supposedly ruled it out. In another view, such an alternative could not have remained stable once it had been introduced; it would have undergone a process of self-destruction. But many of the aspirations that inspired it could have been fulfilled in an alternative style of governmental and economic organization. Though the two objections overlap, they have different implications. It matters whether the alternative lost out because it collided with deeply rooted constraints of social organization and material progress or whether its exclusion was due to particular triumphs and defeats reflecting no such deeper determination. If, as the narrative has already suggested, the truth comes closer to the latter proposition than to the former, the institutional frameworks of contemporary industrial economies lack any higher authority.

*Truth and Error in the Polemic
Against Petty Commodity Production*

The main target of the argument that alternatives to the dominant form of economic organization were bound to fail has been petty commodity production – the economic and social order of small-scale, independent producers and traders, the eternal dream of petty bourgeois utopias, of the well-meaning but woolly-headed votaries of social solidarity, and of the righteous but small-minded apostles of a society of independent yeomen. This traditional proposal should be sympathetically interpreted to include a provision for cooperative organization by the petty producers. A minimum of institutional innovation would allow for at least some of the advantages of scale without subverting the distinctive character of the petty bourgeois economy. Certain arguments reappear in the polemic against this program for social reconstruction; all try to demonstrate its impracticality.

The first element in the polemic emphasizes the inability of such an economic order to sustain continued growth and innovation. Even if the formidable obstacles to taking advantage of economies of scale could be overcome, the petty producers would be perpetually tempted to superconsumption. Nothing could counterbalance the pleasures of immediate consumption except hope for the large accumulations of private wealth that such an economic order cannot permit. Moreover, this alternative economy would suffer from the absence or the weakness of a class of people capable of exercising managerial responsibilities at levels intermediate between central governments, on one side, and the household, shop, or cooperative,

on the other. Above all, petty commodity production would fail to secure the economies of scale indispensable to cost cutting and accelerated technological innovation.

A second strand in the criticism of the petty bourgeois economy singles out the self-destabilizing character of this alternative. Under a regime of petty commodity production, market competition would soon result in economic concentration: some independent producers would prosper while others would go under. This social polarization could be avoided only by a relentless governmental supervision that would undermine both the independence and the efficiency of economic agents. Thus, the argument goes, petty commodity production would fall victim to either competition or intervention.

Yet a third argument identifies an instability in the governmental framework of petty commodity production. It claims that such an economic order would be incompatible with the existence of a state capable of defending it against internal crisis or foreign threat. The state would always be either too weak or too strong to preserve the economy. On one hand, faced with a population of jealously independent and self-absorbed petty producers, the central government might find itself unable to extract the economic and manpower resources needed for long-term infrastructural investment or effective protection against the predatory designs of rival states. On the other hand, if the government managed to overcome these obstacles to its effectiveness it would tower over a society of powerless producers. These producers would be unable to resist the encroachments of public officials or to prevent them from turning access to governmental power into a new basis for economic privilege.

These arguments do indeed tell against the traditional program of petty commodity production and against all the radical utopias formulated in the image of that program. For all the reasons its critics emphasize, such a system would be self-destructive as well as incapable of guaranteeing accelerated material progress. But the radical and conservative critics of the petty bourgeois alternative share a key assumption with its defenders. This assumption is the thesis, evoked and attacked so often in this book, that there exists a narrow set of types of social organization, each with its built-in legal-institutional structure. Thus, the defenders of petty commodity production resemble its adversaries in accepting the idea that the market and the democracy have a self-evident form. Though the scale of economic organization they have in mind may be different and though this difference is sure to have far-reaching distributive consequences, they propose no radical change in the legal organization of a market economy and the constitutional structure of a democratic government. This same premise unites Marxists and conservatives when they imagine that we must either accept the market economy and rep-

representative democracy in the peculiar forms that have become dominant in the course of modern Western history or else embrace the institutional order inaugurated by the Russian revolution.

The critics of petty commodity production fail to consider that the archaic or deviant economic form they criticize can undergo a cumulative change in its institutional foundations. Such a change would drastically alter the detailed institutional content of this alternative while preserving the social sense of its deviation from the arrangements that triumphed in the course of modern Western history. Conversely, the traditional advocates of decentralized and flexible production fail to recognize that their proposal is impractical for just the reasons the critics have pointed out.

Which institutional changes might have given and may yet give a revised version of petty commodity production a chance to succeed? To answer this question is to establish an initial, tenuous link between the view in this chapter of how formative contexts developed and the program for context change presented in Chapter 5.

The organization of the economy would have had to have reconciled seemingly incompatible objectives: the advantages of scale and concentration, the opportunity for entrepreneurial initiative, and the constant redistribution of property needed to make capital available to emerging teams of workers and entrepreneurs and to break the stranglehold of concentrated capital holdings over the forms of exchange and production. Unless this third objective could be achieved, the social sense of the deviation of petty commodity production from the prevailing style of market organization would have been lost. But the third objective seems to conflict with the first, the ability to exploit advantages of scale.

That the conflict may not be as intractable as it appears is suggested by the second objective, which seems to presuppose both the first and the third goals without being unrealistic or incoherent as a result. The emancipation of entrepreneurial initiative requires the ability to launch undertakings with the complexity that large-scale concentrations of capital and labor make possible. But the need for entrepreneurial flexibility also argues for arrangements that avoid the effective monopolization of such capital concentrations by privileged groups. How well a particular market system avoids these twin dangers becomes an empirical question once you accept that markets can assume different institutional forms, each with its own unique consequences for the distribution of wealth, power, and technical expertise.

The key to a solution would be a mechanism capable of guaranteeing rotation in the access to capital. Teams of workers, technicians, and entrepreneurs would be allowed access to portions of social capital under fixed terms and at a stipulated rate of interest, to be charged

by the public capital fund. There would be limits on the extent to which these teams could use the capital at their disposal to enrich themselves or to gain control over other economic activities. Political decisions would settle the basic terms of access to the rotating capital fund. These decisions might include a commitment to seclude from close supervision entrepreneurial discretion in broad sectors of the economy. But the extent and form of entrepreneurial autonomy would emerge from conscious collective debate and choice rather than from the supposedly automatic operations of a prepolitical market. The fundamental principles of property law and the corresponding categories of contract would have to be reconstructed. The different faculties that now compose the property right would be dissociated and assigned to different entities: the central democratic institutions responsible for ultimate decisions about the social form of economic accumulation, competing investment funds that these institutions might establish, and the teams of workers and entrepreneurs who would be the ultimate capital takers.

Such an economic regime undermines the props to the dominance of the rigid variant of rationalized collective labor in the mainstream of industry. For it destroys and even reverses the many institutional devices that enable inflexible, mass-production industries to defend themselves against market instabilities. As a result, the flexible style of industrial organization, with its more intimate contact between task-executing and task-defining activities, escapes its confinement to the experimental vanguard of industrial organization and invades a portion of the mainstream of industry.

The implications of such an economic reordering for social hierarchy are even more dramatic than its consequences for industrial organization. Though stable social hierarchies would not necessarily disappear, they would be weakened and transformed. For one thing, the inheritance of major capital assets, the basis for the continuity of prosperous families, would disappear once the property right had been broken up into component rights granted to different kinds of rightholders. For another thing, the extension of the flexible variant of rationalized collective labor into the mainstream of industry would subvert one of the most important incentives to the perennial renaissance of social hierarchy: the ability to set terms to other people's activities by means that remain sheltered from the risks of a broadly based accountability.

Such an economic regime and the social order it would help sustain would be quickly perverted if it were unaccompanied by a suitable way of organizing government and the conflict over governmental power. Government must be able to serve as a locus for effective controversy over the entire range of economic activities. Yet, for this very reason, it must be all the more open to participation and

control and all the more subject to restraint against despotic ambition and resurgent privilege. The constitutional techniques for limiting governmental power must not be restricted to the armory of eighteenth-century institutional devices that control government only by disabling it from ambitious reform. Moreover, the partisan conflict over the mastery and uses of the state must be arranged so as to incorporate more easily the concerns and controversies of everyday life.

These remarks merely suggest the general direction the alternative form of market order might take and the general way in which the impetus of petty commodity production can survive in a radically altered institutional environment. To explore the problems of such an alternative regime and to justify this regime on grounds of practicality and desirability are concerns of the programmatic discussion undertaken in Chapter 5. Enough has been said, however, to suggest that such an alternative is at least conceivable, that it suffers from no obvious incoherence, or instability, and that it can best be understood as the extension and transformation of a series of related institutional deviations that have in fact recurred at many moments of modern Western history.

We can then imagine an alternative organizational setting for a democratic and relatively decentralized industrial society. This alternative is not self-destructive on its face. The prospects for a feasible alternative weaken the case for attributing the marginalization of this recurrent petty bourgeois challenge to its inherent impracticability, or to its incompatibility with either an objective logic of economic constraints or an implacable stage sequence of social evolution. An independent, less controversial reason to disbelieve in the thesis of the practical necessity of the dominant form of industrialism and democracy is the evidence of all those occasions when central governments and privileged groups intervened to crush or restrict the deviant forms of economic organization before these forms had a chance to operate and to compete with rival institutional solutions. The preceding narrative accounts for the defeat of the petty bourgeois alternative without appealing to deep-structure explanations of why petty commodity production was doomed to failure from the start. We simply do not need the standard necessitarian explanations.

Certain social hierarchies were already in place as the struggle over these institutional arrangements developed. The emergent style of market organization challenged the interests and ideas of these favored groups far less than either the archaic or the reconstructed versions of the petty bourgeois alternative. From this perspective what became the dominant institutional forms of politics and economies can best be understood as the outcomes of an accommodation between the interests and identities of preexisting elites, on one side,

and the practical advantages or spiritual attractions of more revisable and hierarchy-subverting institutions. For the reconstructed alternative would have represented a higher degree of experimental freedom and allowed for a still more relentless development of productive powers, a greater disengagement of the forms of exchange and community from the vitiating constraints of dependence and dominion, and a more complete emancipation of insight into society and personality from the constraints of false necessity.

It often happens in biological evolution that an adaptation succeeds by responding to an environmental threat while minimizing the genetic and mechanical break with existing biological forms. Yet the price of this minimalist adaptation is a rigidity that makes the species all the more vulnerable to its next environmental challenge. Something similar holds for the success of the formative institutional context whose genesis the preceding pages have discussed.

*The Minimalist and the Maximalist Interpretations
of the Institutional Genealogy*

Thus, two salient theses emerge from this schematic genealogy of contemporary formative contexts. One, a negative and minimalist thesis, emphasizes the multiplicity of institutional forms that industrial society might have assumed. The other, more focused and controversial claim affirms that the fragmentary elements of petty commodity production and the cooperative efforts of small-scale manufacturers, artisans, and farmers might have served as a point of departure for an alternative style of economic and governmental organization.

Taken in concert these two theses lend themselves to a systematic misinterpretation. The criticism of this misunderstanding further fixes the sense of the preceding narrative and prefigures themes in the theory of transformation advanced later in this chapter. It is tempting to see the two theses as merely a diluted version of the deep-logic idea of a compulsive sequence of stages of social organization that exhibit a coherent program for the development of practical capabilities or moral aspirations. History, on this view, consists in a series of branching points; at many junctures, developments can proceed in two or more directions. The complete science of history describes the sequence of branching points. The system and sequence of these branches reveals both the driving forces of history and the range of possible forms of social life. Subsidiary, relatively more contingent and particularistic factors explain why at each juncture one alternative prevails over another. On this theoretical interpretation of the polemical narrative, the formative institutional context of power and production in early modern European societies could

have developed in either of the directions I have labeled dominant and deviant. This picture, however, is misleading in two crucial respects.

First, it suggests that as our understanding of society improves we can pass more and more smoothly from the statement of general facts about society to the analysis of the sequence of branching points and even to the explanation of why, at a certain time, one alternative triumphs over another. In fact, however, we cannot complete this passage, not just because we always need to collect more facts but because the very character of historical experience eludes this explanatory style. The more entrenched a formative context, which is to say the more immunized from the disturbances of routine practical or imaginative conflict, the greater the influence it exercises upon its sequels. The entrenchment of an institutional system can be measured by the extent to which it makes some transformations of itself harder to achieve than others as well as by its imperviousness to disruption by routinized group conflicts that it helps shape. The particular content of any such institutional context, the influence it suffers from the institutions that preceded it and the influence it exercises upon the arrangements that succeed it, all have an irreducible particularity. They resist deduction from general facts about society or general tendencies of historical change.

Every institutional system becomes entrenched, however, at the cost of a restraint upon the many practical powers, moral aspirations, and theoretical insights that depend upon the freeing of human connections from the constraints imposed by a particular plan of social division and hierarchy. The development of these powers, aspirations, and insights requires the repeated effacement of the institutional and imaginative barriers that distinguish conflict within an established order from conflict over the remaking of an order. Success or failure in seizing opportunities to reach a higher level of experimental freedom has consequences. These consequences have effects of their own. The preexisting character of European society may have made the now dominant institutional arrangements of North Atlantic societies easier to establish than the alternative of revised petty commodity production. Yet these victorious arrangements may also have been less promising than their principal rival as a basis for achieving what I shall describe as negative capability: the sum of advantages made available by institutional arrangements with the double characteristic of weakening the hold of rigid roles and hierarchies and effacing the contrast between reform and revolution. This point has more than antiquarian interest. Here, as always, the discarded alternatives may be resurrected in new forms once the special conditions that protect the dominant solutions have been eroded.

The picture of social history as a series of branching points is also

misleading in another, related respect. It suggests that we do or might possess a master vision of the multiple trajectories that are possible in history. By gaining such a vision the theorist hopes for an understanding that the historical agent never achieves. For the agent, critical and generalizing insight consists largely in the effort to imagine what existing or remembered anomalies would be like if they turned into organizing principles. The losers and the lost causes of the past and the outlawed or restrained elements in the present arm the subversive imagination with its weapons. The social theorist cannot replace this style of thought with a radically different understanding. He can at best compensate for his removal from immediate action by longer memory and broader observation. His picture of multiple pathways and branching points simplifies and makes transparent the record of our attempts to empower ourselves both by establishing orders of social life and by refusing to take those orders as final definitions of our collective possibilities. His favored materials are all the deviant organizational and imaginative schemes to have arisen in history, including the deviations that have temporarily achieved dominance. He offers not a master blueprint of all possible developments but an interminable reweighting of the elements that make a trumped-up history.

THE GENESIS OF ANOTHER FORMATIVE
CONTEXT:
THE COMMUNIST ALTERNATIVE

*Applying the Spirit of the Institutional Genealogy to the
Non-Western World: Two Examples*

The institutional genealogy shows that what at first seem to be governmental, economic, and legal arrangements strongly determined by a combination of inexorable technical requirements and irresistible social influences turn out, on closer inspection, to have been a series of complicated and precarious settlements, the outcomes of many loosely connected lines of invention and habit, compromise and coercion, insight and illusion. As soon as we shake loose the dogmas of liberals, Marxists, and modernization theorists, we begin to recognize the astonishing variety of forgotten, suppressed, or subordinated institutional notes silenced under the din of the triumphal march toward the contemporary mixed economy and parliamentary democracy. The din, like the triumph, was always greater in the books than in real life. One cluster of institutional alternatives – labeled here petty bourgeois – reappeared insistently in a wide variety of forms and settings. In a radically revised institutional translation, it holds special promise today.

The historical polemic of this chapter closes with a discussion of two episodes in the making of, and in the failure to remake, the Soviet-style institutions described in Chapter 2: the decisive events of the late 1920s and the early 1930s in the Soviet Union and the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s. This close to my admonitory narrative serves both a general and a particular purpose. The general aim is to show how the same haphazard and hodgepodge processes that provided Western industrial democracies with their distinctive institutions also worked elsewhere in the world to produce radically different institutional systems. An antinecessitarian approach does not apply merely to the details of an institutional tradition; it also illuminates the fashioning of new traditions.

The special purpose of this final twist on the institutional genealogy is to suggest the significance of a revised version of petty commodity production for conflicts and controversies far removed from the North Atlantic world. No party ever actually proposed such an alternative in Russia. Yet the alternative could have done – and can yet do – justice to much in the defeated Bukharinist and Trotskyist causes, revealing their hidden common ground and the changes they would have needed to undergo to ensure rapid economic growth and strengthen mass participation in government.

No faction of Chinese cultural revolutionaries ever advocated such proposals. Indeed, the failure of the cultural revolutionaries, from above or below, to come up with any detailed program of institutional reform helped abandon that mass conflict to violent and sterile frustration. Yet if the militants had freed themselves from their initial sponsors and translated their antibureaucratic intentions into plans with a wider appeal, they might well have moved in the direction of something like the institutional program insinuated earlier and discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

There may at first seem to be inconsistency in a way of thinking that emphasizes how much institutions are mired in unique histories of conflict and compromise, ungoverned by any master plan, and yet sees similar institutional arrangements as relevant to the problems of widely different societies. Why are the solutions not as particularistic as the histories, each unique and uniquely suited to a particular situation? The answer, in a nutshell, has two parts: our concerns are not as unique as our situations, and our situations, in an age of partial emancipation from false necessity, enable us to treat anything proposed or tried out in one place as potentially applicable, with adjustments, everywhere else.

Institutional histories are accidental and idiosyncratic in the sense that they obey no ready-made or universal script. Each such history is a record of missed opportunities, including opportunities to realize the radical ideas, now circulating all over the world, that invite so-

cities both to seek wealth and might and to empower the individual by smashing the roles and ranks that belittle and enslave him. The more we manage to weaken the influence formative institutions and beliefs exercise over their own remaking, the freer we become to take our cues from wherever we like and to respond in similar ways to similar ambitions and anxieties.

*Understanding the Soviet Alternative
Without the Help of Deep-Structure Social Theory*

Chapter 2 described a formative institutional context of late twentieth-century communist countries that both differs from the basic institutional order of contemporary Western industrial democracies and resembles it. The Soviet institutional system appeared when its Western counterpart had not yet assumed its contemporary form: each suffered, if only by reaction, the influence of the other. The immediate ideological origins of the Soviet alternative lay, after all, in two reactions to an earlier version of the same Western institutional system whose consolidation my schematic narrative has tried to analyze. One reaction was proudly professed: the commitment to overthrow the economic and political subordination of the working classes. A Western-style institutional system seemed capable of being realized in the conditions of economically and culturally more backward countries only in a form that would perpetuate indefinitely the oppression of the masses. The other reaction remained largely unacknowledged though it was no less powerful: the attempt to achieve Western levels of national prosperity and power in countries traditionally burdened by the intimate partnership between a repressive bureaucracy and a predatory oligarchy.

It was crucial that both these objectives were in the end carried out by a centralized state whose power found no counterbalance in an alternative system of economic decentralization or popular sovereignty. The soviet or conciliar style of organization was the only alternative of which the Soviet revolutionaries and their followers in other countries were aware. And it represented less a serious attempt to establish government and the economy on a new basis than a utopian inversion of established institutions and an escape from the task of dealing with the problems of the large scale. The repeated failure of this stubborn revolutionary dream left in place only the cold reality of a central government concerned to survive domestically and internationally, at any cost. Access to this new source of power came to mean everything. The contrast between task definers and task executors had never been starker, though the former lorded it over the latter in the name of governmental authority rather than the property norm. And the familiar system of Western property

and contract was maintained for small-scale property, especially in the agrarian sector, while the centralized and unaccountable government exercised undivided economic sovereignty over the major forms of productive and financial capital. The communist reform cycle assumed its characteristic structure: its recurrent moments of decentralization came to mean merely increased opportunities of initiative on the part of lower-level bureaucrats and managers. So long as this reform cycle kept its distinctive shape, decentralization never produced a genuinely new way of allocating access to capital. Nor did it undermine the contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities or threaten the oligarchic control of governmental power.

How did this institutional system emerge? The methods and ideas that inspire the mythical history of the Western institutional order have a comforting answer: it says that the Soviet model represents, in broad outline, the only possible alternative to the triumphant Western solution open to industrialized or industrializing societies in the circumstances of modern life. If the analyst is out to be sympathetic, or to express a pessimistic and worldly realism, he may go on to observe that only some combination of bureaucratic and entrepreneurial dictatorship – the forcible exaction and reinvestment of a surplus – can lift today's poor countries out of their poverty. This interpretation of the Soviet model draws an additional halo of justification around Western institutional arrangements. For who could want the alternative unless driven to it by desperate circumstances?

The polemic against the mythical history should therefore include a reinterpretation of the genesis of the Soviet model. This restatement makes two central claims. Its first thesis is that we can account for the emergence, diffusion, and tenacity of the Soviet-style formative context in ways that dispense with the appeal to deep-logic constraints of organizational, psychological, or economic necessity. We do not have to suppose that the Soviet system is one of the few options among which humanity must choose at its present level of wealth and knowledge. In fact, a convincing analysis of the origins of the Soviet model must emphasize factors that cannot be connected with the types of causes dear to deep-logic social theory, not at least without postulating a long and fabulous series of intermediate links between these causes and the actual events.

A second thesis of this reinterpretation is that we can identify at least one major realistic alternative to the institutional system that triumphed in the modern West. This alternative represents a counterpart to the institutionally revised system of petty commodity production discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, a counterpart specifically suited to the circumstances of a backward country. Such a solution would have required yet more audacious institutional in-

ventions than its successful rival. But it would also have had many practical advantages further down the line: all the benefits that can result from institutions carrying forward the task of emancipation from false necessity.

The argument develops in two phases. The first discusses the most important turning point in the development of the Soviet-style system. The second phase analyzes the failure to break out of the Soviet model during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, an episode in which the communist reform cycle got out of hand.

The Origins of the Soviet Model

The war between the Soviet state and the Russian peasantry that began in the winter of 1930–31 exercised a decisive influence on the making of the Soviet model. This war, with its immediate antecedents and sequels, was the occasion for the final defeat of both the Bukharinist “right” and the Trotskyist “left” within the party. It gave determinate form to a relationship between state and society that had been left open by the November revolution. It settled for a long time to come what large numbers of people could expect in their material lives and what government could demand from them. The terms of accumulation and collaboration that grew out of this series of encounters were changed only slowly and marginally in later periods of Soviet history. They became the practical groundwork for a communist regime that would be reproduced elsewhere and that elsewhere, as in the Soviet Union itself, would scarcely change for several generations.

In the late 1920s the Soviet government faced an unmistakably difficult situation. To stay in power and accomplish its minimal programmatic objectives, it had to achieve rapid economic growth. It could not rely on foreign capital: met by the hostility of the Western industrial powers, it could not avoid a high degree of economic autarky even if it had wanted to. Nor could it readily obtain capital by a sharp and lasting depression of industrial wages. Such a policy would have alienated a social group whose active support or grudging acceptance was crucial to the leadership for reasons that were as much doctrinaire as practical. These considerations accentuated what would in any event have been true for any economy with the relative backwardness and dimensions of the Soviet economy in the 1930s: a major part of the capital for stepped-up accumulation would have to come from the transfer of agricultural surplus in the form of cheap food goods for urban populations and industrial workers, and of agrarian exports that could be used as payment for needed machine tools and industrial inputs.

The severity of the situation was masked during the early years

of the New Economic Policy by the existence of a large margin of underutilized capacity in the Soviet economy's productive stock and especially in its industrial plant. As long as this margin continued to exist, the pressure on the agrarian sector remained relatively moderate: manipulation of the terms of trade between agrarian and industrial goods might be enough to effect a transfer of value from agriculture to industry without disrupting the agrarian economy or provoking violent resistance by the peasantry. Such manipulation had proved able to overcome the "scissors crisis" of 1923-24. The result of this temporary success was to lend a semblance of plausibility to the Bukharinist slogans of the NEP period: the ideas that the terms of commodity circulation were enough to determine value and value transfers and that economic growth could be spontaneously assured by the reciprocally reinforcing influence of agrarian and industrial accumulation within a structure of limited market freedom.

But the policies that worked when there was underemployed capacity could not and did not work as the capacity barrier was approached and broken. The squeeze on the agrarian economy became stronger. Other devices had to be found to supplement pricing policy. In this sense, NEP policy resembled Keynesianism, and it shared some of Keynesianism's limitations. A doctrine relevant to particular conditions of underemployed capacity broke down when carried over to the task of achieving repeated breakthroughs in productive capacity.

To be sure, confused, widely fluctuating price policy helped disorganize the agrarian economy. But a system of stable, intelligible administered prices would almost certainly not have been enough to avoid the problems that had surfaced by the time of the procurements crisis of 1927-28. If the state wanted to avoid dependence on the kulaks (the larger farmers) and to expand agricultural production rapidly, it needed to pursue an alternative agrarian policy.

One such alternative would have required the Soviet government to gain a foothold in cooperative farming by millions of smallholders. It would have had to create marketing and procurement structures that would make these farming cooperatives dependent upon the state while giving them priority in technical and financial assistance. Such a program, however, could not be easily carried out by a rigid, authoritarian government. It called for a government that would be willing and able to promote grassroots collective organization on the part of a large segment of its citizenry and that would open itself to the deals, pressures, and risks such organization would inevitably spawn. Such an alternative would have represented something like the reconstructed version of petty commodity production outlined earlier.

The policy of coerced collectivization and violent dekulakization

that was in fact pursued involved the Soviet state in an unprecedented revolutionary campaign against a peasant society of twenty-five million households. This campaign, for all its fits and starts, did in fact achieve an increased and prolonged transfer from the agrarian to the industrial sector, and generated rapid though discontinuous growth. But it did so at many costs. Soviet agriculture was left scarred for an indefinite time to come: the autonomy that peasants and agricultural laborers had failed to achieve in the form of significant collective organization reappeared in the multiple stratagems of a rearguard struggle against coerced collectivization and the forced appropriation of the agricultural surplus.

Besides, the decision to disrupt millions of households called for a state and a leadership that would stop at nothing in the techniques of revolutionary despotism. The alternative conceptions of communist democracy represented, halfheartedly, by the right and left factions in the party were among the victims of the struggle. Thus, there was a tight connection between the way the problem of economic growth was solved and the development of the state. The whole period from the November revolution to the war against the peasantry could be seen as a time when both the mechanism of accumulation and the organization of government had been left undefined. The counterpart to the economic reprieve of underemployed capacity was the political limbo of unresolved factional rivalry.

Both the Bukharinist right and the Trotskyist left had failed to understand what was happening and what was needed. The Bukharinists did not understand the extent of the accumulation problem until the procurements crisis of the late 1920s was already in full swing. The Preobrazhensky leftists allowed themselves to be pushed into a mock Faustian language of heroic industrialization without specifying the concrete institutional forms for enlisting the collaboration of the working masses with the economic plans. Both sides raised the issue of democracy within the party and the state only when driven from power, and therefore they did so alone and at different times rather than in concert. Neither faction had grasped the extent to which the forms of accumulation and of government were bound up with each other. Each faction consistently mistook the other for its most dangerous adversary when in fact they had many aims and ideas in common. Among these shared concerns was the central issue of how to structure collaborative economic arrangements in such a way that a market mechanism (in the sense of some system of economic decentralization) could be combined with central political control over the direction and rate of accumulation. An emerging alliance of agrarian or industrial entrepreneurs and party bureaucrats had to be dismantled without precipitating the state into a revolutionary war against society. In the event, the Bukharinists

joined with Stalin against the supporters of Trotsky. The remaining leftists had failed to join hands at the right time and to translate their democratic slogans into the organization of mass constituencies.

To understand the outcome, we have to take into account the severity of the available options and the strategic errors of the right and left factions. But, even then, the events lack any irresistible logic of their own. The personalities of the leaders – Trotsky's and Bukharin's vanities and illusions, Stalin's mastery of the bureaucratic apparatus, his surefire instinct for the kill, his genius for dosage, and his luck – played an immeasurable part. The turning points in the history of stabilization policy represent an encounter with the impersonal, intractable forces of material life. Yet even there, the full range of contingencies comes into play, as if to remind us that history never stops being political in either the largest or the smallest ways.

The elements of the outcome determined what the Soviet system would be like in the immediate future. They therefore also established the starting point for other communist regimes. The solution that emerged had two decisive features. Whereas one aspect followed directly from the strategy of coerced collectivization, the other was more obliquely linked with it.

The decision to wage war on the peasantry and to crush the right and left factions within the party meant that the preferred structure of accumulation would minimize the role of cooperation and autonomous organization from the bottom up. Instead, it would emphasize the imposition, verging on systematic state terrorism, of a coercive order. The government and leadership that could manage to do this with the vast millions of peasants would be likely to do it with the industrial work force as well, no matter what the ruling ideological preconceptions might be. The combination of remorseless centralism with the violent shattering of the way of life of a large part of the people and the destruction of almost every remnant of the agrarian populations' independent associative life meant the triumph of a kind of state and leader that would see in every sign of communal autonomy and resistance an indication of conspiracy and breakdown. These were institutions and attitudes that could not be easily turned on and off to deal with different parts of the population. Thus, the Soviet experience confirmed, once again, the fateful importance of the relationship between the presence or absence of collective mobilization and the particular ways in which governmental power is used.

The oblique counterpart to this system of accumulation without mobilization was the emerging partnership between the ruling elites in party and bureaucracy and the technical intelligentsia of managers and professional or scientific personnel. The process of mutual though unequal acceptance (the technical intelligentsia was never coequal with the top cadres) had begun even before the start of the

NEP. It had been deepened during the NEP years. Despite the traumatic effect of the purges, it survived Stalinism. Its survival reflected a straightforward fact of reciprocal advantage and dependence. As the regime became increasingly committed to imposition of an order in town and country, it could not afford to fight simultaneously, on a second front, against the technical intelligentsia. The technicians, after all, had the power to disrupt the existing production system until another system could be devised and other technical cadres could be trained.

The regime had something to offer the technical intelligentsia in exchange for its collective support. Though Bukharinist ideas might be rife among the managers, engineers, and other professionals and though the terroristic aspects of revolutionary despotism might be especially hated, there was a basis for minimal agreement. That basis included the desire to preserve a style of work organization distinguishing between the people who formulated general productive tasks, or controlled their execution, and the people who did the routine work. The technical intelligentsia might not rule in the state, but at least it ruled (under watchful eyes) in the bureaus, factories, collective farms, army, schools, and hospitals.

The ruling elites and the technical intelligentsia had in common more than a crude interest in power and its perquisites. They also shared, with increasing clarity, a conception of efficiency and rationality and of the style of organization that would embody them. This conception minimized the break with the style of organization prevalent in the Western industrialized powers of the time (e.g., Lenin's celebrated interest in Taylorism). It also presupposed the foreclosure of widening collective conflict and escalating collective mobilization in every major sector of the economy. Thus, the two elements of the Soviet solution – accumulation without independent collective association, and accommodation with the technical intelligentsia by maintaining the sharpest contrast between task makers and task appliers – were implicated in each other.

The result of this crucial episode in Soviet history was related to the suppression of the soviets after the November revolution. The relationship brings out a special connection between the Western and the communist experiences. It also illuminates the general link between radical conflicts over the mastery of the state and the structure of society and the more subtle or detailed settling of accounts that takes place when new terms are laid down for economic growth and stability.

The soviets were put down almost immediately after the November revolution. They were deprived of their original role as devices of collective mobilization and became, instead, mere instruments of

governmental control. In this respect, their history resembled that of peasant communes that had been transformed into passive tools of some agrarian empire's fiscal policy. The suppression of the soviets had created the opportunity to orient the state and the economy in a way that would restrict all independent collective organizations. But the destruction of the soviets did not make this result inevitable, nor did it tell on just what terms accumulation would go forward. Only the conflicts of the late 1920s and their sequels set these terms. In a similar way, the defeat of radical movements in Western Europe after World War I had created an opportunity to minimize the changes in the established forms of power and production that would be necessary for lasting civil peace as well as economic stability and growth. That opportunity was later realized by the forms of economic policy developed during World War II and by the domestic and international economic arrangements and governmental alliances of the postwar era.

In fact, there was more than a generic parallel between the events in Western Europe (or, more generally, in the Atlantic zone) and those in the Soviet Union; there was a direct mutual influence. The failure to create an alternative style of work organization and of democracy in one area of the world made the failure in the other area seem that much more unavoidable. The development of organizational structures (e.g., the multidivisional firm structure) was going on in the advanced Western countries after the soviets had already been untoothed, and each refinement of those structures suggested to the masters of Soviet Russia the need to find the closest counterpart compatible with their own forms of rule and property. The war effort added to the plausibility of this selective emulation by making it important to achieve the most rapid possible mobilization of resources and labor with the fewest risks and discontinuities.

The settlement of the late 1920s and early 1930s determined the ground on which later conflicts would be fought in the Soviet Union and other communist countries. There were an outer circle and an inner circle of struggle.

The outer circle presented occasional flare-ups of the defeated "right" and "left" tendencies. An example of the rightist resurgence would be the rebellious movements in Eastern Europe; an example of the leftist, the Chinese Cultural Revolution. They had in common the impulse to reverse the strategy of accumulating without allowing independent collective mobilization. They represented, and were understood to represent, an assault upon this strategy that threatened to upset the established forms of power and production. They jeopardized the prerogatives of the ruling groups and (at least in the case of resurgent leftism) of the technical intelligentsia. They

were repeatedly crushed thanks to the reactions of the endangered governmental apparatus, the hesitations of their own leaders, and the military intervention of other communist powers.

The inner circle of conflict was represented by struggles that went on chronically because they arose out of a congenital weakness in the stabilization settlement. There was a limit to the state's use of terroristic violence against society in the effort to impose a growth path upon a passive and frightened citizenry. Terrorism would have its own costs in the breakdown of communication and of simple truth-telling, in the government's need to keep up the remorseless pressure, and in everyone's obsession with survival and self-defense. Once there was a letup in state terrorism, the rulers and planners would have to win a greater measure of active collaboration by the working population at every level of hierarchy. To enlist this collaboration and to compensate for their own relative ignorance of difficulties and opportunities, the central planners periodically felt pressed to allow for greater decentralization in the production system. The loosening of central control, however, could not be permitted to fall into open-ended collective conflict or grassroots mobilization. It could not be allowed to threaten the basic hierarchy of rule within the society at large or the large-scale enterprise. It could not be set free to undermine the barrier between the task makers and the task appliers. Decentralization within these limits invariably meant a greater concentration of power in the hands of managers, technicians, and local authorities. They would in turn make such concessions to their own underlings as were needed to keep things going.

But the decentralizing movement brought dangers of its own. Low-level authorities used every additional amount of discretion to build up more autonomy from dependence upon their rivals or their masters. They tried to turn the advantages they had gained for their enterprises and for themselves into vested rights. The whole economy would then start to sink into a welter of factional privileges and self-defensive actions within the cumbersome and resented framework of the central plan. This was a dreamless apparatchik's version of the ancien régime: freedom through privilege. Correctives milder than revolutionary despotism sufficed to stop it.

No point along these epicycles was satisfactory from even the narrowest perspective of accumulation. At each point, muddling through seemed the best that could be hoped for. Nevertheless, there was no way to avoid the turns and about-turns. They arose from the difficulty an order of the kind that had emerged in the Soviet Union at the decisive point of the late 1920s would inevitably have in coming to terms with the consensual requirements of a production system.

To see what is most revealing about these events, we need to push

the comparison between the twentieth-century Soviet and the Western settlements to a more general level. In both cases, the accepted solution resulted in a persistent limit to the government's capacity to push the economy repeatedly into the high gear of accelerated innovation. This is just a particular way of saying that neither settlement did justice to the exigencies of the modern formula for worldly success.

In both instances, the limitation had the same fundamental structure. The dominant stabilization policies, and the formative contexts of power and production these policies helped sustain, enabled a more or less closed and privileged group to exercise a stranglehold over the conditions of collective prosperity. In one case, this group was the party and bureaucratic elite with its allies in the upper rungs of the technical intelligentsia. In the other case, it was the managers and officials who controlled the crucial flows of investment decisions. In both cases, the other groups dug in their heels. They attempted to organize themselves for self-defense and advancement. They tried to turn every new advantage into a vested right. More often than not, they hardened the criteria of group membership and alliance rather than effacing these lines by a strategy of expanding alliances. They sought and received benefits according to their power to disrupt: whether by the slowing down of the production system in a narrower sense or by the withholding of partisan support in a larger sense. There was certainly no general proportion between each group's ability to blackmail and its actual productive contributions to the economy.

The basic obstacle to ever renewed innovation was then the constraining interplay between an elite certain to confuse social opportunity with factional interest and a larger world of groups armed with uneven degrees of collective organization and devoted to the stratagems of preemptive security. Here was an example of the way the same forces that go into the remaking of a social world – the interplay between collective mobilization and the transformative uses of governmental power – turn into the protective shell that helps defend this world against attack.

The outcome of these constraints upon collective material progress was not definitive economic crises. It was an endless stream of squabbles and a recurrent entropic movement toward hardened factional privilege. Most worldly people thought that things had always been and would always be this way.

*A Failed Attempt to Break Out from the Soviet Model:
The Chinese Cultural Revolution*

The Chinese Cultural Revolution offers a contrasting case: the failure to achieve in fact what at one point had looked like a possible break-

through into a different style of industrial society strengthened by the very forms of production and control that were initially jeopardized. For a while at least, reconstruction for the sake of economic growth – an objective whose relative importance had been one of the very subjects of the contest – was achieved as inconclusive rivalry among proposals gave way to the reassertion of preexisting institution, with a familiar decentralizing twist. The events by which an entrenched system temporarily rids itself of its domestic challengers and emerges with new strength from a battle for survival are among the most important and the most common ways in which the relation between institutional forms and practical needs gets played out: reaction, like revolution, is not easily separable from reform.

The experience of the Chinese Cultural Revolution also holds a more specific interest for an institutional genealogy that anticipates both a theory of context making and a program for social reconstruction. I have suggested that the “right-wing” Soviet deviationists of the 1920s raised once again the problems posed by the institutional arrangements that eventually became dominant in the West. The fulfillment of what was most original in their program would ultimately have required the realization of the reconstructed, economically dynamic and internally stable form of petty commodity production: hence a novel institutional ordering of market economies and democratic regimes. The Chinese Cultural Revolution highlights the difficulties encountered in the course of an equally confused and halfhearted attempt to establish a stabilized order capable of perpetuating a higher measure of collective mobilization and context-challenging conflict in the midst of everyday social life. The petty commodity and mobilizational ideals may seem only loosely connected. Yet they are indeed linked through the requirements that must be satisfied in order to rescue a radically decentralized economy from instability, perversion, and regressiveness. This argument, first advanced during the discussion of certain turning points in European institutional history, becomes clearer in Chapter 5, which develops a program for institutional reconstruction responsive to both the mobilizational and the decentralizing ideal.

Consider the basic march of events. The first stage was one in which Mao and his faction attempted to execute an internal coup within the elites. Their initial motives for stepping up the controversies that led to the Cultural Revolution were surely complex: they included, in some blend the participants themselves could hardly have decomposed, an unvarnished power interest – the desire to humble rival centers of power in the state apparatus and the party – and a visionary commitment – the will to escape from the consolidation of bureaucratic power in the manner already perceived as

indicative of the Soviet vice. Even at its most radical, however, this commitment seems never to have allowed for the possibility of reorganizing power on a radically new basis and institutionalizing popular participation on an unprecedented scale.

The second stage of the events started when the faction that had begun the quarrel within the elites attempted to enlist broader mass support in order to do its will – a variation on the characteristic mechanism by which the recruitment of mass constituencies shakes up an oligarchy's inward-turning squabbles. The call for mass agitation became progressively more shrill, as befitted the confused, halfhearted assault upon bureaucratic power. The popular response, however, soon began to exceed the expectations of its architects. Its major source of support lay in the dispossessed (such as the temporary and contract workers – the Chinese underclass) and in the youth that had not yet acquired the knack of discounting the value of words. Its centers were a few cities. Its major forms of action were the mass demonstration and the transformation of self-criticism techniques. Self-criticism had been a subtle method for reasserting consensus and control through contained conflict – the very image of routine politics, drawn into the microcosm of the enterprise, the work gang, or the neighborhood and supplemented with a subtle psychology of the way an individual can be made to render himself transparent to his fellows. The fundamentals of power at every level would remain out of bounds to conflict and complaint. In the hands of the practicing cultural revolutionaries, however, self-criticism became a device for humiliating alleged enemies and bureaucratic superiors; the boundaries of what could be done to people, who could be reached, and what could be attacked, began to fall apart. This evolution, a paradigm of the way the very instruments of routine politics may turn into the agencies of political intensification, was symbolized by the assault on Liu Shao-chi, at once leader of the party elites and consummate theorist of the mainstream tradition of self-criticism. The widening conflict forced the politicians behind the Cultural Revolution and their allies in the army to choose between two options, which presented themselves in ever starker and more dangerous contrast as agitation grew. One option was to support the insurrectional movement unequivocally, attempting to lead its temper. The other was to reassert control so that the basic structure of party leadership at the top levels and managerial authority at the lower ones would not be destroyed; the popular tumults would then not depart too far from the purpose originally meant for them: that they should serve as a weapon of intimidation in an elite conflict. Not all surprises would be allowed to happen.

The definitive choice of the latter option inaugurated a third stage: the effort to bring events under control once again started with the

“seizure of power” movement of early 1969. The new “revolutionary committees” installed in the enterprises, with the participation of local workers, party cadres, and army representatives, served as the crucial device by which mass participation was whittled down to the point of harmlessness. In this way, too, the more radical factions among the political elites lost any independent channel by which to communicate with their potential supporters below. The extent of the loss became clear only later. The nonarmy radicals found themselves reduced to the condition of favorites at court with a tenure dependent upon the survival of their master.

The fourth stage of the conflict was the period of settling scores among the erstwhile radical allies in light of the largely successful decision to reestablish control. It was also the phase in which the relationship between the domestic and the foreign policy aspects of these conflicts became clear. The two issues came together in the Lushan Plenum of 1970, when Lin Piao and the radical army faction were attacked for failing to swallow the new line of antagonism to the Soviet Union. The main points of the deal were the acceptance by the party and state bureaucracies of the emerging program of international realpolitik in exchange for a guarantee of minimal security made all the more credible by the annihilation of the radical army faction. Yet it would be a mistake to see in the quest for this reorientation to world politics a cause of the earlier reassertion of control. The masses might also have been mobilized for the new foreign policy, but once they had been demobilized, the issue of the terms on which the reinstated elites would agree to the desired international aims became pressing.

The fifth stage of events was the aftermath of restoration, reaction, and reform: after Mao's death even the appearance that his line was the predominant one could be denied and his favorites could be discarded.

The ending of the story suggests the paradox whose resolution in turn uncovers the deeper meaning of the plot. Mao and his immediate friends and supporters seemed to be in charge of events from the start: they began the agitation; they succeeded in controlling it; and they set the terms on which compromise would be struck after rebellion had been put on a leash. Yet in the end their initial enemies sat in the seats of power and judgment. A program of economic growth was organized around a more clear-cut chain of managerial and party hierarchy than had existed before. Concessions to “socialist legality” left little real substance to popular participation. Decentralizing reform respected the limits of the communist reform cycle.

The explanation of the paradox lies in the choice between the two options of continuing mobilization or demobilization. The unequivocal choice in favor of the latter had taken place before any real

alternatives in the organization of production or power had had a chance to consolidate. Indeed by its very nature, the success of such a reassertion depended upon its anticipating the emergence of any alternative logic of power and production, capable of making an economy run and a polity stick together. In the end, the alternative modes of organization remained, at best, half-baked compromises or growths upon a body constituted on different principles. None of the participatory schemes had passed the threshold points at which they might have started to pay off and surmount the opposition. In the absence of a developed alternative scheme of enterprise organization and coordination, the equivocal participatory concessions, such as the "revolutionary committees," became at most an annoying and costly though ineffective hindrance to restrengthened managerial authority; a similar problem arises in the Western economies when efforts are made to push through redistributive or regulatory programs without changing the fundamental pattern of powers over investment. So too, as long as no novel system for governmental decision, control, and communication has begun to appear, departures from established practice in the name of the mass line – or any other line, for that matter – will appear as gestures toward chaos. Their fate will depend upon an unequal battle in which well-organized powers are pitted against sinking enthusiasms.

So, once the reassertion of control had taken place, the Cultural Revolution as a mass movement was lost. But so were the elite factions responsible for its beginning and its later paralysis. To survive as a power bloc they would not only have had to dissociate themselves from the personality of the leader: they would also have had to define themselves in terms other than the ones that had set them on course. Their erstwhile enemies, the governmental and party bureaucracies, found themselves in charge of the real machines of administration and production and discovered as well that, in the newly clarified circumstance, their own power interests coincided with the practical needs to get things done and deliver the goods. To admit this much, you do not have to believe that anyone in the Cultural Revolution – elites or masses – was close to coming up with workable alternatives, or even that such plans of association as they might have found would have represented a change for the better. The point is that no alternatives were really put to the test and that the collective process of searching for them was paralyzed close to the start.

Here, then, is a case of failure in breakthrough toward an alternative mode of socialism and industrialism, unless the breakthrough is defined as a return to a clearer version of preexisting institutions, a return permitting limited decentralizing experiments and achieved at the cost of a protracted ordeal of provoked, uncontrolled, and suppressed insurrection.

Surely a background condition of the whole development was the tilt toward restabilization inherent in the available technologies and organizational forms – the ones that China had largely imbibed from the West. For these favored bright lines between subordinate, routine operations and controlling, task-defining activities, in every sphere of production, administration, and warfare; in the not very long run, a strategy of radical participation would have demanded radical disaggregation and reinvention of the existing technologies and organizational practices.

A much more immediate factor in the outcome, however, was the illusion of an elite faction that thought it could have it both ways with mass mobilization, that it could use the agitated populace at will as a club with which to beat its enemies at the center of power, and yet keep this mass following from posing any serious challenge to the basic structure of power. It is the most paradigmatic of illusions to which mass politics can give rise, for it lies at the very origins of mass politics. It goes to the terms on which collective allegiances can be won and collective aspirations contained. It deals with the way in which the development of organization and technology is steered so as to allow for a more free-playing involvement in productive tasks while maintaining a stable hierarchy of spiritual authority and material advantage.

Just as the liberal identification of freedom and efficiency with a very detailed system of vested rights played a crucial part in the nineteenth-century American events discussed in an earlier section, so too the equation of the impersonal needs of organized power and national development with the maintenance of a concrete system of vested rights performed an equally important role in this episode of twentieth-century Chinese history. But whereas the American belief was largely a mistake that helped cause the result it did not describe, the Chinese belief more truly described a situation. This truth, however, had been brought into being by an illusion, the illusion of those who tried to play fast and loose with mass mobilization. The economy remained as if subject to built-in forces but only because, at the moment of opportunity, its two-hearted political enemies had not dared invade it in the name of possibilities it excluded.

A THEORY OF CONTEXT MAKING

THE AGENDA OF THE THEORY

The Implicit Theoretical Polemic Recalled

This second part of Chapter 4 develops a theory of context making. The theory suggests an account of how we remake the institutional and imaginative frameworks of social life and therefore provides the

dynamic counterpart to the earlier steps of the explanatory argument of *False Necessity*, which explore the character of formative contexts and their internal constitution. More particularly, it makes explicit the view of context change implicit in the institutional genealogy presented in the first part of the chapter.

Unlike the polemical narrative that anticipates it, the theory is meant to have general application. Moreover, it deals with the imaginative as well as the institutional aspects of contexts and their reinvention. Nevertheless, only by synecdoche may this account be called a theory of social transformation. For it addresses solely the major, discontinuous change that occurs when formative institutions and preconceptions are revised.

An adequate view of context making must satisfy the criteria set by the earlier stages of the explanatory argument. It must reject the competing positions of positivist social science (or naive historiography) and deep-structure social theory.

Remember that positivist social science refuses to take seriously the individuality of different social worlds: the ways in which both the institutional shape of society and the subjective experience of personality differ sharply from one society to another. Positivist social science ignores any ultimate distinction between the routine events that take place within a mental or practical context and the struggles that revise this context. These two failures of insight – the failure to distinguish structure-respecting disputes from structure-changing conflicts and the failure to treat seriously the specificity of societies and cultures – arise from the same premises and produce the same results.

The standpoints of positivist social science (or naive historiography) and deep-structure theory represent two facets of the refusal to take the historicity of the social world seriously. Paradoxically, though the two refusals appear to move in opposite directions, they both end up making the same mistake: they understate the extent to which our experiences and projects are at risk in history. In one instance the limitation takes the form of denying the seriousness of the distinctions between societies. It disregards the power of insight and action to change the basic terms of subjective experience and collective organization. In the other case the refusal appears as the conviction that history already has a basic script. The struggles that go on in history may provide minor variations of content and pace (the evolutionary variant of deep-structure theory). They may determine which of several possibilities will be actualized (the non-evolutionary variant). But they can never rewrite the script itself. By contrast, in the view for which I argue here, we write this script both by fighting and by failing to fight. The formative contexts that result from this fighting not only shape our practical and passionate

dealings but also determine the extent to which peace requires prostration.

A satisfactory approach to context-making has as its reverse side a defensible view of the internal constitution of the institutional and imaginative frameworks of social life. Such a view must recognize that the constitutive arrangements and ideas of a formative structure develop separately and can undergo piecemeal replacement. (The deep-logic theories have trouble recognizing or explaining this part-by-part replaceability.) At the same time, it must acknowledge the staying power of these constituents: the components of a social framework do somehow support one another and they do prove hard to change in the course of routine practical or imaginative conflicts. (Positivist social science has a hard time making sense of this staying power.)

The idea of historicity has been one of the greatest and most distinctive achievements of modern thought. Yet the historical perspective does not become secure until the standpoints of both naive historiography and deep-logic theory have been replaced. This replacement does not occur until we actually formulate and deploy an alternative style of social and historical explanation. Until then, we cannot carry the principle of historical consciousness to its final conclusions. Until then, we cannot know how to historicize the relation between freedom and structure by showing how the force with which formative contexts imprison us is itself one of the things up for grabs in history.

The Theory Outlined

The theory of context change presented here is divided into four parts. This subsection outlines by anticipation their topics and themes. Each part describes a distinctive influence upon context making. Because these influences fail to merge together into a single, lawlike scheme, it is all the more important to develop little by little a view of the complex relations among them.

Each of the four sets of ideas can be fully understood, developed, and supported only when placed alongside the other three. Each reflects a basic feature of social life. And each can be translated into a thesis about the implications of having to live in contexts that are less than natural or absolute.

The first part of the theory considers the ordinary workings of an institutional and imaginative framework of social life. It discusses how such a framework gains a measure of stability and a semblance of necessity, despite its haphazard, ramshackle origins. The containment or interruption of conflict suffices to give a context an initial measure of stability. Yet even relatively disentranced contexts – like

the institutional and imaginative orders of contemporary societies – have hardened faces. They effectively prescribe routines and resist transformation.

The argument explains this exorbitant stability. But it does so without appealing to deep-seated economic, organizational, and psychological constraints or to irresistible and determinate tendencies of development. Nor does it understand the problem-solving and interest-accommodating activities of a routinized social world as approximations to a context-transcending norm of rationality. It insists that the particular content and relative entrenchment of a framework determine the vital terms on which problem solving and interest-accommodation take place.

The key claim of this first part of the theory is that each of the forces that bestow a higher stability on formative contexts also generates an endless series of opportunities for the destabilization and reconstruction of the established order. The link between stability and destabilization is built into the detailed practical and imaginative activities that reproduce a social world. The small-scale disharmonies these activities regularly excite can always escalate into context-subverting conflicts. When they do so they also make possible the operation of the long-run influences on context change that provide the next two parts of this view with their subject matter.

The second part of the theory deals with the influence upon context change that results from the many advantages – varieties of empowerment – offered by less entrenched contexts: that is, by contexts that weaken the hold of rigid roles and hierarchies upon our experiments in practical collaboration or passionate attachment and do so by bringing framework-transforming conflict and framework-preserving routine closer together. The central thesis of this aspect of the view of context making is that the varieties of empowerment produced by more revisable and hierarchy-subverting frameworks help explain how a cumulative move toward more disentranced contexts may occur. The mechanism by which advantages of empowerment explain the appearance of more empowering frameworks may be intentional. (The agents deliberately and voluntarily establish the disentranced context so that they can gain its advantages.) Alternatively, the connection may be unintentional, by a social counterpart to Darwinian natural selection. (The more disentranced contexts outlast their rivals.) But for the most part the style of agency has a distinctive and intriguing character that fails to fit the extremes of intentional and unintentional action.

Whether it is more intentionally or less intentionally pursued, the attractions of negative capability – for that is what I call empowerment through disentranchment – remain relatively indeterminate in their practical implications. Those attractions are reversible. They

are qualified by countervailing forces such as the benefits provided by a coercive surplus extraction that relies upon entrenched roles and hierarchies. Above all, they work largely with materials generated by histories – sequences of contexts – they only partly shape. This aspect of the explanatory argument holds the most immediate interest for the radical project – the enterprise of liberals and leftists. For the aims of the radical cause represent a version of the cumulative changes whose possibility the argument about negative capability helps explain.

A third part of this view of context making deals with another influence upon long-run, cumulative context change. Each institutional and imaginative order of social life influences its sequel by giving a bias to the outcomes of order-transforming conflicts. These biases may be overridden and even inverted. But they may also push context change in a certain direction: a direction of substantive arrangements and preconceptions and a direction of relative entrenchment or disentanglement.

The main interest of this third part of the theory has to do with the relation it suggests between the two long-run influences on context change: the push of sequential effects and the pull of negative capability. The advance of negative capability diminishes the force of sequential effects by limiting the power of formative contexts to bias the outcomes of practical or imaginative struggles over context change. Conversely, however, the institutions, practices, and ideas generated by concrete histories of context change provide the materials on which the attractions of negative capability can work.

Thus, the two long-term influences cannot be reduced to each other. A particular historical sequence of contexts or context states is not just an expression of higher-order developmental tendencies, as in the evolutionary brands of deep-structure social theory. Such a sequence suffers the influence of forces – the advantages of negative capability preeminent among them – that make cumulative change in the content and quality of social frameworks possible. The sequence is nevertheless more than the product of such influences. Moreover, it generates the relatively accidental and particularistic stuff that those influences (or rather the people who enlist them) may sift, compare, and transform.

The fourth part of the view of context change describes the factors of disturbance that further prevent the forces identified by the previous three parts from coming together to impose a grand scheme of context change. One factor of disturbance is the inability of formative contexts fully to shape the practical or passionate dealings among people. The individual resists becoming the complete puppet of his contexts. He resists even if he does not want to resist or know that he is resisting, and even when the structure of social life is most

deeply entrenched. The residues of past frameworks and the anomalies of present practice survive to supply the starting points of defiance and reconstruction.

Another factor of disturbance is the partly self-fulfilling character of our ideas about social reality and social change. We can never distinguish clearly and definitively between the descriptive accuracy of a theory (its success as a representation of reality) and its transformative effect (the practical consequences of acting as if the theory were true). Though we can partly control this effect, through comparison and analysis, retrospective control never suffices to dispel the confusion. We would have to try to control prospectively by reversing or varying our practices and projects. But we could not achieve this prospective compensation for the self-fulfilling effect without a degree of detachment from our practical concerns and our ideal commitments that would once again change us.

The two factors of disturbance – the residual recalcitrance of our practical or passionate relations to the frameworks that partly shape them, and the self-fulfilling character of our ideas about social life – share the same basis. This basis is the absence of a natural context, or of a context of all contexts, or of a system of laws capable of determining which contexts or sequences of contexts are possible.

Guiding Intentions

Three general remarks further connect this theory of context change with the broader explanatory view of *False Necessity*. These remarks may help clarify the intentions and thereby dispel the ambiguities of an intricate argument. For the intelligible connections this argument emphasizes presuppose a conception of order more subtle and inclusive – less starkly contrasted to brute accident and particularity – than any acceptable to deep-structure social theory. These initial observations also serve, in miniature and fragmentary form, a purpose similar to the proto-theory presented in Chapter 1. They describe different aspects of an intellectual project. You may accept the project while rejecting the version of it worked out in the rest of this chapter. Then, even the flawed materials of the failed attempt may be serviceable in the development of a better alternative.

Like the entire explanatory argument to which it belongs, the view of context change presented here has a two-sided relation to Marxist social theory. Marx's original doctrines, and much of the work conducted under their aegis, represent the most comprehensive statement of deep-structure theorizing – and of the deep-structure use of functional explanation. The following theory stands in opposition to those doctrines. But other parts of Marx's writings and of the Marxist tradition as a whole are irreducible to the amalgam of deep-structure

and functionalist ideas. For Marxism also represents the single most powerful statement of the antinaturalistic conception of society. The self-criticism of the Marxist tradition provides both general inspiration and particular aid to those who would carry forward the view of social order as frozen politics.

Thus, you can begin to understand what may otherwise seem a surprising and even paradoxical feature of the view of context making offered here. The salvageable part of the Marxist theory of social change represents a special case of the approach for which I argue. But it is not a special case in the traditional scientific sense of an account that applies in the presence of local or temporary boundary conditions. It is, rather, a special case in a looser, psychological sense. Much of the view worked out in the following pages can be mapped onto Marxist theory so long as the Marxist relaxes certain unjustifiably restrictive assumptions about social possibility. In particular, these are the assumptions represented by what were previously described as the second and third moves of deep-structure explanation: the belief in a short list or compulsive sequence of indivisible social frameworks and the appeal to the lawlike constraints and tendencies that can generate such a sequence or list. But it is no easy matter to lift these restrictive assumptions, for they influence the categories, explanations, and theoretical attitudes that give Marx's doctrine its distinct identity and that hold together his intellectual followers.

The view of context making to be developed here is, in a special sense, antideterministic. The overriding aim is less to dilute than to revise the sense in which context change is determined. To be sure, the view makes context change much less determined prospectively – and much less subject to a predefined master plan – than it is, for example, in Marx's theory of history. But it is one thing to take a theory like historical materialism and dilute its claims by multiplying, mediating, or qualifying causes or sequences, and it is another thing to change the style of explanation.

The theory worked out in the rest of this chapter does not make social and historical explanation depend on a denial of our ability to shatter and revise our contexts in ways that no higher-order laws have fully determined. It seeks a style of transformative explanation compatible with our subjective experience of living in history. For in this experience the sense of constraint and compulsion coexists with the recurrence of surprise and discovery.

Such an explanatory practice can more readily make use of historical learning and inform historical narrative. A style of historical writing that has only positivist social science or deep-structure explanation to inspire it must either keep theory at an ironic distance or discount the open-ended variability and uniqueness of whole forms of social life and the radical uncertainty of the course of social conflict.

Finally, this view of context-making gives a secure place to programmatic thought. By reaffirming the context-routine distinction while dispensing with the idea of higher-order laws that govern context change, it makes room for programmatic inventions that cannot be dismissed as the handmaidens of foreordained tendencies or constraints. By recognizing that contexts can be remade part by part, not just all at once, it justifies taking revolutionary reform rather than either inconsequential tinkering or full-scale revolution as the standard topic of programmatic argument. By providing a credible view of context revision it gives to our thinking about social reconstruction the perspective needed to avoid measuring the realism of proposals by their closeness to current arrangements.

These last considerations suggest yet another general point important to understanding the aims of this argument. The view of context change focuses, first and foremost, on the features of social reality and social change that provide opportunities for the radical project: the project of seeking human empowerment through the invention of institutions, practices, and ideas that more fully emancipate social life from rigid roles or hierarchies and that make themselves more easily available to revision in the midst of everyday life. Moreover, it does not merely show how the project may be most effectively carried out. It also contributes to the redefinition of the project, free from arbitrarily restrictive assumptions about the possible forms of social order and personal experience.

Chapter 5 argues that explanatory and programmatic ideas are far more intimately related than our traditional ideas about facts and values would countenance. But the value of a theory of context change that informs the radical cause does not depend upon a commitment to this cause. There is a special cognitive interest in a view of social change that considers society from the vantage point of the radical project. This project is distinguished by its commitment to weaken rigid divisions among roles, genders, classes, communities, and whole societies and to free us from the compulsions of unrevisable contexts. By subjecting these divisions and compulsions to the maximum of transformative pressure – in fact or in imagination – the pursuit of the radical cause puts their necessity, indeed their reality, to the test. For we understand a state of affairs by trying to change it or by imagining how it would change as a result of varying types and degrees of intervention or by entering into the transformative and countertransformative efforts of other minds, remote or long dead.

The cognitive value of the radical standpoint may be restated in a more general form. Once we free the radical project from indefensibly limiting preconceptions about how contexts change, which contexts can exist, and what contexts can be like, we can reinterpret

the project. It must be seen to include a commitment to change the very nature of our relation to the institutional and imaginative framework of social life. To study society and history from the radical perspective – if only as a stratagem of discovery – is to force ourselves to confront the chief sources of trouble in social explanation: the failure of our social contexts fully to determine our ideas and actions, and the failure of higher-order constraints and tendencies fully to govern the content and sequence of these contexts.

STABILITY AND DESTABILIZATION IN THE WORKING OF FORMATIVE CONTEXTS

The Core Conception

The first set of ideas in this view of context change deals with the normal life of an institutional and imaginative framework, the life that goes on in the interludes of revolutionary reform. The point is to understand how the ordinary workings of a formative context make context change possible. This initial group of conjectures represents, then, something like a statics of the minute structure of social life. But it is a statics of a peculiarly antistatic type. For its central themes are the dependence of stability upon artifice and illusion rather than necessity, and the constant reemergence of the opportunities to remake a social world that result from the very means used to defend this world.

Here, by anticipation, are the major claims and assumptions of this part of the argument. There are two moments to distinguish in the stabilization of a formative context. The season of heightened and intensified conflict over some part of the framework must be brought to an end and conflict contained or interrupted. This social peace may be achieved either through an acceptance of the preexisting institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions or through their partial replacement. (The total substitution of the framework is the unrealistic, limiting case.)

This peace must be imposed. It must result from a series of violent or nonviolent, practical or imaginative struggles, fought out against the background of antecedent arrangements and preconceptions biasing the result of the struggles without determining it. There must be a victory and a defeat, however modest its dimensions and imperceptible its forms. Only then can the second moment of context stabilization begin. The imposed contexts become the beneficiaries of the stabilizing forces this section of the argument examines.

Consider three sources of the second-order necessity of formative contexts. One is the consolidation of an organizational and technological style of economic activity. Especially when it is realized within

a system of nation-states at uneven levels of wealth and power, such a style reinforces the institutional settlement on which it was originally superimposed. A second source is the hardening of assumptions about collective identities, group interests, and social possibilities and of correspondences between the privileges each group enjoys and its relative access to governmental power. A third source of derivative necessity is the transformation of the imposed or accepted institutional order into a set of authoritative models of human association meant to be realized in different areas of social existence. Such an imaginative scheme lives both in the more pliant and organized form of official legal and moral dogma and in the more elusive and ambivalent form of implicit, widely shared assumptions about what the relations among people should be like in the different domains of social existence.

The forces operating at this second moment of stabilization presuppose the interruption or containment of fighting over fundamentals. The stabilizing mechanisms cannot account for the distinctive content of a formative context; they operate whatever this content may be. Their work is not to steer institutions and beliefs in any particular direction but rather to give them a degree of stability that they would otherwise lack. They alter the subjective quality of people's experience of formative contexts. This shift in turn has practical consequences.

The stabilizing forces can therefore be said to lend a second-order necessity to the social orders on which they exercise their influence. The term second-order necessity should be understood by analogy to the traditional idea of custom as a second nature, a distinctive and compulsive nature superimposed upon our indeterminate species nature. The forces of stabilization produce the tropisms in which a routinized form of social life so largely consists. Each force generates opportunities to destabilize the formative context in the very course of bestowing upon it an additional level of stability. It thereby also provides an opportunity for the operation of forces, discussed in later parts of this theory, that make possible long-run cumulative changes in the constraining power as well as in the distinctive content of formative contexts.

The transformative opportunities resulting from the operation of the context-stabilizing opportunities are just that: opportunities. They may or may not be turned to advantage. Each one takes the form of a series of petty disturbances. To be put to transformative use these disturbances must be made to escalate into broader and more intense conflict. We can describe circumstances that usually encourage or discourage this escalation, that make it harder or easier. But we cannot draw up a list of the necessary and sufficient conditions under which such escalation occurs. The obstacle to making such a

list does not arise from a mere localized, remediable defect in our understanding of society. Rather, the search for necessary and sufficient conditions rests on mistaken assumptions about what social life is like: the assumptions common to deep-structure social theory and positivist social science.

This part of the view of context change develops through an analysis of the three forces contributing to the second-order necessity of formative contexts. The point is to show how each stabilizing influence regularly produces opportunities for destabilization.* There is no magic to these three. Others may be added, and even these may be divided up or combined in other ways.

*The Second-Order Necessity of Formative Contexts:
The Organizational and Technological Style*

A stabilized set of formative institutional arrangements becomes the basis for an organizational and technological style of economic activity. This style then exerts a retrospective stabilizing influence upon the arrangements it has taken for granted and upon the group divisions and hierarchies these arrangements support. The adversaries of the newly established institutional settlement find they cannot go far in challenging this settlement without jeopardizing the dominant approach to technological design and the ways of organizing production and exchange that have been superimposed upon this approach.

The genealogy of current forms of work organization presented earlier in this chapter provides an extended example. The events that led up to the consolidation of the forms of economic organization characterizing contemporary formative contexts included a vast range of group conflicts, fought out in changing circumstances and with unexpected outcomes. Elites were redefined and their relation to the central and local powers of government was reshaped. Governmental authority was actively enlisted against alternative lines of development in ways that spanned the distance between the most violent methods of repression and the slow, subtle accumulation of legal rules and economic policies. The results of these conflicts favored the rigid form of rationalized collective labor, with its sharp contrast between task-executing and task-defining activities. Varieties of work organization that softened this contrast were relegated to the commercial and technological rearguard and vanguard of the

* In *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*, the idea of the link between stability and destabilization was presented through the discussion of the survival, identity, and oligarchy effects. Now, however, I need categories that can serve the aims of a more detailed analysis, specifically concerned with context change.

economy. The dominant style of work organization in turn became the basis for distinctive approaches to industrial organization and machine design, closely adapted to each other. Mass-production industry conflated disciplinary and efficiency aims. It developed a panoply of defenses against market instability. And it adopted purpose-specific machines, meant to function in a rigidly organized production process. General-purpose or metamachines were confined to the industrial vanguard, and became for a long time the exceptional rather than the standard form of machine design. Thus, in the end, the institutional arrangements and the group hierarchies became the basis for complex managerial and technological conventions. All but the most discerning identified these conventions with economic rationality.

The climb to a higher order of stability did not happen all at once: no clear break or time lag separated the crystallization of institutional arrangements and of group divisions and hierarchies from the development of this organizational and technological complex. But once the complex had formed, it offered an additional layer of protection to the underlying institutional order. A different order would require different organizational and machine-design techniques. For example, a reconstructed, practicable version of the petty bourgeois alternative to the dominant industrial style must break down the stark contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities. Such an alternative cannot accept a tradition of machine design presupposing a passive worker, pegged to an isolated, discretionless role. The practicality of the proposals will be disputed, all the more so because adversaries of the established order must often appeal to little more than a speculative possibility of practical organization. Thus, for example, the idea of a metamachine long remained a purely speculative conception, suggested by the theory of machine design, before it became actualized in the vanguard sector of industry.

But even if the ultimate practicality of an alternative style were beyond dispute, its development must still overcome formidable difficulties of transition. One technological and organizational order must be disrupted before another can be established. The disruption exacts a real economic toll. Moreover, the established technological and organizational style ends up influencing people's intangible assumptions about social possibility and, through them, about group interests.

The preceding discussion of this stabilizing mechanism presupposes a hypothesis introduced in Chapter 3 and developed later in this chapter. Functionalist social theories are right to see connections between the forms of social organization and the ability to exploit technological opportunities for productive or destructive, economic or military purposes. The organization of teamwork imposes con-

straints upon the ability to develop and deploy practical techniques and machines. The larger institutional environment (and, specifically, the part of it I call the formative context) in turn shapes the forms of teamwork. We must recognize these constraints. But we must also understand that there is no one-to-one relation between arrangements at these different levels of technological capability, work organization, and institutional arrangements, and no list of solutions at one level that are required by a particular solution at another level.

An organizational and technological style acquires an additional stabilizing power when it begins to spread throughout a system of interdependent states at unequal levels of economic growth and military strength. (It does not matter for the present purpose whether such a state system actually includes the whole world. But assume that if it occupies a lesser portion of the globe, it is both economically and militarily autarkic.) The state enjoying the greatest economic and military capabilities may be able to impose upon weaker or more backward countries many of its favorite arrangements and dogmas. It may indulge the most primitive of ideological impulses, which is the desire for self-reproduction.

But imposition is hardly necessary. Success remains the best persuasion. It takes time for the ruling or possessing elites of the more backward powers to discover that the practical capabilities achieved by the more advanced countries can be developed through methods of work organization different from the methods prevailing in the pioneering nations of the state system. Only slowly do the relatively backward nations find out that they can combine the same imported ways of organizing work with governmental or economic arrangements completely unknown in the dominant countries. At first, the practical capabilities seem inseparable from their organizational and institutional setting. The setting in turn seems available on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

The persuasive authority of the organizational and institutional solutions that have achieved preeminence in the dominant powers often gets reinforced by the most influential ideas about practical progress and its enabling circumstances. Cultural ascendancy habitually accompanies practical triumph: the ruling doctrines of statecraft and economic management in the dominant countries represent the established amalgam of a technological and organizational style with a formative institutional and imaginative context as if this amalgam were a prerequisite of worldly success. Thus, for example, many of the ideas about economic policy and management emanating from the universities of the rich North Atlantic countries in the years after World War II presented mass-production industry and its technological complement as the condition of industrial development. Those prestigious theories also treated the contemporary Western

forms of regulated market economies and representative democracies as the sole possible institutional basis for industrial mass production outside a modernizing fascist or communist dictatorship. The same gospel, with a slightly different message, had been preached by the liberal political economists and publicists of the early nineteenth century. At that time, the institutional genealogy I labeled the mythical history was already beginning to dominate our understanding of how we came to be what we are.

Illusion, however, is not the necessary basis for the added stabilizing force a technological and organizational style achieves when it begins to spread throughout a state system. Even if the rulers of the more backward nations understand the looseness of the connections between industrial or military capabilities and ways of organizing work, or between such organizational styles and the larger institutional environment, they may well feel they lack the time to develop an alternative. For in the course of the attempt, they might be overcome from abroad or overthrown from within. Given these many inducements to imitation, it is no wonder the follow-the-leader sequence within a state system can so easily be mistaken for a spontaneous convergence, driven forward by the universal influence of the same objective constraints.

Thus far I have described how an organizational and technological style gives a second-order necessity to the institutional settlements on which it is superimposed. Let me now turn the argument around and show how this same stabilizing force creates opportunities for destabilization. To this end I begin with the international twist just discussed and then return to the core phenomenon.

The more widely diffused an organizational or technological style becomes, the greater the variety it is likely to encounter in the social and cultural environments in which it must function. The differences are bound to make the mechanical imitation of the imported technological and organizational style impractical. The institutional order and the methods of work organization in the backward country may be incapable of supporting the technological, economic, or military developments that would allow the country to catch up. Failure to promote revolutionary reform consigns the latecoming country to an ever more dependent position within the state system to which it belongs. But the effort merely to reproduce, lock, stock, and barrel, both the foreign organizational and technological style and its whole institutional setting is equally unrealistic. A practical and imaginative ordering of social life cannot be replaced, and certainly not suddenly, just because a revolutionary leadership wants to replace it in order to revise the position its country occupies within a world order. Successful imitation requires reinvention.

Consider the very common situation in which an elite of reno-

vating reformers and discerning conservatives wants to introduce the changes needed to permit the economic development and military strengthening of their country while minimizing the disturbance to established institutions and to the group divisions or hierarchies these institutions support. This is the situation in which we would expect the stabilizing effect of the proliferation of an organizational and technological style within a state system to be at its strongest. It is therefore also the best circumstance in which to put to the test the hypothesis that this stabilizing force has destabilizing implications.

The renovating elite must identify the connections between the desired practical capabilities and their immediate setting in a form of work organization and machine design. It must also establish that accommodation between this managerial and technological style and the country's basic institutions which requires the least possible deviation from the current arrangements of the backward country. The reformers must invent the counterpart to the foreign organizational and technological style that will bring their country up to the level of the leading nations while minimizing disruption at home.

The most ingenious solutions capitalize on the distinctive characteristics of the backward country and turn what appeared to be archaic obstacles to practical use. But remember the looseness of the connection between an industrial style and an institutional order and the difficulty of developing from scratch a new approach to technology and work organization. Given this looseness and difficulty, renovating reform commonly produces two-sided results. Its managerial and technological approach may remain relatively close to the solutions favored in the original leading powers of the state system while its broader institutional settlements may be far more distinctive. The renovated formative context differs both from the old order of the reformed society and from the alien order of the foreign rivals. It represents an original creation.

The age of world history offers many examples of such national experiments in economic and military strengthening through stabilizing invention. The agent has often been a faction or a coalition of factions within the elite that identifies its own interests with the affirmation of national power and prosperity. Such reforms have continuously occurred both within and outside the West and with varying degrees of deliberation and central guidance. Thus, Wilhelmine Germany developed an organizational and technological style that differed only modestly, though tellingly, from the English original. The German economy followed the broad lines of the rigid variant of rationalized collective labor and embraced the new style of mass production. However, it also incorporated a relatively greater element of artisanal practices into industrial organization itself. It softened the contrast between task-defining and task-executing ac-

tivities and multiplied intermediate work roles. At the same time the continuous processing industries in which the Germans soon came to specialize encouraged the development and deployment of less purpose-specific machines. Together with this subtle and modest originality in technological and industrial style went governmental institutions and practices that differed far more sharply from the English route to wealth and power. In Germany a more authoritarian constitution came to coexist with practices more conducive to mass mobilization to a greater extent than anything seen in nineteenth-century Britain after Chartism.

Japan provides the most notoriously successful example of conservative reform outside the West. There, the policies of the post-restoration regime were far more deliberate, and the deviations, when contrasted to the English original, far more extensive. The preexisting devices of communal organization and patron-client relations were reconstructed and superimposed upon the rigid variant of rationalized collective labor. At the same time the institutional reorganization of government assured a position of privilege to a reconstituted elite.

The German and Japanese developments exemplify the conservative absorption of a technological and organizational style by late-coming countries within a state system. Yet even this conservative style of diffusion constantly generates transformative opportunities. The successful conservative reform requires changes in the organization of labor. It even alters the basic institutions and beliefs that constrain the forms of practical collaboration in work or warfare. Shifts like these in turn suppose and produce a realignment in the definition and ranking of interests, in the character and composition of the ruling and possessing elites, and in the access of rulers and ruled, possessors and dispossessed, to governmental power. Such a realignment can never be wholly predesigned. It creates uncertainty. It generates conflict. Some groups within the elites or the working masses resist the change. Other groups quarrel over place within the new order. Such transitional disputes can easily grow in intensity and scope, and turn the conservative episode in more radical directions. The conservative reformer reckons with the existence of such struggles. Because he cannot prevent them, he must try to contain them.

It is easy to forget how conflictual even the most successful instances of conservative absorption really were. Thus, for example, the violent mass strikes and social conflicts that shook Japan in the first two decades of the twentieth century are submerged under the retrospective gloss of an institutional outcome supposedly predetermined by the cultural peculiarities and psychological predispositions of the Japanese people. In Japan, as everywhere else, the relatively

conservative outcome had to be fought for long and hard before it could assume its deceptive patina of naturalness and necessity. So, too, the cases of national economic and military regression, sometimes labeled "failed modernization" (e.g., mid-twentieth century Argentina), may often best be understood as instances in which the conflict over the institutional and distributive equation of the national catching-up failed to be resolved decisively one way or another.

Pass now from the international dimension of the stabilizing aspect of the organizational and technological style to the core phenomenon itself. Even apart from its diffusion through a variety of social and cultural circumstances, the consolidation of an organizational and technological style produces opportunities for context change. An approach to management and machines never arrests completely the perception of practical productive opportunities, any more than an established scientific theory can fully block out perceptions and discoveries that threaten it. The designers of machines, the managers of work teams, and the heads of businesses have reasons of their own to seize on some of these opportunities and to begin innovating at the boundary of the current managerial and technological tradition. The significance of small-scale, opportunistic experimentation becomes clear when connected with a central hypothesis of this argument. According to the hypothesis a formative context constrains – loosely but significantly – ways of organizing work. Forms of work organization in turn limit people's ability to seize practical productive opportunities. If this hypothesis is correct, the experiments performed on the technological and organizational style must, as they accumulate, put pressure on aspects of the established institutional and imaginative framework of social life. The experiments invite yet larger experiments and, in so doing, they also create opportunities for conflict over basics.

A subsequent part of the theory of context making offers another reason to link such conflict with the progress of industrial or military capabilities. The next section of this chapter argues that under certain conditions the pressure of practical opportunity has a cumulative, directional quality. The constraints that preestablished social roles and hierarchies impose upon the forms of production and exchange must occasionally be lifted if particular classes or whole nations are to avoid defeat or eclipse at the hands of their rivals. Consequently, we must invent institutional arrangements that weaken the hold of social division and hierarchy upon our experience of sociability and soften the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-transforming conflict. The internal development of technological and organizational insight may itself make a modest but real contribution to the recognition of these larger possibilities and connections. It may therefore also help destabilize the very order that it once reinforced.

Later sections of this transformative argument play a series of

variations on a practical example that illuminates the case for linking practical opportunity with institutional destabilization. This example looks to the future rather than to the past of the transformations covered by the institutional genealogy.

The changing international division of labor, with the industrialization of the top tier of third world countries, threatens the emphasis on mass-production industry and on the rigid form of rationalized collective labor in the more advanced economies. A similar effect results in the gradual change of consumption expectations and worker attitudes within the richer nations. Finally, the independent development of technology, with the invention of (computerized) general-purpose machines, both relatively cheap and able to make relatively cheap goods, pushes in the same direction. These pressures suggest the need for a greater emphasis on a type of production, work organization, and machine design hitherto largely confined to both the most advanced (capital-intensive and technologically sophisticated) and the least advanced sectors of the economy. The alternative organizational and technological style more nearly approaches the description of the flexible form of rationalized collective labor, softening the contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities.

We can imagine this shift in style accomplished under the aegis of conservative intentions, with a minimum of disruption of established institutions, just as the approach this new style is meant to displace was once absorbed, conservatively, by the elites of relatively backward countries. But the lesson remains the same. No matter how successful the conservative brand of industrial reconstruction, it requires institutional readjustments. Such readjustments disturb the established pattern of implicit accommodation among classes, communities, or segments of the work force and between these groups and national governments.

Consider an example. The erosion of traditional mass-production industry threatens the position of organized labor, entrenched in that sector of the economy. It therefore poses the issue of whether unionized labor is to continue to rely on unionization or whether labor is to be represented and empowered in an entirely different way. The conflicts invariably ignited over the forms and effects of such adjustments can be seized on and broadened by movements with more radically transformative aims. Or they can simply get out of hand and produce institutional results that none of the contenders foresaw.

*The Second-Order Necessity of Formative Contexts:
The Logic of Group Interests*

A formative institutional and imaginative framework produces and supports a set of roles and ranks. The people who inhabit it settle down not just to particular social stations but to an order of stations,

daily reaffirmed in the routines of practical collaboration and passionate attachment. These stations and routines cannot be reenacted without also being imagined. The resulting assumptions help close a social world in upon itself.

Some of the assumptions address the boundaries of collective identities. They tell each individual what groups he should consider himself a member of – what *we's* he should identify with – on the basis of his practical roles and life history. They conjure up a series of incomplete and partly contradictory but nevertheless connected and mutually reinforcing pictures of what the relevant *we's* in society are. They define and elucidate the relative authority and necessity of the many ways in which people are divided up into groups and in which groups are ranked.

Other assumptions deal with social possibilities. Such assumptions teach the individual what he may reasonably expect for himself and his family. They describe the live options among which society and therefore the groups within it must choose. They separate the practicable from the utopian, thereby also demarcating the social terrain on which – barring the unforeseeable or catastrophic – the individual knows he must move.

Yet other premises describe the content of group interests. These preconceptions define what each group's interests are and how they clash with the interests of other groups. Different groups need not – they generally do not – agree on how to define clashes of interest. But, once again, for this higher-order stability to be achieved, the disagreement must not be too radical or pervasive. It must not prevent different classes and communities from sharing the sense that they can fight for their interests without quarreling over the reconstruction of basic institutional arrangements or over the distinction between the practicable and the utopian.

The logic of group interests is the most ostentatious and operative part of these assumptions. Yet it depends for its semblance of clarity upon the other premises about social possibilities and collective identities. Only when such beliefs about possibilities and identities have begun to harden can the routinized push and shove about group interests take place.

Once assumptions about collective identities, social possibilities, and group interests have begun to form, they lend a new measure of necessity to the stabilized formative context. A world is constituted in which people know what their interests are because they take for granted all the things that make interest analysis possible. Each person becomes an informal version of the positivist social scientist, speaking the prose of a routinized social world while both invoking and concealing the institutional and imaginative framework he has come to accept unquestioningly.

An example drawn from the earlier historical narrative may help make the point. The narrative repeatedly used the pejorative label petty bourgeois to describe the single most significant set of alternatives to the institutional order that eventually became dominant in the North Atlantic countries. But this label has to be applied with many reservations. Old craft groups, new skilled workers, and small-scale proprietors, tradesmen, and farmers figured prominently in these movements. Yet the dominant self-images of these continuing insurgencies portrayed a resistance of the people against their bosses and rulers that overrode distinctions among corporate estates, classes, or segments of the work force. The subjective acceptance and construction of the gross divisions among petty bourgeois and workers did not fully take hold until the most serious early nineteenth century challenges to the ascendant institutional order had long been crushed. An additional wave of social agitation and institutional invention during the years immediately following World War I saw the development of both collective-bargaining and corporatist labor regimes. Only after these further agitations and inventions occurred did the distinction between the organized working class and the precarious or disenfranchised underclass become part of the way people understood the conflict of group interests.

An alternative approach to the hardening of group interests has to do with tangible compromises rather than intangible assumptions. It describes the development of a detailed set of explicit or implicit accommodations among social groups and of the habits and expectations, privileges and duties, that give each group a distinctive measure of access to the exercise and use of governmental power. The forging of deals among groups and between groups and governments may be no more than parallel refinements of the initial moment of context stabilization, when institutional arrangements cease to be challenged and rough compromises are worked out. But the involvement of the two refinements in each other makes a distinctive contribution to the second-order necessity of a system of group interests.

Public power becomes private privilege: governmental authority is actively enlisted in the defense of a particular allocation to groups of positions within and outside the social division of labor. At the same time, each group uses its overt or covert transactions with other groups — classes, communities, segments of the work force — to maintain a lien upon a parcel of governmental power. Neither the group bargains nor the correspondences between governmental access and factional privilege develop smoothly, free of reversals or ambiguities. Their effects cannot be counted on to harmonize. After a while, however, the two processes become entwined; each compensates for the fragility of the other. Jointly, they help shape both

the concerns and the weapons of collective rivalry. The petty fears and ambitions they encourage help keep other aspirations at bay.

So long as the social peace fails to be absolute – and it never really is absolute – people continue to fight both about their perceived interests and about the institutional and imaginative framework within which those interests acquire meaning. Groups join together in ways not determined by the preexisting context, and pass from the normal struggle over interests within a structure to fighting over an aspect of the structure itself. This circumstance represents the prototype of collective mobilization.

The relation of governmental power to private interests always remains at least partly up for grabs. In all but stateless societies the disturbance of the relation between governmental power, on one side, and the system of social roles and ranks, on the other, is an indispensable part of context-transforming conflict. In collective mobilization the controversy over interests extends into conflict over the institutional and imaginative framework for interest accommodation. Similarly, in this framework-disturbing struggle over the state, the effort to harness governmental power to different factional objectives merges into a quarrel over the precise way in which governmental power should be connected or opposed to a differential ordering of group privileges.

When, at the initial moment of stabilization, context-transforming conflict is contained or interrupted, collective mobilization turns into collective contractualism: the practice of partly bargained-out and partly imposed deals between groups. These deals soon begin to seem only marginally revisable. The broadest contest over the state changes into the politics of privilege: the jockeying to move slightly up or down the ladder of access to governmental favor. The key moment of second-order stabilization takes place when the politics of privilege and the politics of collective contractualism begin to fit tightly together and thereby acquire a steadying influence that either would lack if deprived of support by the other.

Thus, for example, the position the unionized and relatively privileged sector of the labor force has come to occupy in contemporary Western democracies depends upon a long series of events that combined deals with governments and accommodations with other groups. These events include: the defeat of the more radical segments of the labor movement, sometimes by violent military action; the self-definition of the labor movement as a defense of factional interests rather than as a campaign for the general reorganization of society; the emergence of a precarious understanding between union leaders and the owners or managers of large-scale enterprise; the acceptance by organized workers of basic distinctions among job categories, each category defined by relative reward and status as

well as by the content of work duties; the development of a negative solidarity against both the manager-owners and the excluded, unorganized, less advantaged segments of the work force; and active governmental involvement in the making of laws and policies that fostered the uneven organization of the working class and allowed the better organized segments of the labor force to inflate their organizational advantage by translating it into additional claims upon state power and public largesse. The key point is that from the content of the emergent institutional arrangements you could never have inferred the content of these deals and accommodations. They added something else: a new measure of naturalness and constraint.

Consider now how the hardening of a logic of group interests may generate opportunities for destabilization even as it helps stabilize a formative context. The basic reason why a logic of group interests creates transformative opportunities is that even the most routinized and closely defined assumptions about such interests suffers from persistent substantive and strategic ambiguities. These may be used to put recognized interests at odds with the established institutional and imaginative framework of social life.

The interests discriminated by such a set of assumptions are substantively ambiguous in the sense that they are never unified or detailed enough to provide the occupants of any given social station with a single uncontroversial view of their interests. Thus, similarly situated individuals and groups, or the same groups and individuals at different times, may act on distinct views of their interests. Together with the ordinary clash of interests, these uncertainties fill society with an endless petty agitation. Some conceptions of interest asserted in the midst of this Brownian motion of social life are harder to satisfy completely within the existing institutional and imaginative frameworks than others. Some therefore go farther than others in redefining current arrangements as constraints upon the fulfillment of recognized interests. There are, for example, any number of intermediate beliefs between the idea that industrial workers' sole interests are to secure their jobs, earn more money, and work less and the contrasting view that these and other interests can be fully assured only by a far-reaching reorganization of government and the economy.

Interests are ambiguous strategically as well as substantively. Alternative strategies, with very different implications for the wider social peace, promote even the most precisely defined group interest. Thus, for example, a group may pursue a narrowing tactic of preemptive security that treats all groups one rung down the ladder as rivals and adversaries. As a result, the prerogatives of the better placed group become hostage to the continued impoverishment of its immediate subordinates. Alternatively, the group may adopt a

policy of broadening alliances that enlists immediate subordinates and potential rivals in the common struggle against the higher-ups. The broadening and narrowing strategies may be relatively more or less feasible and relatively harder or easier to reconcile with the received view of group interests. But there is no general reason to believe that one of the two strategies will always be more effective than the other.

Yet the strategies have radically different implications for the perpetuation of interest conflict within a social framework as opposed to conflict about the framework itself. The narrowing strategy encourages each group to cling to its established position. It thereby reinstates the received premises about identities, possibilities, and interests, and leaves unchallenged the institutional and imaginative framework on which these assumptions have been overlaid. But the broadening strategy leads back from collective contractualism to collective mobilization. What begins as a tactical alliance ends up as an enlarged collective identity. What starts as a purely instrumental effort ultimately broadens the sense of possibility. For as conflict widens and intensifies, the militants awake to the constraints that current arrangements of power and production impose upon the fulfillment of their objectives. They may even begin to experiment with small-scale versions of alternative arrangements, established by their own initiative or by the parcels of governmental power they and their allies manage to win. The fusion of collective identities and the enlargement of the sense of social possibility in turn change the preexisting definitions of group interests. The new definitions of interests encourage new conflicts and new challenges to the established context. Thus, the strategic ambiguities of interests clarify, extend, and dramatize the substantive ambiguities discussed earlier.

Consider now the promise of destabilization as it appears from the perspective of the alternative description of this source of second-order necessity: the description that emphasizes the hardened merger of governmentally supported privilege with collective contractualism. Implicit or explicit group deals and privileged liens upon governmental power are no more precise in form and unequivocal in implication than are the more intangible assumptions about identities, possibilities, and interests. They will be resisted at the margin, and what is marginally contentious can soon become more fundamentally controversial. The attempt to revise the deals and redesign the liens shades into the defiance of the formative context. If institutional changes occur, they in turn may shake up the bargains and the privileges.

The arrow of destabilization can also move in the reverse direction, from localized institutional change to fighting over the translation of institutional reform into particular deals. The readjustment of a

formative context need not come from escalating conflict. It often results from more or less deliberate responses to an internal or foreign crisis. These changes from on top may be modest; but they are also common if only because formative contexts impose constraints upon the ability to seize practical productive opportunities. Thus, modest institutional reform, introduced reluctantly and belatedly to support a shift in the dominant organizational and technological style, shakes up the pattern of state-supported privilege and collective contractualism. It adds uncertainties and sparks conflicts that may be redirected to more transformative goals.

My earlier example of industrial reorganization also illustrates this form of reverse destabilization. The shift from mass production to a greater emphasis on the organizational and technological methods of vanguardist industry threatens the traditional form of unionization. It raises the question of how labor is to be empowered, whether by unionization or by alternative devices, and whether in ways that reaffirm the traditional contrasts between independent, skilled, organized workers, and underclass laborers, or in ways that override these contrasts. The new relations that need to be established among governments, business, and labor may ultimately be accomplished with a minimum of disturbance to established institutions and to the deals and privileges, the roles and hierarchies, these institutions support. But this triumph of conservative statecraft will nevertheless be conflict-ridden. The resulting disputes may serve as points of departure for wider struggles that can help change the basic forms of market economies and representative democracies.

*The Second-Order Necessity of Formative Contexts: The
Imagination of an Intelligible and Defensible Scheme of Human
Association*

Still another source of second-order necessity is the reinterpretation of a stabilized formative context as an articulate plan for human coexistence. Because the same theme is taken up again by the programmatic argument of Chapter 5, discussion of this additional link between stability and destabilization can be brief.

People come to define the restabilized arrangements and the rough compromises distinguishing the initial moment of context stabilization as a plan for coexistence in society. The plan exchanges the abstract and indeterminate idea of society for a particular model or set of models of human association. It establishes what relations among individuals can and should be like in different areas of social life.

The imaginative scheme bestows moral authority on a corrected or idealized version of current arrangements, justifying the strong

in the enjoyment of power and privilege and excusing the weak from the continuation of struggle. But its contribution to the intelligibility of a pacified social order is even more basic than its support for the moral authority of this order. The imaginative scheme does not merely tell the occupants of different social stations what to expect from one another. It also provides them with an elementary grammar of social action. It enables them to participate in complicated interdependencies, practices, and institutions without having to spell out all the assumptions about the ways people are expected to act, and the meanings that actions carry, in a particular domain of social existence. The imaginative plan of social life thereby keeps people from having to deal with one another as contract partners who share little common experience or allegiance and therefore try to regulate their dealings with as much prospective detail as possible. To make a social world in this way both authoritative and intelligible is part of what is implied in giving up the fight over the further reconstruction of a formative context.

The acceptance of this intelligibility and authority comes easily. For one thing, the disturbance that precedes the initial moment of stabilization is usually localized. Many practices and preconceptions remain unchallenged. Rather than inventing a new normative practice or even an entirely new imaginative scheme, people need only continue an old practice and revise an old scheme. For another thing, the reigning view of the realistic and desirable forms of human association does not merely redescribe brutal impositions and accidental compromises. It promises to hold up an improved standard of what things should be like, a standard that can be used to criticize as well as to justify, to soften as well as to strengthen. Though the inhabitants of a stabilized social world have surrendered, even their surrender is halfhearted. Onto the revised arrangements and beliefs that emerge from the new settlement they project all their vague, confused longings for happiness and empowerment. The authoritative image of civilization into which the truce lines and trophies of conflict have been recast becomes the vehicle for aspirations left unexamined, undeveloped, and unfulfilled.

The imaginative plan may take the form of a single, exemplary model of human association, meant to be realized with suitable adjustments throughout all areas of social practice. We usually find such a unitary, recurrent standard of sociability accepted in societies with very entrenched frameworks and in cultures that enshrine highly restrictive assumptions about the possible forms of personal and social experience. The characteristic content of this one-model scheme is the patron-client ideal that seeks to combine, in the same relations, practical exchange, communal loyalty, and outright subjugation.

In societies less submissive to the constraints of false necessity the

dominant ways of imagining the possible and desirable forms of human association characteristically assign different models of human coexistence to distinct realms of social practice. Thus, in the late twentieth century North Atlantic countries whose formative contexts I have earlier studied, people thought of practical exchange, communal loyalties, and nonreciprocal power as mutually repellent forms of experience. They credited an ideal of private community, meant to be realized in the life of family and friendship; an ideal of democratic participation and accountability, addressed to the organization of government and the exercise of citizenship; and an amalgam of voluntary contract and impersonal technical hierarchy or coordination, suited to the practical world of work and exchange. Moreover, they implicitly identified each of these ideals with particular practices and institutions. Thus, people meant by democracy not only the ill-defined aspirations that their slogans and speculative theories proclaimed but a historically unique way of organizing governments and partisan conflict.

The relation of legal doctrine to beliefs about the possible and desirable forms of human association is instructive. In societies less cracked open to politics legal doctrine can openly refer to a background scheme of models of human association, which are alleged to be inscribed in the permanent requirements of human nature and social order when they are not also mandated by divine authority. But in societies that have moved farther toward disentanglement and antinaturalistic skepticism, such a style of legal doctrine becomes unacceptable. For the explicit invocation of such overarching standards of possible and desirable human association is now feared to embroil the legal analyst in the open-ended controversies of the ideologue or the propagandist. It therefore threatens to reopen the conflict over the basic terms of social life. Under these circumstances, legal analysis can neither avow nor avoid relying upon such assumptions about the possible and desirable forms of human association. For lawyers cannot relinquish such assumptions without either presenting the law as merely an expression of interest-group or class conflict or attempting to keep legal reasoning very close to narrow precedent and narrow construction. Those who would use legal doctrine to give the social order the gloss of a higher-order rationality now face a more formidable obstacle.*

The imaginative scheme of models of possible and desirable association also lives, in a looser and messier form, in popular consciousness. The classes and communities that make up society give their own distinctive twists to the dominant vision of possible and

* See *The Critical Legal Studies Movement*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1986.

desirable human association. Much in their professed ideas or implicit assumptions about what relations among people should be like in different realms of social existence may be incompatible with the beliefs of other groups or with the legal, moral, and partisan discourse of the wealthy and the powerful. But unless the country is ruled by a conquest elite alien to the native inhabitants, or unless insulated and antagonistic groups coexist with an imposed structure, we can expect to find a more subtle and contradictory imaginative scheme – or rather a series of overlapping and analogous schemes. The difference between the informal vision of authoritative models of human coexistence and the vision presupposed by elite discourses such as legal doctrine usually resembles the relation of a natural language to an impoverished computer language. Yet the substantive themes of the richer language will carry over, truncated and biased, into the poorer counterpart.

Whether the imaginative scheme is unitary or pluralistic and whether it takes its more elitist and systematic or more popular and contradictory forms, it exercises a retrospective stabilizing influence upon a social order. Any marked deviation by an individual from social norms begins to appear selfish and antisocial whatever its actual motives. Any conflict that defies the scheme seems to threaten civilization itself, if not in the large then in the small, in the detailed pieties by which people evaluate one another and in the implicit assumptions that sustain trust and permit communication.

But, like its counterparts, such a stabilizing force generates destabilizing opportunities. To show how these opportunities arise, take an imaginative ordering of social life at its clearest and most coherent, as it can be found in the elite discourses of legal doctrine or speculative moral and programmatic controversy. Ideal images of human association can always be plausibly interpreted in different ways. These ambiguities remain concealed and contained so long as each such image is represented by distinctive practices or institutions in well-defined areas of social life. The amalgam of ideal understandings, representative practices, and domains of application supports the sense of assurance.

But there is always at least a residual uncertainty about the practical forms that properly represent a model of association and the exact domain of social practice in which it can realistically and suitably be applied. Moreover, different classes, communities, and movements of opinion believe themselves to have an interest in seeing these marginal uncertainties resolved in some ways rather than others. Thus, people quarrel about the resolution of the ambiguities. They quarrel by the crude and open methods of factional or class rivalry and in the refined, secluded forms of legal and philosophical controversy.

This small-time bickering can escalate, either because it simply gets out of hand or because a transformative movement deliberately exploits and aggravates it. The result is to disturb the apparent fit among the authoritative images of coexistence, their practical representations, and their areas of application. Such disturbances force people to choose among different interpretations of the antecedent, largely implicit ideals of human association. Some interpretations fit with the current institutional order and reaffirm the dominant models of human coexistence; but others can inspire challenges to the institutional order and begin to unravel the imaginative scheme. For the meanings we confer on these received and enacted conceptions of sociability are never fully exhausted by the practices and institutions that stand for them in particular compartments of social life. Beliefs about how people ought to deal with one another in particular areas of society are more than readily applicable dogmas. They also serve as bearers of ill-defined aspirations for empowerment and mutual acceptance. They are therefore instruments of a mental reservation by which people who seem to have surrendered unreservedly to a particular institutional and imaginative framework continue to nurture a measure of secret independence and unfulfilled yearning. Two analytically distinct but ordinarily overlapping processes can play out this potential ambivalence in the relation of a scheme of authoritative models of association to a stabilized formative context.

First, there are horizontal conflicts. Uncertainty and disagreements always persist about the exact range of social practice to which different models of human coexistence should apply. The great amount of practical and imaginative material resisting assimilation to the formative context adds to the confusion. The resulting border disputes – conflicts over where to draw the line between different ideals and between the domains of social life to which they apply – become topics of speculative moral and ideological debates or of factional conflicts and social experiments. Such border disputes produce a constant pushing and shoving of familiar ideals onto slightly unfamiliar social territory. As such projections or displacements multiply, people begin to disagree about the practical forms that a given image of human association should assume when enacted in an area of social practice from which it has hitherto been excluded. This disagreement exposes the hidden ambiguities of the traditional models and the multiplicity of framework-preserving and framework-transforming uses to which they may be put.

Consider, for example, the implications of attempting to extend the democratic ideal into industrial organization. Whatever democracy may mean in this setting it cannot mean carrying on with the traditional forms of the tripartite state or with the current

mechanisms of democratic representation and accountability. If industrial democracy is interpreted to mean a limited level of worker participation in business decisions it may be accommodated without major disturbance to the established institutional and imaginative framework. Suppose, however, it is understood to require a shift in the basic form of capital allocation and of control over investment decisions. It will then also shake up the imaginative vision that contrasts an area reserved for democratic principles with a realm governed by voluntary contract and technical hierarchy. This imaginative disturbance may radiate outward, challenging every part of the dominant vision of social proprieties and possibilities.

There are vertical as well as horizontal conflicts. Even within the core area of social practice traditionally assigned to a particular model of human association, discrepancies and doubts will arise about its appropriate practical form. The marginal conflicts that seize on these disharmonies may be further aggravated by the sense that all the established practical realizations of the ideal fail to do it justice, that they betray its promise. There is always an indefinite penumbra of aspiration that intimates more – more by way of empowerment or solidarity – than can be found in public dogma and established practice. Such variations and tensions feed conflict. And the conflict once again reveals the ambiguities of the received models of sociability and demonstrates their ambivalent relation to the institutional arrangements they ordinarily help justify.

Thus, in the contemporary industrial democracies the blend of technical hierarchy and voluntary contract takes different forms in sectors of the economy that either strengthen or soften the contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities. Widely recognized moral assumptions identify personal subjugation as the exemplary social evil. Neither individual and collective contract nor alleged technical necessity suffice to lift the experienced burden of subjugation from the experience of work in the areas of the economy that most starkly contrast task definers and task executors. Workers continue to suffer strongly felt experiences of powerlessness and humiliation. The vanguard sectors of the economy offer a visible though limited example of an alternative style of work organization. Radical critics have argued that this alternative can be extended and generalized through much of the economy. But extension and generalization cannot ultimately succeed without a series of cumulative changes in the organization of power and production. Nor, once realized, can they be reconciled with ruling beliefs about the proper contrast between the domain of representative democracy and the realm of contract and technical hierarchy.

The Escalation of Conflict: The Unavailability of Necessary and Sufficient Conditions

The main theme of the preceding discussion has been the tightness of the link between stabilization and destabilization, the transformative opportunities generated by the very forces that impart a retrospective, second-order necessity to a stabilized context. An endless series of petty quarrels, a permanent Brownian motion, keep even the most pacified social world in contained but irrepressible agitation. The deep-structure social theorist dismisses these low-level disturbances as trivial, identifying in them either a random and unproductive strife or a confirmation of the lawlike routines of an established social order. He sees a basic discontinuity between these controversies and the conflicts that accompany the replacement of one order by another. The positivist social scientist, on the contrary, exalts this constant bickering as the true stuff of social life: the exercise of problem solving and interest accommodation that plays so large a role in his understanding of society. But because he systematically disregards or avoids the distinction between routines and frameworks and the influence of frameworks and framework revision on the problems that chiefly concern him, he cannot see the Brownian motion for what it is. He cannot recognize the nature and extent of its transformative promise or achieve a comprehensive and unified view of its many forms.

The small-scale, contained fighting engendered by each form of second-order necessity may escalate at any time. The subjective sign of escalation is the growing intensity of the fighting. The more tangible, external sign is the widening scope of the conflict: both by the involvement of more groups in the struggle and by the concern with an ever broader range of issues. The special meaning of escalation, however, is the step-by-step passage from context-preserving to context-transforming conflicts. The quarrels about practical adjustments, collective identities, and moral ideals that take the framework for granted pass into struggles that bring the framework into question.

The escalation may be the work of a movement that sees its opportunity in the extension of petty bickering. Or it may be the involuntary consequence of conflicts getting out of hand. In this event, the expanded struggle shows its transformative significance only retrospectively. Much more often, foresight and accident combine to cause escalation.

A critic may object that we have explained little until we have established the necessary and sufficient conditions for escalation. But a corollary of one major thesis of this book is that we cannot draw up such a list of necessary and sufficient conditions. The problem

does not result merely from a limited and remediable defect in our knowledge, as if we could approach the desired outcome by thinking a little harder or discovering a little more. The facts about social reality and social change condemn this search to disappointment. To believe in the existence of such a list, or in the possibility of gradually revealing it, we have to believe in something that at least resembles deep-structure social theory. We have to believe that context change, and therefore also context selection, are governed by lawlike constraints or developmental tendencies. (The polemic against the style of explanation by necessary and sufficient conditions continues, in different form, later in this account of society making.)

Instead of necessary and sufficient conditions, the view presented here recognizes that some circumstances regularly encourage escalation while others discourage it. Prominent among the escalation-favoring circumstances are middle-level crises, such as those provoked by the need to reform basic institutional arrangements in response to military and economic rivalry from abroad or to shifts in the relative size and wealth of different sectors of the population. A skillful and lucky transformative practice, however, may cause escalation to take place even in the absence of such favoring conditions. Conversely, the most favorable opportunity may be squandered. Most importantly, the antecedent institutions and preconceptions and the schemes of social division and hierarchy they support never predetermine the outcome of escalating conflict, any more than they predetermine its occurrence or scope. The underdetermined choice of trajectories by different groups and governments and the relative insight or illusion, skill or ineptitude, with which people pursue these chosen trajectories help shape the final result. (The programmatic argument of Chapter 5 considers the favoring and disfavoring circumstances of escalation. This consideration establishes one of many links between the explanatory and programmatic ideas of *False Necessity*.)

Convinced determinists may resist this defense of the refusal to describe the necessary and sufficient conditions for the extension of conflict and the transformative use of the Brownian motion. They may argue that when we look more closely we always find causes that explain the occurrence, scope, and outcome of escalation, causes that range from the momentary situation of a society to the details of individual biography. They may even insist that all these causes connect, at least from the idealized standpoint of a Laplacean mind. Nothing in this or any other part of the explanatory argument of *False Necessity* depends on the refutation of such determinists. It is unnecessary to take a position with respect to their claims. The narrower aim of the approach to context change taken here is to free social explanation from the assumptions of both deep-structure

analysis and conventional social science: to respect the distinction between structure and routine while denying that the identity, actualization, or succession of formative contexts is governed by higher-order laws or by deep-seated economic, psychological, and organizational constraints.

Of course, this view of context change would lose much of its authority if our subjective experience of reconstructive freedom were illusory (though remember that there is always the habitual hedge of the speculative monist, who holds that phenomenal distinctions are only *ultimately* illusory). But it is no part of this argument to deal with the metaphysical conundrums of free will and determinism and to show in precisely what sense the experience of freedom harmonizes with the practice of causal explanation. We already do something to vindicate our reconstructive powers when we loosen the link between our interest in the generality of our social explanations and the habit of portraying ourselves as the passive objects of social worlds. We do even better when we are able to show that such worlds differ radically in the constraints they impose upon their own remaking.

The Brownian motion of social life – the emergence of destabilizing opportunity out of stabilizing methods – provides the occasion for influences that may shape long-term context change. These influences, working in concert or in opposition, account for a remarkable possibility. Contexts may change in quality as well as content. They vary in the force with which they imprison the people who move within them. The discussion now turns to the sources of possible long-term, directional change.

NEGATIVE CAPABILITY

The Core Idea

The very devices that stabilize formative contexts endlessly produce the occasions and instruments of destabilization. The escalation of framework-preserving routines into framework-transforming conflicts creates an opportunity for two great influences upon context making. These influences differ from the mechanisms of stability and destabilization just discussed in that they account for the *possibility* of cumulative context change in a certain direction, not just for the precariousness of every established order. In particular, they give us the prospect of changing over time the quality as well as the content of our formative institutional and imaginative structures: the relation of these structures to our structure-revising capabilities. These long-term influences upon context change share with the mechanisms of stability and destabilization the power to present the transformative will with opportunities as much as with constraints. They certify

that no ultimate incompatibility holds between the radical project and the nature of social reality.

Consider what would happen if such long-term influences did not exist and if we were left with only the mechanisms of stability and destabilization and with an open list of circumstances that either favor or discourage the escalation of framework-preserving conflict. We would have trouble explaining how or why the component elements of each formative context stick together and reinforce one another. For our ideas about the internal constitution of social orders are always just the reverse side of our beliefs about how such orders change. We might even find it hard to resist the slide into positivist social science, with its disregard for the significance of the distinction between framework and routine and its picture of social life as a series of exercises in interest accommodation and problem solving.

If we nevertheless managed to rescue the distinction between the forming structure and the formed routines, we would have no basis for believing in selective constraints upon the replacement or recombination of the elements composing a formative context. Thus, we might be drawn to a truncated version of deep-structure social theory, seeing the institutional and imaginative frameworks of social life as indivisible but ultimately arbitrary – there, but there for no good reason. If in turn we succeeded in avoiding this conclusion we would still have no reason to hope to become more fully the masters of the social orders that we construct. History would be a procession of conditional social worlds: each a law unto itself, each conditional in the same sense as the others. The radical project would therefore be based upon an illusion, at least if it is true that the disengagement of social life from structures of dependence and domination requires that no major aspect of social organization remain shielded against challenge and conflict.

This section is devoted to the most controversial of the two long-run influences upon context change, which is also the influence most directly relevant to the attempt to change the relation between freedom and structure. Formative contexts and the extended sets of arrangements and preconceptions that constitute them vary with respect to the quality I called disentanglement, denaturalization, or emancipation from false necessity. This quality has two aspects; that these aspects are connected is an empirical claim.

One aspect of disentanglement is the degree to which a formative context can be challenged in the midst of ordinary social life. A structure is entrenched or naturalized to the extent that it prevents such challenge, and it is disentrenched or denaturalized insofar as it facilitates the challenge. On an equivalent definition, disentanglement implies a shortening of the distance to traverse before our context-preserving activities can become context-transforming ac-

tivities. It is the relative facility with which we can interrupt the oscillation between the narcoleptic routines and the revolutionary interludes of history and achieve conscious mastery in the midst of civic peace. Moreover, a more disentranced structure designs this greater opportunity for revision into the very activities on which its reproduction depends.

The other aspect of disentrancement is the relative disengagement of our practical and passionate dealings from a preexisting structure of roles and hierarchies. In this sense, disentrancement is the diminishment of the influence that the social station of the individual – of the place he occupies in the contrast of categories, classes, communities, and genders – exercises over his life chances and experiences. It is the lifting of the grid of social division and ranking from our practical and passionate relations to one another.

The connection between the two sides of denaturalization is far from self-evident. There are no scripts for particular social roles and ranks until the institutional and imaginative assumptions that define a particular version of social life become secure. Such assumptions cannot in turn become secure unless they provide for their own relative immunity to attack. They do so by forming routines – of economic exchange, factional conflict, and normative controversy – that take established institutions and preconceptions for granted. Earlier discussion has emphasized that the contrast between stabilizing and destabilizing activities can never be absolute. The concept of disentrancement implies that the contrast is variable as well as relative.

These clarifications help introduce the main thesis of this part of the view of context making. Disentrancement of formative contexts provides societies with a range of material and intangible advantages, all the way from the encouragement of the development of productive capabilities to the exercise of a more conscious mastery over social circumstance. In fact, all the varieties of individual and collective empowerment seem to be connected in one way or another with the mastery the concept of disentrancement or denaturalization describes. I call these varieties of empowerment “negative capability” when considering them in relation to the context change that makes them possible. Thus, we may use the poet’s turn of phrase to label the empowerment that arises from the denial of whatever in our contexts delivers us over to a fixed scheme of division and hierarchy and to an enforced choice between routine and rebellion.

It should already be clear from the definition of disentrancement that the route to negative capability is not a leap into anarchy, permanent flux, or mere indefiniteness. The institutional and imaginative frameworks that strengthen our negative capability are no less particular and no less capable of being described than frameworks rel-

atively lower on the scale of disentanglement. Thus, for example, the actual institutions and guiding doctrines of the liberal bourgeois democracies are less entrenched and more favorable to negative capability than the arrangements and dogmas of the European absolutist monarchies they succeeded. The hypothetical institutions and doctrines of the empowered democracy described by the later programmatic arguments of this book are in turn just as distinctive as the versions of representative democracy and market economy they are intended to replace.

To be sure, the less entrenched structures are by definition more open to revision in the midst of ordinary social life. But they are not therefore more unstable, except in the very special sense in which a circumstance of frequent, partial adjustments can be said to be more unstable than a situation of rigid structures, periodically disrupted by sudden, major transformations. Rigidity is not stability, nor does the increased transparency and revisability of our practices mean we will want constantly to revise them. The liberal bourgeois democracies have been no less stable – though stable in a different sense – than the absolutist monarchies before them. Moreover, because disentanglement involves a weakening of the mechanisms of dependence and domination, ordinary working men and women have been more rather than less secure in these democracies.

The attractions of negative capability account for the possibility of a cumulative movement toward greater disentanglement. In some instances this movement may result from a more or less deliberate striving for the advantages of denaturalization. In other instances the movement may be explained by a social counterpart to Darwinian natural selection: societies achieving the advantages of greater disentanglement are that much more likely to survive in the economic and ideological struggle with their rivals, and their styles of organization and vision are therefore also that much more likely to proliferate. But by far the most common way in which the advantages of disentanglement account for the emergence and persistence of more denaturalized formative contexts does not fit into either the intentionalist or the Darwinian mold. This most common and distinctive form of agency requires special analysis.

The idea of negative capability as an influence represents a frankly functionalist or ideological element in the theory of context making. The appearance and propagation of less entrenched institutional and imaginative orders is explained by the consequences they may produce – the development of negative capability. But qualifications, soon to be discussed, diminish the functionalist character of this idea. For one thing, countervailing forces may override the attractions of negative capability. The most important of these is the ability of coercive surplus extraction, based on relatively more entrenched or-

ders and on the hierarchies they sustain, to serve as a rival basis – and in certain circumstances even a stronger basis – for the development of productive or destructive capabilities. Moreover, the forms of empowerment summarized under the heading “negative capability” can advance through alternative packages of institutional arrangements. Some alternatives jeopardize other noneconomic varieties of empowerment. The most important consequence of such qualifications is that every advance toward greater negative capability is precarious and reversible, not just susceptible to being deflected into a minor and temporary epicycle.

The influence of negative capability operates on the institutional and imaginative materials generated by particular historical sequences of context making. These sequences in turn constrain only loosely and fitfully our capacities of resistance and invention. Thus, there is no limited list of institutional systems that constitute the necessary vehicles of any given level of negative capability. To speak of an advance in negative capability is not to specify the particular institutional and imaginative forms the advance must take. Nor does a cumulative movement toward less naturalistic orders imply any preestablished evolutionary sequence of institutional systems and social dogmas awaiting a chance to advance to the next step.

When you add up all these qualifications, the result is not to take back the thesis about negative capability but, rather, to detach the thesis from the prejudices of evolutionary, deep-structure social analysis. What emerges is the conception of a possible progression, which presents the radical project with its chance. The ideas that make sense of the notion of a possible move toward more revisable and hierarchy-subverting structures run together with the ideas that justify a commitment to the radical project. For the thesis of negative capability has a prominent role in a view of the conditions of human empowerment and of the means by which we may limit more successfully the part played by dependence and depersonalization in our dealings with one another.

From the vantage point of this preliminary statement, look back once again to the polemical genealogy in the first part of this chapter. Emerging economic, legal, and governmental institutions were all less naturalistic than the arrangements they replaced. The advantages they made available may help explain their appearance and success. Further analysis must specify the mechanisms by which these advantageous consequences helped bring more denaturalized contexts into being.

The institutional and imaginative materials with which such transformations worked were unique to European history. But the solutions developed out of such materials proved exemplary. The dominant institutional and imaginative orders of the world-

conquering Western powers appeared as the setting for a quantum leap in the development of economic and military capabilities. They also provided a basis for a relatively greater emancipation of communal life and individual self-expression from preexisting roles and hierarchies. No wonder that conquest often proved unnecessary to spread European arrangements. Reforming elites anxious to secure similar benefits for themselves and their countries accomplished what conquerors did not. It took time to discover that such benefits could be given institutional and imaginative foundations radically different from the formative contexts of the pioneering Western countries. But the classic European social theorists wrote at a time when these alternative possibilities had not yet become apparent. They were therefore tempted to misunderstand the triumphant European settlements as the necessary form of a stage in world history.

Remember also that these prevalent European solutions were far from secure or self-evident within the European world itself. Throughout the history of their development they had to accommodate to rival institutional ideas. In fact, the most significant rival – the alternative whose economic aspect I have been calling petty commodity production – might well have gone farther than the now dominant economic and governmental arrangements in promoting negative capability. But to make their cause practicable, the advocates of the petty bourgeois alternative would have had to find new ways to organize representative democracies and market economies.

From this initial exposition it should already be clear that the thesis about negative capability requires two key analytical refinements. The first is to distinguish the varieties of empowerment the idea of negative capability encompasses and to show how each aspect of empowerment depends on the invention of more disentranced, revisable institutions. The second refinement is to solve the problem of agency. We must describe how the ability of certain arrangements to encourage an advance in negative capability helps cause their emergence and persistence. We need to understand the mechanisms by which the functional consequence or advantage becomes an explanatory cause.

The Practical Advantages of Disentrenchment

The most tangible instance of negative capability is the development of the productive and destructive powers of society. The idea of a connection between institutional disentrenchment and practical empowerment merely appropriates and generalizes a familiar belief about requirements of practical progress. The narrower and relatively precise version of this idea is the thesis that economic rationality or efficiency requires the freedom to combine and substitute to best

advantage the factors of production. The relatively broader and vaguer form of the notion is the idea that maximum flexibility serves practical success.

Our practical activities are opportunistic. They require the constant substitution of resources and the revision of technical and organizational means in the light of changing circumstances. To be sure, they also demand a framework of shared understandings and practices so that not everything has to be constantly reinvented or fought over. But to ensure worldly success we must be able to revise this framework in the light of emergent practical opportunities. We must not allow it to predetermine the way we combine with one another and with machines in our joint practical endeavors. More specifically, the keynote of practical reason and of rationalized collective labor is the continuous interplay between the definition of ends and the choice of means, the setting of tasks and the operational activities designed to carry them out. The organization of human labor and its coordination with the material and technical resources at its disposal should become a visible image of practical reason. Conversely, the idea of practical reason translates a view of flexible, self-correcting teamwork into a conception of individual mental activity. In order to make our practical collaborative ventures a more faithful image of practical reason, we must weaken the influence of preestablished social roles and hierarchies upon the relations among co-workers. We must not allow fixed rules to predetermine the ways in which the holders of particular jobs, or the members of particular communities or ranks, may deal with one another. We must crack the routines of practical life open to the recombinational activity of practical reason. The same changes that enable a formative institutional and imaginative context to loosen the hold of social roles and hierarchies also diminish the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-transforming conflict.

Consider from another angle the link between disentanglement and the development of practical productive and destructive capabilities. The organizational style of economic or military teams limits the full development and exploitation of a technological capability. The broader institutional setting of governments and economies in turn constrains the organization of the work group. The work team cannot be flexible unless its internal life comes partly out from under the influence of a scheme of social stations. Practical empowerment requires institutions and preconceptions that permanently weaken social divisions and diminish the arbitrary, recalcitrant just-there-ness of our social orders.

Here is a typical, narrowly focused example. The decades preceding the French Revolution saw the development of lighter and more accurate artillery pieces. The armies of revolutionary France were

able to take the fullest advantage of these new weapons by innovating in battle tactics and troop deployment. The dense military formations then in use favored rigid forward marching procedures. Such units could not deploy on the field with the flexibility needed to take maximum advantage of potential combinations of infantry and light artillery. At the same time traditional military formations offered an easy target for the more accurate guns, manned by more flexible adversaries.

The prerevolutionary social situation influenced the preferred tactics and deployments of the prerevolutionary armies. In an army like the German one, of sullen serfs and near serfs, pressed into dynastic wars whose aims they did not share or even understand and lacking nationalist ardor, officers feared their men would break and run away as the moment of battle approached. Often, a row of special soldiers with stretched bayonets had to walk at the back of each unit, literally propping forward the reluctant warriors. The armies of revolutionary France found it relatively easy to adopt thinner formations and more supple tactical procedures. They had better reason to count on the discretion and loyalty of soldiers who were called to defend a national and popular revolution beleaguered by absolutist monarchies.

Thus, successful use of the new technological opportunity required a new organizational style. The institutional and spiritual inventions on which the style depended convinced the soldiery that the army belonged to the nation and that the nation did not just belong to privileged elites. Multiply this particular example many times over, to cover other aspects of military technology, organization, and strategy, and you can begin to see that the armies of revolutionary and Napoleonic France had at least one major advantage in their wars with their Continental adversaries.

The story does not end here. The enemies of France could not exploit the new technological and tactical opportunities presented by such developments as the improved artillery pieces without changing the institutional form of the state and the relation of the ruling and possessing elites to the working people. But France's rivals did not need to change the *ancien régime* as much or as violently as the French revolutionists had set out to do. They required only the measure of popular reform needed to justify a sense of national community (even right-wing nationalism had to make concessions to egalitarianism) and to enlarge the influence of merit-based recruitment and promotion in military and governmental organization. In the age of Stein and Hardenberg, the Prussian military reformers demonstrated what successful conservative reformers rediscover: that they can have their cake and eat it too. They can reconcile the measure of institutional disentanglement needed to take advantage of current technological and organizational opportunities with a suitable version

of the present plan of social division and hierarchy. The jeopardized elites fail when they feel compelled to choose between trying to reproduce a foreign institutional example and rejecting reform outright, for fear it may inevitably shake the established social order to the ground. Thus, for example, the Mamluk state in Egypt lost its ability to resist Ottoman attack when it refused to shift its military emphasis from cavalry to armed infantry. As an alien, corporately organized ruling class, the Mamluks (or, rather, the Mamluk leaders) felt unable to disengage their apparatus of rule and their collective identity from a cavalry-based military organization.

Some may object that the example of the light artillery pieces lacks broader significance. Other productive or destructive faculties might not make any demands on the broader institutional and social environment. Such powers might even require more rigidity and hierarchy rather than more flexibility and equality. The thesis of negative capability in the practical domain does indeed presuppose a belief in the possible preeminence of cumulative disentanglement as an enabling social condition of the development of practical capabilities. A defensible version of the thesis of negative capability must recognize that the coercive extraction of resources and manpower, supported by more entrenched contexts and more rigid roles and hierarchies, can provide an alternative basis for the development of productive or destructive forces. The question is whether this entrenchment-based alternative can be given its due weight within a theory that nevertheless continues to see in cumulative disentanglement at least a possible axis of practical progress.

Institutional arrangements that help reproduce rigid roles and hierarchies can certainly serve as a basis for coercive surplus extraction. Hierarchical duties, enforced and sanctified by challenge-resistant institutions and arrangements, encourage the near automatic transfer of material and manpower resources to limited elites. This device has the formidable practical advantage of making the confiscation of resources appear to be the unavoidable implication of a moral or natural order rather than a result of will and conflict. After all, the human sense of institutional entrenchment is to make the order of social life appear more like a natural fact than like a political artifact. In the relatively more entrenched order the concentration of claims to capital and labor is that much more likely to be taken for granted and that much less likely to be disturbed by threats, deals, and challenges. But the cost is to limit the capacity of experimenting with combinations of resources, machines, and labor and with alternative forms of exchange and production.

Surely in certain historical situations the practical advantages of disentanglement fall below the practical benefits of coercive surplus extraction. But what are these situations? They seem to be ones in

which the creation of a surplus of labor and capital over current consumption remains the overriding practical problem of society, towering over the problems of technological innovation and organizational flexibility.

You may be tempted to say that such is precisely the condition of all societies, at least until they achieve prodigious wealth and come close to eliminating economic scarcity. But in fact it seems to be the circumstance only of very poor countries – of countries poorer than the more prosperous agrarian-bureaucratic empires of world history or than early modern European nations before the onset of the industrial revolution. Economists and historians have repeatedly shown how hard it is to explain sudden surges in productive output and productivity – such as the series of events we call the industrial revolution – by reference to differences in social-savings rates. Often, both the general rate of saving and the amount of surplus coercively appropriated by economic or governmental elites seem to have been even higher in economically stagnant societies than in countries making a quantum leap in their productive capabilities. The main point about nineteenth-century England in contrast to, say, Ch'ing China, is not that the English saved or skimmed off more than the Chinese but that they used resources, performed activities, ran organizations, and recombined factors of production in different ways. The need for surplus extraction does not disappear but becomes subsidiary to the manner of use.

We have an additional reason to think that the practical advantages of entrenchment are more limited than they may at first appear. Not all coercive surplus extraction depends upon rigid social roles and hierarchies, nor is the route to emancipation from false necessity always uncoercive. The opening of social life to practical experimentation may occur through consensual, decentralized, and participatory methods or through centralized command and coercion. The institutions that make this opening possible may advance toward a radical democracy that destroys privileged holds upon the resources for society making. But such institutions may also move toward a mobilizational dictatorship that relentlessly subjects social life to plans imposed by a central authority, willing and able to recombine people and resources. From the narrow standpoint of encouraging the development of practical capabilities, the risk of the consensual path is that decentralized, participatory claims will harden into a system of vested rights that narrows the area of social life open to practical innovation. From the same limited perspective the risk of the dictatorial route is that the willingness to exploit practical productive opportunities will be sacrificed to the power interests of the central authorities.

A mobilizational despotism should not be mistaken for an entrenched order of division and hierarchy, although each of the two

may serve as a basis for the development of practical capabilities and although many societies in the age of mass politics have regularly combined aspects of both. The mobilizational dictatorship reaches for negative capability through coercive means. It therefore attempts to crush all intermediate corporate bodies, all independently organized social ranks, communities, and local governments. Its distinctive economic ambition is not merely to extract a surplus but to recombine and reorganize and to keep reorganizing and recombining. Long ago social theorists such as Tocqueville understood that a new breed of democracies and despotisms shared both a hostility to stable orders of social division and hierarchy and a willingness to treat social relations as subjects for practical experiment. Modern planning dictatorships characteristically engage in a quest for greater negative capability. Forced recombination rather than naturalistic entrenchment is their thing. Once we understand their distinctiveness the historical role of the search for practical progress through entrenchment begins to look much more limited.

Compare the thesis of negative capability to the Marxist thesis about class society and the development of the productive forces. The sequence of modes of production depicted by Marxism portrays all historical societies as driven forward by the logic of coercive surplus extraction based upon class hierarchies and upon the institutionally defined relations of production that such hierarchies require. Primitive communism is egalitarian. But under primitive communism people remain enslaved to both material scarcity and unreflective tradition. Mankind must undergo the immense, painful detour of class society and class conflict before it can attain through communism a higher because freer form of the equality it possessed under primitive communism.

Yet the evolutionary scheme of historical materialism includes a significant minor theme that we can reinterpret as a special case of the thesis of negative capability. The sequence of modes of production is also a series of steps toward the assertion of the free-floating, unitary, universal quality of labor. The divisions and hierarchies of class society mask and constrain this quality. Thus, though capitalism may aggravate many aspects of class oppression and working-class misery, it also reveals more clearly than its predecessor modes of production the interchangeable character of all human labor power. The despotism of capital may take charge of the modern factory. But this despotism tears down barriers to the free recombination of men and machines. At the same time the primacy of exchange values over use values in the sphere of circulation, combined with the relentless treatment of labor as a commodity, emphasizes the convertibility of all forms of productive activity into all other forms.

In Marx's writings these ideas, so close to the thesis of negative

capability, remain imprisoned within an evolutionary variant of deep-structure social theory. Moreover, Marx fails to draw the distinction between coercive surplus extraction, based upon entrenched hierarchies, and experimental recombination, premised on institutional disentanglement. The absence of any counterpart to this distinction is, to use the language of his followers, no accident. For historical materialism sacrifices the insight into negative capability to the belief that the emergence of communism represents the single decisive and definitive turn from necessity to freedom.

A Comparative Historical Perspective on the Thesis of Negative Capability

Consider how this discussion of the development of the economic aspects of negative capability relates to the character of the institutional arrangements whose emergence the earlier schematic narrative studied. The new forms of agrarian and industrial organization exhibited aspects of coercive surplus extraction. The legal rights and governmental institutions sustaining them made possible a basic continuity of the elites. In their historical setting, the engrossment of leaseholds and the factory system represented advances in the degree of command over large pools of land, capital, and labor that could be exercised by large-scale enterprises.

However, once you locate these organizational shifts in a broader comparative-historical background it becomes clear that the refinement of coercive command was only part of the story. The new coercive arrangements did not merely embody new forms of entrenchment. They also reflected more disentranced arrangements. Agrarian concentration was a qualitative as well as a quantitative process: the single, consolidated right to a piece of land replaced the coexistence of many claims, vested in different rightholders. If the quantitative side of this shift contributed to the development of the factory system by making more labor available, the qualitative side contributed by helping destroy the constraints of clientelistic relations between social superiors and subalterns. The qualitative shift took place even where the quantitative change remained modest: in the regions where smallholding and small-scale manufacturing achieved their greatest vitality.

I have emphasized that the new system of contract and property rights coexisted first with statist prerogatives, specific to a particular social rank or corporate body, and then, increasingly, with methods of organizational discipline and surveillance that were justified in the name of technical necessity. The classical system of private rights allowed the persistence of entrenchment-based coercive surplus extraction. The latter-day disciplinary techniques, on the contrary,

stood for coercive forms of practical experiment and disentanglement. The universalistic system of property and contract rights provided a legal structure for recombining resources, people, and practices, even though it was worked out and compromised in ways that remained biased toward an authoritarian contrast between task definers and task executors. The early liberal and utilitarian propagandists of the new order were correct to see a promise of free social experimentation in the ascendancy of the new system of universalistic rights. Their mistake was to sanctify the particular form and content of these rights and to misunderstand the compromises that qualified and even inverted the real social meaning of the entitlements.

Every major aspect of early modern European society confirms the reality of this heightened availability of social life to willful experimentation. The early factory was not only an organization for controlling workers; it was also a method for rearranging people and machines in ways not predetermined by any social script. You can say the same, on a larger scale, when you look beyond the early factory to the society in which it appeared. The absolutist monarchies of the period, and the people who staffed the emerging central governments, may seem to have been only barely capable of acting with a measure of independence from landowning or mercantile elites. Yet when you compare these states to the central governments of the major agrarian-bureaucratic states of past history, you see that the new Western regimes had become immensely less vulnerable to the crises that periodically fragmented the agrarian bureaucratic empires and delivered disintegrated polities and economies into the hands of warlords and magnates. The new Western states were better able to maintain a direct fiscal and military link to smallholders and small-scale traders and manufacturers. These low-level producers preserved their independence more successfully. The commercialized agrarian economy became less prone to the recurrent catastrophe of decommercialization. Such changes laid the institutional and economic basis for persistent group conflict. The possessing and ruling elites never became so united that they were able to close off institutional experimentation from the bottom up or from the top down, not at least to the extent that experimentation had been regularly closed off in the agrarian-bureaucratic states.

Remember that before the new European arrangements could exist as a stable order, they had to live as a fluid series of conflicts. The circumstances in which the Roman order in the West broke up allowed collectively organized peasants to fight it out with local landowners and overlords on more equal terms, for there was no governmental apparatus to tilt the scales in favor of the nobles. The "crisis of feudalism" merely sealed a result that had been achieved through continuing group struggle. Where grassroots collective or-

ganization was weakest and centralized noble reaction strongest – as in Eastern Europe – the same demographic crisis led to enserfment rather than to a freer peasantry. As centralized governments emerged they usually strengthened the hands of local elites. But they did so more in some countries and regions than in others. A few states approached the antimagnate alliance between smallholders and central governments that had eluded even the most successful and determined reformers in the agrarian–bureaucratic empires. Even where the alliance between central governments and landowning or mercantile elites proved strongest in Western Europe, it respected a measure of free movement by the working mass, of decisional autonomy by the governmental apparatus, and of elite conflict and fragmentation. No great agrarian and bureaucratic state of the past had done as well.

The Noneconomic Varieties of Negative Capability

The development of practical abilities to produce or to destroy is not the only form of empowerment that can be advanced through the invention of more disentranced formative contexts. Another variety of empowerment is the diminishment of the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion. Our basic experience of freedom of action requires that we be engaged in a broad range of forms of group life: a practical division of labor in which we exchange commodities and labor, communities in which we value engagement as an end in itself and seek reciprocal engagement, and shared cultures that provide us with the means for self-reflection, self-expression, and communication.

But all these varieties of engagement pose a double threat of subjugation and depersonalization. They threaten to involve us in structures of dependence and domination. Thus, we may find that our participation in the division of labor pegs us at a fixed station in a rigid hierarchy. We may see our communal loyalties misspent on patron–client relations that represent the fluid, personalized form of social hierarchies. Even a culture secretly entangles us in hierarchies of value that translate, more or less obliquely, into hierarchies of actual people. At the same time that he risks dependence, an individual risks becoming the passive object of a rigid social role, his life chances and experiences and finally his very character determined by the station he occupies.

But the sole alternative to disengagement on these punishing terms is no engagement at all and thus the denial of all the practical, emotional, and cognitive resources we need in order to affirm a presence in the world. We require not only the material advantages of the social division of labor but the assurance of acceptance that we may

receive in a community and the means for self-expression and self-reflection we gain from a shared universe of discourse. The most fundamental experience of blockage we can undergo is the sense of an irresolvable conflict between the need for engagement and the need to avoid the dangers of dependence and depersonalization. Conversely, an aspect of empowerment is our relative success at moderating this conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion. Free, empowered people are those able to develop styles of practical collaboration and passionate attachment that also represent occasions to form and advance individual life projects.

A major theme of the social theory of this book is the ability to change the character of our relation to our collective contexts. The more disentranced social orders keep the resources and powers of society making from being confiscated by privileged groups. More generally, they prevent our practical and passionate relations from falling subject to a single sanctified version of social life. By undermining fixed roles and hierarchies, they weaken the pressures of dependence and depersonalization that accompany our efforts at engagement in group life. Disentrenchment can thereby help empower us by moderating the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion.

Negative capability includes yet a third, related aspect of empowerment: our success at gaining mastery over our formative institutional and imaginative contexts. This variety of empowerment lets us participate in our social worlds without suspending our critical faculties or surrendering to the hallucinatory identification of the actual with the necessary. We no longer have to choose either a futile rebellion against all institutions and conventions or a resentful, bad-faith acceptance of the outward forms of society as the sole alternatives to the compulsive reenactment of established routines. The ordinary efforts through which people seek to realize their perceived interests broaden into an experience of effective participation in the collective criticism and remaking of the institutional and imaginative structures within which people define and satisfy their interests.

This instance of empowerment is one most directly linked with the creation of less naturalized contexts. Yet it merely generalizes the aspect of negative capability that consists in diminishing the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion. For this third variety of negative capability does to our relation toward whole forms of social life what the second aspect of empowerment does to our relation to particular social roles and hierarchies. The thesis of negative capability illuminates the connection between the character of our relations with one another and the quality of our relation to the shared contexts of our actions.

Consider how these two noneconomic forms of negative capability

connect with the first side of negative capability – the way disentanglement encourages the development of practical productive forces. The thesis of negative capability does not presuppose a necessary convergence among these aspects of empowerment. In fact, the discussion of practical progress through disentanglement has already suggested how and why they may conflict. The opening of social life to the opportunism of practical reason and practical experiment may come about through despotic as well as consensual means. The centralized, dictatorial forms of disentanglement liquefy fixed social roles and hierarchies just as much as the more liberal forms. But they replace such modes of social division and ranking with the imposed, unstable hierarchies of ruthless planners anxious to impose their will upon the social order. This route to disentanglement puts one type of dependence in place of another. It may make social life even more hostile to a reconciliation of the enabling conditions of self-assertion. Moreover, it concentrates in the hands of the central authorities the freedom to remake the institutional and imaginative assumptions of a social order. The powerless subjects of a mobilizational dictatorship may no longer be tempted to equate their social world with the built-in logic of social life. But neither do they win power over their contexts. The will that turns society into an artifact is not their will.

The thesis of negative capability requires us to believe only that no *unavoidable* conflict exists between the practical and the nonpractical forms of empowerment. In every situation we can search for the forms of practical disentanglement that also help reconcile the enabling conditions of self-assertion and that increase our mastery over the shared contexts of our actions. The search may be facilitated or hindered by the available institutional and imaginative tools. But the effort does not have to fail.

What place does the development of these noneconomic modes of negative capability occupy in the events dealt with by the schematic narrative presented in the first part of this chapter? The new forms of work organization and private rights struck a compromise between disentanglement and a form of coercive surplus extraction based upon entrenched roles and hierarchies. The disentanglement that did take place therefore had authoritarian as well as consensual aspects. Thus, the power to make social relations more fully the subject of an experimental will was at first largely confined to bureaucrats and entrepreneurs. Yet the greater freedom to recombine was there, clearly expressed in the more universalistic aspect of the system of private rights: the effort to define the basic legal relations among people without regard to the particular social stations that the right-holders occupy. The style of liberal democracy that began to take shape in the early decades of the nineteenth century started to de-

mocratize an experience of mastery over the context that already existed in more authoritarian forms. The doctrines of utilitarianism and classical political economy explicitly recognized the link between the primacy of will over custom and the conditions of economic progress.

It may seem less persuasive to claim that the emergent formative contexts of the modern European societies provided a backdrop favorable to experiments in a fuller reconciliation between the enabling conditions of self-assertion. Yet this hypothesis becomes more plausible once you remember the very different despotic and participatory forms that emancipation from false necessity can assume. The lives of workers in early factories, swollen cities, and concentrated "capitalist" estates may have been as oppressive as anything in earlier European history. But oppression was not the whole story. The new varieties of workers' self-defense and of popular communal and religious life often took on an archaizing and pseudomedieval form. Yet these experiments in collaboration and community also witnessed the emergence of styles of association relatively free from the implicit hierarchies of patron-client relations.

Nowhere is this freedom more striking than in the character of the petty-bourgeois challenge to the emergent forms of economic and governmental organization. The advocates of the petty-bourgeois alternative may have failed to come up with the institutional structure that might have cured petty commodity production of its economic and political instabilities. But with the help of a hodgepodge of pre-liberal and liberal legal conceptions, they did envisage forms of work and community more fully emancipated from rigid roles and hierarchies.

The significance of disentanglement for the quality of collaboration and community becomes even clearer when we turn from the conflicts of early modern Europe to the experience of contemporary societies. The cultural-revolutionary politics of personal relations may be far more firmly established in the domains of domesticity, leisure, and consumption than in the organization of practical life. It may still flourish more strongly among the educated professional classes than among ordinary working people. Its war against the tyranny of roles and hierarchies may be perverted by a lack of institutional imagination. Yet its achievements are real. We cannot understand them merely as a series of episodes in the confined life of high culture. We can often trace the ideas of this cultural-revolutionary politics of role jumbling to the work of small numbers of thinkers, artists, and professional outsiders. But the diffusion of these ideas through the medium of popular culture, and the sympathy with which they have been greeted by ever larger sectors of the population, would have been inconceivable without a prior transformation of

social life. As always, people had to see enacted before their eyes a fragmentary example of the connection between the freedom to revise social arrangements and assumptions and freedom from dependence and depersonalization. Only then could they want more of the same and believe more possible.

*The Problem of Agency: The Intentional and the Unintentional
Development of Negative Capability*

The thesis of negative capability is a species of functional explanation. Its development therefore poses the key issue presented by all varieties of functional explanation. How does the functional consequence come to exercise a causal influence? How do the economic and non-economic advantages produced by less entrenched structures help explain the emergence and persistence of these structures?

The easiest instance for functional explanation is the setting of successful intentional conduct: the consequence becomes a cause by serving as the goal of an activity. Darwinian theory provides a spectacular example of functional explanation in a wholly nonintentional setting. The functional advantage or explanatory consequence of reproductive success in the environment turns into a causal influence through a distinctive mechanism of transformation: the interplay between random genetic recombination and natural selection against a background of purely physical or mechanical constraints. The causal influence of negative capability upon long-term, cumulative change in the content and quality of formative contexts is therefore easiest to grasp in two cases: either when the causal influence can be attributed to fully intentional action or when it can rely upon a social counterpart to natural selection. Such a counterpart exists if the formative institutional and imaginative contexts that encourage advances in negative capability have a better chance of surviving in the economic and ideological competition with their rivals, whatever the independent causes that may explain the initial appearance of these more revisable formative structures.

Some aspects of the development of negative capability approach the standard of fully intentional action. Other aspects provide counterparts to natural selection. But much in the causal influence of negative capability fails to fit either the intentionalist or the Darwinian model. Events and transformations drawn from the earlier institutional genealogy can illustrate each of these modes of intentional, nonintentional, and special agency.

The aspects of the reach for negative capability that most closely approach the pure case of intentional action are circumstances involving retrospective practical wisdom, prospective ideological aspiration, or some combination of the two. The thesis of negative

capability is merely the controversial explication and generalization of a practical lesson that becomes clearer as the number of worldwide experiments in the achievement of negative capability multiplies. In the long series of events covered by the earlier institutional narrative, the latecomers had the benefit of hindsight. The later they came, the greater the benefit. The most telling instances of the deliberate pursuit of practical empowerment through institutional disentanglement are often successful movements of national renovation and reform led by elites concerned both to improve their own positions within their societies and to bring these societies up to the levels of economic prosperity and military strength achieved by the leading Western powers.

In each successful example of renovating reform the reformers arrived at a new understanding of social life and acted upon this understanding. They discovered that the exploitation of technological and organizational opportunities required a loosening of the constraints that rigid roles and hierarchies imposed upon both the recombination of factors of production and the practice of technological and organizational innovation. The weakening of those constraints was not merely a condition for freedom in practical experimentation. It was also an indispensable basis for awakening and strengthening the sense of nationhood that could bind different classes, communities, and regions together in shared economic and military endeavor and render the great mass of the people less open to the blandishments of foreign or domestic subverters. This weakening of the structure of social division and hierarchy invariably turned out to require a change in governmental and economic arrangements.

Another common discovery qualified this first set of insights and showed how empowering reforms could be reconciled with a commitment to defend a reinterpreted version of elite interests. The reformers even understood that the primary beneficiaries of an economic order that emphasized coercive surplus extraction could emerge richer and stronger when recast as authoritarian experimentalists and recombiners. To make discoveries such as these was to grasp the practical aspect of the development of negative capability. To act successfully on this understanding was to show how negative capability can be developed by intentional action.

A case in point is my earlier example of the response of the Prussian reformers to the threat posed by the French revolutionary army and government. The examples become clearer as we move ahead in time: to, for instance, the reforms sponsored by German, Japanese, and Russian elites during the later part of the nineteenth century. In the course of the twentieth century, the insight into the links connecting economic and military success to the partial liquefaction of

the social order as well as to the establishment of more disentranced institutions has become a worldwide possession. This insight may be concealed in some instances under a show of reverence for tradition and in other circumstances under revolutionary pretensions. But it never lies far from the concerns of practical statecraft. The rulers and the ruling classes that fail to take it seriously become easy targets for overthrow by other, more resolute groups better able to connect their factional interests with the cause of national development.

Additional examples of the conscious and deliberate pursuit of negative capability concern the teachings of liberal, socialist, and communist doctrines rather than latecomers' anxieties over practical statecraft. The revolutionary ideologies of liberalism, socialism, and communism all seek to develop forms of empowerment through the subversion of rigid roles and hierarchies and through the subjection of social life to the transforming will. The social ideals and the social theories informing these doctrines are marred in traditional liberalism by the implicit identification of representative democracies and market systems with forms of government and economy that in fact frustrate the fulfillment and distort the definition of liberal aims. Orthodox Marxism sees the nexus between the ideal of empowerment and the advance of disentanglement through the narrowing lens of deep-structure social analysis.

To find the fragmentary signs of a more inclusive understanding we must look to a loose amalgam of tenets about freedom and efficiency that classical liberals often shared with utilitarian propagandists and writers on political economy. But in every one of the major traditions of social criticism the insight into the connection between empowerment and disentanglement was prejudiced by a failure of institutional imagination, which was in turn provoked by the lack of a credible social theory. Nevertheless, each secular doctrine of emancipation did embrace something like the thesis of negative capability, though in versions either unjustifiably narrow or excessively vague.

Political movements in power have repeatedly acted upon radical liberal, socialist, and communist doctrines. To this extent their actions exemplify the intentional promotion of negative capability. We should not allow the diversity of their more particular aims and the disparity of their social basis to conceal the extent to which they have all shared in the same quest. This quest is the search for the advantages resulting from a loosening of the constraints that an institutionally determined logic of social division and hierarchy imposes upon our experiments in practical collaboration and passionate attachment.

Nor should an emphasis on the radical promise of alternative, deviant pathways of institutional change permit us forget how much the dominant solutions were themselves influenced by the modern

revolutionary social doctrines. Early forms of the work-organization and the private-rights complexes, discussed in the polemical institutional genealogy of this chapter, certainly preceded the formulation of liberal and socialist theories. The practical and imaginative conflicts from which those early forms emerged helped produce the expanded sense of social possibility that the secular doctrines of emancipation later codified and developed. But the doctrines in turn set their mark upon the later versions of such legal and economic arrangements. They did so both directly, through their influence upon the conditions of legitimate authority in the private order (e.g., the system of collective bargaining for workers), and indirectly, through their effect upon the character of representative institutions.

There is less of a gap than may at first appear between the two aspects of the intentional encouragement to negative capability: the high-minded programmatic aspiration to emancipate social life from the constraints of a rigid scheme of division and hierarchy, and the self-interested efforts of reforming elites to make their relatively backward countries catch up with the most advanced contemporary levels of economic prosperity and military strength. For one thing, the ideological programs included a commitment to the development of practical capabilities through the invention of more revisable and hierarchy-subverting institutions. For another, the emancipatory ideologies often served as the legitimating vocabulary of reform-minded elites in relatively backward countries.

Consider now nonintentional agency in the development of negative capability. There is a social counterpart to natural selection. Formative contexts permitting a relatively higher level of negative capability may have, for this reason alone, a better chance to survive in the economic, military, and ideological competition with their rivals, whatever the causes that explain the initial creation of these more denaturalized contexts. The practical advantages disenchantment offers to the exploitation of technological and organizational opportunities may outweigh the countervailing benefits of coercive surplus extraction based upon entrenched frameworks of social life. The relative emancipation of both the division of labor and the experience of community from predefined roles and hierarchies may make a more denaturalized formative context attractive to the leaders of mass movements around the world. Thus, through a combination of practical advantages and ideological prestige the more disenfranchised structures may proliferate and drive out more rigid and hierarchical arrangements.

The analogy to natural selection remains imperfect because the intentional and the unintentional realization of negative capability can be only roughly contrasted. The success of the relatively more disenfranchised arrangements is soon recognized, and what began as

an unpremeditated experiment may eventually turn into a deliberate goal. Moreover, even the least intentional approach to negative capability works less by circumventing people's conscious desires and intentions than by applying to them the pressure of an enlarged sense of social possibility.

When we take an overview of a long historical process, like the one discussed earlier in this chapter, we may be tempted to exaggerate the unintentional element in the development of a more disentranced structure. But the impression of the complete estrangement of the historical agents from the effect of their creation begins to dissipate as soon as we go into greater detail. The closest that people ordinarily come to the unintentional development of negative capability is better described as the fragmentary anticipation of broader possibility. People more or less deliberately pioneer an advance in negative capability in a narrow area of social life. In this experiment they later discover principles with broader application. Indeed, the whole thesis of negative capability can best be understood as just such a retrospective extension, its subject matter being the entire experience discussed by the institutional genealogy. This style of partly deliberate agency fits into the circumstance of intermediate intentionality described next.

The part of the genealogy that comes closest to exemplifying the nonintentional, quasi-Darwinian form of agency is the long chain of improbable events that allowed the European countries to escape the endless reform cycles of the agrarian-bureaucratic societies. No breakthrough to the early forms of the institutional arrangements that have become dominant could have occurred if the familiar developmental pattern of the agrarian-bureaucratic empires had remained undisturbed. Remember that this pattern included: the central government's inability to maintain a direct fiscal and military link to a class of independent smallholders and to safeguard them against the encroachments of landowning elites; the success with which these elites and their minions or representatives in the lower rungs of the bureaucracy undermined or circumvented policies designed to defend the smallholders and forced onto these petty producers and tradesmen the full burden of emergency fiscal or military support; the ensuing ruin of the small-scale producers compelled to seek protection from the *grandees* who had plotted their destruction; the formation of huge estates and independent armies; and the consequent breakdown of both the commercialized economy and the administrative unity of the state until a reforming elite managed to reestablish the institutional conditions of governmental strength and economic vitality. I have argued that the single most important factor in the medieval European evasion of this pattern was the absence of a central state able to tilt the scales in favor of landowning elites against the smallholders, independent laborers or tradesmen, and village communi-

ties. Thus, the little people could fight it out with their immediate local superiors in conditions where they had a chance – not a chance to escape their subordinate status but a chance to retain a variable measure of collective independence. These conditions encouraged the emergence of social groups (such as the merchants of independent towns) less dependent upon a landowning elite, the change in the relation between town and country, and the eventual emergence of central governments better able to act independently. The social changes in turn provided an environment favorable to further institutional disentanglement: the institutionalized weakening of rigid roles and hierarchies and of a contrast between framework-preserving routine and framework-transforming conflict was preceded by the more fluid, conflictual enactment of this weakening. No such institutional invention was *intended* to promote any aspect of the link between disentanglement and empowerment. Yet the societies in which the inventions took root proved able to stage additional institutional experiments and to develop further practical capabilities that set them on the path to world primacy.

The most interesting and distinctive aspect of agency in the development of negative capability fails to fit the extreme instances of intentional or unintentional action. This intermediate mode of agency has both a familiar and an unfamiliar aspect. The familiar one is the idea of the innovator's advantage. A group within a society pioneers in the development of a limited form of negative capability, in a restricted domain of social life. If, for example, these innovators are developing a new form of economic enterprise they must see a chance to reap rewards from a more flexible recombination of labor, expertise, and capital rather than merely from a more successful effort at coercive surplus extraction based upon preexisting roles and hierarchies. They must imagine a style of production or exchange that not only differs from current ways of doing business but also brings people together in ways foreign to the logic of the established social order. The immediate incentive is the chance of capturing for themselves the profits or privileges that others will only later be able to achieve. What holds for pioneering groups within a society may hold as well for an entire society within a system of national economies or world powers. The best-known protagonists of such innovations are entrepreneurs whose rewards are measured in wealth. Other protagonists may include bureaucratic innovators whose success produces wealth for themselves and their countries, or even propagandists and ideologists whose achievements lie in the transforming effect of a broader sense of social possibility upon established group interests and collective identities and whose reward is influence.

The innovators have a motive to act. But they may not at first have more than the dimmest understanding of the general relation

between empowerment and disentanglement. If all that could be said about these pioneers is that their self-interested experiments happened to coincide with the requirements for the development of negative capability, these examples would hardly differ from the situation of unintentional agency, with its social counterpart to natural selection. But here is where the other, less familiar part of the intermediate case of intentionality comes in. Once a set of more disentrained institutional arrangements or preconceptions about possible and desirable human association gains acceptance, it must be run. The institutions or preconceptions must be reproduced by practical or conceptual activities: routinized styles of conflict, exchange, and argument. Such activities differ from those needed to operate more inflexible and hierarchy-producing institutional arrangements or to elaborate and apply more naturalistic forms of legal, moral, and political thought. Moreover, the procedures required for the successful operation of complex institutional arrangements invariably imply a view of the problems with which the arrangements deal. Such an implicit view must include at least a partial understanding of the thesis of negative capability. Thus, if the innovators do not have to grasp the whole truth of negative capability in order to introduce their innovations, they or their successors and imitators must achieve a measure of insight into this truth if they are to operate and to reproduce the initial innovation in changing circumstances. This indispensable insight ensures the element of intentionality in the intermediate case of agency. Examples drawn from each of the three major institutional complexes addressed by the institutional genealogy illustrate this halfway situation.

The entrepreneur and the manager who ruled a modern factory had to develop a style of production, marketing, and labor control that guaranteed stability, or compensated for instability, in the key capital, product, and labor markets while maximizing opportunities for flexibility and recombination. As the coercive element in the new forms of work and market organization diminished, the importance of entrepreneurial and managerial skills increased. The successful manager in the new institutional environment had to sacrifice a measure of flexibility in work organization the better to safeguard his interest in maintaining a secure work force. He had to use techniques that have historically spanned the full gamut between a violent factory despotism and a policy of friendly deals with unionized labor to the detriment of temporary or jobless workers and occasional subcontractors. The sacrifice of flexibility in work organization was enshrined in what I have described as the rigid variant of rationalized collective labor, with its sharp contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities. Too severe a restraint upon flexibility in work organization was, however, as dangerous as no restraint at all.

For it put the manager at a disadvantage in the competition with his more flexible competitors and encouraged a sullen resistance from his laborers. As mass production developed, the manager also had to forego a measure of flexibility in product and production design and in creating or managing market opportunities in order to satisfy the requirements of a style of industrial organization that depended upon a concentration of resources and that remained especially vulnerable to market instabilities. But this further sacrifice of flexibility also had to be balanced against a countervailing need to make continuing technological and organizational innovation possible.

The whole art of management came to lie in the achievement of the maximum of flexibility compatible with maintaining both a structure of control over workers and preemptive defense against market competitors. The prize goes to the manager who either can loosen the restraints on innovation that are imposed by the needs for control over workers and for preemptive defense against competitors, or who can multiply opportunities for innovation within those restraints. Such a manager acts on an implicit theory amounting to a qualified version of the thesis of negative capability.

Similarly, efforts at practical reform by bureaucrats and politicians require a capacity to see beyond the established logic of group interests and collective identities and to envisage deals and experiments that collapse distinctions enshrined by this logic. The emancipatory doctrines of liberalism, socialism, and communism have often functioned as vague, elastic normative justification for a statecraft of recombination that has its own claims to being taken seriously.

Like economic and governmental institutions, systems of private rights must be applied and elaborated by an activity. This activity is legal doctrine, taken both as a substantive conception of social organization and as a method of analysis. The substantive conception of social life that inspires modern legal thought takes for granted the incompatibility of both contractual and communal ideals with rigid and pronounced inequality. Rather than accepting the patron-client relation as the exemplary form of all social life, this conception seeks to realize radically different models of human association in different areas of social existence. In each area it seeks a distinctive way to tame the dangers of power: accountability, representation, and legal restraint in the constitution of the state; voluntary agreement and impersonal technical necessity in the organization of work; and the solace of intimacy and parenthood in the life of the family. From a more searching critical perspective this conception may appear both apologetically naive and unjustifiably restrictive. It nonetheless presupposes a newly broadened sense of social possibility and institutional diversity. To move within its boundaries is, at a minimum, to recognize that exchange systems and forms of communal life have

a controversial relation to each other and to hierarchies of power and advantage.

Consider now the characteristic methods of modern Western legal analysis as distinguished from the dominant conception expressed in substantive law and doctrine. The prevailing genre of legal justification is characterized by an embarrassment to commit itself to any scheme of possible and desirable association, even to the scheme it in fact presupposes. Thus, the legal analyst wants to contain legal analysis at the level of rules, or principles, purposes, and policies, rather than appealing to the inclusive normative views of society and personality that occupied so prominent a position in earlier, classical styles of legal doctrine. Much in modern legal analysis can best be understood as a half-conscious attempt to resolve a particular contradiction: the contradiction between the impulse to treat the law as a haphazard, confused body of transitory outcomes to particular conflicts among organized interests and the opposing tendency to represent the authoritative materials of the law as an approximation to a defensible scheme of human association. The desire to achieve a higher form of consistency and justification leads in the latter direction but the effort to represent society as an artifact of legislative will pushes in the former direction. Such are the hesitations of legal analysis in an age of partial emancipation from false necessity. The embarrassments, contortions, and stratagems of this style of legal thought all presuppose a partial acceptance of the idea that we raise ourselves up by overthrowing the tyranny of a prewritten social script over our social experience. They therefore exemplify a half-intentional agency in the making of negative capability.

The Thesis of Negative Capability Qualified and Reinterpreted

The preceding discussion of negative capability has focused on the varieties of empowerment that may result from the creation of more disentranced institutions. It has gone on to examine how the emergence and persistence of more disentranced contexts come to be influenced by the capabilities that disentranchment permits. But the full sense of the thesis of negative capability can be appreciated only after it has passed through a series of qualifications. The preceding discussion has anticipated almost all these qualifications. But when they are brought together, they clearly indicate how much negative capability differs from the deep-structure style of evolutionary explanation. The point of the qualifications, it soon appears, is less to weaken the thesis than to fix the sense the thesis acquires outside the framework of deep-structure analysis.

A first qualification is that coercive surplus extraction, based upon rigid roles and hierarchies and upon the institutions or preconceptions

that sustain them, may rival and outdo the practical benefits of more hierarchy-subverting and more freely revisable arrangements and ideas. We must assess the force of this reservation in the light of the empirical hypothesis that entrenchment-based, coercive surplus extraction is likely to have the upper hand only in relatively poor societies. In such societies the promise of innovation pales in comparison to the difficulty of generating savings. If this hypothesis is true, denaturalization – the creation of formative contexts that both undermine stable roles and hierarchies and efface the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-transforming conflict – has a more general and enduring influence than coercive restraints on consumption or leisure.

A second qualification is that the three aspects of negative capability I have distinguished do not necessarily go hand in hand. The development of productive or destructive capabilities through disenfranchisement may occur through coercive as well as consensual means. It may be the handiwork of a ruthless command system, committed to impose its transformative plan upon a recalcitrant society. When institutional invention takes this tyrannical direction, it may harm rather than benefit a widespread experience of empowerment in the sense either of greater mastery over context or of fuller reconciliation between the enabling conditions of self-assertion.

This observation has an important corollary. The fragmentary development of negative capability may not be an unqualified good even within an argument, such as the one developed here, that attributes normative authority to a view of human empowerment and its conditions. (See the discussion of facts and values in Chapter 5.) At best, the thesis of negative capability encourages us to search for the particular enabling forms of practical empowerment that do coincide with our larger human interests. It teaches us that nothing in the demands of practical social life condemns this search to failure. It thereby holds before us the hope that by a change in the character of our relations to our contexts we may partly free our relations to one another from the taint of dependence and depersonalization.

A third qualification is that any cumulative advance toward greater levels of negative capability is reversible. At no point does the development of more denaturalized structures become safe. The single most important source of reversibility is the ambiguity of the state. Governmental power may serve as the master tool of context smashing. However, the access to the strengthened state may become a basis for the reconstitution of social divisions and hierarchies. The explicitly imposed character of such state-based divisions and hierarchies and the revolutionary ideas under whose aegis mobilizational regimes conduct their affairs, the memory of upheaval and reconstruction, and even the requirements of worldwide economic and

military competition may all seem to limit the renaturalization of social life. But what was once experienced as an artifact may gradually come to be mistaken for the way things are. A society may suffer a slow decline into rigidity and ineptitude before being brought up short by an unforgiving rival.

A fourth qualification, which goes farthest toward distancing explanation through negative capability from evolutionary accounts in the deep-structure style, has been anticipated by the analysis in Chapter 2 of the internal structure of formative contexts. It will soon be further developed through the discussion of the influence of formative contexts upon their own remaking, as a second source of long-run, directional change in the character and content of frameworks of social life. The point of this final reservation is that the influence of negative capability works with the materials generated by particular institutional and imaginative sequences or traditions as well as with our fitful efforts to escape the limits of these traditional materials. There is no short list of the possible institutional and imaginative forms among which mankind must choose at each step in the development of negative capability. For there is no grand scheme of possible types of social organization or necessary institutional and imaginative forms of social evolution underlying mankind's experiments in context making. There is no closed set of suitable formative contexts waiting to be deployed at the right evolutionary turn. Thus, the question – what institutional and imaginative forms can and should a particular advance in negative capability take? – never has an uncontroversial answer. Much depends on the materials, opportunities, and obstacles of a particular circumstance or tradition. Even the imponderables of resistance and invention have their place, for no structure of social life fully determines its own sequel.

These several qualifications may at first appear to eviscerate the thesis of negative capability. In fact, however, they serve only to emphasize the distance separating this thesis from evolutionary explanation in the deep-structure mode. Once the thesis has absorbed all these qualifications it turns into a claim about the *possibility* of a certain precarious, indeterminate, reversible but nevertheless cumulative and momentous change in the character of our formative contexts as well as in their content. In particular, the thesis shows, if it is true, the fundamental realism of the radical project: the effort to diminish the influence of dependence and depersonalization upon our experience of social life by changing the quality of our relation to the institutional and imaginative frameworks of our existence.

Like any conception of happiness and ennoblement, the radical project draws upon certain assumptions about social reality and social possibility. But we must look to past and present experience to test and correct these assumptions. We must see whether something in

the nature of social reality dooms this cause. Here, then, is the practical sense of the thesis of negative capability. The thesis represents less a claim that the history of context making is oriented in a particular direction than a claim that we can act on the radical project if we want to. The thesis does not merely support the fundamental realism of this transformative commitment. It forms part of a set of descriptions and explanations that help refine and revise our understanding of what the commitment is and that show us what obstacles we must face in order to realize the commitment in practice.

It is true that you do not need to share an allegiance to the radical project in order to evaluate or even accept these descriptive and explanatory ideas. Nevertheless, I shall later argue that our basic programmatic choices and explanatory views have a far more intimate connection than traditional ideas about the divide between factual and normative judgments lead us to suppose. For the moment, it is enough to emphasize that what we understand as social reality depends on the deliberate or involuntary, the real or imagined transformative experiments we perform upon it. If we were both long-lived and indifferent enough to push these experiments in all conceivable directions simultaneously, we might end up with a conception of social reality more truly neutral among particular transformative endeavors. But we do not in fact have either the time or the indifference, and our exercises in social explanation are anchored, implicitly if not explicitly, in attempts to maintain or remake our social worlds, attempts that our explanatory ideas in turn help elucidate and criticize. The explanatory argument of this book, and the thesis of negative capability within it, is the work of a mind anxious about the realism of the radical cause.

Applying the Thesis of Negative Capability: Classes and the State

The thesis of negative capability has far-reaching implications. Let me now briefly illustrate these implications in two important areas that may appear to be strangely undervalued by this view of context change: social classes and the state.

Formative arrangements and beliefs generate a system of social stations: of roles and hierarchies, group interests and collective identities. They do so by influencing the claims people can make upon one another's labor, wealth, help, and loyalty and by shaping people's ability to command the economic and noneconomic resources of society making. One of the many implications of deep-structure social theory for analyzing social hierarchies is that such hierarchies always have the same fundamental nature, however much they may differ in content. Marxist social theory, for example, recognizes that

the class systems of capitalism and feudalism differ in the type of connection they establish between power in the state and power over labor and capital. But both the relation of class interests to social conflict and the lawlike, dynamic tendencies of history (the interplay between forces and relations of production) always remain the same. According to Marxism, only under prehistorical, primitive communism or posthistorical, developed communism do class division and class conflict fail to appear or cease to exist. Moreover, just as there is a necessary, well-defined sequence of modes of production, so there is a clear-cut, inescapable logic of class interests that corresponds to each mode of production. Ideological obfuscation and self-deception may temporarily conceal this logic of interests. But continuing conflict will eventually make it clear.

The explanatory approach developed in this book weakens the allegedly determining force of objective class interests. By denying that there is a necessary sequence or short list of indivisible formative contexts the theory also undermines the basis for any strong claim about the need for a particular logic of class interests. A related idea emphasizes that escalating conflict progressively disorganizes an entrenched logic of group interests and collective identities. The implications underline the importance of alternative approaches to social explanation in general and to the possibility of cumulative context change in particular.

An important corollary of the point just stated is that class-based explanations (or explanations appealing to hierarchies or divisions other than classes) cannot be expected to account for long-run, cumulative context change. They do far better at illuminating the normal operation of a particular social world. They are more helpful in revealing the content and mechanisms of stability than in accounting for the occurrence or direction of destabilization. They are also better at explaining a single, historically located episode of context change than at showing how or why several such changes can produce a cumulative effect and stake out a certain direction. This corollary sheds retrospective light on the relative absence of class analysis from the earlier, general discussion of negative capability.

The shift in the sense of class analysis that comes closest to the thesis of negative capability is the redefinition of class as a distinct species of hierarchical ranking. Class hierarchy is not the sole or exemplary form of social hierarchy. Formative contexts can be placed on a spectrum of disentanglement. The farther along on this spectrum they stand, the weaker the stereotyped hierarchical positions they generate: weaker in the greater openness of their institutional and imaginative foundations to challenge, weaker in their diminished influence over both context-respecting routine and context-transforming conflict (which in any event come closer together), and

weaker even in the extent of the inequalities of wealth, power, and prestige they establish. The familiar descriptive vocabulary of social hierarchy can be easily related to this spectrum. Thus, the caste, the estate, the class, and the party of opinion (whether or not organized as a political party in the modern Western sense) are characteristic hierarchical forms of social frameworks whose hierarchies are progressively weaker in all the senses indicated.

The caste or estate comes closer to the limiting case of a society whose hierarchies are not only represented but also treated in practice as beyond the reach of the transformative will. Of course, this characterization focuses on only part of the historical reality to which the vocabulary of caste habitually applies. The actual Indian *jatis*, for example, as opposed to the scriptural Hindu *varnas* that supposedly subsumed them, were always locked in conflict with one another. They always jockeyed for access to governmental power. The experience of living under what may appear to be the most naturalized hierarchy invariably includes a fragmentary awareness of the dependence of stereotyped hierarchical systems upon social conflicts and institutional artifacts. Here, as almost always, the comparative differences of experience (between, say, living under Hindu castes and living under modern Western-type classes) are far smaller than the differences of dogma. That the experiences nevertheless are different justifies the application of the spectrum idea to the varieties and vocabularies of social hierarchy.

The interpretation of the caste idea as an approximation to a limiting case of entrenched hierarchy is also simplified in another way, which brings out more clearly what a view of context making like the one presented here can contribute to the comparative study of social hierarchies. A particular form of social hierarchy can never be adequately understood as merely a more or less rigid and determining principle of ranking, based upon more or less naturalistic arrangements and assumptions. It carries a weight of connotation rich with the practices and beliefs of a unique historical tradition. It can be relieved of these meanings only by an exercise in drastic historical simplification. The same can be said of the corporately organized estates of the prerevolutionary absolutist monarchies of Europe or of the social classes of the postrevolutionary West. The general point illustrates rather than qualifies a view that sees negative capability and the sequential effects of current contexts as two distinct but interlocking influences upon long-run context change. The former influence works with the materials provided by the latter.

At the opposite pole of disentanglement lies the party of opinion. The party can similarly be understood as an approximation to an ideal, limiting circumstance in which the free alignment of people among organized movements of opinion replaces entrenched divi-

sions and hierarchies. Of course, political parties as they have in fact developed are never just free alignments of opinions. They are advocates for the recognized interests of particular classes and communities. They are defenders of programs that do not easily correlate with class or communal position (the free-alignment aspect). And they are syndicates of office seekers.

But if it is possible to imagine and establish more revisable and antihierarchical formative contexts than those now existing, it is also possible to conceive of a situation in which stable classes and communal divisions have weakened further. In such a situation the role of the party as an embodiment of opinions that override class and communal divisions becomes more important than its role as a voice for classes and communities or as a partnership of professional politicians. The division of society into fluid movements of opinion that fail to follow class or communal lines becomes the primary principle of social organization. In such a society social life in fact approaches the liberal image. It does so, however, only by revising the institutional assumptions and guiding conceptions of the liberal cause.

Remember also that the freedom invoked by the idea of free alignment is not freedom in the sense of uncaused action. It is merely freedom from the determining effect of current social stations upon the stands people take in the struggle over the future form of society. For the creation of more disentranced contexts never immunizes us against causal influences. It merely diminishes the extent to which we are at the mercy of the established frameworks of social life. One of the aims of the explanatory theory of *False Necessity* is to show just how much is involved in this "merely."

Even the most entrenched formative context, productive of the most rigid, determining, and inclusive hierarchies, can be dissolved by escalating practical and imaginative conflict. One outcome of this dissolution may be all-out social warfare: the violent, merciless struggle for security and advantage at any cost. Another outcome is the increasing supersession of castes, estates, or classes, as well as of communal or ethnic groups, by movements of opinion whose membership and orientation cross preexisting lines of social division and hierarchy. The two experiences often coexist and combine. The more disentranced the formative context becomes, the more the dissolution of social stations into parties of opinion (or, rather, of parties of opinion based upon particular social stations into parties not based upon them) carries over into the routine experience of social life.

Between the caste or the corporately organized estate and the emancipated movement of opinion stands the social class: a characteristic form of hierarchy in societies partly emancipated from false necessity. The interplay between classes or communities and political

parties that both do and do not represent these communities and classes has become the dominant form of conflict over the mastery and uses of governmental power in the West ever since the mid-nineteenth century. It may be useful to employ the class concept in this sense as a term of art, indicating one of a number of varieties of hierarchy, distinguished by their relative position on a spectrum of disentanglement. But if you want to keep the concept close to its core setting of familiar, richly defined connotations, you have to particularize it still further, drawing into its descriptive significance a multitude of imaginative and institutional assumptions that form part of the modern Western experience of class.

Any number of other actual or not manifestly unfeasible intermediate forms of hierarchy differ significantly from this more richly defined experience of class. Consider, for example, a society in which independent family position or tradition is relatively less important than meritocratic advancement (as in contemporary Japan), or in which relative access to the state apparatus is combined with meritocracy (as in the contemporary Soviet Union) as a basis of position and advantage. Whether or not you take this final step toward the historical particularization of the class concept, you will have come to recognize that class analysis is most powerful when applied to short-run, context-specific problems of social explanation. In the study of such problems, class analysis plays a derivative though important role.

Consider the speculative history of the state suggested by this approach to division and hierarchy. This narrative seems to be compatible – so far as it goes – with familiar ethnographic and historical observations. It develops a latent theme in the earlier treatment of negative capability. And it anticipates the ideas of the later programmatic argument about government. Such a speculative history may appear unjustifiably evolutionary. But I hope to have shown already that evolutionary explanations may shift in sense drastically once we disconnect them from deep-structure assumptions.

Stateless societies – societies without central governmental institutions able to tax or redistribute wealth, to recruit soldiers and wage war, to adjudicate disputes and define enforceable norms – seem usually to have stood very far toward the extreme naturalistic pole of the spectrum of entrenchment. The institutions and preconceptions constituting such formative contexts were only minimally available to revision in the midst of ordinary social life. The absence of a central government itself helped to weaken the experience of society as artifact. For throughout history the state has been the single greatest tool for remaking the social order. Central governments focus on an identifiable point the collective power to make and remake

society. They establish a visible connection between human will and the social order, no matter how much society's ruling practices and ideas may conceal and constrain the treatment of society as artifact.

In such entrenched but state-free formative contexts, division prevailed over hierarchy. Such societies were what the language of modern anthropology describes as segmented rather than stratified, or their forms of stratification were subordinate to their methods of segmentation. Moreover, real or fictive kinship usually played the major role in segmentation. Each segmented unit (clan, tribe, village commune, or whatever) had its internal hierarchies and elites: its dominant families, for example. But the higher-ups could not draw capital and manpower on a societywide basis. Even within their small worlds they found their cupidity and ambition restrained by the demands of kinship-based solidarity as well as by the poverty of their societies.

Imagine, then, that a combination of unusual crises, opportunities, and institutional inventions required and permitted the societywide mobilization of material and human resources: for example, a need for defense against invaders or rivals or the hope of conquest and plunder, against a background of increased surplus, denser population, and greater technological sophistication. The leaders or leading families of certain segments into which society was divided might step forward as the leaders of the entire constellation of segments. They would then assert a largely personal control over capital, land, laborers, or soldiers drawn from many of the divided units of society. Eventually, what had once been an exercise of personalistic authority, practiced in a crisis situation, would become an institutionalized arrangement for normal social life. Both the desire of the power holders to perpetuate their power through their descendants and the commitment to preserve the newfound levels of economic and military capability may have contributed to the result. The state would have now come into existence. For a state exists when there are effective institutions and widely shared ideas that enable a group – the people who staff the state or who are the state – to exercise a significant influence over the use of the economic and noneconomic resources with which we create the social future within the social present.

The process I have described is certainly not the sole route to the emergence of the state. But all the different routes resemble one another. Besides, this particular form of state making has continued to recur well into historical times in the experience of pastoral or nomadic peoples, who may owe much of their success as conquerors and empire builders to the closeness between their methods of governmental organization and the perennial experience of fluid collective mobilization.

Once a central government had come into existence, its power

could be used to help build up privileged degrees of "private" control over land and labor. The disparities among social ranks became closely identified with degrees of more or less privileged access to governmental power. The emphasis of the social order shifted from segmentation or division to hierarchy. Formative contexts may then have become both more entrenched and less entrenched than in their stateless form: more entrenched because they came to be defined and supported by agencies with the power to command people and resources on a societywide basis; less entrenched because the exercise of a commanding governmental authority implied a partial recognition of the artifactual quality of the social order.

If the thesis of negative capability is correct, the entrenched formative contexts that characterized these early state societies put restraints upon the development of productive capabilities and other forms of human empowerment. The pressure to overcome such constraints might for a long time be overridden by the countervailing advantages of coercive surplus extraction based upon rigid roles and hierarchies. But the pressure nevertheless made itself felt through the several modes of intentional, unintentional, and half-intentional agency discussed earlier.

The organization of government and of the conflict over governmental power represents one of the extended institutional complexes that make up a formative context. Like the context as a whole, it can vary in the extent to which it remains open to challenge in the midst of ordinary social life and in the degree to which it encourages the formation of fixed roles and ranks. A particular level of disentanglement in the organization of the economy or in the system of private rights does not necessarily require any particular form of governmental organization. But according to the argument of Chapter 2, a formative context cannot become stable unless all its constituent elements occupy similar levels of negative capability.

The structure of the state has remained controversial throughout history. Central governmental institutions have been both the major support of private privilege and the chief instrument for the disruption of privilege. In modern times some doctrines have attempted to resolve this dilemma by seeking the nearly complete abolition of governmental institutions. An uncoercive private order of free coordination would reduce governmental institutions to a residual role. But no such uncontroversial uncoercive order exists. The problem is not only that choices must be made among alternative ways to define such a free order. It is rather that the economic and the non-economic resources of society have to be constantly redistributed, and their redistribution fought about, for disentanglement to progress. Compare, for example, a market economy based on conditional and temporary claims to capital, allocated by publicly regulated

capital funds, to a market economy committed to absolute property rights. The former economy does more than the latter for economic decentralization, plasticity, and equality. As the argument about the reconstruction of petty commodity production has already suggested, the effort to preserve this alternative market order from authoritarian perversion may in turn require a change in the inherited institutional forms of representative democracy. Such a reorganization is in fact independently required if we are to realize more fully any of the goals of freedom and decentralization, community and concerted action, participation and equality, that have come to dominate the rhetoric of contemporary party politics. Those whose hopes depend upon our further emancipation from false necessity cannot bypass the state; they must rebuild it.

THE SEQUENTIAL EFFECTS OF FORMATIVE CONTEXTS

The Idea of Sequential Effects

A second influence upon context change is the effect an institutional or imaginative framework has upon the frameworks or framework changes that may succeed it. A formative context exists in the sense that it resists being disturbed by everyday tensions and that it helps shape a richly defined set of routines; the sense of its existence is parasitic upon the sense of entrenchment. It is harder to change the framework or to challenge the roles and hierarchies the framework supports than to fight, exchange, or converse within the framework. Of course, people may soon discover that they cannot advance very far in the pursuit of their material or ideal interests without confronting established institutional or imaginative assumptions. But they must then begin to change the quality of their efforts and ideas. They must overcome a higher order of resistance.

As context-preserving conflict escalates into context-transforming conflict, the contestants move into the broader and more intense struggle with stronger or weaker weapons. A formative context shapes the means and opportunities of struggle. It gives some groups – as defined by their place in the system of social divisions and hierarchy – an advantage over others. It makes certain conceptions, programs, or ideals easier to justify and even easier to comprehend than others.

Moreover, the different institutional complexes and imaginative preconceptions that make up a formative context are unlikely to be equally open to revision. Some will be harder to replace. The relatively greater recalcitrance to revision from which some parts of the structure benefit may result from the greater support these parts

receive from the other components of the framework. Remember that a formative context is neither an indivisible whole nor a freely recombinable collection. Some of its elements may be relatively easier to change without having to change the institutions and beliefs with which it connects. Other parts, however, may be harder to disconnect. Their substitution may require more extensive revolutionary reforms. When you combine the uneven vulnerability of the elements forming a context with the uneven opportunities each context affords to different social groups or movements of opinion, you can begin to see how a framework may influence its own sequel.

This sequential influence never determines particular outcomes. At most it makes certain lines of transformation more likely than others. Given the complexity of the circumstances involved in each instance of context change and the difficulty of comparing such instances, we have little prospect of ever being able to quantify these probabilities. No wonder we can explain a context change retrospectively much better than we can predict it, although an element of prediction is required for the intellectual guidance of transformative practice.

An additional qualification is that the sequential effect remains time-bound. We may be able to understand (at least retrospectively) how a formative context shapes its immediate sequel. But we cannot easily trace the effects of this influence at later moments of context change. There are too many possible combinations: any number of parts of the new, revised formative context that may be revised farther down the road; any number of possible replacements for the revised parts; any number of reasons why the easiest transformations may be spurned in favor of more difficult results; any number of alien contexts and traditions that may be drawn upon as sources of transformative inspiration; and any number of ways in which all these causes may be further shaken up by the imponderables of invention and insight, of war and economic crisis.

Thus, a chain of sequential effects is, if not randomly aligned, at least extremely sinuous. The point is not that it is uncaused but rather that so many and such various causal influences act upon it. For by abandoning the pretensions of deep-structure social explanations we also give up all hope of discovering a master set of dynamic tendencies underlying sequences of context change. Sequential effects must be understood apart from other long-run influences upon context change that are less directly time-bound: the attractive force of negative capability and the subsidiary, countervailing influence of coercive surplus extraction. The sequential effects are not epiphenomena; they have their own life, and their messiness is just the reverse side of their relative autonomy.

Within the limits just outlined, the sequential effects should nevertheless be viewed as possible long-term, cumulative influences upon

context making. They do not have to push in any particular direction except to the extent that they may interact with the influence of negative capability. But a tilt toward one line of transformation can build upon a previous tilt, and what began as a slight inclination to change in a particular direction may become an orientation harder to redirect.

The whole contentious narrative with which this chapter began provides a striking example of sequential effects. The conflicts that produced the dominant forms of governmental and economic organization and of private rights did not take place in a social and institutional vacuum. They occurred against the background of institutions and beliefs that favored certain groups and disfavored others. The reigning institutional arrangements discussed in earlier parts of this chapter implied a change in the structure of social division and hierarchy and in the distribution of the key economic and non-economic resources of society. A standard topic of European history-writing is the reconstruction of economic and governmental elites that attended the transition from "feudalism" to "capitalism." But the alternative of petty commodity production stood in far sharper tension with preexisting elites and their progeny than did the styles of economic organization that came to prevail. This greater conflict with established interests would have applied even to the naive, unstable, and unreconstructed form of petty commodity production. The formative contexts of late medieval European societies tilted the scales in favor of what later became the dominant approach to agriculture and industry. The reality of the tilt is hardly a speculative hypothesis. The petty bourgeois challenge was usually defeated or contained even before its internal instabilities had become manifest. The instruments of its suppression went all the way from outright repression to legal rules and economic policies that disfavored smallholders, petty manufacturers, and small-time traders.

Even with this bias, however, you can imagine a series of events, not radically different from other actual occurrences, that might have overcome this tilt. After all, from a larger world-historical perspective the entire European development represented an improbable exception to the recurrent patterns of the agrarian-bureaucratic empires. The deviant petty bourgeois economic forms did occupy a larger place in many European regions where smallholders and minor manufacturers were able to cement alliances with stronger and more independent central governments. It might be objected that these regional variations merely give further proof of the bias. But the vitality of collective peasant, artisanal, or petty-manufacturing organizations was often more the outcome than the cause of particular sequences of group conflict.

Moreover, other aspects of the institutional genealogy reviewed

in this chapter demonstrate the limits rather than the force of the tilt. The authority of preexisting elites may help account for the contours of liberal constitutionalism. But that authority cannot explain why these elitist liberal polities nevertheless opened themselves to universal, unrestricted suffrage, mass parties, and trade unions. To appreciate the biases of sequence correctly, you must combine them with the other influences upon context change examined by this view of context making.

The Interplay Between Negative Capability and Sequential Effects

The most interesting problems about sequential effects concern the relation between such effects and the influence of negative capability. In the evolutionary variant of deep-structure social explanation the influence of a context upon its own transformation has no independent force but is merely the detailed expression of the lawlike tendencies governing context change. For the politicized social theory developed in this book, however, the indeterminacy, complexity, and reversibility of dynamic tendencies, such as those resulting from the advantages of negative capability, give sequential effects an independent life. This independence in turn renders both puzzling and significant the relation between the time-bound force of sequence and the less focused attractions of negative capability.

One side of the relation has already been discussed. The influence of negative capability works with and through the materials generated by particular sequences of context change. To be sure, the pressure of negative capability (and of the countervailing forces that qualify its operation) may have influenced the course of context change. But such pressure counts as only one of many influences.

There is never a well-ordered list of the possible institutional or imaginative forms society may assume at a given level of emancipation from false necessity. The new forms are built with the institutional and imaginative materials at hand. The materials at hand are in the first instance the ideas and arrangements of the context being changed. They also are all the intellectual and practical resources to be recovered from the past history of that context or of other frameworks. As disentanglement progresses traditions of context change intersect more readily and overtly. The recombination of elements drawn from different traditions becomes easier so long as they embody comparable levels of negative capability.

The system of absolute property rights, for example, developed through a reworking of the same doctrinal categories that had served the rank-specific or corporate-style prerogatives of an estatist society. The discontinuities between estatist and liberal jurisprudence may

impress a mind formed by the conventions of Western legal culture. But once we reexamine the same problems from a broader comparative historical perspective, we become aware of how these different legal styles depend upon the continuous stretching and reinterpretation of civilian and common-law categorical schemes or argumentative habits.

What is true of the system of private rights also holds, though less obviously, for economic and governmental institutions. The emergent forms of economic and governmental organization constituted recognizable transmutations of an institutional vocabulary many centuries in the building. Even the institutional program of empowered democracy presented in Chapter 5 merely takes off from a particular historical approach to the organization of market economies and representative democracies.

It may seem that the givens and starting points of reconstruction hardly matter so long as we continue to reconstruct endlessly. But reconstruction takes time to learn and to execute, and it is often unintentional. Moreover, we can never tell for sure to what extent our results have been influenced by our working materials. For we lack a secure, uncontroversial Archimedean point outside particular sequences of context change from which to assess the proximity of particular traditions to a universal ideal. Even our bolder efforts at the speculative understanding of social experience are never more than the penumbral enlargement of our actual, recollected, and intimated experience of life in particular social orders and of fights about particular revolutionary reforms.

Thus far I have discussed the constraints that sequential effects impose upon the workings of the search for negative capability. Consider now the reverse relation: the consequences of an advance toward greater disentanglement for the sequential effects of formative contexts. A more disentranced framework is a framework less resistant to challenge and revision in the midst of ordinary social activity. To the extent that our context-making freedom can be partly institutionalized and thereby exercised without the violent accompaniment of a Hobbesian social war, to that extent we cease to be the passive automatons of our contexts. Just as the more disentranced framework imposes less of a grid of preestablished division and hierarchy upon our ordinary dealings, so too it enforces less of a bias upon its own transformation.

One way cumulative advances in negative capability may influence the passage from one context state to the next is the outright exclusion of institutional solutions or social visions embodying a lower measure of negative capability. The cumulative growth of negative capability may also diminish what I have called the sequential effect. Because complete disentanglement represents an idealized limit rather than a

goal we can envisage actually reaching, the sequential effect never entirely disappears. But the thesis that this effect can vary in force follows directly from the thesis that social orders differ in their power to imprison us within a particular version of sociability.

The same developments that diminish the power of sequential effects also influence the countervailing forces of stability and destabilization that besiege an ongoing formative context and the regularity with which transformative opportunities arise from the very circumstances that lend a second-order necessity to social frameworks. In the more denaturalized structures, there is less distance to cross before a context-reproducing practice becomes a context-destabilizing activity. The opportunities counterbalancing the spurious, second-order necessity of formative contexts lie more clearly at the surface of social life.

The institutional genealogy presented in the initial sections of this chapter describes, among other things, a passage from a circumstance in which sequential effects were relatively stronger to another state of affairs in which they became relatively weaker. The preexisting arrangements, preconceptions, and elites of early modern European society tilted the scales in favor of what became our dominant styles of economic, governmental, and legal organization. Undoubtedly, contemporary formative contexts continue to bias change in certain directions as well as to impose the recurrent, unchosen patterns described by the cycles of reform and retrenchment. But the tilt – at least the tilt in any direction other than the direction of further disentanglement – has become smaller now than it was then.

How do we find out whether such a change has in fact occurred? How do we measure the tilt or even infer its existence? We can try to do with our recent past and contemporary experience what historical argument does with more distant events. We can consider the extent to which preexisting arrangements and assumptions, and the divisions and hierarchies they support, fail to explain the institutional experiments that take place in particular societies. In our own practical efforts at transformation we can try to judge the role these antecedent circumstances have played and will play in the success, the failure, or the redirection of our plans.

Imagine this condition of cumulative disentanglement extended to its outermost, idealized limit. The chief form of ordinary social conflict becomes the clash and combination of parties of opinion – organized or unorganized movements of thought and sensibility whose commitments cannot be explained by the place its supporters occupy in a preexisting system of social roles and ranks. The ideals and programs of these movements do not remain within the limits set by any shared scheme of the models of human association meant to be realized in different domains of social existence. Nothing in

this description implies that people's beliefs and actions become somehow uncaused. In fact, the metaphysical determinist may continue to claim that such beliefs and actions remain entirely determined. The point is, however, that they can no longer be explained as the products of a fundamental, unchallenged framework of institutions and assumptions.

At the times when the sequential effects retain their importance and the attraction of negative capability prevails over the countervailing advantages of coercive surplus extraction, a characteristic tension may arise. Some context changes may promise more for the development of negative capability while other, rival institutional or imaginative proposals may accommodate more easily the preexisting institutional order and the group interests it supports. Thus, the dominant institutional forms of Western industrialization were easier to reconcile with the interests of the richest and most powerful groups of early modern European society than any suitably revised version of the petty bourgeois alternative. The institutional inventions needed to cure the petty bourgeois program of its internal instabilities would only have aggravated its unacceptability to the dominant interests. Yet this program would have been more promising to the development of negative capability. Thinking that the bolder but ultimately more promising solution had no chance from the start, because it threatened the rich and the powerful, would not do justice to the many intentional and unintentional ways in which the more disentranced and empowering approach may triumph.

Reconsider, from the vantage point of a speculative conception of world history, the preceding discussion of the relation between the two sources of cumulative, long-term context change. If history were the history of a single society, if it were, from the outset, world history in the strongest sense, there would be no way to tell apart the cumulative development of negative capability and the influence of a particular context upon its sequels. There would simply be an occasional or even cumulative weakening of the restrictive force of imaginative and institutional frameworks in social life. On the other hand, if there were simply separate societies, each with its own series of sequential constraints and opportunities, these parallel and separate sequences would never cross. Everything would then happen as if history were marked by many independent chains of sequential effects. In fact, however, neither view describes what history is like.

Several circumstances converge to account for the link between the sequential influence of formative contexts and the causal significance of negative capability. History, to be sure, is the history of different societies, with their distinguishing formative contexts. Even at their most entrenched, however, the contexts never fully determine the deeds and thoughts of the people who move within them. More-

over, the degree of their determining influence may itself wane. Because different social worlds do in fact collide, materially and spiritually, these causal sequences may be jumbled. They may even merge, ultimately, into a single process: that would indeed be world history.

Such a world history may emerge because one formative context or sequence of formative contexts has taken the others over. It may also come about because all distinctive contexts and sequences of context change have been mixed together. Insofar as world history emerges by this second route, its emergence dissolves the force of sequential restraint. But because social life never entirely escapes from dependence upon a limiting and shaping context, the sequential effect never disappears completely.

Thus, the basis for the influence of sequence also explains the many-sided relativity of this influence. It draws its force and direction from a particular social order. The very subsistence of such an order depends in turn upon the temporary suppression of the conflicts whose containment enables a textured form of life to subsist. Explanations appealing to the force of sequence must do justice to all the things that enable people to limit and resist this force.

THE FACTOR OF DISTURBANCE: TRASHING THE SCRIPT

Resistance to the Context

The final set of ideas in this view of context change deals less with a general influence upon the remaking of our social orders than with a limit upon all other such influences. This limit is the resistance the individual opposes to determination by his context, or by a list or sequence of contexts, or by the forces shaping the content and history of these contexts. Our recalcitrance turns out to be closely connected with another source of disturbance in history and in our efforts to understand history. The additional cause of uncertainty is the partly self-fulfilling character of our conceptions of social reality and possibility.

More than any other fact, our resistance to determination by our contexts accounts for the surprising and paradoxical quality of social experience. But though this structure-defying resistance represents an anomaly in relation to all other fixed structures or structure-shaping forces, it is no mere residue of unexplained fact in this view of context change. On the contrary, it has an integral role to play in a theory, like this one, that unties the possibilities of social explanation from the appeal to all-determining and wholly determined structures.

This factor of disturbance makes explicit the basic circumstances

that prevent all the other forces invoked in the narrative or the theory from meshing to form a closed and compulsive pattern. Its presence becomes more obvious as historical reconstruction or social description gain details. Moreover, its significance grows at the extremes of the spectrum of disentanglement. At the farthest limit of emancipation from false necessity, it turns into a pervasive quality of ordinary experience. At the opposite pole of maximum entrenchment, it accounts for our capacity to overcome the constraints and redirect the forces that seemed to hold us in thrall.

The Context-Transcending Imagination and the Factor of Disturbance

The resistance of the individual to the institutional and imaginative framework of social life appears in two distinct forms that at first seem related only by opposition. On the one hand, the source of disturbance is the individual's partiality, the ultimate basis of which is his residual sense of being the center of the world – at least of his own world. No matter how entrenched the practical and imaginative order of society may be, it never turns him into its pliant agent. To some marginal but significant extent, he has ideas and goals of his own. He can never quite grasp the social order from a perspective that wholly transcends his place within it. Even when his intentions become altruistic, his knowledge remains fragmentary. The collisions between these partial perspectives, of will or understanding, give rise to an instability still more basic than the instability inherent in the very mechanisms that help stabilize formative contexts.

The element of disturbance appears, as well, in another, bolder and often more generous guise, the visionary impulse, the capacity to imagine – and to try out – forms of practical or passionate connection and of subjective experience that transcend the divisions and hierarchies of social life. It is the ability, which the individual never quite loses, to do the things that fail to fit.

The two faces of the element of disturbance look in opposite directions: one, toward self-centeredness, the other, toward prophetic hope. They are nevertheless faces of the same thing. Observe, first, their negative connection. They both presuppose the individual's resistance to the influence of a formative context. Even this negative relation, however, fails to do justice to the strength and significance of the link. Remember that the opportunity of the visionary appeal is precisely the individual's experience of forms of subjectivity and connection that override the constraints of the established order. Both aspects of the element of disturbance begin with the real, embodied, never quite capturable person whose antagonism to the dogmas and

institutions of society takes the dual form of quarrelsome self-concern and visionary detachment.

To acknowledge such a two-sided element of disturbance is to take no position on the metaphysical issue of free will and determinism. It may or may not be true in some ultimate sense that to explain something is to give its sufficient conditions and that failure to do so represents a failure of explanation itself. The thesis central to this set of ideas takes its stance one step down from the metaphysical controversy. It tries to separate out from this controversy the more limited dispute whose resolution is essential to its concerns. The minimal form of the thesis is the claim that however human conduct may be determined, it cannot be determined exclusively by the institutional and imaginative design of society.

The element of disturbance operates with very different effect according to the level of exploitation of negative capability that has in fact been achieved. At the lowest levels – when formative contexts are relatively entrenched – it increases the chances for breaking out of a rigid order. It ensures that even the framework most carefully and successfully immunized against fighting can again be broken apart. At the contrasting limit of maximum emancipation from false necessity, the role of the factor of disturbance may be exactly reversed. It may now become a force that provokes the resurgence of an entrenched social order.

People who find themselves in a more or less extreme situation of loosened structure may act in ways that draw them back into a circumstance of straitened constraint. They may do this more or less deliberately, finding their freedom too troublesome, too dangerous, too costly, or too unholy. They may also reach the same result under the influence of selfish motives and shortsighted ideas.

Even in a circumstance of maximum disentanglement, governmental power or group strategy may create the first elements of a resurgent order of social division and hierarchy. As soon as a system of differential social stations begins to crystallize, people may start to cast their conceptions of interest, identity, and possibility in its terms. They may adopt a strategy of preemptive security and narrowing alliances. They may simply fail to grasp the consequences of their actions for the reconsolidation of entrenched arrangements.

Our recalcitrance to thoroughgoing determination by the established institutional and imaginative structure of social life is a source of disturbance and surprise. But it need not represent an anomalous or subversive factor within the type of explanatory social theory argued for here. All other parts of this view of context change require this addition. The forms of destabilization built into the methods for stabilizing social contexts depend, in each instance, upon the structure-resisting quality of individual action and insight. The sequential

influence of an order is only relative: one of the causes and corollaries of its relativity is precisely the individual's ability to act and think in ways this order can neither control nor countenance. The cumulative move toward higher levels of negative capability presupposes the possibility and the effectiveness of structure-breaking action and in turn widens the area available for its operation. Here at last is a view of transformation that need not treat the most obvious feature of ordinary social and historical experience as a mysterious inconvenience, nor conclude that reason must lose where freedom wins.

The Self-Fulfilling Quality of Our Theoretical Conceptions

Our views about society have an irremediably self-fulfilling quality. The effect of our conceptions of social reality and possibility upon the very experience they describe and explain means that our social theories have an ineradicable element of contestability, which is nowhere more evident or important than in our ideas about the existence, composition, and reconstruction of formative contexts. This incurable lack of assurance touches history itself, for it condemns us to disagree and struggle about our understanding of social life as well as about our material and ideal interests.

The self-fulfilling quality of our ideas about contexts is closely connected with our resistance to the influence of context. This quality is much more than the result of a localized interference of a measuring procedure upon measured phenomena. If we were indeed fully determined by our contexts or by a system of lawlike tendencies and constraints underlying the realization or succession of these frameworks, social reality might indeed be isolated from the effects of any particular account of it. Our conjectures would represent only better- or worse-informed approximations to the understanding of objective influences upon contexts and their revision. Because no system of context-produced or context-producing laws can fully govern us or limit our possibilities, we cannot by appealing to a closed system of laws determine what our contexts can become. Yet the answers we explicitly or implicitly give to this question influence our goals and actions. They end up changing what society is like and even what we are like.

We develop, probe, and test our ideas about social reality and possibility by doing transformative or conservative things to social situations. Our ideas about what can be done and what can happen influence both the way we define our interests or ideals and the actions by which we attempt to safeguard or advance them. In both ways our views of society – and about the character and transformability of social frameworks – inform our conservative or transformative

projects, which in turn push social organization and personal experience in certain directions. Thus, our explanatory ideas leave their mark upon the reality for which they attempt to account. Beliefs about society or social possibility may actually become truer (i.e., easier to apply to experience) just by having been acted upon.

Some of our projects may fail and by their failure may cast a critical light on the descriptive and explanatory assumptions that informed them. But we can never be entirely sure that these same projects might not succeed under slightly different circumstances or with the help of slightly different methods. Even when we can draw persuasive inferences from success or failure, we face a more basic difficulty. We can never be sure how much our views of social reality or possibility would be changed if we had chosen to subject our inherited social experience to different transformative pressures. We have neither the time nor the indifference required to act upon a random and comprehensive set of transformative projects. If, absurdly, we tried to act in such a manner in the hope of overcoming the bias in our beliefs about society we would once again change the subject matter – ourselves – in the very course of attempting to grasp it.

We can, indeed, go a long way toward making a view of social reality and possibility more independent of the revelations produced by current or remembered collective efforts to preserve or transform our forms of social life. We can try to develop a conception drawing upon the revelations of many such efforts, undertaken by many classes, communities, and peoples in many different eras. A social theory compensates for its relative removal from a particular setting of conflict by recollecting a rich experience of reaffirmed and broken constraint and by drawing around this recollected and interpreted experience a penumbra of intimated possibilities. In this way, it hopes to achieve something of the cognitive effect of seeing society and history from the standpoint of a numerous and varied set of transformative or conservative projects.

But there is a limit to the efficacy of this cure. Each project is itself partly the product of certain beliefs about what people can and cannot do to their societies and to themselves. It takes an all-out rationalistic optimism to suppose that these inspiring ideas or inspired endeavors cancel out one another's biases. If much of history is the product of bad theories that have become less bad merely because people took them seriously, then it is hard to know how much of this made-up reality can be changed just by taking different theories for granted.

The implication of this discussion of the self-fulfilling quality of social theories is not that social reality is an artifact of our speculative ideas about society and social transformation. It is rather that we are unable to separate out with assurance the aspect of past, present, or

future experience that is a product rather than a test of our speculative views. Nor does the argument lead to the conclusion that a social theory represents merely the elaborate rationalization of a transformative or conservative precommitment. The conclusion is, instead that we cannot separate, clearly and definitively, the part of a speculative social theory that represents a successful attempt at a more detached understanding and the part that can succeed only as a self-fulfilling myth, even a myth of emancipation and enlightenment.

THE USES OF THE THEORY OF CONTEXT MAKING

The Complete Job

How can the theory of context making presented in the second part of this chapter be used? From the outset, you should be careful not to treat this view the way you would a comprehensive theory in natural science: as a closed system of ideas that can be tested only at its periphery of empirical application. Rather, the view inspires a loose collection of explanatory practices and informs an equally loose group of transformative activities.

What would it mean to do a complete explanatory job on a social situation with the help of this account of context making? There would rarely be reason to attempt the complete job, but it may be helpful to imagine what it would look like. For the effort to do so provides an occasion to recapitulate the chief theses of the theory and emphasizes its twin central intentions. One intention is to break the link between the methods of social or historical explanation and the appeal to context-produced or context-producing laws and constraints. The other is to historicize the relation between structure and freedom: to explain stability and change in a way that not only recognizes but elucidates our capacity to diminish the force with which our frameworks deny us the ability to remake and rethink them.

Imagine, then, a complete job performed on a complicated social circumstance with the aid of the theory developed in this and preceding chapters. It may seem odd to apply a theory of context change to a social situation rather than to an episode of revolutionary reform. But this application simplifies the argument and underlines the continuities between the explanatory conjectures of this chapter and the descriptive or comparative categories of Chapters 2 and 3. Remember that a major theme of the explanatory argument of *False Necessity* has been that the way we describe and explain the workings of a social framework and of the whole social world it shapes already implies a view of framework change. Remember also that the po-

lemical narrative beginning this chapter anticipates the application of the theory to an extended and connected series of social changes.

The first step in the complete job is to distinguish in the situation being studied the formative context and the formed routines. Actually, the attempt to select out the institutions and preconceptions that deserve to be included in the framework already presupposes a view of past transformations and future possibilities. We can state with assurance that a practice or preconception belongs to a context only when we know that its appearance has redirected, and that its substitution would rearrange, the ways in which people use the tangible and intangible resources of society to set terms to one another's activities and to determine the conditions on which some people can enlist the practical aid or allegiance of others.

The second step is to analyze the internal composition of the formative context and the particular practical and imaginative activities by which this context is regularly reproduced. The analysis must take into account that some parts of the framework are more tightly embedded in the whole they compose, and therefore harder to replace piecemeal, than others. It must describe the connections among the components of the context in ways compatible with the theory of context making, recognizing that our ideas about the internal constitution of a framework and our ideas about how the context gets remade are always just the reverse side of each other. It must show how the arrangements and preconceptions constituting the formative structure are constantly reacted and defended by certain practical or conceptual activities, all the way from the form of commodity exchange to the prevailing method of moral and legal controversy. The executor of the complete job must show how each context-preserving activity draws shape and guidance from the framework it helps reproduce. He must also describe the particular devices of containment or truncation that prevent each context-respecting activity from turning into an occasion for context-transforming struggle.

The third step of the complete job is to place the institutional and imaginative framework in a double history. There is a history of sequential effects: the effects of earlier context or context states upon the present framework, and the effects of this framework upon its own transformative sequel, the bias it imposes upon the direction of change. Then, there is a history of the attractions of negative capability and of the forces that may counterbalance or override them. The established context must be placed on a spectrum of entrenchment and disentanglement, and its emergence or subsistence must be interpreted as an episode in the relation of empowerment to emancipation from false necessity. If either of these two histories – the history of negative capability or the history of sequential effects –

existed alone, the formative context might be or seem to be the passive product of a determinate evolutionary dynamic. But the reciprocal interference of the two histories prevents any cohesive set of forces from becoming predominant, and makes room for surprise.

An important part of the attempt to locate the framework in this double historical setting is the commitment to understand how the context fails to fit into the sequence from which it emerged and how it in turn coexists with deviant modes of practice and sensibility that fail to fit into it. These incongruous elements may often be used as material with which to resist and to revise the framework. They may even prefigure institutions and conceptions that empower us more fully by pushing back farther the restraints of false necessity. But the passage of deviant practice into a more dominant position is never a smooth operation; it is likely to require the invention of novel institutional forms and the reinterpretation of familiar ideals. To execute the complete job we must see how much the present framework is indebted to a record of past, surprising deviations, and we must study the anomalies and the resistances that may play a similar role in relation to the established order.

The fourth step of the complete job is to consider what the present context might become under different directions, degrees, and circumstances of transformative pressure. Part of this exercise involves analyzing the opportunities for destabilization that result from the very activities that constantly restabilize the formative context. Another part is to examine the characteristically paradoxical relation of received ideals and recognized interests to the established institutional arrangements of society. The current institutional arrangements help shape the definition of these interests and ideals while frustrating their more complete fulfillment. Yet another part of this final step of the complete job is to anticipate the alternative institutions and conceptions that may realize such interests and ideals more fully while changing their recognized content in the course of realizing them. The last step in the complete job may even seek to describe the transformations of current practices and preconceptions that would contribute to a further measure of empowerment through disentanglement. You would probe for the points of convergence between these changes and reforms required to realize given ideals and interests.

This book can be read as an attempt actually to do this complete job on the formative contexts of certain contemporary societies while developing and defending the theory under which the job is to be done. But the tentative and sketchy character of the result in a work already long and complicated shows that the complete job is a limiting case and a dangerous one too. For the standard explanatory uses of the theory we must look elsewhere.

The Normal Practice of a Politicized Social Theory

The more accessible alternative to the complete job is the revision of familiar genres of explanatory, critical, and programmatic writing. The view of contexts and context change presented in *False Necessity* can be used to support, connect, develop, and reconstruct these genres, to mix them together, and even to create others like them. At a minimum the view can serve as an antidote to dangers that beset these inherited ways of thinking and writing. *False Necessity* incorporates – and revises in the course of incorporating – each style of thought and explanation enumerated in the following paragraphs.

Consider first the genre of antinecessitarian explanation. This style of analysis criticizes an evolutionary stereotype, such as the identification of a simplified view of the English route to economic growth with the universal characteristics of “modernization” or “capitalism.” The critic puts the stereotype in its place. He may hesitate to reject it entirely. But he reinterprets it against a background of forgotten conflict, of repressed or contained alternatives, and of continuing and continuingly promising deviations from the supposed norm. He emphasizes the relatively accidental quality of the events that resulted in the prevalence of the once or currently dominant arrangements. He takes the losers seriously even when he does not side with them.

The weak point of the antinecessitarian explanation is its characteristic lack of foundation for the claim that the alternatives were realistic, that they were not in fact ruled out by deep-seated economic, organizational, or psychological imperatives. This weakness is often aggravated by the temptation to disregard the external obstacles or internal instabilities that the defeated or contained alternatives confronted. The failure to recognize these instabilities and obstacles in turn invites a recurrent historiographic put-down: the counter-revisionist historian shows that the would-be radical prophets were in fact archaizing malcontents. Thus, for example, the petty-bourgeois radicals of the nineteenth century may be dismissed as the last-ditch defenders of a doomed artisanal dream. The politicized social theory for which *False Necessity* argues provides conjectures, categories, and methods that prevent an interest in explaining social and historical facts from being confused with an interest in vindicating the deep necessity of actual outcomes and triumphant arrangements. Moreover, by its emphasis on the importance and the variability of institutional forms, the theory shows how we can acknowledge the difficulties that the defeated alternatives faced in their original institutional form while nevertheless continuing to claim that these dif-

faculties might have been – and may yet be – superseded once an alternative acquires a new institutional character.

A second, related genre is the analysis of a whole social world from the standpoint of its hidden tensions and vulnerabilities. The statecraft of reform and subversion habitually relies upon just such an analysis. When written at all, this genre is characteristically written episodically and for a practical purpose. Yet the historical reconstruction of a past situation may aspire to the same quality when its concern is to see beyond the distortions of hindsight to the many oppositions and possibilities in a world that is past, and thereby to recover the ambiguity and openness in what is now dead and gone. The practitioner of this genre wants to understand the situation as a whole rather than as a linear series of episodes of interest accommodation or problem solving in the manner of positivist social science. But he also wants to avoid the denial of multiple tensions and multiple possibility that has traditionally characterized the emphasis on the whole in deep-structure social explanation and in the earlier tradition of nationalist and romantic historiography. He seeks to recognize the detailed mechanisms of stabilization and constraint that lend a second-order necessity to the established order while also identifying the transformative opportunities to which each mechanism gives rise. He appreciates the shaping and constraining influence of the dominant arrangements and assumptions while also searching for the residues and anomalies they fail to crowd out.

This analysis of stability and destabilization, of precarious dominance and promising deviance, is in constant danger of taking too much of the current institutional and imaginative framework for granted. It may take the framework for granted whether it understates the presence of deviance and the prospects for destabilization or whether it overstates them. For the subtle and delicate part of the exercise is understanding how recognized group interests, collective identities, and received ideals may change as practical or imaginative conflict escalates and as practices and institutions are replaced. To offer a way of imagining such changes is the main contribution this politicized social theory can make to the analysis of stability and destabilization.

A third genre focuses on the interplay between routine activities and institutional or imaginative assumptions within a particular domain of social existence. Its concern is to reform a specialized branch of social analysis and turn it into the living image of a less superstitious understanding of social life. It seeks to develop an understanding less likely to mistake particular artifacts for social laws. Take economics as an example. *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task* discussed the distinct techniques of evasion by which the different styles of contemporary economic analysis evade the problem of the frame-

work. Thus, to recall only the most striking instance, the macroeconomist concedes in principle that the relations among aggregate economic phenomena (such as savings, investment, and employment) he seeks to study and establish depend upon very particular institutional assumptions such as the form and extent of unionization, the instruments with which governments may influence the economy, and the style of industrial organization and enterprise finance. Yet, having made this concession of principle, he hastens to return to a style of analysis and explanation that connects the aggregates directly to one another against an institutional background that he rarely makes crucial to the internal content of the economic account. Implicitly, he begins to treat the economic regularities he observes as if they were the laws of a general type of economic organization (i.e., the "regulated market economy"), irreplaceable except by distant, unrealistic, and undesirable alternatives. He fails to treat these regularities as the expression of a highly particular, temporary, and loosely connected series of social institutions and preconceptions. In a period of quiescence, when basic arrangements remain unchallenged, such an approach may achieve a measure of apparent success. This macroeconomist, however, attributes the wrong sense to the correlations that do hold in such a period of stagnation. For he sees deep necessity and general law where there are only the grinding routines reproduced by a makeshift and unique set of formative arrangements and beliefs. He will be caught by surprise as soon as the formative context changes again.

In economics, the genre of reformed, specialized analysis inspired by this antinaturalistic social theory would put the interplay between economic activities and the institutional and imaginative framework of social life at the center of its concern. It would recognize the pure system of equilibrium analysis or choice theory for what it is: a useful but empirically empty analytical apparatus. It would therefore also ascribe a much diminished and qualified sense of lawfulness to economic phenomena. It would not make its explanatory hopes depend upon the discovery of more determinate and universal economic laws. Every other branch of positivist social science can be reformed in a similar spirit.

The literature of social science includes many fragmentary examples of this genre. Economics, for example, has the tradition of nineteenth-century German and twentieth-century American institutionalism. Even the writings of mainstream economists have contributed to this mode of economic thought. But such examples dramatize all the more clearly the risk of an unguided eclecticism that compensates for its lack of theoretical direction by snatching

ideas from incompatible styles of analysis. The result has often been to confirm the adepts of orthodox economics (or of its counterparts in other branches of positivist social science) in the conviction that their critics lack a coherent alternative. For, indeed, all coherent alternatives in any particular area of social science either presuppose or prefigure an escape from the confines of positivist social explanation, with its evasion of the framework problem, and of deep-structure social theory, with its reification of formative structures and its misguided search for structure-producing laws. The politicized theory of this book offers a principle of criticism and guidance that can help rescue such intellectual and political dissent from confusion and marginality.

Still another genre (or set of genres) appropriated, informed, and revised by a politicized social theory like the one developed in *False Necessity* is the programmatic proposal: the description of ways to reorganize social arrangements and institutions. In its contemporary forms programmatic thought suffers from a double disturbance: it lacks confidence in a way to argue about ideals and interests or about their implications; it also has no credible conception of social reality and transformation, no persuasive way to think about contexts and context change. The explanatory argument of *False Necessity* is most directly relevant to the second trouble.

In one guise, programmatic writing searches for minor adjustments, exercises in tinkering. Its proposals may then appear realistic, but their semblance of realism depends entirely on their making few or no changes in the established formative context of social life. (It is easy to appear realistic when you accept almost everything.) This style of programmatic thought takes interests and ideals as they are, with whatever authority they are assumed to possess, and looks for a more effective way to realize them. It has no prepared answer to the critic who asks, But why should we credit these recognized interests and ideals with any force? The normal element of such a style is practical controversy within a particular political community rather than abstract debate among speculative thinkers. (There is, of course, no a priori reason why ambitious theoretical claims cannot be advanced to support a marginally adjusted version of current practice. Such a combination, however, is today almost exclusively an artifact of the academic political philosophers.)

The other common contemporary genre of programmatic writing is utopian. It describes ideal arrangements distant from current realities. The utopian may not even pretend to have a practical way to reach this goal from the position he and his society now occupy. He nevertheless hopes that his radical proposals may inspire transformative practice in the here and now. However, the absence of a credible view of transformation exacts its price. The utopian proposal

often turns out to be little more than the inverted image of current reality. Its content betrays the failure of the utopian thinker to reconstruct or even reimagine the very social order he appears to have overcome in an act of admonitory fantasy. Whether presented evocatively or discursively, the utopian vision speaks for interests and ideals that transcend the standards of a present political community. Yet the latter-day utopian (unless, once again, he is an academic political philosopher) has no prepared way to support the authority of his proposals. Though he speaks to frustrated parts of current experience, he lacks a developed view of the role these repressed aspects of sensibility and sociability ought to play in our imagination of a reordered social world.

The social theory for which this volume argues can help fuse the two genres of programmatic thought by providing both with a tenable way to deal with contexts and context change. So long as we lack the means for such a synthesis we remain condemned to the surrogate and arbitrary conception that measures realism by the closeness of proposed practice to current practice. (Even such an approach, however, rests on assumptions about transformative possibility, for how do we know what is close?) As a result, we are torn between dreams that seem unrealizable and prospects that hardly appear to matter. The aim must be, instead, to replace the criterion of closeness with a conception of realistic trajectories of context change. Along each trajectory, proposals may be cast in terms ranging from narrowly focused and short-run plans to distant and comprehensive reconstructions. Yet we need not present even the most radical proposal as a timeless blueprint, nor identify it with perfectionist aspirations, nor make it merely invert or negate the institutional and imaginative vocabulary of current society. The argument of Chapter 5 shows how a version of programmatic thought that overrides the contrast between the tinkering and the utopian genres of programmatic argument also effaces the contrast between taking for granted received ideals or recognized interests and searching for a more transcendent perspective. The explanatory theory that informs this revised approach to programmatic writing extends into a view of normative practice.

A politicized social theory must do its work through the reform of established genres like these, and through the invention of yet other ways of thinking and writing. The reform of each genre offers a new opportunity to reopen the issues raised by the attempt to sever the link between our practices of social explanation and the denial of our ability to remake our contexts. It enables us to undertake localized intellectual interventions in the spirit of comprehensive and radical intellectual reconstruction.

A CODA: FUNCTIONAL AND COUNTERFACTUAL EXPLANATION IN THE THEORY OF CONTEXT MAKING

The theory of context making set out in the second part of this chapter becomes more precise when reconsidered in the light of two well-known philosophical issues: the debate about functional explanation and the controversy over counterfactual explanation. For the most part, this work takes up methodological issues as an integral part of substantive debates; a methodological program always transcribes obliquely a substantive vision. Occasionally, however, the explicit analysis of methodological issues serves to dispel crucial ambiguities in a substantive argument.

Functional Explanation in the Theory

The view of context making seems to rely, in certain respects, on functional explanation, especially when it explains events according to their contribution to the development of negative capability. It therefore seems vulnerable to the criticisms leveled against functional hypotheses in social thought.

Functional explanations account for the emergence and continuance of a state of affairs by the consequences it produces and are therefore a species of causal explanation. They treat the power of something to generate certain effects as the cause of that thing. Whatever the difficulties in justifying the deployment of functional argument in particular explanatory settings, the structure of this explanatory approach is no more controversial than any other version of causal analysis. It fits easily into received schemes of scientific explanation, such as the deductive-nomological model.

G. A. Cohen has usefully distinguished functional explanations both from the study of functions and from those schools of twentieth-century anthropology and sociology that have been labeled functionalist. The study of functions is merely the inquiry into the consequences of states of affairs and, particularly, into the effects of these states upon one another. It implies no commitment to functional explanation, much less to the thesis distinguishing the functionalist schools. Functionalism, on the other hand, holds that everything in a society is connected and that the components of a social or cultural order must be explained by the contribution these components make to the whole that they constitute. If the study of functions is less than required for functional explanation, the functionalist thesis is more. Functional accounts can be legitimately deployed by those who see societies and cultures as largely made up of conflicting ele-

ments or who attribute explanatory force to consequences that imply the disruption rather than the maintenance of established orders.

The greatest difficulty posed by the use of functional explanation in social and historical studies consists in the failure to achieve clarity about the precise mechanism through which the consequence produces the cause. Deliberate action may provide this connecting mechanism. People set out to achieve certain objectives, and the foreseen consequences of their actions, as purposes or motives, become the causes of these actions. In these circumstances, functional explanation offers few difficulties. More precisely, the core context of functional explanation consists in situations that combine several attributes. There must be a cohesive source of action – an individual or, more debatably, a movement. Deliberate action cannot be plausibly attributed to a collection of individuals who have no active awareness of working toward a common goal. The individual or collective agent must remain largely in control of the environment of their action. When this control fails, the power of the unintended consequences of intentional actions to cause those actions requires a special, nonobvious elucidation. As Jon Elster has argued, the course of action explained must be brief. The longer the duration the less likely that cohesive and deliberate agency can be ensured and the more likely that purposive action will have to be replaced by other, more obscure and dubious ways to turn consequences into causes.

When functional explanations are used in social and historical study beyond the boundaries of the easy case defined by intentionality, effective control, and short-term duration, the mechanism by which consequences acquire causal force requires additional definition. The functional explanations advanced in this more uncertain territory are often equivocal: they invoke a vague analogy to purposive action without either specifying or justifying their departures from the scheme of purposive explanation. More often than not, the confusion matters not only for its own sake but because it denies social experience much of the quality of surprise and possibility that accompanies intentional action. To a greater or lesser extent, it encourages us to picture people as the half-conscious objects of forces explained by consequences that nobody actually ever chose and that barely anyone, other than the theorists in the know, really understands. Thus, an abyss opens between lived experience and retrospective or theoretical judgment.

Yet social and historical experience seems repeatedly to justify functional explanations that go beyond the core case of intentional action. There does seem to be something to the search for an equivalent in social studies to the Darwinian mode of functional explanation. The problem is to find the equivalent to Darwinian explanation that renders precise the more than intentional connection

between consequence and cause while respecting the sense of historical contingency.

Consider first, for the sake of the comparison, how core evolutionary theory (by which I mean here the "modern synthesis" of Darwinism and genetics) fits the model of functional explanation. The explanatory consequence is reproductive success in the environment. The mechanism that turns this consequence into a cause is the interplay between random genetic recombination and natural selection. This interplay operates against the background of additional constraints such as the mechanical limits to the building of alternative bodily forms with the biological materials at hand.

The part of the preceding theory of context making that deals with the long-term development of negative capability represents the historical parallel to the style of biological explanation. It nevertheless avoids the two main objections to the use of suprainentional functional accounts in social study: imprecision in describing the link between consequence and cause, and retrospective or contemplative fatalism in the appreciation of historical events and social arrangements.

The counterparts, in this aspect of the theory, to the goal of reproductive success are the three distinct forms of development singled out by the theory of negative capability: the growth of the practical powers of production (or destruction), the potentially cumulative emergence of forms of practical collaboration or passionate attachment less circumscribed by the restraints of a fixed pattern of dependence or dominion, and the advance of theoretical insight into the truth about false necessity. It is important to remember that these distinct cumulative developments remain always mere reversible possibilities. Moreover, in their most general form, they draw their authority in part from the contribution they all make to a freedom whose value is itself controversial: the freedom that consists in resisting imprisonment by a particular structure of life or discourse. The third, theoretical expression of the development of negative capability highlights this special sense of moral progression and reveals what the other two expressions have in common. The development of practical powers, or the creation of forms of exchange and communities less constrained by a preexisting hierarchical order, often proceeds in advance of what available theoretical insight considers possible. But these new social forms can continue to operate only because the participants in them understand their principles of operation and grasp how such principles exhibit a more capacious sense of social possibility and reality than had been available before. The consequences of negative capability are more complex than the relatively straightforward goal of reproductive success. They nevertheless possess a unity: the individual and collective empowerment

made possible by repeated departures from a fixed logic of recombination in society or culture.

But what of the mechanism that would give causal force to this threefold structure of consequences? The most remarkable feature of this instance of functional explanation, in contrast to the examples found in the natural sciences, is its resistance to a clear-cut contrast between the strictly intentional and unintentional transmutations of consequences into causes. Actions that bring about a development of negative capability may be undertaken for the very purpose of developing this capability. Thus, reformers in high office may deliberately attempt to achieve the minimal weakening of the established order of social division and hierarchy that allows for a more remorseless recombination of material and human resources. Alternatively, some actions bringing about a development of negative capability may be performed without foresight of the consequences. Yet this lack of foresight is compatible with a relation to negative capability that the contrast between intentional and unknowing action cannot capture. Consider some examples. A small-scale experiment in deviation from the established forms of business organization, for example, may be undertaken merely for the sake of the immediate advantages it promises its authors. A model of human association at odds with ruling social ideals may remain quarantined in a limited area of society, without any apparent general reach.

The public or private entrepreneurs who want to initiate and extend a practical innovation must be able to replace or recombine the components of the novelty; the original innovators must themselves constantly reinvent their own invention if they want to stay ahead. Every way of organizing work, no matter how self-contained it may appear, relies on preexisting social relations and accepted assumptions in order to fill out its ambiguities. A shift in this background would itself suffice to require the rearrangement of the initial innovation if changes in particular market conditions and institutional settings did not.

Similarly, the ideological critic who wants to extend an anomalous model of human association to areas of social life it had previously left untouched must reinvent it. For every enacted picture of human association involves a transaction between a more or less indeterminate conception and a set of context-specific practices that give the conception its richly defined meaning and are in turn illuminated by it. Thus, when ideals of family community or of a democratic republic are extended into the realm of practical work and exchange, they cannot continue to mean just what they meant before.

The businessmen or ideologists who follow the leaders in these examples may have neither a commitment to the development of

any aspect of negative capability nor any extended insight into how their actions advance it. In this sense, they are unintentional agents. They must nevertheless practice the art of recombination. To practice it repeatedly and successfully, they must, to some extent, understand it. The art of recombination required involves rearranging the constitutive elements of a set of institutional practices or imaginative pictures. It also implies rearranging them in a particular direction, however circuitous and halting the pattern may be: the direction of disentrenching institutional or imaginative structures and making them more susceptible to criticism and revision in the midst of ordinary social life. To practice repeated recombination people must master at least an implicit and truncated version of the insights developed by a full-fledged theory of negative capability.

The same point can be restated in more general form. The characteristic method of social invention in general and of the development of negative capability in particular is to seize on deviant, subsidiary, or repressed elements in present or remembered experience and to push them toward a dominant position, all the while changing them in the course of this extension. The transmutation of the deviant into the dominant may amount to no more than a change in the composition of an established order of life or discourse, a change that preserves the relation between what the order incorporates and what it excludes. But if the theory of negative capability is true, the most successful transmutations over the long run – the ones least vulnerable to subversion by practical rivalry, moral indignation or aspiration, and theoretical insight – are likely to be those that permit or invite further tinkering. Thus, they may be repeatedly corrected rather than entirely replaced. Such innovations preserve to a higher degree, in their own workings, the practice of recombination that created them in the first place. The social innovator may neither want nor comprehend the development of negative capability as a general goal. But he will be more likely to fail unless he grasps the principles of accelerated recombination that help explain the workings of his most successful inventions. If his contribution to the development of negative capability is not entirely intentional and conscious, neither is it wholly compulsive and unknowing.

Compare this view of the way consequences may operate as causes in history and society to the neo-Darwinian idea of the interplay between natural selection and random genetic recombination. The counterpart to genetic recombination here is the more or less conscious and intentional innovation whose character has just been described. The counterpart to natural selection is the greater vulnerability of the less developed forms – the ones that fail to embody a higher measure of negative capability – to practical, moral, or theoretical challenge and defeat. The difference is that this test of

failure and success, rather than operating blindly, already bears the imprint of the minds like those that devise the innovations. For a set of institutions and discursive practices gets in trouble by failing to achieve the flexibility that embodies or perpetuates the practice of recombination. Thus, innovation and vulnerability to subversion connect far more intimately than genetic variation and natural selection; each is partly internal to the other. A related consequence is that the possible cumulative development of negative capability may achieve a directional movement and rapidity that biological evolution can never attain, not at least unless Lamarckianism is true.

Counterfactual Explanation in the Theory

A major feature of the theory of context change set out in these pages is its effort to dissociate success in explanation from the attempt to show that an event had to have occurred as it did. This theory devalues the necessity of what exists. Thus, the earlier polemical genealogy of the current formative contexts of power and production emphasizes how the distinct social and institutional versions of industrialism to have emerged in the course of modern history suggest a yet wider range of possible variation. Indeed, insight into lines of development that were halted or reversed is crucial to understanding the main direction events in fact took. We see a social order differently according to how much of its content we attribute to deeply rooted practical, psychological, or moral imperatives and how much to the precarious, haphazard exclusion of alternative arrangements and preconceptions.

The alternatives this theory invokes fit into no well defined set of possible forms of social organization or possible pathways of social change. They represent, instead, the imagined extension of deviations that have in fact emerged and been contained: a penumbra of variation around actual societies and actual events rather than an a priori scheme of social and historical possibility. No single criterion traces the limits of possibility or distinguishes the realistic alternatives from the futile approaches. We must determine the extent to which particular deviations failed because they were suppressed by force and guile and the extent to which they failed because they were outdone by their rivals on the multiple terrain of practical, moral, and theoretical needs. And we must be guided in this judgment by a general view of context making that tries to make sense of the entire historical record of successful or failed deviation.

Though social and historical alternatives in this theory remain parasitic upon actual events, they lose explanatory value if they cannot serve as the antecedents in hypothetical judgments of cause and effect. They must figure in arguments of a type that has proved

central to my institutional narrative: thus, for example, if petty commodity production had been the chosen path to industrialism, it would either have failed or have needed to undergo the institutional redefinition described earlier. The making of claims like these introduces into the heart of this theory of transformation the famous problem of counterfactuals and lays the view open to the criticisms leveled against counterfactuals.

A counterfactual argument draws out the consequences of a hypothetical state of affairs. Typically, the argument is used to make a point about events that did occur. Given the character of social experience and social thought, it is hardly surprising that all but the most narrowly necessitarian students of history and society find themselves repeatedly tempted to rely upon counterfactual explanations. The importance of such explanations to social and historical analysis is habitually obscured by the failure to make them entirely explicit.

Recent critics have distinguished two main objections to the common uses of counterfactual argument. (See, especially, Brian Barry's discussion, cited in the notes.) Such objections can best be understood as expressing strong and weak versions of the same test for the validity of counterfactual claims.

The strong version states that the theory violated by the hypothetical existence of the counterfactual antecedent must not be the same theory used to pass from the antecedent to the consequent. The causal passage from antecedent to consequent must not depend on laws violated by the hypothesis of the antecedent itself. For such an ambivalence creates the danger of a speculative free-for-all masquerading as rigorous explanation. Consider the following example. If the Aztecs, possessing the social organization they in fact developed, had produced the steam engine, the technical division of labor in the Aztec economy would, within two generations, have resembled the one prevailing in England around 1840. We cannot simultaneously pretend to have a theory of technical or social change capable of determining precise connections between technological innovation and social arrangements and suppose that the Aztecs might have developed the steam engine without first reconstructing their society. The reason why this first criterion of legitimacy in counterfactual explanation may nevertheless be too severe is that it discounts the possibility that an apparently unified body of explanatory ideas may be broken apart into distinct elements, some of which may then be incorporated, with the help of counterfactual speculation, into another set of ideas. Counterfactual argument may be a tool for pillaging one theory to build another.

The other, looser version of the test for the validity of counterfactual explanations criticizes those counterfactual explanations

where the change in preexisting reality dwarfs in importance the further move from antecedent to consequent. If the Aztecs, while retaining more or less the society and culture we know them by, had possessed a highly industrialized economy and a mechanized army, they would certainly have defeated the Spanish invaders. At first, the objection seems to be merely one of triviality. If the Aztecs had industrialized, the course of world history that brought Cortés to the Yucatán might well have been entirely different, and the outcome of those battles beside the point. On a closer view, however, the weak test states, more diffusely, the same basic problem posed by the strong test. The more we disrupt our understanding of reality by suspending part of our beliefs about how things happen, the more uncertain become the calculations informed solely by the beliefs we have chosen to retain. The problem is not merely that we have fewer assumptions to go on but that we are unsure about how to use the assumptions we have kept.

How well does the counterfactual element in the view of context making presented here hold up under this double test? Take, as an example of the use of counterfactual conditionals in this theory of transformation, the particular hypothesis that has played so large a role in the institutional genealogy put forward in the first part of this chapter. According to this hypothesis, there existed a major alternative to the dominant form of industrialism. This alternative might have arisen out of the actual impulses toward and beyond petty commodity production in the history of modern Western industry and agriculture. Such impulses, however, would have failed unless petty commodity production had undergone something like the institutional redefinition outlined earlier and described more fully in Chapter 5. The redefinition would have resulted in a fuller development of negative capability than the forms of production and exchange that in fact prevailed. Rather than having been defeated once and for all, the alternative remains a live possibility once new circumstances (e.g., changes in the international division of labor) bring pressure to bear against the established styles of industrialism.

This set of ideas has no trouble passing the weaker test for the validity of counterfactual explanations. The shift in preexisting reality represented by the counterfactual antecedent certainly does not dwarf the long chain of consequences derived from it. For here the antecedent – the further development of deviant tendencies that in fact emerged – differs only by gradual and almost indistinguishable steps from actual occurrences, on one side, and from the first links in the chain of consequences, on the other. Even the institutional redefinition that might have nurtured these aberrations was prefigured, however fragmentarily, in social thought and practice.

But what of the other, more severe and precise test? Do these

counterfactual claims depend upon the very theories suspended by the counterfactual antecedent? The exact reverse can be said. The same ideas that guide insight into the chain of counterfactual consequences also support the historical realism of the counterfactual antecedent and inform the way it is defined. The same conceptions link the institutional genealogy of the first part of this chapter to the theory of the second part of the chapter. They emphasize that similar practical powers (such as those implied by an incipient industrialized economy) can be realized by alternative institutional orders, that these orders differ in the degree of negative capability they embody, and that such differences can be ascertained by analyzing specific features of formative institutional contexts of power and production. More significantly and controversially, the same animating ideas suggest criteria for choosing the deviations with a better or worse chance of taking hold. We must look to the preexisting situation and take into account its sequential effects and its distinctive opportunities for stabilization and destabilization. We must examine the conduciveness of the rival alternatives to negative capability. We must not forget to reckon with the factor of disturbance represented by the perspicuity, guile, tenacity, or sheer luck with which one or another alternative is pursued.

The ideas supporting both the antecedent and its consequences may seem too loose to be considered a theory of any kind. And indeed the theory to which these ideas contribute neither resembles natural science nor supports confident predictions. The theory aspires only to broaden and to refine, not to replace, the pre-theoretical self-reflection of historical agents. Its claims, including its counterfactual claims, resemble far more the arguments of plain people about what to expect and what to do than they resemble the structure of covering law and deductive inference in natural science. They are contentious but defensible grounds for argument rather than knockdown proofs or statistical generalizations. But by abandoning the quest for a certainty it cannot achieve the theory gains the countervailing explanatory advantages suited to its character. *Politics* is an effort to make good on these distinctive strengths.

The Program of Empowered Democracy

The Remaking of Institutional Arrangements

FROM EXPLANATIONS TO PROGRAMS

PLAN OF THE DISCUSSION

THIS chapter sets out a program for reconstructing the large-scale institutional structure of society: the constitution of government, the organization of the economy, and the system of legal rights. This institutional program is extended by a program for remaking the fine texture of social life: the style of direct, person-to-person relations.

The immediate subject of the programmatic argument is the institutional structure of contemporary societies and in particular the formative institutional context of the Western industrial democracies, the very context whose origins the argument of Chapter 4 explored. The program is not meant as a timeless blueprint, to be applied with appropriate variations to any historical circumstance. It responds to a particular situation with particular measures and beliefs, drawn in large part from a particular institutional and imaginative tradition. Just as the interpretive genealogy of Chapter 4 anticipated a general theory of transformation, so the program presented in this chapter and the following exemplifies not only an approach to the social ideal but a view of the possibilities of programmatic argument.

How does the programmatic vision connect with the account of context change developed in the preceding parts of this book? After all, the dominant tradition of modern philosophy since Hume and Kant has emphasized the difference between the *is* and the *ought*. Modern social thought affirmed its identity in part by the resoluteness with which it tried to overcome the loose confusion of normative and explanatory ideas. The initial section of this chapter elucidates and justifies the suspect turn from explanation to program making.

The argument moves through three steps. First, it considers the narrowest link between the programmatic and the explanatory ideas. The institutional program includes a feasible version of petty commodity production, the most stubborn rival of the style of economic

organization that became dominant in the course of modern Western history.

The second step goes on to consider the relation between the larger theory of transformation that informs my polemical genealogy of dominant and deviant styles of industrial society and the conception of the ideal that inspires this entire institutional program. Both the program and the explanatory theory take as their point of departure the same fundamental account of our relation to the contexts of our activity. In particular, they discover both a practical and an epistemological interest in the paradox of contextuality: our need to settle down to a particular context and our inability to accept any context in particular as fully satisfactory. The programmatic argument sees the change of our relation to the contexts of our activity as the basis for a broad range of forms of empowerment.

The third step in the effort to establish a link between the explanatory and the programmatic arguments examines the sense in which a vision of human empowerment can possess prescriptive authority. Views that define both the meaning of empowerment or self-assertion and the causal conditions for its promotion should be seen as the most common form of a historically located practice of normative argument. Such a fundamental practice cannot be in any simple sense true or false, right or wrong, though we may have reasons to change it or even to abandon it. Our ways of assessing the normative weight of conceptions of self-assertion ultimately reflect views about our relation to our fundamental practices.

THE RESCUE OF PETTY COMMODITY PRODUCTION

My highly interpreted account of the genesis of the contemporary formative context of power and production in the advanced Western countries emphasized the abundance of deviant forms of organizations failing to fit the dominant "English" route to development. The argument also suggested that many of the deviations that took root, and an even larger portion of those that did not, represented variations on the theme of petty commodity production: the economy of small-scale, relatively equal producers, operating through a variable mix of cooperative organization and independent activity. Elements of this alternative were never completely suppressed, although the suppression went further in some countries than in others, influenced industry more than agriculture, and excluded the cooperativist varieties of small-scale production more than the recourse to small-scale, independent property. The smallholding alternative continues to characterize the agriculture of many industrializing Western countries. The centralized factory and the multidivisional

enterprise coexist everywhere with a multitude of manufacturing and commercial shops that employ most of the work force. Many of the economy's most technologically advanced as well as its most technologically retrograde sectors depart from the model presented by mass-production industry and display features of petty commodity production. Moreover, the working masses in the advanced West and throughout the world stubbornly maintain the petty bourgeois dream against the almost universal advice of their centrist or radical betters, who insist that history has condemned this dream to frustration.

Nevertheless, as a principle for the organization of the economy, the program spearheaded by the artisanal classes and by the "utopian" propagandists of cooperation has been repeatedly defeated in the course of modern Western history. A major point of the polemic in Chapter 4 against the stereotype of Western development is to argue that this defeat cannot be plausibly understood as the result of inescapable economic, organizational, or psychological constraints. The early versions of the alternative were defeated before they had a chance to fail. The alliance of central governments with preexisting and emergent elites generally sufficed to ensure that the dominant style of economic organization won out. At times, this alliance supported the use of outright military force against the proponents of the alternative (e.g., the crushing of the experiments barely begun by the 1848 revolutionaries). More often, economic policies and legal rules tilted the scales against the alternative.

But the argument about origins in Chapter 4 also showed that had the alternative been tried out on a larger terrain, it would have run into basic dilemmas. To solve these dilemmas it would have been necessary to invent an institutional framework for power and production very different from the one that has come to prevail in the course of modern Western history. In the absence of this invention, petty commodity production would indeed have proved economically regressive and economically and politically unstable. But from its indispensable institutional reconstruction it would have emerged with a character very different from the one its champions had sought to impress upon it. To this limited extent the conservative or radical opponents of petty commodity production *were* right, though not in the sense they supposed.

The alternative production system seemed bound to die through either economic concentration or economic stagnation. The more successful independent producers would eventually reduce the less successful producers to the condition of dependent wage labor. Thus, something like "capitalism" or, more precisely, something like the dominant style of modern Western economic organization would result. But suppose that concentration failed to occur and that

independent, small-scale, and relatively equal producers and traders continued to dominate markets. Then, petty commodity production would preclude the economies of scale in production and exchange that are vital to technological dynamism. The society would vegetate in economic stagnation or regression, until its institutional order collapsed under the pressure of domestic discontent or foreign rivalry and conquest.

The dilemma of concentration or stagnation besetting the alternative cannot be resolved so long as the chief mechanism of economic decentralization remains the consolidated property right: the claim to divisible portions of social capital that is relatively unlimited in both scope and duration. For this method of market decentralization achieves economies of scale precisely by permitting proprietary concentration – a concentration that may persist so long as the property owner avoids too many mistaken investment decisions. Antitrust law and policy simply take for granted the existence of a fixed trade-off between economies of scale and competitive fragmentation, as if any particular degree of interference between competition and scale were required by the laws of economic reality.

The dilemma of concentration and stagnation can be broken only by a method of market organization that makes it possible to pool capital, technologies, and manpower without distributing permanent and unqualified rights to their use. Claims upon the divisible portions of social capital have to be made temporary and limited: temporary, to prevent the ongoing accumulation of economic power in particular hands; limited, to stop accumulated capital in some enterprises from being used to gain control over other enterprises or to reduce large numbers of propertiless workers to wage-dependent status. Such limitations must be merely the reverse side of an allocational system that makes substantial resources available to teams of workers and entrepreneurs and thereby achieves the indispensable economies of scale. But if such a system is to retain a plausible link to the spirit of petty commodity production, it must compensate and more than compensate for the required limitations of time and usage with more economic deconcentration and greater facility to try out new ways of organizing work and exchange than can be hoped for under property-based market regimes. Above all, the alternative institutional definition of markets must work.

Suppose that, by narrowly economic standards, it does work. The dilemma of concentration and stagnation would then give way to another problem, about the relation between government and the economy, that the revised version of petty commodity production would have to solve. Even under existing market regimes, the rules of property and contract law, which describe the basic means for the allocation of claims to capital, are the results of conflicts over the

uses of governmental power. And legal analysis shows that, on however small a scale, these rules contain the elements of conflicting approaches to market organization. But the types of market organization they enshrine operate to a large extent as if they had an inner logic barely distinguishable from the logic of a general coordination of private interests. The preconceptions of legal and political theory further aggravate the sense that the rules of private law are somehow apolitical; politics decide whether to have a market at all and even how much of a market to permit but not what a market should look like, legally and institutionally. This choice among radically different styles of economic decentralization is not supposed to exist.

The reconstructed form of petty commodity production requires a much more overtly political administration of the social capital fund. It does so even if the allocation of capital claims emphasizes general rules and conditions rather than discretionary judgments. The deliberative processes of a democratic government must gain the scope, continuity, and decisiveness required for effective social control of accumulation. Unless this more explicit economic influence of government is counterbalanced by new forms of participation and accountability, governmental power can be used all the more effectively to entrench some private interests at the expense of others or to subordinate all these interests to the will of the groups in control of the state. The new-model economic alternative would then prove incapable of coexisting with a form of governmental organization that can sustain it. The current style of liberal-democratic thought and practice seems inadequate to this task. It makes central power accountable only by helping to stalemate it. It disperses power in order to slow it down, and it seeks to combine representation with demobilization. Its characteristic devices are ill-suited to the demand for governmental processes both more present in the economy and more pliant to the citizenry.

Thus, the attempt to give the repressed alternative form of industrial organization a chance requires nothing less than the reinvention of the institutional framework of markets and democracies. The program of institutional reconstruction explored in this chapter can be understood in part as the description of such a framework. One aim of the programmatic argument advanced here is to suggest the radical and comprehensive institutional redefinition that the repressed alternative would have to undergo in order to become feasible. But why should we be interested in this return of the repressed?

My earlier discussion of the origins of contemporary formative contexts has already emphasized the many lives of the alternative. Remember its most recent incarnations in the Western industrial democracies and in their third world periphery. The changing international division of labor threatens the stability of mass-pro-

duction industries in the richer countries and underlines the importance of a greater emphasis on the vanguardist industries, with their characteristically more flexible interplay of task-defining and task-executing activities. This change of emphasis can be accomplished by either more conservative or more subversive means. Its more restrained form would resort merely to economic incentives and manpower training. Its more radical variant would begin by depriving mass-production industries of the legal-institutional devices by which they protect themselves against potentially fatal instabilities in the product, capital, and labor markets. This more transformative sequel would culminate in a capital-allocation system more supportive of the teams of technical workers and manager-technicians that typically do the main work of vanguardist industry. The reconstructed mode of petty commodity production represents just such a system.

In many contemporary third world countries, popular forces search for a more equal and less authoritarian growth path. These forces want redistribution with agrarian reform, the redirection of the production system to mass needs, and a relatively greater measure of autarky from the world economy. They seek a program that frees them from having to choose between either passive collaboration with the national bourgeoisie, in the name of a blind faith in the dialectic that supposedly leads from capitalism to socialism, or commitment to the cause of an industrial proletariat that turns out to be a relatively small labor aristocracy, lost amid a far more numerous petty bourgeois and underclass populace. The growth path and the class alliances these popular movements are in search of require both a broad range of decentralized economic activity and a pooling of large-scale resources, under a regime of governmentally guided accumulation. The acceptance of decentralized forms of production and exchange saves the popular state from having to wage war against its actual petty bourgeoisie and aspiring working classes. It therefore also prevents the economic disruption and governmental authoritarianism that such a war brings in its wake, as Soviet experience so dramatically testifies. Such economic arrangements in turn call for a practice of government that expands both the scope of public decisions and the means for holding public officials accountable. Once suitably adapted to third world conditions, the remodeled framework of petty commodity production promises to satisfy this combination of objectives.

The recurrence, over so long a period and across such varied circumstances, of occasions and attempts to try out one or another version of the alternative suggests it must have more going for it than its suitability to an odd series of particular historical circumstances. The genealogical argument of Chapter 4 implies that this

deeper basis of the recurrence is the promise to carry the development of negative capability in practical life farther than our established ways of organizing power and production have hitherto permitted.

The point of the preceding paragraphs has been to describe a first link between the explanatory and the programmatic arguments of this book, not to present the primary inspiration of the program. To anticipate: an entirely different inspiration to connect the explanations and the proposals is the desire to rescue the modernist theory and practice of personal politics – the war against rigid social roles and canonical orderings of the emotions – from its disastrous anti-institutional and privatistic bias and to do so by imagining an instituted form of life that does justice to modernist ideals. Once you grasp the deeper and more general connection between the explanatory and the programmatic ideas developed here, you can begin to see how the same program serves such seemingly unrelated objectives as the rescue of modernism from privatism and the defense of petty commodity production against impracticality.

THE ADVANTAGES OF NOT FITTING

The relation between the explanatory and the programmatic aspects of the argument can be reformulated in a manner that emphasizes the shared grounding of programs and explanations in a picture of human activity. The theory of transformation in this book gives a constructive use to what might otherwise seem a mere explanatory embarrassment: our irrepressible ability to think, act, and connect beyond the limits imposed upon us by any existing or denumerable list of social or mental frameworks. We can not only step outside these structures but also limit their imprisoning force and draw from this limitation a range of varieties of empowerment. The constraining force of the formative contexts helps explain much of our routine behavior and even a great deal of the actual sequence of institutionalized social worlds. But our ability to stand outside these structures and eventually to change the relation between their constraining force and our power to resist them introduces another possible source of long-term, cumulative historical transformation. The interaction between the consequences of our membership in stabilized social worlds and the consequences of our ability to escape those consequences produces a practice of social explanation incompatible with deep-structure social analysis. The new practice emancipates us from the suspect contrast between the lived sense of openness and contingency in history and the retrospective appeal of the theorist to lawlike constraints that underlie the surface agitation of history. It does so by attacking simultaneously both sides of this opposition. Theoretical

insight and political prophecy need no longer seem inexplicable exceptions to structural determinism.

Just as the earlier view of context change confers an affirmative explanatory value on our structure-transforming capability, the program outlined in this chapter gives this capability an independent normative interest directly connected to its explanatory value. The empowerment produced by the development of negative capability has explanatory value because it serves our individual and collective projects of self-assertion and because we can act, more or less perspicuously and intentionally, to create the social orders that strengthen our negative capability.

The whole program for the reconstruction of institutional arrangements and personal relations that is developed here takes as its point of departure the improving effect a greater mastery over the contexts of our activity may have upon our relations to one another. In particular, this change in our relation to our habitual frameworks promises to moderate the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion: between our need to participate in shared forms of practical, emotional, and cognitive life and our struggle to escape the threats of dependence and de-individualization that seem inherent to all forms of collective engagement.

Nothing in the program worked out here represents a sharp break with the shared ground of the modern secular ideologies of emancipation: liberalism, socialism, and communism. All these doctrines emphasize the link between individual or collective empowerment and the dissolution of social division and hierarchy. All hold that such dissolution depends upon the remaking of practical institutions. They differ, of course, in their understanding of institutional reconstruction (a voluntary act? a reflection of underlying forces?), in their specific institutional proposals and their resulting evaluation of present society, and therefore also in their way of characterizing the content of empowerment.

The programmatic argument worked out here contrasts with those doctrines in relying upon a far more inclusive view of the possible institutional forms of human coexistence, a view focusing upon the conditions and consequences of our ability to alter the basic character of our relation to our established frameworks. One result of this enlargement of the sense of social possibility is to change the way we define the empowerment we hope will result from the further effacement of the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-transforming conflict. It then becomes possible to grasp with greater precision both the distinctions and the connections among varieties of empowerment – the development of productive capabilities, the escape from passive imprisonment within a framework, and the moderation of the conflict between the enabling conditions of

self-assertion – and to take each aspect of empowerment seriously as a concern of social reconstruction. The hope of limiting the conflict between structures and freedom by changing the content and character of structures, the broadening of the range of imagined alternatives to current forms of social organization, and the specification of the ideal of empowerment all help prepare the way for a reconciliation between the leftist and the modernist criticism of contemporary societies, between the social-revolutionary politics of institutional reconstruction and the cultural-revolutionary politics of personal relations.

The intimate and fundamental connection just described between the explanatory and the programmatic arguments takes for granted another, looser but no less important relation. Deep-structure social theory makes programmatic thought superfluous. There is no point in asking ourselves what society should become if history will tell us in the end what it must become.

The weakening of ambitious, deterministic claims, through the dilution or abandonment of deep-logic social theory, and the rise of conventional social science have had a paradoxical effect upon the status of programmatic thought. They have undermined the most extreme necessitarian objections to the enterprise of programmatic thought; but they have also failed to produce any credible theory of transformation and, more especially, any persuasive account of the remaking of formative contexts and of the limits to their recombination and renewal. The more compromised versions of deep-structure social theory circumscribe necessitarian claims without offering persuasive reasons not to restrict them even more drastically. Though they erode belief in the lawlike constraints to which the hard-core variants of deep-logic analysis appeal, they supply no alternative basis for social-theoretical generalization. Conventional social science fails just as clearly to present any coherent approach to the substitution of frameworks. (Remember its characteristic stratagems: profess total agnosticism about all nontrivial causal connections, as in the most rigorous branches of microeconomics and choice theory; or assimilate the choice of frameworks to the choice of the most efficient solutions within a framework, as in the cruder, more propagandistic versions of microeconomics; or concede the historically specific and contingent character of a framework while searching for stable correlations and causal sequences within the framework, as if it were not so makeshift and transitory after all, as in much of macroeconomics.)

The failure to produce a credible account of the remaking of our institutional and imaginative frameworks and of the relations among their component elements deprives us of any standard by which to distinguish realistic and unrealistic transformative projects. The sole criterion left is the relative closeness of a given project to the estab-

lished order. In this way, there arises the typical dilemma of programmatic theory in an era of theoretical agnosticism. If a proposal is distant from current reality it is a futile utopian dream not worth thinking about. If, on the other hand, the proposal lies close to the established framework it represents mere reformist tinkering not worth fighting about. The perpetuation of this false dilemma is the direct consequence of a bastardized conception of political realism. This conception reflects less the wrong ideas about transformation than the failure to entertain seriously any ideas about transformation at all or the tongue-in-cheek allegiance to ideas that are literally incredible.

The mere abandonment of strong necessitarian claims is not enough; the practice of programmatic argument requires credible ideas about society making. It demands that we distinguish, however tentatively, between more realistic and less realistic trajectories of transformation. We can then ask not whether a particular proposal is close to what already exists or distant from it but whether it can be placed along a realistic trajectory. We can continue to press short-term and long-term proposals without feeling compelled to choose between utopian irrelevance and marginal adjustment. The defense of this intellectual opportunity is a major objective of the explanatory theory presented in this book.

THE NORMATIVE FORCE OF CONCEPTIONS OF EMPOWERMENT

A familiar objection can be made to the preceding attempt to establish a general and intimate connection between the explanatory and the programmatic arguments of this book. The way of establishing the connection seems to assume that a view of human empowerment, or of the conditions of individual or collective self-assertion, can exercise normative authority, that it can guide us in organizing a life or a society. But how can it? It seems that a set of descriptive and explanatory ideas can teach us how most effectively to pursue a given ideal of self-assertion. But it cannot persuade us to value that ideal more or less than a competing goal we might pursue. And it cannot even convince us to accept or reject a particular picture of empowerment or self-assertion, except to the extent that a definition of empowerment implicitly incorporates a strategy for its own realization, or makes factual assumptions that prove to be untenable or inconsistent. Though this objection holds good in a very limited sense, there is another, very important sense in which it remains false.

There is no unique, distinctive form of thought or experience to which we can confidently append the label "normative argument,"

just as there is no uncontroversial method for explaining the constitution of the physical world. All we have are a series of historically produced practices of inquiry, invention, collaboration, or production. The procedures and concerns that distinguish these practices change, though they may change only slowly and imperceptibly, according to the substance of the ideas and actions we use them to produce. Some of the practices are fundamental in the sense that they influence broad reaches of our experience and generate other, more short-lived or narrowly focused activities.

We are our fundamental practices. But we are also the permanent possibility of revising them. It is hardly surprising to find our twofold relation to contexts reproduced in our relation to our basic ways of acting. For these contexts consist both in a set of arrangements and preconceptions and in a series of conflictual activities, standard procedures for conflict over individual or group positions in the division of labor and individual or group rights under the law. Such activities ordinarily keep an order going but may, once they get out of hand, transform it. Fundamental practices differ from many of these activities only because they often have a longer, slower, and more universal history than the formative contexts they help perpetuate or disrupt. As a result we are often tempted to forget that even our most basic practices are relatively accidental ventures, whose success remains at risk in history.

One of the most common and influential of such practices is the attempt to draw guidance for action from factual conceptions of personality or society. The guidance consists both in the definition of certain ideals of individual or collective striving and in hypotheses about how these ideals may be most effectively realized. The ideals and the hypotheses cannot be clearly distinguished. Such a characterization, however, has the drawback of placing too much emphasis on the passage from the empirical (the substantive conception of personality or society) to the normative (the aims of individual or collective striving), a passage that constitutes the obsessive concern of much modern moral philosophy.

On an alternative characterization, the core of the practice I have in mind is the attempt to describe the conditions of empowerment or self-assertion. We simultaneously define a conception of self-assertion and an account of the requirements for its realization in the life of the individual or the society. Once again, we cannot neatly divide the definition and the strategy. We must recognize that the view of self-assertion counts less as the depiction of a limited, contentious value, to be weighed against competing values, than as a summation of our strivings for happiness. If the effort to formulate such views of self-assertion has a central theme, it may be the struggle

to resolve the conflict between the imperative of engagement in shared forms of life and the dangers of dependence and depersonalization such engagement brings.

The views of self-assertion just mentioned support existential projects and social visions. Existential projects are an individual's plans to live his life so that the best and most important things will occupy their proper place; they are most often attempts to attain a happiness that does not depend on the instability of illusion or the surrender to routine. Social visions are efforts to imagine an intelligible and defensible ordering of a life in common. Each such vision trades the indeterminate conception of society for a unique model of human association or for several distinct models, meant to be realized in different areas of social life.

There is no closed list of ways to test a view of human self-assertion or empowerment or the existential projects and social visions it generates. Almost everything in our understanding and experience may be relevant. These numerous clues may even regularly contradict one another. When we focus on the more general aspects of the view – the ones presenting a picture of society or personality – the most suitable tests may be empirical and may emphasize the compatibility of the view with our factual discoveries about self or society. But they may also include the lessons of an educated introspection. We can compare the view to our immediate experience, so long as we also judge this experience by trying to assess how much of it results merely from the routines and preconceptions of a particular stabilized society.

Alternatively, we may turn to the existential projects and social visions resulting from a general view of self-assertion and apply more practical tests to their evaluation. Is the vision or project unstable in the sense of unleashing or perpetuating forces that frustrate the realization of its professed goals? Do our attempts to realize it diminish rather than strengthen our sense of empowerment, perhaps by aggravating the conflict between the benefits and the dangers of engagement in shared forms of life or shared universes of discourse? All such practical tests rely on the resistance our pretheoretical sense of empowerment puts up against unrestrained theoretical manipulation.

The practice I have just described might be called normative argument, so long as we are careful to avoid an easy misunderstanding. Many practices have existed in history and exist today that offer to guide us in our attempts to reconstruct or criticize social relations. Some practices focus on individual conduct or social institutions; others may convey only oblique and unacknowledged messages about the society we ought to organize or the lives we ought to lead. Do not suppose that all these procedures are versions of the same

thing. They are at best overlapping and analogous. Such analogies and overlaps are all you can reasonably expect once you understand the historical, made-up quality of all our practices and resist the temptation to treat those we deploy as constituents of a permanent organon of human knowledge and activity.

Nevertheless, this cluster of styles of normative discourse has been extraordinarily tenacious and widespread. The programmatic argument of this book uses them, and revises them in the course of the use. In what sense can the deployment of these familiar forms of normative discourse produce conclusions with prescriptive weight? To what degree do these evaluative practices presuppose or exclude the distinction between factual and normative claims that has come to occupy so central a role in modern thought? To what extent can the family of inherited normative styles be rejected by someone who claims merely to subordinate the goal of self-assertion to a different objective? These questions may best be answered by responding to two types of critics. There is no simple way to characterize the status of the fact-value dichotomy within the practice, except by redefining this status as the sum of our answers to these and other critics.

Consider first the person who accuses the traditional practice mentioned in the preceding paragraphs of disrespecting the crucial distinction between facts and values and who insists on a style of argument that claims to derive normative conclusions solely from normative premises. We may accuse him of mistaking the practice he rejects for a particular metaphysical interpretation of it, such as Aristotle's teleology. We can criticize him for sharing, unreflectively, the teleologist's metaphysical realism: the assumptions that all our practices rest on presuppositions making more or less implicit claims about what the world is really like, and that all these claims must converge toward a single coherent picture of reality. We can then go on to point out that the modern philosophical attempt to draw a rigid distinction between the factual and the normative has largely failed. To the extent that the styles of normative moral or political thought produced by this attempt escape emptiness they do so only by resorting to implicit conceptions of personality and society, conceptions all the more dangerous because they are neither brought to light nor subject to criticism. Thus, the wants and intuitions some philosophers use as the raw material of moral theorizing may already compose a picture of the self and its overriding concerns. And the methods of choice other philosophers invoke may be more or less tacitly identified with institutional arrangements – such as particular ways of organizing markets and democracies – that help to perpetuate unique forms of life and to enact distinctive ideals of personality.

Of course, the rejection of the metaphysical-realist perspective and its replacement by a practice conception are themselves contentious.

The merits of the solution must be compared with the advantages of rival approaches. Moreover, the status of the practice conception within the world it describes is puzzling. For what is the practice by which we survey all other practices from a historicizing angle? Perhaps it is a reformed philosophy: a philosophy that refuses to close the list of our practices, or to interpret the list we have as the expression of a higher necessity, or to identify the list with our very selves.

Now consider a very different critic. His quarrel is with the point of departure rather than the method. He protests that he sees no reason to credit human empowerment, or individual and collective self-assertion, with any authority, or at least with anything more than a very limited authority. He hears our story about self-assertion and says: So what? First, we must assure ourselves that he understands just how we are characterizing the dispute. The aim is not to exalt a discrete value at the cost of others but to present a detailed vision of the strengthening of human life. We must remind him that such a vision combines a picture of the aims of our striving with an argument about the conditions for realizing these aims. He may claim to understand this combination but persist in rejecting the authority of the aim of self-assertion. If he moves far enough toward a radical skepticism, we cannot refute him. What we can do is to show how much must be given up in order to occupy this extreme and irrefutable position. And we can attack on their merits the intermediate positions that seem to escape the limits of a project of self-assertion without falling into this all-out skepticism. We can try to persuade him that he must choose between involvement in the controversy over alternative views of human empowerment and the paralyzed outsiderdom of the unqualified skeptic.

Suppose, for example, that our interlocutor embraces a variant of the philosophies that teach the ultimate unreality of the phenomenal world of individuation and that exhort the individual to sacrifice the life of subjectivity and encounter to the quest for the absolute. I am not interested in theories of self-assertion, he may say, if my primary aim is to overcome the illusions and sufferings that inevitably accompany the insistence on selfhood. (It is actually harder than it may first appear to find examples of this critic; the development of the experience of subjectivity and encounter keeps being introduced – in Buddhist moral psychology, for instance – as a secondary aim or as an indispensable condition to the transcendence of self.) We may argue that he cannot in fact suppress his selfhood and that his futile attempt to overcome the self in order to conquer self-centeredness will produce unexpected and perverse effects (e.g., cranky obsessions rather than a participant mind). On the other hand, we may argue that his message fails to do justice to his driving concerns. He values as spirit that which transcends the limitations of particular contexts.

But he fails to see it is precisely personality or consciousness that most clearly possesses this context-transcending power. He does not recognize that the institutional and imaginative settings of our lives may differ in the degree to which they give play to context-transcending capability. He fails to understand that only through engagement in personal relations and social movements can we change our settings and enlarge the part of our lives graced by the qualities he most prizes.

A critic, however, may occupy a position farther along the spectrum of disengagement from efforts at individual and collective self-assertion. He may simply refuse to give any weight to human striving and its success. He cannot be proved mistaken. And the impossibility of proving him mistaken defines one of the residual, revised senses in which a practice conception of evaluative activities presupposes the fact-value distinction rather than repudiates it.

The response to the critic who rejects the point of departure rather than the method suffers from a crucial weakness. A vision of human empowerment and its conditions describes a form of life rather than a discrete value. But what is its relation to the ideal of love – the acceptance of the concrete other – and to the many forms of commitment and concern that often seem to represent the diluted counterparts of love? Surely, at least this form of striving must resist assimilation to an argument that ostentatiously employs the language of empowerment. Only the substance of the programmatic argument can answer this doubt. The answer will not have been formulated until the program for institutional reconstruction extends into a vision of the transformed relations among individuals.

THE JUSTIFICATION

INTERNAL AND VISIONARY ARGUMENT

This part of Chapter 5 shows how the program of empowered democracy may be justified and how the justifications anticipate the outline of the program. Programmatic ideas, when they remain in touch with a close sense of social reality and present controversy, are always just the reverse side of the criticisms, visions, and strategies that can generate them. Thus, when we study the normative arguments or the ideal conceptions supporting a program and the style of political practice that can realize it, we study the program itself.

Our normative ideas can move in two main directions. By far the most common of the two is what might be called internal argument or internal criticism. We take a particular tradition – or a particular

community of sense or value – as our starting point. The abstract, indeterminate idea of society gets translated into a particular model or set of models of human coexistence, meant to be realized in the different domains of social life by distinct sets of institutions and practices. In some societies, a single model of human association is intended for application, as a theme and variations, to every domain of social life. Typically, this recurrent scheme of human coexistence builds inequality, exchange, and communal loyalty into the same human connections; the patron–client relation is its obsession and its ideal. But in many other societies, and especially in the societies addressed by the institutional program of this chapter, sharply distinct models of human association are meant to be realized in different areas of social practice. Thus, we have an ideal of representative democracy for the organization of government and for the realm of citizenship, an ideal of private community for the life of family and friendship, and a blend of contractual exchange and technical hierarchy for the workaday world. The most ambitious models are the communal and the democratic, for they hold up the promise of a fuller reconciliation between the enabling conditions of self-assertion: the image of a development and of an expression of self that can be achieved through engagement and attachment. The willingness to tolerate a far more instrumental style of personal relations and a much weaker and looser relation between the enabling conditions of self-assertion is justified by the belief that attempts to extend the democratic and communal ideals into practical, daily life would be futile and self-defeating. The practical failures of such attempts and the despotic tendencies they would unleash – so the argument goes – would end up endangering democracy and community in the areas of social life where they belong.

Internal argument forswears the search for ultimates. It takes place within a tradition of accepted moral and political ideals largely defined by a scheme of models of human coexistence, made actual by institutional arrangements and social practices, in areas of social life considered suitable to each of these ideals of association. The interlocutors in an internal controversy probe the uncertainties, ambiguities, and tensions in the imaginative world defined by their shared points of departure. The exact boundaries of the models of human association – of the areas marked out for democracy and for private contract or technical hierarchy, for example – may be disputed. Or there may be a disagreement about whether established practices and institutions represent an adequate realization of a given model of human association: over whether, for example, the constitutionalism of checks and balances does justice to our ideal of representative democracy. Such disagreements over the scope and the practical form of received models of association expose tensions

within these models that may previously have been concealed and force us to choose the direction in which we want to develop each model.

Many of our most common forms of normative disagreement may at first seem unrelated to any overarching and assumed map of images of human association. No such map seems involved in an argument over whether a particular act is justifiable in a particular setting. Yet the evaluative premises and ideals we bring to bear on these arguments over the legitimacy of isolated deeds characteristically draw on a repertory of conceptions of what the relations among people can and should be like in characteristic situations of social life. Indeed, when we turn from the favored conundra of the modern moral philosophers to the stuff of actual moral assurance and anxiety we discover that much of this stuff has to do with socially recognized roles, with the obligations and aspirations we attach to these roles, and with the extent to which we believe ourselves justified in defying role expectations. Reciprocally related social roles are merely models of human coexistence translated into detailed scripts for dealings among individuals.

Like all practices that help reproduce a stabilized social world, internal argument can escalate into a broader conflict over the fundamentals of this world. What began as debate that took for granted a scheme of models of possible and desirable human association can end as a controversy over the scheme itself. In fact, when we examine detailed internal arguments in legal, political, or moral controversy, we find that they avoid this escalation only by sleights of hand and arbitrary truncations. Much of modern legal, moral, and political theory tries to give such truncations a semblance of rational necessity, the better to contrast legal doctrine, moral casuistry, or political criticism with open-ended and supposedly arbitrary ideological warfare. This theoretical effort to circumscribe the scope and the revisionary effect of normative reasonings finds unexpected support in a widespread philosophical teaching: because only particular historical communities of sense and value exist in the world, we *must* choose one of these communities and play by its terms. But despite the formidable array of intellectual justifications enlisted in its defense, the attempt to ensure internal normative argument against the dangers of escalation characteristically produces the opposite of the results it is designed to achieve; it increases rather than diminishes the element of sheer assertion and arbitrary juxtaposition in our received forms of political, moral, and legal analysis. In the course of justifying the program outlined in later parts of this chapter, I want to illustrate a practice of internal argument whose insights and persuasiveness depend precisely on the ease with which it escalates into more basic controversy.

This initial characterization of internal argument already suggests how escalation takes place and why it cannot easily be prevented. The vocabulary we use to invoke our accepted models of human association is typically vague and contradictory, so that a stranger to our social practices would be baffled by these familiar descriptions of our ideals. But we know what we are talking about because we understand these models against the background of specific social practices and institutional arrangements, realized in particular areas of social life. We know what representative democracy, for example, means because we more or less implicitly equate the democratic ideal with certain constitutional techniques and styles of partisan rivalry inherited from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. So long as our sense of the fit among the models, practices, and domains of application remains undisturbed we feel assured. Though we may disagree about particular legal, moral, or political decisions, we preserve an implicit confidence in the broader imaginative framework within which such decisions must be made.

But suppose a model of human association is extended to an area of social life to which it did not previously apply: say, representative democracy to the internal organization of a productive enterprise. Such a displacement of a familiar model onto unfamiliar territory may be motivated by practical or ideal concerns (the need to elicit worker cooperation or the belief that neither technical necessity nor private contract adequately legitimate the type of power that managers exercise over workers). After all, the boundaries of application of distinct models of human association are never entirely clear-cut. The projection of a model into an unfamiliar domain of application merely extends the boundary disputes that proliferate in even the most stable ideological situations.

Once the old model is applied in new settings it must be realized by untried practical or institutional forms. Representative democracy in the workplace cannot mean the tripartite state and the traditional style of partisan rivalry. But what then should it mean? In choosing the new practical forms we not only confront the constraints and opportunities presented by the new area of application; we also disclose ambiguities in our ideal that remained concealed so long as the image of association, the practical forms, and the domain continued to fit together uncontroversially. Is the most important point about democracy the refusal to privilege anyone's interest over anyone else's? Or is it the experience of participation in decisions about the basic terms of a collective activity? Or is it something that neither of these aims fully captures?

We cannot answer such questions merely by analyzing more closely our received conception of democracy. For there is no permanent archetype underlying this conception: no canonical order of

social life that settles, once and for all, the core meaning of democracy. If the explanatory arguments of this book are correct we cannot fix the meaning of democracy by appealing to an inherent logic of a type of social organization such as capitalism, because no such types exist. Our inherited ideal of democracy is nothing but a particular set of practices, applied to a particular group of problems, and invested with an indiscriminate range of aspirations whose relation to their practical forms we have left largely unexamined. In fact, the implicit awareness that there are no archetypes to our models of human association is what drives us to avoid the escalation of internal argument in the first place. We cannot merely decide what democracy already means; we have to decide what we want it to mean. And the meaning we impart to it in this new setting is likely to react upon our conception of democracy in its original core domain and to heighten our sense of the discrepancy between the pretensions of political rhetoric and the realities of our political experience. Thus, we may have moved, step by step, into a discourse that puts established ideals of association up for grabs.

Although we cannot find conclusive guides in the circumstance of heightened imaginative struggle, neither are we reduced to silence or to an unreasoning assertion of will. For our practice of normative argument can move in an alternative visionary direction. Our thinking about ideals becomes visionary or external to the extent that it holds up a picture, however partial or fragmentary, of a radically altered scheme of social life and appeals to justifications that do not stick close to familiar and established models of human association. The visionary is the person who claims not to be bound by the limits of the tradition he and his hearers or interlocutors are in; at least he does not support his cause by advocating the gradual extension or clarification of shared assumptions about the possible and desirable forms of human association.

Visionary thought can arise from the escalation of internal argument, or it can begin as independent activity that collides with internal argument. Moreover, we know the visionary in two forms so different that their similarity becomes apparent only in contrast to internal argument. In the cold form he is the philosopher who ascribes normative force to a conception of personality or society, to a method of choice that supposedly relies on no such conception, or even to an entire metaphysical or religious picture of the world. In the hot form he is the political prophet who evokes a reordered social world in which all the major forms of individual and collective self-assertion may be promoted and all our practical and passionate connections may be cleansed of some of the perils that make us shrink from them. Both the rationalizing theorist and the political prophet speak to us as people whose insights and judgments are not limited by the dog-

mas and institutions of our societies and cultures. When they take the visionary turn, both emphasize the sharpness of the break between their teachings and our realities.

Notice that visionary thought is not inherently millennialist, perfectionist, or utopian (in the vulgar sense of the term). It need not and does not ordinarily present the picture of a perfected society. But it does require that we be conscious of redrawing the map of possible and desirable forms of human association, of inventing new models of human association and designing new practical arrangements to embody them.

Notice also that the concept of visionary thought implies no particular view of how visionary proposals may be supported. In particular it does not require the search for self-evident or metaphysically justified first principles. On the contrary the historical experiences and the intellectual attitudes that place internal argument and visionary thought in tension with each other are also characteristically hostile to this philosophical foundationalism. Internal argument is controversial because it takes certain social ideals and practices for granted: if not as the limit of prescriptive judgment, at least as its starting point. Internal argument benefits from the detailed texture of an assumed and accepted imaginative world. But it invites an objection: Why give any weight to this tradition? Visionary thought proclaims a more self-conscious independence from any society or culture in particular. It therefore raises a question: What support is there for this claim to transcend tradition?

There is no uncontroversial way to characterize the sense of the authority that internal and visionary arguments may possess, or the proper relation between the internal and external perspectives. Whatever characterization we accept is sure to influence the form and content of our actual argument. It seems clear, however, that our relation to imaginative schemes of possible and desirable forms of human association is simply a facet of our relation to the imaginative and institutional contexts of our activity. I therefore propose to view internal and visionary arguments and their relation to each other in the spirit of the same thesis about our relation to the formative contexts of social life that animates all the explanatory and programmatic ideas of this book.

The resulting conception recognizes two inherently controversial and inconclusive activities that inspire and correct each other but never succeed in emptying our normative ideas of a large, ineradicable residuum of choice, commitment, and faith. My arguments for the program of empowered democracy are meant to exemplify this approach to normative arguments. But the approach is less a response to the normative skeptic than an attempt to show how we can incorporate into our practices of criticism and justification the

insights proclaimed by all but the most uncompromising forms of skepticism about values and ideals.

The development of a view of the varieties of normative argument and of their relation to each other may at first seem a strange diversion from the task of elaborating a program of social reconstruction, even given the relation of program to justification and of justification to views of what counts as a justificatory argument, idea, or impulse. But the program is not just an institutional proposal. It is also an advocacy of practices that reproduce these institutions and keep them faithful to the spirit that inspires them. One such practice is normative argument. If part of the larger ambition of this program of empowered democracy is to narrow the distance between context-preserving routine and context-transforming conflict, a similar approximation must take place between the style of normative controversy that takes an established context for granted (internal argument) and the style that transcends this context and claims to judge it from an independent standpoint (visionary thought). For the routines that reproduce and respect a context include our habits of moral and social controversy.

The program of empowered democracy is merely the next step in a trajectory: not the millennium but the further emancipation of our practical and passionate attachments from a predetermined script, the further subversion of a fixed plan of social division and hierarchy, and the further reach toward the forms of individual and collective empowerment this context smashing may produce. So, too, the development of methods of normative argument that more fully combine the detailed texture of internal argument with the greater transcendence of visionary thought represents merely the development of a tendency we already see at work all around us.

There is no permanent canon of forms of normative argument. Our ways of arguing about ideals are, like all our other practices, the mutable products of a specific history and the expressions of our ideas about society and thought. Where a naturalistic understanding of society prevails the particular distinction between internal argument and visionary thought sketched at the outset of this section does not exist. Some normative controversies may have a narrower and others a broader scope. But, within a naturalistic view, there is no question of having to choose between claims within a scheme of models of human association and claims about such schemes. Only one legitimate scheme is supposed to exist, though its practical manifestations may pass through countless episodes of corruption and regeneration. The contrast between the internal and the visionary already presupposes an acute sense of the specificity and discontinuity of the imaginative worlds within which we may argue. Once we accept this presupposition, we are assaulted by two feelings of ar-

bitrariness: that of the internal arguer who takes for granted an imaginative map of forms of possible and desirable association, and that of the visionary who claims to step outside any particular tradition but has no uncontroversial foundation on which to rest his arguments and proposals. The following sections suggest how this twofold arbitrariness may be simultaneously recognized, contained, and included in a constructive practice of normative criticism and justification.

THE VISIONARY JUSTIFICATION FOR EMPOWERED DEMOCRACY

Empowerment and Context Smashing

The visionary justification for the institutional program worked out in this chapter is postponed to the final sections, which present it as the spirit animating the whole body of institutional proposals. This part of Chapter 5 is therefore mainly concerned with the program's internal justification. The aims of the whole program, however, may be better understood if parts of the visionary justification are anticipated. Moreover, when it is seen to interact with the visionary justification, internal argument becomes stronger and less indeterminate than it would otherwise be. The composite result of the two kinds of arguments is still inconclusive in its detailed implications and still depends upon an irreducible element of commitment or faith. But both the uncertainty of the implications and the shakiness of the ground are less than they would be if either type of justification had to stand alone.

The vision offered by this program is that of a society in which people are more fully empowered through the development of institutional arrangements that both diminish the gap between framework-preserving routine and framework-transforming conflict and weaken the established forms of social division and hierarchy. It is a program of empowered democracy because it promises to serve a range of forms of individual and collective empowerment, in part by empowering democracy itself: that is, by extending the subjection of social life to democratic participation and conflict. As always, the effort to project a received image of human association into an unfamiliar terrain requires that the ideal be reconceived. Indeed, the conception of democracy presented here merges into the idea of the next best thing to the absolute or natural context that we can never possess. This second best is a set of artificial arrangements that both better ensure their own availability to challenge and more effectively emancipate from a prewritten script our experiments in practical collaboration and passionate attachment. It is the vision of a society

in which individuals are freer to deal with one another as individuals rather than as placeholders in the system of class, communal, role, or gender contrasts. The point of the vision is not chiefly to enlarge our field of choice but, rather, to imagine and defend a certain change in the quality of our experience of subjectivity and sociability and to describe the institutional conditions of this shift.

The change I have in mind consists in the interaction among three varieties of empowerment, all to be encouraged by the same institutional devices, all familiar from the earlier discussion of negative capability. One variety consists in the development of our practical capability through the openness of social life to the recombinational and experimental activities of practical reason. Another type of empowerment is the exercise of a more complete and deliberate mastery over the imaginative and institutional contexts of our activities. And still another lies in our success in escaping both submission and isolation and in diminishing the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion: between our need to participate in group life and our effort to avoid the dangers of dependence and depersonalization that accompany such engagement.

These varieties of empowerment have convergent or overlapping institutional requirements and a shared human significance. Some institutional solutions may privilege one type of empowerment at the expense of the others. For example, the way of opening social life more fully to practical experimentation may aggravate certain forms of domination. To that extent it may also heighten rather than diminish our experience of conflict between the enabling conditions of solidarity. But a major thesis of the explanatory theory that forms part of the background to this political vision is that no necessary or permanent conflict exists among the enabling institutional conditions of the several modes of empowerment. It is up to us to discover in our historical situation which conditions of each variety of empowerment also satisfy the other varieties. We cannot be sure to find this subset or, having found it, to establish it in practice. But neither is there any general reason to expect that we must fail.

The shared human significance of these aspects of empowerment is our success at making the world – the whole social and even natural setting of our lives – more fully into a home and a garden. The transformed world becomes a place whose limits and patterns bear a closer relation to our felt concerns. In it, our sense of being at home becomes less dependent upon our service as placeholders in a pre-established system of social stations.

Although this vision includes the idea of enabling individuals to develop and pursue their life projects, it does not pretend to be neutral among all possible projects. It emphasizes whatever in the experience of the individual enables him to treat others and himself as an original,

to fashion practical and passionate attachments less vitiated by dependence and depersonalization, and to move within his social contexts with the heightened self-consciousness and engagement of a context-revising agent.

It is not surprising that the first two varieties of empowerment should share the same institutional requirements. Both Marxism and mainstream economics prepare us for the idea that the development of productive capabilities depends on the weakening of the resistance that fixed orders of social division and hierarchy impose upon the organizational forms of exchange and production. But the relation of the first two kinds of empowerment to the third is less familiar, and it brings us closer to what gives the program of empowered democracy both its distinctive message and its claim upon the visionary imagination. Our relative success at moderating the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion is one of the root experiences of freedom. It is one of the basic ways in which we make the world into a home and avoid the conflict between our sense of who we are or of what we want and our understanding of the social situation in which we find ourselves. The consequences of our ability or our failure to limit the contest between the enabling conditions of self-assertion help determine the quality of much of our cognitive, emotional, and political experience. The explanatory theory developed in the earlier parts of *False Necessity* supports the thesis that the favoring institutional conditions of the third variety of empowerment overlap with the institutional requirements of the other two. The same devices that open up society to practical experimentation and recombination and that strengthen our self-conscious mastery over the institutional and imaginative frameworks of our social experience also help cleanse group life of some of its capacity to entangle people in relations of dependence and domination and to turn them into the faceless representatives of predetermined roles.

The Radical Project and the Vision of Empowered Democracy

The idea that the development of our practical capabilities and of our mastery over our collective contexts is connected, through its shared institutional requirement, with the cleansing of dependence and depersonalization from group life has always been central to the radical project. The great secular ideologies of emancipation – liberalism, socialism, and communism – agree in affirming the importance of this link. They are all committed to the making of institutional arrangements that simultaneously turn us more completely into the authors of the social worlds we inhabit and free us from the need to choose, at every turn, between isolation and submission. But the understanding of society and history that informed

these ideologies suffered the effects of unjustifiably restrictive assumptions about the possible shape of social organization and in particular about the possible institutional forms of markets and democracies. The program of empowered democracy is the radical project, restated and revised in the light of an enlarged sense of social reality and possibility. To achieve this enlargement it is not enough to change the way in which we describe and explain the formative contexts of social life; it is also necessary to imagine institutional arrangements that in fact carry the radical project farther than it has been taken by the institutional systems now available in the world. Our broadened sense of the practical forms that the radical project can assume, a sense inspired both by a credible view of social change and by an actual exercise in programmatic imagination, reacts back upon our understanding of what the radical cause is for. The ideas set out in the preceding paragraphs express this changed understanding.

To say that empowered democracy represents the next step in the advancement of the radical project is to emphasize that it does not stand for an ideal of social perfection. The claim of this program to be a political vision and to draw on a visionary justification does not depend on promising heaven. What the program does hold up is the image of a society in which the shaking up of institutional arrangements and the redrawing of our imaginative map of possible and desirable association allow us to carry forward the stalled endeavor to which the modern emancipatory ideologies are committed. One intention of the programmatic argument of this book is to illustrate the twin theses that we must be realists in order to become visionaries and that we can be visionaries without being millennarians.

Facts and Values in the Vision of Empowered Democracy

It should be clear that just as the program of empowered democracy does not depend upon perfectionist assumptions, so too it is not meant to remain neutral among contrasting visions of the good or among competing conceptions of personality and society. It takes sides with the radical project and reinterprets it in a certain way. The program refuses to follow the main line of modern moral and political philosophy in the futile attempt to make normative argument independent of particular conceptions of self and society.

But to acknowledge the commitment to particular factual and ideal conceptions is to invite an objection: What then, other than a gratuitous act of commitment, constitutes the basis of this political vision? The acceptance of this program does indeed require a real and irreducible element of pure commitment. The sense in which the programmatic vision depends upon such a groundless choice is the

sense in which a sufficiently thoroughgoing normative skepticism is irrefutable. It is also the revised, limited sense in which we should accept the traditional idea of a discontinuity between the *is* and the *ought*, between factual and normative claims. But the irreducible commitment is not to a richly textured group of ideals, values, and arrangements. It is not even to the radical project exemplified by the modern liberal, socialist, and communist doctrines. It is merely to a much broader and looser range of goals of empowerment, freedom, or self-assertion. All the rest depends upon claims that, though always controversial and inconclusive, are nevertheless empirical.

To say the claims are empirical is not to assert that they describe and explain isolated features of our experience or that they can be corroborated or falsified one by one. It is merely to state that they do depend upon ideas about the possibilities of our experience and the constraints of our situation and that we have reasons, though controversial and inconclusive ones, to prefer some of the ideas to others. Modern philosophy has taught us to broaden our understanding of what counts as an empirical claim: the ontological assumptions of a scientific theory, the "laws" of logic and the truths of mathematics, and almost all the propositions traditionally placed on the analysis side of the contrast between the analytic and the synthetic. The ideas informing a political vision like the program of empowered democracy also belong to this broadened domain of empirical beliefs.

What makes it difficult to assess this particular category of empirical beliefs is that we have too much rather than too little to go on: too many arguably relevant forms of discourse, sources of observation, and facets of experience. We have no reason to believe they all add up to one coherent picture; they are much more likely to lend themselves either to many such pictures or to none. But notice that to say a political vision is contestable, because its informing ideas have these characteristics, is very different from saying that its detailed conclusions and assumptions rest on no more than an act of partisan faith. The claim that they do not is central to a major concern of this book: the effort to break down the rigid contrast between social explanation and political vision.

In particular, the program of empowered democracy, taken as an instance of visionary thought, depends upon three large sets of empirical claims. Each set of ideas stands more or less closely connected to the explanatory theory advanced in earlier parts of *False Necessity*. Each draws part of its empirical status and persuasive force from this link with a body of explanatory ideas that can be put to work and judged, verified, or falsified, at many points along its periphery of detailed explanation and implication. Each represents the result of an interaction between preexisting intuitions or experiences and their theoretical reinterpretation and revision.

The first set of sustaining empirical ideas has to do with those of our most tenacious desires that are also most relevant to the task of institutional reconstruction. The argument for empowered democracy depends on the belief that our ordinary demands for security, freedom, and connection do have the internal relations and the institutional implications invoked in my discussion of the aspects of empowerment and that there is little in our experience of longing that cannot be related to one of these varieties of empowerment. The understanding of these implications and relations changes the direction and the sense of our desires, because all our desires are informed by ideas. This group of empirical assumptions is the one most directly connected with the view of context making presented in Chapter 4.

The second set of empirical claims addresses the status of normative argument itself. Here, the aim is to propose an understanding of normative argument as a diverse and mutable series of historically located practices: practices that, like our elementary desires themselves, change under the influence of an altered understanding of society and personality, of thought and language. The particular style of interaction between visionary and internal argument represents a proposal to revise the way in which we engage in normative argument and to do so under pressure from a host of empirical ideas about the nature of institutional and imaginative contexts and the ways they change. These contexts are perpetuated by activities that normally reproduce them but that may, through escalation, destabilize and transform them. Our practices of normative argument, in moral, legal, and partisan-political controversy, are themselves examples of these stabilizing-destabilizing activities.

But the effort to bring internal and visionary argument more intimately and explicitly together does not follow directly from the willingness to see normative argument as a loose group of historically specific and revisable collective practices. It results, instead, from the commitment to empowered democracy itself. If an empowered democracy is the institutional order that softens the contrast between moving within a context and fighting about its terms, then all the forms of practical and imaginative conflict on which it depends must also make their stable, routine forms more like their exceptional, destabilizing manifestations. Our inherited practices of internal argument (in legal doctrine, moral casuistry, and partisan debate) must incorporate more of the characteristics we traditionally attribute to visionary thought. Our justifications of empowered democracy must, in turn, serve a dual purpose: they must be both a discourse addressed to the unconverted and a discourse we ourselves might practice under the arrangements whose establishment we advocate.

Implicit in this practice orientation to normative argument is an invitation to abandon the perspective of metaphysical realism. Me-

taphysical realism may be defined as the thesis that all our practices presuppose hypotheses about the world and that if these hypotheses are true they must all add up to a coherent world picture at some ideal limit of all-inclusive insight. For the metaphysical realist the relation of human goals to factual observations must be a fact about the world. We must not have two practices – one, normative argument, the other, natural science – that make incompatible assumptions about the same fact. From the standpoint of metaphysical realism the traditional criticism of the normative uses of empirical ideas about society or personality (i.e., the criticism somewhat inappropriately blamed on Hume) may be irrefutable: we must choose between the way *is* and *ought* connect in our scientific explanations and the way they connect in other forms of discourse. But once you abandon the metaphysical-realist prejudice the traditional criticism becomes largely irrelevant. We *can* criticize our practices but not merely by assuming that one of them (i.e., modern natural science) can limit what may justifiably be said and how it may be said within another (i.e., a particular style of normative argument).

The third and narrowest set of empirical assumptions deals with the relation of the program of empowered democracy to other versions of what I have called the radical project and indeed with the existence of the radical project itself. Here, as always, a newly envisaged possibility of social reconstruction leads us to reinterpret a past history of transformative effort and thought. It prompts us to reassess the aims and relations of liberal, socialist, and communist doctrines. These intellectual-historical claims are the least closely connected to the explanatory theory of *False Necessity*. Although no less controversial than the other empirical assumptions previously mentioned, they are the easiest to assess.

THE INTERNAL JUSTIFICATION OF EMPOWERED DEMOCRACY: THE STATE NOT HOSTAGE TO A FACTION

The following sections describe three convergent lines of internal justification for the program of empowered democracy. Each argumentative strand reveals a distinctive way of getting from our received models of possible and desirable association to the ideals that inspire the institutional proposals. Each underlines a different aspect of the program's intentions. And each draws attention to the most interesting feature of internal argument: its ability to push us from relatively less controversial starting points to relatively more controversial conclusions. This ability is vastly strengthened when the practitioner of internal argument draws on a social understanding that expands his sense of the institutional forms that received ideals

of human association can take. It is also reinforced when he spurns the devices of argumentative truncation that attempt to enforce a rigid contrast between internal criticism and visionary thought.

At least one important route of internal criticism I postpone to a later section: arguments from the failure of current economic and governmental institutions to ensure the conditions for economic growth and stability. Prosperity represents both an aim in itself and a condition for the successful realization of received democratic ideals or party-political programs. The economic variety of internal criticism, however, may best be considered in direct connection with the parts of the program of empowered democracy that propose a reorganization of the economy.

The first line of internal justification starts from a minimalist version of the democratic ideal and from the contrast between the requirements of this ideal and the contemporary forms of democratic politics. The conception of democracy as the regime that subjects social relations to the wills of free and equal citizens has often been disparaged by the more skeptical democratic theorists as an unrealistic idealization. But even these skeptics, when they do not characterize democracy as merely disguised oligarchy, insist upon the authority and the practicality of a narrower ideal of democracy: the goal of preventing the state from becoming hostage to a faction. The faction may be a class, a community, or a party. Governmental power must not be exclusively and permanently exercised by such a sector of the population nor used for its primary benefit. Elites may share much of public office among themselves. The authority of the state may regularly serve some classes and communities better than others. But the power elites must compete for office. Their success in gaining office and in keeping it must depend to a significant degree upon their ability to enlist mass support, within the electoral process and outside it. The people who win governmental power under these conditions must in fact be able to set policy over the major issues of social life. They must not find their programs regularly circumvented or undermined by a faction of the population, entrenched in positions of privilege that elected officials and representatives are unable to disturb. Such an ideal of democracy is more than an artifact of theory; in less articulate form it lives in even many of the more cynical popular conceptions of democratic politics.

Democracy, for the citizens of North Atlantic democracies at the close of the twentieth century, is this ideal. It is also, however, a detailed set of institutions and practices, such as the constitutional techniques that deliberately multiply hurdles to the execution of any bold program and the style of party rivalry and rotation that first assumed its modern identity several generations after the earliest liberal constitutions had been invented. All but the most self-

conscious radicals see democracy as both that minimalist ideal and these distinctive practices. But you do not have to be a radical to see how far the experience of democratic politics fails to make good even on the seemingly modest commitment to prevent the state from falling hostage to a faction. The recognition of this straightforward disparity between an accepted ideal and a familiar reality represents the beginning of the style of internal argument this discussion is meant to exemplify.

Consider first the ability of relatively small groups of people – financial and enterprise managers – to exert a crucial degree of control over the basic flows of investment decisions, the decisions that most directly shape the rate and character of economic growth. These investment controllers play a disproportionately important role in determining the response of the economy to public policy. Parties in office bent on economic redistribution and institutional reform quickly discover the negative economic consequences of plans that jeopardize business confidence – as most serious transformative projects do. The ability of the investment managers to respond to the distant threat of reform with the immediate answer of disinvestment, less productive, long-term investment, or outright capital flight compels the reformers to limit their aims. It perpetuates the reform cycles discussed in Chapter 2. It places the conditions of collective prosperity largely beyond the reach of democratic control.

Clearly, the privileged control that small cadres of entrepreneurs and financiers can exercise over key investment flows is simply the most dramatic instance of a more pervasive problem: the capacity of specially endowed or organized groups to withdraw major areas of policy from the effective jurisdiction of elected governments and to hold these governments hostage to the perceived interests of narrow factions. The key lies in the combination of a measure of factional or nonreciprocal privilege with the insulation of such privilege against disturbance or redistribution in the normal rounds of partisan rivalry and policy change. Viewed from this broader perspective the beneficiaries may be as much organized labor and bureaucratic or technocratic elites as private entrepreneurs and investors. Their ability to hold the state hostage may therefore survive a gradual expansion of the public sector of the economy that is not accompanied by a more fundamental shift in the methods of decentralized capital allocation and in the institutional forms of production and exchange.

Consider next the consequences of the influence large-scale business and administrative organizations exercise upon the quality of everyday social life. These organizations seem to be indispensable instruments of economic and administrative efficiency because they permit the large-scale pooling of financial, technological, informational, and manpower resources. Yet they pose a double threat to

the minimalist ideal of preventing the state from becoming hostage to a faction. On the one hand, they endanger the integrity of democratic elections and democratic representation by the pressure they are able to exert upon the financing of elections, the attitudes of the mass media, and the career backgrounds and prospects of officials. On the other hand, they create vast domains within everyday practical life that are not themselves organized on principles analogous to those shaping democratic governments. They appear, in the prosaic world of work and exchange, as the sole alternative to isolated petty property. In this capacity they help make the promises of citizenship seem a largely irrelevant exception to the inevitable demands and characteristics of practical life.

The single most powerful source of these contrasts between the minimalist democratic ideal and the realities of democratic politics is the reliance on absolute property rights as the primary device of economic decentralization. These rights provide the institutional shell within which those who act as delegates of the property owners are entitled to organize work on nondemocratic principles. They enable relatively small numbers of businessmen to maximize the constraining effect of business confidence. They constitute the means for accumulating influence over the instruments of mass communication. More subtly but no less importantly, they help sustain a style of industrial organization that privileges mass-production industry, with its sharp contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities, and its incalculable value as a citadel from which managers, investors, and union leaders can hold reform-minded governments to ransom. These mass-production enterprises could not contain the otherwise fatal threat of instability in the capital, labor, and product markets on which they depend without resorting to a range of devices, all of which (as argued in Chapter 3) presuppose absolute property.

The evidence for believing in the existence of a strong link between democratic pluralism and economic decentralization is persuasive. Moreover, the traditional alternatives to a property-based market economy do indeed threaten us with bureaucratic despotism, massive inefficiency, or a combination of both. But notice that these familiar alternatives – the nationalization of the private means of production and the bestowal of such means upon the work force of each enterprise – do not alter the character of the property right; they merely transfer it – in one case, to central planners, in the other case to the people who happen to have the jobs at the time the transfer takes place. Their negative consequences, discussed in the appendix to Chapter 2, may make the subversive effects of absolute property rights upon democratic politics seem modest by comparison.

But imagine a way of organizing a decentralized economy that

dissociates and assigns to different entities the faculties that now compose the property entitlement. Teams of workers, technicians, and entrepreneurs would make conditional or temporary claims upon competing capital funds, whose administrators would in turn be accountable, for their resource base and their overall capital-allocation policies, to the elected governments and representative assemblies of the democracy. Such a reorganization of the institutional form of a market economy might enable us to fragment markets and enterprises, to reconcile enterprise fragmentation more easily with economies of scale, and to encourage experimentation and diversity in the organization of production and exchange. This alternative would also pose dangers of its own. Its deliberative processes might be perverted by increasingly explicit deals among particular groups of capital takers, capital fund managers, and politicians. To guard against this danger, the forms of democratic accountability and participation might have to be extended – extended beyond what the inherited constitutional techniques of the liberal state can readily countenance. The conflict over the mastery and uses of governmental power would have to be reorganized in ways that more effectively subjected to challenge and conflict every emergent situation of privilege.

Suppose we confront the resigned democrat with both the criticism and the proposal outlined in the preceding paragraphs. He may reject the proposed alternative as impractical or dangerous and insist that the present form of democracy, with all its imperfections, is preferable to any feasible alternative. But if he pursues this tack we can at least hope to sharpen his sense of the contrast between present realities and a minimalist version of his own ideals. We can draw him into empirical controversies over the probable consequences and conditions of alternative arrangements. We can shake his sense that the democratic ideal has a self-evident institutional content.

He may reject our program not because he believes it to be unfeasible but because he thinks it fails to respect that aspect of the democratic ideal we should care about most. But then in choosing either to reject the alternative or to accept it he gives greater clarity to his understanding of what democracy is for. Although the new institutions may have been justified or motivated by the narrow goal of rescuing the state from the control of a faction, they require from those who would operate them or reason from them a revised idea of democracy. This idea extends the notion of a state not hostage to a faction into the notion of a society not hostage to any entrenched version of itself and not designed to make its citizens hostage to predefined places in a plan of social division and hierarchy.

If internal argument is defined narrowly as taking its points of departure from received empirical understandings of society as well

as from inherited ideals of human association, we cannot expect it to persuade anyone to accept proposals for alternative institutional definitions of markets and democracies. It can merely heighten our sense of ambiguity and prevent us from staying, imaginatively, where we are. Its focus is sharpened and its force strengthened, however, when it can draw upon an enlarged sense of social possibility (such as the explanatory theory of this book seeks to justify) and upon visionary justifications of its arguments. The internal discussion then provides the materials and opportunities on which the visionary can seize, while vision gives the internal arguer a stronger measure of corroboration and clarity. In the end the visionary and the internal justifications may even merge into a single mode of discourse.

THE INTERNAL JUSTIFICATION
OF EMPOWERED DEMOCRACY:
SOCIETY AS AN ARTIFACT OF WILL

The dependence of internal argument upon both social theory and visionary thought becomes all the clearer in a second line of criticism. This alternative version of the case for empowered democracy also plays on the contrast between acknowledged ideals and experienced realities. But it starts from an ambitious rather than a minimalist version of the democratic idea, and it highlights disharmonies between aspiration and experience that the first line of internal argument leaves unexplored.

Democracy, in this more ambitious view, is a regime in which the basic arrangements of social life are chosen by the wills of free and equal citizens. The more ambitious ideal connects with the minimalist goal because the circumstance in which the state remains hostage to a faction amounts to a situation of privilege in the authorship of social arrangements, a confiscation of the society-making power the democrat believes ought to reside more or less equally in all. The more ambitious ideal goes farther because it requires that we be able affirmatively to trace our most important institutions and practices to democratic choice. (In the light of the explanatory theory of *False Necessity* the most important arrangements may be defined, more precisely, as those composing the formative context of social life.) Moreover, this more demanding ideal outlaws unchosen tradition as well as nonreciprocal privilege; it insists that our society be our artifact.

In our democratic aspirations the commitment to bring society under the rule of free and equal wills never stands alone. It is tempered and complemented by an expectation about the type of social order these free and equal wills establish. This expectation constitutes the

distinctively liberal element in our thinking about democracy. A democratic social order is one in which no majoritarian choice destroys the framework that enables new majorities to emerge and to change or reverse earlier decisions. It is also one in which majorities do not choose to abandon individuals to a circumstance of dependence or subjugation that mocks the claim of the abandoned to be the free coauthors of the social worlds they inhabit.

One way of clarifying the relation between democracy as a procedure (the triumph of the will) and democracy as an outcome (the effective respect for the continuing autonomy of the individual and for the continuing emergence of new challenges to old decisions) is to say that only those outcomes count as democratic that do not jeopardize the procedure. But the relation between procedure and outcome gains a higher order of generality when we reinterpret both the procedure and the outcome as complementary expressions of the same effort to free our practical and personal dealings from any imposed arbitrary or domination-tainted grid.

The feature of democratic politics that contrasts most clearly with this exigent and internally complex ideal is the persistence of the reform cycles discussed in Chapter 2. Caught in these cycles, democratic polities alternate among a small number of policy options that are almost no party's favorite solutions. Why must we be condemned endlessly to rehearse economic or social policies that are widely viewed as halfhearted and second best? And why should we find the range of feasible alternatives so narrowly defined when we did not democratically choose the list or trace its limits?

There are two familiar ways to reconcile these facts with the more ambitious democratic ideal. We often find these two tactics combined. The composition of the narrow list of viable alternatives can be attributed to the pressure of inexorable practical constraints, such as the requirements of satisfying the material expectations of large populations against a background of limited resources and limited technological and organizational capabilities. Alternatively, the rigidity and recurrence of the options may be put down to the inevitable effects of the mutual resistance that many organized interests impose upon one another in socially and culturally pluralistic societies. The repeated solutions are the few resultants of far more numerous vectors. But the argument of Chapter 2 has already suggested that neither practical constraints nor pluralistic tensions suffice to explain the shape and tenacity of the reform cycles unless we also take into account the independent influence of a formative institutional and imaginative context such as the one described there.

Now suppose someone objects that even this institutional and imaginative framework results largely from the combination of free and equal wills. A liberal-democratic constitution not only provides

for its own revision but also enables suitably constituted and represented majorities to revise any social arrangements, subject only to the revisable constraints imposed by the constitution itself and to the limitations in the content of legislation that inhere in a commitment to the democratic ideal. Remember, however, that a formative context consists in detailed institutions and beliefs, not just in an explicit constitutional scheme. Much or most of the formative context may never be mentioned, directly or indirectly, in the constitutional document. Conversely, many things found in a written constitution may not deserve to be included within the description of a formative context. Unlike the written constitution the formative context is not chosen. And the whole point of its existence and entrenchment is to resist the ordinarily available forms of challenge and disturbance. Moreover, if we attributed the content of the unwanted reform cycle to the formative context while continuing to insist that the context is chosen, we would be driven to conclusions that are either unpersuasive or embarrassing. When we choose the context we must be unaware of its real consequences for the course of routine conflict and policy. In this event our allegiance to the framework depends upon ignorance. Alternatively, we may appreciate the consequences but regard them as the unavoidable price for the gaining of benefits and the defense of ideals that only this framework can ensure. But then we make an empirical claim about the feasibility and consequences of alternative institutional means to achieve those goals. We find ourselves drawn into the very controversies about the merits of alternative regimes that this internal argument is designed to bring to the fore.

What changes in the content and character of the contemporary democracies would diminish the discrepancy between the more ambitious democratic ideal and the experience of democratic politics? The changes required would disrupt not only these but any other reform cycles. At the very least, they would prevent whatever part of these recurrences cannot in fact be attributed to the tensions of pluralism or the constraints of practical necessity. And they would succeed in this objective only to the extent that they weakened the force of formative contexts by narrowing the distance of context-preserving routine from context-transforming struggle.

One such set of changes might replace constitutional techniques of fragmentation and planned deadlock (such as the checks and balances of presidential regimes) with methods better suited to enable a party in power to try out far-reaching programs of social transformation. Another group of reforms would ensure, in the organization of governmental politics, occasions and methods with which to bring every important feature of the social order into question. The structure of government and the style of party-political rivalry

would provide opportunities to destabilize any privileged hold over the material and cultural resources with which the social future is created within the social present. Still another set of reforms would put the decentralization of economic decisions on a basis that prevented small numbers of capital controllers from setting the social terms of economic growth. This altered institutional basis for economic decentralization would also help open the ordinary world of work and exchange to collective conflict and deliberation.

There is no a priori reason to believe that reforms of this kind and with these goals would converge with the institutional changes suggested by the previous line of internal criticism. The convergence between the requirements of the effort to prevent the state from being hostage to a faction and the requirement of the attempt to ensure the rule of free and equal wills is an empirical hypothesis. But it is one made plausible by a major theme of the explanatory theory of this book: the idea that privilege becomes stable only by being insulated from the effects of routine conflict. It is a conjecture vindicated by the detailed institutional proposals and supporting arguments presented later in this chapter.

By confronting the democrat with such a combination of internal criticisms and responsive proposals, we may hope to unbalance his self-assurance and force him to choose between a retrenchment or an extension of his commitments. He may reject our proposed alternative as unfeasible or dangerous. But if he accepts our empirical claims about the nature and basis of the reform cycles, we have at least taught him to understand the constraints present institutional forms impose upon his version of the democratic ideal. We have drawn him into particular controversies about the conditions and consequences of alternative governmental and economic arrangements. If, in the end, he remains faithful to the current institutional scheme, we can even expect to make him concede that they support only a far more modest conception of democracy than he had previously been inclined to profess. He can then hardly blame a disillusioned citizenry from seeking in other aspects of their experience (such as the politics of personal relations or of large-scale organizations) the satisfactions they have failed to find in citizenship.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the democrat accepts if not our proposals, the route of institutional transformation they exemplify. As he moves along this route he must enlarge his preexisting view of the democratic ideal. The changed institutions require from those who operate them, or reason from them, a new democratic theory. For this theory the goal of subjecting social relations to the wills of free and equal citizens can be achieved only by arrangements that weaken the practical and imaginative force of the contrast between

the pursuit of private interests within a framework and the self-conscious fighting over the content of this framework.

Here, as before, the power of internal criticism not merely to expose problems and ambiguities but to support a particular resolution of them depends upon the extent to which internal argument incorporates into its own practice the other forms of discourse explored in this book: the expansion of the sense of social possibility that an antinecessitarian social theory permits, the higher confidence in the rightness of the cause that visionary thought inspires, and the awareness of alternatives that programmatic thinking awakens.

THE INTERNAL JUSTIFICATION OF
EMPOWERED DEMOCRACY:
THE FRUSTRATION AND FULFILLMENT OF
PARTY-POLITICAL PROGRAMS

A Different Version of Internal Argument

The two possibilities of internal criticism explored in each of the last two sections differ in the relative ambition of the democratic ideal from which they start. They nevertheless illustrate the same basic method. Both exploit the tensions between an accepted conception of democracy and the realities of democratic politics. Both suggest changes in the institutional form of governments and markets that, once accepted, require an enlargement of the initial democratic ideal. Both show how this enlargement goes hand in hand with an effort to apply democratic principles to social relations previously considered unsuited to them. Both suggest that the alternative to this redefinition of democratic ideals and democratic institutions is a heightened sense of the disharmonies between received ideals and current institutions and a more active engagement in the discussion of possible alternatives. Both demonstrate that the ability of internal argument to push us to surprising conclusions, and not merely to explicate ambiguity, depends upon the extent to which it is informed by critical social theory, reinforced by political vision, and enriched by detailed institutional proposals and experiments.

My final line of internal criticism presents a variation on this method. Instead of taking the ideal of democracy as a point of departure, the exercise focuses on the main types of party-political programs advanced in the Western industrial democracies, the societies that represent the immediate setting for the programmatic arguments of this chapter. The party programs can be understood both as interpretations of democracy and as efforts to reconcile the democratic ideal with other goals and values. They make somewhat

different assumptions about the models of possible and desirable human association that ought to be realized in different areas of social existence. But they rarely make these assumptions explicit, in part because they view enacted ideals of human association solely as objects of governmental policy.

Once again, however, the crux of the internal argument lies in the relation of the distinctive ideals of each party program to the formative contexts of the societies in which they are upheld. Here, too, attention focuses on established and alternative institutional definitions of market economics and representative democracies. The argument is cast in the form of a dilemma. If the proponent of the program continues to accept the existing institutional framework, he finds himself repeatedly frustrated in accomplishing his objective. He can realize it up to a certain point but there he hits against a barrier he finds himself unable to overcome. The discussion of the reform cycles in Chapter 2 suggests the nature of these barriers and offers a hypothesis about their institutional and imaginative basis. The comparative classification of Chapter 3 probes their distinctive identity and effects. The schematic narrative of Chapter 4 explores their historical origins. Faced with the obstacles dramatized by the reform cycles, the champion of a current party program may continue to press his plans, complaining that they have never been given a fair trial. Alternatively, he may give up the pretensions, though not necessarily the rhetoric that expresses them, and embrace present arrangements as practical necessity.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the adherent to the party program recognizes the need to reform the current institutional structure the better to realize his goals. Once he has established the alternative arrangements, or even just imagined them in significant detail, he discovers that they require of him a revised understanding of his programmatic aims and their relation to the aims of his adversaries. Internal argument does not merely force the proponent of the program to confront this choice between the retrenchment and the transformation of his ideals. It gives him reasons to choose the second horn of this dilemma over the first and, having done so, to move in the direction of the program of empowered democracy laid out in detail later in this chapter and already anticipated in earlier arguments. The reasons are inconclusive and controversial but gain greatly in force if the interlocutor comes to accept the conclusions of an explanatory social theory like the one offered in this book and hears the visionary message this theoretical understanding helps inform.

Three programs are discussed here: the conservative (or classical-liberal) program of free markets and decentralization, the corporatist-centrist program of encouraging communities focused on organizations such as business enterprises or local governments that lie

between the central government and individual citizens, and the social-democratic program of egalitarian redistribution and grassroots participation in workplaces and local governments. Clearly, the three programs do not come close to including the important programmatic differences among political parties in contemporary democracies. Nor are they neatly divided among different party movements. To this day, for example, many of the European Christian Democratic parties hesitate between the second and third orientations I have distinguished. The extreme leftists of the labor or socialist parties sometimes advance programs that resemble ideas associated with the most radical free-market ideas, and if my argument is correct they are right to do so.

Nevertheless, despite the remoteness of my classification of programs from the fine texture of party differences in particular countries, the main point of this version of internal argument finds frequent corroboration in contemporary experience. The troubled relation of institutional assumptions to programmatic aims is not just the teaching of an alien experience, addressed to people who have never thought along such lines. It is a dimly understood but pervasively felt anxiety of party-political practice. The conservative free-market parties do hesitate between serious efforts to advance economic and governmental decentralization and outright pandering to the business interests. They fail to appreciate the constraints the current forms of markets and democracies impose upon their partisan ideals because they do not envision the alternative institutional forms that representative governments and decentralized economies might assume. Similarly, left-leaning reformers in high office regularly hesitate between advocating economic redistribution within an unchanged institutional framework and seeking changes in the framework. They vaguely understand the difficulties that current institutional arrangements create for large-scale redistribution. But they have little to put in place of the current market forms except nationalized industry, central planning, and brokered deals among big business and organized labor and nowhere to look for an alternative to current constitutional methods except impractical ideas of direct democracy and selfless civic engagement. The confusion is there all right; we lack the insights with which to dispel it.

*The Conservative (Classical-Liberal) Program of Governmental
Decentralization and Economic Competition*

One characteristic partisan program has free markets and governmental decentralization as its watchwords. Its extreme form is the libertarian commitment to consign the state to a residual role as a mutual protection association and a provider of essential services.

The illusion it never unequivocally abandons is the idea of an uncontroversial system of free human interaction, complete with a system of contract and property rights, that we can establish if only we manage to discipline government and prevent it from playing favorites among individuals or groups.

The devolution of governmental power to small territorial units is a major plank in the conservative platform. But territorial decentralization immediately presents the issue of economic decentralization. The traditional objection to devolution is that it delivers working people into the hands of local notables and elites. Its real social significance must therefore be largely determined by the character of local society, and this character in turn bears the imprint of the country's economic regime. Even in societies that do not exhibit an ostentatious class hierarchy the emancipatory effect of territorial deconcentration depends very largely on the quality of relations among people in their everyday, practical lives. The forms of production and exchange help shape this quality.

Thus, the nature and extent of economic decentralization is crucial to the conservative program. The institutionally serious conservative wants to maximize the independence of economic agents and the competitiveness of product, labor, and capital markets. But he confronts two obstacles to the achievement of his goals.

First, he must face the tension between the breakup of economic units and the practical advantages of economies of scale. A shrinkage of the size of the economic units and an extreme market fragmentation can be expected to drive up unit costs. It may prevent the concentration of resources and the organization of markets that encourage technological dynamism by making technologically productive investments physically possible and financially rewarding. Thus, the conservative feels compelled to temper his goals of deconcentration for fear of exacting an economic cost that the society would not and should not pay.

A second obstacle to the program of economic decentralization has to do with a tension within the competitive ideal itself rather than with the constraints that economies of scale impose upon this ideal. Disparities in market influence and in economically relevant information are the very stuff of market transactions. Economic success is measured in the accumulation of capital and in the financing of technical, organizational, and informational capabilities allowing the agent to be that much more influential at the next round of transactions. If these inequalities of power and knowledge are allowed to accumulate without limit, the market system would soon become a power order because the psychological reality of autonomous economic decision making would be destroyed. But if the transaction-shaping inequalities resulting from earlier transactions were canceled

out by a higher redistributive authority as soon as such inequalities arose, the market would in effect have been sacrificed to an overriding method of redistributive allocation. The thoughtful conservative or classical liberal recognizes this problem as a disharmony inherent in the market ideal and as still another reason to restrain his decentralizing goals.

The tension between market competitiveness and economies of scale and the disharmony within the market idea itself between the requirements of decisional autonomy and the restraint on corrective redistribution are endemic to all market systems. What the conservative fails to understand, however, is that market systems – the arrangements for decentralized capital allocation, production, and exchange – may differ sharply in the extent to which they resolve or aggravate these tensions. Under some institutional settlements the economies of scale needed to sustain a high level of technological dynamism may be unattainable. The minimum of case-by-case correction needed to prevent the market from remaining a power order may be more than a maximum of correction beyond which the corrective system of allocation replaces the market. Under other systems economies of scale may be reconciled with a far-reaching fragmentation of agents and markets, and the pressure for case-by-case corrective redistribution may greatly diminish. That market economies do vary along these lines is a historical fact, though one whose dimensions and implications remain misunderstood. The more speculative and controversial claim is that the actual historical variations represent but a portion of the indefinitely wider range of possible variations. The significance of the speculative claim is brought into focus by a proposal to reconstruct, in the here and now, the institutional basis of a decentralized economy.

The conservative does not recognize these actual or possible variations in the institutional form of a market economy, or if he recognizes them in the abstract, he fails to appreciate the consequences of the recognition. His first impulse is to equate the abstract idea of a market, as a system that enables many economic agents to bargain on their own initiative and for their own account, with particular economic institutions and legal rules. When he says "market" he means not only a market based upon absolute property rights but the unique system of contract and property rules that prevailed in the course of modern Western history. He may believe that part of the two tensions described can be resolved by such measures as the repeal of unnecessary governmental regulation. Whatever part of the tensions results from the established institutional framework of capital allocation, however, he attributes to the very nature of a market.

Suppose we point out to him the distinction between the abstract idea of a market and its concrete historical forms. We follow up on

this distinction by proposing an institutional redefinition of the market regime. We advocate a version of the idea of rotating capital funds and disassociated property rights that later parts of this chapter develop and that the earlier lines of internal criticism have already evoked. It may now be helpful to restate the suggestion in slightly greater detail. Such an alternative system would, remember, pull apart and assign to different entities powers that the property right brings together and grants to the same rightholder. Teams of worker-technicians and entrepreneurs would make conditional and temporary claims upon one of a number of competing, semi-independent social capital funds, oriented to different kinds of investments and social needs. The ultimate constraints under which both capital takers and capital givers would operate would be determined by the central representative bodies of the democratic republic. These constraints would presumably include limits on the accumulation of capital by a team, the distribution of profits or the acquisition of other enterprises and services, and the permissible levels of wage and income inequality. Such constraints might be designed to prefer the rotation of both manpower teams and capital resources over the maintenance of long-lasting enterprises and a labor force bound to particular enterprises. But even these preferences might occasionally be reversed in some sectors of the economy for the sake of experimentation and comparison. The basic and sector-specific rates of interest charged by the central capital funds to the lower-tier competing funds and passed on by these funds to the capital takers would constitute the mainstay of governmental finance. Each aspect of the proposed economic regime would be implemented by a broad range of intermediate arrangements and transitional strategies, leading gradually from current institutions to the desired alternative.

We might try to persuade the free marketeer to move in the direction of our proposal by showing him that, if feasible, it would dramatically limit the tensions plaguing his efforts to achieve a fuller measure of economic decentralization in social life. Under the proposed system the entrusting of vast amounts of capital to managers who act as the delegates of the absolute property owners would cease to be the indispensable means for taking advantage of economies of scale. Nor would the breakup of large-scale enterprises endanger practical efficiencies. The competing capital funds would be able to give large amounts of resources to particular teams and several teams would be able to join in certain endeavors. Yet this pooling of manpower, technological, and financial resources would remain both temporary and conditional. Moreover, the alternative regime would deprive the mass-production industries of the major devices with which they protect themselves against instability in their product, capital, and labor markets (see the argument about rigid and flexible

production in Chapter 3). It would thereby encourage the extension into the mainstream of industry of an organizational style and scale characteristically associated with the high-tech and service vanguard of the economy. Because the proposed system would prevent the accumulation of private fortunes (through strict limits on the accumulation and hereditary transmission of wealth and through the development of the right to satisfy basic material needs), ensure the diversification of access to capital, and sever the link between entrepreneurial success and cumulative market influence, it would also distance the exchange system from a power order. The need to correct transactions and redistribute their outcomes would greatly diminish because a much higher measure of equality (or of the prevention of permanent inequality) would be built into the defining rules of the market order. In brief, the new system would encourage both more economic deconcentration and more innovation in the organizational forms of production and exchange, though it would do so by abandoning the relatively absolute and unified property right.

These economic arrangements would in turn require changes in the organization of government and of the conflict over governmental power. If only to compensate for the dangers that attend a more overtly politicized allocation of capital, the forms of participation and accountability in governmental politics would need to expand. The conflict over the mastery and uses of governmental power would have to provide the occasions and instruments to destabilize emergent alliances between cadres of politicians or bureaucrats and groups of capital takers. The more mobilizational and conflictual style of politics that can be expected to emerge from such constitutional changes may have independent appeal to a classical liberal. For the earnest liberal wants to establish a society in which individual experience, opportunity, and initiative are not overshadowed by social station and in which the devolution of power to local governments does not mean surrendering to local elites.

The conservative as classical liberal might reject these proposals as unfeasible, inefficient, or dangerous to civic freedoms. But if he could be engaged in the effort to respond to this sequence of critical arguments and constructive suggestions he would gain a more acute sense of the difference between the abstract idea of a market and its varied institutional forms. He would have to assess more self-consciously the constraints current forms impose upon his ideals and to explore more seriously the empirical assumptions that lead him to reject this or other alternatives. And he might be led to make explicit the reasons that prompt him to subject the ideal of economic and governmental decentralization to the special requirement of the absolute property right.

If, on the other hand, he moved toward the proposed arrangements he would experience a transformation in his self-conception and in his understanding of his relation to his political adversaries. His view of the market would become disengaged from the commitment to small-scale property and his conception of democracy would no longer remain attached to the specific constitutional techniques of the contemporary liberal democracies. Most importantly, he would alter his sense of his disagreement with centrists and leftists. From his newfound vantage point many of the traditional differences among these ideological tendencies would be overshadowed by the dispute about whether to take the established institutional framework for granted or to reconstruct it along the lines suggested.

Here, as always, the persuasive force of internal argument – its ability to go beyond the exposure of ambiguity to the justification of a particular direction of institutional change – depends upon how much it is allowed to incorporate. It can neither convince the interlocutor to confront the ambiguity it exposes nor lead him toward the particular resolution it desires if it must work solely with received ideals and widespread empirical assumptions. But its direction sharpens and its base broadens to the extent that it draws upon a credible view of social transformation and institutional invention, a visionary message, and detailed programmatic proposals. To be sure, all these informing ideas are controversial. But each new focus of controversy is an opening through which further varieties of relatively corrigible and partly empirical insights can be brought to bear on our programmatic controversies.

The Centrist Program of Corporatism and Community

The centrist program of corporatism and community may seem much less important than the other two discussed here. Certainly, it has always been less strongly represented in the English-speaking countries than in continental Europe or Latin America. Even in the countries where it has exercised the strongest influence, it has lost the specificity it once possessed in, for example, the social teaching of the Catholic Church in the period between the wars, a teaching that resonated in the programs and rhetoric of the center Christian parties. Today, the centrist program of community has largely become a vague aspiration in search of an explicit ideological form.

But it continues to repay internal criticism as much as its more influential rivals. Its predicament of institutional disorientation merely makes explicit a problem shared less self-consciously by free marketeers and social democrats. Centrist communitarianism provides an opportunity to probe the relation of our inherited communal ideals to current institutional arrangements. And it corresponds to a

powerful undercurrent of disappointment and longing even where it fails to be articulated as a distinct political program.

The identity of this program may best be understood from the angle of its diagnosis of the ills of modern society. According to this diagnosis the primary evil of daily life in contemporary society is the breakdown of the bonds of communal solidarity and the abandonment of the individual to self-reliance, loneliness, and selfishness. The isolated individual confronts the government and other large-scale organizations with very little, except the obsessional nuclear family, by way of communal sustenance.

The centrist communitarian may gladly acknowledge that the disruption of the texture of sustaining reciprocal loyalties resulted from changes that also made societies both more equal and more productive. But he does not believe that the situation of universalized estrangement constitutes the inevitable counterpart to economic growth and social equalization. Moreover, he also recognizes that there is no return, desirable or possible, to the earlier more naive, more impoverished, and often more oppressive and hierarchical situation. He seeks a response that respects the conditions and achievements of modern life.

His prescription begins with the effort to define the intermediate organizations – intermediate between the state and the individual – that can serve as practical settings for a modernized communitarian ideal. But the centrist communitarian characteristically displays a pattern of hesitation and equivocation when he tries to define these institutional settings. He does not advocate a radical reconstruction of current institutions; the idea of alternative institutional definitions of market economics and democratic representation forms no part of his doctrinal repertory. But neither does he fully accept established institutional practices. Typically, he wants to transform existing institutions – businesses and bureaucracies, shops and factories – from within and to do so less by dramatic transfers of power or institutional inventions than by nurturing habits of mutual allegiance, communal harmony, and restraint on individual or factional self-interest. Insecurity and extreme inequality must be avoided. But he does not see entrenched hierarchies of advantage as themselves an insuperable obstacle so long as the relations between superiors and subalterns are infused by a sense of continuing mutual loyalties and of devotion to the common good of the group. Economic security and coparticipation in collective decision-making may help sustain this devotion and these loyalties. But the widespread acceptance and enactment of certain moral ideas are likely to be just as important.

Where is the centrist communitarian to look for the practical realization of his aims? The most richly developed versions of the centrist communitarian program often place their hope in the effort

to impart to modern enterprises some of the characteristic forms of the guild: the association of employers and employees on a basis of security and mutual commitment. This association requires from both the workers and their supervisors a willingness not to push to the hilt each party's advantage on the labor market. The leading right-of-center version of this idea is the repudiation of class conflict and union militancy and the redefinition of existing businesses as a locus for community. Because the intermediate organization was often supposed to occupy a well-defined and regulated place in the social order and perform some of the functions reserved by liberal theory either to individuals or to governments, this right-of-center communitarianism sometimes presupposed a corporatist reorganization of society. In this corporatist guise it served as an inspiration to fascist theory. Yet the doctrine of guild socialism showed that the same idea could be reinterpreted in a left-of-center manner.

The explicitly corporatist devices of the centrist communitarian program may have lost their attraction. But the practical compromises and moral concerns that inspired these ideas persist in vaguer and more credible forms. On the one hand, they surface in the advocacy of consensual deals between workers and employers in mass-production industries and large-scale organizations. These pacts characteristically rely upon the distinction between a stable, organized labor force and the transitory, unprotected workers or the independent subcontractors who enable the enterprise to respond to demand cycles without having to enlarge its permanent work force. The deals also require national governments to be actively engaged in promoting the more cooperative style of labor-management relations. On the other hand, the same ill-defined communitarian concerns reappear in forms unrelated to work. Such forms go all the way from the willful and factitious development of ethnic or national identities to the attempt to reconstruct the family as a refuge from the experience of egotistic self-interest. These versions of the quest for community gain urgency from the awareness that their work-related counterparts amount to hardly more than strategies for more effective practical cooperation and leave the communitarian aspirations unfulfilled. But the question is precisely: What would it take to fulfill them?

The centrist communitarian program is defined in part by its refusal to break decisively with the established institutional forms of democracies and markets. The result of this refusal is to frustrate the realization of the communitarian ideal. One aspect of frustration is the division of the communitarian ideal into practical solutions that lack emotional force and psychosocial experiments that lack connection to humdrum practical life. Another, more fundamental aspect is the entanglement of the communal ideal in social relations of de-

pendence and domination. I earlier argued that present institutional arrangements both realize and block the radical project of fashioning institutions that weaken the influence of preestablished social division and hierarchy over our practical and passionate dealings with one another. This argument is implied in the recognition of the failure of current institutions and dogmas to prevent governments from remaining hostage to a faction, for privileged access to governmental power is the single most important tool for the entrenchment of group prerogative.

Consider what happens to the communal ideal when it must be realized in a setting of recalcitrant but also resented inequality. Every rebellion against dependence and domination takes on the character of a betrayal of communal bonds, whereas fidelity to these communal bonds requires submission to a hierarchical order. Yet the societies in which these varieties of dependence and domination persist are not like the societies in which the ideal of patron-client relations, with their combinations of exchange, dominion, and allegiance, reigned unchallenged. The coexistence of community with inequality is recognized, half-consciously, to require special excuses and to generate special problems. People fear that this coexistence will turn the communal ideal into little more than the softening halo of a brutal power system. They fear it will sacrifice to the preservation of this system their chances for greater practical and emotional access to one another. This subversive though imperfectly articulated insight poisons the subjective experience of communal life. Allegiance becomes deference, and deference is vitiated by an undercurrent of resentment, contained by apathy, escapism, and willed naiveté. When the resentment produces actual rebellion it must be repressed. However anodyne a form the repression may take, it is experienced as particularly nasty because it occurs against the background of so troubled a sense of entitlement and possibility.

At the same time, the continuing entanglement of communal ideals in structures of dependence and domination distances the ideal and the experience of communal life from the basic problem of solidarity: our effort to moderate the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion and to free our experiences of attachment and engagement from some of their perils of dependence and depersonalization. The higher-ups are preoccupied with the maintenance of control; the underlings, with the anxieties of resentment and rebellion. Neither superiors nor subalterns can readily move toward the heightened mutual vulnerability that represents the most immediate spur to the advancement of solidarity. Moreover, both masters and mastered find their attempts to deal with one another as individuals constrained by the roles each person occupies within the hierarchical structure of the group.

Suppose we propose to the centrist communitarian that he follow the trajectory of institutional change anticipated in preceding sections and worked out later in this chapter. We argue to him that these institutional inventions help undermine the obstacles to the realization of his communitarian ideals. They do so primarily by contributing to the disruption of the mechanisms of privilege and to the undermining of entrenched social roles and hierarchies. Moreover, because factional advantage can easily turn into cultural hegemony, the proposed arrangements make it harder for any one group to present its distinctive way of life as a model for society although they may also help destabilize the pattern of inherited communal, ethnic, or national identities. Finally, they vastly expand the opportunities for individual engagement in collective life.

Even if the centrist communitarian believes in the feasibility of some version of the proposals for empowered democracy, he may reject them as subversive of his communitarian aspirations. He may insist that their appeal to conflict and mobilization jeopardizes the cultivation of group harmony and of shared values that he sees as the core of communal life. He may repudiate the emphasis on challenge to all nascent forms of privilege as a disguise for factional selfishness and animosity. But if he pursues this tack he may still be led to confront the constraints that existing institutional arrangements impose upon his communitarian objectives. He may become more conscious of the specific quality of the communities that can flourish within the institutional framework he refuses to abandon. And he is put on notice that this framework is at least not the self-evident vehicle of the communitarian program and that if our proposal does not seem preferable to present arrangements, another may well be.

If the centrist communitarian does agree to move toward this proposed revision of our basic institutional arrangements, he soon finds himself redefining the communitarian ideal. He now comes to see the promise of a fuller reconciliation between the enabling conditions of self-assertion as more important than group harmony or than the sharing of values and opinions; his idea of community begins to incorporate conflict as a condition rather than an evil. At the same time he begins to abandon the view of community as a distinctive model of human association to be realized in narrowly defined domains of social existence. He starts to see community instead as a variable aspect of social life, more fully realized in some areas of social practice than in others but never definitively excluded from any area.

These shifts in his preexisting definition of community are not the results of tricks we spring on him. They merely exemplify the interplay between images of association, their practical forms, and their domains of applications that represents the essential dynamic of in-

ternal argument. The more fully the centrist communitarian allows the visionary and social-theoretical supports of this programmatic direction to inform the moves of internal argument, the more likely he is to join us in our campaign.

The Social-Democratic Program of Redistribution and Participation

The third program considered here has the strongest manifest affinity with the proposals of empowered democracy. Moreover, when it is considered less as a partisan platform than as the idealized agenda of a certain tendency of social transformation, it represents the most attractive alternative to empowered democracy. But it is also the party orientation that I shall discuss most briefly. Almost everything I have to say about its ambivalent relation to present institutional arrangements has already been anticipated by the criticism of the other party orientations or by the analysis of contemporary reform cycles, or will later be developed more fully in the course of presenting the plan of empowered democracy.

The program of social democracy is distinguished by its commitment to diminish inequalities of wealth and income, to guarantee through tax-and-transfer schemes the satisfaction of welfare needs, and to establish the economic and social conditions for full employment. Together with this major theme of redistribution and stabilization, the social-democratic program incorporates a minor theme of grassroots involvement: the active participation of ordinary men and women in the governance of their workplaces and localities. In the internal evolution of social-democratic attitudes this minor theme has come to play an increasingly prominent role either because traditional economic demands become less pressing or because participation is seen as a basis for practical cooperation and for avoiding costly and unnecessary economic strife.

The social democrat is often straightforward in expressing his ambivalence toward the institutional framework he finds in place. He frequently speaks of modernizing economic and governmental institutions, of making them more accountable and participatory in their operation and more egalitarian in their effects, and of bringing them closer to the experience of ordinary men and women. But he does not advocate radical institutional inventions. He is likely to insist that mixed economies and representative democracies are infinitely better than available alternatives like the Soviet style of organization. He, too, implicitly identifies markets and democracies with the institutional forms he sees around him even though he professes an open-minded attitude toward institutional experimentation.

The social democratic program often finds its champions in labor

or socialist parties with a radical Marxist past. But the commitment to the proletariat regularly encourages an uneasy, favored relation to organized labor, entrenched in mass-production industry. The two main variants of social democracy reflect clashing but equally nonradical attitudes toward this special connection. One approach maintains the privileged link to the organized industrial working class; but it treats organized labor increasingly as a well-defined interest group, with a stake in the perpetuation of a certain style of industrial organization, rather than as a powerless, national mass unified not only by its present position but by its devotion to a new ordering of society. Another approach wants to sever the increasingly onerous connection and seeks support in a more amorphous middle-class constituency. Both approaches lack a transformative institutional vision. The social democrat ends up being someone who always promises a little more within the present institutional order, discovers that these promises are hard to keep, and attributes the difficulty of keeping them to the complexities of interest group politics and the intractability of practical constraints rather than to the formative institutional and imaginative context he half-consciously accepts.

The analysis of the reform cycles in Chapter 2 has already indicated ways in which current institutional forms of markets and democracies frustrate the achievement of the social-democratic goals of redistribution and participation. Thus, for example, the threat of serious redistribution encourages disinvestment and economic crisis wherever relatively small numbers of capital managers are able to exercise a major influence upon basic investment flows. To change this situation without merely transferring economic sovereignty to central planners or tenured enterprise labor forces would demand an alternative to absolute property as an instrument of economic decentralization. It would also require a style of governmental organization that could prevent this alternative from turning into an instrument of renescent privilege.

The participatory ideal faces similar constraints. It is certainly possible to expand the range of grassroots involvement in local administration and workplace governance without any change in the institutional structure of democratic governments and market economies. But this framework-respecting style of collective participation involves little real transfer of power. It is easily criticized as an exercise in human relations, and it often disappoints both its champions and its beneficiaries. As soon as the social democrat tries to give real force to the participatory ideal, however, he comes up against the limitations imposed by the established formative context. If workers participate more actively in the organization of the enterprise, can their power reach the point of overriding managers and stockholders?

If not, the participation amounts to little more than a consultative technique. If yes, we must make the workers into the new collective capitalists and property owners or revise the fundamental methods of capital allocation. If citizens are to participate more fully in local government, how can the approach toward techniques of direct democracy be reconciled with a system of public office and specialized bureaucracy that runs on entirely different principles? Until it hits against the limits set by these principles the participatory movement threatens little and offers less.

If the social-democratic program remains within the boundaries of current economic and governmental arrangements, it can hope to realize its participatory and redistributive goals only in the marginal and fitful manner described. The reflective social democrat who has grasped the constraints current market and democratic institutions impose upon his objectives but who has rejected available alternatives as impractical or dangerous must emulate the chastened classical liberal or centrist communitarian. He must retrench in his claims while holding himself open to examine such other proposals for institutional reconstruction as may be advanced.

If, on the other hand, the social democrat agrees to move toward the program of empowered democracy, his sense of what a more participatory and egalitarian society is like begins to change. The empowered democracy, for example, achieves a greater measure of economic equality through its basic methods of capital allocation and constitutional organization rather than through the tax-and-transfer correction of market outcomes. It therefore implies a far more intimate connection between civic engagement and outcome egalitarianism than the traditional social democrat envisages. We can hardly expect him to take internal criticism in this direction unless he comes to accept, in whatever fragmentary or implicit form, the visionary aspirations and the understanding of social reality and possibility that inform the program of empowered democracy.

The Radical Direction of the Internal Argument

In what sense does the internal criticism of party-political programs outlined in the previous sections have a leftist direction? The program of empowered democracy, anticipated by these lines of internal argument, is presented here as a leftist program of social reconstruction. In a real sense it does stand to the left of any of the three programmatic orientations discussed in the preceding sections. Yet I have also claimed that under certain assumptions the program of empowered democracy represents the fulfillment of each of the party tendencies. This claim makes the desired outcome look like a synthesis of current

partisan opinions rather than a position to their left. How can the apparent paradox be resolved?

You cannot capture in any one hierarchical ordering of values and policies the continuing identity of the leftist idea. What distinguishes and unites the left over the course of its modern history is the commitment to carry forward what we can now retrospectively recognize as the radical project: the effort to establish institutional arrangements that more fully emancipate our practical and passionate dealings from a preestablished and recalcitrant structure of social division and hierarchy and do so in part by the facility with which such arrangements lay themselves open to revision in the course of ordinary social life. The implications of this shared endeavor can be clarified by substituting for the three party tendencies discussed the revolutionary slogans of freedom (for the classical liberal program), fraternity (for the communal corporatist program), and equality (for the social-democratic program). To understand the leftist as the person who values equality over freedom and fraternity is to miss the main point of the leftist undertaking, though leftists have often laid themselves open to this misrepresentation, particularly when accused of not facing up to the insoluble disharmonies among competing values.

In fact, however, it is their accusers who are confused. The confusion arises from the failure to appreciate one of the most important features of normative argument: the way in which ideals of human association draw their meaning from the combination of an open-ended aspiration with concrete practices and institutions realized in particular areas of social existence. Because of this interplay among abstract ideals, practical forms, and domains of application, vague ideals like autonomy and community cannot have a stable core of meaning. But if the effective human meaning of such ideals varies according to their practical forms, so must the extent to which the ideals contradict or complement one another. Much of traditional modern moral and political argument, with its stock arguments about the conflict of values, fails to understand this characteristic of our moral and political opinions.

Once we do understand it, however, we are that much less likely to mistake leftism for the assertion of a particular value over other competing values and are much more open to an interpretation that accords more fully with the actual campaigns and the felt aspirations of the left. On this interpretation, the leftist is the person who believes that the most important elements in our ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity cannot be adequately realized through present institutional arrangements. More specifically, he believes they can and should be realized through the direction of institutional change described by the revised understanding of the radical cause.

The emphasis on the radicalism of the reconstructive effort elicited by these internal arguments and by their explanatory and visionary supports may aggravate another concern. If the direction is in fact that radical, if it stands clearly to the left of any major party orientation alive in the contemporary democracies, how can it be expected to have a chance?

The response to this concern comes in the detailed programmatic proposals, their supporting justifications, and their explicit relation to the explanatory ideas worked out in the earlier parts of this book. The presentation of the proposals for institutional reform includes a consideration of the transitional forms they may assume and of the favoring circumstances on which they may seize. It is preceded by a description of the style of political practice they would both require and perpetuate. Consider, first, by way of anticipation, the most general reasons for insisting that the radicalism of the program should not be equated with a lack of realism.

To many it may seem that social democracy is the best future that mankind may reasonably expect. By social democracy in this setting I mean a way of life more complex than the social-democratic program discussed in the preceding pages. This way of life includes: the perpetuation of the current institutional forms of mixed economies and representative democracies; the halting, partial development of the welfare state and of the social-democratic program of economic redistribution and grassroots participation within the limits tolerated by the institutional framework; the management of crises and shifts such as the decline of mass-production industries in ways compatible with the maintenance of that same institutional order; the continued disengagement of the citizenry from practical or imaginative conflict over the formative context of society; and the search for happiness through a mixture of experiments in material consumption, personal relations, and communal diversity. How could the program of empowered democracy hope to compete with a direction of change that fits so easily with existing assumptions about self-interest, collective identity, and social possibility because it respects the institutions and preconceptions that help to shape these assumptions and renew their life?

Once the argument for empowered democracy goes beyond the constraints imposed by received ideal and empirical preconceptions, its force depends upon the thesis about empowerment that has been restated in so many forms in these pages. If this thesis is correct the basic advantage of empowered democracy over social democracy is its ability to carry farther than its more established rival the varieties of self-assertion or negative capability. This advantage may compensate for the greater remoteness of empowered democracy from

present economic and governmental institutions, if only feasible combinations of transitional arrangements and favorable circumstances can be found.

One aspect of the conception of advantage deserves special attention because of its responsiveness to the objections of the self-professed realist. The earlier account of context change claims that the development of productive and destructive capabilities requires a cumulative loosening of the constraints imposed by preestablished social roles, divisions, and hierarchies upon the organizational forms of production and exchange. At some levels of technological development the constraints that entrenched social divisions and hierarchies impose upon practical experimentation may be overshadowed by their use as an instrument for coercive surplus extraction. But at higher levels of resource availability and technological development, coercive extraction of surplus becomes less relevant and less difficult to ensure than permanent organizational and technological innovation. Remember also that the theory of transformation claims that the breaking open of social life to higher measures of practical recombination can be achieved by either more despotic or more consensual means. But among these practical solutions we usually find some that also advance the empowerment resulting from the creation of forms of communal life and practical collaboration less plagued by the risks of dependence and depersonalization. The program of empowered democracy is put forward as an example of just such a special solution in the historical circumstance to which it is addressed. It presents a vision of solidarity that simultaneously contributes to the enabling conditions for the development of practical capabilities. If this claim can be supported, it justifies the realism of the program. At least it does if the obstacles to the initial acceptance and introduction of empowered democracy are not themselves insuperable.

The issue of realism takes on an added poignancy in a third world setting. Although the institutional proposals detailed later in this chapter are designed with the contemporary Western democracies chiefly in mind, these proposals have their third world counterparts. Yet how, it may justifiably be asked, can countries that often remain far from the achievements of social democracy aspire to the more ambitious goals of empowered democracy? The answer lies in what I earlier called the catapult argument. In the absence of the great accidents of war and invasion many of these countries can expect to attain Western levels of economic equality and democratic pluralism only through the militant organization of the oppressed, the excluded, and the angry. It is not enough for these sectors of society to mobilize; they must remain mobilized. They and their leaders must use the favoring circumstances of crisis, revolution, and radical enthusiasm to establish economic and governmental institutions that

help perpetuate in the midst of humdrum social routine something of the transitory experience of mass mobilization. The program of empowered democracy represents a plan to establish institutions with this more mobilizational character. For many third world countries the route of empowered democracy may represent less the bolder alternative to social democracy than the sole practical means by which even social-democratic goals can be achieved. To escape the predatory rule of their elites and the subordinate status of their economies these peoples must catapult themselves forward to a more extreme version of the radical project than the richer nations have yet achieved. They must become empowered democracies in order to become democracies at all.

THE PRACTICE

THE PROBLEMS OF TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

The Task of a View of Transformative Practice

The institutional ideas presented in this chapter have two sources: one is intellectual; the other, practical. The intellectual source is a practice of normative criticism and construction: exceptionally as visionary thought but more often as normative argument from within a tradition. In the sequence of exposition such visionary conceptions and internal criticisms anticipate the outline of the program they help to justify. But, in the actual psychological experience of formulating programmatic ideas, institutional proposals and ideal commitments develop simultaneously. Surprising turns in internal normative argument – our ever-present ability to deduce controversial conclusions from relatively uncontroversial premises – may suggest departures from current institutional arrangements. And the fragmentary description of these institutional proposals, together with our ideas about realistic trajectories of transformation, may in turn awaken us to unsuspected tensions between our ideal models of human association and the institutional arrangements that realize these models in fact.

The institutional program has a basis in political practice as well as in normative argument. The institutional ideas have to be realized by collective action. They remain unpersuasive and dreamlike until we have complemented them with a view of the social activities that might establish them. Our ideas about transformative practice and our programmatic commitments exhibit the two-way relation we

find in our experience of the interplay between justificatory argument and institutional invention. Program and practice form a single vision; each can be inferred from the other, given a certain background view about the remaking of formative contexts. (The background view invoked here is the explanatory theory presented in earlier parts of this book.) The correspondence between practice and program comes out even more clearly in the small-scale politics of personal relations than in the large-scale politics of institutional arrangements.

By imagining a style of practice that prefigures a desired programmatic outcome we deal with the demonic problem of politics: the tendency of means to create their own ends, or the difficulty of realizing our chosen ends except through means that bring about results we do not want. A programmatic vision that cannot rely on a corresponding style of practice remains unstable: its proponents must choose at every turn between inaction and betrayal. The indispensable prefigurement of the ends within the means may refer to the social character of the transformative movement. The movement may embody a living, fragmentary, compromised image of the future it advocates for society as a whole. Alternatively, the prefigurement may take the form of localized experiments in novel styles of social organization, experiments that the transformative movement helps stage in the surrounding society. The practical solutions and the enacted ideals that distinguish these small-scale foreshadowings must be revised when those ideals and solutions extend to broader areas of social life. But the revised forms may still be recognized as transformations of the early, anticipatory experiments.

The following pages present a view of the style of transformative practice that can establish and reproduce the programmatic arrangements discussed later in the chapter. The ideas about justification and those about practice converge to support the institutional proposals. And the view of transformative practice establishes yet another link between the explanatory and the programmatic themes of *False Necessity*.

It may seem that nothing that is not trivial could possibly be said about the generalities of transformative practice. For the realm of practice is the domain of the constraints imposed by each unique context. Nevertheless, the theory of social change and the program for social reconstruction presented in this book help support an approach to problems of transformative practice. Indeed, if they did not, we could hardly hope to establish the necessary correspondence between program and practice. For the program itself is pitched at a level of generality beyond the distinctive problems of individual nation states. Success at speaking cogently about practice even at this transnational level lends support to a central thesis of this book: that

we not only can break out of particular formative contexts or sequences of formative contexts but can also change the character of the relation of these frameworks to our freedom as agents. The generality of the programmatic and practical ideas is more than a convenience of exposition; it is a corollary of a whole view that refuses to give the constraining influence of context the last word and that promises to alter the sense in which our societies imprison us.

Two great problems must be confronted by the transformative practice described here. The portrayal of the practice begins with a discussion of these problems and an anticipation of the way the following argument resolves them.

Reconstructing Institutional Arrangements and Revising Personal Relations

The first major problem of transformative politics has to do with the relation between the effort to reconstruct social arrangements and the attempt to change the character of the direct practical or personal dealings among individuals. Neither endeavor can prosper without the other. Yet they cannot easily be integrated into a single undertaking.

The ultimate stakes in politics are the qualities of the direct relations among people. As the practical and visionary fighting over the content of social life gets contained or interrupted, as a formative context of power and production settles into place, as the routines of work and domesticity grind on in the protective climate of the social peace, as men and women learn to give to their abstract moral slogans a meaning compatible with the recurrent experiences of their everyday lives, the styles of personal relations harden. Among these habits of personal dealings are the available forms of friendship and marriage, the things that people expect from one another's company, and the methods they use to cope with conflict and disappointment and to express their wants and feelings in the conventions of society. These habits also include the manner and degree in which, in the different circumstances of social life, people reconcile self-assertion and attachment and deal with the significance of hierarchy for community. In all these ways, men and women show how they hope to achieve a measure of redemption through their dealings with one another. This fine texture of routinized human relations is the primary social reality. Even the boldest transformative efforts often take it for granted or, having acknowledged its importance, fail to alter it.

People understand differences in material standards of living, they care about them, and accept or reject them, largely for what these differences reveal about the ordering of human relations and the place

each person occupies within it. To be sure, an individual may desire more material goods simply as a means to realizing his independently chosen ends. Short of the most basic needs for security and survival, however, the ends people entertain are commonly shaped by a background scheme of images of feasible and justified human association and by the desire to hold a certain place within this scheme. Even when, through exceptional insight, faith, and courage, an individual defines and pursues goals that seem to contradict the ruling vision of collective life, his aims make sense only in relation to some other view of human association, whose sovereignty he recognizes or desires to establish. The chief objects of human longing are other people and the character of dealings with them. The whole world of material things is like a stack of poker chips that people use to signify the ups and downs in the great game they play about the nature of their relations to one another.

For all its importance, however, the politics of personal relations cannot advance unless it is accompanied by the reconstruction of the formative context of power and production. This institutional framework helps shape the routinized dealings and preconceptions that constitute the fine texture of social life. It defines the occasions, and tilts the scales, of the ordinary individual and collective conflicts that take place just because people want to remain who they are and to keep what they have. It enables some people to set terms to other people's activities.

This pinning down of the collective power to remake social life affects, more or less obliquely, every aspect of people's relationships to one another. Even the seemingly most private aspects of love and marriage, of religious devotion and intimate ambition, bear the marks of the experience of each individual's power or powerlessness in the face of the circumstances of social life. The available forms of practical collaboration or passionate attachment hit against the limits of preconceptions and institutions that, in turn, obey and sustain the larger order of the society. By these means, both the powerful and the powerless are denied opportunities to discover the indefiniteness of self and society. Each institutional order denies these opportunities in a different fashion and to a different degree.

The formative context of power and production influences people's elementary dealings with one another in another, more subtle way. The stabilization of a social world requires the spiritualization of violence. The haphazard sequence of truce lines in the ongoing group struggle must be reinterpreted as an intelligible and defensible scheme of human association: a canon of the possible and desirable models of human association to be realized in different areas of social life. The ability to assign relatively stable meanings to a system of legal rights requires at least a tacit reference to such a scheme. Even peo-

ple's effort to make sense of everything in society, from the appropriate use of different buildings to the expectations that attach to different roles, must appeal to another, vaguer version of this imaginative scheme of social life.

Our immediate experience of practical and passionate attachments always includes more than is dreamt of within this implicit map of possible and desirable forms of human association. The exorbitant elements in our experience, the elements that fail to fit the established context, provide us with an endless flow of incitements to reimagine and remake society. But this reconstructive opportunity can be taken advantage of only to the extent that people manage to redefine their enacted ideals and establish a new relation between actual social practices and the assumptions about possible and desirable association that support and authorize these practices. Until the marriage of presupposed meaning and realized institutionalized practice has been achieved, our incongruous experiences remain anxieties without a message and rebellions without a legacy. Transformative struggle must then proceed without the incalculable prestige and credibility that a model of human association acquires just by being realized in a routinized practice.

The history of the world religions has repeatedly shown the price of the failure to embody a novel vision of personal interaction in a changed institutional ordering of practical life. The religious movement submits to the state. Often this submission takes place under the delusive appearance of a religious conversion of the power holders. The votaries of the religion limit rather than push the struggle over the formative institutional context and over the routinized personal dealings and preconceptions that take place within it. The iconoclastic spiritual vision strikes a compromise with the established forms of behavior and perception: not just the deal inherent in the slow process of changing people's most elementary habits and ideas but the additional accommodation that arises from the willingness to take a large portion of social life more or less for granted. Then, the thing the religion forgets perverts the thing it remembers. The untransformed social order ends up taking its revenge against the vision of transformed personal relations.

Just as the attempt to change the character of direct personal relations soon requires a transformation of fundamental institutional arrangements, so the enterprise of institutional reconstruction calls for a vision of the transformed personal relations that the new institutional arrangements are meant to sustain. It even demands anticipatory examples of the realization of this vision.

For one thing both the persuasiveness and the realism of an institutional program require that gross institutional arrangements be changed into the small coin of personal relations. The human sense

of institutional proposals depends in the end on their implications for the social microcosm. Only when we reach in thought and practice this level of personalized detail can we see a radically reconstructive program chastened by its confrontation with the stubborn, daily cares of ordinary people.

For another thing the vision and anticipatory experience of transformed personal relations encourage the self-restraint vital to successful institutional reconstruction. When the government's active engagement in the defense of established institutional arrangements has been shaken by violent or peaceful means and when settled assumptions about collective identities, interests, and opportunities have come partly unstuck, institutional reinvention enjoys its favored moment. This opportunity can, nevertheless, be squandered if redistribution over material advantages takes priority over institutional reconstruction. Redistribution may exercise a mobilizing effect by granting larger numbers of people the security that enables them to give themselves more wholeheartedly to escalating conflict. But both rapid redistributive and institutional change disrupt routines of production, exchange, and administration. The need to contain the disruptions of the transition period often requires that institutional aims be given priority over redistributive goals, except to the extent that these goals result immediately from those aims. When the tide of enthusiasm recedes and the opportunities for revolutionary reform shrink, a changed formative context must already be in place. The ability to see institutional transformation as part of an attempt to change the character of our most elementary personal interactions pushes conflict over the form of society beyond the instrumental struggle over material advantages. It extends strategic prudence into visionary ardor, thereby offering the incitement to sacrifice and self-restraint that cold calculation is rarely enough to ensure.

But though the transformation of personal relations and the reconstruction of institutional arrangements depend upon each other in all the ways described, they cannot easily be combined. The two undertakings seem to require devotion to divergent and partly conflicting aims. The effort to reorder institutional arrangements demands the churning up of the social practices in which personal attachments are embedded, and it turns the imagination away from the delicate and intricate texture of personal interdependencies. The dangers appear vastly to increase when the reconstructive program aims to carry society to a circumstance of heightened plasticity. Moreover, efforts to combine, in a single programmatic vision, proposals for institutional change and ideas about the transformation of personal relations have traditionally been associated with a naturalistic view of society and personality.

The intellectual solution to this first overriding problem of trans-

formative practice is given by the many links of thematic analogy and mutual dependence that the programmatic argument of this chapter establishes between the reform of institutional arrangements and of personal relations. The argument integrates the two concerns on the basis of a radically antinecessitarian view of society and of a corresponding commitment to reduce the extent to which society is just there, as a set of entrenched roles or stations, beyond the reach of the will. The two practices of revolutionary institutional reform and of transformation in personal relations can reinforce each other despite the conflicts sure to arise between them.

Transformative Practice from the Top Down and from the Bottom Up

A second great problem of transformative political practice is internal to the attempt to reconstruct the formative institutional structure of power and production. Stated in the most general terms and with respect to the broadest range of projects of social reconstruction, the problem is the tension between the importance and the dangers of using governmental power in order to transform society in the image of a programmatic vision.

The use of centralized, coercive state power to impose a plan of social life is likely to be both futile and dangerous unless it is prepared by a less willful change of habits and sentiments. The masters of the state will soon find themselves waging war against a resistant society. The results of the interplay between the transforming will and the social resistance may bear little relation to the initial program. The commitment to carry this program out may soon take second place to the struggle to hold on to an isolated and rebuffed authority.

The attempt to gain control over an aspect of governmental power and use it for transformative purposes cannot, however, be left to take care of itself. For the control of governmental power exercises an overwhelming influence upon the course of conflict over the basic form of society. Those who postpone to the end the bid for governmental power may find their enemies holding the cards.

Like the first great problem of transformative practice, this second is a special case of the conflict and mutual dependence between means and ends. Like the earlier problem, it takes on a peculiar intensity because of the distinctive goals the program outlined here assigns to transformative action. In one description, the program of empowered democracy seeks to diminish the gap between framework-preserving routine and framework-transforming conflict. It does so by increasing the mastery we exercise over our contexts in the midst of our normal activities. Our practical and passionate dealings and our relations to the social worlds we inhabit are to be improved by our

success in putting the basic arrangements of society within reach of ordinary collective conflict and decision and thereby breaking the hold of factional privilege over the resources needed to remake society. The style of transformative effort most closely anticipating this programmatic goal is the same style earlier labeled as collective mobilization. The second problem of transformative practice is therefore the tension between the strategy of changing social life through the capture and use of governmental power and the attempt to change society by gradually heightening collective mobilization. Governmental power may indeed be used both to enlarge opportunities for grassroots collective militancy and to consolidate its achievements. Nevertheless, the imposition of a reconstructive plan from the top down seems to be the very opposite of what a practice emphasizing collective self-mobilization and self-organization requires.

Before developing in detail this program-specific formulation of the second problem of transformative practice, remember the defining characteristics of collective mobilization. It is the coming together of people in ways that already differ from the kinds of relations that exist in the surrounding society and for the purpose of changing aspects of these relations. At first, the aims may be narrow and the innovations modest. But as the mobilizational movement presses forward, with its mixture of disciplined organization and organization-denying militancy, the goals become bolder. The gap between society as currently established and as recast within the movement widens. People broaden their sense of the groups to which they belong and of the possibilities of social experimentation. Their conception of the interests worth fighting for change accordingly. At every stage of its progress collective mobilization offers people an experience of reinventing the terms of their social existence. It undermines the clarity of the distinction between the aspects of life surrendered to a prosaic calculus and the areas in which personal relations matter for their own sake. It draws defined impersonal institutions back into the undefined personal realities from which they arise. It may do all these things faintly or strongly. But it does them always. Collective mobilization is thus more than a weapon for the remaking of social life; it is the living image of society dissolved, transformed, and revealed, in the course of the fights that take place over what society should become. Mass mobilization occurs when collective mobilization turns into the experience of large numbers of ordinary men and women.

Ideally, the capture and use of governmental power would be the last step in the gradual transformation of society. Mastery of the state would represent only the final consolidation of a victory achieved by other means; governmental power would be like ripe fruit falling from the trees. One domain of institutional life after another – con-

ned areas of social practice and the internal arrangements of large-scale organizations – would be transformed by an exercise of collective mobilization inspired by a programmatic vision such as the one later sections of this chapter discuss in abstract and systematic terms. A shared feature of the new arrangements would be to preserve more fully in routinized social practice some of the qualities social experience assumes in the moment of collective mobilization.

It is not absurd to think that these many moves of collective mobilization might take a predominant programmatic direction, even though no one has written this program down and no one has orchestrated in detail these many experiments in social change from the bottom up. To admit this possibility of shared direction you have only to accept a number of assumptions that have already been presented and will be further justified. You must believe that this trajectory of transformation can be imagined and justified in bits and pieces, through the interplay between received social ideals and more inclusive understandings of social possibility. You must think that the normative doctrine of the program is not radically different from the ideal conceptions to which we already resort in our fragmentary attempts to criticize or justify particular institutions. You must concede that the connected reforms advocated by the program represent at least one possible route to the varieties of empowerment earlier discussed. And you must recognize that the logic of group interests, and of group alliances and antagonisms, begins to lose its clarity and its determining influence as soon as conflict starts to escalate.

Consider the dangers of the attempt to reverse the sequence that puts escalating grassroots mobilization first and the use of centralized governmental authority last. For the sake of clarifying the stakes, focus initially on the extreme case. A revolutionary vanguard seizes the central government and the military apparatus through force, guile, or luck, and attempts to impose its program by coercive means. We may even assume their take-over has been facilitated by mass agitation. Yet nothing but the experience of agitation itself has established anticipatory, fragmentary versions of the programmatic aims. In such a circumstance, two forces may easily converge to foreclose opportunities to realize any program resembling empowered democracy. These forces show two ways in which means may overtake ends.

On the one hand, the rulers may commit themselves to a project that finds little echo in the vague discontents and tangible wants of the populace. They rightly feel themselves threatened by rejection from within if not by invasion from abroad. To hold on to power becomes, in this precarious situation, their paramount concern. The obsession with the maintenance of power at any cost gains a semblance of justification from the need to keep custody of the supposed

means of transformation. The effort to hold on to power in the circumstance of isolated and rebuffed authority is itself an all-consuming project. It requires the containment of conflict, the exaction of obedience, and the exercise of a vigilant distrust. It tempts its votaries to violence and rhetoric – those “two ways of denying reality.” And it brings to the fore men skilled at perpetuating and strengthening an apparatus of control. Those rulers who take the prophetic dogmas at the heaviest discount will rise most quickly. The moment to carry out the program of empowered democracy will never come. Alternatively, the program will be carried out with so many concessions to the imperatives of the apparatus and to the power interests of those who staff it that little of its original content will remain.

On the other hand, plain people will fail to see in the professed aims of the revolutionary regime the elements of an alternative order of life. Once secure in power, the willful regime may succeed in promoting economic growth and material welfare. But it cannot credibly stand for the ideal of a society broken open to everyone’s will or for the varieties of individual and collective empowerment permitted by the opening of privileged holds on the resources of society making. Faced with a mixture of unbelievable slogans and unmistakable coercion, ordinary men and women will withdraw into their families and careers in search of whatever tangible advantages they can secure. From these havens, they will emerge, because they must, only to engage in a sullen wrangling with their bosses and rulers.

These dangers stand out most clearly in the extreme instance of a revolutionary vanguard that attempts to impose a radical plan upon a resistant populace. But the same perils reappear, on a more moderate scale, whenever the struggle over governmental power as the master tool of social reconstruction takes precedence over the reform of one domain of institutional practice after another through escalating collective mobilization. The struggle for governmental power imposes a relentless discipline of its own. Militants and supporters must be converted through a language they can understand. Battles must be fought in circumstances where they can be won. Such tactical imperatives may require compromises and self-restraints incompatible with the conflictual style of a mobilizational strategy. In all these ways the effect of focusing on the struggle to win governmental power is to tempt partisans of the transformative movement to take for granted current assumptions about collective interests, identities, and possibilities.

The effort to cling at any cost to whatever measure of governmental power has been won presses the would-be reformers to depart farther and farther from their initial aims. Thus, for example, insti-

tutional reforms may be subordinated to immediate redistributive goals, and the reformers' time in office may come and go before they have had a chance to alter the formative institutional context of power and production. First the cause of partisan victory and finally the concern with partisan survival may prompt the sacrifice of one programmatic aim after another. The growing disparity between the slogans and the achievements of the reformers may provoke their disappointed supporters into ever greater degrees of withdrawal from militancy at the grass roots.

Despite all the dangers of anticipating the attempt to gain governmental power and use it for transformative ends, state power cannot in the end be treated as the final, spontaneous trophy of collective mobilization and institutional reform. The risks of leaving the take-over of governmental power to the end are even greater than the perils of using public office to reconstruct society. To begin with, governmental power may decisively influence the opportunities and obstacles of an organized, structure-revising militancy. It may do so through all the ways the state reproduces society. Government may enlarge or constrict the freedom to organize and proselytize. By redistributing wealth, it may free people from the extremes of a demobilizing poverty. It may counterbalance factional privileges even before it has abolished them.

Moreover, although a programmatic vision and a distinctive trajectory of transformation may emerge from the dispersed activities of many movements, this activity is unlikely to maintain a minimal cohesion and continuity of direction unless the grassroots efforts interact with at least occasional help from those who determine the most important rules and policies. The institutional reforms must enjoy sustenance in law and economic policy. The policy and legal obstacles to their further expansion must be overcome. And in all these ways tentative experiments and visionary routine must find an anchor in alternative, emergent structures.

The very attempt to win governmental office may prove almost as important as its exercise. The electoral or extra-electoral contest to gain position in government shakes the many links that connect access to the power of the state and entrenched privilege in society. The pattern of public intervention in favor of factional prerogatives gets disturbed. This disturbance in turn helps put the established definitions of collective identities, group interests, and human possibility up for grabs.

Even if your party were to arm you with an endless patience and propose to wait many generations for a slow but solid victory, you would find opportunities lost and lost forever. You would watch your enemies renew the life of institutional arrangements that would help shape future wants and self-descriptions. You would see people

give to your party's slogans a meaning in accord with practical experiences you were powerless to influence. You would stand by while the aspirations of your movement withered in isolation. Why would these results surprise you if you had truly abandoned faith in the dialectic of history and learned to recognize how closely the dealings among groups connect with their relation to government?

The second key problem of transformative political practice may now be restated in formulaic terms. Collective contractualism (the explicit or implicit bargains among groups entrenched in the division of labor) changes into collective mobilization. This change encourages and depends upon the process by which the hardened links between private privilege and governmental power turn into a more intense and less defined struggle over the state. Yet each process makes voracious demands of its own. Each, followed to the end, threatens to disrupt and displace the other.

The ready antidote to this danger may seem to be an interplay between the pursuit of governmental power and the propagation of self-guided collective mobilization. Each move forward in the capture of parcels of state power can be used to improve the conditions for autonomous grassroots militancy. Each successful change of stabilized deals into an open-ended fight over the redefinition of ideas about collective identities, interests, and possibilities can help prevent the power of the government, and the quest for governmental office, from becoming an instrument of demobilization.

The allusion to this interplay, however, represents the name of a solution rather than its description. The description comes in the form of a view of transformative practice or, rather, of the limited insight into the problems of such a practice that can be achieved outside a particular setting of conflict. The ideas and maxims constituting this view are formulated here at two hypothetical moments of transformative practice: a moment when the movement, still far from the heights of governmental power, has only just begun to take root in society and a moment when it wins the highest offices. This view of practice should be general enough to apply to transformative movements that culminate in either the peaceful or the violent seizure of state power. The wager is that even at this level of generality, so remote from the problems of any individual circumstance, we can discover principles of action that illuminate the task of transformative practice.

Who are the agents of this program? They are the people whom I sometimes call the radicals, the transformers, or the transformative movement and, at other times, the defenders of empowered democracy. By radicals I mean the adherents to the radical project as previously defined: the men and women who seek to promote specific varieties of human empowerment by developing economic and

governmental institutions that both diminish the conflict between framework-preserving routine and framework-transforming struggle and loosen the constraints of established social hierarchies and roles upon the forms of production, exchange, and personal attachment. The program of empowered democracy represents a proposal, informed by a view of social reality and social transformation, to develop the radical project in a certain direction. As a version of that project, it addresses a distinctive historical circumstance (the circumstance of contemporary industrial democracies and their rivals). But like any other social vision of comparable generality it embodies ideals, methods, and assumptions intended to have a broader reach.

This preliminary loose identification of the transformative agents should be read against the background of a refusal to treat any particular class, community, or nation as the natural proponent of this or any other program, even though it is possible to identify the strata, parties, and even countries most likely to be receptive to it. The explanatory theory of *False Necessity* has already justified this refusal. The programmatic argument justifies it some more. The relation of the transformative movement to existing parties and classes and the relation within the movement among cadres, rank and file, and potential supporters are taken up in the course of the following discussion of transformative practice.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE MOVEMENT IN QUEST OF POWER

The First Task: Linking Grassroots Mobilization with the Contest for Governmental Power

The first and most persistent task of the transformative movement is to maintain the connection between grassroots mobilization and the contest over governmental power. The allusion to the importance of maintaining this link merely restates the basic problem of transformative practice discussed in the preceding pages. But the first principle of practice describes the organizational basis for a successful solution to the problem.

The point of departure for this strategic approach is a recognition that neither the effort to capture parcels of governmental power nor the attempt to develop collective mobilization must be allowed to crowd the other out. Each must be practiced with an eye to the requirements of the other. At every juncture of activity the participants in the movement ask: Which grassroots organizations are most likely to be useful in the contest for governmental power and what style of engagement in this contest can encourage militant collective self-organization? Nevertheless, the two contending goals of trans-

formative practice are characteristically served by two different types of organizations. To insist on an immediate synthesis of the two types is to risk creating a political enterprise unable to perform either role effectively. The conditions that would allow for the organizational synthesis cannot be assumed; they must be created.

In the contemporary Western democracies the primary tool for the conquest of governmental power is the political party, often little more than an electoral syndicate held together by a strange combination of transitory interest-group alliances, vague but powerful affinities of vision and sensibility, and career ambitions of professional politicians. The poverty of the institutional imagination regularly makes for an incongruous, shaky fit between tangible promises to particular groups and ideal commitments to social reconstruction. The same lack of clarity about the relation of formative contexts to routine policy options helps prevent the parties from breaking or even understanding the cycles of reform and retrenchment that so greatly influence their electoral fortunes. Such an electoral syndicate ordinarily takes for granted current definitions of group interest, collective identities, and social possibilities. It is tempted to seek the broadest possible alliance of interests and opinions it can achieve consistently with these assumptions and with its sense of its historical identity. It understandably resists challenges to such assumptions, which risk sacrificing its chances for high office. It tends to defer to organizations, like labor unions or ethnic associations, that claim to represent its prospective constituents. And it usually confines its activities out of power to planning for future electoral campaigns or to the ritual reassertion of its distinctive identity. All these proclivities make it ill-suited to the work of grassroots collective mobilization. The available experience of partisan struggle, directed to central power, may bring people together. But it is much less likely to bring them together in ways that already begin to defy this context and to overstep the assumptions about the interests, identities, and possibilities the context helps sustain.

To the extent that the work of collective mobilization is carried on at all in the contemporary industrial democracies it is undertaken by a medley of nonparty organizations: the more militant and less economic labor unions, social activists committed to organize as well as to defend the unorganized poor or oppressed minorities, and citizens' movements devoted to social interests perceived to fare poorly in mainstream governmental politics. Each variety of popular extrapartisan militancy can remain detached from any general program for social reconstruction, or it can make common cause with the social-democratic parties and reinterpret its commitments from a social-democratic perspective. But if its participants accept the internal criticism of the social-democratic program outlined earlier,

they will come to believe that their objectives cannot adequately be accomplished within the institutional frameworks to which social democracy remains committed. They will also be more ready to see the campaign for empowered democracy as a fulfillment of their own efforts.

This shift in the self-definition of extrapartisan grassroots activity may be paralleled by a reorientation of any of the existing political parties or by the creation of a new party committed to empowered democracy. The internal criticism of contemporary party-political programs has shown how the established institutional forms of market economies and representative democracies frustrate the realization of the classical liberal, the centrist communitarian, and the social-democratic programs. The program of empowered democracy can persuasively claim to realize the part of existing party-political platforms the established institutional framework excludes. But, of course, abstract commitments are one thing, and represented interests are another. The program of empowered democracy has a far better chance of taking root in the reform, labor, socialist, and communist parties of the industrial democracies than in the centrist and conservative parties.

The initial concern of the defenders of empowered democracy, then, must be to work loosely within the political parties and the extrapartisan grassroots movements most open to their vision. Success in influencing the programmatic orientation of these movements and parties can in turn be expected to bring about a shift in the conception of the relation between partisan politics and social activism. The convert to the program of empowered democracy wants to develop the style of political practice whose character I am now beginning to describe. Because he seeks to tighten the link between collective mobilization and the quest for governmental power, he also desires to bring together the grassroots organizations and the political parties that most fully represent each side of the transformative effort. But it does not follow that he should try to abolish the contrast between the political party and the extraparty organization as quickly as possible. For the result might be to harness the grassroots social activism to the short-run perspective and the consensus-building concerns of the electoral syndicate while exposing this syndicate to the risky, long-term experiments and aggravated factionalism of the grassroots activities.

So you can imagine the friends of empowered democracy working, at first, with a loose sense of their shared identity, within political parties and nonparty social movements. They work both to change the direction of the party or movements to which they belong and to prepare the day when party and movements can safely unite. The picture here is not one of a conspiratorial organization that sends its

militants out as secret agents and partners. It is rather an image of people who from several points of departure and in different theaters of activity gradually converge toward the sense of sharing in a common undertaking.

The interplay between social activism and party campaigns can be vastly reinforced by the presence of a third element, distinct from both traditional partisan rivalry and collective mobilization. The task of this third element is to detach a parcel of governmental, economic, or technical authority from service to the reproduction of the existing formative context and to turn this fragment of power, instead, into a floating resource – a resource that can be fought over and converted to transformative uses.

In countries with a strong statist tradition the lower rungs of the governmental bureaucracy constitute the most likely agents for the development of such floating resources. For example, in many Latin American nations whole sectors of the economy (e.g., agriculture) are closely supervised and coordinated by economic bureaucrats: public-credit officers and agronomists. Such countries often provide for corporatist union systems that compulsorily include most of the labor force. The unions may be staffed, guided, or manipulated by public lawyers and agents of the Ministry of Labor. Normally, these forms of state activity seek social harmony in the form of submission to economic and bureaucratic elites. But the bureaucracies are typically mined by a multitude of more or less well-intentioned, confused, unheroic crypto-leftists – middle-class, university-trained youth, filled with the vague leftist ideas afloat in the world. The ambiguities of established rules and policies and the failures of bureaucratic control can supply these people with excuses to deny a fragment of governmental protection to its usual beneficiaries and make it available to other people, in new proportions or new ways. A tiny flaw is then introduced into the manner in which the state apparatus fits into the social order. The result is to create a floating resource – one the transformers can appropriate or fight about.

In countries with a weak statist tradition (such as the English-speaking democracies) reliance on state-provided resources is dangerous. For the welfare-state programs that enable social workers or public-interest lawyers to carry on their organizing efforts tend to be precisely the programs sacrificed first during the retrenchment phases of the reform cycle. In these countries, however, the learned professions are often proportionately stronger than in the societies with a more marked statist heritage. A vast area of social practice is effectively withdrawn from the scope of party-political conflict and treated as a subject for the application of professional expertise, when in another country some of the same subjects might be handed over

to bureaucratic supervision. The outcomes of fighting and of the containment and interruption of fighting reappear as, say, the structure of legal rights inherent to a democratic market system or the style of work organization necessary to the management of an advanced industrial enterprise. The rights-defining practice of lawyers and the efficiency-defining practice of managers and engineers represent the two most prominent professional methods for the depoliticization of social decisions. But such depoliticization invariably depends on violent truncations of analysis: on the creation of a fictive sense of determinate rational constraint at the cost of arbitrariness in defining the methodological and institutional assumptions that make this determinacy possible. As a result, the depoliticization can be reversed. The domain of professional expertise can be turned into one more arena for carrying on, under special though contestable constraints and with special though revisable tools, the struggle over the formative institutional and imaginative assumptions of social life. A fragment of the power exercised by the efficiency experts and rights specialists becomes a floating resource: a society-making capability whose uses and beneficiaries are not predefined.

Whether the floating resource results from a bureaucratic betrayal or from a politicization of professional discourse, it serves the alliance of grassroots mobilization and state-oriented party politics. It turns the attention of both party and extraparty activists toward the immense depoliticized area of social practice that stands between them. It also provides those who begin to agitate and organize in this area with an opportunity to enlist resources, previously devoted to the reproduction of the existing social world, in the construction of enclaves and countermodels: enclaves for further experiments in the blend of grassroots mobilization and party politics; countermodels to a portion of the current formative context of social life. The point of the next principle of transformative practice is to explore the relation between enclaves and countermodels.

The Second Task: The Experimental Anticipation of Empowered Democracy

The need to prefigure the goals of empowered democracy in the means for its attainment does not merely require that collective mobilization and the struggle for governmental power be allowed to reinforce each other. It also demands that the transformative movement succeed in establishing small-scale, fragmentary versions of the future it advocates for society. Without these experimental anticipations of the program, there would be no way to bridge the gap between reformist tinkering and wholesale revolution and no way

to pass from one set of assumptions about group interests, collective identities, and social possibilities to another.

Several features of the explanatory theory of this book suggest the characteristics of social reality that make such experimental anticipations possible. One characteristic is the looseness of the relations among the constituent elements of a formative context: despite the existence of constraints upon the institutional or imaginative elements that can be successfully combined, formative contexts can be changed piecemeal. Another enabling feature of social reality is the relativity of the distinction between the practical or imaginative activities that respect and reproduce a formative context and the activities that challenge and transform it.

Each fragmentary anticipation must satisfy two basic requirements. First and fundamentally, it must represent a step on a possible passage from the present formative order to the desired order. Like the situations it connects, and despite its limited scope, this step always has a double significance. It involves institutional changes. It also requires a shift in the assumptions about group interests, collective identities, and social possibility that help sustain, and receive sustenance from, current institutional arrangements. The correspondence between institutional order and the logic of group interests holds good for parts of a formative context, not just for a formative context as a whole. An act of experimental anticipation should satisfy another requirement: it should contribute to the solution of the overriding problem of means and ends by serving both as an anticipatory image of broader transformations and as a strategic tool.

As an anticipatory image the experiment embodies a partial, tentative, transitional version of part of the program. As a strategic tool it constitutes an enclave within which people may collect forces in order to engage in further episodes of grassroots mobilization and further efforts to win parcels of governmental power. When the anticipatory experiment goes well, its instrumental and expressive uses cannot be clearly distinguished. It then resembles the type of artwork (say, a late romance of Shakespeare's) that invokes a higher, renewed order of human life and demands an assent which is also a redemptive complicity. It gives people a more tangible and therefore more persuasive sense of what the desired transformation of social life would be like. As a result, the vision that inspires the transformers stands a better chance of enticing the will and the imagination to collaborate in making it come true.

No anticipatory experiment can maintain its content unchanged when extended to another area or transposed to another scale. The fragmentary version of the program is never just the program in microcosm. It is a transaction between an established and imagined

reality and an effort to work out the implications of a complex program for particular problems.

One form the anticipatory experiment can assume might be called the movement as model. The movement as an organized political party or as a loose confederation of grassroots activities seeks to be an image of the future it advocates for the society as a whole, a picture of the true republic within the false republic. The relations between superior and subalterns, or between centralized collective decision and individual or factional initiative, the merger of democratic and communal ideals with each other, and their extension to ordinary practical dealings, must all turn the movement into a living icon of its program. To be sure, the fidelity of this image to the societywide program is limited both by the constraints of current institutional arrangements and current perceptions of group interest and by the distinctive problems of a political party or a grassroots organization. The opportunity nevertheless exists because it arises from the very nature of collective mobilization. For remember that collective mobilization occurs when people come together for transformative aims in ways that defy, however modestly, established hierarchies and roles. Collective mobilization can hope to change the formative context of social life only because it already escapes the pattern this context prescribes.

The success of the method of movement as model depends in part on an ability to capture some of the legal and financial support that normally goes to organizations with no transformative aims. To this end, it helps to exploit the structural similarities between the passive and the militant organization and to take advantage of the difficulty of distinguishing them in the eyes of the law. For example, a unitary, all-inclusive, corporatist union structure, such as can be found throughout much of Latin America, may have originally been designed by pseudopopulist authoritarian regimes as a device of controlled mobilization. Yet once the union structure is established it may be susceptible to gradual, piecemeal take-over from within. The "liberated" parts of the union system may become just such fragmentary models of the desired society. And the work of liberation may be facilitated by the failure of existing labor-law rules (if not of the people who administer them) to discriminate clearly enough between passive and radical unions or union militants.

The other factor on which the success of the movement as model chiefly depends is its ability to break down the distinction between the work of organization and agitation and the ordinary responsibilities of practical life. The prospects for prefiguring a reordered formative context increase as the activity of the movement goes beyond a narrow focus on conflict with bosses or bureaucrats and

turns into a setting where people can go about their ordinary activities. At that point, engagement in the work of the movement ceases to compete with practical concerns or to be the special province of professional agitators and politicians. Clearly, this objective can be far more easily attained by the movement as a loose confederation of social activities and organizations, conducted both within and outside established institutions, than by the movement as a political party. The importance of this goal suffices to ensure the inadequacy of a party model of transformative practice.

The movement as model is not the sole form of the anticipatory experiment. Its other, even more important method can be labeled the exemplary conflict. Every society plays host to an endless series of petty practical conflicts, constantly renewed by the ambiguities in the accommodations struck between different groups or between these groups and governmental policy. The transformative movement must seek out the more promising of these disputes and intervene in them on the side of its present or potential allies. It must attempt to solve the disputes in ways that foreshadow a portion of its broader program. A sign of success in this work is that the intermediate solution provides a link between current assumptions about group interests, collective identities, and social possibilities and the form these assumptions would take if the program of empowered democracy were to be fully accepted and established. Such conflicts are thus doubly exemplary. They exemplify the ordinary controversies that proliferate throughout the society. And they can be met with solutions that prefigure, on a modest dimension, alternative institutional arrangements.

Once again, an example may help bring the method into focus. The example is all the more revealing because of its distance from the conventional picture of social agitation. Consider the economic tensions between small-scale and large-scale producers. At one extreme of contemporary economic and technological sophistication the small-scale producers may be peasants working at the periphery of capitalized agribusinesses or on relatively unmechanized plantations. At the other extreme, they may be high-tech "cottage" manufacturers, working for and against mass-production industry, as a permanent vanguard and an occasional rival. As rearguard or as vanguard, the petty producers work in an economic and institutional environment that disfavors them, if only by forcing them to do business in markets mainly organized by the large-scale producers. The small-scale producers may embrace the subaltern and dangerous role and accept whatever work the large-scale producers allot to them. They may press for governmental support in the form of fiscal policy or financial, commercial, and technological assistance. Alternatively, they may couple this pressure upon government with co-

operative organization among themselves. Cooperative financial, marketing, and machine-sharing arrangements may help them capture economies of scale, diminish their vulnerability to market fluctuations, and escape the role to which the large producers want to confine them. Thus, some form of competitive partnership among the smaller and more flexible firms may emerge from an implicit or explicit contest with the dominant businesses. As the small-scale enterprises expand their experiments in resource-pooling they begin to develop a version of the rotating capital fund – a major principle in the economic organization of empowered democracy. As they combine this flexible pooling arrangement with various forms of state support they establish a preliminary model for dealings among many tiers of governmental capital givers and private capital takers. They pioneer in methods for using governmental assistance to change the character of markets rather than to supplant the market principle. In all these ways they give a little object lesson in the establishment of a reconstructed, dynamic version of petty commodity production. By participating in the problems of petty producers and by promoting the types of solutions just described, the transformative movement practices the method of exemplary conflict. The sense of incongruity this example may cause reflects the influence of unjustifiably restrictive views of what context-transforming conflict may be like and of who may serve as its executors.

The practice of exemplary conflicts may become more powerful when the radicals learn to connect the practical solutions they advocate with the ideals implicit in the most morally ambitious models of human association: the models that promise to reconcile more fully the enabling conditions of self-assertion. Representative democracy and private community are the most important of these models in the societies the program of empowered democracy most directly addresses. The exemplary solutions to exemplary conflicts – the solutions that most faithfully anticipate the transformative program – are also characteristically the ones that extend democratic or communal ideals and practices to areas of social life from which they had previously been absent and that reconstruct these ideals in the course of extending them. By such means the practice of exemplary conflict gains the element of visionary intensity it might otherwise lack.

The Third Task: Recruiting and Managing the Cadres

No problem of transformative practice is more important, or less studied, than the recruitment and management of cadres. The inequalities in existing societies combine with differences of temperament to maintain the distinction between the cadres and the rank

and file. The cadres, activists, or militants are the people whose relatively privileged social circumstances and intimate psychological identification with the movement enable them to devote themselves to its work. Distinct from the ordinary supporters or sympathizers of the movement, they are also not its leaders although the leaders are usually recruited from their midst. These militants make the movement, and they can break it.

The further the movement goes along the spectrum of escalating mobilization, the more its fate depends on the cadres. For the sporadic exchange of favors or the occasional show of support must then be increasingly replaced by experimental deviations from existing arrangements, with or without the use of governmental authority. The militants supply the personnel to staff the experiments and keep them faithful to the program.

A politician who is good at everything in practical politics may find himself frustrated and defeated by the problem of the cadres. With luck, it is even possible to go a long way by being good at cadre management though bad at almost everything else. (Remember Mussolini.) The visionary leader and the egalitarian participatory movement are especially apt to be undone by trouble with the cadres. For the visionary leader who begins by fearing that too close an association with the recruitment and management of activists will compromise his moral authority may end up transformed into a symbol, manipulated by other, more astute politicians. (Contrast Gandhi's failures to Saint Paul's achievements.) And the radical movement, embarrassed by the social and psychological realities of leadership, may find itself destroyed or perverted by the very tensions among leaders, militants, and supporters it has failed to acknowledge and control.

In the practice of the movements that can serve as vehicles of a fuller democratization of social life the problem of the cadres comes to a focus on a single issue. Although no aspect of the techniques of radical politics has greater practical importance, none is more consistently disregarded in the literature of social activism. The problem consists in the range of difficulties presented by two types of cadres that, coexisting in very different proportions, tend to dominate the political movements that have arisen from the radical traditions of modern politics. Each major type of agitator and organizer suffers from deficiencies of vision directly reflected in failures of action. Such defects have been the ruin of many a radical campaign. They must be corrected or contained by something other than the good intentions of the militants themselves or the restraining influence each type exercises upon the other. For the coexistence of the two kinds of activists is just as likely to aggravate the dangers of each as to balance them out.

Consider first the sectarian cadre. He is obsessively concerned with the fidelity of the movement to the right line: to just the right programmatic objectives and social alliances. Although he may speak incessantly of the corrective value of practice, his tendency is to refer every major controversy about practice to a preestablished scheme and, particularly, to the kind of scheme congenial to deep-logic social theory. He treats a specific set of group (i.e., class or community) alliances as given in a predefined type or stage of social organization. If hard-core Marxism did not exist, he would need to invent it; the pompous subtleties of a hairsplitting scholasticism provide his natural element.

The truths he fails to appreciate are the insights the criticism of deep-structure social theory makes explicit. He does not understand the extent to which the reconstructive program can and must be chosen rather than found in a preexisting list of options. Nor does he recognize how much the apparent clarity of a calculus of class interests, class alliances, and class antagonisms depends on the very stagnation his movement seeks to interrupt.

The illusions of the sectarian result in two related habits of action and thought. On the one hand, he stands ever ready to split the movement for the sake of the line. He delights in internal antagonism, seeing in it the confirmation of his political seriousness. His energies are consumed in an endless and unproductive infighting rather than in a cumulative, outward-turning struggle. On the other hand, the divisions he provokes, expressed as they are in an idiom of manipulable political rhetoric and superstition, easily become the vehicles of personal or factional rivalries that are driven by baser motives. The very starkness of the gap between the categories to which the sectarian appeals and the content of practical politics makes the confusion between correctness and malevolence all but inevitable. Indeed, the sectarian may switch lines sharply and frequently, and change them all the more abruptly because the ideological contrasts that absorb his attention have so tenuous a foothold in practical experience.

The typical rival of the sectarian is the consensualist, coalition-building cadre. He nurtures a moralistic, antistrategic view of politics. He envisions a struggle between the rich and the poor or, more simply, between the good and the bad. He stands ready to fight in the battle of the little people against their masters. He therefore exudes confidence in his ability to tell who his allies and adversaries are and what must be done in the given situation. But this confidence rests on a naive and sanctimonious moralization of the social order rather than on an allegiance to the dogmatic prejudices of deep-logic social theory. He repeats, in modernized form, the oldest and most universal pattern of social criticism, for he imagines politics as the

reenactment of a drama, outside historical time, that tries to preserve or restore the rightful order of society. He is an inveterate goody-goody.

What the consensualist cadre fails to grasp is the controversial and conflictual character of social life. He does not appreciate that the cause of the little people can reasonably be understood in different and incompatible ways, and that these alternative interpretations imply, and are implied by, divergent trajectories of institutional reform and coalition building. He does not recognize the need for fundamental choices that are also gambles. He does not admit that these choices entail and legitimate a large measure of internal factionalism.

These illusory assumptions also take their toll in a misguided strategy. The consensualist cadre often imposes a particular line under the mistaken impression that there is nothing particular about it. He thereby barricades himself against the lessons of experience. Because he thinks he knows who the friends and enemies of the movement are, he fails to manage existing divisions or to exploit potential alliances that are not self-evident. Because he believes that the demands of his cause are clear he fails to develop arrangements capable of replacing established practices. And because his naiveté is supported by a sanctimonious disposition he can be as repulsive to the outsider as the most bigoted sectarian.

Theoretical enlightenment would seem to be the necessary and sufficient cure for the inadequacies of the two types of cadres. Have the right ideas about politics, and you are on the way to being the right kind of cadre. But, in the short run, theoretical criticism is not enough. For the perversities of the sectarian and the consensualist result from a circumstance of divided loyalties as well as from a legacy of mistaken ideas. The consensualist and the sectarian alike are caught between the leaders and the rank and file. Both kinds of cadres accept leadership and in turn perform a custodial role that cannot easily be acknowledged and legitimated within the tradition of radical politics. Moreover, sectarian and consensualist cadres alike can exercise power and submit to it in the name of impersonal ideological rectitude or uncontroversial popular solidarity. Neither type of activist has to confront the discretionary, controversial character of the choices he makes or has made for him. For it is discretion that gives power its most painful edge.

There is a realistic, second-best solution to the problem of the cadres, an alternative to full theoretical enlightenment. The first step of the solution is to create another manner of cadre, one who does not share the complementary illusions and defects of the consensualist and the sectarian and who is animated by the view of transformative practice these pages describe. This better cadre is able to play the

other two against each other. The creation of a third style of cadre represents a far more modest accomplishment than the total renovation of the corps of activists. For this achievement not only dispenses with the total substitution of the cadres but can also draw on the reinforcement of insight by ambition. The third type of cadre can turn to his own advantage the resistance that the consensualist and the sectarian are almost sure to provoke in the rank and file and in the populace among which the movement does its proselytizing work.

The next stage of the second-best solution plays out the rivalry among the sectarian, the consensualist, and the "enlightened" cadres for the favor of the rank and file. The leaders who emerge from this new group of militants or who have helped create them provoke the rebellion of the ordinary activists against the ideological purists and the goody-goodies. They hardly need to fabricate occasions for this rebellion; it is enough for them to await the frequent occasions when the beliefs of the consensualists or sectarians suggest strategic decisions that endanger the movement.

The final stage of the next-best solution is to complete the rebellion both by propagating a more defensible understanding of transformative practice and by effacing the starkness of the contrast between who is and who is not a cadre. The situation in which all members of the movement are simultaneously cadres and noncadres will be realized more fully and easily when the ideas animating practice no longer resemble an esoteric science or a sacred creed and when they develop rather than deny the uncertainties and opportunities that inform ordinary political life. (Remember that the social theory underlying this conception of practice rejects any sharp contrast between the subjective experience of the agent and the insight of the theorist.) The ideal of maximum possible confusion between cadres and noncadres can also be approached more easily when the dogmas of a mistaken style of practice do not defeat at every turn efforts to carry forward the work of emancipating society from false necessity and entrenched order.

The three-step solution to the problem of the cadres can never be easy. It must contend with limitations of insight and generosity against which no theoretical rectification can guarantee us. It must be performed again and again, rather than once and for all; the three steps must be made to overlap and to recur. At least, however, this approach to the problem of the cadres remains in close touch with the ideas that inspire this whole view of transformative practice and the program of social reconstruction this view anticipates and confirms. Moreover, it makes no demand of extraordinary selflessness or privileged knowledge.

The Fourth Task: Recognizing and Devaluing the Logic of Group Interests

The theory of society that underlies the view of transformative practice presented in this section implies a certain view of the agent's relation to the logic of group interests. By the logic of group interests I mean the overall constellation of positive and negative aims that seem to inhere in the distinct places that every system of social division and hierarchy generates.

Both deep-structure social theory and conventional, empiricist social science encourage belief in the clear and determining influence the logic of group interests exercises over the course of conflict in social life. The deep-structure theorist in his hard-core Marxist guise believes a system of class interests to be implied by the structure of a mode of production and by the forces commanding the succession of modes of production. He believes, as confidently as he believes anything, that escalating conflict reveals the system of underlying class interests and that those who persist in making or disregarding the class alliances this system requires will be destroyed. Hence, he enters political practice with a clear sense of the alliances that are necessary and of the antagonisms that are unavoidable.

The positivist social scientist or the routine politician (remember the affinity between routine politics and positivist social science) gives a different sense to similar conclusions. He may concede a significant element of give and ambiguity in the established logic of group interests. He may even acknowledge that the clarity of this system of alliances and animosities depends entirely on the persistence of institutional arrangements that can be challenged and replaced. But, having made this acknowledgment of principle, he then wants to get back to ordinary politics and ordinary thought. He has no way to represent to himself the transformation of group interests that is brought about by a change in their institutional framework. The moment of rupture is, for him, a limit to thought and action rather than a central problem to be explained or an objective to be achieved.

The activist who has understood the problems of transformative practice in the light of the social theory developed in this book must respect the constraints that group interests impose upon collective action. Yet from the outset he must also act in the spirit of one who sees these collective interests as dependent upon institutional frameworks that are not themselves guided by higher-order laws. This determination to recognize the immediate realities of class or communal interest while denying that they are for keeps is no ad hoc reconciliation of clashing attitudes toward the force of class and communal interests. It is, rather, the direct expression in practice of a certain theoretical understanding of society. And this understanding

turns what would otherwise be a vague prudential formula into an approach to the problems of political practice.

The narrower the range and the dimmer the intensity of conflict over the institutional and imaginative framework of routinized social life, the more transparent, rigid, and influential the system of class and communal interests will appear. This clarity of the system of collective interests will grow stronger when the institutional framework provides for its own insulation from destabilizing strife. For a system of group divisions becomes secure when it is constantly regenerated by the institutional arrangements that shape our routine activity and that allot the economic and cultural resources for society making. These arrangements in turn achieve safety when they stand protected against the disturbing effects of ordinary conflict.

If the transformative militant finds himself in such a situation, he must strive to understand it and to mold his actions according to its dictates. He must identify the groups that will most easily support his cause given their preexisting view of their own interests. He must not pursue group alliances or antagonisms that frontally disregard the constraints that currently perceived group interests impose. Nor must he propose objectives that cannot readily be translated into the language of such interests. (Even the political prophet, who ostentatiously breaks with the system of group interests, must appeal to the anomalies of current personal experience.)

But the subversive activist entertains a mental reservation even when he seems to be bending to the stabilized social world and its active repertory of interests and possibilities. He sees its stability as predicated upon the temporary interruption and containment of broader conflict and the partial realization of negative capability. He is committed to an alternative institutional order he sees as capable of pushing farther the emancipation of social life from false necessity. Moreover, as the next maxim of this view of transformative practice emphasizes, he understands that even the most rigidified social situation is rich in ambiguities that can be exploited by the resolute transformer.

At moments of extreme closure the whole art of the transformer consists in the attempt to find in the modest opportunities that never entirely disappear a foothold for larger conflict. He must take everything *almost* as given: *almost*, because the relation between the uncertainty about just what is given and the vision of something beyond the given creates the possibility of movement.

As conflict escalates, the institutional niches and collective identities that lend a real but superficial clarity to group interests begin to fade. It now becomes clear that choices must be made among alternative routes along which each preexisting group interest may be both fulfilled and redefined. Each path involves a commitment to a set of

institutional arrangements – or, rather, to a sequence of institutional reforms – that is just the reverse side of a group of social alliances. Each sequence ends up changing how people see their interests. The possibility was always there. But now it can begin to be lived out. And this living out gives the thesis of the provisional, redefinable quality of group interests a credibility it would otherwise lack.

Consider, for example, the situation of the labor or socialist parties in the industrial democracies of the late twentieth century. They might continue to define themselves as spokesmen for the organized work force, entrenched in the mass-production sector of the economy, while speaking with another voice to a larger, indistinct constituency outside the traditional working class. Following this strategy, they would seek no drastic alteration of the established institutional arrangements for government and production: only the incremental redistribution of wealth and income, the gradual development of social assurance schemes, the extension of nationalized industry, and the occasional experiments with more participatory methods of decision in workplaces and neighborhoods. But these parties might also well conclude that there was no future in the privileged commitment to a shrinking part of the work force (i.e., the unionized workers of the mass-production industries), anchored in a declining sector of national industry. Prudence alone might lead them to cast about for an alternative program that could turn them into representatives of a larger coalition: an alliance of people committed to novel or archaic forms of small-scale entrepreneurship and professional independence as well as of the unemployed, the unorganized, and the poor. One candidate for such a program would be the reconstructed version of the suppressed alternative in Western history: revised petty commodity production, with its many consequences for the regimes of governmental organization and capital allocation, consequences the program of empowered democracy spells out.

As the execution of this program advanced, the distinctions among the underclass, the skilled workers, the old and the new petty bourgeoisie, and the independent technical or professional cadres would weaken, not because a single homogeneous work force would emerge but because the surviving distinctions within the labor force would be numerous, fragmentary, and volatile. Each stage in the trajectory of institutional reconstruction would be both preceded and followed by a shift in the way people imagined the groups they belonged to and the interests that were theirs.

At the extreme of escalation of conflict all rigid social relations collapse into the twofold circumstance earlier described. On the one hand, society passes into the Hobbesian conflict of all against all. Each person grabs whatever he can and gives himself to the relentless

search for preemptive security. On the other hand, the contest of class and communal interests dissolves into a struggle of parties of opinion, animated by alternative programmatic visions. On the one hand, the man in tooth and claw steps outside the social station: all are equalized by the brutal struggle for defense and self-defense. On the other hand, the successor to the interest-determined agent is the individual as a context-transcendent being whose commitment to certain ideals and opinions is not determined by his membership in particular classes and communities. The strongest assertions of spiritual independence resemble the most brutish contests for material advantage in their power to weaken the constraints that social stations impose upon the will and imagination of the individual. In this circumstance of maximum conflict the perspective of the transformative militant becomes, in part, the standpoint of the theorist and the prophet.

Thus, at each stage of escalation, the transformative activist must change his attitude toward the established system of group interests: first finding his allies within the constraints this system imposes and then helping to overthrow such constraints. His apparently incompatible attitudes, however, are motivated by the same theoretical conception; what seems to be a shift in assumptions turns out to be faithfulness to the same ideas. At the beginning of the process the enlightened militant may easily be mistaken for the traditional leftist, content with deep-structure social analysis, or for the conventional, interest-group politician, who shares the premises of conventional social science. But from the outset he recognizes that moral and political intelligence requires you to see in real people *more* than examples of a social category and in social categories *no more* than the expression of a conditional social world, with its definitions of interest and identity, of associative reality and possibility.

His ultimate aim is not merely to replace one set of collective interests by another but to change the sense in which society making remains at the mercy of a preexisting system of group interests. The program of empowered democracy that this view of transformative politics anticipates and supports seeks to undermine the basis of fixed social stations in a formative institutional order effectively protected against recurrent challenge. The normal experience of politics (both in the narrower sense of conflict over the mastery and uses of governmental power and in the broader sense of struggle over the re-making of society) must more fully embody the dissolution of classes and communities into parties of opinion. The attitude toward group interests that characterizes the moment of escalation must become the normal attitude. But the further dissolution of social classes into parties of opinion must be achieved without the Hobbesian search for preemptive security. For the dissolution that is sought results

from the adoption of particular institutional arrangements rather than from a violent anarchy, and these arrangements ensure the vital security of the individual. However, the institutional means for ensuring this security must not, like consolidated property, allow any one group to gain a privileged hold on the resources for society making. They must minimize the rigidifying implications of individual security upon the surrounding social order. (See the later discussion of immunity rights.)

The Fifth Task: Identifying and Exploiting Transformative Opportunity in the Midst of Stability

The transformative movement must learn to identify and exploit opportunities for practical and imaginative destabilization even when the current formative context seems most stable and entrenched. (Remember that entrenchment designates the extent to which the formative institutions and preconceptions make themselves unavailable to challenge and revision in the midst of routine social activity. Stability, on the other hand, refers to pressure or danger, such as economic or military crisis, at any given level of entrenchment. To adopt a contrast beloved of leftists whose minds have been formed by deep-structure analysis: entrenchment is an attribute of structure, whereas stability describes a conjuncture.)

The fifth task is merely an extension or a special case of the fourth task. The preceding principle of transformative practice describes an approach to prevailing assumptions about group interests, collective identities, and social possibilities. It teaches a way to take these assumptions seriously while denying them the last word. The present maxim of practice explores the implications of this same approach for the circumstance in which the approach is hardest to apply and easiest to forget.

The discussion focuses on three characteristic instances of transformative opportunity that persist in even the most stable moments of societies like the contemporary North Atlantic democracies. For this purpose I choose examples of practical collective conflict, although I might just as well have selected situations drawn from the routines of, say, legal controversy. The analysis of these transformative opportunities draws upon several basic themes of the social theory worked out in this volume: the close connection between perceived group interests or identities and institutional arrangements, the failure of any institutional or imaginative framework to accommodate all emerging opportunities for practical or passionate human connection, and the irrepressible ability of context-preserving activities to escalate into context-transforming struggle. In each instance the analysis of transformative opportunity shows how the response

to a relatively minor crisis or disharmony may be achieved in contrasting ways. These responses may either maximize or minimize the disturbance to formative institutional arrangements, or to formative ideas about possible and desirable human association and to the assumptions about interests, identities, and possibilities that these ideas or arrangements help support. The transformers must recognize the initial opportunity. They must master the practice of the disturbance-maximizing response. They must turn each success in the pursuit of this response into an example of the fragmentary anticipation of their program.

One irrepressible source of transformative opportunity arises from the relation between the enlistment of governmental power in the service of private privilege and the more or less negotiated or coercive accommodations private groups make to one another. The place that each class, community, or segment of the labor force occupies in the scheme of social division and hierarchy depends in large part upon its relative success at securing direct or indirect governmental protection for its interests. The protection may take the form of legal rules, of economic policies, or even merely of a refusal to upset an established pattern of group advantage or compromise. The influence thus gained and secured can in turn be used to renew a measure of privileged access to governmental power: if not through hereditary claims upon office then through economic and cultural influence upon elections, policies, or even assumptions about the appropriate and inappropriate uses of public authority. Every group must engage in this struggle unless it resigns itself to the lowest social positions. Every group must fight to stay ahead in order not to fall behind.

But the translation of governmental power into group advantage and of group advantage into governmental power is a trick that must be constantly repeated. The less immediate the connection between the power and the advantage, the greater becomes the attention that must be devoted to it and the less predictable the results it may produce. While government personnel and policies shift, the relative economic, organizational, or demographic strength of different groups also changes. The structure of government-supported prerogatives and disabilities within which groups must operate is therefore incurably unstable. This low-level, contained instability results in an endless series of petty conflicts and anxieties that the transformers must learn to recognize and exploit. For what may seem from one standpoint an annoyance without a message may be reconceived from another perspective as a revelation. If the boundaries of recognized group interests and identities can be shaken by conflicts over the mastery and uses of governmental power, then perhaps everything in the current logic of group interests and identities may be changed by this or some other type of conflict. The transformative

agents must do all they can to carry this insight into the subjective experience of the fighting over group advantage and governmental privilege. To this end they must play upon two other major transformative opportunities that persist in the presence of stability.

One such opportunity arises from the existence of an irreducible strategic ambiguity in the requirements for the defense of group interests. Suppose that the formative institutional and imaginative context of society is very clearly defined and largely uncontested. Each segment of the work force occupies a well-marked place in the social division of labor: characteristic jobs, complete with a distinct relative level of wages and discretion, a shared style of life, and many shared attitudes, ambitions, and apprehensions. (The segmentation of parts of the labor force is only one aspect of the logic of group interests. But it suffices to illustrate the point now under discussion.) Each segment of the work force may pursue either of two strategies in the defense of its interests. It may adopt a narrowing strategy. It then seeks to hold on to its current position and prerogatives strictly conceived. It defines the groups just below it or most similar to it as its rivals and adversaries. The resistance it opposes to its superiors is tempered by the fear that they might make common cause with its inferiors to prejudice its interests and its place. This strategy has the advantage of minimizing short-run uncertainties and risks. But aside from making it difficult for a group to achieve a significant improvement on its current position, it also makes each group hostage to the continuing inferiority of its immediate subalterns. The group will hesitate to engage in acts of defiance for fear that such acts might incite its own inferiors to rebellion.

The alternative is an expanding strategy. The group and its leaders seek to ally themselves with the closest coordinate or inferior groups against their common superiors. They may do so at first in a spirit of mere tactical alliance. But what begins as a tactical partnership may slowly turn into a broadened definition of collective interests and identities, a definition cemented by alternative institutional arrangements or by the experiments that prefigure them.

Even if you suppose that the logic of group interests, collective identities, and social possibilities is both well defined and unchallenged, this logic provides no general reason to prefer either the narrowing or the expanding strategy. Each has its advantages and its risks. The relative persuasive force of each depends on specific traditions and circumstances of collective action. Although both strategies may be equally compatible with such rigid assumptions, they have radically different implications for the future of those assumptions. The narrowing strategy encourages the perpetuation of assumed interests, identities, and constraints on possibility. The expanding strategy leads directly to their subversion. The militants of

the transformative movement must seize on this strategic ambiguity. They need to argue and act whenever possible in favor of the expanding strategy, even if they have to begin by doing so on the basis of received views about interests, identities, and possibilities. In so arguing and acting they await the first chance to show how the enlargement of alliances for the sake of currently perceived group interests may help bring about a redefinition of these interests.

The coexistence between a more conservative and a more radical response to the same problem reappears in another situation, the most promising of the transformative opportunities likely to appear in a circumstance of seemingly unshakable stability. Societies and their governments regularly face middle-level crises brought on by the need to adapt their institutional arrangements to unexpected economic or military challenges. To exploit an opportunity for the development of practical productive or destructive capabilities they must revise an aspect of their current formative context. If they fail to carry this revision out they risk economic decline or diplomatic and military defeat. Either is likely to spark conflict over current institutions. But if they go ahead and execute the reforms, they must face the prospect of conflict nevertheless. The institutional arrangements to be changed or preserved support complex accommodations among groups or between groups and governments. The practical objectives may be satisfied with minor institutional adjustments. But it is important to understand that these goals can invariably be realized through alternative institutional adjustments, each with its distinctive effects upon the relative positions of contending groups or their relation to the state. The crisis-diverting reforms are unavoidably productive of conflict both because they disturb existing deals and because, depending on their content, they can upset these deals in very different ways. Once the conflict arises, it can widen in scope and intensity. The aim of conservative crisis-managers is to seek the reforms that meet the immediate practical danger while minimizing the disturbance to established institutions and recognized interests. The goal of the transformative movement is just as clearly to exploit the controversies that will inevitably take place: to expand and intensify them and to meet them in ways that also represent steps in the direction of the transformative program.

By way of example, consider again the rich industrial countries who now find themselves under pressure to adapt to changes in the international division of labor by changing their style of industrial organization. They must move from an emphasis on traditional mass-production industries (the favored ground of the rigid variant of rationalized collective labor) to greater strength in the more flexible, vanguardist forms of high-tech manufacturing and provision of services. This shift can be staged in forms that scrupulously avoid chal-

lence to the current institutional forms of capital allocation and representative democracy. But even in this modest version they require new arrangements and new deals. They therefore also produce new conflicts. Thus, for example, a labor movement traditionally entrenched in the mass-production industries may find its inherited forms of representation threatened. It may then seek alternatives that redefine the relation of organized labor both to governments and to the previously unorganized sectors of the labor force. Such alternatives may also change the balance between union militancy and participatory representation in enterprise decision making. Managers and bureaucrats may find that a haphazard pattern of covert subsidies and transfers has to be replaced by a more organized relation between public policy and entrepreneurial decision. Large-scale enterprises may come under pressure to reconstruct their internal divisions in the image of the smaller businesses that had previously flourished as their junior trading partners, subcontractors, or unofficial research departments. All these changes are compatible with what can be broadly described as a conservative route to industrial reconstruction. Yet none of them can be accomplished without offering alternatives and generating conflicts.

The advocates of the program of empowered democracy may seize upon these conflicts. They may do so all the more easily because they can justifiably claim to favor institutional arrangements that push the same shift farther. The system of capital allocation they support deprives the mass-production industries of the devices by which these industries have traditionally protected themselves against instability in the product, labor, and capital markets. It also gives the more flexible vanguardist enterprises the institutional advantage previously reserved to their mass-production rivals.

Middle-level crises like these provide the standard occasion for revolutionary reform and are the stuff with which conservatives and radicals alike must chiefly work. No wonder the frequency and the importance of such crises have been dramatically understated by both positivist social science and deep-structure social analysis: the former insensitive to the distinction between solving problems and changing frameworks, the latter obsessed with the idea of total and sudden framework change.

The ideas implicit in the discussion of this final source of transformative opportunity become both more general and more precise when they are related to three theses of the explanatory social theory developed earlier in this book.

The first relevant thesis is the existence of a relation between the development of practical capabilities and the making of institutional arrangements that loosen the constraints imposed by a preestablished

scheme of social division or hierarchy upon the organization of work. (Remember that at certain levels of resource availability and technological development this relation may be temporarily overridden by the service that entrenched hierarchies and roles render to coercive surplus extraction.) The thesis shows why a series of middle-level crises and of responses to them may result in a cumulative creation of institutional arrangements that weaken rigid social roles and hierarchies while narrowing the gap between context-transforming and context-preserving activities. Thus, the thesis draws attention to the special interest such crises hold for a political practice committed to the program of empowered democracy.

A second pertinent thesis of the social theory advanced here is that any move toward greater negative capability can be accomplished through alternative sets of institutional arrangements and therefore also through alternative effects upon the wealth, power, and prestige of different groups. The particular content of existing institutions, available ideas, and traditions of group action may limit the range of existing solutions. No solution is likely to succeed if it requires too sudden an advance in negative capability or if it draws upon materials too far removed from the unique history that produced a formative context. But such limits remain loose and ambiguous; they fail to specify a unique solution to any given middle-level crisis or even a well-defined set of possible solutions. Because such a crisis can always be met by alternative institutional reforms and because any such reform disturbs vested group interests, conflict is sure to result. The conservative must try to contain it. The radical must attempt to turn it to his purposes.

A third implicated thesis of the social theory is the frequent existence of an inverse relation between the contribution an institutional reform makes to the development of negative capability and the ease with which it fits into a received history of institutional reinvention. The radical (by whom, remember, I mean the champion of the radical project as earlier defined, not just the person who wants more change) has the strategic disadvantage of demanding — at least ultimately — a bigger break with current assumptions about group interests, collective identities, and social possibilities. But if he thinks and acts correctly, he may gain the countervailing advantage of plausibly claiming to make the organization of social life more hospitable to the further development of practical capabilities and the further management of middle-level crisis. He even promises to turn this speculative future benefit to present use. By understanding and respecting the affinity of the radical cause to the practical interest in social plasticity, he helps to even the odds in his contest with the conservative.

The Sixth Task: Formulating a Visionary Language

Success in executing all the tasks of transformative practice previously discussed will not ensure the availability of a language in which to discuss practices and programs. The forms of discourse now available to radical transformative movements are largely unsuited to the program of empowered democracy. Some represent the sloganlike versions of deep-structure social theory. Others merely appeal to established conceptions of group interest. Some have a utopian content almost entirely devoid of institutional specificity. Others describe institutional reforms without making explicit their connection to any general program of human empowerment or emancipation. In a very real sense the movement must talk itself into power, and its talk, like its more worldly stratagems, must be both a tool of persuasion and a device of discovery.

The first standard an appropriate mode of discourse must satisfy is the ability to combine an appeal to recognized group interests (i.e., the recognized interests of the groups composing the initial coalition of program supporters) with a reference to a sequence of institutional reforms that move in the desired direction. A suitable discourse enables people to reflect upon the interplay between definitions of group interests and successive adjustments of the institutional framework within which these interests get defined and satisfied.

Consider the habits of thought and expression on which such an interaction depends. In order to prefer the forms of satisfying pre-existing groups that require institutional reconstruction to those that do not, it will be necessary to anticipate in the earliest and most prosaic discussions something of the visionary impulse that underlies the program. Strategic calculation alone never suffices to tilt the scales in favor of an unmistakably risky course of action.

The institutional proposals, for their part, must be stated in terms that are modest and concrete enough to allow for linkage with current debates and concerns. But they must also be sufficiently far-reaching to exercise a visionary pull. The solution to this apparently intractable dilemma is to focus on a whole sequence of cumulative institutional changes going from minor reforms to major reconstruction. It is the trajectory that matters rather than any single place along it. Thus, the language of the movement must speak of right and wrong routes, of realistic and unrealistic paths. It must repudiate the exclusive contrast between reformist tinkering and all-out revolution. It must bring to bear on the identification of realistic paths of change the applied version of an entire understanding of social transformation. In these, as in so many other ways, the discourse of the movement should represent the practical extension of the style of social theory for which this book argues.

The preceding considerations already suggest that the language of the reconstructive movement must be prophetic as well as institutional. It must achieve a visionary freshness and immediacy to enlist energies on the side of the institution-challenging forms of interest satisfaction and to maintain the instructive and encouraging connection between present experiences and ultimate programmatic aims. These aims are the subject of political prophecy *because they promise a better solution to the problems of solidarity and contextuality: a better opportunity to diminish the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion and to make our social contexts less arbitrary and imprisoning.*

Thus, the language may play on aspects of our current ideals and practices of democracy or private community that, however flawed, offer a more complete experience of self-assertion through attachment than we can find in the everyday world of work and exchange. The talk of the transformer then suggests how these higher experiences of solidarity may be extended to broader areas of social life and how they would be revised in the course of this extension. Alternatively, the discourse of the transformer may make use of whatever in pop culture emphasizes the idea of the adventurer, at once ordinary and extraordinary, who is able to fight back against his context and to triumph over the belittling routines of humdrum practical life. The purpose is to show how this fantasy can be made real, which is to say how it can be actualized in a form that is both collective and institutionalized.

But whatever the rhetorical strategy pursued, the emphasis of language must always fall on the subtleties of personal experience rather than on the more impersonal aspects of dogma and practice. For one thing, only the reference to detailed, person-to-person relations can give the discourse of the movement an intelligible and persuasive immediacy. For another thing, only the test of personal experience, as shaped by changing institutional context and as interpreted by theoretical analysis, can ultimately validate our ideas about possibility and empowerment. There can be no real conflict between the rhetorical uses and the intellectual value of the appeal to personal experience. The exercise of political prophecy presupposes the failure of established dogmas and institutions fully to inform our direct practical or passionate dealing. The prophetic vision takes the anomalies resulting from this failure as points of departure for the regeneration of social life.

A political language couched in this spirit will not easily be produced or accepted by militants formed in the tradition of deep-structure social theory. Until the cadres are transformed and the theory is replaced, many compromises may have to be made with theoretical prejudice. It may take time before what seems merely a concession

to the demands of popular understanding can be accepted as a requirement of true insight.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE MOVEMENT IN POWER

A Second Moment of Transformative Practice

The preceding discussion deals with the problems faced by a transformative movement when it remains distant from governmental power and struggles to gain a foothold in social life. Consider now the problems faced by that same movement when it comes to exercise a fragment of central state authority, that great and perilous lever of transformation.

Once again, the analysis treats simultaneously the peaceful winning of power by electoral and parliamentary processes and the violent seizure of the state against a background of revolutionary action. Here, even more than at the earlier moment of practice, the analogy may seem misleading. Yet here, even more than previously, it pays off. Although it presents distinctive problems the revolutionary situation also simplifies and dramatizes the difficulties transformative practice must confront in the evolutionary circumstance.

The following discussion of practice at the moment of governmental power makes explicit a pattern only implicitly present in the analysis of the moment of relatively powerless agitation. Once again, the overriding goal is to use methods that both anticipate and produce, both express and serve, the desired outcome. Once again, the aim requires that centralized collective decision combine, in both its practical methods and its transitional results, with decentralized, grassroots engagement and decision. The program of empowered democracy, which this style of transformative practice is meant to suit, rejects the one-way imposition of institutional solutions from the heights of state power. But it also repudiates, as misguided and self-defeating, any attempt to do without large-scale governmental and economic institutions and to replace institutional arrangements with an uncontroversial system of pure, uncoercive human coordination. A premise of the program is that no such system exists and that the development of less coercive systems of coordination is bound up with the transformation – not the abolition – of governmental institutions.

The Primacy of Institutional Reconstruction over Economic Redistribution

The transformative movement in office must affirm the primacy of institutional reform over the redistribution of wealth and income. It

must also prefer the forms of economic distribution that result from institutional reconstruction to those that leave basic institutional arrangements unchanged.

Both major redistribution (meaning, in this setting, economic redistribution) and institutional reform have disruptive effects. They provoke resistance and dislocation and do so in the parliamentary as well as the revolutionary situation. Both redistribution and institutional change must go forward in the face of opposition from those whose advantages they threaten and whose beliefs they insult. Moreover, both can disorganize practical activities of production, exchange, or administration and cause an opposition that arises from the fear of disorder and jeopardy. The resistance-provoking effects of redistribution may be even stronger than those of institutional reforms whose redistributive effects are delayed or unclear. They may take the form of disinvestment and capital flight as well as of overt antagonism to the party in office. But these "nonpolitical" consequences may soon produce "political" results; if they are allowed to persist too long they will quickly erode any government's base of popular support or tolerance. On the other hand, institutional reform is sure to provoke major disruption even if its redistributive consequences are not overt and immediate. A transitional period exists during which part of the established formative context ceases to operate – a series of arrangements for production, exchange, or administration – before the intended replacement is secure. The transitional difficulties may well be further aggravated and prolonged by the need to make the new institutions fit with the arrangements that are left unchanged, and to reconstruct them so they can fit.

The transformative movement in office inevitably runs a race against time. No matter how successful it may be in its policies, it must count with disappointment on the part of many of its supporters. This disappointment is in part psychological. The hot moment of social life – the moment of escalating collective mobilization and public enthusiasm – cannot be permanently sustained. To recognize that it cannot is not to introduce an ad hoc claim about motivations but merely to emphasize the subjective side of the whole view of human activity that animates the explanatory and programmatic argument of this book. Although we can transcend our contexts, we cannot pursue any of our ordinary human concerns outside a context.

The radicals want something of the quality of the hot moments of social life – the periods of accelerated collective mobilization – to pass into the cold moments – the ordinary experience of institutionalized social existence. Thus, the whole program of empowered democracy can be seen, from a limited but nevertheless illuminating perspective, as an effort to capture in a stable context part of the

heightened freedom from false necessity that is discovered in the course of our activities of context making.

The uncertainties and resistances of the transition increase the pressure to establish the alternative arrangements as quickly as possible. Here the relative priority given to redistributive and institutional aims becomes crucial. If the transformative movement attempts to pursue all its redistributive and institutional aims simultaneously, it aggravates the disruptions and antagonisms and increases the likelihood of being voted out of office, overthrown, or perverted from within before it has had a chance to carry out its plans for institutional reconstruction.

Suppose, however, that the movement decides to give priority to noninstitutional redistribution. The difficulties of transition will still occur, and though disruption may be less than it would be if the focus remained fixed upon institutional reforms with delayed or implicit redistributive effects, resistance may be even greater. The people threatened in their most tangible interests will organize to agitate against the party in power. Even if they remain entirely passive, the nearly automatic response of investment capital to heightened risk will ensure the occurrence of economic difficulties that will jeopardize support for the government. If it has come to power by democratic parliamentary means, the transformative movement in office will soon find itself under pressure to abandon its more ambitious redistributive goals, to content itself with a program of economic growth and restabilization, and to assuage the very business groups it previously assaulted. If the radicals in power fail to retrench, their tenure in office may well be shortened. But whether they retrench or not they risk leaving office without having executed any part of their institutional program. Redistributive tax-and-transfer measures, which require the constant correction of outcomes generated by the ordinary arrangements for production and exchange, can more easily be reversed. Even when they prove lasting, they may turn out in retrospect to have at best redistributed a little for the sake of not reconstructing much. The radicals would have unwittingly contributed to keeping politics at the limit of marginal redistribution within an unchallenged institutional framework.

When the transformative movement holds power by revolutionary means, the danger of giving priority to redistribution presents itself in a different way. The quickened resistance excited by the redistributive plans may tempt the regime to retrench or drive it out of power. But resistance may also provoke the radicals into the relentless centralization of authority. The redistributivist emphasis then becomes an episode in a series of events culminating in the dictatorial perversion of the movement and its program.

These arguments suggest the importance of emphasizing the pri-

macy of institutional reconstruction over redistribution. Whether their situation is parliamentary or revolutionary, the transformers generally come to power on a wave of urgent redistributive demands. To resist these expectations the transformative movement must rely on many sources of help: the preference for redistributive policies resulting from institutional reforms rather than for those supplanting these reforms; the long-term development of insight into transformative practice; the careful sustenance of the ardor attending the experience of collective mobilization; the concern with the personalist, noninstitutional parts of the program, which help inspire this ardor; and the active engagement of ordinary men and women in the emergent economic and governmental arrangements.

In the most extreme revolutionary situations the primacy of institutional reform over noninstitutional redistribution may hardly be a matter of choice. An institutional order has already been disrupted. No distribution or redistribution can take place until an institutional framework for production, exchange, and administration gets consolidated. The only question is, which framework? The revolutionary government must do its best to resist the tendency of some of its peasant, worker, or petty bourgeois constituents to demand redistribution according to notions of fairness and right embedded in the prerevolutionary order.

In parliamentary circumstances these distinctive reasons to assert the priority of institutional reform over economic redistribution no longer hold. But the government has a countervailing reason to struggle against the tendency of some of its constituents to adopt a clientalistic attitude to the state: to await passively the benefits it may shower upon them. By engaging people in the conflicts and experiments required for the development of new institutions, the movement gives them a focus of concern other than immediate redistribution. It thereby establishes a bond with ordinary working men and women stronger than the gratitude or love that people may be expected to show a paternalist welfare state. It also keeps alive the type of relation between central government and decentralized social action that the whole program of empowered democracy is designed to encourage.

The principle of the primacy of institutional change must be qualified in several ways. Some forms of economic redistribution are needed to tear people out of the misery and fear that effectively prevent them from mobilizing. Such situations – pervasive in third world countries and common to the underclass in even the richer Western nations – trump institutional goals. But it may still be possible to pursue these goals in ways that combine institutional and redistributivist effects.

The significance of this qualification becomes clearer in the light of

another qualification, already present in the initial statement of the principle. Almost all forms of institutional reconstruction produce long-run redistributive effects. Some institutional reforms, however, have dramatic consequences for the redistribution of wealth and income, while some forms of redistribution presuppose no change in the society's institutional arrangements. Consider the difference between a mere tax-and-transfer mechanism, on one side, and, on the other side, the broader involvement of workers' delegates in salary-setting and investment-making decisions or a change in the terms on which capital is made available to workers and small-scale entrepreneurs.

A particularly favorable and instructive case for early redistribution is presented by agrarian reform, especially when it seeks to replace the large, relatively unmechanized, plantation-style estates that still flourish in many third world countries with family-style farms, organized in a cooperative financial, marketing, and technological network, with governmental support. Such an agrarian reform illustrates the qualifications to the principle of priority of institutional change over economic redistribution, while also serving as the exception that proves – or, rather, elucidates – the rule. It alleviates the single most important source of extreme poverty and clientalistic subjugation in the countries to which it is suited: the condition of the landless agrarian laborers and of migrants and marginal smallholders. At the same time it provides an occasion to anticipate a major theme of the program for economic reorganization. The collaboration among small-scale and medium-scale farmers on the basis of government-supported arrangements for the pooling of financial, marketing, and technological resources modestly prefigures the multi-tiered system of rotating capital allocation the program of empowered democracy embraces.

Notice, however, that agrarian reform is the easiest case in which anticipatory institutional experimentation combines with economic redistribution and long-run programmatic commitments converge with short-run practical needs. It is, in the terms of earlier arguments, a relatively unreconstructed form of petty commodity production. The industrial counterparts to such agrarian solutions require more far-reaching institutional changes and therefore demand from the radicals in power a more careful balancing of redistributive and institutional methods. It is then all the more deplorable when the special opportunity offered by this style of agrarian reform is sacrificed either to the dogma of agricultural collectivization or to a strictly privatistic and proprietary form of smallholding.

The Combination of Central Decision with Popular Engagement

In both the revolutionary and the parliamentary situation the transformative movement needs to combine a change in the methods,

forms, and uses of central governmental power with a heightened degree of popular engagement in ground-level economic and administrative institutions. In its most general form the commitment to achieve such a recombination simply restates the basic principle of prefiguring the ends in the means. But here this commitment takes a specific form, suited to the moment of arrival in central power, when the passage from means to ends is most visible and the tension between means and ends most dramatic.

The need to combine a reorientation of central power with an increased popular involvement in the organization of production, exchange, and local government and administration breaks down into two tasks: one governmental, the other economic. The two problems often come to a head at different moments: the governmental first, the economic later. A common but fatal error of transformative movements is to suppose that they have solved the latter when they have disposed of the former. Then, the failure to understand and to accomplish the economic task quickly undoes the governmental achievement.

The governmental task is to work toward a mutually reinforcing relation between effective use of the central governmental apparatus and popular participation in local government and administration. By effective use of the central governmental apparatus I mean in part the ability to press forward toward the reconstruction of governmental institutions the program of empowered democracy advocates (see the discussion in later sections of the chapter). Top priority must be given to replacing the traditional constitutional techniques that guarantee freedom and pluralism only by preventing bold transformative projects. A later part of the programmatic argument describes how full-blown empowered democracy accomplishes this objective.

Effective use also means that the radicals in high office do whatever possible to act within present governmental institutions as they would act if their desired governmental reforms had been achieved. This attempted conversion of established institutions to a new style and new uses is not an exercise in political bad faith or a mere tactical gamble, though its use must be tempered by an awareness that it may be seen as both of these. It is, on the contrary, a consequence of the perspective of internal normative argument, which sees the constitutional and legal order as a disharmonious conversation between controverted ideals of human association and the practical arrangements supposed to embody them in different domains of social existence. Theories of the constraints appropriate to different institutional roles – including the roles of such officeholders as cabinet ministers, parliamentary representatives, and judges – are not self-evident parts of present arrangements; they presuppose a view of the ideals that present institutional arrangements should be considered to serve. Many views may be excluded as plausible candidates. But

the closure comes from the rough, loose continuum of a constitutional and legal tradition and the larger climate of opinion within which it developed, not from the practical arrangements standing alone. Thus, for example, ideas about the proper limits of the judicial role are likely to depend upon a conception of the kind of democracy the constitution establishes. Though the choice of this conception is not a free-for-all, neither can it be kept entirely separate from the question of what kind of constitution people now living would like to have. The separation becomes harder to establish when (as in the United States) the constitution is treated less as an easily replaceable artifact than as a structure within which the nation, with the help of occasional amendments, can endlessly renew itself.

The incongruous use of existing institutions grows in importance relative to the development of new institutions when the setting is parliamentary rather than revolutionary. In parliamentary situations incongruous use is most important when the inherited constitutional structure of the state possesses a special sanctity. But it is never an adequate substitute for reconstruction, only a diminished though real possibility of action. If there is enough popular support to prevent a putschist vanguardism, there must also be enough support to change the constitutional arrangements.

There is one aspect of the effective use of central government that no movement can avoid, whether it comes into power by peaceful elections or by violent revolution: the effort to prevent the permanent bureaucracy from silently undermining its plans. In the revolutionary situation the inherited bureaucratic and military structure must be replaced. The failure to do so with sufficient relentlessness has been the bane of many a revolutionary experiment. (Consider the experience of some of the revolutions in Central Europe immediately following World War I.) In the parliamentary circumstance the need is just as great though both opportunities and risks are more modest. The movement in power must discipline its inherited bureaucrats – if it cannot rid itself of them – by a combination of political will from the top and popular engagement at the grass roots. The preservation of a nonpolitical civil service is compatible with such an approach so long as technocratic authority is not allowed to masquerade as administrative neutrality and civil servants continue to be pressed by resolute politicians and an engaged populace.

The principle of transformative practice now under discussion requires the reorientation of central government combined with the active engagement of ordinary men and women in ground-level government and administration. In both revolutionary and parliamentary situations the achievement of this objective may require the widespread use of rotation as well as party-political pluralism and the partial deprofessionalization of lower administrative positions. Pop-

ular engagement succeeds best in its purpose when it can seize on the opportunities created by the central government for decentralized collective decision-making. The mass of actively engaged citizens must in turn press the central reformers not only to decentralize power but to decentralize it in ways that prevent its devolution to inherited oligarchies.

The primacy of institutional reform over economic redistribution and the preference for redistributive measures that presuppose institutional reconstruction are vital to the successful interplay between grassroots engagement and the reorientation of governmental policy. The preferred policy must make the redistributive program depend upon the activities of local governments and the internal transformation of large-scale productive enterprises. The byword "No redistribution without militancy" must be incorporated into the design and work of institutions.

Notice that the combination of a reoriented central policy with intensified grassroots engagement has both a programmatic sense and a strategic use. The combination is successful to the extent that the tension between the sense and the use disappears. A basic premise of the program of empowered democracy is that the diminishment of the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-transforming conflict cannot be achieved either by bombing out the state and putting a pure system of human coordination in its place or by submerging fixed institutional arrangements in personal charisma. Nor, on the other hand, can it result from solutions imposed by a self-appointed vanguard upon a recalcitrant and sullen populace. Empowered democracy attempts instead to change the relation between large-scale, inclusive institutions and noninstitutionalized collective action, to make the former into a more congenial home for the latter. The closer the movement comes to its moment of power – and therefore also to its hour of institutional definition – the less room there is for discrepancy between means and ends. The key themes of the program must be directly and faithfully represented in the relation between what the movement does with central power and what it does with local or nongovernmental organizations.

A government committed to revolutionary reform needs active grassroots engagement to stand strong against its foreign and domestic enemies, to replace untrustworthy bureaucrats, and to prevent the disruption of essential services. To the objection that a major part of the population may be hostile to the government's intentions, the answer must be that plans without broad support are bad plans to execute; at least they are not plans that can produce the institutions of an empowered democracy. The government must retrench to whatever extent necessary to maintain broad support at the ground level, so long as it continues to respect, in its retreat, the principle

of the primacy of institutional change over economic redistribution. A parliamentary government stands less in need of active popular support than does a revolutionary regime under siege. But the importance of preventing an attitude of passive clientalistic dependence upon a redistributive state becomes correspondingly greater.

An economic as well as a governmental task must be accomplished to secure the interplay between the reorientation of central policy and grassroots popular involvement. This economic mission can be dealt with summarily, in part because its difficulties are similar to those of the governmental task and in part because such difficulties can be better understood in the context of specific proposals for the reorganization of the economy. The reformers in power must attempt to combine a measure of political control over the basic flows of investment decisions with the active engagement of the working population in the basic activities of production and exchange.

The central government should try to consolidate as soon as it can the degree of control over investment decisions that is necessary to prevent the destabilizing trauma of economic crisis. It should prefer the forms of control that foreshadow the system of capital allocation defended by the program of empowered democracy. The nationalization of a range of large-scale enterprises may represent in many countries the easiest way to secure a public nucleus of capital accumulation that provides the minimal conditions for economic stability and growth at a time of heightened social and ideological conflict. But nationalization is far less promising as a transitional experiment than any number of ways in which central governments may begin to explore procedures for allocating capital, conditionally and temporarily, to smaller and more flexible enterprises while preserving, through pooling devices, the economic advantages of scale. (A number of such transitional forms of reconstructed capital allocation are discussed later, in a section on transitions, alliances, and opportunities.)

Just as the emergency form of central political guidance of the economy is nationalization, so the corresponding emergency method at the grass roots is the actual occupation by workers of factories, shops, and farms. In such a revolutionary circumstance the alternative market order – with its several tiers of capital givers and capital takers – must ordinarily be built within a dominant, semiautarkic state sector. But reform governments that come to power by parliamentary means in a contemporary mixed economy must employ a more subtle and varied range of techniques. Instead of the actual occupation of the productive stock by workers, they must press for checks upon private investment policy – and in particular upon the power to invest or to disinvest in ways that maximize financial return rather than productive advantage. They must link these checks from the top

down with a cumulative transfer of parcels of capital access and decision-making power not only to the labor force of existing enterprises (many of which would eventually be broken up into smaller, more flexible units) but also to teams of workers, technicians, and entrepreneurs who want to go into business. The objective is to come closer to a situation that is neither that of an economically sovereign government facing powerless workers nor that of tenured workers who have succeeded private capitalists as the joint holders of absolute property rights. It is to approach a circumstance in which economic access, decentralization, and flexibility advance through the disassociation of consolidated property into several different faculties, allocated to different types of capital givers and capital takers, rather than through the transfer of consolidated property to a new absolute and permanent rightholder – the central government or the enterprise labor force.

The programmatic sense and the strategic use of the combination of central control and grassroots engagement run closely parallel to the sense and use of the governmental counterpart to this economic task. The economic program of empowered democracy must be prefigured in the early, partial realization of its key commitment: the social control of economic accumulation must be achieved in ways that promote rather than supplant decentralized economic access, discretion, and organizational flexibility. The revolutionary regime must guarantee production and distribution lest a disappointed populace seek protection from old elites or new rulers. But it must do so in ways that do not tempt it to denature its program on the pretext of carrying it out. The parliamentary reform government must break out of the cycle of reform and retrenchment by preventing the capital strike while engaging working men and women in an active, non-clientalistic relation to its economic proposals.

THE INSTITUTIONS

THE IDEA OF AN INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAM

The critical arguments and the forms of political practice discussed in the preceding sections represent two parallel lines of approach toward a program of social reconstruction. This program takes the contemporary formative contexts analyzed in Chapter 2 as its point of departure, in particular the institutions of the rich Western democracies. It describes how these institutions might be remade in light of the internal and visionary arguments rehearsed in an earlier section of this chapter. It depicts the arrangements that could suit –

both as feasible product and as favorable circumstance – the style of politics just examined. The easy intellectual passage, back and forth, between criticism or practice, on the one hand, and program, on the other, shows that the proposals presented here respect the maxim that the ends must be prefigured in the means. For the criticism of existing arrangements and the methods of practical organization represent the basic instruments of political action.

The exposition of the program distinguishes three main spheres for institutional reconstruction: the constitution of government, the organization of the economy, and the system of rights. These areas correspond very roughly to the major institutional complexes singled out in my earlier analysis of the Western formative contexts. But the major domains of programmatic reform are designed to emphasize the importance of the organization of government and of the struggle over governmental power as the chief means for the stabilization or destabilization of society. Lawmaking and discretionary economic policy are the chief tools with which the state goes to work on social life, just as rights definition and economic organization are the most important results this action helps produce. Moreover, by defining the agenda of institutional reconstruction in ways that do not neatly fit the categories deployed in the analysis of the contemporary Western formative context, I also want to underline that this program might be realized through a transformation of other institutional systems, including those of contemporary communist countries.

Each section of the institutional programs begins with critical remarks. These remarks establish a link between the more general ideas and arguments supporting the program as a whole and the detailed content of the institutional proposals. Characteristically they draw attention to an evil brought out by an aspect of our traditional way of organizing democracies or rights, or of understanding the nature of legal entitlements – an evil that despite its distinct identity points to a more general defect in the contemporary formative contexts.

Nothing in modern political or intellectual life gives much hope to those who would devote themselves to the task of programmatic thought. All over the world the most politically conscious and active elements claim to be interested in alternatives to established institutions. The most common objection to those who criticize contemporary institutions is that they have nothing to put in place of what they seek to destroy. Yet if a person who hears these professions of interest in alternatives were to go around looking for the constructive proposals such an interest might be expected to produce he would soon be disappointed. What programs do we have? The platforms of the political parties usually consist in a blend of vague slogans and cynical promises. The slogans illustrate a rhetoric of feeling. The promises hold out the hope of entrenching a private interest through

rights definition or economic policy. The coexistence of the promises and the slogans expresses the peculiarly somnambulant quality of so much of modern politics: the remorseless contest of narrow material interests gets disoriented by muddleheaded ideological aspirations while the ideologies may seem at any moment the nearly transparent rationalizations of selfish factional goals. What the platforms most conspicuously lack are, precisely, large-scale proposals for reordering major aspects of the institutional structure of society.

To turn from the party platforms to the political writings of the left is to encounter a similar poverty of ideas. Both the illusions of deep-logic social theory and the faith in the spontaneous creative powers of revolutionary action have disarmed the constructive political imagination of the left. The major constructive institutional theme of leftist thinkers has been the idea of direct democracy in the form of conciliar, worker-council government. Rather than offering a credible alternative, this institutional conception has more often served as a reverse image of contemporary society, the revenge of a secretly hopeless mind upon a political reality that it cannot imagine pulled apart and reconstructed through a series of conceptual and practical adjustments that we can actually make. And this imaginative failure – I earlier argued – is itself partly responsible for the institutional forms that twentieth-century communism in fact assumed.

The few who try to work out alternatives more considered than those found in the party platforms or in the mainstream of leftist literature are quickly dismissed as utopian dreamers or reformist tinkerers: utopians if their proposals depart greatly from established arrangements, tinkerers if they make modest proposals of change. Nothing worth fighting for seems practicable, and the changes that can be readily imagined often hardly seem to deserve the sacrifice of programmatic campaigns whose time chart so often disrespects the dimensions of an individual lifetime. If all this were not enough, the would-be program writer still has a final surprise in store for him. He will be accused – sometimes by the very people who told him a moment before that they wanted alternatives – of dogmatically anticipating the future and of trying to steal a march on unpredictable circumstance, as if there were no force to Montaigne's warning that "no wind helps him who does not know to what port he sails."

What are we to make of this astonishing gap between the alleged interest in alternatives and the lack of any tangible sign that this interest is real? The problem is not merely that programmatic ideas lack the immediate excitement of both theoretical controversies and practical politics and require repeated acts of faith. The difficulty also lies, I have argued, in a troubled conception of social reality and social transformation that deprives us of any sensible way to distinguish the utopian from the realistic and seduces us into identifying

political practicality with the willingness to take for granted almost all the institutions and beliefs that matter. (A practical man, said Disraeli, is a man who practices the errors of his ancestors.) All the more reason to join a programmatic proposal to an explanatory approach.

The program outlined in the following pages represents the application of internal and visionary arguments to a particular circumstance. Viewed from the standpoint of internal criticism, it is no more than an imagined moment in the interplay between ideal conceptions of human association and particular institutional arrangements. Even when this program is taken as an exercise in visionary thought, its image of empowerment works with the materials provided by a distinctive institutional tradition.

To many the result may seem both too deviant from established reality to be of much practical interest and too clearly located in a particular historical setting to have a more general intellectual appeal. Yet to those who see this program as at best a hortatory dream, I protest that we can realize each of its facets bit by bit, through a series of more modest reforms for whose realization practical politics constantly create new occasions. To those who see the program as of only transitory interest, I answer that it exemplifies an intellectual practice whose significance outreaches its immediate scope of application. The program adds retrospective support to an understanding of contemporary societies as placed in a middle position on an imaginary spectrum of degrees of emancipation from false necessity. The programmatic argument shows what it means to take the capacity to revise our contexts as both an ideal to be pursued and a fact to be recognized. And it suggests the style of constructive social thought that can achieve a more than tenuous link with social explanation.

AN EXPERIMENT IN CONSTITUTIONAL REORGANIZATION: THE EXAMPLE OF THE DUALISTIC SYSTEMS

The program begins with a discussion of the constitutional structure of central government. In no area of the institutional order is our dependence upon a unique tradition more striking. For our views about the organization of democratic governments are very largely beholden to a small stock of ideas that come to us from the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. We have long ceased to appreciate that those ideas were once regarded as rivals for a primacy that seemed anything but certain and as instruments of specific social goals that would now be regarded as suspect and even shameful. This protracted exercise in forgetting, buttressed by

the stabilization of the social world we inhabit, has persuaded us that these techniques of governmental organization represent the very nature of liberal democracy. The act of persuasion has been all the easier because of the inability of the recurrent socialist dream of worker-council government ever to outlast the briefest revolutionary interludes and the failure of the communist-style popular democracies to provide a respectable alternative to the liberal-democratic institutions that we have.

So complete has been the suppression of historical experience, we seem hardly to remember that these same liberal institutions of government changed their real social meaning, while maintaining their outward forms, at least once in the course of their history. In the pioneering democracies, this change took place during the mid-nineteenth century, when the system of universal suffrage and mass-based political parties first took its modern form. Until then, liberal constitutionalism seemed to be the instrument of a republic of notables that carefully filtered out the fickle mob and the dangerous demagogue. And the sole alternative to such an overtly elitist polity seemed to be the peril and chaos of a radical democracy. Few, if any, foresaw that the same liberal constitutionalism would, in conjunction with the emergent style of partisan conflict, shape the mass democracies we now know.

Given our delusive tendency to equate representative democracy with a very distinctive constitutional tradition, it may be helpful to consider the one significant wave of constitutional reforms this tradition has in fact witnessed. At a minimum these reforms remind us of the artifactual and revisable character of our ways of organizing central democratic governments. But I have another, stronger reason to discuss them. They prefigure, in a limited setting, many of the concerns and techniques of the parts of the program defended here that deal with the organization of the state, just as the vanguard sector of contemporary industry anticipates much of what the program advocates for the reorganization of work and industry.

I have in mind the series of constitutional innovations introduced by the post-World War I constitutions in Europe and developed further by some of the post-World War II ones. You have to distinguish two aspects of this wave of constitutional innovations: the ideas and practices originally championed by the theoreticians of the constitutions adopted in the immediate aftermath of World War I and the quite different set of constitutional conceptions and arrangements that emerged, piecemeal, when those earlier approaches were abandoned or revised.

Many of the constitutions promulgated in the wake of World War I – like the German, the Austrian, and the Polish, or, for that matter, the constitutional program of the Russian provisional government –

arose from the reciprocal effect of two forces: the predominance of a hesitant, embarrassed left in the constitutional conventions or cabinets of that almost revolutionary era, and the teachings of the legal theorists who identified themselves, more or less explicitly, with this political faction, men like Hugo Preuss or Hans Kelsen. The social-democratic majorities had even less of a conception of a radically new governmental structure than they had of an alternative industrial organization. To their left, they saw only the revolutionary tradition of conciliar-type government (the commune, the soviet) constantly revamped and reabandoned in the history of popular insurrections. Their main concern was simply to react against the immediate past. As their characteristic political experience had been the struggle against an authoritarian executive, their primary constitutional objective became to ensure the obedience of the executive to the parliament. The legal theorists added the goal of "rationalizing" government: of identifying every aspect of governmental power and creating the legal form that would shape and discipline it. In pursuing this aim they continued to be guided by the implicit equation of accountability with the techniques of dispersion of power and distancing among branches and levels of government. The force of their commitment to these techniques seemed to be undercut by the theoretical concentration of almost unbounded power in the parliament and by the use of the popular initiative and the referendum alongside electoral representation. The commitment was nevertheless reaffirmed by the weight of the constraints upon the governing ministry that actually had to carry out legislative policy.

The collapse of many of the European democracies of the interwar period cannot be attributed primarily to defects in their constitutional structures. It took place in the setting of the unresolved challenges to the emergent formative context of power and production, the very same setting that, at an earlier moment, had allowed the new constitutionalism to take hold. Nevertheless, the relative immobility to which those constitutional arrangements often condemned the government sometimes helped hasten the downfall of republican institutions.

The new constitutions, however, did not stay put. They were revised. Most of these revisions had two immediate causes: the change in the balance of political forces, from left to right, and the desire to give the executive decisional mobility in a domestic and international circumstance of perpetual insecurity. Some revisions, like the amendments to the 1921 Polish constitution, almost completely reversed the original spirit of the constitutional plan and established a plebiscitarian presidency with all-inclusive powers. Other shifts, however, like the Austrian reforms of 1929, the Portuguese

constitution of 1933, or even the changing constitutional practice of the Weimar Republic, contained the elements of an alternative, though highly limited, constitutional program. This program proved insufficient to rescue states that had already been caught up in the deadly struggles of the interwar period. But it did contain the elements of the dualistic structure developed later, more explicitly, by constitutions like the Icelandic of 1944, more lopsidedly by the French of 1958 and 1962, and most fully by the Portuguese of 1976.

Two closely connected arrangements distinguished this emergent constitutional scheme. One was the establishment of two governmental powers elected by direct universal suffrage – the parliament and the presidency, whence the core meaning of the term “dualism.” The other was the decision to make the active government – the parliamentary cabinet – dependent upon both those powers, yet for that very reason not entirely dependent upon any one of them. Three leading institutional ideas worked in this dualistic system.

One was the effort to maximize the popular aspects of indirect democracy. The plebiscitarian features of the presidential regime, subversive of party oligarchies, would be joined to the vital partisan conflicts of a parliament elected under proportional representation.

The second idea was the attempt to give the acting government decisional initiative by allowing it to lean on either the president or the parliament and not to fall automatically or immediately because it had lost the support of either. The goal therefore became to permit the rapidity and continuity of governmental action by making the ability to act effectively independent of a consensus among all the powers of the state. (Think, for example, of the impact in a presidential regime of the antagonism between president and legislature; in a parliamentary one, of the effect of fragile party coalitions in a wider social context of frantic but petty collective bickering.)

The third institutional idea put limits on the second one and allowed it to operate without jeopardizing the primacy of the appeal to the mass electorate recognized by the first idea. It consisted in the use of devices that allowed different powers in the state to resolve deadlocks by provoking immediate general elections at which they themselves would be at risk. This technique had already been used in some of the European constitutions of the immediate post-World War I years. For example, the parliament might be able to remove the president on purely political grounds, dissolving itself by that very act. The president might simultaneously be allowed to bring about an electoral confrontation with a hostile parliamentary majority.

The significance of these parallel rights of appeal to the mass electorate increased when combined with a more general duplica-

tion of functions among branches of government. More than one power might be allowed to perform the same acts: to propose or even provisionally pass certain laws. If one of the duplicated powers in the state failed to obtain some required agreement on the part of its twin, there would be a deadlock that justified new elections.

These devices had an ambiguous relation to the mainstream constitutional tradition. On the one hand, they might be seen as minor adjustments to practices they did not displace. Examples of the dualistic revision coexisted with the older constitutional arrangements, and most had been initiated by moderate reformers or even by conservatives, uninterested in any radical reconstruction of state and society. On the other hand, the shift in the constitutional tradition could also be seen as the small-scale, limited version of a more drastic change. This alternative interpretation seemed to be supported by the internal analysis of some of the professed or tacit goals that motivated the dualistic experiments. Instead of disciplining power through the perpetuation of impasse, constitutional dualism disciplined it by the rapid resolution of deadlock. In the place of the techniques of distancing and dispersion, it put devices that replicated functions, focused conflicts, and broke up political oligarchies. No wonder the Portuguese constitution of 1978 – the only one of the late-twentieth-century constitutions to show an explicit commitment to aspects of institutionalized collective mobilization – was also the one to adopt most unreservedly the institutional ideas worked out through the dualistic experiments. In fact, the alternative constitutional structure presented in the next section of this chapter generalizes the principles already exhibited by the dualistic reforms.

There is no cause for surprise at the ambiguous relation of the dualistic system to the earlier constitutionalism: such an ambiguity marks all significant reforms. More specifically, dualism resembled those changes in industrial organization that, in the course of the twentieth century, introduced aspects of the flexible form of rationalized collective labor into sectors once dominated by the traditional assembly line and the other trappings of the rigid approach to industrial organization. Constitutional dualism shared with these industrial innovations its substance and historical circumstance as well as the ambiguity of its relation to the tradition within which it arose. Constitutional and industrial reforms could either remain minor variations on the established formative context of power and production or become steps toward the inauguration not just of another context but of a new measure of freedom over contexts.

THE ORGANIZATION OF GOVERNMENT: THE
MULTIPLICATION OF OVERLAPPING POWERS
AND FUNCTIONS

The attempt to emancipate social life more fully from false necessity can succeed only if our ordinary social experience gives us the occasions and the means to challenge and revise every aspect of the basic institutional structure of society. To every major feature of this structure there must correspond a practical or imaginative activity that puts it up for grabs, and this activity must be available to us in the midst of our routine conflicts and concerns. Among these routines none are more important, as a domain for context-challenging activities, than those that respect the struggle over the mastery and uses of governmental power. For this struggle directly influences the terms on which we conduct all our other disputes. A main point in my earlier criticism of the established version of democracy was precisely that by placing much of the established institutional order effectively beyond the reach of democratic politics, that mode of democracy fails to give adequate application to even the most modest conception of inherited democratic ideals.

Viewed from this standpoint, the classical liberal technique of dividing central government into a small number of well-defined branches – executive, legislature, and judiciary – is dangerous. It generates a stifling and perverse institutional logic, and it does so whether the division of powers takes the rigid, tripartite form of presidential systems or assumes the more flexible style of parliamentary regimes. The effort to put every aspect of the social order on the line will characteristically require many ways of using governmental power – or of fighting over its use – that find no suitable setting in the existing order. Would-be reformers may be told, for example, that the reconstructive activity they have in mind does not quite fit either the legislature or the judiciary. So it should not be done at all, for fear of distorting the system of institutional roles that supposedly helps define the inherent constitutional structure of democracy. But the result of abstaining is typically to leave a faction of society with an inordinate measure of control over the human and material resources by which we create the future society within the present one: money, expertise, and governmental authority itself.

The program that seeks to empower democracy in order to empower people must therefore multiply the number of branches in governments while attributing overlapping functions to agencies of the state. The multiplication of powers in the state should obey two overlapping criteria: first, that when the total system of powers and functions has been established, it will work to prevent any section

of society from gaining a lasting stranglehold over the material or human resources that can be used to generate the future form of society; second, that the same system provide an opportunity for the exercise of every major variety of transformative activity, practical or imaginative. The first criterion looks to the result; the second, to the means. Each may predominate in the design of a particular power.

Another reason to multiply the number of powers in the state with overlapping functions is the usefulness of increasing the number of governmental authorities that are chosen, one way or another, by a general electorate. The point is to transfer to the relations among governmental institutions the same device by which mass politics loosen the oligarchy effect: the effort to enlist increasing mass support in the course of rivalries over the mastery and use of state power. One of the many reasons why this loosening of the oligarchy effect remained so imperfect had to do with the defects of the institutional means by which the loosening was achieved. The fewer the lines of access to the grass roots of popular involvement, the greater the likelihood that oligarchic tendencies will assert themselves within the institutional order and thereby constrain or defeat the wider intentions of the constitutional plan.

Consider two examples of the creation of new powers in the state. Each illustrates one of the two criteria cited earlier. And each displays, in a more focused setting, a more general concern of the whole constitutional scheme. The commitment to avoid a monopoly over the resources of society creation may justify the establishment of a branch or agency of government especially charged with enlarging access to the means of communication, information, and expertise, all the way from the heights of governmental power to the internal arrangements of the workplace. The effort to control the sources of technical knowledge and expertise is the natural ambition of unresponsive power. It becomes all the more attractive as wealth comes to consist, in ever increasing measure, in the capacity to undertake instrumental activities on the basis of specialized knowledge, routinized at its core and flexible in its applications. It is vital to the enlarged democracy that the tendency, at every level of social life, to gain an entrenched, uneven access to this capacity be constantly resisted. The power able to resist this tendency cannot be a mere instrumentality of any other power or a limited governmental organization. For the struggle about what exactly it should do would be a major form of conflict over the uses of governmental power and a chief determinant of the terms on which people can collaborate practically.

Such a branch of government must be legally and financially qualified to oversee the basic arrangements separating technical coordination and managerial advice from a generic disciplinary authority in the workplace. (See the later discussion of the regime of capital.)

It must be able to make know-how available to those who, under the conditions I shall describe, set up new productive enterprises. It must be able to intervene in all other social institutions and change their operations, by veto or affirmative initiative. Its power to intervene must be directly related to the task of securing the conditions that would maximize information about affairs of state and achieve the maximum subordination of expert cadres to collective conflicts and deliberations. The officers of such a branch would be selected by joint suffrage of the other powers in the state, the parties of opinion, and the universal electorate.

Now take an example of the prevalence of the other criterion by which to multiply branches of government: the commitment to give every transformative practice a chance. The order of right – the laws generated by the joint, constitutionally regulated collaboration of all the other powers of government – constitutes a repository of social ideals. Though these ideals never form a cohesive whole or justify a single imaginative scheme of right and possible association, they stand in greater or lesser tension toward the internal life of particular institutions.

There is a practical and imaginative activity that works out the implications of such prescriptive models of association for the re-making of institutional life. Its imaginative aspect consists in understanding and elaborating a large body of law as a project to advance a certain vision of life in common. Its practical aspect lies in the series of procedural devices that involve some far-reaching intervention in an area of social practice. These devices aim to strike down obstacles to the advancement of the ideal, to prevent such obstacles from arising in the first place, and affirmatively to reconstruct the chosen area of social life in conformity to the guiding vision. Such interventions may involve the institution that undertakes them in the ongoing administration of major institutions: productive enterprises, schools, hospitals, asylums. (Think of the complex, collective injunctions afforded by American law in the late twentieth century, and imagine their radical extension.)

As the governmental power moves forward in its attempt to reconstruct a body of social practice, it finds inducements to go still farther. First, the partial execution of the reconstructive effort reveals new causal connections: more or less remote social forces that prevent the fuller realization of the ideal pursued. These causal links extend, continuously, in all directions. Only standards of institutional limitation and reservations of institutional prudence, or the qualifying force of other powers in the state, could keep every instance of this procedural intervention from expanding, bit by bit, into a complete remaking of society. Second, each step forward in the application of an ideal to social life reveals new ambiguities in its content and new

disharmonies between it and established social practice. Even a well-defined and seemingly limited reconstructive project never ends: each new occasion for its realization reveals both new ambiguities in its meaning and new requirements.

The imaginative aspect of the activity I have described – the understanding of bodies of rule and principle as expressive of ideals of human association – is universal to all forms of legal doctrine. Indeed, I shall argue later that any extended practice of legal doctrine failing to render explicit this reference to ideals of common life degenerates, by virtue of this truncation, into a pseudorationality, an arbitrary choice of results that the ambiguous body of law cannot support and that only a broader exercise of social criticism could justify. But the practical aspect of this activity is another story. When the implementation of the broadened conception of doctrine involves a systematic intervention in large areas of social practice and the consequent disruption of major institutions, it does not seem to lend itself easily to any of the branches of government admitted by the received constitutional traditions of democracy.

The characteristics of the traditional judiciary – devoted, as it primarily is, to the settling of more or less focused rights and wrongs under the law – make it a less than ideal instrument for far-reaching and systematic intervention in social practice. The adjudication of localized disputes over the boundaries of rights may best be conducted by officials removed from the pressures of conflict over the uses of governmental power and expert in the entire body of law, or else by ordinary laymen involved in the life of a community (popular tribunals). Neither type of adjudicative corps may be well suited to conduct a radical extension of complex procedural intervention. The expert judges, with their vaunted immunity from direct influence by the other powers in the state, or even by the general electorate, would, with such procedural weapons in hand, turn into a nearly absolute censorial authority. They would hover over the republic, like a Lycurgus who had forgotten to go away after completing his work of state building. The popular tribunals of ordinary laymen are equally disabled from the performance of this task because both their inexperience and their fragmentation prevent them from acting effectively as the agents of a systemic reconstructive intervention in social life.

If the traditional judiciary seems ill-qualified for the purpose so does the conventionally understood legislative body. Preoccupied as it is with the struggle over more or less marginal adjustments to the existing law and with the support or subversion of the party in power, it cannot be easily expected to undertake the ideal, long-range, and systematic interventionism that would provide such a power with its mandate. There would always be the danger that a legislature's

attempts at such an engagement would become subordinate to short-term partisan rivalries, and the reasonable suspicion that it had been so tainted would, even if unjustified, rob it of authority. The point is not that the activity of such a power should be or seem unpolitical, but that it should represent politics carried on by somewhat other means and to a somewhat different end. The conventional legislature is defective in another way as well. Though its members may be expected to be proficient in the more general styles of political persuasion, most may lack firsthand familiarity with the more specialized forms of normative argument – religious, moral, and technically legal – that flourish in the society. An enlarged conception of legal doctrine weakens these distinctions but does not abolish them.

These arguments suggest that the power responsible for systematic interventions should be a branch apart, staffed and organized according to the principles most suitable to its overriding task. Like the power responsible for rescuing know-how from privilege, its members may be selected by the other powers, the parties of opinion, and the universal electorate. They should be drawn from activities that have acquainted them with the different modes of normative thought important in the society. They should have at their disposal the technical, financial, and human resources required by any effort to reorganize major institutions and to pursue the reconstructive effort over time.

Such a branch of government must have a wide latitude for intervention. Its activities embrace, potentially, every aspect of social life and every function of all the other powers in the state. If the other powers could not resist and invade the jurisdiction of this corrective agency, it would become the overriding authority in the state. The broad-based selection of its members would not compensate for this evil: the control of a primary access to the general citizenry, the very circumstance the technique of overlapping powers and functions wants to avoid, would have reappeared under the new constitution. The resistance the other powers impose must not, however, exemplify the rigid distribution of functional competences, the checks and balances, of the tradition inherited from the eighteenth century. The paralyzing impasses such devices favor, hostile to the aims of a constitutionalism of decisive experiments and broadened participation, would become all the more deadly when many more branches of government coexisted and collided. Thus, the effort to describe the appropriate workings of this reconstructive power nicely illustrates the problem addressed by the constitutional technique of multiple and overlapping branches of government.

THE ORGANIZATION OF GOVERNMENT:
SHAPING AND RESOLVING THE CONFLICT OF
POWERS

A main way in which the received constitutionalism tried to discipline power was its appeal to an automatic mechanism of containment: any branch that went beyond its proper sphere would be automatically stopped by all the other branches. This banal system of checks and balances has a meaning that does not become apparent until you understand both the problems that it was originally designed to solve and the effects it continues to produce long after those problems have changed beyond recognition.

In the prerevolutionary Europe of corporatist and statist politics the different powers in the state were often identified as representing particular segments of a hierarchically ordered society. The attempt to create a state set up without regard to the internal divisions of society, in a society whose disorganized classes replaced corporately organized estates, meant that the powers of the state had to be defined by reference to one another. And as the division of government into different departments (branches) with specialized functions achieved greater fixity, it also became more important to establish a mechanism that would hold these departments to their assigned tasks and keep them from invading one another's domains. One device would be appeal to an outside umpire. If this umpire were an unaccountable sovereign claiming to stand for the collective good (such as a monarch), he would pose a serious threat to the form and spirit of a republican constitution. But neither could a universal electorate serve as the arbiter every time power clashed. For such a procedure would be dangerous as well as cumbersome. It would run counter to the liberal aim of establishing a representative regime that would minimize the opportunities for popular agitation and for the scheming of demagogic agitators. Thus, it became important to invent a built-in method of mutual restraint that would avoid the need to turn to the outside umpire.

It is remarkable that as the republican order became more democratic, the constraining effect of the system of "checks and balances" continued to operate. When first devised, the system was subsidiary to another, more ostentatious method of restraint: a filtering-out technique that both restricted the suffrage and established many levels of intermediate representation between grassroots electorates and central governments. In time this technique – once justified by the commitment to ensure that electors be independent and informed – proved both an intolerable insult to popular sovereignty and a superfluous guarantee of social stability.

The founding liberal myth of a constitutional mechanism and a

system of rights that tower above the hierarchical and communal divisions of society has since become true in an unacknowledged and embarrassing sense. Liberal-democratic politics and the society in which it is practiced have indeed become separate: a social order that consists largely of groups entrenched in fixed niches within the division of labor and occupying stable places in the established scheme of social hierarchy coexists with a political practice that plays up to shifting coalitions of interest formed by groups with crisscrossing and unstable membership. A major thesis of my explanatory and programmatic arguments has been that liberal politics – and its defining institutional framework – help perpetuate a form of social order that can be remade in their image only by a transformation of the liberal conception and practice of political life. To make society resemble what liberal politics to a considerable extent are already like, we would have to change the institutional form of the state and of the conflict over governmental power and push the liberal vision beyond the point to which its creators have up to now been willing to take it.

The classical technique of checks and balances is only a small part of the structure that would have to be changed. But it exemplifies in a particularly heavy-handed way the constraints imposed by the larger structure to which it belongs, just as the arguments deployed in its favor illustrate with peculiar clarity the vision we must replace.

Because of the system of checks and balances, a faction bent on an ambitious program must capture more or less simultaneously the different departments of government. And the leaders of each branch of government can usually be counted on to be so jealous of the prerogatives of their offices that pride of place becomes identical with resistance to every bold plan. Indeed, the most noticeable feature of the system is to establish a rough equivalence between the transformative reach of a political project and the obstacles that the constitutional machinery sets in its way.

Some say this method of mutual restraint and deliberate deadlock serves as a necessary defense of freedom. But a program that proposes ways to extend the enjoyment and meaning of public freedoms while avoiding the paralysis of experimental capability in politics helps discredit belief in this necessity. Others say the pattern of stalemate is an unavoidable consequence of the conflict among narrow organized interests in societies in which most people remain reasonably satisfied most of the time. But this view is a principal target of a theory that wants to show all the ways in which a contingent, revisable institutional order forms the occasions and instruments of conflict and shapes assumptions about identities, interests, and possibilities.

A constitutional program committed to the empowerment of democracy therefore has many reasons to replace the inherited strategies of automatic and reciprocal institutional constraint. The multiplication of overlapping governmental powers and functions lends added urgency to such an innovation.

Three principles may concurrently govern the conflict of powers under the reformed constitution. The first – and the only one of the three widely used in the established liberal bourgeois democracies – is the absolute restraint one power may impose upon another. This restraint can be overcome only by the reciprocal influence the different branches may exercise upon one another's composition. Suppose that a party succeeds to office on a platform of far-reaching distribution of wealth and power, reforms directed against the institutional framework of the economy. Imagine, further, that the new rulers keep the support of the highest representative assemblies, which also form part of the decisional center of government. (See the next section, on the organization of the center.) Some of the innovations may involve an attack upon the basic rights guaranteeing the individual's security and his access to conflict over the mastery and uses of governmental power. An agency in the state, isolated from the immediate effects of the struggle over governmental power, must be able to hold back such assaults. It hardly matters whether it is the same judiciary that settles particular controversies or some distinct constitutional authority. What does matter is that the nature and basis of this individual immunity change. (See the later discussion of immunity rights.)

The second principle to govern the conflict of powers is one of priority among the different branches. The third is the use of the immediate or delayed devolution of constitutional impasses to the general electorate. These two principles qualify each other. When the branches of government are few and the constitution limits power by perpetuating impasses, it is natural to treat the branches as equal. The force of this conclusion vanishes together with its premises. The test of a power's relative hierarchical position lies precisely in its right to impose its will upon other powers. The two most important justifications of higher hierarchical place are the breadth of the composition of the branch or agency (the extent to which its members are chosen by an organized societywide struggle) and the scope of its responsibilities (how far into the social order its central constitutional responsibilities allow it to reach). By these criteria, for example, the interventionist power responsible for vindicating the ideals that underlie the entire legal system is more important than the power charged with maintaining the integrity of access to information. The decisional center of government is more important than both.

The constitution may establish circumstances in which a conflict between powers justifies an immediate devolution to the general electorate. This will be peculiarly appropriate to circumstances in which the contest arises within the decisional center and indicates a failure of popular support for the party program. A prodigal use of this technique, however, would paralyze the state's capacity for action just as surely as a commitment to the method of restraining power by perpetuating impasses. Thus, the normal method for resolving conflicts between unequal powers will be delayed devolution (referendum) to the electorate. Suppose, for example, that the party in office enters into conflict with the power responsible for disrupting established institutions in the name of the systematic ideals attributed to the legal order. If the party is acting in the execution of its program, and if it has not been stopped in this course by the judicial protection of individual security, it would be allowed to proceed. But the dispute would be set for debate and resolution at the next general election.

No one of these constitutional procedures is essential to the constitutional scheme. The particular institutional proposals represent no more than a plausible interpretation of the project of an empowered democracy. Which of these interpretations works best, in the spirit of that project, cannot be inferred conclusively from general arguments. The same loose connection between the details and their reasons holds for the relationship between the entire institutional plan and the conception that underlies it.

THE ORGANIZATION OF GOVERNMENT: THE DECISIONAL CENTER

Just as the multiplication of overlapping powers and functions threatens to worsen the paralytic effect of the system of checks and balances, so too it threatens to submerge the decisional center of government under a confusion of clashing agencies. This result would be fatal to the aims of the revised constitutional order, which must give a party of opinion, supported by a broadly based social movement, a chance to try its program out. The instruments at its disposal for doing this must be even more effective than those available to the ruling parties of the established style of democracy. They must be able to reach the sources of private power this style ordinarily leaves untouched. They must be proportionate to the intentions of collective movements capable of linking struggles at the heights of state power to the rivalries of everyday life. They must be able to deal with the complexities introduced by the presence of many branches of government. Moreover, so long as the state exists in a world of rival states, it must have at its head an authority capable of decisive diplomatic and military action.

The decisional center of government includes the executive and the legislature foreseen by received constitutional doctrine. It hardly matters whether these are conceived as two distinct branches of government, in the context of a presidential regime, or as something close to a single power, under a parliamentary system. For the new-model constitution may either include an elected president or dispense with him. The powers forming this decisional center are those most immediately responsible for the implementation of a partisan program that may address the overall structure of society and for the ultimate control over the state's dealings, in peace and war, with other states. It may not seem self-evident that these two concerns should be joined in the hands of the same public agencies. But those governmental institutions that stand closest to the citizenry and that provide the broadest scope for popular decision must also be the ones to make the choices that involve most dramatically the lives and fortunes of the people. The powers that stand outside this decisional center are the ones charged with a more focused responsibility and removed, to a relatively greater degree, from immediate partisan rivalry.

In order to understand the place of the decisional headquarters within the constitution of the empowered democracy, it helps to consider its nature and responsibilities in earlier constitutional schemes. In these schemes, it often amounted to almost the entire constitutional system.

Start with a simplified version of the medieval European constitution. The central constitutional task – usually performed by a king in parliament – was the occasional declaration or restatement of the law, conceived as a body of sanctified custom that determined the rights and obligations of each estate in the realm. For this conception to become dominant, the origin of these customary arrangements in a history of particular conflicts had to be forgotten or denied, and the conflicts themselves interrupted or contained. The other, subsidiary constitutional function was the power of the prince to deal with the unexpected by taking emergency measures that might involve some ad hoc revision of the customary order. Without this power of princely correction the stability and survival of custom might be jeopardized by every significant change in circumstance. The corrective function – the *gubernatio* by contrast to the *jurisdictio* – could not easily be assimilated to the system of thought that informed the central vision of right. To exercise or to accept it was to acknowledge, even if only marginally and implicitly, the failure of the established order to exhaust the possible forms of social life. Whether the prince claimed to act by divine inspiration or secular wisdom, he, his advisers, and his critics made use of a faculty of inventing measures that might endure, turning into custom.

The liberal-democratic states of the modern West did not alter this picture as much as at first appeared. The nostrums of the dominant political rhetoric might proclaim a popular sovereignty limited only by the sanctity of individual and minority rights. Under a presidential regime, the president and the legislature were able, in conflict or cooperation, to work out the implications of party programs for existing social arrangements. Under a parliamentary regime, this conception of a sovereign decisional center stood out even more clearly. The occupants of the highest executive offices became the instruments by which an electorally successful party could act upon the principles for which it had stood in the elections. The head of state turned, at most, into an official responsible for overseeing the mechanism by which rival parties fought for power.

Even with the reforms introduced by the dualistic system, the reality of constitutional practice qualified the idea of programmatic initiative to the point of radically changing its understood meaning. All the traits of a demobilizing constitutionalism made it hard for a victorious party to seize the state or, having seized it, to execute its program rapidly and decisively. The link made by the legal system between the means of immunity against government and the forms of control over individuals meant that the attempts to carry a partisan program into the reconstruction of the private order appeared as more or less direct threats to individual or minority freedom. Reigning opinion and constitutional principle conspired to ward off these threats. Thus, even under the most flexible parliamentary regime, with the greatest measure of unity between cabinet and parliament, policy making and legislation by the decisional center rarely amounted to more than marginal and fragmentary interventions in a social and legal order with a tenacious structure of its own. Thus persisted the older constitutional idea of a legislature that debates and enacts occasional changes in the laws. Despite its seeming archaism and unsuitability to the structure of a dynamized parliamentary regime, it expressed the reality of constitutional practice. For just as the larger attempt to realize the idea of a state hostage to no faction would require a major change in the organization of government and in its relation to society, so too, on a smaller scale, the idea of a government organized to make and implement a coherent party program would demand a change in the conception of the decisional center, in its structure, and its relation to the other agencies of the state.

Suppose, for the sake of simplicity, that the new constitution includes a qualified parliamentary regime (which provides for a popularly elected president, independent of the parliament, with significant powers of his own, as in the dualistic system). The supreme representative assembly must carry out two tasks, neither of

which can be easily assimilated to the traditional idea of legislation. On the one hand, it must supervise and ensure the fidelity of the party or parties in office to the program to which they committed or came to commit themselves in the course of their campaign or of their tenure in office. On the other hand, the assembly should serve as the maximum level of a series of forms of popular representation that spread out through society. In this second role, it may work, in an interlocutory capacity, as the agency responsible for settling conflicts among the other branches of government. Its task will be most important in those cases of lesser importance when the solution is not immediately entrusted to the universal electorate. It must also provide the vehicle by which these lower-level representative bodies can stop the ruling government in its tracks and go to the country.

These two tasks – the supervision of the party in office and the interlocutory representation of the larger electorate – need not be performed by the same representative body. A smaller council within the larger one may represent the parties in office and supervise the execution of the program. This program-supervising work may seem like a job done anyway under existing democratic institutions. But its delicacy and importance increase dramatically when the partisan conflicts at the summit of governmental power extend down to the disputes that occur on the familiar ground of work and leisure and when the entire structure of society is at stake in this struggle.

Under such a scheme, the whole idea of legislation undergoes a change. The laws and directives embodying the program are worked out together by the cabinet and the smaller supervisory council. No hard-and-fast distinctions exist between the different kinds of norms that result from the process. The supervisory partisan council performs a role that could be called jurisdictional as much as legislative: it judges in each instance the conformity of enactment to program. The large representative body, to which this smaller council may belong, serves to stop rather than to initiate or enact measures of state. At the same time, thank's to its size, the multiplicity of the forms of election and representation that generate it, and the closeness of its ties to lower-order representative assemblies, this more inclusive body provides a running preview of the broader electoral struggle.

The cabinet and council govern subject to the restrictions imposed by this greater assembly and the other powers in the state. Thus, there will be conditions under which the power designed to preserve the integrity of communication, or to vindicate by interventionist procedures the imputed ideals of the legal order, or to adjudicate individual disputes and safeguards, can impede the exercise of governmental power in a particular instance, or reserve a matter for later electoral decision, or even provoke an impasse requiring immediate devolution to the electorate. But the cabinet need not necessarily

count on a majority in the larger organization. In circumstances of party fragmentation and intense partisan rivalry, a method may be devised that allows a minority force to rule so long as it can win compensatory support from other powers in the state or from lower-level representative bodies.

THE ORGANIZATION OF GOVERNMENT: MAKING MINICONSTITUTIONS

There are limits to the extent to which any particular set of institutional arrangements can embody a principle of permanent self-revision. By its very existence in a particular form, it excludes other constitutional arrangements. By excluding other such schemes, it also rules out certain modes of practical or passionate association that people may come to want. No constitutional system can be perfectly elastic in relation to all possible instances of collective life. Nor can this limitation be adequately remedied by a conventional power of constitutional amendment. For the exercise of such a power can rarely change more than an isolated fragment of the established constitutional order.

The normal constitutional system must include among its own precepts the opportunity to establish special constitutional regimes for limited contexts and aims. These special regimes amount to miniconstitutions. At the most modest level, the party in office may have as part of its program to set up institutions able to act in anomalous ways, with exceptional degrees of power, in particular sectors of the society. (See, for example, the later discussion of a regime of extreme entrepreneurial freedom within an economy whose main lines remain subject to direct political control.) At the highest level, the leaders of a party may appear before the universal electorate requesting some special regime of power – a temporary change in the arrangements and prerogatives of the decisional center – that can be reconciled with the crucial constitutional safeguards for individuals, minorities, and oppositions. In this event, the election becomes, simultaneously, a conflict over the form of the state and the identity of the highest officeholders.

Whatever the scope of the miniconstitution, its use always requires a specific precautionary method. To each special venture in the establishment of an extraordinary power there should correspond a special venture in control. Thus, the higher power that institutes an anomalous lower power must provide for the special independent board that will supervise the anomalous agency's actions and regulate its connections to the other, normal parts of government. The party that appears before the electorate in search of special arrangements and prerogatives must at the same time come with a proposal for the institution of a special supervisory authority, an ad hoc branch

of government. Thus, every special power, under the exceptional constitutional regime, has a shadow power in its pursuit. The shadow grows longer in proportion to the dimensions of the special power it follows.

THE ORGANIZATION OF PARTISAN CONFLICT: POLITICAL STABILITY IN AN EMPOWERED DEMOCRACY

The most obvious objection to the constitutionalism of permanent mobilization defined by the preceding techniques is its apparent inability to guarantee a minimum of stability. Everything in such a constitution might seem explicitly designed to reduce state and society alike to bitter strife and paralyzing confusion. Carried to the extreme, such an instability would deny people the practical and moral benefits of all lasting, secure forms of association. It would disrupt the social basis for the development of productive or destructive capabilities just as much as if it had allowed a principle of vested rights to preclude all innovation in social life. In the end, a regime of extreme instability would turn out to destabilize itself and to give way, at whatever cost, to a stabilized order. People would cry out for firm leaders and peacemaking institutions. Their freedom would seem intolerably burdensome to them if they could keep it only by accepting an uncertainty that disturbed every aspect of life and an antagonism that always stood ready to turn from programmatic disagreement to bitter quarreling and from quarreling to violence.

The attempt to explain the nature and bases of stability under the transformed constitutional regime requires us to consider the role to be played by organized parties of opinion under such a regime. More generally, it serves as an invitation to imagine the actual dynamic of central political struggle that would characterize such a reordered society. Once again, our ability to make reasonable conjectures about the workings of adjusted social practices puts to the test our understanding of the practices we actually have. For once this understanding goes beyond the most external and mechanical descriptions, or the most ambiguous correlations, it requires ideas about the difference it would make to change particular arrangements or enacted beliefs.

Remember first that the emancipation of society from false necessity takes in part the form of a dissolution of social classes into parties of opinion. To some extent, this dissolution has already taken place: it is always reemerging through history, and the liberal-democratic politics of the present day have carried it to an unprecedented point. The classical liberals who have betrayed their early radical vocation claim society has already reached this condition. But

if the early analysis is correct the relatively rigid quality of social life differs fundamentally from the comparatively fluid organization of politics, and our political ideas and institutional arrangements are partly responsible for the results. The institutional program outlined here seems calculated not only to propose carrying this dissolution of social classes into parties of opinion still further but to aggravate its destabilizing effects. The problem of instability has its focus in the relation between an extended partisan strife and the constitutional and social conditions that seem to turn this strife in a dangerous direction.

The ancient hostility to factional struggle always had a double foundation. One basis was the conviction that factions would be inherently selfish and thus subversive of the common good. The other was the fear that contending parties would destroy the civic peace.

Factional struggle seemed incompatible with the stability of any polity so long as it cut to the most basic matters of life. Chief among these, in an age of belief, were the terms of salvation. Thus, parties of religious opinion seemed to be the exemplary case of factions that would tear a commonwealth apart. Their differences could not be compromised, and their partisans would rest only with the complete defeat of their adversaries. At least, this uncompromising demand would persist so long as the religious principle demanded a privileged if not universal community of belief.

The closest secular equivalent to religious controversy was all-out ideological disagreement. When the major factions defined themselves by sharply opposing secular visions of what society should become, or pitted the tangible interests of one large class against those of another, the republic would be equally in trouble. The normal conflicts for and over governmental power might quickly slide into a social warfare that put everything up for grabs. For the sake of realizing nonnegotiable goods, all restraint in the use of means would soon be forgotten.

Partisan rivalry became safe, in this view, when it came to be characterized by two related features. The principles and interests to which each major party was committed no longer fitted into a single cohesive vision, sharply and clearly contrasted to the visions championed by the other leading factions. At the same time and for the same reasons, a multiplicity of crosscutting factions – if not parties, then segments of parties and other collective bodies – would organize for the prosecution of particular goals. The citizens would find themselves divided in many contradictory ways rather than enlisted into two or three civic armies ready to do battle, first figuratively and then literally, over the organization of society. In such a circumstance, partisan conflict would rarely seem to be about society's for-

mative institutional context or its enacted imaginative scheme of association. It would be largely about the marginal advances of certain groups within that context. Any change in the defining institutional arrangements or the embodied vision of social life would normally come about as a by-product of the struggle over fragmentary goals and interests. It is precisely because of this relative deflection from the fundamentals that, on this view of minimal stability, partisan rivalry appears compatible with republican life.

Notice that this received conception of the sources of stability and instability depends upon two crucial identifications. The first is the equation of instability, understood as a heightening of the intensity and a broadening of the scope of conflict over the uses of governmental policy, with instability, interpreted as a resurgent threat to the individual's most vital interests in material security and welfare. This link presents instability in the image of Hobbesian civil strife, as the nightmare from which people must and will escape at any cost. My later argument about the reorganization of the system of legal rights suggests how to uncouple these two types of jeopardy so that the basic security of the individual is guaranteed and even strengthened in a mobilizational democracy.

There is another identification at least as central to the received view of stability: the equivalence established between fundamental conflicts and nonnegotiable disputes. The concept of a formative institutional and imaginative context provides a more precise interpretation of what is fundamental and permits restating the classical approach to stability in the following terms: an institutional order deliberately designed to favor repeated controversy over the formative context will, if it succeeds in its objectives, inevitably result in an escalation of nonnegotiable demands that will tear the civil peace apart. It will create precisely the style of partisan strife that the mainstream of Western political thought has always considered intolerable.

It is tempting to see a refutation of the equivalence between fundamental conflict and nonnegotiable practice in the partisan rivalries of many Western European democracies in the two or three generations since World War II. There you found major parties committed to radically different programs for the organization of society and of its relation to the state. Large numbers of partisan cadres treated this program as the articles of an intransigent faith and managed, with varying degrees of success, to draw the larger electorate into their own vision of fundamental differences. Yet these states remained stable by any plausible test of stability you might care to propose.

The actual practice of party politics and administration, however, told a different story from the programs and the speeches. For the most part, this party-political activity continued to revolve in the

toils of the reform cycles described in Chapter 2. No matter how bold their intentions upon arriving in office, reformers typically found themselves dragged down by the cumulative force of resistances that undermined their hold on the state before allowing them to establish the basis for an alternative organization of power and production. Thus, in practice, the system of partisan rivalry departed much less from the conventional model of stability-preserving partisanship than the contenders' rhetoric seemed to indicate. For the rhetoric came from periods, such as the aftermath of World War I, when a formative context had been in jeopardy or had failed to achieve a determinate form. But the reality was that of a stabilized social world where wide swings in governmental policy were much more likely to end as costly disturbances than as lasting innovations. In all the ways described, the very structure of institutions had been, more or less intentionally, rigged against too many surprises.

The real trouble with the traditional identification of conflicts over fundamentals with conflicts not lending themselves to compromise is its failure to appreciate that the relation between what is negotiable and what is fundamental changes according to the beliefs people entertain about society and the institutional structure of party conflict. As a result, the classical approach to stability in politics disregards the possibility of a circumstance distinct from both marginal, peace-preserving and basic, peace-destroying disputes: a style of factional rivalry that regularly questions the practical and imaginative foundations to the established social order.

The feature of the conflict over the basic arrangements of society that most directly makes it resistant to compromise is, paradoxically, its characteristic vagueness, its elusive and almost dreamlike quality. The less the abstract vision championed by the contending parties is worked into a texture scheme of social life, the flimsier the basis for any compromise. In the absence of a detailed plan for a reordered society, the only sure sign of victory becomes the triumph of an exclusive allegiance: the defeat of the disbelievers and the rise of the orthodox. At the same time, whenever a factional program combines vagueness of definition with intensity of feeling, it easily becomes hostage to whatever interpretations of its airy, murky promises may, for wholly secondary reasons, come to prevail. The temporary circumstances of a movement, the choices made by a leadership, or the mere desire to contradict an adversary lead the faction to embrace one particular version of its commitments over others. This almost accidental preference is then invested with all the devotion that had been reserved to the abstract conception. It is as if these details, rather than counting for their own sake, represented surrogates for the faction's image of its own identity and fortunes. In this substitute capacity, they again refuse compromise: there are no standards, other

than the crassest material ones, by which to judge the cost of concessions, and any concession may seem to jeopardize the faction's essential identity.

Even the feared quarrels of confessional parties confirm this idea. These disputes become uniquely venomous in one of two circumstances. In the absence of any worked-out view of the implications of religious truth for the secular life of society, the relative preponderance of competing allegiances may be all there is left to fight about. Or the religion may include a detailed program of social life that pretends to prescribe almost every important feature of collective existence down to the last detail. The personal quality of the relation to God – the deepening in the relation to Him of all the claims and emotions that may exist among individuals – is falsified by the arbitrary, inscrutable character of the link between the central points of revelation and the unrevisable details of sacred laws. The detailed plan begins to look untouchable precisely because it is arbitrary. People lack the criteria by which to judge whether a similar vision could be realized, more perfectly, by different arrangements. There is, in this view, no underlying vision to be discovered and stated apart from the details of sacred law.

The more the conflicting partisan visions get translated into detailed schemes of collective life, down to the lowest levels of work and leisure, the less likely it becomes that these visions will seem impenetrable to one another. The force of concreteness changes the relation between the depth and the deadly intransigence of a partisan struggle. The deeper a programmatic position, the closer it comes to offering a revision of society's basic institutional arrangements and, even, of the fine structure of elementary personal relations. Take, then, a number of practical ways of doing things: of getting work done and assigning incomes and jobs, or organizing exchange and distribution; of living in families and dealing with superiors, subordinates, and equals. Impose the sole restriction that each competing scheme have the qualities allowing it to carry conviction for its specificity rather than for its vagueness (and consequent openness to the free play of connotation). Within its circumstance, it must seem practicable. It must appeal to an established, though inchoate, sense of personal realities, needs, and longings. Views with such characteristics are likely to be, and to appear, deconstructible and recombinable in many different ways. They will have the same features that theory shows societies themselves to possess, for they are nothing but social worlds, or variants of the existing social world, prefigured in the imagination. Moreover, the requirements of practicability and of responsiveness to personal aspiration impose constraints upon the extent of the divergence of the proposals from actualities.

That these views must seem practicable in the near future, or that they must be capable of immediate though partial realization, makes persuasion depend if not upon insight then upon the appearance of insight. Despite the inexistence of any metascheme that sets limits to possible societies or determines their unique sequence, the actual experience of transformative effort shows that some features of the existing order resist pressure more than others. The persuasive force of a program depends in part upon its success in incorporating into the definition of its aims and strategies a view of these differential pressures that ongoing events continue to confirm. Fidelity to personal experience exerts a similarly restraining influence. For the prophetic dogmas of politics, like the images of the self in world literature, differ more than do the actual wants of people.

The argument of the social theory developed in this book offers a justification for these common observations. It does so by working out the idea that each imaginative and institutional form of society represents an attempt to freeze, into a particular mold, the more fluid experiences of practical and passionate relationship characterizing the immediate, relatively unreflective, uninterpreted, and undisciplined life of personality. The dogmas and arrangements inform this life and alter it. But they do not completely overcome its recalcitrance or determine its inner nature. The visionary impulse in politics draws much of its persuasive force from the appeal to this defiant experience. The competing programmatic visions that, by dint of both their depth and their concreteness, touch people's ordinary concerns and inward longings do not thereby set themselves on the track to some ultimate convergence, any more than do whole societies under the negative impact of the dissolution of their rigid schemes of hierarchy, division, and associational possibility. But they do find the lines of divergence blurred by the presence of overlapping themes.

Both the political ideas and the actual institutional organization of the conflict for power in present-day liberal democracies discourage the alliance of scope and specificity. They do so, most directly, by denying opportunities for a continuous connection between the disputes of official politics and the quarrels of everyday life. They do so, more generally, by adopting institutional arrangements that make the choice between reform cycles and revolutions seem the normal condition of civic life. Thus, every radical vision has to be imagined as an abrupt and total deviation from existing society and nurtured without the chastening influence of practical experience and responsibility.

This circumstance does not merely enforce a constrained view of stability and reassert the dilemma of routine and revolution. It also accounts, in significant measure, for the strange, dreamlike quality

of a politics that serves, at the same time, to accommodate the crassest interests and to express a struggle among abstract opinions. The experiences defining the situation of mass politics, world history, and enlarged economic rationality deprive all but the crudest interests of their appearance of self-evidence and make explicit their dependence upon opinion. Were it not for this disturbance of concreteness, party politics in the modern sense could never have emerged, for one of its crucial elements, from the start, was the commitment to speculative principles. These principles, however, remain, for the most part, both fragmentary and abstract, or they become only sporadically concrete. Thus, even in the circumstance of routine and reform cycles people act as if dazed by abstraction. Their political conduct has something of the arbitrariness of confessional factions clinging all the more woodenly to literal prescriptions, or lurching all the more haphazardly among conceptions of the ideal, because people lack any developed vision of a transfigured human reality.

To organize the conflict for and over state power in a way that encourages the combination of depth and concreteness, you need both ideas and institutions. Without the institutions, the ideas would lack transformative influence. You could expose the arbitrarily narrow assumptions of the received account of social peace and invoke the possibility of another style of stability. But you would be unable to deny the reality of the dilemma posed by this account within the institutional framework it took for granted. Your proposals would seem like proposals for another time. Without the ideas, however, the reformed institutional arrangements would lack a vision that made them intelligible and linked them, by a series of mediating connections, to an understanding of social reality and social transformation. The fuller and truer account of the varieties and conditions of stability must do the same work for the revised constitution that the more truncated and misleading view of tolerable stife did for the earlier democracies.

The ideas necessary to inform such a revised style of partisan conflict can be developed and supported by a social theory freed from the preconceptions of naive social science and deep-logic thinking. The two most important contributions such a theory can make to the intellectual climate of this practice of fundamental but negotiable disputes are the view that formative contexts can be replaced piecemeal and the thesis that the deviant elements in any social order have a subversive and reconstructive potential. Because revolutionary reform – defined as the substitution of any element in a formative context – is possible, a conflict can deal with fundamentals while stopping short of a confrontation of ultimate views. Not only can schemes of social life – proposals for alternative formative contexts – be recombined, but they can be recombined in different ways.

Because new dominant solutions must typically begin as attempts to extend an already existing deviant principle of organization or imagination, we can usually translate even the boldest vision into proposals that work with familiar and intelligible materials.

The ideas that inspire this approach to social stability and invention gain practical influence upon the style of partisan rivalry only when combined with a change in the institutional setting of party conflict. Such changes proceed outward in a net of mutually reinforcing measures revealing the connections between the narrowly constitutional proposals discussed in earlier sections and the ideas about economic organization and legal rights put forward in later pages.

The most significant practical reform addresses the relation of political parties to the organizations that absorb everyday life. In the midst of daily experience, the forms of practical or passionate association must be subject to methods of collective deliberation and conflict that connect with the most general issues of national politics. People must be able to see the positions they take within this more intimate circle as partial but recognizable extensions of their stand in the largest national sphere and vice versa. To this end, the partisan conflict needs to be fought in terms of programs combining breadth of scope with concreteness of intention: these programs should address structures of authority and advantage within and outside large-scale organizations.

The other institutional changes are the enabling conditions of this shift. They contribute to the connection between central political conflict and everyday concern. They keep this connection from taking the spurious form of the reduction of the societywide parties of opinion into the weapons of social classes or of segments of the work force rigidly defined by the niche they occupy in the division of labor. Frequent devolution to the universal electorate and the maximization of opportunities for factional propaganda and agitation at all levels of society bring many major conflicts before the citizen in a manner that penetrates his awareness of the immediate concerns of life even when it occupies only a modest portion of his time. The guarantee of welfare rights enables the individual to accept these conflicts without feeling they jeopardize his basic safety. His conception of minimum stability shrinks to the extent that his most intimate interests in material and moral security for himself and his family get disentangled from a system of vested proprietary rights that turns the forms of immunity from governmental power into the means of control over other people. (See the later discussion of the system of rights.)

The single most important condition to the linkage between conflict at the grass roots of social life and conflict at the heights of governmental power is the reform of the reigning practical institu-

tions that allow small groups of people to exercise a general disciplinary power over everybody else in the name of the property norm, of the state's control over the economy, or of the inherent imperatives of organizational life. The arrangements and preconceptions of these institutions systematically confuse technical or managerial expertise with a more indiscriminate capacity for ultimate decision and command. To the extent that collective conflict and choice gain a significant role within major organizations and that expertise and coordination are distinguished from the ultimate choice of goals and methods, to that extent the opportunity arises for partisanship in the midst of humdrum practical activities. (See the later discussion of the regime of capital for an analysis of how, concretely, to create this opportunity while maintaining both the primacy of national politics over the national economy and the chances for bold entrepreneurial innovation.)

These practical institutions, broken open to collective conflict and deliberation, would also have to take on many of the tasks and characteristics previously attributed to the state. Thus, they should be drawn into the forms of popular representation and administrative responsibility. They should not become exclusive channels for the distribution of essential welfare benefits, for such a role would give them a formidable power of intimidation over their members and jeopardize the integrity of welfare rights. Law and policy, for their part, should give priority to the varieties of distribution and redistribution that strengthen militant collective organizations rather than replacing them: that prefer, for example, the cooperative, public-private offer of services to lump-sum transfers.

The institutional arrangements outlined in the preceding pages remain dangerously compatible with an outcome inimical to the aims of empowered democracy. The national political parties get entrenched in the organizational settings of everyday life. There, at the grass roots, people divide up in ways that help constitute and reflect their divisions at the societywide level. But each party of opinion merely serves in the end as the instrument of a large social group or class or work force segment defined by a relatively stable place in the division of labor. In such a circumstance, a politics of preemptive security, petty bickering, and marginal adjustment would again be likely to dominate the greater part of civic life. The logic of fixed collective interests, rigid definitions of collective identity, and arbitrarily narrow assumptions about historical possibility would again gain an independent force that, though ultimately false, was true relative to its circumstance. Programmatic specificity would turn out to be the enemy of depth and scope in political struggle.

The entire constitution, rather than any one of its features, is designed to prevent such an outcome. By relativizing, through all its

provisions, the contrast between an original formative struggle over the basic order of society and the routine contests that go on within this order, the empowered democracy would counteract emergent schemes of rigidly defined interests, identities, and ideas of possibility. Insofar as the attempt to extend the vulnerability of structure to conflict and choice succeeds, the source of partisan division among people becomes to an ever greater degree the diversity of their opinions rather than the nature of their stations. This diversity will be to an ever lesser extent the mere surface expression of some underlying scheme of independently defined collective interests. Opinion will instead be nothing but each individual's partly corrigible interpretation of the meaning of his experience: of what he needs and wants and thinks possible for himself and for other people.

It is important to understand just how this condition compares with the conventional idealized picture of the social basis of the "liberal-bourgeois" democracies: the existence of crosscutting groups that never agglutinate into coherent, long-lasting, and potentially dangerous factions. For one thing, the reformed constitution wants to realize in fact the circumstance described by this picture and, indeed, to carry it to extremes rather than to reverse it in favor of a fantasizing, sentimental, archaic, tyrannical prospect of devotion to a shared vision of the common good. The point is not just that groupings on the basis of collective interest will be fuzzy and unstable but that they will constantly be exploded as soon as they begin to harden. For another thing, precisely because the destabilization of the collective positions gets pushed so far, the individual's commitment to a party of opinion cannot be based primarily upon the material advantages of groups defined by a stable niche within the social division of labor. It must depend, increasingly, upon a combination of immediate, tangible personal interests and personal vision or conversion. The citizen becomes more and more an individual rather than a puppet of collective categories of class, community, or gender, or a player in a historical drama he can neither understand nor escape.

Suppose all these changes in ideas and institutions were realized. Minimal stability might still seem threatened in another way. A society organized under a regime such as this would appear peculiarly subject to a virulent form of the invidious comparison that already characterizes the established democracies. Because mass politics denies people the experience of a more or less naturally assigned and stable place in the division of labor, everyone compares his advantages to those of everyone else. To this degree, almost everybody has to judge himself a relative loser. The reformed and empowered democracy seems to aggravate the situation by undermining still further the sense of natural social place and hierarchy. Thus, the citizenry of such a republic would be thrown into an endless anguish

of envy and longing. This anguish might itself be a source of radical instability in the life of the republic. The citizens might always alternate between a paralyzing self-contempt, when they felt they had failed and deserved to fail, and a resentful hatred of the constitution, when they blamed their institutions for their discontent. Their minds might be totally absorbed in petty deals and comparisons of advantage. They would find themselves unable ever to accept any collective provision for the distribution of jobs, opportunities, and material benefits, unable to accept it, at least, as anything more than the transitory triumph of some factions over others.

The way the constitution avoids this instability is basically the same as the way it prevents the entrenchment of partisan divergence in everyday life from turning into the mere self-defensive jousting of groups defined by relatively fixed places in the division of labor. The social conditions that generate the dynamic of invidious comparison in the existing democracies must be radicalized. Three connected reforms fix the meaning of this radicalization.

First, all the institutional arrangements that sustain a high level of collective mobilization in normal social life prevent the dynamic of invidious comparison from focusing upon the differential relations among relatively fixed social places. They dull and disorient indignation. They help liberate the contest of opinions from obsessional concern with disparities of advantage.

Second, the disconnection of the forms of immunity against the state from means of control over other people – a disconnection carried out primarily by the regime of capital outlined in the following pages – presupposes and makes possible a major equalization in the material circumstances of life. It opens up ultimate issues of income differentials, job access, and educational opportunity to the centers of national decision. At the same time, however, it enables ground-level organizations to provide a series of variations on the minimal levels of equality mandated from above. This second series of institutional revisions does not necessarily moderate the experience of invidious comparison. Such a comparison may seize all the more fiercely upon the most modest material inequalities or upon the more intangible but ultimately more important differences of honor and achievement. But it helps separate out from this experience of invidious comparison the distinct element of class struggle over the organization of material life. By so doing, it draws attention to the more general problems of envy, equality, and the acceptance of differences. Here, as elsewhere, the aim is less to suppress fighting than to liberate it from the exclusive and bitter obsession with confined aspects of the structure of society.

Yet a third effect of these constitutional changes upon the dynamic of invidious comparison has to do with the power of the reformed

constitution to increase the importance of aims to which that dynamic simply fails to apply. For the force of such comparative judgments depends in part upon the exclusivity of the struggle for relative advantage within an order taken as given. But the more the duel over relative place within the order gets mixed up with a conflict over the order itself, the more the dynamic of invidious comparison is likely to be overshadowed and transformed from within by other motivations. (A later section comes to terms with the relation between institutions and motivations.)

Consider, by way of example, the likely effect of such changes upon what was known in the North Atlantic democracies of the late twentieth century as the problem of incomes policies. To ensure economic stabilization through continued economic growth and the control of inflation, governments needed a minimum of broadly based acquiescence in the distribution of the benefits and burdens imposed by any coherent recovery program. From the pure standpoint of economic growth, it often seemed less important to decide which of several possible recovery paths would be taken than to settle on one path in particular and to remain on it for some time. One aspect of the ability to stay the course was the capacity to secure some basic agreement to the established distribution of income shares among segments of the work force and, more generally, of the entire population. Without such a minimal consensus, the better-organized or more protected segments of labor and business constantly tried to cash their organizational advantage into additional income. Everyone else attempted to catch up. Those who lost out (unorganized workers, independent professionals, proprietors, and rentiers) sought, one way or another, for compensatory help from government (through manipulation of the tax burden or of welfare rights). In such an atmosphere, enterprise investment strategies were skewed by the overwhelming concern to maintain a stable, core labor force. The downward rigidity of the wage structure helped keep markets from clearing and inflation from correcting itself. Group wage and income differentials were unstable both because groups remained unevenly organized and because their power to defend themselves in the marketplace did not coincide with their ability to pressure governments. This disparity perpetuated an inconclusive, paralyzing bickering among social ranks or work force segments with fixed niches in the division of labor.

The deeper historical situation that underlay these tendencies reflected the coexistence of two facts. The first was that the hierarchy of collective positions in the division of labor had been shaken to the point of undermining its appearance of naturalness and its claim to moral authority. The idea that customary wage differentials were fair just because they were customary coincided with an active sense

of the arbitrariness of the entire scheme – of its vulnerability, in the large and in the small, to renewed collective conflict. No group had any reason to accept the place assigned to it within the job and income hierarchy if it could hope, by rebeginning the fight, to do better. At the same time – here entered the other defining fact – the hierarchy of collective places had been only partly disturbed. Though too weak and fragmented to guarantee acquiescence in a particular pattern of distribution, it was strong and unified enough to regenerate the system of collective stations people would fight over.

The reformed constitution acts upon this circumstance by altering the second of these two facts. The system of stations is more thoroughly fragmented. This fragmentation occurs less by a once-and-for-all redistributive fix than by the deepening and enlargement of the conditions that make the passage of collective contractualism into collective mobilization an ongoing rather than a sporadic and anomalous feature of social life. The result should be not to guarantee a spontaneous consensus over income shares but to strike at the basis of the resentful collectivism and unbroken, grubby impasse that the failure of income policies exemplified.

BREAKING THE RULES: THE FORMS OF DECENTRALIZATION

The program of empowered democracy requires that power be decentralized in a way that resolves a familiar dilemma. Central governmental power is the greatest lever for the transformation of social life. But to put all hope in central power holders and in the forms of accountability that may be imposed upon them is to sacrifice social experimentation to a single-minded plan. It is to focus civic engagement on a distant, barely visible point and to concentrate in the hands of the few the short-term authority taken away from the many. Empowered democracy would be an illusory, self-contradictory program if this dilemma were indeed intractable.

But the dilemma need be no more insoluble than any other tension between abstract institutional commitments. The tension is real enough. What is illusory is the fixity of the antagonism between the two aims. Both centralism and decentralization can assume an indefinitely wide range of institutional forms. Some forms aggravate the tension, whereas others mollify it.

The traditional program of decentralization relies upon the two basic principles of subsidiarity and functional specialization. The principle of subsidiarity requires that power to set rules and policies be transferred from a lower and closer authority to a higher and more distant one only when the former cannot adequately perform the particular responsibility in question. Of course, everything depends

upon the standard of adequacy. Nevertheless, against the background of a view that sees established institutions as uncontroversial, the principle works to justify the maximum possible decentralization. It draws force from the commonsense notion that the authority or group closest to the individual ought to be the most involved in the resolution of his problems. And it merges into the liberal conviction that the ultimate residual authority is the individual himself. Functional specialization, the other plank in the traditional platform of decentralization, requires that the same task not be performed by two competing or overlapping authorities. It is the logic of entrepreneurial efficiency extended to the organization of the governmental hierarchy in both unitary and federal states.

The program of subsidiarity and functional specialization is what contemporary right-wing and centrist parties have in mind when they defend the decentralization of governmental power. But this style of decentralization merely disarms central governments before an untransformed society. It hands decision over to local elites. It respects entrenched privilege. For all these reasons, it aggravates the dilemma mentioned earlier.

An alternative road to decentralization should leave room for major swings in the emphasis different political parties may give to either greater centralized authority or more decentralized experiment. But it should also place these swings within a framework that upholds the broader commitments of empowered democracy. Such a framework must prefer the forms of centralization and decentralization that are less likely to immunize privilege against effective challenge. Imagine, then, a constitutional order that provides for two complementary methods of decentralization. The relative weight to be given each method depends upon the programs of the political parties in office. The system composed by the two strategies applies to both federal and unitary states, and it changes the relation of legal rules to individual conduct.

The first method is the conditional right to opt out of the norms established by higher authorities. Under this approach, the central representative agencies lay down rules governing a broad range of social situations. But a minimum of two individuals, or a larger group of people, can opt out of these rules and establish an alternative charter. The opting parties must satisfy two key conditions. First, when they set up the alternative structure they must stand in a relation of relative equality, whether as individuals or as enterprises. Second, the optional charter must not have the effect of casting one of the parties into a relation of enduring subjugation. The first condition is primary. The criteria that give it content can take current private-law doctrines of economic duress as their point of departure.

Such an approach may still rule out certain innovations simply

because they conflict with the minimal standards of conventional morality. Nevertheless, the spirit of this form of decentralization is to permit a much broader range of deviation from public rules than we are now accustomed to: a range broad enough to include both economic and family matters.

The other method of decentralization, the qualified devolution of power, reallocates power among the levels of the governmental hierarchy rather than between government and people. The qualified devolution of power seeks to transfer power from higher to lower governmental authorities in just the way the traditional principle of subsidiarity recommends. But it differs from the traditional, right-center style of decentralization by attaching to every episode of devolution a corresponding guarantee.

The point of the guarantee is to prevent the devolution from helping to entrench old or emergent privileges. More specifically, the transfer of authority and resources must be prevented from serving to build up a local citadel of hierarchy, strengthened against both internal challenge from the disfavored and external challenge from the broader politics of the republic.

The form of the safeguard is proportional to the extent and duration of the transfer of authority. An example at the highest level of government is the special branch, described earlier, that would disrupt and reconstruct whatever organizations and practices condemned people to a circumstance of subjugation subversive of their role as citizens of the empowered democracy. Many other safeguards may apply to more local or transitory forms of devolution. Among these mechanisms, the empowered democracy may use ad hoc supervisory boards, special rights of challenge and appeal, and the practice of transferring authority or resources to overlapping and competing bodies.

THE ORGANIZATION OF ANTIGOVERNMENT: THE STRUCTURE OF VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION

The program of empowered democracy for the reorganization of government has its counterpart in a scheme to facilitate the self-organization of society outside government. The point of this plan is twofold. The negative aim is to organize a parallel state or even an antistate. It is to form a set of institutions that, without canceling the opportunities for government-sponsored social experiments, diminishes the risk of despotic perversion: the danger that the governmental arrangements of the new-model democracy may be used to initiate a concentration of power unrestrained by independent social organizations.

An analogy and a distinction may help bring out what is at stake. According to a familiar theme in modern political thought, predemocratic ancien régimes enjoyed a complex, differentiated structure of privileges and power. This scheme of group prerogatives and disabilities limited both popular sovereignty and centralizing despotism. The destruction of the tissue of intermediate association in the name of democracy creates opportunities for a more thoroughgoing despotism than any practiced under the ancien régime. If the contemporary liberal democracies have stood fast against this danger – so the conservative–liberal argument goes – they have done so by incorporating more of a system of differentiated collective prerogatives and immunities than the more naive apologists of liberal democracy like to acknowledge.

The negative work of this part of the program of the empowered democracy can be redescribed, with the help of this skeptical argument, as the attempt to establish a style of restraining social counterweights. These brakes, however, no longer take the form dear to conservative–liberal propagandists and aristocratic–corporate polities. They cease to be anchored in institutions that help establish privileged strangleholds on society-making resources and that reproduce a scheme of fixed social roles and ranks.

The affirmative point is to turn the organizational instruments of nongovernmental association into better means of discovering, questioning, and revising each formative institutional and imaginative context of social life. The ways people have of coming together to pursue individual and group interests within a framework left both undisturbed and unremarked should draw closer to the ways they can challenge such frameworks. We should abandon the futile or self-defeating attempt to superimpose upon the factional pursuit of private interests an activity of selfless or enlightened devotion to the common good. Instead we can create practical institutional conditions that enlarge the scope and the sense of our prosaic, self-regarding efforts. The conflict over interests can always escalate into struggles over the preconceptions and arrangements that help define the interests. Let us institutionalize the escalation, depriving it of its supposed terrors. And let us do so for the sake of the forms of empowerment served by the whole program of institutional reconstruction outlined here.

Consider the issue of union organization as a setting in which to formulate ideas that can later be generalized. The legal setting of union organization in the advanced Western democracies follows, more or less resolutely, a contractarian approach. This approach seeks to reestablish in the employment relation the minimal degree of freedom from economic duress required to make of labor contracts between employers and employees something more than a cover for outright subjugation. The remedy against such duress is to ensure

an opportunity for collective organization and collective bargaining. This opportunity enables workers to counterbalance the overweening pressure employers might be able to exercise if they could deal with the workers on an individual basis. The law must make an exception to contractual forms the better to uphold the essentials of contract. What counts is not that most workers in fact unionize and avail themselves of collective bargaining – individual labor bargains may continue to preponderate – but that workers can unionize if they find themselves under contract-subverting duress.

Two master principles work out this idea. A principle of freedom from government requires that unions remain under only the minimal form of public control inherent in the establishment, elaboration, and application of the labor laws. A principle of structural pluralism commands that the law impose no unitary scheme of union classification: no system for determining which unions are to represent which workers or how the labor force is to be divided up for the purpose of union representation. Certain dominant principles of classification may emerge. But the union structure looks like a collection of fragmentary pieces of different puzzles, with the fragments forming no single, coherent picture.

Only in a few countries, and often due to fascist influence, do we find elements of a corporatist model of labor relations. Under this contrasting approach, unions represent an extended part of the structure of government. By their power to establish and tutor labor organizations central governments gain a chance to practice controlled mobilization. Governmental control replaces autonomy from the state. At the same time, the corporatist labor regime follows a principle of unitary classification. This principle affirms that the entire work force should be divided up into a single, coherent classificatory scheme: all the fragments should in fact be pieces of the same puzzle.

Any democrat must oppose the governmental-control aspect of the corporatist model. But the principle of pluralistic classification, characteristic of the contractarian approach, has defects of its own. It forces union organizers and militants to expend much of their efforts in the attempt to unionize. It absorbs them in the peculiarly inconclusive factional struggles a pluralistic union system encourages. The struggles remain indecisive because the contenders need not fight for place and join issue within a single structure. They can simply inhabit different, hostile but noncommunicating union hierarchies. Moreover, both the dispersive pluralism of the contract regime and its treatment of collective organization as a mere surrogate and safeguard of private bargaining encourage a sharp contrast between worker-employer and worker-government relations. The result is to discourage workers from treating workplace disputes and conflicts in national politics as parts of the same continuum.

No wonder the quasi-contractual organization of labor seems to favor a purely economic style of militancy, relatively unconcerned with the organization of the work force, even less interested in the larger institutional structure of the economy and the polity. When the core economic basis of the unions in the mass-production industries declines, the union movement formed under the contract model comes to be perceived, and to perceive itself, as just one more interest group. It ceases to speak as the voice of all working people and as the bearer of a message for the whole society.

By contrast, the corporatist approach may better serve the extremes of repression and mobilization. When administered by a strong, authoritarian government, it represents – just as its authors intended – a formidable tool of industrial discipline. But against the background of governmental weakness or openness, its unitary organization facilitates an institutionally committed militancy. The work force is already unionized and unionized in a single framework. This structure need not be created from scratch. It can be taken over by those who see the conflict over interest-defining structures as the continuation of fights over structure-defining interests. Their work is made easier by an institutional and imaginative tradition that dramatizes rather than conceals the links between the domains of government-worker and worker-employer relations.

Why not then join together, in the interest of empowered democracy, the contractarian principle of autonomy from governmental control and the corporatist principle of unitary classification? Different currents of opinion – linking the organized political parties to the distinctive problems of the workplace – would contend for place in this unified structure of labor organization, just as the political parties themselves compete for position in the unified structure of government. And the workers in the labor movement as a whole or in particular job categories may even initiate changes in the classification scheme, subject to veto by the national legislature.

The familiar role of unions will change as the style of industrial organization shifts. It would change all the more under the economic program of empowered democracy, outlined later in this chapter. But a role for the organization and representation of people on the basis of job categories will remain long after workers cease to confront managers imposed upon them by an alien and unaccountable authority.

The same combination of autonomy and unity that applies to unions can also extend to territorial organization. A unitary system of neighborhood associations may also be established, at least at the local level, as a stimulus to popular engagement in local government and as an independent control upon local authorities.

On the solid ground of this organization of people in the places

where they work and live, a host of other forms of association may flourish, pluralistic and fragmentary in structure as well as free from governmental control. Legal opportunities, public resources, and free access to the means of communication support these additional groupings. But such open-ended associational experiments complement rather than replace an associative structure established by law and made, by law, independent from government. This antistate helps keep the state humble and the people proud, inquisitive, and restless.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ECONOMY: THE CURRENT MARKET REGIME AND ITS COSTS

A second domain for reconstruction is the institutional framework of economic life. The major theme of this part of the program is the attempt to imagine an alternative institutional definition of the market just as the major theme of earlier parts of the program lies in the proposal of an alternative institutional setting for democracy. This part of the institutional scheme anticipates the outline of a theory of the enabling conditions of material progress that extends the central social theory of this book into an area of life that may seem peculiarly resistant to its intentions.

In any society the organization of government and of the economy depend upon each other. But the character of the institutions, and of the forms of thought that explain and justify them, often make the connection both indirect and obscure. In the constitution outlined here, the link becomes, instead, direct and transparent. This shift represents far more than an accidental and minor feature of the institutional proposal; it exemplifies a general truth about society, a truth to which the social theory underlying the proposal attaches great importance.

Collective mobilization is the exemplary form of the collective creation of society, of society making conceived as an ongoing and deliberate event, intentionally undertaken by particular people, rather than as a definitive foundational act or a permanent, unknowing drift. A constitutional order that tries to multiply the occasions for collective mobilization gives immediate practical effect to the hidden truth that any given institutional and imaginative order both arises out of practical or visionary fighting and depends upon its partial and provisional containment. The segments of social life that appear to operate by some distinct logic of their own do so only on sufferance from a peace whose continuation they can never themselves guarantee. To the extent the peace gets broken, it becomes evident that what seemed to be distinct spheres of social life governed by laws

of their own are in fact only temporary versions of some larger, inchoate realm of practical or passionate association whose unity is more important than its temporary internal differentiations. A constitution that perpetuates mobilization in the moment of normalcy brings this unity out; the distinctive self-operating laws of different spheres of social life begin to lose their appearance of even relative autonomy. Contemporary cosmologists have pointed out that a universe approaching its higher-energy moment of maximum collapse and density would exhibit directly the symmetries and connections that, in the cooler stages of its history, had to be discovered scientifically and represented mathematically. The constitution of the empowered democracy produces in the social world the effect of that moment of greatest transparency.

This section prepares the description of an alternative institutional framework for economic life through a criticism of existing economic arrangements. The criticism emphasizes the unity of the explanatory and normative ideas that can help guide a constructive effort. The immediate target of the criticism is the private-rights complex of the advanced Western countries, especially insofar as it influences the organization of production and exchange.

The private-rights system establishes a practical and imaginative equation between the abstract idea of a market and a historically unique group of institutional arrangements. The abstract concept of a market means no more than the existence of a large number of economic agents able to bargain on their own initiative and for their own account. The historically specific arrangements with which this abstract market idea gets improperly identified have as their core the consolidated property right: a more or less absolute entitlement to a divisible portion of social capital – more or less absolute both in its discretionary use and in the chain of voluntary transfers by successive property owners. Once this initial identification has been established, the market economy is often further assumed to imply a particular style of industrial organization: the style that puts standardized mass production in the mainstream of industry and flexible production in its vanguard. Indeed, if we accept the identification of the market with the system of relatively decentralized consolidated property, we also have some reason to further assume that an industrialized market economy will favor this method of industrial organization. For the system of consolidated property does contribute to the conditions that allow mass-production industries to arrange markets and to counteract what might otherwise be instabilities in the product, labor, and financial markets. Rigid, highly capitalized enterprises could not hope to survive such oscillations.

It may seem surprising that the consolidated property system and the mass-production style of industrial organization also characterize

the major contemporary alternatives to the economic systems of the advanced Western countries. Yet consolidated property and mass production are also at home in the socialist-bureaucratic and workers' ownership models whose distinctive business cycles the appendix to Chapter 2 analyzes more fully. In one case, the consolidated property rights are transferred to a central government; in the other case, to the workers who have secure jobs within a given enterprise when the transfer takes place. Though the immediate target of my critical arguments is the economic regime of the advanced Western countries, many of these arguments carry over, with only slight adjustments, to the main rival economic systems. The present section suggests this carry-over and the more detailed discussion of the appendix to Chapter 2 develops the thesis. To deny that the available alternatives are the necessary options among which we must choose, to show what these alternatives have in common, and to suggest how this common element might be replaced all form part of the view.

Consider first a series of criticisms of the established forms of democracies and markets. These criticisms fall into two main categories, anticipated by the earlier discussion of reform cycles. Some are arguments about the effect of established economic arrangements upon freedom. Others address the influence of existing or alternative institutional arrangements upon economic efficiency and growth. I do not assume that what contributes to material progress always enhances freedom. There is nevertheless an element of truth in the superstitious belief that the two go together. Liberation from poverty and drudgery is one of the chief forms of empowerment. Moreover, it depends as much as the other forms on a partial lifting of the constraints an entrenched plan of social division and hierarchy imposes upon our collective experiments in the organization of exchange and production.

Our current version of market institutions jeopardizes freedom on both a large and a small scale. On a large scale it leaves a restricted number of people with a disproportionate influence over the basic flows of investment decisions. It thereby withdraws the basic terms of collective prosperity from effective democratic choice and control. As a result, the plans of reform governments are easily frustrated in precisely those areas that so often matter most to the reformers. Any attempt to assert governmental control over the main line of economic accumulation seems both to undermine the effective decentralization of economic decisions and to enhance the authority of bureaucratic officials. The difficulty of imagining an alternative governmental structure both more capable and more democratic makes all the more fearsome such a strengthening of central authority.

At the same time the current market form undermines freedom

on a small scale. It does so, diffusely, by generating and permitting inequalities of wealth that reduce some people to effective economic dependence upon others – those who occupy the supervisory positions. It does so, more precisely, by helping to prop up a style of industrial organization that thrives on the relatively rigid contrast of task definers and task executors.

The earlier stages of the programmatic argument suggest yet another sense in which our present mode of economic organization limits freedom. The empowered democracy outlined in earlier parts of this program represents a requirement of freedom. Yet such a democracy cannot flourish if the everyday world of work and exchange is organized in ways that not only differ from the principles of democratic government but limit their scope, undermine their influence, and disrupt their workings. If markets cannot be given a different institutional form, if the only practical alternatives to the established economic regimes are the socialist-bureaucratic and the worker-ownership models, the program of empowered democracy is doomed from the start, and with it our hope of extending the meaning of freedom.

Take now a series of arguments about the constraints the established market system imposes upon economic progress – that is upon the ability to sustain repeated breakthroughs in productive capacity and productivity. (Remember that these same criticisms apply in a different sense, but with redoubled force, to the major acknowledged alternatives.) After enumerating these critical arguments, I make explicit the basic view of the enabling conditions of economic progress that underlies them.

The first criticism focuses upon the absolute degree of economic decentralization. Within the established regime of capital, economies of scale seem to require almost by definition the consolidation of property rights over large amounts of capital in a single decisional center, even if – as in many large stock corporations – shares of ownership are widely distributed. A centralized management acting in the name of fragmentary shareholders supervises the large-scale pooling of manpower and capital resources. These managers can then act almost as if they held their power by the accumulation of personal wealth. An apparent fragmentation of the consolidated property system may thus end up preserving the essential features of this system. The most important of these traits is precisely the legally protected faculty to organize production and exchange in the name of a more or less absolute claim to a divisible portion of social capital.

Without an extreme dispersion of business power, the breakup of trade unions in turn appears intolerable, at least in the absence of an alternative way of asserting the power of the labor force to resist business authority. But the alternative devices that respect the prin-

principle of consolidated property while changing its locus – greater central governmental control over economic accumulation or outright workers' ownership of enterprises – seem to aggravate the threat to efficiency and freedom, or both. Conversely, the unacceptability of breaking up the trade unions provides an additional excuse to accept as inevitable the current degree of economic concentration. Attempts to encourage economic decentralization can therefore be derided by tough-minded publicists as sentimental reveries.

A second economic criticism addresses the plasticity of the current market economy rather than the absolute degree of decentralization it permits. Plasticity is the generalized form of economic rationality: the ease of recombining the components of the institutional context of production and exchange as well as of combining factors of production within a given context. The point of plasticity, broadly speaking, is to increase the opportunity for experiment and innovation in social life. The move toward more plastic economic arrangements loosens the predetermination of exchange and production relations by rules and regularities that remain unavailable for revision in the light of emergent practical opportunities.

The economic value of this loosening may seem uncontroversial when the constraints to be weakened are those of a social order that arranges production and exchange according to noneconomic standards and subordinates the logic of restless practical reason to respect for entrenched social divisions and hierarchies. But the case for plasticity may seem a great deal less persuasive when the constraints to be loosened are universal rules that seem to cast everyone in the same position of formal equality. For, it may be objected, the interest in experimentation must stop at the limit dictated by the even more fundamental need for a stable and generally understood framework for practical dealings. To this objection there are two answers. One response, implicit in a general thesis of the social theory developed in this book, is that the only assurance that fixed arrangements will not generate new systems of entrenched social division and hierarchy is precisely that they be open to challenge and revision at all levels of activity. The other answer, specific to the present economic arguments, is that alternative economic regimes and indeed alternative market systems, though equally stable, may differ in the extent to which they permit variation in the social forms of exchange and production. Relative openness to organizational innovation, like relative conduciveness to economic decentralization, is a feature of discrete institutional systems, not a characteristic of economies or markets in the abstract. The idea that the functioning of a competitive price will automatically ensure that over time the most efficient innovations prevail has been traditionally criticized for not taking account of market failure. But this criticism misses the more

fundamental point that a competitive price system is institutionally indeterminate. Precisely because of its indeterminacy, no automatic identification exists between allocative efficiency relative to a particular price system and the encouragement of continued breakthroughs in productivity and productive output – all facts that would be too trivial to mention were not their implications almost universally disregarded.

A third economic objection to the present market system, seen in its broader governmental and social setting, has to do with the constraints it imposes upon a growth-oriented macroeconomic policy. A strategy for economic growth may be realized through any number of alternative patterns of distribution: differential wage, tax, or subsidy levels. It is vital, however, that one such distribution be made to stick, at least to the extent necessary to avoid an inconclusive conflict over the proper distribution. For even when such conflict fails to cause major disruption, it prevents governmental policy from being decisively marshaled in favor of any given strategy of economic growth.

In the rich North Atlantic democracies we find two correlations of forces in two relatively distinct domains. In the market arena, big business and organized labor, both entrenched in the rigid, mass-production sector of industry, exercise a disproportionate influence over the organization of markets and production. Through investment and disinvestment policies, through the disruption of the core productive system, and through their influence upon the means of mass communication or the financing of politics, they can strike back against any distributive deal that fails to respect their position of strength. On the other hand, the groups relatively weak in the economic arena – petty proprietors, independent professionals, and the unorganized underclass – will seek to overturn through the vote, through social agitation, and even through appeals to conscience and prudence the distributive bargains that do them in. No distributive bargain can respect both correlations of forces and none can preserve itself against the destabilizing effect of the powers it devalues.

To be sure, this inconclusiveness might be avoided by many possible institutional changes: if, for example, the government had dictatorial powers (“authoritarian capitalism”), thereby enabling it to impose a solution, or if unionization extended to the entire labor force, thereby bringing the two correlations closer, except insofar as big business retained a broad measure of independent decisional authority. But each institutional change would produce more far reaching and disturbing consequences for society. Thus, if an authoritarian, nonrevolutionary state is not the relatively passive instrument of a particular class, it must reach a *modus vivendi* with different classes. It will find itself continually pulled among conflict-

ing claims: the desire to pander to established elites, the effort to win wider popular support, and the attempt to assert an independent power interest, justified in turn by the strengthening of the nation-state. The competing claims may maintain the effect of deadlock while drastically changing its causes and content. On the other hand, the general unionization of the labor force and the overcoming of the distinction between the working class and the underclass would, at a minimum, put pressure on the established style of industrial organization by denying the rigid, mass-production industries one of their instruments of defense against oscillations in demand: subcontracting work or hiring temporary workers. To the extent the unionization was militant and led the unions to define themselves as the people rather than as an interest group, the resulting mass mobilization would be far more consequential. For either it would be suppressed or it would lead to yet more drastic changes in the basic institutions and enacted beliefs of society.

Consider now the general view of the enabling conditions of economic progress that underlies such criticisms. The statement of this view suggests the broader range of ideas within which the critical arguments would have a secure place. It reveals the basic unity of those arguments. It provides a perspective from which to criticize the major available alternatives to economic regimes of the contemporary Western democracies. It supplies a basis on which to imagine the reconciliation between enlarged political freedom and accelerated economic growth.

Economic progress occurs through the acceleration and deliberateness of leaps in productivity and productive output. To this end, the relations among people at work must become as much as possible an embodiment of practical reason: they must give expression to the free interplay between problem definitions and problem solving. In this interplay, new definitions suggest new solutions; and new solutions, new problems. Presuppositions – such as the rules governing inference and the idea of what counts as a solution or as the instrument of a solution – are gradually dragged into the interplay. As a result, the boundary becomes increasingly fluid between what is treated as a problem and what is accepted as a presupposition. In the organization of production and exchange these presuppositions may be the limited stock of associative and technical ideas that people bring to economic activity, the practices that compose the institutional setting of production and exchange, or the social divisions and hierarchies generated by an entrenched formative context of social life, predetermining how people can deal with one another at work or in trade. The last point is especially important: economic relations cannot become practical reason on the march so long as they remain

subject to a closed logic of the social stations that are possible and the activities that occupants of these stations may undertake.

How does this view of a basic condition of economic progress relate to the familiar idea that economic growth requires that particular groups combine innovative capability with access to capital? So long as we continue to accept the naive view of the market as possessed of an inherent institutional structure, we can count on the price system to channel capital automatically to those best able to use it. But once we abandon the idea of inherent institutional structure of the market, the identification of the most productive users becomes, like everything else about an economy, a matter of experimental fact. The institutions and the people responsible for setting the ultimate framework of economic life must compare the results of different institutional arrangements. Such a comparison becomes more valuable as the experiments compared become more numerous; and they become more numerous as the framework itself becomes more flexible, enabling economic agents to renew and recombine the arrangements making up the institutional context of production and exchange. The transformation of economic life into an embodiment of practical reason describes both the expected outcome of this ongoing experiment and the means for carrying it out.

Such a transformation of economic organization may take two main directions. One direction is coercive. A commanding will, ordinarily ensconced in the central government, repeatedly shatters the constraints that old or reemergent routines and privileges impose upon the dynamic of problem solving and the renewal of institutional arrangements. In particular, it disrupts social divisions and hierarchies and the institutional arrangements that give life to them, at least to the extent necessary to prevent these institutionalized roles and ranks from closing down the range of social life left open to economic experimentation. The basic problem with the coercive approach is the tendency of the institutional center that exercises this directing function to subordinate the practice of the problem-solving dynamic to the power interests of those who hold this power or serve as the agents of the powerholders farther down the command ladder. The crucial practical difference among institutional versions of the coercive approach is, therefore, the relative facility with which they lend themselves to such abuse.

The alternative direction is consensual. The economic order takes the form of a decentralized framework for interaction by parties able to bargain on their own initiative and for their own account. The characteristic problem of such market solutions is their tendency to define economic positions or the claims upon capital and labor that make them possible, as vested rights. Interest in the perpetuation of

these claims, sanctioned by law and keyed into current styles of economic organization, takes precedence over the seizure of emergent productive opportunities, and the resulting price system confirms a rationality that remains only loosely connected with its productive economic uses. Market systems differ in the extent to which they avoid this difficulty and encourage both absolute decentralization and institutional plasticity. These decisive differences are rooted in the institutional arrangements defining the context of production and exchange, including the detailed texture of contract and property law. The crucial point is the legal-institutional device for decentralizing claims of access to capital. The belief that this device must always amount to a variation on the consolidated, relatively absolute property right represents a groundless prejudice, but one from which even the most subtle forms of political economy have only partly freed themselves.

Neither the coercive nor the consensual realization of the problem-solving dynamic can ever prevail to the complete exclusion of the alternative. Even the most coercive system must count on voluntary collaboration, on pain of resorting to a runaway governmental terrorism that both disrupts the production system and overtaxes the capabilities of the state. Every working collaboration in turn implies settled expectations and partial reciprocities that imply a significant measure of de facto consensual decentralization. Conversely, every consensual market system requires the degree of centralized direction needed to establish basic guidelines and other rules governing the power to vary those fundamental norms of exchange.

From the pitiless standpoint of developing practical capabilities to produce or to destroy, the problem is not to choose between coercion and consensus. It is rather to invent the consensual or coercive solutions that go farther than do existing economic regimes toward freeing economic initiative from the constraints of administrative or proprietary privilege. Many nineteenth-century utilitarians and liberals thought they had solved this problem once and for all by discovering the pure system of market coordination, just as they also claimed to have expounded the built-in institutional structure of a democracy. But they were mistaken, having drastically understated the ambiguity of the institutional arrangements that might both realize and redefine market economies and democratic governments.

Notice also that although the coercive and consensual realizations of problem solving and plasticity may be equally promising or troublesome when viewed in the narrowest practical terms, an important difference between them emerges as soon as they are placed in a broader setting. The consensual emphasis in economic life fits with the broader program of an empowered democracy, whereas the coercive one does not. The objection to be made against current market

systems from this wider perspective is the same one they deserve on narrower economic grounds: their failure to move far enough along the consensual path and to heighten the plasticity of economic life.

This sketch of a general approach to the enabling conditions of material progress suggests why the available alternatives to the mixed economies of the rich North Atlantic countries of the present day are inadequate, both as machines for accelerated economic growth and as integral parts of an empowered democracy. Each alternative system establishes a balance or an oscillation between the prerogatives of those who exercise a directing will and the vested rights of those who represent the lowest significant rung of effective decentralization. In the Soviet-type model, the prerogatives of the central rulers and bureaucrats are balanced against the settled positions of the managers in charge of economic enterprises. In the Yugoslav "worker-control" model, they are balanced against the vested rights of the workers who occupy an entrenched position within an enterprise. (Even this distinction loses its force to the extent that effective job security becomes an accepted constraint within the Soviet model.) The reform cycles characterizing each system show the outer limits within which both the most coercive and the most consensual moments of these economic systems remain, limits that prevent either the coercive or the consensual approaches from achieving a form more congenial to the ceaseless renewal and recombination required by accelerated economic progress.

An alternative economic order must minimize the constraints current economic systems impose upon the free interplay of problem definition and problem solving. It must do so both to make a practical success out of the experiment in a more empowered democracy and to create a form of economic life that extends and sustains the social ideal underlying the whole constitution. The scheme of economic life must emphasize the consensual interpretation of organizational experimentation over the coercive one. This emphasis requires an attempt to imagine a mechanism of economic decentralization more radical in its bias toward decentralization and plasticity than the classical property right. Nor should we imagine that transferring economic sovereignty to a central state apparatus or to the enterprise work force represents the sole alternative to the familiar version of a market system. But what then might a better market structure be like? And how would it connect with the exercise of effective democratic conflict and control over social resources?

Before considering an answer to these questions, reflect on two clues for construction implied by the preceding critical arguments.

The first hint has to do with the shape of the property right. The

economic systems discussed in the preceding pages all maintain consolidated property: they keep together the many heterogeneous powers that compose this right, and they assign all these powers to the same rightholder. The systems differ solely in the way they define the identity of this major rightholder: the freely accumulating individual and the beneficiaries of his inheritance, the state and its delegates and favorites, or the work force of each enterprise. The consolidated property entitlement serves as the most striking instrument of the privileged control over capital. The reason why it does so is not self-evident: it appears, after all, to be compatible with substantial equality. Nevertheless, the attempt to combine substantial equality with the consolidated property right turns out to be both paradoxical and impractical. It is paradoxical because it can be achieved only through some independent institutional mechanism that eviscerates the significance of the consolidated property right by drastically limiting its exercise and its accumulation by the rightholders. It is impractical because the immediate effect of such limitations is to undermine the market principle in the legitimate abstract sense of economic decentralization and to impede the mobility of capital. The severance of the link between politics as organized group conflict and politics as privilege or stalemate seems to require a systematic breaking up of the property right.

The other clue in the criticism of existing economic systems refers to the relation between the regime of capital and the organization of government. The critical discussion suggests that the idea of a connection between the market and freedom holds good, although not in the sense in which it has been ordinarily understood. We find the legal tools of privileged hold over capital reciprocally linked, through a series of mediating institutions and preconceptions, to the forms of privileged access to state power. The trouble comes from mistaking democracy and the market with some marginally adjusted version of the institutional arrangements already established in the advanced Western countries. I have shown how, in the Soviet-style economies, even the most technical microeconomic constraints on the operation of a market mechanism related, directly or indirectly, to the failure to bring the control of state power into question. (See the appendix to Chapter 2.) Thus, to take one of the more oblique examples, you could not understand the force of the nearly absolute job security constraint without taking into account the implications of the attempt to uphold the pretense of a workers' state in a society where workers had few powers. Such powers as they might have – like the claim to job security (by no means acknowledged in all communist economies) – depended upon their ability to play on the unintended consequences of existing institutional arrangements (such as the tightness of the labor market, under conditions of severe wage

control, a situation giving the workers shop-floor power while also helping establish job security). In the Western-style economies, the analogous connections were more subtle. The microeconomic constraints in markets connected to macroeconomic constraints that included the need of elected governments to accommodate to the relatively small groups controlling the major flows of investment decisions. Conversely, the stability of the established institutional arrangements, including the arrangements that defined markets, depended upon a long-lasting social demobilization that had in turn been encouraged – and at one time deliberately sought – by the constitutional organization of government.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ECONOMY: THE ROTATING CAPITAL FUND AND ITS DEMOCRATIC CONTROL

The Core Conception

A regime capable of working out the implications of the clues described in the preceding section brings the structure and direction of economic life into the domain of central conflicts over society's alternative futures, a domain in which no segment of society and no cadre of experts can easily gain the upper hand. Such a regime constantly resists and reverses the subjection of capital to the more or less permanent and unrestricted dominion of particular rightholders. It pushes the economy farther into becoming a perpetual innovation machine and increases the freedom of economic relations from pre-determination by a challenge-resistant scheme of social life.

The key idea of the institutional proposal is the breakup of control over capital into several tiers of capital takers and capital givers. The ultimate capital giver is a social capital fund controlled by the decisional center of the empowered democracy: the party in office and the supporting representative assemblies. The ultimate capital takers are teams of workers, technicians, and entrepreneurs, who make temporary and conditional claims upon divisible portions of this social capital fund. The central capital fund does not lend money out directly to the primary capital users. Instead, it allocates resources to a variety of semi-independent investment funds. Each investment fund specializes in a sector of the economy and in a type of investment. The central democratic institutions exercise their ultimate control over the forms and rates of economic accumulation and income distribution by establishing these funds or by closing them out, by assigning them new infusions of capital or by taking capital away from them, by charging them interest (whose payment represents the major source of governmental finance), and, most importantly,

by setting the outer limits of variation in the terms on which the competing investment funds may allocate capital to the ultimate capital takers. The investment funds may take resources away from one another, thus forming in effect a competitive capital market, whose operations are also overseen by the central representative bodies of the democracy. The investment funds in turn allocate resources to the primary capital takers – teams of entrepreneurs, technicians, and workers – under two different regimes. The funds set the terms on which financial and technological resources may be obtained. The capital users pay an interest charge to their investment fund just as the latter pays a charge to the central social fund. Within the limits laid down by both the central governmental bodies and the competing investment funds, these direct capital takers buy and sell. Within those limits they, too, may bid resources away from one another. They profit from successful enterprise and suffer from business failure. But they never acquire permanent individual or group rights to the capital they receive. Nor does success entitle them to expand continuously, to buy out other enterprises, or to introduce into their own business a special category of relatively disadvantaged and voiceless workers. Success merely increases their income.

Thus the proposed regime provides for three tiers of capital givers and capital takers, the second tier being both a taker and a giver. The precise balance of economic power among these levels represents a major topic of political conflict under the empowered democracy. The discussion of the following pages strikes a particular balance only in order to clothe the central intuitive idea in more tangible dress.

The basic legal principle of this alternative economic order is the disintegration of property: its breakup into distinct powers, vested in different agents. To be sure, much in the design of this alternative may already be recognized in germ in the interplay between consolidated property and relatively haphazard governmental regulation as well as in the subtleties of contemporary capital markets. You can hardly expect otherwise from a programmatic argument that draws on internal criticism, addresses a particular historical circumstance, and eschews a millenarian utopianism while nevertheless claiming to express a visionary impulse. Yet the proposed regime offers an institutional framework within which the principle of deliberate social control over the forms and consequences of economic accumulation can be more fully reconciled with decentralized economic decision making than it can be within a market order using consolidated property as its device of decentralization and occasional administrative regulation as its means of control. The economic order of the empowered democracy is both more a socially responsible economy and more a market economy than the system it is meant

to replace; the impression of paradox results from a failure to grasp the effect of institutional variation upon the tensions between general principles. It is more of a socially responsible economy because the means for collective review of the arrangements and results of economic life are deeply integrated into the institutional order rather than dependent upon a relatively haphazard pattern of governmental intervention. It is more of a market economy because it promises to increase both the absolute degree of economic decentralization and the revisability of the organizational settings of production and exchange, although, admittedly, it does so at the cost of circumscribing both the duration and the absoluteness of individual capital claims. Consider now, in greater detail, each of the three major tiers of capital givers and takers.

The Central Capital Fund

The first tier, the social investment fund, falls under the control of the central executive and representative bodies of the empowered democracy. The central social fund establishes the competing investment funds, which form the second tier of the system. It occasionally opens new funds or closes old ones and shifts resources from some to others. But its single most important task is to draw the limits of variation within which the competing investment funds must operate. Some limits are institutional; others, parametric. The institutional decisions set boundaries to the permissible organizational forms of production and exchange. The parametric decisions influence the employment and cost of capital, most notably through the interest charged for its use. Rules and policies that restrict either wage and authority disparities or the right of enterprise personnel to distribute business gains as current income share institutional and parametric characteristics.

Among the key parametric or institutional decisions to be made by the fund are: the basic underlying rate of interest to be charged to all specialized investment funds; the choice between forced reassignments of capital and variable rates of interest as alternative ways to control the relative size of the specialized funds and the relations among gross sectors of the economy; the alternative regimes or terms under which the second-tier, specialized funds may give out capital; the minimal restraints upon accumulation, reinvestment, investment in other enterprises, distribution of profits as income, preference for capital-intensive technology, and exclusion of outside workers that must be respected either in the economy as a whole or by particular funds and sectors; the extent to which the specialized funds may allow the enterprises they deal with to insulate managerial and technical prerogatives from the collective decisions of its members and

thereby establish a hierarchy of privilege among segments of its labor force; and the outer limits to wage (or other income) inequality that must be respected by enterprises in the economy as a whole or in particular sectors.

Some decisions may take the form of economywide rules and policies, others may be written into the charters of particular investment funds, and still others may be left entirely open to the discretion of these funds or of the enterprises and teams that receive capital from them. The correct balance among these options, as more generally the relative power of the three tiers of capital givers and capital takers, constitutes a major concern of governmental party-politics under the empowered democracy. The evisceration of the second and third tiers of the system, through the making of increasingly detailed and intrusive decisions, would destroy the distinctive character of this economic regime. The disintegration of property would give way to the transfer of property to the central government. But the abdication of decisional responsibility by the central democratic institutions, and its resulting concentration in the specialized funds and the primary capital takers, would be equally subversive of the regime. For one thing, the democracy would lack effective means to assert ultimate collective control over the two aspects of economic life that are crucial to the character of a society: first, the direction and rate of economic growth, and the consequent balancing of economic and noneconomic goals and of the claims of different generations; and, second, the relations of equality and inequality, of joint responsibility and mutual distancing, allowed to exist in the organization of production and exchange as well as in the distribution of their benefits. For another thing, the division of property rights between the specialized investment funds and the primary capital takers would not long survive if these two levels of the regime were left on their own. A new system of consolidated property rights, in the service of a new plan of entrenched social division and hierarchy, would emerge from an economy reorganized by the more successful funds or enterprises.

The Investment Funds: Capital Auctioning and Capital Rationing

The second tier of the capital regime consists of investment funds established by the national government or the social fund through which government sets economic policy. The investment funds hold capital from the social fund and give it out to the primary capital takers, who represent the third tier of the economic system. Without this intermediate level – at once capital taker and capital giver – the central democratic entities would be forever tempted to exercise a

roving, ad hoc economic clientalism, and the prospects for extreme decentralization and organizational diversity would greatly diminish. The investment funds, chartered by the central government, specialize in a sector of the economy or a type of investment (short-term or long-term, low-risk or high-risk, oriented to small ventures or large ventures). But these specialties are not meant to peg the funds at fixed positions in the economic order. Their areas of operation intersect; many funds may compete within the same sectoral or functional area. In fact, within the limits established by the top tier of the system, they may even bid away one another's assets on an investment-fund capital market placed under the control of the central social fund.

The special funds are semi-independent bodies, much like contemporary central banks or even philanthropic foundations in contemporary Western societies, with their technical personnel chosen by a combination of appointment from above and election from the sectors in which they operate. The method of appointment should vary, as later discussion suggests, with the specific aims of each fund and the nature of the system by which it allocates capital. The definition of this system is by far the most important issue to be faced in designing the second tier of the capital order.

In their capital-allotment policies the funds operate with a mixture of general rules and discretionary judgments. The danger that a promising entrepreneur may be turned away is diminished by the existence of numerous overlapping and competing funds. And if this opportunity seems insufficient remember that even under the regime of consolidated property an entrepreneur must either already be rich or succeed in convincing others to give him money.

Each fund conducts its activities under one of two regimes: capital auction and capital rationing or rotation. The choice between them, set by the fund charter, has far-reaching consequences for the role of the fund in the economy and for the structure of its dealings with other funds and with the primary capital takers. The interaction between the two regimes influences the whole character of the economic order of an empowered democracy.

The key feature of the capital-auction system is that, within certain gross limits, the primary capital takers can buy one another's resources by offering to pay the capital-auctioning fund more for the employment of these resources than their current users. If the value of the resources has been run up, part of this added value may be paid to the current users as a reward, though it may then be subject to capital, income, and consumption taxes designed to restrain the resulting economic inequality. (Notice that the tax system, which becomes subsidiary to state-charged interest as a source of governmental finance under empowered democracy, must reappear as a

constraint on inequality in the capital-auctioning area of the economy.) To guard against the continued depletion of assets, on the other hand, the capital-auctioning fund must use a blend of screening, guarantees, penalties, limits on the distribution of profits, and provisions for repossession.

The capital-rationing or rotation system, by contrast to the capital-auction system, largely avoids the buying-out of some capital takers by others. Instead, it emphasizes the conditional and temporal limits to the capital taker's employment of the resources placed at his disposal. It demands a much heavier use of parametric constraints than can be reconciled with the capital-auction regime: the setting of standards about the minimal levels of permissible reinvestment and maximum levels of allowable profit distribution. The capital-rationing fund must be ready to take the initiative in pooling financial and capital resources, in bringing teams of worker-technicians and entrepreneurs together for large-scale, durable enterprises, in redistributing capital from time to time to new teams, and in designing incentives and disincentives.

As under the capital-auction system, successful enterprises cannot be allowed to build industrial or financial empires. Once certain limits of personal enrichment and enterprise investment are reached, the additional capital goes back to the original capital fund for reassignment. But much more clearly than under the capital-auction system, continuing enterprise decline must be met by fund intervention, followed by the recovery and reassignment of the residual capital and the reentry of a retained enterprise work force into the labor market, a blow softened though not annulled by the welfare rights described later in this chapter.

The advantage of the capital-auction system is that it maximizes opportunities for the trial and error of entrepreneurial decisions. Its danger, for the program of empowered democracy, is that it jeopardizes social control over economic accumulation and economic inequality. The advantages and disadvantages of capital rationing are just the reverse.

To identify this dilemma may seem tantamount to recognizing the persistence of the tension between social control and market decentralization under the economic regime of empowered democracy. But remember that the point of this whole programmatic argument is less to abolish the basic tensions familiar to our vocabulary of ideological controversy than to change their sense and moderate their force. Both capital auctioning and capital rationing reconcile market decentralization and social control more fully than the inherited combination of property-based markets and administrative regulation, although they do so by different means and in different proportions. The auction and rationing regimes encourage this

reconciliation more effectively through their combination than either could alone.

Some capital funds, possibly in the more standardized sectors of the economy, would operate primarily on the model of rationing, whereas others, possibly in the more experimental areas of manufacturing and services, would follow the capital-auction model. In this way the whole economy would benefit from an ongoing experiment with these alternative styles of market organization.

Because a rationing fund exercises a much stronger influence over the economic fortunes of its capital takers than does a capital auctioning fund, it should give them a major role in its decision making. The fund and its recipients may form a veritable industrial confederation, subject to both the pressure of conflicting interests within the confederation and the demands of the central democratic agencies. By contrast, an auctioning fund may be expected to keep more clearly apart from its capital takers. It stands in some ways in the position of an investment bank dealing with its clients and in other ways in that of a governmental agency supervising a capital market, except that here no one exercises absolute and permanent control over any portion of capital. These last remarks carry the discussion from the second to the third tier of the system: the primary capital takers with whom both auctioning and rationing funds deal.

The Primary Capital Takers: Problems of Scale and Incentives

Within limits set by the capital-giving fund, the capital users transact freely with one another. There is a market system, though the specific quality of their decision-making autonomy depends upon the extent to which they operate under the auction or the rationing regimes. Either regime, however, provides the enterprise work force with the conditions for exercising a crucial say about the organization of work and about the range of income and power disparities. It is only required that these decisions remain within the ample boundaries established by the higher tiers of the economic order.

Under the auction regime the power to organize production is evident: the auctioning fund can more easily leave its users to their own devices. It is more concerned with long-term rates of return and organizational or technological breakthroughs and experiments than with the maintenance of any particular system of work organization. Under the rationing regime the independence of capital takers is more restricted. But the counterpart to these restrictions becomes greater engagement of the capital takers in the governance of their fund.

Under both regimes the capital-taking unit is a team that, as a whole, receives capital grants or bids capital away from other users.

Within ample bounds it remains free to govern its internal relations. Moreover, the entire economic order of dissociated property deprives the mass-production industries of the instruments with which they protect themselves against instability in their product, capital, and labor markets. It thereby favors extending into the mainstream of the economy a style of organization previously confined to the economy's experimental vanguard and distinguished by a closer and more continuous interplay between task-defining and task-executing activities.

Neither the auction nor the rationing regime, however, turns its clients into new individual or collective property owners. The economic system of empowered democracy is not worker corporatism. (For a partial criticism of the worker-corporatist alternative, sometimes called the Yugoslav model, see the appendix to Chapter 2.) The individual worker does not even have an absolute or permanent right to job tenure within his enterprise or team, and the enterprise or team has no absolute or permanent right to the resources temporarily put at its disposal or to the wealth it accumulates through their use. But every citizen does have an unconditional right to the satisfaction of his legally defined minimal welfare needs (see the later discussion of immunity rights), qualified only by the size of the welfare fund available to government, which is in turn influenced by the price charged for the use of capital and by the decisions made about the basic desired rate of economic growth.

The discussion of the third tier of the reformed economy raises two problems deserving more detailed analysis and influencing the operation of the economy as a whole. One problem is the compatibility of the proposed system with economies of scale. The other is its probable effect upon the motivation to work.

Many forms of economic activity will always require the pooling of large-scale resources in manpower, technology, and financial capital and the continuity of enterprises over long periods. But the resulting concentration of workers, capital, and machines need not have the familiar characteristics of contemporary mass-production industry, operating under a system of absolute property rights.

Large-scale enterprises may be relatively loose confederations of teams or units that move in and out of a particular enterprise, just as an entire capital-rationing fund may be a loose confederation of these enterprises. Such an organizational scheme would combine flexibility with pooling to an extent still uncommon in the contemporary practice of mass-production industry. Yet it would merely exaggerate an already discernible tendency in some of the more innovative large-scale businesses. Many such enterprises have organized themselves into small-scale, tenuously integrated units, each emulating the organizational style of the smaller, more flexible, van-

guardist enterprises that proliferate in the high-technology and service sectors. The influence of technological evolution favors this tendency while the managerial and financial interests generated by property-based market and work-organization systems continue to frustrate it. We cannot reasonably expect to tell in advance exactly which current characteristics of large-scale and continuous enterprise would change under an institutional reform like the one proposed here, and which would prove to result from more intractable economic, organizational, or psychological constraints.

There is at least one other foreseeable effect of the dissociation of property rights for the conduct of large-scale business. Such a system prevents managers from exercising a broad-ranging discretionary authority over their workers that confuses the requirements of technical coordination with the right to act in the name of property (whether the private property of stockholders or the public property of an economically sovereign state), a right fitfully restrained by explicit or implicit collective bargaining. Nor may the enterprise work force under the proposed system entrench itself against disadvantaged or jobless workers from outside or hire them to occupy a subordinate status. The common association of mass-production industry with a distinction between a core, almost tenured work force and a variable periphery of unstable workers or subcontractors violates the spirit of the economic system described here. Such a distinction would quickly generate a hierarchy of vested interests, benefiting workers entrenched in the more successful sectors and enterprises. And it would constrain the opportunities for organizational innovation and ceaseless recombination.

There is indeed a price to pay for avoiding such privileges and constraints. Neither individuals nor groups would be able to nurture distinctive forms of life that are based upon the permanent occupancy of stereotyped positions in the social division of labor. But there are compensations. The attempt to develop varieties of practical collaboration less dependent upon a preestablished set of social roles, hierarchies, and divisions is more than a practical goal; it is a major aspect of the ideal underlying this entire argument for empowered democracy. It would not be a powerful ideal if it did not also promise a special sort of happiness. I explore the character of this happiness when dealing, in the final part of this chapter, with the spirit that inspires this whole institutional program.

Consider, finally, the effect of these economic institutions upon the motivation to work. The economic system outlined in the preceding pages allows for a large range of variation in the income rewards to particular capital takers. Under both the auction and the rationing regimes the individual prospers with the economic success of his team and suffers with its economic failure. Moreover, within

the limits established by the central and specialized funds each team is free to establish economic rewards and penalties.

The conflict between incentives to diligence, on one side, and egalitarian or welfare goals, on the other, is not abolished. At the very least, however, it becomes a subject of explicit collective experiment and discussion at each tier of the capital-allocation system. The reformers may even hope to moderate the conflict by diminishing the dependence of work incentives upon stark inequalities of wealth and income. For many aspects of the proposed regime are calculated to universalize within society the conditions encouraging people to shift the focus of their ambitions from the accumulation of a patrimony to the shape of a career and to the slightest nuances in the semblance of worldly success. The result is not spiritual redemption. But it does help push motivations beyond the obsessions peculiar to a society in which people feel unable to distinguish their most vital interests from their continued hold upon a particular type of job.

This eclectic and open-minded approach to the problem of incentives and inequality illustrates the general attitude of the whole programmatic argument toward the mutability of human nature. The view of society and personality that informs this argument refuses the consistently disappointing and misleading attempt to distinguish a permanent core and a variable periphery of human nature. It takes into account the loose, contradictory, and complex set of motivations and aspirations that people demonstrate in the societies it wants to reform. It recognizes that even the most intimate and seemingly unyielding of these propensities are influenced and cumulatively remade by the institutional and imaginative context in which they exist. But it rejects as unrealistic any institutional scheme whose success requires a sudden and drastic shift in what people are like here and now.

Contrast with an Inheritance-Free Property System

The whole character of the democratized economy stands out by comparison to a system that preserves the traditional mix of property-based markets and ad hoc regulation but that limits private fortunes by abolishing inheritance and levying a heavy capital tax. The economic program of empowered democracy also abolishes the hereditary transmission of substantial assets. Each individual would be given instead a wide range of minimal welfare guarantees, including support during job transfers and opportunities for ongoing reeducation and retraining. What the mere abolition of inheritance cannot do, however, is to develop an economic order congenial to the spirit of empowered democracy. It cannot open ordinary social

life to the same practice of collective conflict and deliberation that people experience in the exercise of citizenship. It cannot turn the arrangements of production and exchange into subjects of deliberate social experimentation and thereby give a practical as well as an ideal sense to the conception of a formative context more freely open to revision in the midst of ordinary social life. It cannot knock the institutional props out from under a style of industrial organization that continues to emphasize the discontinuity between task-defining and task-executing activities. It cannot cleanly sever the link between the ability to take advantage of economies of scale and the opportunity to command large numbers of workers in the name of property: for while an inheritance-free system does away with magnates, the managers of great businesses may have all the freer a hand as the fictive delegates of countless petty holders of equity. It cannot overcome, though it may diminish, the conflict between the rewards for economic achievement and the methods for ensuring basic social equality. The redistributive state would still have to intervene through tax-and-transfer policies. Thus, the logic of rough equality and the flow of actual market outcomes would remain far more starkly opposed than the need for incentives to work requires or than the economic order of a radical democracy permits.

Supplementary Ideas

A number of subsidiary or qualifying ideas help fill out this institutional picture. Remember first that the proposed regime should not be misunderstood as a compromise between a centralized ("command") and decentralized ("market") economy. It should be taken instead as a proposal to provide both the market economy and the social control of economic forces with alternative institutional definitions. From the mere fact that this alternative system provides for the central institutional and parametric decisions I have described, you cannot legitimately infer it would result in markets less decentralized (i.e., with fewer and less independent decision-making agents) than the Western-style economies of the late twentieth century. Such central institutional and parametric decisions are also made in those economies, only in a fashion more fragmentary, invisible, and invidious because susceptible to being either manipulated or overridden by privileged social groups. The forms of this decision making range from the unstable conduct of discretionary economic policy within the institutional limits described to the marginal legislation of a system of contract and property falsely equated with the very nature of a market. Such choices are also made within a constitutional structure that disempowers collective action and deliberation

in the many ways pointed out by the internal arguments explored at the beginning of this chapter. Moreover, by their selective character, their underlying vision of what a market has to be, and their mistaken assumptions about the requirements of industrial efficiency, these decisions permit the emergence of vast centers of private power that also represent constraints upon decentralization.

But once you set aside the polemical comparison between the Western-type economies and the alternative system, you still have to acknowledge the presence of powerful centralizing tendencies within the economic regime of empowered democracy. Unless compensated, such tendencies can pervert the democratizing program. (The next section discusses both these tendencies and their antidotes.)

A second clarifying idea is that the fidelity of the regime of capital to its goals depends closely upon the implementation of the other, more narrowly constitutional part of the republican program. Only such a reformed government can be technically capable of performing these enlarged responsibilities. Only such a government can resist more effectively the risk of becoming the instrument by which particular groups transform temporary advantage into lasting privilege.

The third auxiliary idea is that the realization of such a regime of capital presupposes a different background order of right. In particular, it presupposes the disaggregation of the consolidated property right. This disaggregation takes place in two related ways. First, the different powers that appear merged within the consolidated property right get pulled apart. To take the single most obvious and important point, the employment of large amounts of capital is always conditional and temporary and the recipients' powers of use always coexist with the powers of the administrators of the social capital fund and of the competing investment funds. The other aspect of the disaggregation of property is therefore the assignment of these separated powers to different entities: the three tiers of capital givers and capital takers. There is nothing novel about disaggregation in either of these senses; the consolidated property right, after all, represents an artifact of particular traditions. In most legal orders, in most historical periods, property always has been disaggregated in both these senses. What matters for the program, however, is that the disaggregation takes the particular form that suits a democratized economy.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ECONOMY: THE DANGER OF CENTRALIZATION AND ITS ANTIDOTES

The capital regime just outlined has certain centralizing tendencies that, if left unchecked, would pervert the whole system. The presence

and peril of these tendencies become the more obvious once you enlarge the ideas of centralization and decentralization. Decentralization refers, at a minimum, both to the number of agents who are able to trade and produce on their initiative and for their own account and to the extent of their independence. This second element may be expanded to include the extent of variety in the conduct of economic affairs: variety in the ways of doing business, organizing work, variety even in the results of labor, variety measured chiefly by the margin of departure from what most other economic agents do. This is the sort of decentralization that the normal regime of capital chiefly endangers.

It does not help to say that this recentralizing impulse is no more hostile to economic pluralism than are contemporary economic systems. Whatever comparison may show, the centralist tendencies are noxious in themselves. They undermine the economy's capacity to achieve repeated breakthroughs in output and productivity, a capacity that depends largely upon the persistent exercise of an almost frenzied inventiveness applied to the very context and structure of productive activity. The centralizing tendencies also threaten the basic aims of the constitution. Once the internal arrangements and external strategies of economic organizations stabilize into a single dominant mode, they favor the emergence of well-defined groups, formed on the basis of rigid conceptions of collective interest, identity, and opportunity. Each organization, each segment of economic life, becomes a little world whose structure mirrors the arrangements of all the little worlds with which it coexists and collides. That repeated pattern, supported by central power, supplies the mold in which the group divisions and hierarchies can form.

Apart from any genuine technical constraints of economy by scale and repetition, two main centralizing forces operate within the normal regime of capital. One centralizing dynamic merely works out the implications of the threat that the reemergence of well-defined groups poses to the constitution. The normal regime of capital applies in principle throughout the economy. It establishes a distinctive style of control and decentralization. However indeterminate the institutional implications of this style may be and however significant the margin of autonomy allowed to the individual enterprises, this approach to the relation between central economic authorities and decentralized economic agents may become the basis for a dominant type of enterprise organization and enterprise dealing. A casual combination of biases and transitory market circumstances may turn into an enduring mode of industrial organization. The parties elected to office may then adjust the parametric and institutional decisions so as to favor this dominant type and thereby further consolidate its ascendancy. With this, a renewed, subtle version of the politics of

privilege emerges. The dominant enterprise type readily becomes a system of niches in which economic groups can form. The most favored and the most numerous, if they are also most numerous or most favored in the society at large, can then attempt to use governmental power to entrench their advantages. Thus, the state would become an enemy to deviant types of business organization and once again help turn the occasional disadvantages of some segments of the work force into continuing subordination. This outcome would jeopardize both the specific goal of avoiding unconditional claims upon capital and the general commitment to avoid the reappearance of a stabilized plan of social division and hierarchy.

The other dynamic of centralization is internal to the government itself. The governmental bodies that make the institutional and parametric decisions belong to a scheme designed to perpetuate, multiply, and extend collective mobilization. This mobilizational context, however, may be insufficient to prevent the assertion of a bureaucratic interest in the transparency and stability of the economic order. Once the basic decisions about the parametric and institutional bases of economic activity stop being fragmentary and implicit, they become all the more subject to a characteristic bias. The administrative foundation of this bias is everyone's desire to cover his tracks in a realm where public scrutiny and controversy are intense. Its general form is the tendency to treat variation first as folly and then as an immoral assault upon the collective interest. Its economic manifestation is the intolerance toward radical disagreements about the risks that are reasonable for a business to take, disagreements whose very occurrence represents one of the conditions of continued economic progress. The chosen institutions and parameters may be more or less deliberately rigged against deviant risk schedules and systematically increase the dimension of risk relative to the margin of deviation. Many kinds of risk taking may even be intentionally prohibited as irresponsible or indirectly excluded by their incompatibility with the institutional or parametric requirements imposed from on high.

No constitutional scheme can guarantee itself, once and for all, against the renaissance of a politics of privilege. Conflict produces winners and losers. The winners will try to keep their own prizes and abolish their own example, and so long as a central state exists, they will find ready at hand an instrument with which to do so. It would be unwise, even if it were possible, to destroy a central government if you understand such a government simply as the terrain on which people can fight about the basic terms of collective life and carry their opinions into practice. For the risk of a mutual reinforcement between privileged access to the state and privileged advantage

in society is overshadowed by the danger that a structure of social life may emerge that cannot be revised by any readily available means at all: the naturalization of society is the peculiar risk of statelessness. To justify the destruction of a distant central government, a circumstance would have to arise in which people's material and moral connections to one another were so completely contained in a narrow social and geographical area that the structure of their social existence would be wholly determined by what went on within this circle. But this reduction of the polity to a metaphorical if not a literal village would mean the naturalization of society with a vengeance: the turning away from the larger clash of alternative visions and versions of society, the eternal dream of those who want to get off the roller coaster of history.

Short of statelessness, no society can protect itself against the reappearance of the politics of privilege. So, too, as institutions become the explicit contexts and instruments for revising the basic terms of social life, the reorganized economy confronts the other centralizing danger: that parties and governments, armed with new opportunities to try out their proposals, may exclude too much random or dissident variation. The result may be to impoverish the practical and imaginative resources available to the programs of another day. The generic antidote the constitution of the reformed republic gives to these perils is the twofold effort to achieve the maximum incitement to conflictual collective mobilization outside governmental institutions while obtaining the greatest permeability of governmental institutions to the results of this mobilization. An approach to voluntary association that draws its strength from mere opposition to the state cannot be secure – for it lives under threat from rulers at home and powers abroad. Nor can it freely transform social life in its own image – for it comes up against institutional limits it can overcome only by perennially defeating or neutralizing the state. Thus, the need to imagine a state with a built-in bias toward the self-organization of society.

The preceding discussion has shown that the generic risks of the appeal to an empowered democratic state take distinctive forms in the economic domain. The compensations must be correspondingly specific. One such compensation is the provision for an extraordinary regime of capital, to exist alongside the ordinary one. The most basic antidote, however, is the existence of the intermediate tier of the capital-allotment system: the specialized competitive investment funds, which shield the primary capital takers from ad hoc or detailed governmental control. They operate with a vast array of different sets of investment policies and different combinations of institutional and parametric constraints. They span the distance from maximal

guidance to minimal checks. Moreover, the auction or rationing regimes they follow represent two radically different versions of market organization.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ECONOMY: THE DESIGN OF WORK

There is another compensation to the perils of centralism and monotony: the effect of the constitution upon the organization of work. The importance of such an effect goes far beyond the problem of decentralization. The organization of the workplace represents the area in which the striving for social control of economic activity and permanent collective mobilization must most clearly confront the demands of practical effectiveness in a highly mechanized and industrialized economy. The character of ordinary work experience also either strengthens or undermines the psychological dispositions on which the constitution depends; more than any other aspect of social existence, except the family, it serves as the school of everyday life and teaches the only lessons that ordinary people in ordinary times cannot easily forget.

The proliferation of the flexible version of rationalized collective labor matters to this enriched idea of decentralization in several ways. The flexible style of work organization, with its softening of the contrast between supervisors and supervised, can flourish in large enterprises and plants (offices, stores, outlets) or small ones. But the rigid type favors the large enterprise and the large plant or office: large enterprises, to permit and justify successive infusions of capital; large plants or offices, to organize the work force in the fashion of a conventional army. Moreover, the flexible mode encourages the proliferation of divergent forms of production by making it unnecessary to subordinate experiments in the organization of work to the maintenance of a fixed structure of control. In this sense, it does for the organization of work what the breakup of oligarchic control of government does for the society as a whole.

Each economic system criticized in the preceding section enshrines the rigid variant of rationalized collective labor as the mainstream form of work organization and relegates the flexible variant to the vanguard of industry, administration, and warfare. In Chapter 2, I argued that the overwhelming predominance of the rigid variant cannot plausibly be understood as a consequence of the inherent organizational requirements of technologically advanced, large-scale industry and warfare. It depends, on the contrary, upon the fulfillment of certain social and technical-economic conditions. It may help to recall briefly what these conditions, in the industrial sphere, are,

and how they came to be satisfied by the Western-style economies of the post-World War II period.

The social conditions include both a negative and a positive element. The negative element was the defeat of the social movements that threatened to overturn, at a single stroke, the constitutionalism of permanent demobilization, the quasi-oligarchic control of basic investment decisions, and the rigid contrast between task definers and task executors at work. The positive element was the development of an order of right that – in the name of both property and technical necessity (each covering for the other) – distinguished the task definers from everybody else. In so doing, this order also conflated technical coordination with a broad disciplinary authority, limited only by the collective contracts struck by an unevenly organized work force. The technical-economic condition was the avoidance of the various forms of economic instability that would jeopardize the large-scale, mass-production industries operating largely with product-specific machines and relatively inflexible production processes. In these industries, the rigid variant of rationalized collective labor prevailed. They sank successive amounts of capital into product lines, production processes, and even work arrangements that could not easily be altered. The combination of deepening capital investment with structural inflexibility made these enterprises all too vulnerable to the disruptive effects of instability in the financial, product, and labor markets. Against the instability of financial markets they employed the generation of internal investment funds. Against the convergent effect of instability in labor and product markets, they developed ways to reconcile the maintenance of a relatively privileged and pacified labor force (working to produce for the unstable part of demand) with the deployment of outside subcontractors or occasional, unorganized laborers, who absorbed, on the front line, the shock of downturn and helped fill burgeoning orders during booms.

The economic order of the reformed republic knocks the props out from under each of these social or technical-economic encouragements to the prevalence of the rigid variant of rationalized collective labor. It does so as an automatic consequence of the institutional arrangements it establishes. The attack upon the stabilizing conditions of the established style of work organization does not guarantee that the flexible variant will prevail throughout the economy. It merely destroys the bias in favor of the rigid mode and facilitates different versions of the continuous interplay between task definition and task execution to take hold in many sectors of the economy. Consider just how the proposed economy system subverts each of the conditions mentioned; the argument moves in the reverse order of the earlier enumeration.

Take the technical-economic conditions first. The recourse to in-

ternally generated investment funds is drastically curtailed by the overall method of assigning capital conditionally as well as by the limits on enterprise accumulation. In fact, the assignment of capital will even be subject to terms that affirmatively require efforts to moderate the contrasts between task-defining and task-executing activities and among job categories in general. The interconnected defenses against instability in the labor and products markets cannot survive the measures designed to limit job exclusivity within the enterprise, the shift in the fundamental status of workers, and the open-minded favor to all manner of small and medium-size enterprises.

Consider now the affirmative element in the social conditions for the predominance of the rigid style of work organization. The whole constitutional scheme takes away the legal basis for concentrating in a few hands the power to direct other people's labor: its goals, forms, and rewards. To prevent the emergence of economic entitlements that enable individuals to control large amounts of labor, property must be disaggregated in the sense defined earlier: not handed over lock, stock, and barrel to the capitalist, the government, or the enterprise work force. Disaggregate property (rather than transfer it) is what the reformed regime of capital does.

Finally, take the negative aspect of the social conditions of contrasting styles of work organization. The inauguration of such a radical democratic program would mean reversing the defeat of the revolutionary movements and leftist experiments that took place throughout Europe in the aftermath of World War I. Despite the relative crudity of their programmatic ideas, these experiments and movements came closer than any other episode of collective conflict to articulating the very vision this transformative program develops. The program represents, in a sense, the development of what they left vague and confused. Its implementation presupposes the victory of which they were robbed. The previous discussion of transformative practice and the later analysis of transitional institutional arrangements suggest how this victory may be won.

THE SYSTEM OF RIGHTS

Redefining Rights

The system of rights represents a distinctive domain for institutional reconstruction. By a system of rights I mean simply an institutionalized version of society, which is to say, a form of social life acquiring a relatively stable and delineated form and generating a complicated set of expectations. The stability and the expectations are not merely those of the prison camp: a system of rights defines arrangements that many people (how many?) treat as the expression

of a defensible scheme of human association. The organized social world that a system of rights describes is not presented and understood primarily as a collection of mere truce lines or trophies in ongoing social and party warfare. Each such social world seeks to provide the exclusive setting of human life and, though it invariably fails in its attempt at exclusivity, it succeeds enough, while it survives, to shape beliefs and motivations as well as opportunities and practices.

We have come to think of the vocabulary of rights as ordinarily limited to the legal definition of institutions and practices and therefore to state-described and state-enforced law. The following discussion presupposes this narrower conception of right while effacing the clarity of its boundaries. For the system of rights described here is meant to transcribe an institutional structure that weakens the contrast between state and civil society just as it softens the opposition between devotion to the common good and the pursuit of private interests.

The remaking of the system of rights is not a separate task of institutional reconstruction, as if we could change the constitutional form of government, the style of conflict over the control and uses of governmental power, the regime of capital, the organization of work, and *then* the content and form of legal entitlements. It is rather the indispensable expression of all those other changes. But this expression is not transparent or automatic. It poses specific problems and clarifies hidden connections.

Consider two objections radicals frequently make to any program for the redefinition of legal entitlements. To anticipate a response to these objections is to indicate the direction taken by this stage of the programmatic argument.

One source of hostility to theories of legal rights is the belief that rights, any rights, are inseparable from a particular type of social and economic organization – such as “capitalism” – that can and should be overcome. In a more inclusive variant of the argument, legal rights become a form of social regulation inherently suited to a particular social practice – such as the market exchange of commodities and of labor. Though the critic acknowledges that this law-sustaining practice may exist in a broad range of societies, he insists it cannot be reconciled with other types of social organization and especially not with the type (e.g., communism) to which he is committed. All versions of this objection rely upon the idea of a limited and well-defined list of possible types of social organization, a characteristic theme of deep-logic social theory. They depend even more directly on the unjustified identification of rights with a particular style of entitlement, with what I earlier called the consolidated property right.

These critics know perfectly well that every body of law includes entitlements that differ in content from consolidated property rights. They may even acknowledge that differences in the content of rights and in the character of the social activity to which rights apply influence the ways in which entitlements are created and interpreted. But they drastically underestimate the extent to which legal entitlements may differ, in form and content, in different legal systems. Like their conservative adversaries, they allow themselves to be beguiled by the imaginative dominance of the consolidated property right as a model to which all entitlements in all legal systems must conform. The programmatic argument about rights developed here claims that the construction of an empowered democracy requires the elaboration of types of legal entitlements differing, in form as well as content, both from one another and from the consolidated property right, that there are no obvious insuperable conceptual or practical obstacles to development of these alternative models of rights, and that the rudiments of such alternatives can already be found in current legal thought and practice.

If this first objection to rights theories reflects a sociological radicalism preoccupied with the built-in constraints of social types, a second objection arises from a modernist or existentialist radicalism. It denounces rights not for serving a particular institutional order but simply for establishing any institutional order. The radicalism that underlies this objection believes we achieve freedom only by a ceaseless struggle against all institutional routines. Such a vision recognizes the disproportion between our capabilities and the limited social or mental contexts in which we attempt to exercise them. But its great weakness is its failure to come to terms with the imperative of contextuality. We must in the end inhabit a particular social world, and we can never perform the act of denial often or quickly enough to prevent individual and social experience from being largely, though not entirely or ultimately, governed by the practices and assumptions of the world we live in. Nevertheless, the argument for the empowered democracy and for its system of rights rescues something from the wreck of this self-defeating ideal. It preserves the conception that formative contexts of power and production vary in the extent to which they respect and encourage our context-smashing abilities and enable us to exercise a vigilant and self-conscious mastery over the collective settings of individual activity. The system of legal rights outlined here defines a society that diminishes the dazed, narcoleptic quality of routinized social life and does so for the sake of a vision of individual and collective empowerment. Each detail of this set of legal entitlements connects back to this seemingly empty but in fact inspiring ideal.

The Trouble with the Established System of Legal Rights

What is the trouble with the established system of legal rights? From the standpoint of the criticism and the vision that underlie this whole institutional program, the trouble can be summarized by a single fact: the practical and imaginative ascendancy of the consolidated property right. The consolidated property right that exercises this overwhelming influence can be defined by both its content and its form. In content it is the principle of economic decentralization that consists in the allocation of more or less unrestricted claims to divisible portions of social capital: unrestricted both in the chain of temporal succession and in the scope of permitted usage. To be sure, the law has always recognized limits to this absolute discretion, just as in the counterpart area of contract it has always tried to restrain the dominant principles of freedom to choose the partner and the contract terms. But these qualifications remain anomalies. They acknowledge the existence in current society of forms of human association irreducible to the central categories of property and contract. They show that the coexistence of absolute property rights generates practical problems that cannot be solved by more absolute property rights. But they do not present alternative, developed models of entitlement.

Consolidated property right works its restrictive influence most directly through its relation to a version of the market economy that stands in the way of an advance toward greater economic plasticity and even toward greater degrees of economic decentralization. The result is not only to circumscribe unnecessarily the opportunity for permanent economic innovation but also to reproduce an ongoing conflict between the practice of democracy and the organization of the economy. Democratic control over the forms, pace, and result of economic accumulation is undercut while the contrast between task-defining and task-executing jobs turns the workplace into a permanent countermodel to the exercise of democratic citizenship.

The continuing authority of consolidated property also exercises a more indirect influence. By identifying the abstract principle of economic decentralization with a particular version of market institutions, it drastically restricts our vision of the possible alternatives to current market systems. The imagined alternatives – the transfer of undivided economic sovereignty to central governments or the attempt to cast the workers in each enterprise as the holders of consolidated property in their own business – jeopardize public freedoms and economic dynamism in all the ways previously discussed. And the basic institutional choice seems to be the selection of a mix of economic centralism and decentralization. But the radical who has

freed himself from the vestiges of deep-logic social theory and the spell of a particular theory of rights knows that any given mix of centralism and decentralization can assume different institutional forms. Thus, the functional and imaginative centrality of consolidated property within the system of rights contributes to the negative prejudice that underlies some of the paradoxes discussed in my earlier account of the genesis of the private-rights complex. Though the received system of private rights provides some people with the instruments with which to reduce other people to dependence, though it coexists with other rights that pose no such threat (welfare and civic entitlements), and though it needs to be combined with methods of organizational surveillance and hierarchy that nullify or reverse its overt meaning, it may nevertheless seem indispensable. Any attempt to replace it may seem bound to cause tyranny and inefficiency. The polemic against this negative prejudice can be completed only by a proposed system of rights that defies the negative prejudice on which the "realistic" defense of current institutions depends.

The prejudicial effect of the influence exercised by the consolidated property right does not stop at the direct and indirect contributions of consolidated property to a certain organization of the economy. It also exercises a broader, more intangible influence because it readily becomes a model for rights dealing with matters far removed from the methods for economic decentralization. It provides a form that, once abstracted from its specific content, is reproduced in almost every area of thinking about rights. The absolute portion of capital delineates a zone within which the property owner may act as he pleases, no matter what the consequences of his actions, and outside of which he may expect no protection, no matter how appealing his claim. The boundaries of such a right are primarily defined, at the moment of its creation, by law or contract; the relational setting in which the right is to be exercised remains largely irrelevant to its definition; thus, the discretionary action constituting the heart of this model of entitlement may be circumscribed but cannot be eviscerated. The definition of the right must be connected to its application by a rulelike or principled method of adjudication that can keep under control both open-ended normative controversy and complex causal analysis. The source of the right must be suited to the decontextualization that characterizes its later life: the unilateral imposition of a duty by the state, the fully articulated act of will, or some combination of the two.

The effect of attempting to cast all rights in this mold is to force large areas of existing social practice into incongruous legal forms. Thus, the obligations arising from relations of mutual interdependence are governed by contractual and delictual incrustations upon

a body of law obsessed with instantaneous contracts and confrontations between hypothetical strangers. The organization of work in large-scale institutions is treated either as the beneficiary of a paternalist police power or as the parallel to a regime of free contract. The need to combine widespread supervisory discretion with at least the facade of a regime of contract is in turn justified as a requirement of impersonal technical necessity.

Why does the legal form of the consolidated property right exercise the influence I have just described? You need not conjecture that this influence betrays a conspiracy of judges and jurists to maintain the property regime or that it demonstrates the unconscious subjection of motives and beliefs to the functional requirements for the reproduction of an established social order. Each type of legal right represents, even in its most formal aspects, the incomplete but significant picture of a certain model of human association. The stubborn understatement of existing, much less possible, diversity in the form and substance of legal rights is a version of the idolatry of the actual. It shows a failure to grasp the extent to which the models of human association already accepted in the less practical parts of social life (the exercise of democratic citizenship and the life of family and friendship) offer imaginative points of departure for the remaking of practical institutions.

The Generative Principles of a Reconstructed System of Rights

Two basic constructive principles inform a system of rights that gives legal form to the governmental and economic institutions of an empowered democracy and escapes, once and for all, the confining example of consolidated property.

The first and basic constructive principle is that the security of the individual should be established in ways that minimize both the immunity of institutional arrangements to challenge and conflict and the ease with which some individuals can reduce others to dependence. The meaning of this principle can be brought out by a brief discussion of its elements: the security of the individual, the avoidance of social petrification, and the antidote to dependence.

The security of the individual is his justified confidence that the conflicts of the republic will not put at risk his most intimate concerns with physical security, minimal material welfare, and protection against subjugation by any public or private power. The individual remains secure only if he enjoys basic freedoms to express himself and to combine with other people, most especially to combine with them for the purpose of influencing the future form of society. Security requires that the individual feel assured that overwhelming

practical need will not periodically threaten him with poverty or force him to submit to a superior power.

The commitment of empowered democracy to expand the scope of context-revising conflict makes it all the more important to assure the individual that his basic security, and the security of those closest to him, will be protected. If he lacks this assurance, the institutionalized controversies and reinventions of social life will quickly become intolerable to him and he will see each as a threat to himself. Of course, nothing can ensure that the institutions guaranteeing the immunity of the individual will not be undermined, but only in the trivial sense that nothing can entirely prevent any institutional arrangement from being changed.

If the attempt to give the constitution a transcendent basis may prove temporarily useful, it may also turn out to be dangerous once transcendent justifications go out of fashion. If an antimobilizational style of politics seems to diminish the risk that any arrangements, including those that guarantee immunity, will be altered, it does so only by producing dangers of its own. No contribution to public freedoms is more important than the attempt to make them rest on a basis that puts the fewest possible constraints upon experimentation with the institutional forms of social life. In this way, they need not be jeopardized every time conflict produces change. And because the entrenchment of practices and arrangements that cannot easily be challenged and altered usually goes hand in hand with the development of structures of dependence and domination, the rebellion against these structures can easily turn into an attack upon the protections of immunity.

Though the constitution of the empowered democracy requires an effective defense of immunity, it is not compatible with all possible views of security. The individual may, for example, feel that his vital sense of protection requires that he live in a quiescent polity and that he have at his disposal private wealth in the form of consolidated property rights. He may even feel he is secure only if he has a lifelong guarantee to occupy a particular job or to live in the manner customary to a certain caste. The constitution of the empowered democracy expresses a social and personal ideal incompatible with this version of the ideal of security. Like all our other ideas about ourselves, subjective conceptions of security are stubbornly held, and no single set of facts serves to disprove them. But if the ideals and understanding underlying this institutional program hold up, people will have reason to change their views of what essential security consists in. They and, if not they, their children will discover that the security that matters does not require the maintenance of a narrowly defined mode of life. They reach this conclusion in part by finding senses and varieties of security compatible with an ever

greater jumbling up of distinct styles of life and in part by awakening to a conception of the personality as both dependent upon context and strengthened through context smashing.

It may be objected that any arrangement for securing immunity, must be, by definition, an institutional practice not open to revision. But this objection misses the key point. The institutional interpretations and foundations of security differ in the measure of their abstractability: that is to say, in the extent to which they can be disengaged from a complex texture of social life. At one extreme, the safeguard of individual immunity may consist in the intangibility of a particular way of life, defined by the position a group occupies within a well-defined communal and hierarchical order. At the other extreme, it may consist in a set of rights whose main demand upon the other parts of the social order is that they lay themselves open to challenge and revision and that they contribute to the overcoming of the gap between contextualized routine and context revision. Along the spectrum defined by these two poles, the rights afforded by empowered democracy have the same relation to a property-based rights system that absolute property has to inherited ranks. The point is to diminish the extent that safeguarding security rigidifies social life and thereby helps reproduce inflexible roles and ranks. A major theme of the programmatic argument developed here is that, in a particular circumstance, with its available stock of available institutional practices and models of human association, this seemingly vague ideal can be made to yield affirmative proposals. And so, too, one task of the system of rights is to give a distinct content to the seemingly empty idea of a more abstractable immunity right.

From even the little that has been said it should be clear that differences in the abstractability of the institutions that establish the immunity of the individual are not just isolated technical features of certain arrangements. They represent both rival interpretations of the meaning of security and causal conjectures about the most effective way to realize in fact this particular ideal of security. In both guises they exemplify the general views of society and personality they help sustain.

Just as the forms of immunity differ in the extent to which they bar social life against transformative pressure, so too they differ in the ease with which they lend themselves to use as instruments of domination. To recognize this difference, it is enough to recall an earlier comparison between two kinds of rights within existing legal systems. The property owner can use consolidated property rights, freely accumulated and transferred by inheritance, to diminish his dependence upon other people (or rather upon their discretionary decisions) while increasing their dependence upon him. But welfare entitlements and civic or public rights do not lend themselves to this

use except through a far more indirect chain of deliberate manipulations or unintended effects. This imbalance between the subjugation-producing effects of the legal forms of immunity within a legal system can extend into differences between entire legal systems, according to the way each legal order goes about protecting individual security.

Immunity guarantees in the reformed constitution should satisfy two negative standards: they should not supply instruments of subjugation and they should not help protect the social order against effective challenge and revision. A major theme of this book has been that a necessary condition for maintaining a system of communal and hierarchical divisions is that these divisions be generated and regenerated by institutional arrangements protected against the risks of the routine practical and imaginative conflicts of social life. Precisely this seclusion from conflict represents the surest sign of triumph in the social warfare. It would also be a sufficient condition of structures of dependence and domination, were it not for the following qualification: society may be highly routinized in a fashion that gives communal division primacy over social hierarchy. The social order may then appear as a confederation of relatively equal and rigidly separate communities, although foreshortened hierarchies may appear within each community or group. In such a circumstance institutional arrangements, sanctified by slowly changing custom, may aggravate the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-transforming conflict. Something like this situation is said to exist in many tribal societies. Moreover, the longing for such a circumstance marks a long succession of political utopias from the idea of a republic of relatively equal yeoman farmers to the unreconstructed versions of petty commodity production. But even when such a rigidified system of communal divisions (sometimes called a segmented society) can be realized in fact, it suffers from a peculiar instability. If the view of the enabling conditions of material progress presented in earlier parts of this book is correct, the development of productive or destructive capabilities requires a shifting around of people, jobs, and institutional arrangements. It even demands that the organization of work represent a visible embodiment of practical reason, understood as a method for the continuous interplay between task definitions and operational acts. Whenever the rigidified society as a whole or a group within it faces a practical emergency (or an exceptional opportunity), its leaders must mobilize resources and manpower in ways not predetermined or even tolerated by the established institutional order. Those who take the lead in this extra-constitutional mobilization find themselves with a floating quantum of power in their hands: the power represented by the emergency

resources. They may then fashion arrangements that transform this exceptional control over free-floating capital and manpower into an institutionalized part of the social order. Notice how this line of argument suggests a speculative conjecture about the genesis of social hierarchies out of relatively egalitarian tribal societies. The larger view of the enabling conditions of material progress that this hypothesis presupposes explains why the combination of rigidity with equality fails to recur at higher levels of the development of productive capability. The segmented tribal society is a historical fact, whereas the idea of the yeoman republic is an archaizing fantasy.

The first generative principle of a system of rights for the empowered democracy is the commitment to establish the individual's position of immunity in a way that minimizes both the rigidification of the institutional order and the risks of personal subjugation. But though this principle represents the most important constructive idea of a system of rights suitable to the empowered democracy, it can generate this system only when complemented by a few subsidiary principles. One of these auxiliary ideas is that the legal devices for granting access to divisible portions of social capital should contribute to the making of a decentralized economic order; which is to say, of an economic order that privileges the consensual route to the development of negative capability. The legal form of economic decentralization, however, must carry negative capability beyond the point it can reach under a regime of consolidated property rights and mass-production industry. Market rights must therefore be created that combine certain features of consolidated property with other traits that consolidated property lacks. Thus, under the reformed constitution, the terms of access to capital emphasize the provisional and conditional character of all proprietary control. But within these terms and for this period, the discretionary use and transfer of the resources may be nearly absolute and may resemble, to that extent, consolidated property. Indeed, the clearer the assertion of ultimate collective control over the forms, rate, and fruits of accumulation, the stronger the justification for property and contract rights similar to the most unforgiving versions of nineteenth-century private law. This subsidiary principle requires no further discussion here; the arguments that support and elaborate it have already been worked out in the course of discussing the proposals for economic reorganization.

Another subsidiary idea does require more extended analysis because its foundations and aims outreach those of the institutional program. This principle is the effort to affirm legal rights that, by their form and content, suit the obligations of interdependence that characterize communal life. And these rights, when viewed in their

interaction with the other types of entitlements constituting the system of rights, should embody and promote a certain prescriptive vision of communal relations.

The program for institutional reconstruction worked out here does not exhaust the reach of the vision that inspires it. The ultimate stakes in politics are the fine texture of personal relations. The institutions of the empowered democracy matter not only for the heightened freedom, prosperity, and self-consciousness they promise but also as the framework for a style of personal attachments. At the center of this revised approach to direct personal relations stands a conception of community as a zone in which the increased acceptance of mutual vulnerability makes it possible to multiply ways of diminishing the conflict between attachment to other people and the claims of self-consciousness and self-possession. Overcoming this conflict represents but another facet of the project of human empowerment.

Traditional legal thought has accustomed us to think of communal life as almost beyond the proper scope of legal rights. If the jurists are to be believed, legal regulation appears in the domain of intimate and communal relations as the hand of Midas, threatening to destroy whatever it touches. But this supposed antipathy between rights and community reflects both a rigid view of rights and an impoverished conception of community. Its actual effect is often to leave communal life all the more subject to the forms of self-interested exchange and domination from which the policy of legal abstention is expected to protect it.

A legal theory under the spell of consolidated property imagines rights to establish sharply demarcated areas of discretionary action. But the rigid related contrast of right and no-right, the refusal to take into account the effect that an exercise of right has upon the associates of the rightholder, and the insistence upon explicit bargain or unilateral state imposition as sources of obligation are all inappropriate to communal life. In fact, they are even unsuitable to continuing business dealings that involve significant collaboration between business partners. Communal and collaborative relationships demand that the scope of a right be contextually defined in the light of standards and judgments about the effect the exercise of the right might have upon other people. The legal penetration of community and collaboration also requires the legal acknowledgment of obligations that arise from half-articulate and half-deliberate relations of interdependence rather than from either completed bargains or unilateral impositions of duty. Though current law occasionally protects such interdependencies, it characteristically does so through a haphazard sequence of subordinate principles and exceptional bodies

of doctrine. The effect is to make the protection depend upon mechanical distinctions.

The policy of legal abstention reveals an inadequate view of community as well as a single-track conception of rights. It sees community as the exclusion of conflict or the restraint on self-interest and, in either instance, as a contrast to the quality of workaday life. Because the received vocabulary of legal rights is associated with both conflict and self-interest, it appears here as an alien and subversive presence. But the imagined contrast between a communal idyll and the everyday world of work and exchange is both unrealistic and corrupting. It fails to recognize the element of conflict that inevitably arises from the development of independent subjectivity. It does not see that the restraint on self-interest retains its vital connection to the communal ideal only to the extent that it remains subordinate to a principle of radical mutual acceptance. However, the strongest argument against the stark contrast of communal harmony and practical activity is that this antithesis forms part of a scheme of social life that harms both the elements it so rigidly opposes. It abandons practical life to unrestrained self-interest and technically justified hierarchy and reduces private community to a futile refuge against the brutality of the outside world. To the extent that the forms of dependence and domination remain undisturbed, the communal ideal becomes the softening mantle of a power order. Every attempt to assert equality in the distribution of trust requires a betrayal of existing communal attachments.

The generative principles discussed in the preceding pages connect the other parts of the institutional program to the reconstruction of the system of rights. They suggest the creation of distinct types of entitlements, distinguished along lines that, in fainter and more tortuous outline, can already be discerned in modern law. These types of rights differ both by their operational characteristics and by the particular areas of the institutional program to which they give legal form. The distinguishing operational features concern the relation between the right at the moment of its initial formulation and the right at the moment of its legitimate exercise. They also include the modes of argument and analysis most relevant to the passage from formulation to exercise. The aspect of the institutional program to which each type of right refers presents less a distinct model of human association than part of a scheme designed to prevent such rigid distinctions from taking hold. Within such a view, the operational characteristics of entitlements cease to be seen as the inherent features of rights, just as rights themselves are no longer thought to mark the built-in structure of an institutional type of governmen-

tal, economic, or communal organization. Now the form of a right can be made to reflect, deliberately and directly, its programmatic role.

Market Rights

Market rights are the rights employed for economic exchange in the trading sector of the society. They come into their own within a fully realized version of the reconstructed economy: the economy that allows teams of workers, technicians, and entrepreneurs to gain conditional and temporary access to portions of social capital and that thereby develops both the absolute degree of economic decentralization and the extent of economic plasticity.

Market rights show two different faces, according to whether we focus on the relation between the capital takers and the capital fund or on the dealings among the capital takers themselves. In the relation to the capital fund, what stands out, by contrast to the existing market systems, are both the general commitment to a scheme of conditional and provisional rights of access to capital and the turn to explicit collective decision making to set the precise terms of use. These terms may fix the time for which capital may be available, the interest charged by the fund for its resources, the uses to which capital may be put (e.g., the extent to which it may be employed to expand the enterprise), and the outer limits that must be observed in experiments with the form of work organization. They may leave a broad and nearly unlimited scope for entrepreneurial discretion in certain sectors of the economy while circumscribing this discretion severely in other sectors.

The key legal significance of the new relation between the capital fund and the capital takers is brought out by its impact on the traditional contrast between private and regulatory law. This contrast typically combines and confuses two ideas that should be kept distinct. First, there is the opposition between the rules and practices defining a particular type of market and those correcting its results in particular transactions. This distinction, though never entirely clear-cut, has its justifications. The reformed market and the revised theory of market rights would not abolish the difference between market definition and contract correction. It would simply make this difference less important by weakening, for reasons soon to be remembered, the felt moral and social need to correct particular deals.

But implied in the contrast of private and regulatory law there is another, indefensible idea. This idea, rarely confessed but even more rarely abandoned, is the distinction between the rules and practices establishing a market (the content of private law) and those correcting

the operations of the market economy as a whole, or of broad sectors of this economy, rather than the results of particular transactions. This supposed general correction may be motivated by social policies, such as distributional fairness, that market institutions are supposedly unable to accomplish (the task of regulatory law). The contrast between market definition and general market correction makes no sense as a distinction between two inherently different activities or topics. The market may indeed substitute nonmarket for market forms of organization. But nonmarket forms are just as likely to represent fragments of a different style of market organization – one at odds with the style enshrined in the established rules of private law. Received economic and legal thought has trouble recognizing these exemplary deviations because of its habitual confusion of the market with one particular version of market institutions. Under the reformed economic system, however, such confusion would lose its props; the basic norms of contract and property would be seen to be no less “political” than the distributional issues fought out in the categories of regulatory law. The resulting advance in intellectual clarity would also be a gain in our effective mastery over the terms of practical social life.

Consider now the second side of market rights: the side that refers to the dealings among the economic enterprises themselves. Here firms are free to transact with one another within the limits of time and use prescribed by the central political decisions. The constraints on entrepreneurial discretion are certainly more overt than in the current style of market institutions. But I have already suggested several reasons to expect that the overall workings of such a system would actually broaden the opportunities for the exercise of entrepreneurial initiative. One such line of reasoning deserves further development here because of its close bearing on the form and effect of economic rights.

A transactional system retains its character only so long as it can be distinguished from a power order in which some people make decisions at the behest of others. Yet market transactions constantly produce inequalities of wealth, and they commonly presuppose inequalities of information. Success in the market appears, first and foremost, as the acquisition of advantages that can be used to secure further advantages in the next rounds of market transactions. If all such inequalities are canceled out as soon as they have been gained, the market is reduced to little more than the facade to an overriding method of redistributive allocation. But if these inequalities are allowed to accumulate too much, the market is gradually replaced by a power order. We cannot deduce from the abstract idea of the market an ideal reconciliation between the imperatives to correct and not to correct. We cannot even expect that there will be such a reconciliation

for all possible versions of market institutions. For a given economy, or sector of the economy, the minimum of correction needed to prevent it from collapsing into a power order may be greater than the maximum of correction compatible with the autonomy of market decisions. Market systems, and the broader formative institutional contexts of power and production to which they belong, differ crucially in the extent to which they realize the idea of a structure of decentralized bargaining, without having constantly to correct or compensate the outcomes of particular transactions.

Legal systems often appeal to a stratagem that moderates or obfuscates, rather than solves, the problem of overcorrection and undercorrection. This stratagem replaces outright redistributive correction by rules and standards that distinguish between contractual situations according to the degree to which the parties are allowed to treat one another as unrestricted gamblers. The antigambling theme includes the notion that the parties had in mind a rough equivalence of performances. It also incorporates the idea that they are engaged in something of a collaborative venture and may not exploit to the hilt one another's unexpected misfortunes or guileless mistakes. Both because it characteristically works through presumptions of intent and because it singles out only certain transactions, the antigambling impulse softens and conceals the subversive force of redistributive correction. Yet it does in effect circumscribe the scope of decentralized economic decision. The frequency with which it appears in the setting of significant disparities of power between the contract partners suggests that one of its major, half-conscious uses is to protect the weak from the strong.

An economic system that dispenses with consolidated property as the principal mechanism of economic decentralization may increase the constraints of time and usage on the employment of capital, although even these constraints may be set very differently in different sectors of the economy. Within these limits, however, it lessens the need for ad hoc redistributive corrections. In the core area of the dealings among takers of capital from the rotating capital fund, it diminishes the pressure to restrict initiative in all the ways suggested by the antigambling impulse. For this reconstructed system is designed precisely to encourage decentralization and plasticity and to undercut all the devices enabling entrenched economic organizations and accumulators of capital to protect themselves against the effects of market instabilities. The provisional teams of capital takers, secure in their basic welfare entitlements, can be treated to a very large extent as unrestricted gamblers.

What follows for the operational characteristics of market rights? Such rights would have the basic operational features of contract and property entitlements in current private law. In fact, for the reasons

previously considered, these characteristics may be realized in an even more untrammelled form. Property, to be sure, would be disaggregated, as it has been in so many periods of its history, into a series of distinct powers assigned to different entities or rightholders: central representative bodies of the democracy, the competing investment funds, and the capital takers who have access to the fund on explicitly temporary and limited terms. But within these limits the capital takers would benefit from market rights with all the formal characteristics of current contract entitlements. The limitations of time and use could be absorbed, as conditional terms or public policy prohibitions, without damage to the three basic operational traits of the consolidated property right itself.

First, the source of obligation must be either the unilateral imposition of a duty by the state or a fully articulated agreement. The half-deliberate relations of interdependence and reliance that occupy so prominent a place in our ordinary views of moral obligation have no force here.

Second, the boundaries of the entitlement are primarily defined at the moment of its initial formulation. The specific relational context in which a market right may be exercised has only a limited bearing on the definition of how the rightholder may or may not use his right. To be sure, the commitment to demarcate the scope of the right at the moment of its birth must inevitably be fudged in a system of judge-made law, just as it unavoidably weakens even in a system of legislated law that has cast doctrinal conceptualism aside. But there a distinction must be drawn between the reinterpretation of entitlements in the light of general purposes, policies, and principles and the willingness to make this reinterpretation depend upon the detailed relational setting in which the right is exercised.

From this second characteristic there follows a third: a bright line separates the areas of entitlement and nonentitlement. Within the boundaries of the entitlement, the rightholder may act as he pleases, deaf to the effect that the exercise of the right may have upon other people. Outside those boundaries, however, he cannot expect to be protected, no matter how appealing his claim may seem morally. This bright line between the zones of right and nonright keeps the rightholder in the circumstance of a gambler.

The market rights of the reformed constitution do not bring about any major change in these operational characteristics, which already apply to the consolidated property rights of existing economies. The number of legally imposed conditions and prohibitions increases while the direct or indirect correction of transaction outcomes diminishes. Yet the practical effects and the imaginative message of the rights that possess these familiar structural features are radically transformed by the institutional reconstruction of the economy.

Immunity Rights

Immunity rights protect the individual against oppression by concentrations of public or private power, against exclusion from the important collective decisions that influence his life, and against the extremes of economic and cultural deprivation. They give him the justified confidence of not being fundamentally endangered by the expanded conflicts of an empowered democracy. This confidence encourages him to participate fearlessly and actively in making collective decisions about the organization of society. This initial definition of immunity rights requires several clarifications.

The interests to be protected by such entitlements may not always be identical to the ones people may themselves define as crucial to their security. But neither are these interests the expression of an independently defined and externally imposed view of what vital security requires. The theory of immunity rights rests, in part, on the empirical hypothesis that freedom from violence, coercion, subjugation, and poverty (defined in both absolute and relative terms) enters into people's ordinary conception of essential security. These goods are rivaled in importance only by the more intangible sense of being accepted by other people as a person, with a place in the world. But, to a varying extent, people have also always put their sense of basic security in the maintenance of particular social roles, jobs, and ways of life. Any attempt to indulge this conception of security would prove incompatible with the institutions of the empowered democracy and with the personal and social ideals that inspire them. The case for the reformed constitution draws heavily on the argument that people can and should wean themselves away from a restrictive, rigidifying view of where they should place their sense of protection.

Modern history has abundantly showed that motivations can be changed in just this way. The triumph of liberal or authoritarian mass politics has weakened the system of fixed social stations that might enable people to seek their essential safety in the performance of a precise social role and in the claims upon resources and support that may accompany these roles. The experience of world history, with its headlong recombination of institutional practices and ways of life, has forced whole peoples increasingly to disengage their abstract sense of collective identity from their faithfulness to particular customs. The play of economic rationality has taught everyone that an insistence upon the perpetuation of rigid social stations and ways of life exacts a formidable cost in economic sluggishness. The constitution of an empowered democracy merely carries these tendencies farther while harnessing them to a liberalizing rather than a despotic cause.

The chief goal of the system of immunity rights is to afford the citizen a safety that encourages him to participate actively and independently in collective decision making. The point is not to favor public engagements by contrast to the pursuit of private interests, a choice that would confront the individual with real dangers and unattractive options. The institutional arrangements and the animating ideas of an empowered democracy progressively weaken the antithesis between civic participation and the pursuit of private interests. Immunity rights encourage the citizen to share in an activity combining features of both, within a more integrated experience of mastery over the social contexts of activity.

The idea that individual security must be strengthened if individual involvement in expanded collective conflicts is to be encouraged also rests on straightforward empirical assumptions. Unless the citizen feels secure in the most vital matters, he will live in constant fear of the controversies in which the life of an empowered democracy abounds. He will soon try to escape from what will appear to him an intolerably perilous situation. He may try to flee the anxieties of this free-for-all by throwing himself under the protection of whatever aspiring strongman may offer to shield him. The republic would soon degenerate into a battle of demagogues or warlords in command of frightened retinues.

Freedom as participation presupposes freedom as immunity. The critics of traditional democratic theory go wrong when they polemically contrast positive and negative freedom to the advantage of the former and treat participatory opportunities as a more than satisfactory substitute for immunity guarantees. But the defenders of conventional liberal democracy are mistaken to treat the narrow forms of participation available in a demobilized democracy as an adequate complement to the safeguards of immunity. They also err in viewing consolidated property rights (which they mistakenly identify with the market form of economic organization) as an indispensable condition of freedom, indispensable if only because their replacement would destroy liberty.

Note that the suggested relation between immunity and participation merely appropriates and develops a familiar theme of classical republican thought. Thus, one traditional justification of the property qualification to the suffrage was the conviction that the poor elector would become dependent upon patrons for physical protection and economic support. This traditional fear has in fact been borne out by the perversions of universal suffrage in contemporary third world countries.

We are accustomed to think that the legal means for assuring individuals a sphere of inviolable security necessarily impose a measure of rigidity on social life. Thus, there may arise the false belief — so characteristic of the diluted, modern versions of social necessitar-

ianism – in an inevitable tension between the desire to secure an area of protected individual safety and the commitment to leave the shape of social relations open to experimental innovation, especially when innovation comes through governmental policy.

A minimum of tension is unavoidable; here as elsewhere we do not have to become perfectionists when we stop being fatalists. Any solution to the problem of immunity requires that some rules remain stable and some resources be set aside. But there is no fixed inverse relation between individual security and social rigidity. You can have more, or you can have less, of both at the same time. A caste system affords individuals a mode and a measure of security, in a fashion bound up with the entrenchment of dependence and dominion and at the cost of an extreme rigidification of social life. Absolute property rights give security too: a protection that leaves more room for movement, and condemns fewer people to gross oppression, than does caste. The immunity rights of an empowered democracy have the same relation to consolidated property that property has to caste.

Immunity rights safeguard two main sets of vital interests. They secure against governmental or private oppression especially insofar as such oppression may threaten or circumscribe the opportunity to participate, actively and equally, in major decisions about the organization of society and the disposition of social resources. They protect against economic or cultural deprivation, especially insofar as it makes the individual dependent upon governmental officials or private patrons. Each major direction of the immunity right requires further discussion.

The narrowly political and civic freedoms that a more democratic constitution must protect do not differ in kind from the freedoms already upheld by conventional democratic practice. They include freedom of expression and association and freedom from arbitrary imprisonment or imprisonment for subversive activity. If the wealth of society permits, these liberties may well incorporate a freedom to opt out of ordinary, gainful social activity and to lead, with a minimum guaranteed income, what many may view as a self-absorbed and parasitic existence. Society stands to benefit from the alternative social visions that may be dreamt up and enacted by these internal exiles or by the countercommunities they form. And the individual's awareness that he may at any time withdraw from society into a proud independence may make it easier for him to display this self-possession within society. But the special quality of political and civic freedoms under an empowered democracy depends less on such additional entitlements than on the enlarged opportunity to exercise the ordinary freedoms and on the many features of the institutional plan that contribute to protect these liberties.

Under this institutional proposal, the exercise of public freedoms

ceases to be either a last-ditch defense against despotic governments or an ecstatic deviation from the tenor of ordinary social life. For example, the freedom to associate politically gains new force when institutional arrangements make it easier to establish a connection between disputes at the center of governmental power and debates inside the grassroots organizations that absorb much of people's everyday lives. Even the vote for the central representative bodies and higher offices of the state takes on a greater authority when constitutional arrangements no longer deliberately link the safeguards of freedom to the obstacles that stand in the way of institutional experimentation.

The constitutional scheme contributes to the stability of these essential freedoms by the beliefs that it exemplifies and confirms, by the motivations it reinforces, and by the methods of institutional design it deploys. These contributions help define the distinctive quality of the traditional political and civic freedoms under an empowered democracy.

Remember, first, that these immunity rights do not lend themselves to the exercise of domination and that they impose a minimal rigidity upon the organization of society. For these reasons, no part of the essential security of the individual is made to rest upon the exercise of consolidated property rights. Thus, the rebellion against domination and the attempt to experiment need not endanger – as they so often have – the indispensable safeguards of liberty.

Consider also that the institutional structure of the empowered democracy shares with the traditional version of democracy a commitment to avoid the concentration of governmental power into a small number of offices. Indeed, the proposed constitution multiplies the spheres of institutionalized conflict over the resources for society making. The aim is to avoid associating this multiplication of independent parts of government with constitutional techniques that encourage and perpetuate deadlock and thereby help insulate social arrangements against effective challenge. But because there are many arenas of conflict, the take-over of the state by a faction determined to pervert the constitution, or the withdrawal of the citizenry into a dangerous passivity, cannot be sudden or invisible. Such events would result in the derangement of the relations among governmental institutions and in the stultification of these many, independent centers of institutional experimentation. No constitutional plan can save citizens who have lost the desire for self-direction. It is nevertheless possible to devise institutions that give us many chances to discover the perversion of our political ideals.

Other psychological and intellectual forces complement the stabilizing effect of these methods of institutional design upon the arrangements that secure the immunity of the individual. The

institutions of radical democracy increase opportunities of empowerment that merge the sense of satisfying a private interest into the experience of mastery over the social contexts of individual action. Such experiences of empowerment have an addictive force, and the longing for self-assertion becomes attached to the complex of institutions that presuppose and guarantee the security of the individual.

Just as the motivations encouraged by a more democratized constitution are tenacious, the insights on which this constitution draws are irreversible. The programmatic vision defended and developed here has many connections to descriptive and explanatory ideas. But it is important to distinguish the more affirmative and contentious aspects of these ideas – such as the particular theory of transformation presented in Chapter 4 – from the initial negative conceptions on which the affirmative ideas try to make good – such as the theses that institutional systems do not fall into a predefined list or sequence and that they differ in the extent to which they aggravate or efface the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-transforming conflict. These more elementary and largely negative ideas form a proto-theory: a body of ideas that can serve as point of departure for different views of social reality and possibility. They represent an advanced form of skeptical disenchantment with attempts to present particular social orders as either holy or necessary. From the perspective of this proto-theory, deep-logic social thought can be recognized as only a halfhearted version of the experience of seeing through false necessity. The conventional democratic creed of the present day can be seen to continue the superstitious and unargued identification of markets and democracies with the forms of democracies and markets that happen to exist. Freedom is intangibly but immeasurably strengthened when its safeguards no longer depend on such superstitions and when seemingly nihilistic insights can be enlisted in the cause of a liberalizing program.

Freedom against governmental or private oppression represents only one of two major sets of immunity rights. The other set consists in welfare entitlements: guarantees of access to the material and cultural resources needed to make a life. These include provision for nourishment, housing, health care, and education, with absolute standards proportional to the wealth of society. The right to opt out of gainful social activity can be viewed as an extension of these welfare entitlements rather than as a development of the traditional civic liberties.

The key point is that under the proposed regime welfare entitlements must provide a minimal, equal amount of resources, whether as money or as services in kind, rather than respect a claim to keep particular jobs or positions. The enforcement of such claims to specific social places would undermine a program of democratization

that puts its hope, and the hope for developing the productive capabilities of society, in the cumulative opening of social life to revision and recombination. The rejection of job tenure as a major direction for welfare entitlements highlights the contrast between the program of empowered democracy and traditional proposals for re-communalizing social life.

The economic institutions of an empowered democracy help generate the resources to fund the welfare entitlements and encourages individuals to make their conceptions of material welfare more independent of tenure in particular jobs. The arrangements of an empowered democracy contribute to the development of productive capabilities and thus promise to increase the absolute amount of wealth available to finance welfare rights. Those arrangements also diminish the familiar conflict between the bias toward economic growth and the commitment to satisfy welfare needs. Collective and individual choices -- between consumption and saving, and between short-term and long-term or safe and risky investments -- must still be made. But the basic flows of investment decisions are no longer critically influenced by relatively small numbers of investors, managers, and entrepreneurs who may be frightened into disinvestment by every concession to the poor or every advance toward greater equality of circumstance. Moreover, together with the sharp curtailment of inheritance, the rejection of consolidated property rights as the chief vehicle of market decentralization makes it unnecessary for the welfare system to serve as a relatively futile and disruptive means to moderate inequalities that the operation of the economy constantly re-creates and sharpens.

At the same time, the institutions of the empowered democracy weaken the fixity of special social roles, or stations in the social division of labor, and restrain the allegiances that attach people to these fixed places. In this way, the institutions help stabilize a type of welfare entitlement that minimizes the creation of vested rights in particular jobs.

Welfare entitlements and civic freedoms have the same operational features, readily inferred from the preceding discussion of the social ideals and empirical assumptions underlying the theory of immunity rights. Discussion of these structural characteristics can be summary, because in all but minor respects they coincide with the formal traits of consolidated property. But the social significance of the structural features changes radically with the shift in their institutional setting.

First, the source of the immunity right is the situation of ongoing connection to the society -- the mere circumstance of continuing involvement in its institutional arrangements. The importance of a clear-cut dichotomy between citizenship and residency diminishes

when decisional processes within grassroots or productive organizations resemble and amplify decision making in the central representative bodies of government. Note that the source of the immunity right is a situation – and, indeed, a situation that transcends all particular engagements. Yet the specificity of this source does not make the other structural features of immunity rights any different from the operational characteristics of traditional rights of contract or property, whose sources are articulated agreements or state-imposed duties.

The immunity rights are defined as rigidly as possible at the time of their initial formulation. There is no more latitude for their redefinition at the moment of exercise than inheres, inevitably, in the interpretive freedom of the law applier. The particular relational circumstance in which the right is to be exercised is largely irrelevant. For the immunity rights define the safeguards – the minimal defenses – with which the individual enters all the dealings in which he does participate.

Consequently, a bright line circumscribes the boundaries of each immunity right. The rightholder can expect to distinguish confidently between the factual circumstances in which the law protects him in the asserted exercise of such an entitlement and those in which it does not. He need not subject the use of his right to a calculus of its effects upon other people. All the entitlements that make up the system of rights must be developed and enforced without prejudice to these safeguards, which secure each individual in a proud and jealous independence and enable him to experiment with contract and community without the fear that he may become another person's dependent.

Destabilization Rights

Destabilization rights protect the citizen's interest in breaking open the large-scale organizations or the extended areas of social practice that remain closed to the destabilizing effects of ordinary conflict and thereby sustain insulated hierarchies of power and advantage. The combination of immunity rights with destabilization rights gives legal expression to the central institutional mechanism of the whole constitutional plan. The destabilization entitlement ties the collective interest in ensuring that all institutions and practices can be criticized and revised to the individual interest in avoiding oppression. The empirical basis for this connection is the role that closure to effective challenge plays in the entrenchment of factional privilege.

The primary respondents to the citizens who claim a right to have an organization or an area of social practice destabilized are the non-governmental organizations or the actual individuals who are legally

competent, or actually able, to reconstruct the objectionable arrangements. The subsidiary respondent is the state, perhaps even a special branch of government. Governmental action to disrupt and reconstruct the overprotected and subjugation-producing arrangements may be needed not only because the people in charge of the organizations or practices at issue may be the biggest beneficiaries of the insulated hierarchies but because there may be no people visibly in charge. Such a situation is especially likely to occur when the claimant seeks to disrupt an area of social practice rather than a discrete organization.

Consider now in greater detail the content of destabilization rights. They encompass both a negative and a positive use. Their negative aim has already been described as the attempt to deny protection against destabilizing conflict to either institutions or noninstitutional arrangements whenever this immunity to conflict seems to generate stable ties of domination and dependence. The destabilizing conflict that must be kept open may come from within a particular institution, if such an institution is the target of the right. It may result from the ordinary activities of a sector of the society or the economy. Or it may even take place in the central deliberative processes of the republic. What matters is that the arrangements in question be available to *some* mode of attack. When the focus falls on the evil to be remedied rather than on its cause, the destabilization entitlement can be re-described as the citizen's right to prevent any faction of the society from gaining a privileged hold upon any of the means for creating the social future within the social present. The destabilization right can also be depicted in a way that draws attention to the process by which immunity to conflict arises and gives rise to power and privilege. The two descriptions overlap because the exercise of a privileged hold over the resources for society making allows those who exercise the hold to subjugate those who do not.

The voluntary passivity of potentially affected publics may be the original cause of an entrenchment of prerogative. But the turning point that justifies the exercise of a destabilization right takes place only when a new burst of collective activity by the immediate victims of the newly entrenched prerogatives can no longer easily overcome the entrenchment-producing effects of this political withdrawal.

Destabilization is not enough; intervention provoked by the exercise of a destabilization right must change the disrupted practice or institution. The entire argument of this book supports the idea that susceptibility to revision is not a merely negative characteristic. Some sets of institutional arrangements go farther than others toward overcoming the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-transforming struggle. What is true of large constellations of practices must also hold, though less clearly, for particular, rel-

actively isolated practices. But the search for the affirmative content of the seemingly negative idea of a structure-revising structure must be tempered here by a concern not to circumscribe unnecessarily the freedom to experiment either with the content of the general laws or with the design of particular institutions. The reconstructive activity unleashed by the exercise of a destabilization right must therefore obey a negative presumption. It should aim at the minimum of reconstruction required to satisfy the negative aims of the entitlement rather than at the form an institution or practice would take if it were to make the greatest possible contribution to the development of negative capability. Instead of being used to force men and women to be free, it should give them a second chance before they decide to enslave themselves.

The destabilization right whose negative and affirmative content I have just described has counterparts in variants of the complex injunctive relief found in contemporary law. Such relief frequently has courts intervening in important institutions, such as schools and mental asylums, or in major areas of social practice, such as electoral organization, and reconstructing them in the name of democratic ideals said to inspire complex bodies of law. The character of the relief afforded by destabilization rights can be brought out all the more clearly by contrast to these established remedies. On the one hand, the destabilization entitlements go farther than anything available in current law. Freed once and for all from the restrictive model of consolidated property, they can develop unashamedly as devices of institutional disruption and reconstruction. The exercise of these rights brings into question a part of the collective structure of society rather than serving merely as a means to vindicate a transitory interest within that structure. Because they do not suit standard judicial or legislative settings they may even have to be elaborated and enforced by a special branch of government. (Recall the suggestion, in the section on the organization of government, as to how such a branch might work.) On the other hand, however, the destabilization rights have a more precise focus than the complex injunctions of present law. They serve not to embody specific ideals of human association but to ensure that, whatever the enacted forms of human association may be, they will preserve certain minimal qualities: above all, the quality of being readily replaceable.

The whole theory of destabilization rights outlined in this section rests on a key empirical hypothesis: the belief that treats insulation against destabilizing conflict as a necessary condition for the entrenchment of structures of domination and dependence. The explanatory social theory helping sustain this program of empowered democracy emphasizes the connection between freedom from subjugation and freedom as mastery over context. The legal practice of

destabilization rights must itself become one of the principal ways of testing and developing this hypothesis experimentally.

To gain a sense of the practical settings in which to deploy the abstract ideas discussed up to now, consider an example of a situation calling for the exercise of destabilization rights under a fully mature version of the proposed constitution. Suppose some of the enterprises trading under the capital fund are unusually successful, thanks to a combination of exceptional diligence or skill and unforeseen market conditions. They succeed in using economic influence, electoral pressure, and policy persuasion to change the terms on which capital is made available. Under the new terms they are allowed to gain control of other, subordinate enterprises and to hire workers for temporary, dead-end, and underpaid jobs shunned by the stable, relatively privileged labor force of the enterprise. Once established in this new situation, they can extend their wealth and influence still farther. They increase the autonomy of the capital fund from the central deliberative processes of the democracy, leaving technocrats, beholden to the favored enterprises and groups, in effective charge of crucial financial decisions. The subversion of the nascent privileges now requires something between a mere shift in policy and a constitutional revolution.

In such a circumstance, the agency of government responsible for developing destabilization rights may move to rob the nascent prerogatives of their defenses. The law may provide that some of these interventions take effect unless and until reversed by a combination of other branches of government. Thus, the enforcing authority may order the enterprises in question to moderate their internal hierarchy or relinquish some of the devices by which they exclude new workers or relegate them to a permanently inferior status. Other destabilizing interventions may come closer to jeopardizing the democracy's freedom to experiment. Although taking effect immediately, they may need to be reconfirmed, within a short time, by other branches of government or by the general electorate. Such a procedure might be suitable, for example, when the responsible agency of government intervened to prevent the bodies directly responsible for administering the rotating capital fund from using their discretion in a systematically biased fashion to favor a certain group of enterprises in ways not adequately justified by the importance of support for up-and-coming innovators. Other types of intervention would not take effect at all until confirmed by the electorate or by a broad range of intermediate representative bodies. This suspended application might be called for whenever the asserted destabilization right came into conflict with decisions of the democracy's major representative assemblies: the privilege-entrenching measures might, for example, have been laid down by the national parliament.

The example of the perverted capital fund already suggests the importance of developing standards that give specificity to the abstract ideal inspiring the theory of destabilization rights. There are two ways in which the ideals underlying the theory of destabilization rights gain the concreteness that enables them to produce practical consequences. Analyzing these processes serves to link the basic conception of destabilization rights with the distinctive operational characteristics of such rights. Each form of specification affects the other types of entitlement, and each has an established place within the reigning styles of legal doctrine. Yet their importance undergoes here a hypertrophy that imprints special features on the right.

The first method of specification is the advance of the abstract idea of availability to criticism and challenge toward increasing concreteness. The subsidiary standards required by the march toward particularity may be drawn to some extent from the developing body of explanatory and normative ideas that lends sense and justification to the entire constitutional plan. But because a constitution must gain a life independent of the doctrines that may have originally inspired it, the criteria must also rely upon the laws and arrangements of the society. For the bulk of the arrangements and laws of an empowered democracy must give a range of concrete expressions to the vague notion of a structure-revising structure. No legal theory or legal practice can keep this ideal alive once it has lost its hold on the conscience of the citizenry and has ceased to be realized, however imperfectly, in the actual organization of social life. Experience, recorded in a tradition of institutional practice, must show how far the quest for negative capability has gone, what distinctive problems it must face in different areas of society, and which of its varied social meanings it takes at each moment of its history and in each area of its application.

The other, complementary method of specification consists in treating self-revision not as an abstract ideal to be made more concrete by a series of contextual definitions but as a goal to be advanced by suitable causal means. Empirical questions must be asked and answered with respect to each major area of application of the destabilization rights. Which institutional practices are in fact most immunized against challenge and revision? When is this immunity to attack most likely to generate stable relations of dominion and dependence? And when does it in fact generate them? Which forms of disruption and reconstruction will promote most effectively and economically the goal of openness to revision? And which will minimize the danger of continuing intervention by external authorities? The empirical difficulty of answering these questions and the administrative difficulty of acting upon the answers are two reasons

why traditional court institutions may be unsuitable to develop and enforce the entitlements.

The operational characteristics of destabilization rights result directly from the two modes of specification just discussed. First, the immediate source of the right is neither a fully articulated agreement nor the unilateral imposition of a duty by the state but the interplay between a basic commitment of the constitutional plan and the emergent practices that place the commitment in jeopardy. Second, the initial, legislative definition of the entitlement must always be complemented by an important element of specification at the moment and in the circumstance of the claimed exercise of the right. Legislation may go some way toward codifying the two processes of specification: it may distinguish situations and remedies in ways that implicitly answer the relevant causal questions and that implicitly provide contextual definitions of the abstract ideal of freedom from subjugation through availability to revision. Both sets of issues, however, must be reopened at the moment of the asserted exercise of the right if contextual definition and causal investigation are to do the work required by the theory of destabilization rights. A third operational characteristic follows from the second. Because the redefinition of the entitlement must pass through the surprises of causal investigation and the shifts of contextual analysis, no bright line surrounds the area of the protected legal claim. The point of destabilization rights is not to demarcate a fixed zone of discretionary action, within which an individual rightholder may do whatever he pleases, but to prevent recurrent, institutionalized relationships among groups from falling into certain prohibited routines of closure and subjugation. So the controlling image is the mandated, context-specific disruption of complex collective arrangements rather than the vigilant defense of a zone of untrammelled individual discretion.

Solidarity Rights

Solidarity rights give legal form to social relations of reliance and trust. The aims of the theory of solidarity rights extend beyond the limited goals of the institutional program to the transformed communal and personal relations an empowered democracy may help generate and sustain. The establishment of a system of entitlements that gives an explicit place to solidarity rights represents part of a plan of institutional transformation. But it also serves the cultural-revolutionary transformation of personal relations that goes hand in hand with the plan to empower democracy.

Solidarity rights form part of a set of social relations enabling people to enact a more defensible version of the communal ideal than

any version currently available to them. This reconstruction of the idea of community does not rest content with either the commitment to exclude conflict from a charmed circle of group harmony or with the willingness to limit the play of self-interest. Both altruism and harmony are deemphasized in this reconstructed image of community. Insofar as they continue to play a role, they do so for the sake of their contribution to the view of community as a zone of heightened mutual vulnerability. In this zone people may experiment more freely with ways to achieve self-assertion through passionate attachments.

A later section develops this communal ideal and argues its superiority over altruism and harmony as the nub of the communal ideal. This revised conception of community relates the communal ideal to the central concern with empowerment instead of relegating it to the role of refuge against the brutality of workaday life. It encourages people to recognize and use the element of conflict that marks even the closest personal connections.

This changed understanding of community helps resolve an apparent paradox: an institutional program that seems to exalt collective militancy, with all its conflictual consequences, is claimed to support a communal ideal. But the paradox fades once each of its supposed elements is put in its place. For one thing, the ideal of community invoked here is no longer defined by contrast to conflict. For another thing, the institutional program is oriented less to the perpetuation of struggle than to the emancipation of social life from the automatism and hierarchies with which the rigid contrast of conflict and community is invariably associated. Only through the softening of the opposition between context-preserving routine and context-transforming conflict can the mechanisms of domination and dependence be subverted. Only through this subversion can communal attachments be rescued from their traditional status as mere reprieves from the brutality of everyday life or mere restraints upon the untrammelled exercise of privilege.

Solidarity rights apply to relations within distinct communities and to relations of trust and reliance that take hold outside a well-defined communal setting. (Compare to destabilization rights, which encompass relations within and outside an organization.) The domain of solidarity rights is the field of the half-articulate relations of trusting interdependence that absorb so much of ordinary social life but remain troublesome aberrations for a legal theory devoted to the model of consolidated property. The situations calling for the exercise of such entitlements include family life, continuing business relationships (as distinguished from one-shot transactions), and the varied range of circumstances falling under fiduciary principles in contemporary law. The trust such relations require may be voluntary

and reciprocal or half-deliberate and unequal, usually in the setting of disparities of power or advantage.

The chief practical legal expression of the refined view of community underlying the theory of solidarity rights is the legal protection of claims to abide by implicit obligations to take other people's situations and expectations into account. By contrast to traditional contract law, the obligations are only partly explicit and the expectations refer to detailed, continuing relational positions rather than to instantaneous arm's-length transactions. The restraints these entitlements impose on individual self-interest matter solely as a by-product of the effort to vindicate a delicate texture of interdependencies and representations. It is through an analysis of this texture that the central categories of the law of solidarity rights must be developed.

It follows that solidarity rights should not be misunderstood as claims to a subjective state of mind on the part of the person who owes the rightholder a duty. The point is not to ensure that the owner of the duty has a benevolent and concerned frame of mind. Pursued to its ultimate conclusions, such a subjectivist goal would result in a stifling and hypocritical despotism of virtue, obsessed with invasive yet futile methods. The immediate aim, instead, is to accomplish just the reverse of what consolidated property offers the rightholder. People bound by solidarity rights are prevented from taking refuge in an area of absolute discretion within which they can remain deaf to the claims others make upon them. Thus solidarity rights deny the discretionary action both immunity rights and market rights seek to protect. Wherever such entitlements apply, people must answer to the claims arising from the usual blend of reliance-in-fact, half-made promises, and customary role-dependent standards of obligations. Subjective motives are to be influenced, if at all, only in the long run: the theory and practice of solidarity rights represents but a small part of an institutional program that enacts certain ideas about society and personality and favors some impulses over others.

The operational characteristics of solidarity rights can be inferred from the theory and practice of their more limited counterparts in contemporary law. These counterparts include the law of fiduciary relationships, the contractual and delictual protection of reliance, the doctrines of good faith and of abuse of rights, and the many doctrinal devices by which private law supports communal relations while continuing to represent society as a world of strangers.

The first structural feature has to do with the sources of the obligations protected by solidarity rights. Such obligations arise from partly articulate relations of interdependence rather than from either fully bargained agreements or the unilateral imposition of a duty by the state. The obligations covered by solidarity rights resemble the

vast majority of the duties people have traditionally recognized in the most diverse societies, even in the few societies refusing to give such duties substantial legal protection. But the characteristic quality of these obligations is transformed by an institutional order that encourages the jumbling up of fixed social roles and the disruption of systematic hierarchical and communal contrasts.

The second operational trait of solidarity rights refers to the relation between the entitlement as initially defined and the entitlement as redefined at the moment of a claimed exercise. General principles and discriminating standards must be developed, along the lines previously suggested, to single out the recurrent situations suitable for the enforcement of these entitlements. And other, complementary standards and principles must distinguish between such situations in order to determine the legal consequences of recognizing a particular solidarity right. For example, an unequal relation may require the imposition of a greater duty of self-restraint on the advantaged party, whereas a more equal common endeavor may justify reciprocity in the allocation of duties. But the very standards deployed in this initial definition of the right invoke an additional definition in context. For only the specific relational context, analyzed in detail, can reveal a structure of interdependence and show its complex blend of reliance-in-fact, semiexplicit representation, and equality or dependence. The program of empowered democracy increases the particularity of relations of interdependence because it undermines rigid role systems and the moral expectations such systems produce. It therefore also makes the contextual redefinition of solidarity entitlements all the more important.

The third operational trait of solidarity rights follows directly from the second characteristic. No bright line divides the area of conduct in which the holder of a solidarity right may claim protection and the area in which he may not. Instead of contrasting a zone of unquestioned discretion to an area of no protection, this class of entitlements favors a nuanced grading of degrees of legal support for the rightholder. The determination of where the rightholder stands along this spectrum of legal protection depends in every instance upon an analysis of his prelegal relation to the person against whom he wants to assert the right.

It does not follow from the establishment of solidarity rights that they ought to be coercively enforced nor from the commitment to enforce them that they should be overseen by the same judicial bodies responsible for administering, in last resort, immunity and market rights. I have argued that destabilization rights should be applied by a distinctive branch of government. Similarly, many of the solidarity rights may best be enforced, when they are enforced at all, by more informal means of mediation, with more ample participation from

parties, families, communities, or work teams, depending on the subject matter of the dispute.

But many solidarity rights may best remain unenforceable, as a statement of an ideal. The mere threat to let black-robed officials or officious companions enforce them might fatally injure the quality of reciprocal trust they require. The most serious candidates for exclusion from coercive enforcement are the relations in which a rough equality of power coincides with the central importance of trust to the success of the association.

It may be objected that an unenforceable right is no right at all and that merely to speak of such entitlements is to disinter the illogical language of natural rights with its implicit but halfhearted allusion to a natural, absolute context of social life. But it is a mistake to identify the positivism of governmental enforcement and the idea of innate and eternal entitlements as the only two senses that rights language may bear. A system of rights, in the sense employed by this discussion of all rights, is fundamentally the institutionalized part of social life, backed up by a vision of possible and desirable human association. The limits to rights are the limits to institutionalization itself. Not everything in a system of rights need be enforceable, on pain of being treated, if it is unenforceable, as either a natural right or a meaningless gesture. The rights that governmental or other institutions may not enforce remain a public declaration of a public vision, extending, qualifying, and clarifying the ideals embodied in other, enforceable parts of the system of rights.

To be sure, the refusal to enforce certain rights weakens the sense in which the part of social life those rights address is institutionalized at all. But such a weakening fits well with the idea of solidarity rights as a point of passage from the institutionalized to the personal, non-institutionalized aspects of social life. The vision underlying these rights, and inspiring the system of rights as a whole, is partly a conception of how the institutional and the noninstitutional realms should connect.

OPPORTUNITIES, ALLIANCES, AND TRANSITIONS

Empowered democracy is not meant to be a utopian blueprint, good for all time. Instead, it interprets the implications of a social ideal, intimately connected with a method of social explanation, for a particular historical circumstance. An important part of the programmatic argument therefore is made of ideas that suggest the occasions on which such a program might be implemented, the class alliances that might sustain its initial application, and the transitional forms

that might constitute intermediate steps between its proposals and current varieties of governmental or economic organization.

These subsidiary ideas are even more tentative and loosely connected than the programmatic arguments they complete. Their value is to exemplify a way of thinking rather than to replace a judgment of the distinctive demands and opportunities of particular historical situations. The impossibility of reducing the implementation of a program to theoretical formulas is less a limitation of theoretical discourse than a consequence of features of social and historical life that an adequate theory helps us understand. According to deep-logic social theory (in its evolutionary variant), programmatic thought, when possible at all, consists in the effort to anticipate a higher stage of social evolution or to work out the secondary problems each new stage brings in its wake. The same assumptions underlying this approach to programmatic thought also make it possible to ask such questions as, What are the occasions, the class alliances, and the intermediate institutional arrangements necessary and sufficient to the inauguration of a new form of social life? But if formative contexts of power and production fit into no well-defined sequences or lists and if they can be pulled apart and recombined piecemeal, any search for a theoretically based formula of transition must be misguided. What can be legitimately said about implementation and transition must take a far more open form. If the results seem disappointingly tentative, at least they are not illusory and make no sharp break between theoretical insight and the subjective experience of transformative effort. Moreover, the looseness of these ideas does not make them theoretically insignificant. On the contrary, they bring out aspects of this view of society that would otherwise remain implicit. These aspects tighten the link between the explanatory and the programmatic arguments of *False Necessity*.

Opportunities

Deep-logic social theory is obsessed with the contrast between reformist tinkering and all-out revolution. The concept of revolution has traditionally equated two events that do not always or even often go together: a style of action – the violent seizure of the state by a revolutionary mass led by a conspiratorial vanguard – and an outcome – the radical substitution of an entire formative context. Whatever the teachings of official doctrine, the basic conditions in modern times for episodes that come close to combining these two characteristics have been the division of the elites and the paralysis of the heavy arm of officialdom. As the forces that watch over the stability of the social world are temporarily checked, pieties that seemed un-

shakable begin to shake and inherited assumptions about social possibility may suddenly expand. If a well-organized movement, with a realistic plan, is waiting in the wings, something may actually happen.

By far the most important favoring circumstance for the occurrence of such subversive conditions has been defeat at war, with its fearsome burden of slaughter and disappointment and its tangible evidence of the remaking of social relations through wartime mobilization. In the third world, the attempt to overthrow an unpopular dictatorship has proven a distant runner-up. But war or subversion produce these subversive effects only when combined with a real and consciously felt contrast between the elites and the masses.

In the circumstances the world had reached by the late twentieth century these classic conditions of revolution had dwindled in subversive potential. War had become too terrible to serve as the normal midwife to revolutionary upheaval except along the periphery of conflict between the great powers. The overthrow of clumsy tyrannies was an activity restricted to parts of the third world. The force of the contrast between elites and masses had been steadily eroded in the industrial democracies by the practice of an antimobilizational mass politics and by the strengthening of a popular culture that overrode the distinction between high culture and folk culture. If deep-logic social theory was to be believed, significant transformation had become steadily more impossible, save as a by-product of catastrophic and unforeseeable events.

In the course of modern history, however, there have been at least two other circumstances or tendencies that have regularly created opportunities for the more or less deliberate reconstruction of formative contexts. The type of reconstruction they permit typically falls far short of the all-out change envisioned by the idea of revolution. But both despite this limit and because of it, such favoring circumstances are especially relevant to the implementation of the institutional program outlined here.

One circumstance is the periodic need to realign institutional arrangements for the sake of continued economic growth. Viewed over the long run, the development of collective practical capabilities requires a heightening of the plasticity of social life. This heightening can take either predominantly coercive or predominantly consensual forms. It can also be achieved by reforms that either minimize or maximize the break with the preexisting social order. Often a solution easier to accept in the short run, because it accommodates more readily the established structure of organized interests, turns out to be less promising in the long run, for precisely the same reason. The emerging formative institutional context of power and produc-

tion, when contrasted to its major petty bourgeois rival, represents just such an option on the largest historical scale. But a similar choice reappears on more modest dimensions.

Thus, the style of industrial organization and the pattern of dealings between government, on one side, and the entrepreneurial and working classes, on the other, has changed discontinuously in the course of modern Western history. Each discontinuity originates in large social conflicts as well as in the pressure upon entrepreneurial groups and national governments to escape the doom of a superseded specialization. Each discontinuous break also allows for both more conservative and more daring solutions.

For the advanced Western countries of the present day, the pressure for realignment takes the form of the need to overcome the special pattern of constraint upon economic growth analyzed earlier: the institutional stimulus to an organizational gigantism that economies of scale cannot justify, the inability to settle on a scheme of rewards and burdens that permits a coherent macroeconomic policy, and the failure to give a larger role to the vanguardist, flexibly organized industries that might allow the older industrial economies to deal more successfully with the changing international division of labor.

These problems might be solved in ways minimizing the break with established institutional arrangements and with the conceptions of interest and collective identity these arrangements help shape. Thus, for example, a distinctive deal might be reached that merely splits the differences among opposing forces in the production system and in the electoral contests of the democracy. Public policy might make funds, incentives, and skilled labor more readily available to the flexible, vanguard industries without changing any of the legal-institutional arrangements that enable rigid, mass-production industries to protect themselves against market instabilities.

But similar results may also be achieved by means that imply a more drastic departure from current practice. The institutional means for protecting mass-production industries against market instabilities might be abolished, a move that would imply far-reaching changes in the system of private rights as well as in the style of work organization. The core consensus necessary to the conduct of a coherent macroeconomic policy might be achieved by a more aggressive deconcentration of the industrial system. Thus, the power of big business and organized labor would be undermined; the correlation of forces in the productive system would more nearly approach its counterpart in the economic arena. Beyond a certain point, such a deconcentration would require a way to make large amounts of capital available to teams of entrepreneurs and workers that nevertheless prevented these teams from building a permanent industrial empire. It would also imply a way of protecting and representing workers

different from the traditional mass-constituency union, whose fate seems indissolubly bound up with large-scale mass production industry. An advanced version of this alternative route to worker empowerment would encourage a more fluid contrast between workers and entrepreneurs: against the background of extended welfare entitlements, all could look to membership in a team with a defeasible claim upon the social capital fund. Thus, one thing would lead to another, and the more radical version of industrial realignment would create a string of opportunities to change, piece by piece, the formative institutional context of power and production.

You need not imagine this more radical realignment as the execution of a plan imposed from above. The adoption of a different style of economic policy and industrial organization means that established interests must find new instruments and even new definitions in an institutional structure that has been at least marginally revised. Such a transfer can never be smooth; it engenders conflict. Success in passing from one moment of economic organization to another, with only a minimum of social and institutional change, represents a triumph of conservative statesmanship. For if conflict is allowed to get out of hand, some of the contenders may come to see their interests as lying in a more radical version of the shift, depending upon the ideas they and their leaders adopt. The immediate concerns that might favor a more reconstructive strategy and the transitional forms it might take are topics for later discussion.

The need for realignment in economic policy and industrial organization is not the sole occasion to choose between more conservative and more radical revisions of the established institutional order. The search for ever more ambitious forms of personal expression in the setting of continuing economic dissatisfaction, provides another occasion to choose between more conservative and more radical revisions of the formative institutional context. Of the revolutions in sensibility that have accompanied the history of mass politics, none is more remarkable than the vague though universal cult of self-fulfillment. The self-fulfillment that serves as the object of this piety is one that, unlike most of its predecessors or counterparts in the history of feeling, cannot be defined as a happiness gained from performing the duties of a particular social station. Indeed, the newfangled happiness depends, to a large extent, upon experiences of self-expression and association that escape the dictates of preestablished social roles and even depend upon a willingness to violate such role expectations.

This cult of self-fulfillment is intimately bound up, in the age of mass politics and world history, with the practice of invidious comparison. All may readily compare their advantages with those of everyone else, and imagine their own lives as graced, on a smaller

scale, with the material or spiritual benefits that accrue to the most successful. No longer do envy and ambition move within the narrow confines of the inequalities existing within a particular social rank or community, with its distinct way of life and unique standards of propriety and success.

Invidious comparison applies to the more spiritual benefits of social life as well as to crude economic advantage. People do not wait to be secure and well cared for before pressing their claim to varieties of self-fulfillment that might have been thought luxuries of the rich, leisured, or overrefined. On the contrary, they advance this claim as soon as they feel even a modest reprieve from the pressure of material need.

The new moral message is conveyed by an ever more universal popular culture that combines in a single mode of discourse the ancient themes of romance, reenacted in countless folk cultures, with the fancy gospel of high modernism, not perhaps as originally stated by philosophers and writers but as lived out in the politics of personal relations. This popular culture crosses the boundaries of all civilizations, insofar as distinct civilizations still exist. To the millions intent on their television or movie screens, in their moments of bored or exhausted leisure, it offers something midway between an entertainment and a revelation.

The message purveyed on this world scale and with such relentless insistence can be read as an offer to let everyone participate in the material and spiritual advantages of a particular way of life: the existence of the educated middle classes of the rich North Atlantic countries, with its security, comforts, and gadgetry, its democratic safeguards and private joys, and its titillating flirtation with the quasi-modernist popular culture whose excesses may still occasionally shock. On an alternative reading, however, the point of the message is to evoke a form of life that allows people to experiment with varieties of practical collaboration, personal attachment, and individual self-expression that obey no preestablished logic of social roles. The two interpretations differ less than might appear: the Western way of life so coveted by the propaganda of self-fulfillment has gone further than its predecessors in liquefying entrenched structures of social division and hierarchy and in creating the institutional and imaginative conditions for a more free-floating experience of exchange, attachment, and subjectivity.

Like the need for realignment in economic policy and industrial organization, the pursuit of self-fulfillment can be undertaken in ways that minimize the pressure to change the formative institutional context of social life. Indeed, the dominant practice of the cultural-revolutionary politics of personal relations, and of the vision of intimate success that inspires it, has been privatistic: a flight into private

enjoyments that require no fundamental reconstruction of institutional arrangements and of the social divisions and hierarchies that these arrangements sustain. Thus, the willingness to put the fine structure of social life up for grabs and subject it to modernist tests is often accompanied by a prostrate acquiescence in the established order of society, while the leftist attack on current social organization just as often goes together with a failure to reimagine and reconstruct the microstructure of personal relations. But the privatist and fatalist pursuit of self-fulfillment has its disappointments, which create an opportunity to redirect the search for happiness toward an alliance between the politics of personal relations and the politics of institutional reconstruction.

First, the established institutional systems impose upon both economic growth and egalitarian redistribution the many constraints earlier discussed. They therefore make it hard to support the dazzling life-style required by even the more privatistic and hedonistic versions of this ideal of self-fulfillment. Although these dominant institutions and interests may encourage the consumerist rapture of a privatistic hedonism, economic life suffers from the subversive effect of this hedonism on diligence at work.

Second, the ease with which the modernist teaching gets compartmentalized into private life is balanced against the constant temptation to pass from the private to the public domain. The relation between superiors and subalterns in the organizations in which people spend their working lives provides the bridge between private concern and public stance. The subversion of deference, the demand to share in discretionary authority, and even the pretense of egalitarian camaraderie cannot finally be satisfied without reforming these organizations – offices and factories, shops and schools – in ways that push present economic arrangements to their limits of tolerance.

Third, the privatist solution exacts a heavy cost even when it can be successfully stabilized. Private enjoyments that remain unconnected to a broader solidarity or to a collective historical project soon take on the quality of a desperate and obsessional narcissism. Because they offer the individual no sense of participation in something greater and more lasting than himself, they belittle him in his own eyes.

Such troubles create an opportunity for a version of the pursuit of self-fulfillment congenial to institutional reconstruction. For the program outlined in this chapter shows how the institutional structure of society must be changed if the cultural-revolutionary ideal is to be more fully realized in social life. Such change requires, and can best begin, through the remaking of basic arrangements and enacted beliefs rather than through the redistribution of resources within an unchallenged order.

The preceding pages have described two very different types of occasions that contemporary social life opens up for revolutionary reform along the lines sketched earlier. Less dramatic than the sequel of war and occupation, they are also less rare or risky. Located at the most humdrum and ethereal extremes of social experience, they suggest the variety of points from which the reconstructive effort may depart. But in the end they are no more than the most obvious examples of a pervasive principle, namely, that the opportunity to destabilize and to reconstruct is always built into the very devices that perpetuate the existing social peace.

Alliances

You may object that the discussion of opportunities for institutional reconstruction is superfluous until you are told who will find it in his interest to support such a program. Few aspects of the programmatic discussion can be so likely to disappoint a mind formed either in worldly ambition or in theoretical study than the failure to specify who could be expected to support such a program and for what reasons. To answer correctly the question about interests we must first define the sense in which it can be legitimately asked. Such a definition is implicit in earlier arguments about the contrasting assumptions that deep-structure social theory and the alternative defended in this book bring to class-interest or interest-group analysis.

In its illustrative Marxist version, deep-structure theory claims that escalating conflict makes explicit an underlying logic of group interests that is ordinarily concealed by the compromises and equivocations of the social peace. To each mode of production there supposedly corresponds a system of conflicts among objective class interests, including the interest of the class whose particular stake in the inauguration of the next mode of production coincides with the universal interest of mankind in developing the productive forces of society. Though class interests may be understood with greater or lesser clarity, and though such triumphs or failures of insight may have fateful consequences for particular classes in particular countries, they cannot alter the basic facts about class goals.

This approach to the political consequences of group interests has encouraged disastrous mistakes even on the part of those who pride themselves on their detachment from theoretical dogma. As the basic terms of social life open up to transformative conflict, the baneful influence of these ideas upon the political practice of radicals becomes more visible. Thus, this influence has become most evident in the third world, whereas its European heyday was the period between the wars.

Remember now the main tenets of the alternative approach to

group interests suggested by the social theory worked out here. The strategic implications of this approach will soon become clear. The stabilization of a social world may occur at different levels of permanent plasticity, that is to say, with different degrees of contrast between context-preserving routine and context-revising conflict. Assumptions harden about collective identities, social opportunities, and group interests. Each group takes more or less for granted its position in the entrenched scheme of social hierarchy and division — its distinctive niche in the social division of labor or its communal way of life, which may or may not be closely related to occupational position.

But even in the circumstance of maximum hypothetical rigidity, the perception of group interests must deal with ambiguity and allow for the influence of opinion and persuasion. For one thing, the order of division and hierarchy never becomes entirely cohesive, just as the contrast between routine and revolution never becomes absolute. The agent cannot reconcile the contradictory clues to his "real interests" without recourse to a partly independent set of ideas that resolves ambiguities and sets priorities. For another thing, the promotion of a predefined interest can always follow two alternative tacks: a narrowing strategy that clings to a niche and defends it against the closest rivals (and especially the immediate inferiors) or a broadening strategy that seeks to enlarge alliances against more fundamental common adversaries (e.g., the bosses). What begins as a tactical partnership can easily turn into a redefinition of collective identities.

As conflict escalates in scope or intensity and questions more and more of the terms of social life, the hardened logic of group interests undergoes a contradictory change. On the one hand, the concern for security and preemptive defense amid the tumults of the social world leads each group to dig into its present threatened situation all the more firmly and to strike out all the more fiercely against perceived enemies. On the other hand, the predetermination of interests by social position loses its force. For not only are established arrangements disturbed, but the imagination of realistic alternatives penetrates everyday experience. People come to be divided increasingly by differences of opinion that antecedent position or experience predict with increasingly less accuracy. Social classes (as well as all other hierarchically or communally defined groups) dissolve, to a greater extent than before, into parties of opinion.

Thus, the dissolution of classes into parties of opinion is not a once-and-for-all event taking place at a single moment at the end of history. It is, rather, a tendency always present even in the most rigid social circumstances and rapidly accelerated whenever context-preserving quarrels turn into context-subverting struggles. A major

aim of the program of empowered democracy is to make this dissolution stick: to turn it into a permanent feature of ordinary social life. Such an ambition generalizes the meaning of the attempt to make social life resemble what, to a considerable degree, liberal politics are already like.

This view of the relation between interests and opinions has important implications for the strategic practice of transformative movements. Such a practice must be inspired by a double vision. It must identify the groups that in a given stabilized social situation are most likely to favor a given transformative practice. To accomplish this task it must understand correctly the logic of organized interests as it exists, neither exaggerating nor understating its ambiguity. But, at the same time, it must anticipate how escalating conflict may change the content of this logic and weaken its force. To this extent the reformers must treat one another as members of parties of opinion that override and redraw the fault lines of the social order. They must see in themselves and in those whom they seek to seduce the protagonists of a humanity that must choose its assumptions about identities and interests.

Notice that the two modes of vision – the one accepting and the other defying established definitions of group interest – cannot be just sequentially ordered; the second mode must be deployed from the very beginning to complement and to discount the calculus of interests, even though its initial role may be greatly restricted. Notice also that the two modes do not contrast as realism and idealistic aspiration; they both belong to the analysis of social reality. This last fact throws light on the perspective from which the whole programmatic argument has been developed. The appeal to the universal conscience of humanity expresses here a thesis about the unique and provisional character of any given logic of group interests: its relativity to a particular degree of constraint upon the recombination of ranks or cultures and its inability to define an indispensable stage in a universal progression.

Focus now on how the first mode of vision might be exercised in an attempt to define the groups with the most immediate interest in executing the type of program for which I have argued. For the purposes of this argument, consider only the rich North Atlantic countries and the richest fringe of the third world, as they were toward the end of the twentieth century, and disregard the important variations in social structure and culture between countries. For each of the groups to be singled out as potential short-run supporters of the program, the recognition of interest was far from automatic; it required an act of persuasion. This requirement testifies to the inevitable overlap between the two approaches. And in each instance,

successful persuasion would involve an interplay between the political leaders and the rank and file of the respective classes.

The first group of likely supporters would be the most obvious losers in the current social order, those whose exclusion from task-defining authority combined with the greatest lack of economic welfare and job security. These primary losers included both the underclass and the less skilled and less organized sectors of the working class. Their conversion to such a program would depend on a recognition of the enormous constraints the established institutional structure imposed upon both social equality and economic growth. These limits are made patent by the cycles of reform and retrenchment that periodically threaten and circumscribe welfare entitlements and full-employment policy.

A second group of potential adherents to the program would be the old and new petty bourgeoisie: the small-scale proprietors, technicians, and professionals as well as the technical cadres who move in and out of large-scale organizations and wanted opportunities for independent initiative. Their conversion to the institutional program requires them to understand a version of a thesis defended in the historical argument of Chapter 4: the impossibility of realizing the petty bourgeois dream of easy access to initiative and capital without a major shift in the institutional assumptions with which this dream had been traditionally associated. So long as the present institutional forms of markets and democracies and the present system of legal entitlements remain in place, small-scale private or cooperative enterprises, however numerous, would prove to be an incrustation upon an order constituted on principles fundamentally antagonistic to their prosperity and prominence. All plans to achieve a significant increase in either the deconcentration or the plasticity of economic life would prove futile. By comparison, the program outlined here represents, among other things, an effort to redefine the petty bourgeois program in ways that would save it from self-destabilization and enable it to connect with the aspirations of other sections of society.

A third group of potential supporters would be the class of fancy staffers, calculators, and rhetoricians – the restless and overeducated who lived uncomfortably with the contrast between cultural revolution and institutional stagnation and suffered from a chronic shortage of access to opportunities for experiment, influence, and decision. The initial sympathy to such an institutional program among these cadres might be sparked by the awareness that its implementation would vastly multiply the number of independent settings for organizational experiments and combine, in each of these settings, ideological controversy with technical problem solving.

As the conflict over institutional transformation persisted and intensified, this particular calculus of group interests would lose its relevance. Each succeeding experiment might give rise to new divisions and hierarchies, suggesting new combinations of interest. Or it might, on the contrary, simply diminish the significance of an analysis of preexisting group interests as a guide to possible alliances and interests. People vying for allies would then have to address one another in more of the spirit in which I must address you, reader, not knowing your social station or the fate that it is supposed to have reserved for your political opinions.

Transitions

Many aspects of the theoretical approach worked out in this book highlight the importance of institutional arrangements that can serve as bridges between the programmatic goals and current practices. First, remember the rejection of the all-or-nothing attitude encouraged by deep-logic social theory and the emphasis on revolutionary reform as the normal way of revising formative contexts. Second, bear in mind the commitment to a transformative practice that anticipates its ends in its means, treats existing deviations as the favored raw material of major reconstructions, and uses conflict both to accumulate influence and to anticipate a desired future. Third, recall the thesis that normative argument, even in its visionary mode, transcends a context or a tradition only by first reappropriating it.

The following pages enumerate, in each of the major domains touched by the program, a series of conceivable institutional arrangements that could serve as transitional forms. Examples are given with the rich North Atlantic world of the late twentieth century in mind, and their sketchiness results in part from the inability of programmatic generalities to solve the strategic problems of transformation in a particular national setting. Sketchy or not, these illustrations serve to demonstrate the existence of a spectrum connecting the most modest and the most radical examples of the programmatic vision.

The politics of transition obey a principle of uneven development: transitional forms may advance in one direction more rapidly than in another. Ultimately, the level of advance in one realm imposes limits upon the degree of progress that can be achieved in another. The reason for such constraints is not that all parts of the program form a single indivisible whole in the sense of indivisibility that deep-logic social theory attributes to necessary stages of social evolution or possible types of social organization. The basis of the mutual dependence is, instead, the looser connection that derives from the impossibility of continuing coexistence among institutional arrange-

ments that reflect sharp differences in the development of negative capability. This alternative conception of mutual dependence has been extensively discussed in Chapter 2.

In the organization of government, the task of the transitional arrangement is to establish a state that can serve both as a more effective instrument for the destabilization of entrenched plans of social division and hierarchy and as a more pliant object of collective conflict and controversy. One relatively far-reaching form such a transition can take is a general constitutional reform of the kind exemplified by the dualistic system discussed earlier. Such a reform increases the decisional mobility of the center of government, strengthens methods of accountability that do not deliberately encourage constitutional stalemate, and multiplies the points of contact between the heights of state power and the general electorate. Another, more limited transitional method is the creation of a new branch or quasibranch of government, such as the administrative agencies under the American constitution, that may exemplify a novel and anomalous relation between state and society. (Note that in the case of the administrative agencies the increased power of government to champion social experiments is not matched by a greater power of organized society to assert effective control over the bureaucratic apparatus.) Still another transitional method is an established branch of government's assuming activities that anticipate practices and preconceptions of the new-model constitution. Thus, the judiciary may forge complex interventionist remedies allowing for the destabilization and reorganization of large-scale institutions or major areas of social practice, even though such remedies may be irreconcilable with the received view about the appropriate institutional role of the judiciary (or of any other branch of government).

The performance of such incongruous functions by an established branch of government cannot be repudiated as merely the bad-faith manipulation of a constitutional plan. A doctrine of appropriate institutional roles cannot be persuasively deduced from any unique group of arrangements for the organization of government, because the conception of a democratic republic or a democratic political process, which such a doctrine of roles inevitably expresses, cannot itself result from such a deduction. Otherwise, we would have to believe there is a hard and fast distinction between reasons to prefer a given normative view of democracy and grounds to prefer this view as an interpretation of an existing democratic constitution. A people may treat its constitution either as a rigid but easily replaceable commitment to a particular conception of democracy or as a permanent set of detailed arrangements compatible with a range of descriptive and normative political conceptions. But a nation is headed for trouble if it treats its constitutional plan as both definitive and

inseparable from a particular theory of democratic politics. For it will then have denied itself the means to adapt to changes in circumstance and shifts of faith.

With respect to the organization of conflict over the control and uses of governmental power, a transitional practice might take its point of departure from a style of political action that combines two features. Its subject matter consists in the problems of hierarchy, inequality, and coordination in large-scale organizations or in particular areas of social practice. Its method is workplace solidarity and collective mobilization at the grassroots level. Step by step, this practice can be linked with the contest over the heights of governmental power. Such a combination may occur through the extension of these experiments in internal institutional politics. Or it may occur through the adoption by conventional political parties of a mobilizational style that does not accept the simple contrast between a reformist politics of petty deals and a revolutionary politics of escalating confrontation. Whatever the specific route, the crucial point is to combine a way of connecting grassroots and governmental politics with a program that seeks to deprive all areas of social practice or institutional life of their effective immunity to conflict and challenge.

The reorganization of the economy provides the richest and most familiar area for the discussion of transitional forms, if only because greed and ambition may suffice to produce here what imagination is insufficient to suggest elsewhere. The desired transitional arrangements should conjoin the assertion of more effective political control over the basic terms, pace, and direction of economic growth with a change in the microstructure of production that undercuts the rigid contrast between task-defining and task-executing jobs and activities.

In the circumstances of late twentieth century industrial democracies – the illustrative setting of this treatment of transitions – there are two complementary occasions for the development of transitional forms of economic organization with this characteristic. Both these occasions arise from the terms on which governments try to protect economic stability and growth. One focus is reactive: the willingness to subsidize industry in the face of domestic and international pressure or, more generally, to guarantee profitability and employment. The other focus is innovative: the attempt to encourage changes in the structure and direction of production (industrial policy) or, more specifically, to facilitate the expansion of the vanguardist sector of industry. The reactive strategy tries merely to limit the effects and slow the rate of economic decline. The active response seeks to guarantee the conditions for the continued success of the national economy as a whole.

Take first the reactive, subsidization issue and consider how it presents itself in two characteristic situations. In one situation, gov-

ernments accustomed to overt attempts to maintain the profitability of industry and the stability of large-scale enterprises confront a strong labor movement. Such a movement almost invariably supports wage solidarity among segments of the labor force: respect for the customary wage differentials and job categories that result from a long history of collective conflicts and deals as well as of market relations.

Incentives and infrastructural investments geared only to the most efficient industries undermine wage solidarity and are therefore resisted by the labor movement. But if the support policy is calculated to reach even the least efficient enterprises of a given sector of the economy or of the economy as a whole, it produces for their more efficient counterparts what are perceived as windfall profits. The very circumstances and attitudes that inspired the broad-based subsidization policy in the first place generate pressure to exact a *quid pro quo* for these government-created riches. Thus, strong labor movements and left-leaning governments may demand greater public and worker participation in basic investment decisions and changes in the organization of work that progressively soften the contrast between task-defining and task-executing activities. Participation in basic investment decisions may operate through joint public-union pension funds that buy into enterprise equity through agreements to invest in particular innovations. Or it may take a form that respects entrepreneurial initiative more fully while anticipating the basic principle of the rotating capital fund; part of the windfall profits may be taxed away and made available, conditionally and provisionally, to new teams of petty entrepreneurs and skilled workers. These small-scale rotating capital funds may be administered by independent public banks or agencies.

In another typical variant of economic and political life in the rich North Atlantic countries, more passive and conservative governments and relatively weak trade-union movements coexist with a strong petty bourgeoisie, with the continuing authority of the dream of petty proprietorship and small business, and with a greater respect for what are imagined to be the inherent rules of market economies. The least controversial form of subsidization in this circumstance is government support of agriculture. Widespread family ownership and the overt instability of agricultural production contribute to make farm subsidies palatable. (The United States provides the classic example.)

Against such a background, the characteristic dramatic instance of industrial subsidization is the rescue of a failing large-scale industry. The underlying impulse may be to avoid a major loss of jobs, to prevent an economically disruptive and strategically dangerous gap in the production system, or to satisfy influential interest groups.

But whatever its motive, the industrial rescue creates special embarrassments. It both violates free-market doctrine and lacks the special justification of support for family-scale enterprise. Thus, it may allow for more modest versions of the same institutional experiments that become feasible in the other, more broadly based circumstance of subsidization.

Turn now to the active, industrial-policy issue: the attempt by governments to seize the initiative in helping reorient the structure of industry. For the industrial economies of the late twentieth century part of this reorientation consists in attempting to extend the area of economic life open to the vanguardist sector of industry. But this particular theme of industrial reorganization is no more than the occasional form of the more fundamental and permanent need to increase the plasticity of economic arrangements.

The earlier discussion of transformative opportunities has already suggested this effort may be carried out in ways that either minimize or sharpen the break with preexisting institutional arrangements and social practices. The more reconstructive tack requires legal and organizational changes that would deny rigid, mass-production industries the institutional devices with which they protect themselves against market instabilities. Thus, for example, the strategy of hiring temporary, relatively unprotected workers during upturns in a demand cycle and then firing them as soon as business declines might be frustrated either by the unionization of the entire work force or by a connected series of legal prohibitions and fiscal disincentives. Capital must be made available to existing vanguardist enterprises as well as to groups of entrepreneurs, technicians, and workers willing and able to found new firms. The availability of needed finance might be ensured by the same anticipatory forms of the rotating capital fund suggested in my earlier discussion of subsidization policy: independent public agencies or banks lending money and technical assistance conditionally and provisionally, with an initial endowment derived from the direct or indirect taxation of mass-production industry and renewed with the proceeds of their own operations. Success would require further initiative in organizing cooperative technological and marketing arrangements among the innovative enterprises. Thus, the idea of a technologically advanced and institutionally redefined form of petty commodity production would begin to be realized together with the conception of a rotating capital fund. To the extent that all these experiments were carried forward, the economy would gradually see the proliferation of enterprises that began to overcome the contrast between task-defining and task-executing jobs or activities.

The final domain for the development of transitional institutional forms is the reconstruction of the system of legal rights. In this realm,

transitional strategy must combine a methodological and a substantive approach; the former represents the indispensable instrument of the latter.

The methodological approach is the development of an expanded version of legal doctrine, a version that overrides the simple, polemical opposition between restrictive legal analysis and freewheeling ideological controversy. As a positivist rule-formalism loses its credibility, legal argument begins to appeal more openly to impersonal purposes, policies, and principle, as necessary complements to rules and rule analysis. But the line cannot easily be held at this point. The incorporation of these nonrule elements may be treated as simply a step toward the incorporation into legal reasoning of debate over the models of social relations applicable to different areas of social practice, models we take for granted when deploying argument from purpose, policy, or principle.

The practice of legal analysis creates many opportunities to enlarge in this direction the character of legal doctrine. There is the conflict among models of human association, which goes on more or less tacitly in the form of inevitable choices between principles and counterprinciples, or between alternative ways of relating principles and counterprinciples, in any extended body of legal doctrine. There is the impulse to organize and justify a set of legal ideas by making ever more explicit a set of assumptions about the possible and desirable forms of social relations, a process that opens both the ideas and the assumptions to further criticism and broadens the habitual range of legal argument. And there is the disharmony between acceptance, in the legislative setting, of the cynical rhetoric of interest group politics and the appeal, in an adjudicative context, to the priestly language of impersonal ideals. To seize on these many opportunities is to create a legal and political discourse that overrides the contrast between the routine and the revolutionary in normative argument. Such a discourse will often be unsuited to judges. But to the citizenry it offers a medium in which to advance the interplay between received ideals and established practices, whatever the role constraints of particular officials. It gives us a way to discuss, in the course of our everyday disputes, the remaking of the institutionalized scheme of social life.

The substantive aspect of the transitional forms of rights is the attempt to develop the elements of modern law and legal thought that rebel against consolidated property as the unique model of entitlements. Contemporary law already provides materials for each of the categories of right discussed in the institutional program. Thus, the point of departure for the development of the immunity rights lies in existing public freedoms and welfare entitlements. Market rights are most legitimately exemplified by dealings between enterprises of roughly equal influence, trading in a setting of deliberately

assumed risk. Such rights would begin to operate, in the manner suggested by the program, as the transitional forms of economic organization, with their anticipations of the rotating capital fund, began to be implemented. The germ of solidarity rights already exists in the aspects of modern law that recognize the genesis of legal obligations out of only partly articulate relations of reliance and interdependence. Even destabilization rights are prefigured by the ideas underlying many complex judicial remedies. These remedies often seek to reconstruct major institutions or distinct areas of social practice for the sake of a legally supported ideal of association that society continues to betray.

THE CULTURAL-REVOLUTIONARY
COUNTERPART
TO THE INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAM

The Idea of a Personalist Program

The institutional program of empowered democracy has its counterpart in a program for the transformation of personal relations. Call this program cultural revolution. There are both causal and justificatory links between the institutional proposals and their personalist extension. Like any institutional order the institutions of empowered democracy encourage certain changes in the character of the direct practical or passionate relations among individuals, and they depend for their vitality upon the perpetuation of these qualities. At the same time the ideals inspiring the cause of empowered democracy also support a criticism of the fine texture of social life.

The correspondence of institutional and personalist proposals should not, on reflection, prove surprising. The qualities of our direct practical or passionate dealings always represent the ultimate object of our conflicts over the organization of society. No institutional structure or system of social dogma informs these dealings completely; the inability to do so guarantees in even the most entrenched and coherent frameworks the possibility of anomaly and rebellion. But only insofar as a formative structure does influence these subtle personal relations can it show its mettle. All the routines of practical and imaginative conflict that every such framework helps perpetuate must ultimately take the form of person-to-person encounters, even though they may be encounters in which practical aims and institutionally defined roles prevail. But although institutional arrangements matter because of their influence upon personal interaction, the task of presenting a view of transformed personal relations cannot be accomplished by the mere statement of an institutional program. The links between institutional order and personal behavior are –

though real – loose, complex, and obscure. Moreover, influences upon the character of our encounters with one another go far beyond the institutional framework of social life; they include not only biological or technological constraints but also ideas, habits, and attitudes that never quite crystallize into institutions. The institutional agenda must be complemented by a personalist program.

There is also a narrower, tactical reason for the need to make this addition. Successful institutional transformation requires a willingness to subordinate redistributive aims to institutional goals. The subordination implies a sacrifice; the sacrifice must be inspired by a vision; and the vision must address the thing people care about most – their immediate experience of practical collaboration and passionate encounter, of self-assertion and solidarity. A visionary ideal must draw much of its force from its personalist immediacy, whether or not the ideal takes the form this book advocates.

Just as the institutional program needs a personalist vision, so the latter cannot dispense with the former. Personal relations must move within a context that is, to a large extent, institutionally defined. If this framework is not brought into closer accord with the spirit of the personalist vision, it will exact a price in the frustration or perversion of the ideal.

The effort to combine the institutional and the personal was known at earlier moments in the history of Western political thought as the attempt to unite the political and religious, a union Tocqueville recognized as the hallmark of the greatest revolutions. For religious creeds enter this secular realm largely as articulations of a prescriptive phenomenology of subjective experience and personal encounter and as bearers of existential projects containing a social message. The revolutionary need not, indeed he should not, put his faith in the total transformation of an established formative context, recognizing instead that these contexts can be and ordinarily are changed bit by bit. But even revolutionary reform must manage over time to link transformation in the domain of institutions with change in the “*pianissimo*” of the personal in order to attain its objectives.

The classical liberal would nevertheless object to this personalist extension of the institutional program. You can imagine him reasoning in the following way. An explicit aim of the project of empowered democracy is to deny authority to any entrenched scheme of authoritative models of human association, enacted in the different domains of social life. To advocate a particular style of direct personal interaction, and to support this advocacy with social pressure if not coercive force, is to betray the spirit of the institutional program rather than to extend it. It is also to impose a despotism all the more oppressive because it meddles even with the areas of intimacy that despots are ordinarily content to leave alone. If, however, the pro-

gram of cultural revolution is not to be backed up by organized or informal coercion, why should it be so closely linked with proposals to reform social institutions?

This objection reflects a double misunderstanding: first, about the sense in which institutional orders can be neutral among styles of social interaction; second, about the nature of the cultural-revolutionary program itself. The classical liberal is right to object to an institutional program if it embraces a highly defined and restrictive view of what people – and relations among people – should be like. Thus, even the program of empowered democracy would lose much of its persuasive force if its success turned out to depend on the presence of the ever-ready, selfless citizen of classical republican myth.

But the classical liberal is wrong to think – if he does think – that an institutional order can be neutral among all possible styles of personal interaction or to draw a watertight distinction between the public institutions of a people and the forms of close association or intimate experience to which the people are drawn. The futile quest for institutions that are unbiased among all possible manners of association can only impede the search for arrangements that in fact free people more effectively from a closed canon of associative practices and models. The insistence on absolute neutrality can also keep us from appreciating the full extent of what we choose when we choose an institutional program. It can thereby lull us into commitments we might otherwise prefer to avoid.

Once we recognize the impossibility of perfect neutrality we are more likely to acknowledge the inadequacy of the neutrality standard as a guide to the criticism and invention of social forms. The authority of the radical project lies in its vision of the individual and collective empowerment we may achieve by cumulatively loosening the grip of rigid roles, hierarchies, and conventions upon our experiments in practical or passionate association. We can lift the burden of dependence and depersonalization, in part by changing the character of our relations, as individuals and as collectivities, to the institutional and imaginative frameworks of social life.

This conception of empowerment – of its meaning and conditions – incorporates a version of the neutrality ideal, both as an end and as a means. It does so in the form of a commitment to free social life from the compulsions of a ready-made script. But it does not claim to be indifferent to the choice among alternative styles of association. Nor does it produce an institutional or moral blank; it is rich with implications for both the design of social institutions and the character of personal dealings.

This two-sided attitude toward the ideal of neutrality stands closely connected with an approach to the vexing question of human nature,

its relative determinacy, diversity, and mutability. The institutional and personalist program should not depend upon a narrowly and dogmatically defined account of human nature. The programmatic arguments and proposals must reflect an awareness that in changing our institutions and practices we also change who we are; no motivations and drives are cast in so rigid a mold that their form, intensity, and experienced significance remain uninfluenced by the transformation of the social world. But we also know, as a matter of individual experience and historical memory, that many of our predispositions toward one another resist manipulation. Rather than attempt neatly to separate an unchanging core and a variable periphery of human nature, we can simply impose an ad hoc, loosely defined constraint. The successful realization of the program must not require any abrupt or drastic change in the predispositions we now experience. A programmatic vision could be justly criticized for requiring all-out public-spiritedness or altruism. We *can* choose who or what to become, but only so long as we go step by step, never expect to move very far at any one time, and resist the temptation to mistake our strongest current desires for a permanent kernel of human nature.

Thus far, I have discussed the part of the classical liberal objection to the idea of a cultural-revolutionary program that rests on a mistake about the sense in which institutional arrangements can and should be neutral. Consider now the part of the objection that reflects a more limited misunderstanding of the nature and scope of the cultural-revolutionary cause. You will soon see that this cause does not specify an inclusive, detailed picture of desirable personal relations and communal forms. It merely indicates certain minimal qualities that such forms and relations should possess. Moreover, by its very nature this personalist program cannot be coercively implemented, either by central governments or by other organizations. What governments and organizations can do to assist the cultural-revolutionary endeavor is to subvert socially enforced roles and hierarchies and to help the individual feel secure in a core of vitally protected interests. The rest depends on the politics of personal relations and decentralized institutions, carried out within these institutions and relations by their participants. Such a politics draws on the devices of fiction and enactment: to tell stories about yourself and others, to represent through these stories untried possibilities of association, and to try these possibilities out.

Despite the many reasons to extend the program of empowered democracy into a vision of transformed personal relations, this book cannot carry the extension out in detail. Both *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task* and *False Necessity* have argued that programmatic ideas must be intimately informed by an imagination of reality and

possibility. Only then can such ideas suggest credible solutions. Only then can they cut through the false dilemma between the prostrate acceptance of current orderings of social life and the depiction of utopias that merely deny and invert a reality we feel powerless to reimagine and reconstruct.

But the explanatory argument of this book moves at the level of the large-scale institutional structure of society. The understanding it provides is too gross to serve as a capable guide to the formulation of such an intimate personalist program. A successor volume to *False Necessity* will explore the implications of the antinecessitarian thesis for an understanding of the microstructure of social life: the realm of direct practical and passionate relations. The more subtle insight into social and personal possibility to result from that exploration can inform a more persuasive ethic – for an ethic, in an enlarged, loosened, and partial sense of the term, is what the program of cultural revolution ultimately amounts to.

The following pages merely suggest the outline of a vision that needs to be worked out later, with better tools. The argument advances in three steps. First, it suggests a definition of the general theme of the cultural-revolutionary program. Second, it describes two planks in the cultural-revolutionary program: two connecting sets of qualities that this program seeks to impart to our direct dealings. Finally, it lists some of the truncated but rich materials that lie at hand, ready to assist us in our efforts to develop this part of our programmatic ideas and of our transformative practice.

*A Unifying Theme of the Cultural-Revolutionary Program:
A Transformed Conception of Community*

Social theories offering a radical criticism of society have often held out the vision of a regenerate style of personal relations. But all too often the conception of a perfected human community put forward by these doctrines has been literally incredible. The view of the ennobled form of human solidarity has been little more than the reverse image of current experience: the dramatization of a wish to avoid all the dangers of conflict and inaccessibility that result from the independence of our wills and minds. The leftist contribution to this persistent fantasy has often been the hope that the banishment of subjugation from social life would put an end to our self-absorption and our antagonisms.

An impoverished and unbelievable idea of community emphasizes the exclusion of conflict and the sharing of values and opinions. In any society like the societies we know in history this ideal of communal life can gain a semblance of reality only in certain privileged corners of social experience, such as the intimacy of the family. Even

then, it often depends for its force upon the polemical and delusive contrast established between this idealized exception to the quotidian and the character of a workaday world surrendered to the heartless exercise of dominion and the unrestrained calculation of advantage. The claim to mark out a privileged circle of communal relations frequently conceals the devolution of these purified areas of private community to the very experiences of oppression and malevolence from which they are supposed to offer a reprieve. When this ideal of community is used to inspire a vision of the transformation of all social life, the opposition between the privileged zone of harmony and the brutal, prosaic world of conflict gets replaced by a contrast between the purgatory of historical experience and the dream of a liberation from history.

The implications of this presumed rupture between history and the escape from history comes out in a comparison with a typical narrative strategy of the early romantic novel. A man and a woman fall in love with a passion whose subjective quality depends upon the vehemence with which it hurls itself against the social obstacles set in its way. Often the lovers spring from different classes, an advance over the romances of an earlier day when a legitimate love and a sound social hierarchy were regarded as inseparable and could diverge only temporarily and thanks to mistaken identities or forgotten origins. The authorities of the family, the church, and the social order are ranged against the lovers' union. The narrative revels in the story of the adventures the lovers undergo as they confront and finally overcome these many resistances. The end is the marriage, the goal and justification of all the preceding struggle and the inauguration of a higher example of human community. The trouble is that the typical romantic novel has nothing to say about what life under the new dispensation is actually like, nothing that would not make the ideal of marital felicity seem both unrealistic and unattractive. Silence becomes its alibi: let me not bore you, reader, with the indescribable felicities of this happy union. Only in novels that have a more or less deliberately ironic relation to the early romantic ideal of marital community can the marriage be portrayed in credible terms.

A similar narrative structure appears in the radical and millenarian versions of social thought that promise a cleansed community (e.g., communism) as the reward for an immemorial fighting. Mankind, like the romantic lovers, must pass through a many-staged ordeal of class and national conflicts so that it may arrive at a form of life free from at least these forms of conflict. But, like the romantic marriage, this final reconciliation cannot be portrayed in a way that makes it seductive or even believable.

The vision of a perfected community, successful at overcoming

the antagonism of its members, would not be so persistent if it did not so often seem the only available alternative to certain familiar doctrines. These doctrines identify the inadequacies of a particular form of social organization with the inherent limitations of social life, or they portray a small number of alternative forms of social organization as the repositories of incompatible sets of ideals among which we must choose. The view of social life that animates the explanatory and programmatic arguments of *Politics* rejects these apologetic doctrines without embracing the millenarian and perfectionist assumption. This view enables us to complement the institutional proposals with an ideal of direct, individual relations that is imaginatively credible. At least, the alternative proposed here does not require a sudden rupture in our prior experience of social life; it merely extends to the domain of the personal the same conception of social reality and the social ideal developed in the parts of *False Necessity* that deal with the institutional structure of society.

The result is a transformed ideal of community. Like any proposal to change an inherited evaluative notion, this revised conception of community draws its tacit meaning from the institutionalized and noninstitutionalized social practices that are meant to realize it. Having revealed, through these novel forms of practical realization, an unsuspected ambiguity in an inherited ideal, it invites us to resolve this ambiguity in a particular direction. It takes a stand on the issue of which aspects of that ideal really do or should matter most to us. (Recall the earlier discussion of the internal, standard mode of normative argument.)

The kernel of this revised ideal of community is the notion of a zone of heightened mutual vulnerability, within which people gain a chance to resolve more fully the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion: between their need for attachment and for participation in group life and their fear of the subjugation and depersonalization with which such engagement may threaten them. Success at these experiments in accepted vulnerability gives us moments of ardor and empowerment, and the quality that life attains at these privileged moments can under favorable circumstances be perpetuated in lasting personal commitments and diffused through a broader social experience. This notion of community shifts the gravitational center of the communal ideal away from the sharing of values and opinions and the exclusion of conflict. Here is a version of community that, although jeopardized by conflict, also thrives on it.

The ideal of community can be most fully realized in the noninstrumental areas of social experience, where constraints imposed by the calculation of practical advantage are relaxed. But it no longer presents itself as the privileged possession of a charmed circle of

private existence, contrasted polemically to the rest of social life. It becomes instead a quality that all social relations can enjoy to a greater or lesser extent.

The argument of the following sections suggests that this abstract and seemingly empty conception of community in fact points to a particular line of transformation in the subjective experience of social life. The distinctiveness of this line is brought out by its message about the performance and the betrayal of our received social roles.

*A Plank in the Cultural-Revolutionary Platform: Role Defiance
and Role Jumbling*

A social role is simply a typical place in a recurrent social relation. Roles come in sets, and these sets of roles exist so long as there are recurrent positions some people hold in relation to others and so long as these positions exercise normative authority as well as factual influence upon the practical or passionate relations among the individuals who occupy them. The role requires discrete, repetitious, and normatively charged stations.

Any major change in the formative institutional context of social life has a transformative impact upon established roles. The effect is all the greater when the institutional program aims not merely to replace one set of roles by another but to diminish the force of roles, the influence they exercise over our experience of human connection. The loosening of roles is, in fact, just one more corollary of the softening of the contrast between structure-preserving routine and structure-transforming conflict.

One way to understand the sense of the cultural-revolutionary attack on rigid roles is to ask what it would take for some characteristic ambitions of modern moral thought to be realized. Just as classical liberal theory treats the social world it helps elucidate and support as a fluid mass of free and equal citizens and rightholders, so the dominant styles of moral speculation treat duty and obligation in the language of universalistic, role-neutral precepts. But just as the stuff of social conflict continues to be dominated by the realities of social division and hierarchy, so we expend much of our moral scruple in taking a stand about the obligations, aspirations, and expectations that mark the roles we continue to occupy. We argue about what our role duties are and how we may reconcile them, as well as about the weight we should attach to roles in general and the persistence with which we should rebel against them. Just as the attempt to actualize liberal ideals requires ideas and arrangements unfamiliar to liberals, so the effort to make our moral experience resemble more closely what so much of moral thought already sup-

poses it to be like calls for a practice of role defiance and role jumbling that has little place in traditional moral doctrines.

The cultural revolutionary wants to show how roles can be stretched, pulled apart, combined with other roles, and used incongruously. He acts out a loosened sense of what it means to occupy a role. In this way he helps disrupt frozen connections among social stations, life experiences, and stereotyped forms of insight and sensibility. He thereby carries into the drama of everyday personal relations the effort to free sociability from its script and to make us available to one another more as the originals we all know ourselves to be and less as the placeholders in a system of group contrasts.

The roles that deserve to be targets of this cultural-revolutionary subversion are, above all, those that mark a place within a preestablished scheme of class, communal, or gender divisions: what an older sociological tradition used to call ascriptive roles. Specialized work roles are neither inherently suitable nor intrinsically unsuitable as subjects for role defiance and role jumbling. The more the technical and the social divisions of labor present themselves in everyday life as a rigid grid of functional allocations, the more they deserve to be smashed up at the microlevel of cultural-revolutionary defiance and incongruity as well as at the macrolevel of institutional innovation.

*A Plank in the Cultural-Revolutionary Platform:
The Confusion of Expressive Means*

A striking mutual dependence exists between what people feel about the situations they are in and the means by which they communicate to other people these subjective experiences. There are stock situations and – at least so far as these current means of expression go – stock responses to them. A table of correspondences arises between what people feel, or are supposed to be capable of feeling, in the recurrent circumstances of social life and the combined ways of acting, talking, and looking that convey the subjective response. The basis of these correspondences is an accommodation between subjectivity and society.

The differences in the ways that people use these available expressive means are not so great and numerous as to belie the vision of possible and desirable association enacted by society. So long as men and women believe themselves able to communicate to one another what the experiences of social life are like, and to communicate it by some recognizable variation on the repertory of standard expressed response, they continue to accept some of the crucial, realized dogmas of society. The social order may thwart both their ambitions and their ideals but it does not leave any part of their subjectivity

without a voice. It therefore does not seem to enshrine assumptions about possible experience that they already know to be false.

Far more than a natural language, this social code shapes what it is supposed to convey. By using it faithfully enough, you become a certain kind of person. You fulfill in yourself the implicit prophecy about human possibility the institutions and dogmas of society proclaim. Every naturalistic social doctrine has understood this truth and developed on the basis of this understanding a method of educating the passions through the constant reenactment of the proper social forms and the constant reinstatements of the proper personal responses to the typical situations of social life.

One of the aims and methods of cultural revolution is the disorganization of these codified affinities between subjective experience and expressive means. The cultural revolutionary begins by taking the fullest advantage of the incongruous aspects of all social experience: the fact that people always do feel more than the social code enables them to express. Many of these voiceless experiences may seem to have no bearing on the struggle over the collective structure of society. Yet all represent some opportunity of subjectivity and relationship whose very possibility the available code denies. In following the line of the incongruous, the cultural revolutionary has two aims. When considered in tandem, these goals suggest a method of action.

The cultural revolutionary wants to develop the varieties of relation and subjectivity that a fixed scheme of association denies, subjectivity and relationship being reverse sides of each other. Among these suppressed human opportunities are all the experiences evoked by the other elements in the work of cultural revolution. They, too, must gain vehicles of expression, for, without such vehicles, they cannot develop.

The cultural revolutionary, however, is not content to put one range of expressible subjectivity in place of another. He also wants permanently to loosen the connection between the subjective experience of personal encounters and its symbolic representation. All experience must be capable of expression, and all expression must influence the content of experience. A way must nevertheless be found to keep the life of subjectivity from becoming entirely hostage to a closed list of symbolic forms.

These two aims may seem at first contradictory: the effort to express novel experiences and the struggle to loosen the link between experience and expression. What resolves the apparent paradox is that the experiences to be expressed are primarily those described by the other parts of the program of cultural revolution. All the modes of relationship and subjectivity invoked by this program have in common some incorporation of the indeterminacy of society and

personality into the minute episodes of ordinary life. The theoretical affinity between the two seemingly contradictory aims is confirmed by the power of the same practical methods of action to advance both of them.

The most important method is the displacement and combination of expressive forms originally meant to designate supposedly uncombinable subjective responses to the circumstances of social life. There is hardly an alternative: all expression must begin with the stock of available signs. Such mixing does not take place as a mere transitory expedient, to be cast aside once new appropriate symbols emerge. It keeps going on. The continued recourse to it serves to perpetrate the permanent confusion of social or sexual roles and of prescriptive models of association. It carries into the normal course of social life something of the implicit boundlessness of personal subjectivity and relationship. It keeps alive the acknowledged tension between the reach toward the unconditional and the pervasiveness of context.

The disruption of the stock forms of subjective response is accompanied by a particular spiritual anxiety, which reveals yet another side to the ambiguities of cultural revolution. The sense of having enlarged the range of expression and experience alternates with the awareness of speaking a disordered social language and of undergoing incompletely formed and expressible responses to the ordinary incidents of life. The cultural revolutionary drags the element of incongruity between experience and expression from its unmentioned corner into the center of daily existence. The ordinary person becomes to that extent more like the poet, whose visionary heightening of expressed emotion may border on unintelligibility and aphasia.

The Available Points of Departure: Two Truncated Versions of Cultural Revolution

Like the institutional program of empowered democracy that it extends, the personalist program of cultural revolution must start from the arrested and truncated versions already at hand. We need to identify them and to understand the opportunities and dangers they present.

We have witnessed two main movements of practice and sensibility in the twentieth century that approach, by their ideas and their methods, the program of cultural revolution. On one side stands the radical experimentation with personal relations that characterizes in varying degrees the industrialized democracies of the North Atlantic world. Its self-reflection is the culture of high and popular modernism. On the other side, you can find in the surrounding poorer and largely non-Western world occasional radical projects for transforming the fine structure of elementary personal relationships and the

ideas about self and society that underlie them. But these projects usually remain subsidiary to leftist efforts at institutional reconstruction. In different ways and for different reasons, each of the two movements falls short of the program of cultural revolution. The defects of one provide a reverse image of the flaws of the other. Either form of failure stops cultural revolution dead in its tracks after giving it an initial impulse. But each stops it in a different way.

Consider first the approach to cultural revolution in the advanced Western countries. There, the progress of a cultural-revolutionary politics of personal relations has roughly coincided with the stabilization of the formative institutional structure of society. In fact, this familiar, limited version of cultural-revolutionary practice seems to thrive on passive acquiescence in the established institutional order. Nevertheless, to speak of cultural revolution in this setting is not to grasp at metaphor or to mistake the mere struggle over personal relations for the particular programmatic vision outlined in earlier pages. Each theme in that vision is tenaciously pursued today, not just by small numbers of vanguardist critics but by ever larger multitudes. In fact, by the end of the twentieth century, the program of cultural revolution has seeped into popular culture.

But though all the themes surround us, all appear subject to a characteristic truncation. It is as if cultural revolution had been suddenly arrested in its momentum while continuing to collect details and adherents. With this concealed paralysis comes a distortion of commitment — a distortion, that is, by reference to the personalist program outlined earlier. The most general mark of this mistake lies in the tendency to treat each aspect of cultural revolution as a pretext for endless self-gratification and self-concern. Every part of the cultural-revolutionary program is interpreted negatively as a license to withdraw not only from the particular, rigidified hierarchies of value and power implicit in fixed assignments of role or schemes of association but from the very experience of larger connections and responsibilities, from the possibility of self-transcendence, and from the claims of self-sacrifice. No wonder the emancipation of personal possibility from preexisting institutions and dogmas is so often taken, in the manner of the neoromantic attitude toward love and marriage, as an opportunity to deny the permanence or the exclusivity of any personal relation. For exclusivity and permanence might imply responsibility and renunciation. No wonder the most important attachments begin to seem incompatible with any lasting social form. For a public presence would turn the intimate connection outward toward broader communal engagements. The enemies of this version of cultural revolution are right to denounce such tendencies as a gospel of despairing selfishness, promoted in the disguise of moral enlightenment.

Earlier discussion suggested that the main source of these distortions is the cutting off of radicalism in the sphere of personal relations from any practical experience of struggle over the collective structure of society, from any developed vision of a regenerate life in common. As a result of this severance, people find it hard to recognize, in any but the most abstract sense, the constraints that collective institutions in fact impose upon even the most seemingly radical experiments in personal relations. All the less role-dependent personal relations that require a novel institutional setting or a more generous set of social involvements and responsibilities run up against the limits laid down by the quiescent social world. A failure of vision completes the work of the institutional constraints. Without an active sense of engagement in the remaking and reimagining of society, people feel absolved of responsibility for the larger collective contexts of their existence and irresponsible to any shared enterprise that can precede and outlast them. The illusions of endless gratification and casual intimacy then become less a voluntary choice than an almost irresistible imaginative compulsion.

The poorer and more turbulent countries of the world have witnessed many attempts to alter the basic character of personal relations as part of a larger struggle over the collective structure of society. When these attempts have won a broader popular allegiance, they have in fact established a connection between conflicts in the most intimate and the most public spheres.

Nevertheless, the practice of cultural revolution often emerges in these settings as if distracted and even obsessed by anxieties far narrower and more focused than the concerns embraced by the radicalism about personal relations that has spread throughout the North Atlantic countries. Thus, the link between the remaking of institutions and the transformation of personal relations has been established in a mutilated form that drastically limits and vitiates the significance of the achievement.

This other practice of cultural-revolutionary politics has had two obsessional targets: the contrast between the mass and the elite, and that between the pure and the impure. Sometimes one, sometimes the other, stands at the forefront of concern. The Chinese communist practice of "criticism and self-criticism" and Gandhi's method of pedagogic defilement neatly exemplify each.

The technique of criticism and self-criticism, first conceived by Liu Shao-ch'i and his collaborators, was reinterpreted and revised under the impact of the "mass line." This technique had roots that long predated the communist take-over of state power. It had been a device for reaffirming common purpose, discipline, and hierarchy within an in-group of beleaguered revolutionaries. The victim re-

canted. The group of cadres readmitted the deviant. All rearticulated and reaffirmed the doctrinal and organizational essentials of their movement. Under the influence of the mass line, pioneered by Mao Tse-tung and his coterie and then accepted and enlarged by zealous agitators, the method changed its form and purpose. In the hands of its most radical practitioners, it became part of an attempt to chasten and, if possible, to destroy the established bureaucracies of party and state and to produce a new man or woman, new above all in their attitude toward authority. The victim now appeared often as the mere pretext for the reenactment of a collective denunciation of every trace that the inherited contrast of masses and elites had imprinted upon the style of direct personal relations. Because that contrast had amounted to a hierarchy of value as well as to a system of control, its subversion had all the seductive and liberating force of an attack upon the distinction between the pure and the impure. The crudest allocations of personal role, or the most rigid conceptions of the style of association suitable to each domain of social life, could be accepted so long as they did not overtly involve the feared contrast between elite and mass.

Recall, by comparison, Gandhi's teaching and agitation in India. Consider the aspect of his activity that comes closest to the status of cultural revolution: not passive disobedience against the imperial master but the attempt to form a man who can be the citizen of a single nation, capable of common allegiance and even compassionate solidarity, across the frontiers traced by the norms of caste and ritual purity. In Gandhi's world, the distance among castes appeared bound up with the ritual contrast of the pure and the impure. To disrespect caste lines was the exemplary form of impurity. The position of each group within the caste hierarchy could be justified, though not explained, by the group's relative closeness to the purest or the most impure activities. The most cultural-revolutionary aspect of Gandhi's politics was his practice of defilement and his recruitment of others to share this practice with him: to reach out to the forbidden person, to undertake the most humiliating work, to touch the dirtiest thing (though exalting cleanliness and continence as high forms of virtue). The empowered person was the person who had emancipated himself, through repeated practice, from the fixed hierarchies of value that stood in the way of mutual responsibility and shared nationhood. Insofar as the caste system represented the chief locus of this ranking of values, the defiance of the values included an attack upon the system. But no more developed vision of cultural-revolutionary practice or program emerges from this relentless, focused concern. Even the longing for a civilization of self-reliant, communal villages represents less a deliberate rejection of the ideals that inspire the

program of empowered democracy and cultural revolution than an avoidance of the need to describe in detail the face-to-face relations a suitably empowered individual should hope to experience.

The ideas, attitudes, and power relations implicated in the contrasts between mass and elite or the pure and the impure do indeed act as a bar to the realization of the cultural-revolutionary program. But the single-minded focus on these concerns to the exclusion of others narrows the front on which cultural revolution can be staged and leaves untouched much of the established structure of social life. Stubborn fighting over the mastery of the state and the organization of the economy often occurs side by side with the rebirth of styles of personal association characteristic of an earlier, destroyed social order. The radicalism in the sphere of intimacy that has spread throughout the Western industrial democracies and penetrated its world-seducing popular culture combines insight and illusion, both empowering and disabling its practitioners. But it has often been dismissed by the militants and theoreticians of third world cultural revolution, forgetful of their own disabilities, as the autumnal and luxurious self-indulgence of dying classes and civilizations.

In one view, the advanced Western countries represent the privileged terrain for the execution of the cultural-revolutionary program. Their more thoroughgoing supersession of the contrast between masses and elites, and their wider acquaintance with the transvaluation of hierarchies of values, has freed them from constrictive obsessions and enabled them to practice the politics of role defiance and role jumbling on the broadest front. In another view, the poorer and more tumultuous places where the collective structure of society seems more fully up for grabs, represent the favored theater for cultural revolution. There, people fight out the conflict over personal relations, in depth, as part of a questioning of the whole social order. Larger collective involvements and responsibilities sweep aside the corrupting illusions of self-gratification. Both views are one-sided and even impertinent. The point is to connect the revolutionary reform of institutional arrangements with the cultural-revolutionary remaking of personal relations. In this effort there is no uniquely favored terrain and there are no clearly anointed champions of the cause.

THE SPIRIT

THE SENSES OF SPIRIT

Consider now the spirit that inspires this whole institutional program. Suppose someone were to hear the program expounded and

defended in just the terms adopted in the preceding sections. He might still remain unsure of the point of it all and press upon the obsessive proponent an insistent question: Yes, but what do you really want? The spirit of the constitution is the restatement of its animating ideal in a manner sharp enough to count as an answer to such a question. This ideal – at once a vision for society and a project for individuals – connects directly with a view of social reality, and its formulation exemplifies the anomalous genre of normative argument I termed visionary thought.

The spirit of the institutional proposal can also be restated with greater psychological immediacy. In this more experiential mode, the spirit is the set of motivations and attitudes that the constitutional scheme relies upon and that it in turn helps sustain. The most relevant attitudes and motivations are those that connect (or disconnect) the individual to the many collective settings of his existence and that express what he hopes to get, or fears to receive, from a life in society. The psychological dynamic implied by the institutional scheme must be realistic, and the inevitable bias of this dynamic toward certain personal ideals and against others must be defensible. Realism in turn implies stability. An unstable set of motivations is one that, once in operation, will change in ways so radical as to undermine the connected sets of institutional arrangements depending upon its continuance. The unstable spirit may disregard an irrepressible element of ordinary experience and yearning. Or it may encourage ambitions that cannot be made to coexist for long without a shift of impulses and objectives.

To define the spirit of the constitution is therefore to make clear that the entire institutional program can claim no neutrality among social or personal ideals. To a significant extent, it must be defended as both an account of the meaning of self-assertion and a hypothesis about the social conditions under which individual self-assertion may best be achieved. On both these scores the program implies a theory – an explanatory view of society. To claim for a particular set of institutional arrangements a strict neutrality among ideals of personality and society is to claim the impossible. It is to abandon the effort to invent social orders that are in fact less biased and more corrigible in exchange for a fantasy of detachment.

Nevertheless, the constitution and its spirit benefit from a special sense of neutrality. Like so much of social life in an age of partial emancipation from false necessity, this institutional program represents the theory and practice of a jumbled experience. It draws upon, and attempts to encourage, forms of practical and passionate human connection that recombine and redivide activities traditionally associated with different nations, classes, communities, and roles. More generally, its goal is to bring something more of the underlying

indefinition of personal and collective existence into a workable mode of life. Thus, the skeptic who disbelieves all large theoretical arguments for particular social ideals, but who, for that very reason, wishes all the more to weaken the tyranny of the present over the future, may nevertheless commit himself to this program.

It is a disputable commitment, for it rests on at least two arguments, each of which remains open to attack. The first is the value given to openness toward the uncreated forms of experience, a value that does not follow self-evidently from the premises of a general political skepticism. The second argument is that the constitutional scheme I have described can in fact serve this openness more than rival systems. But, though the skeptic's reason to accept the program of empowered democracy may be controversial, it is plausible, and its plausibility shows the breadth of the sympathies on which the constitutional program might draw.

The adversaries of the program must therefore fall into one of two groups. They must have a different general view and this view must favor an institutional structure less extreme in the pursuit of the radical cause. Or, if they want to avoid any such structure, they must believe that definite structure can best be avoided by some means other than those provided by this program. I have argued, though indirectly, against both these positions: against the first by presenting the grounds of political iconoclasm and against the second by describing the workings of the constitution and by defending its empirical assumptions. More detailed and direct arguments you, reader, will easily be able to supply.

THE SPIRIT OF THE CONSTITUTION: THE STRUCTURE-DENYING STRUCTURE

The following pages define the spirit of the institutional proposal in two equivalent ways. One definition describes the point of a social vision; the other brings out the ideal of personality and the psychologic dynamic that correspond to this collective ideal and help inspire and justify it.

The spirit of the constitution can be described in another still more general way. The constitution is a superstructure: distinct from the remaining institutions of society not only because it sets the terms on which they may be revised but because, of all parts of the social order, it is the most obviously invented. The artifactual quality that applies, in greater or lesser degree, to all social life, appears concentrated in it. This superstructure, however, has a remarkable property. It is designed to prevent any definite institutional order from taking hold in social life; there lies its structure-destroying effect. In this respect, it is the precise opposite of the eighteenth-century pre-

revolutionary idea of the constitution as a device by which to exhibit and sustain some determinate scheme of social division and hierarchy. At the extreme, each rank or sector in society was to be represented by a particular agency of the state so that to study the constitution would be like looking at a Renaissance building whose facade discloses the plan of its interior. By contrast, the constitution of the reformed republic pushes social life toward an approximation to the ideal of an order that preserves in its determinate existence the marks of an original indefiniteness and that thereby loosens the constraints of context. A few analogies amplify the meaning of this alternative description of the spirit of the constitution.

Compare, first, the constitution to the flexible variant of rationalized collective labor, whose extension it promotes, if only by undercutting the institutional props to the predominance of the rigid variant. The normal forms of discourse and relationship maintain a relative distinction between the structure of activity and the activity itself. Only when insight or conflict have reached a certain threshold is the structure of activity brought explicitly into question. In the flexible variant of rationalized collective labor, however, the structure of work – the definition of the job categories, the hierarchy of discretion, the standardized operating procedures – changes frequently according to the demands of the task at hand and the results of collective deliberation. Activity within the frame of reference carries over, by constant gradations, into activity about the frame. The revised constitution extends this mode of practice to the whole of social life. It describes the meta-arrangements instituted by people to the end that their activities may more effectively subject their practices and institutions to scrutiny and revision.

But there is a difference. The goals of work are always given by some act of will, even if it is the will of the workers themselves, and even if the definition of the ends shifts with each new step of operational experience. In this sense every work system resembles a machine. But there is nothing external to the democratic republic that might supply these ends of action – nothing except the fantasies of its citizens. So the description of the enlarged democracy cannot be complete until it includes an account of the relation of individual fantasy to public order.

Compare now the program of the revised republic to a characteristic ambition of twentieth-century art. Take an example from painting, though the same point, in different form, might be illustrated by any of the arts. The disintegration of the picture plane in cubism can be understood, in one way, as a deliberate subordination of the representational to the expressive. The wrenching apart of the forms in the picture disturbs their reference to the external world and facilitates the use of these disturbed forms as references to a hidden

subjective experience that lacks any natural or readily constructible language of its own. But one way to understand this stylistic event cuts across the distinction between the expressive and the representational. So long as the different clues contained in the painting can be reconciled within some possible – that is to say, conceivable – world, the imagination can assign a more or less definite referent to the work. It does not matter whether this reference points to the external world. (Compare to the nature of consonance and resolution in music.) After having tried out a certain number of variations and finding one or a few that fit, the reimagination of what you see stops. It stops at the price of adding some defined artifact to all the other defined artifacts that already exist in the world but that, strangely, arise out of an imaginative activity whose very nature is the endless denial of all settled determinations. Suppose, however, that the clues in the work of art contradict one another in every imaginable world. The imagination cannot then come to rest; it must continue to spin out variations in its understanding of the work. None of these variations fit for sure. The effort of the viewer, if it does not merely stop out of exhaustion, boredom, or despair, reenacts the endless travail of the imagination that produced the work. At first, it may seem that the external forms and colors (or sounds and words) merely provide the excuses that allow art to deal with itself. But this is still a superficial view. The imagination – including the artistic imagination – is nothing but the search for reality through the perpetual multiplication of schemes of transformative variation, reaching toward the unconditional through the discovery of the less conditional. The art concerned with itself is also and primarily concerned with the original truth of indefiniteness and with the quest for the unlimited. When it determines to provide visible signs of its own power to break all rules, the imagination pursues the paradoxical ambition of giving a finite form to the infinite.

The project of the reformed republic is the political parallel to this artistic aim. In place of the contradictory clues that deny rest to the imagination, it puts the institutional arrangements that help keep collective deals and state-supported privilege from congealing into a cohesive order and from lending support to a definite enacted vision of social life. Instead of the always unfinished labor of the beholder, forced to repeat the permanent spin of the constructive imagination, it favors collective practices of experimentation and innovation that never fall into planned quiescence and that encourage people to re-discover the gap between institutional order and the undefined opportunities of practical or passionate attachment.

But the difference between the artistic and the political context is that the latter deals with a focused content: the dense, intractable material of personal connection. The program of a republic cannot

be fully defended on narrowly political grounds or even by reference to an overarching social ideal. The republic is also a stage on which some possible progression in the forms of human encounter can take place. To know how good a stage it is, you have to come to an understanding of the nature and possibilities of human encounter, the proper subject matter for a view of the passions. Unenlightened by such a view, the program of the restored republic remains crucially incomplete.

The most illuminating analogy may well be religious rather than technical or artistic, for it shows most clearly the relation of the republican program to the truth about the conditional and the unconditional. Imagine a religion in which all people are both priests and prophets and in which the priestly and the prophetic work coincide. The prophetic work is the denial of the absolute character of any set of social arrangements. The priestly one is each individual's and each group's renewed sacrifice of the acceptance of any one situation as a permanent element in the definition of its identity. The priestly, sacrificial emptying out is just the reverse side of the prophetic iconoclasm. This priestly and prophetic activity makes possible the emergence of fuller forms of self-assertion and attachment, and enables people to hold themselves open to the signs of the unconditional or the less conditional. But because the waiting and sacrifice have to do with the most ordinary, profane, and constant realities, they must, even more than do religion and art, contain a promise of happiness. To be credible, this promise must begin to be kept as soon as it is made.

THE SPIRIT OF THE CONSTITUTION: THE IDEAL OF EMPOWERMENT

An alternative definition of the spirit of the constitution emphasizes an ideal of personality and a psychological dynamic. Its distinctive character may be brought out by considering the response it offers to a particular experience of disbelief and submission. This experience is so intimately connected with the partial emancipation of social life from false necessity that every attempt to realize a stronger freedom must grapple with it.

In democratic and nondemocratic states alike, wherever relative education and privilege allowed people to participate actively and consciously in the experience of mass politics, world history, and enlarged economic rationality, a familiar attitude toward society became harder and harder to recapture. This was the sense that the actual design of social life embodied some higher, value-giving and self-justifying reality. To the extent that people could share in such a view, society would have the radiance of a perpetual revelation.

Imagine two kinds of sacred reality. The first is a foundational reality or transcendent personal being; the second, the experiences of personality and personal encounter that, multiplied many times over, make up a social world. Whereas the first of these two sacreds is elusive and disputable and requires, to be recognized, the power of vision, which is the ability to see the invisible, the second seems near and palpable. Whenever they can, men and women try to identify the first of these two sacreds with the second. They want to see the social world graced with the authority of an ultimate reality. But the progress of insight and the disclosures of conflict prevent this bestowal of authority. If there is a common theme in the history of thought and of politics, it consists precisely in failure to sustain claims of unconditional authority on behalf of particular ways of talking, thinking, living, and organizing society. As the two sacreds lose their contact with each other, the distant one fades away into an ineffable, longed-for reality without any clear message for understanding and conduct. The nearby one becomes profane and arbitrary.

The farther this process goes, the more it seems to threaten the experience of belief itself. The relation between the two sacreds is only the most acute form of the link between immediate contexts of thought or action and the wider contexts in terms of which the former can be understood, criticized, and justified. The remote sacred is the context of all contexts, if there can be one, and not simply the next widest context to the one we are in. The same parallel and connected events in the history of mind and society that disrupt the identification of the two sacreds also create obstacles to mistaking any context for a context of all contexts. The only beliefs people can readily have in such a situation are beliefs incident to some particular conceptual or social practice to which they deny any ultimate foundation.

Under the influence of this experience, people become like a priesthood that has lost the secret of its mysteries; their devotions and dogmas become pretenses and ploys. Looked at from afar, they could easily be mistaken for those who still share the naive euphoria of the identification of the conditional with the unconditional. But what appears, superficially, to be the same behavior proceeds from a different motive, has a different meaning for those who do it, and opens up different opportunities of action. Now their very lack of belief tempts them to capitulate all the more readily to the demands and opinions surrounding them. Resistance to these surroundings would exact sacrifice. Sacrifice can be offered willingly only by those who see some reality or value that would give it sense and make it worthwhile.

What their moral wills cannot accomplish, their imaginations can also not reach. When they try to conceive some alternative social world, they find only another conditional reality, just as arbitrary

and exacting in the demands it makes upon its participants as the one that already exists. Nothing is left to them but to choose one of these worlds and to play by its rules. Each such world is both ultimately groundless and definitive of the terms of people's practical, passionate, and cognitive dealings with one another. By a perverse but logical implication, the decisiveness of its influence arises precisely from its lack of any place within a hierarchy of contexts. There is no larger defining reality to which it can serve as the vehicle or from whose standpoint it can be criticized.

The loss of strong belief in the ultimate rightness and necessity of established arrangements and opinions does not suddenly put current social arrangements at issue, nor does it make the reinvention of beliefs and practices any easier. The more common effect runs in the opposite direction. The lack of a sacrificial or imaginative impulse to transformative action means that existing ideas and institutions fail to be subject to the pressure that might reveal their workings, their limits, their hidden weakness, and their chances of replacement. Thus an involuntary skepticism and a craven fatalism may confirm each other.

In such a circumstance, many people may begin to regain a mock version of the naive-naturalistic view of social life. They do not merely want the distant sacred. They want it in a form that specifies and justifies the content of the nearby sacred. Theirs is the sentimental attitude: the wish to repeat and to believe in order to repeat. If the great imposter is the one who fools himself, the little imposter is the one who cannot quite carry it off. To this role of the petty imposter, the sentimentalist of strong belief is almost always condemned.

Individuals and even entire nations may manage for a while to convince themselves. They will imagine that a particular system of detailed social relationships and opinions is mandated – by God, by history, or by some other supreme authority. Their task will be easier if, out of lack of education or experience, they never quite abandoned the naive-naturalistic view in the first place. To the others – their disillusioned contemporaries – these people will seem slaves to an obsession that is also an illusion, and indeed they are.

Disbelief joined to fatalism, the sentimental longing for the naive and vicious confusion of the conditional with the unconditional, and the occasional obsessional living out of this spurious equation – these experiences are doubly hostile to the program of empowered democracy. They express preconceptions about self and society incompatible with the beliefs that justify this program and that incite people to carry it out. They display and generate emotions that, if allowed to hold the field, would quickly undermine the institutions the program describes. Unless the constitution is protected against the rule of such emotions, it cannot stand: only disappointment and failure

would come of putting a machine for permanent iconoclasm in the hands of people who alternated between the listless acceptance and the idolatrous worship of social forms.

One antidote to these subversive emotions is the diffusion of a better, less superstitious understanding of society. The emotions I have described represent the psychological counterpart to a philosophical doctrine: the thesis that all we can do is to select a social world or a tradition of discourse and play by its rules. Precisely because all forms of social life are groundless, we must choose between a radical and paralyzing skepticism and an acceptance of the criteria of sense and value with which one such form of social life furnishes us. Thus, we must perform, though with heightened historical consciousness, the Humean operation of using an irresistible social engagement to crowd out an irrefutable mental anxiety. (When I go out into the street, my skepticism vanishes, driven out by involvements rather than by arguments.) We can never hope to change the character of our relation to the contexts of our ideas and activities by weakening the power these contexts hold over us and strengthening the power we exercise over them.

A central argument of this book, however, has been that only a social theory that recognizes and explains this possibility enables us to imagine society and history richly and truly. Such a theory shows how the power to loosen the bonds of contextuality without ever breaking them once and for all constitutes the most basic character of progress in thought and politics, of realism in the former and freedom in the latter. This insight does not, by itself, determine the content of a theoretical system or an institutional order. But it excludes certain beliefs as false. What is more relevant to the cognitive element in the emotions I described, it gives another sense to certain ideas and experiences. Thus, for example, it discredits the interpretation of the alternative forms of social or governmental organization that happen to exist at a particular time as humanity's compulsory option list. It enables people to criticize their own achievements in science or art, cultural or social revolution, by discovering the extent to which the structure they created in each realm suppresses the very activity of making and destroying structures.

The diffusion of an element of correct belief cannot, by itself, suffice to generate the emotions that sustain the constitution. The education that counts most is the one that daily life ministers. People may have a theoretical insight into the truth about the conditional and the unconditional. This insight may alter the character of all their views of self and society, of the secular and the sacred. But unless this insight gets somehow reconfirmed by the events of everyday life, it will fail to receive the testimony of the emotions. There must

be a recurrent practice in ordinary social life that provides the reconfirmation and ensures the testimony.

This recurrent practice is the ability to entertain fantasies about possible forms of self-expression or association and to live them out. Its goal is the strenuous enlargement of enacted possibility. It misses the point to suppose that the reason for this commitment is merely a desire to increase the range of the choices open to us. It is, rather, to do justice to the offended and forgotten greatness of the ordinary human heart and to strengthen all those varieties of individual or collective self-assertion that depend upon active mastery over the contexts of our action.

The citizen of the empowered democracy is the empowered individual. He is able to accept an expanded range of conflict and revision without feeling that it threatens intolerably his most vital material and spiritual interests. The struggles in which he engages challenge or transform not only the material circumstances of his life but the nature and structure of the groups to which he belongs and even his preexisting sense of personal identity. This perpetual readiness for renunciation amounts to less than a sacrifice. The citizen renounces because he knows that, whatever happens, he will not be abandoned, humbled, or oppressed and because his concessions are transfigured by the affirmative inclinations and achievements I shall soon describe. The constitutional basis for this willingness to accept the risks of expanded conflict lies in the guarantee of immunity afforded by a system that precludes entrenched dependence or dominion and keeps every issue open for another day. Its higher spiritual significance consists in the assertion of transcendence as a diurnal context smashing. The citizen lives out in practice what the foundational view of human activity proclaims: the truth that his connections, desires, and insights cannot be definitively contained by the conceptual or institutional framework within which they provisionally operate. He denies the choice between resignation and escape, between treating these worlds as the end of the story and refusing wholehearted participation in any of them. He has learned the secret of how to be in them without being entirely of them.

Put more affirmatively, the ideal effect and demand of the constitution upon personality consists in the accumulation of three mental tendencies, all of which meet in the practice of fantasy and enactment. The first tendency is the accentuation of desire, of its scope and intensity. This goal holds for desire in general, whatever its specific aim or relative weight. It applies, however, with special force to those desires that aim at particular aspects of freedom itself. For such desires differ from others in contributing directly to the central experience of human empowerment. They do not – at least

not inevitably – destabilize the regime within which the ordinary person can experience this enhancement of the will nor do they have the quality of an obsessional fixity that crowds out other desires. The second mental disposition is the enlargement of the imagination. The person imagines a broader spectrum of circumstances within which desires can be satisfied. The stronger the imagination becomes, the more it transfuses desire, sloughing off the elements that focus upon mere satiation or obsession and emphasizing the experience of active deliberation and reconstruction itself. The third mental tendency is the broadening of the actual opportunities to realize in practice the transformed desires produced by the first two tendencies. Such expansion saves the enhancement of the will and the imagination from issuing in a self-destructive experience of constantly frustrated insatiability.

This ideal of empowerment, and the practice of fantasy and enactment that most directly embodies it, may seem at first almost empty. They do not tell us what particular forms of human connection we should establish. The appearance of emptiness is, however, illusory. The previous stages of this programmatic argument have shown that the seemingly negative ideal of a context more fully open to challenge and revision can be made to yield very detailed institutional implications. To be sure, the citizens of such a democracy must still choose which forms of association to dream up and to enact within the institutional structure they have established, accepting some and rejecting others. The points of departure for these projects in association are inevitably local: the varieties of association enshrined by established practice and dogma as well as the incongruous experiences of practical or passionate connection suggestive of opportunities this order denies. But the more we succeed at the task of remaking society on the model of an empowered democracy, the more directly our particular forms of association can be tested against the several aspects of self-assertion I earlier distinguished: the development of practical capabilities and of the enjoyments they make possible, the diminishment of the conflict between the enabling conditions of self-assertion (the need for engagement and the avoidance of subjection), and freedom from the superstitions of false necessity.

As the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-revising conflict dissipates, the idea of a canonical list of forms of association also loses its force.

Nevertheless, insofar as the contrast between context-respecting and context-challenging activities persists, we find that all our associational practices and ideas remain subject to a two-layered standard of judgment. The normal standard is the conformity of these practices to inherited, enacted ideals of association. The exceptional,

visionary standard comes from the turn we give to our basic longings for empowerment and solidarity, which, together, compose a more complex project of self-assertion.

The change in our relation to our contexts that the program of empowered democracy exemplifies may seem to deprive us of the normal standard, first by undermining our confidence in its authority and then by jumbling up the distinct models of association that represent its working materials. But, in exchange, that movement begins to turn the exceptional standard into the ordinary one: it enables us to experiment, more constantly, freely, and self-consciously with the relation between ultimate aspirations and social practices. And it thereby encourages us to develop a richer, more subtle, and more prosaic discourse about matters that too easily seem to be beyond words.

THE SPIRIT OF THE CONSTITUTION: EMPOWERMENT IMAGINED AND PERVERTED

In the industrial democracies of the late twentieth century the ideal of empowerment lives a strange double life. This ideal has already been realized in the important but truncated form of an experience of rightholding open to large numbers of ordinary men and women. Here is empowerment as the ability to move within the discretionary zone of entitlements defined on the model of the consolidated property right. The achievements and deficiencies of this version of empowerment, as well as the alternatives to it, have already been discussed.

The felt inadequacy of this experience of rightholding becomes evident in the fantasies of adventure and mastery. These fantasies are not even meant to be lived out. When, in exceptional circumstances, people have taken them seriously and acted upon them, the results have often been disastrous.

The hidden, second life of the empowerment ideal shows the extraordinary force of this longing and the perverse forms it assumes when left unrealized in the ordinary lives of ordinary men and women. Consider a typical example of the aestheticized presentation of empowerment in the twentieth century: Abel Gance's cinematic extravaganza about Napoleon Bonaparte (1934). There he is – the great hero, the man of will, embodying to the highest degree the rage of transcendence and the transformative vocation. He refuses to take the established contexts of action for granted and repeatedly smashes, or threatens to smash, them. He combines an acute insight into the opportunities and dangers of his situation with an ability to imagine possibilities that the logic of this situation excludes. He

conducts himself within the established world as if he possessed secret knowledge, and indeed he does.

The context smasher puts himself into situations that others would regard as ridiculous and demeaning (e. g., Napoleon's awkward and self-deceiving pursuit of the philanderer Josephine). He doesn't feel tainted; he just doesn't give a damn. For one thing, his efforts are all turned toward his great enterprise and away from the petty ambitions and fears of ordinary life. For another thing, he transvalues the hierarchies of his contemporaries: his greater freedom from the context enables him to judge by another hierarchy of value. Therefore, he appears to be shameless when he is in fact guided by an alternative moral vision. This vision does not merely replace one hierarchy of values by another; it partly liberates moral judgment from the constraining effect of any clearly defined hierarchy.

The same forces that free him from the fear of being laughed at also emancipate him from small-minded vanities and resentments. (Remember that all this is part of the myth presented in the film rather than of the actual psychological reality of these individuals.) Though he may be ruthless in his treatment of particular individuals and loyalties, he never indulges in revenge for its own sake, nor can he be manipulated through vanity. After all, he is on more important business and has greater pleasures.

Then there are the piercing eyes, the intense, wild expression that the man of will shares with all the secondary characters and even the ordinary mobs drawn into the momentous events he commands. It reminds you of those books of nineteenth- and early twentieth century photographs of Chinese, Japanese, and Russians. The subject looks into the camera with the same crazed expression. Perhaps his disquiet comes from the unfamiliarity of the camera, which seems to puncture the shell of social routine and produce a moment of dazed incongruity in which the familiar limits and aims of action fall away and deeper, wordless concerns rise up. Perhaps the surprise given by the machine serves both to exemplify and to portray the larger shock administered by the Western intrusion. Perhaps, however, these circumstances merely precipitated a distinctive, ambivalent experience of human empowerment. The fierce-eyed subjects, amid their ornate or ragged trivia, look as if they had seen beyond the photographer and their circumstance to a reality previously hidden from their eyes. They had seen something of the God who says, No man sees me and lives. Similarly, in the Gance film, the actors looked at the moving camera as the exotic photography subjects had looked at the still one. The revolutionary interlude replaced with advantage the Western shock. All the way from the transcendent man of will to the agitated crowds, the participants seem in touch with another, higher reality, with the things you see and feel when

one conditional world has been destroyed and another not yet emerged, as if this crack in the finite provided a glimpse into the absolute. At any moment, this context-breaking brio might be converted into an idolatrous delusion: people might treat their particular historical endeavors as if these undertakings were themselves the absolute. Such were the risks and complications of a more radiant vitality.

All these aspects of human empowerment – the frenzied pursuit of the transformative vocation; the freedom from the fear of the ridiculous, from the compulsion of mean-minded concerns, and from the “narcissism of petty differences”; the ability to impart to worldly action the ardor that accompanies the loosening of the constraints of context – all this appeared bound up with a special union between leader and followers. At a still more concrete level, it seems inseparable from particular forms of mass organization. The leader achieved empowerment in a basically different fashion from the other people. He alone took events by the hand and thereby realized the transformative vocation in all its purity. He required no teachers or mediators and promised no equality with himself: on the contrary, equality among his followers depended upon their acceptance of his special role. When, for example, he freed himself from the fear of the ridiculous, there was never a suggestion that they could do the same, except perhaps unconsciously as the result of a spell he cast on them and they on one another.

The exceptionalism of the leader was connected, obscurely but significantly, to the form of his historical enterprise. In different degrees and in different ways, pseudorevolutionary nationalism and its surrogates involved the superimposition of a communal ideal upon social hierarchies that this ideal simultaneously adjusted and preserved. Such movements often embraced the cult of warlike force, wielded by the collectivity under the guidance of the leader. Thus, the psychological experience of empowerment was to be realized through social forms that constrained or negated the different aspects of freedom. Yet empowerment meant freedom if it meant anything. Here was a social experience at war with itself: a monstrous equivocation, already prefigured in the circumstance of followers whose access to the sense of empowerment paradoxically depended upon their submission to a leader or upon their absorption in a crowd. Nevertheless, the film presented the experience of empowerment as if it were inseparable from these offensive manifestations.

The audience at the cinema stood at a second, safer remove from the man of will. They responded with barely suppressed fascination to the representation of greatness while ashamed and even repelled by the social forms that greatness took. They got no help in distinguishing the former from the latter, nor could they readily imagine

any alternative way by which society might extend the availability of empowerment.

The epic grandeur evoked by such a film did for the audience what the bewitching force of a more or less consciously staged collective drama did for the participant crowds and the secondary characters within the film: it provided their admiration with an alibi. But the apparent alibi ended up calling attention to the crime. The aesthetic of empowerment – the worship of an imaginative power to transform reality unaffected by ordinary human longing, the substitution of art for religion and even for love – ran through much modern art. In the antinovelistic style of works of art like these, it reached its most crudely and overtly political but also most revealing form.

To comprehend what attracted the audience, however ambivalently, to this display of impenitent grandeur, you need to understand some crucial aspects of the circumstance people lived in. The less advantaged ranks of society might be almost entirely preoccupied with the need to find work, to support a family, and maintain a position within a residual local or ethnic community. Many might still adhere to an ideal of the honorable calling that made them relatively immune to larger conceptions of empowerment. But whenever the compulsions of material need loosened, or people's actual or imagined experience of social and personal possibility broadened, the conception of empowerment underwent a corresponding change. All the varieties of happiness that involved the experience of transforming a context emerged alongside the longing to exist safely within a context. There was little chance of a naive return to the mere acceptance of place within an unquestioned world. Return, under these conditions, would produce a sentiment of defeat and self-compromise, poisoning the more limited happiness that people knew and cherished. The extraordinary and lucky individual – the leader, the artist, the thinker, the mover and shaker – might satisfy his aspiration. But he satisfied it in a way that excluded other people and that perpetuated, in some less dramatic form, the paradoxes of empowerment that exclusion produced. Neither the privileged nor the excluded could imagine, much less realize, an alternative social form of empowerment. The character of their fantasies emphasized the nature of their constraint.

A driving force of the constitutional program is the desire to do justice to the human heart, to free it from indignity and satisfy its hidden and insulted longing for greatness in a fashion it need not be fearful or ashamed of. To this end, the experience of empowerment must be made real rather than vicarious. It must be reconciled with the ordinary needs and attachments of ordinary people. And it must be freed from its corrupting association with the cult of leaders and

of violence. The program outlined here describes the institutional requirements for achieving these objectives.

THE SPIRIT OF THE CONSTITUTION REDEFINED BY CONTRAST

The spirit of this institutional proposal becomes clearer by contrast to other, familiar doctrines of the present or the past that superficially resemble it.

In the contemporary world, the most persistently attractive program of social reconstruction has often been described as social democracy or as the welfare-corporate state. Its most developed forms have emerged in Western Europe and Japan. To be sure, even in the advanced industrial democracies, it has prospered far more in some places than in others. But its influence, at least among the industrial democracies, is shown by the failure of more left-wing or right-wing political parties to make a major dent on its achievements or to find a political creed of comparable authority.

Recall the major tenets of the social-democratic program. First, it upholds the particular variant of constitutional democracies whose instruments were first perfected in the crucial period from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century — though its proponents may say this institutional structure is merely the best one around, rather than show much interest in looking for significantly different alternatives. For they believe that the main problems and concerns lie elsewhere. Second, this doctrine holds that government must actively supervise a regulated market economy organized along just the lines of the formative institutional context whose content and genesis Chapters 2, 3, and 4 described. The democratic state must encourage investment in the most promising sectors of industry. It must seek to place the national economy in a favorable place within the international division of labor. And it must broker with big business and organized labor, as well as with other sectors of the population, distributive deals that enable all to turn from disruptive conflict to productive collaboration. Third, people's basic material needs must be taken care of. This objective may be accomplished through either a recognition of universal welfare claims independent of job position, or an emphasis on job security, accompanied by a tie-in of welfare benefits to job position. Fourth, people should be encouraged to participate in the organization of the workplace and the management of their local areas. These local engagements should help blur the distinction between public and private order and revitalize the sense of citizenship. Fifth, both welfare guarantees and local participation should be achieved in ways minimizing conflict

about the social order as a whole. Such conflict gives free reign to ideological posturing, utopian illusions, and selfish defensiveness that draw people away from the collaborative undertakings needed to solve practical problems.

Two mutually reinforcing impulses underlie the social-democratic program and make clear why it is simply the most recent version of the desire to deny or contain the political character of social life. One such impulse is the perennial desire to retreat from the violent connotations of history into a stable life of practical concerns and communal engagement. The other impulse is the effort to discover the objective structure of practical requirements and organizational constraints that the loose talk of the ideologists disguises.

The argument for empowered democracy sees this social democratic program as practically, spiritually, and theoretically inadequate. It is practically inadequate because the development of productive or destructive capabilities requires a more thorough subversion of the hold of privilege over the means of society making than the established institutional versions of markets and democracies allow. It is spiritually inadequate because this same liquefaction of established social structures is needed to develop the richness of our subjective life and to advance our attempts to reconcile more fully the enabling conditions of self-assertion. It is theoretically inadequate because it relies upon yet another diluted residue of the naturalistic idea: it still draws on the idea of a latent structure of flexible coordination and collaboration that is waiting there to be discovered, if only we could get rid of the distractions of ideological conflict.

The program defended here diverges from the social-democratic ideal in its advocacy of radically revised ways of organizing market economies and democratic governments, in its search for the institutional arrangements that further soften the contrast between context-preserving routine and context-revising conflict, in its preference for the styles of welfare guarantees that presuppose these institutional reforms rather than compensating for their absence, and in its effort systematically to connect involvement in local and workplace self-government with conflict over the basic terms of social life.

If social democracy conceived in these ample terms represents the closest counterpart and rival to the program of empowered democracy, civic or classical republicanism may seem to be one of its sources. But the genealogy is no more accurate than the comparison. The civic republicanism to which I refer has been the single most important rhetorical weapon of many who oppose both the selfish privatism and the rampant inequality they see as continuing to vitiate contemporary Western forms of economic and governmental organization. The characteristic republican trope is the need to recapture the selfless devotion to collective ends that supposedly distinguished

the ancient republics. Its ambition is to ensure an equality of material circumstance and to enlist a selfless devotion to the common good. Equality is to be ensured by granting each citizen a roughly equal unit of property. Prohibitions of alienation (e.g., of land) and constant redistributions must prevent exchange from undermining this fundamental equality. Devotion to the common good is to be won by requiring the citizens, from childhood on, to participate in public responsibilities and by deploying all the varieties of education and example that may coax them out of their tendency to withdraw into narrow attachments and material pleasures. The tenacity with which some partial version of this doctrine has been upheld under the most diverse historical circumstances is matched only by the regularity of its failure whenever it has been allowed to influence, even obliquely, actual policy.

The material cost of the classical republican doctrine lies in the paralysis of the power to innovate. For, as earlier stages of the argument have repeatedly emphasized, the development of practical capabilities depends upon the ability to recombine and renew, by consensual or coercive means, not only the factors of production but the arrangements that constitute the organizational setting of productive activity. A country nailed to the constraints upon recombination that classical republicanism requires could not survive in the military, economic, and ideological rivalry of nation-states. Nor could it provide its citizens with the many opportunities for individual and collective experimentation that enrichment opens up.

The spiritual cost of the classical republican program is even more terrible. The equal rightholders live in a circumstance of self-conscious austerity. This austerity is not due merely to the constraints such a system of right imposes upon material progress; it results as well from the spiritual incompatibility of this regime with luxury. Luxury means, in part, the surfeit and variety of sensual pleasure, particularly insofar as this pleasure is directed away from personal attachment to material things or symbolic representations. The psychology of variation and surfeit cannot easily be reconciled to a circumstance requiring the quiescence of basic social arrangements, a basic sameness in the outward conditions of life, and the comparative isolation of each rightholder within his separate sphere of right. In such a circumstance, the individual readily falls victim to two contrasting sets of emotions, which sometimes coexist and at other times replace each other. He may wallow in a torpor of narrow routine (after all, how much can the yeoman or his latter-day counterpart find to do in his little plot?), while he jealously watches over his shoulder to see that nobody gets ahead of him or trespasses on what is his own. The adherents to this social doctrine have always claimed that the citizen of their desired republic can be expected to

put the collective good over private interest. But the content of this collective good is exhausted in the defense of the system of inviolable spheres of right against all domestic or foreign enemies. The sameness of different subjectivities must be ensured by their shared emptiness; any richness of subjective experience creates the danger of cumulative discord or hopeless self-absorption. The citizens may disguise their indignation at any departure from this sameness in the language of a pompous and unforgiving virtue. These emotions will sometimes give way to others: no social order can entirely submerge longing in routine. The individual fantasizes fabulous wants and satisfactions. If his own imagination is inadequate to generate these yearnings, he may receive them from other societies, or from the rebels and deviants he ostentatiously condemns but secretly envies, or even from the mere exaggeration of the satisfactions and desires he already experiences. Such longings can be counted on to be both persistent and forbidden. When openly flaunted, they will antagonize the regime. When denied, they may linger on, as resentment and self-contempt, to poison it.

The program of empowered democracy avoids these material and spiritual costs by redefining both the character and the forms of equality and participation. The rough equality of material circumstance that it seeks is meant to arise as the convergent effect of absolute claims to the satisfaction of minimal material needs (claims that rank among the immunity rights), the temporary and conditional character of access to capital, and the openness of the formative context of power and production to challenge and change. The participation in public life that it proposes is not the cult of altruistic goals rigidly contrasted to private ends, nor is it the fatal mania of meetings that invariably ends in boredom for the many and manipulation by the few. What it wants, instead, is to extend the scope and the clarity of private ambitions by enlarging our sense of the possible forms of association through which they may be realized and redefined. In this way, it seeks to superimpose upon the delights of private enjoyment the pleasures – neither private nor public – of creating, within society, distinctive but shared forms of life that permit shared but distinctive activities.

The radical democratic program outlined here is therefore less a sequel to the classical republican vision than a superliberalism. It pushes the liberal war against privilege and superstition to a point that requires the abandonment of the forms of governmental, economic, and legal organization with which liberalism has traditionally been associated. Having made its peace with modernity, it no longer needs to prepare the future by pretending to restore the past. This superliberalism is also the defensible form of a leftist ideal that breaks the spell of deep-logic social theory, confronts the need to think

institutionally, refuses to define itself by reference to class interests shaped by the very institutions it wants to reconstruct, and seeks to further both freedom and equality by turning subversion into a practical way of life.

THE MEANING OF IMPERFECTION

Consider now three apparent dilemmas that, if true, would prove fatal to the programmatic argument. Each is false in its initial form. But each apparent dilemma can be reformulated as the description of a real risk. To acknowledge both the reasonableness and the seriousness of this risk is to emphasize the antiperfectionist character of the program. All that can be claimed for the institutional platform of the empowered democracy is that it represents an advance over the available forms of governmental and economic organization.

Self-Reproduction and Stability

A first apparent dilemma has to do with the self-reproducing quality of the constitution. On the one hand, the constitutional scheme may guarantee its own perpetuation by the success with which it informs motivations and shapes the occasions and instruments of conflict. But such a success at self-defense would discredit the authority of the institutional scheme, for it would show this scheme to be in flagrant violation of the animating ideal of revisability. The formative context of power and production would have become more rather than less entrenched, and the entrenchment would be all the more insidious for being largely automatic and invisible.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the institutional structure could be as easily revised as its claim to legitimacy requires. Imagine that the scope of conflict over the basic terms of social life were as ample as the programmatic argument implies. Then, any political party elevated to office that failed to share the vision underlying the institutional scheme would set out to change it. The decisional mobility the proposed style of governmental organization seeks to strengthen would make such changes all the easier to effect. Only a party that precisely shared the spirit of the constitution could be counted on to develop it according to its ideals.

Clearly, the dilemma draws attention to the relation between disentanglement and institutional stability. The staying power of a formative context seems to depend to a large extent on its unavailability to revision. It therefore also depends on the failure of written constitutions or legal rules to make this structure entirely explicit. To explicate the formative context while undermining all other obstacles to its revision seems to be a formula for transience.

The flaw in the description of this dilemma is the assumption that only the entrenchment of an institutional plan – only its protection against the destabilizing effects of ordinary conflict – can ensure its continuity. There is not, nor is there meant to be, any guarantee that this particular institutional plan will, once established, be perpetuated. The plan merely interprets, for a particular historical circumstance, an approach to the project of individual and collective empowerment. The institutional implications of the approach must change constantly and unpredictably. These changes will in turn suggest new interpretations of the animating ideas of the institutional plan. Moreover, parties may rise to power that are radically unsympathetic to the spirit of the proposed constitution. They may undo the constitutional plan. And the experiment in empowered democracy, once interrupted, may never be repeated. But do not suppose that an institutional plan can continue, or that its animating ideals can be upheld, only if it remains hard to revise. The argument for the new-model republic includes the hypothesis that once the increased opportunities for individual and collective self-assertion opened up by the empowered democracy are tasted, they will not easily be forgone. The hypothesis may prove wrong. But the spirit of empowered democracy requires us to put it to the test; every obstacle to institutional change takes something away from the distinctive design and ambition of this institutional program. The point is to undertake an experiment, an experiment in whose success we have reason to hope but whose integrity we wish above all to preserve. Here is a style of institution making that presupposes no contrast between an omniscient and benevolent Lycurgus (the founders, the revolutionaries, the fathers of their country) and the ordinary historical agents who live in the world Lycurgus has set up.

Militancy and Empowerment

A second dilemma refers to the psychological attitudes needed to avoid a perversion of the constitutional scheme. The institutional program, it seems, can achieve its desired objectives only if the citizens throw themselves ardently into the organized conflicts of the republic, conflicts whose resolution influences every facet of the institutional order and whose occasions recur in every domain of social life. In the absence of broadly based and wholehearted civic engagement, empowered democracy might suddenly turn from the freest constitution to the most despotic. As the citizens withdrew, out of boredom or frustration, into their immediate concerns, the group in power would find in these institutional arrangements an unrivaled opportunity to turn transitory advantages into vested rights. The connections among spheres of social life, the ease with which pro-

grammatical experiments could be tried out, at least in the early years of the regime, and the weakening of independent centers of power able to stand up to these initiatives from the center — all this may open the way for the architects of a new order of privilege. The work of entrenchment and enserfment may be all the more dangerous by benefiting from the citizens' impression that they lived under the most free (though, unbeknown to them, also the most fragile) of constitutions.

If, on the other hand, only a constant militancy could prevent these perverse consequences, empowered democracy would depend upon unrealistic and indefensible assumptions about conduct and motivation. The implicit ideal of human existence would be too narrow and biased to carry authority. It would harm or downplay all those forms of subjective experience and practical problem solving that depend upon the containment of civic militancy, which threatens to consume the time of those whom it does not bore, or whom it does not intimidate into privatistic withdrawal.

But we have reason to downplay both horns of this apparent dilemma. The constitution of empowered democracy does not oppose private desires and collective devotions. Instead, it robs this polemical contrast of its force. It does so by enabling people more easily to extend the humdrum practice of pursuing interests within a framework of unquestioned institutional and imaginative assumptions into the extraordinary activity of questioning this framework. Thus, the practice of fantasy and enactment that the institutional program encourages is less a public militancy than an extension of the ordinary activity of defining goals and pursuing them. Its chosen expression is not civic pomp and heroic striving but the activity of a working life. And its favorite devices are conversations rather than meetings, conversations that continue when the meetings end.

On the other side, the constitutional plan eases the formation of a large number of perceived group interests in tension with one another. It multiplies the arenas in which the citizens may engage in organized conflict over the organization of social life. It breaks down the rigid roles and ranks that give stability to conceptions of group interest. It dissolves such conceptions into the more fluid crisscrossing lines of parties of opinion unanchored in social stations. It makes actual social life more closely resemble what, to a considerable extent, democratic party politics are actually like. Moreover, although the program of empowered democracy undermines the independent centers of social authority that a petrified division of labor or a stable corporatist organization of society sustains, it brings into existence other constraints upon central power.

Thus, what initially seemed an intolerable dilemma turns into a calculated risk. There is no assurance that empowered democracy

will provide adequate safeguards against the danger that people may withdraw from civic life and through their withdrawal permit a new and more thoroughgoing entrenchment of factional interests. I claim only that the guarantees and benefits of the constitutional plan make it reasonable to run these risks. Indeed, we must reach toward a regime such as empowered democracy if we are to reconcile freedom as empowerment with the practical drive toward plasticity in social life, the condition of collective wealth and power. Both our happiness and our virtue depend upon the particular institutional forms we give to the search for plasticity. Just as the quest for empowerment through plasticity may enable us to live out more fully our context-transcending identity, so, too, it may subject us to a despotism less messy or violent but more thoroughgoing than any yet known.

Solidarity and Empowerment

A final dilemma refers to the relation between the spirit of the constitution and the social ideals this spirit seems to antagonize. The programmatic argument would make no sense if the spirit of the constitution were neutral among all credible accounts of the meaning and requirements of our project of individual and collective self-assertion. For this argument assumes that neutrality is possible only in the highly limited sense defined earlier. But once we abandon the hope of neutrality we can recognize more frankly the bias and insufficiency of empowered democracy. Of all the values this institutional program downplays, the weightiest is the commitment to communal attachments and to the transforming virtues of personal love and of faith and hope in individual people. To the extent that the ideal of empowerment means something more limited than the general effort to achieve individual and collective self-assertion, it seems to value the development of individual and collective capabilities more than the continuance of particular loyalties to individuals and groups. It slights the customary practices in which such loyalties are inevitably embedded.

Empowered democracy represents only a partial vision of a form of life designed to help us to carry forward our efforts at self-assertion. The details of this vision reflect the legacy and the problems of a particular historical circumstance. The defense of the vision invokes a particular normative and explanatory approach. The content of the vision needs to be complemented by a conception of transformed personal relations.

The ideal of empowerment fails to make up the whole of a defensible social ideal. Taken in isolation, it does indeed threaten to submerge concern with trust under the power-mad or narcissistic flaunting of the will and the heartless cult of magnificent capability.

But the program of empowerment through institutional invention and cultural-revolutionary practice refines as well as threatens our experiences of solidarity. The reinvention and advancement of the radical project, in the form of empowered democracy, make it easier for us to give our attachments the qualities of love: the achievement of a heightened mutual vulnerability; the imaginative acceptance of other individuals that tears through the screen of stereotyped images, roles, and ranks; and the effacement of the conflict between our need for others and our fear of the jeopardy in which they place us. These qualities of love represent the least illusory and most durable aspect of our communal ideals: the part best able to outlast the disappointments of life and the surprises of history.

In many convergent ways the program of empowerment reinforces the ideals of solidarity that it also jeopardizes. The proposals extend a series of social changes that shake up and leave permanently weakened all roles and ranks. The more rigid and influential such divisions and hierarchies are, the more do our attachments and animosities stay entangled in a vitiating dilemma. Every allegiance remains susceptible to confusion with craven role playing or with the exchange of exploitation and servility between oppressors and oppressed. Conversely, every attempt by the subjugated to win more independence seems to require the betrayal of loyalties that represent the strongest available examples of community. The institutionalized destabilization of the hierarchical and divided order of society diminishes the opportunities for this equivocation. It allows us to attach ourselves to others without accepting subservience and to become more free without turning against those to whom we feel closest.

The program of empowerment makes a second contribution to the improvement of solidarity. It strengthens the liberty of the individual to forgive the harms other people do him. The record of these wrongs tempts him to search for preemptive security against other people. It freezes him into strategies of distancing and defense. The empowered are freer to be generous. They can more readily lift the burden of frustration and resentment and imagine themselves related to others in untried ways – especially in ways that diminish the conflict between attachment and independent self-assertion.

The result is a benefit to society, in the form of a boost to collaboration. Above all, however, it is a gain to the individual. For that conflict blocks human capability – to be, to do, to produce, and to connect.

In yet a third and most significant way the program of empowerment helps better our relations to one another. The institutionalized breakdown of rigid ranks and roles continues the work of democracy: it saves us from remaining placeholders in a system of predefined social stations. As the grip of these stations upon individual exp-

rience loosens, we become more able to deal with one another, imaginatively and practically, as individuals rather than as stand-ins for collective categories of class, gender, nationality, or race. This opportunity to address the other as a concrete individual never completely defined by the coordinates of his place on a social map is a mark of love. The style of solidarity favored by empowered democracy draws our communal relations closer to love just as it undermines sharp contrasts between the communal and the noncommunal aspects of life in society.

Some may object that they prefer the old version of community, the version based on the opposition of insiders and outsiders, on the intolerance of conflict within the group, on the jealous defense of exclusive communal traditions, on the commitment to outward, even inherited signs of joint identity, and on the insistent sharing of values and preconceptions. But this antique style of solidarity is less capable of reconciliation with other basic goals of ours, less likely to outlast the illusions of false necessity, and therefore also less capable of making us happy. For the happiness it grants us requires special circumstances of social tranquillity and unchallenged prejudice and depends on the maintenance of conditions that hinder the development of our powers.

Considerations like these – informed promises of happiness – rather than assessments of conformity to ready-made standards of right and wrong are what do and should matter to us in the criticism and justification of forms of social life. Such considerations exemplify the methods employed by political argument under the impact of enlightenment about false necessity. They also complement and correct the more closely textured varieties of social criticism that contrast our distinct, received ideals of human association with the practical arrangements supposed to realize these ideals in fact.

Two great constructive forces work upon social life. One force is restless experimentation with institutions, ideas, and techniques for the sake of enhancing our practical capabilities. This search for growth in worldly power shades into the quest for another, less tangible empowerment: the ability to question and revise our shared institutional and imaginative assumptions as we go about the daily business of life. It is the opportunity to join engagement with self-consciousness, and to avoid the choice between alienation and stupefaction, to act confidently within a society or a culture without becoming its puppets. The overlap between the conditions for these two modes of empowerment is a surprising fact rather than a self-evident truth.

The other major constructive force is our acceptance of one another across the barriers of division and hierarchy that keep us apart. We

want access to relations and communities that limit the conflict between our need to affirm ourselves in one another's presence and our struggle to escape the incalculable dangers we pose to one another. We want something better than the middle distance, and we know that failure to find it leaves us homeless in the world.

The reformed democracy directly serves the search for empowerment both as practical capability and as mastery over context. Its point is to secure capability to the individual as well as to the society. This aim connects the program to the liberal tradition. But because the commitment to empower individuals – not just societies or groups – sees through the eyes of a theory that looks beyond false necessity, it requires us to break with institutional arrangements that liberals have traditionally identified with their cause. To complete this rupture, we must free ourselves from the received contrast between liberal and socialist programs, which depends upon the same superstitions.

The program of radical democracy has a more troubled relation to the strengthening and cleansing of solidarity. The fulfillment of its proposals does not ensure us of coexisting in peace. It does not take away our hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh. But it does enable us to live out more fully the tense, ambiguous, ennobling connection between solidarity and empowerment, between the experience of mutual acceptance and the development of our faculties, between our longing for one another and our efforts to find particular expressions for the impulse within us that rebels against all particularity. What more could we ask of society than a better chance to be both great and sweet?

Appendix to the New Edition:

*Five Theses on the Relation of Religion to Politics,
Illustrated by Allusions to Brazilian Experience*

1 The Personality Thesis

An exemplary experience of possibilities of personal connection – of intense and transfiguring relationships among individuals – forms a central part of the visions developed by the historical religions of salvation. Each such vision promises a happiness dissolving or attenuating the conflict between our need for one another and the jeopardy in which we place one another. To experience some measure of this reconciliation is to become free; the promise of happiness is a promise of freedom. The narrative structure of belief in the historical religions exhibits a world in which this promise of happiness makes sense. The ethical imperative in the historical religions shows how this world can be made real, strengthening its purchase on everyday life.

Such a view of religion privileges the forms of religious consciousness that place the personal above the impersonal (e.g., the religion of the Bible over the doctrines of Plato or Spinoza). It may, however, embrace even a religion, like Buddhism, that rejects the all-the-way-down reality of individual experience. What the narrative structure of such a religion seems to deny, its ethical imperative may reaffirm. Moreover, this understanding of religion also suggests a way to evade the choice between metaphorical and literalist accounts of religious belief.

The basic relation of religion to politics arises from the formative role assigned to exemplary personal relations in religious experience and vision. The most significant form of political theology is not the official teaching about the state, but the image of possible human association that is acted out in the community and the deeds of believers. For example, in Brazil the Pentecostal movements, making conversions by the millions, offer practical liberalism – communities of the elect, marked by the qualities of self-reliance, trustworthiness, self-cultivation and mutual respect. These qualities are scarce in a world of patrons and clients in which power, exchange, and sentiment remain confused. By contrast, the radicalized Catholic Church promises progress through prophetic resistance and confrontation, as well as through engagement in voluntary

associations with an adversarial relation to the established powers of government, capital, and television.

2 *The Democracy Thesis*

The moral and political ideals of a culture have often amounted to a transaction between the vision of exemplary personal relations voiced by an influential religion and the concerns of dominant classes. Nineteenth-century bourgeois conceptions of married happiness, for example, built a precarious bridge between Christian hopes and Victorian realities. However, the bond between democracy and the religion of the Bible is more intimate than this history of equivocations and attenuations may lead us to expect. The nature of this link is best illuminated by first probing the troubled relation between two master themes of the religion of the Bible: the idea of spirit as the infinite caught in the finite, as transcendence over context, and the organization of moral experience around love rather than altruism.

What is the connection between these two themes? According to Hegel, love is the relation in which we most fully recognize and accept one another as spirits; that is to say, as beings whose powers of insight, association, transformation, and self-transformation go beyond all the practical and discursive worlds we make and inhabit. The trouble with this Hegelian formula is that we are not yet fully these context-transcending beings; we must become them. One way in which we do so is by advancing democracy, understood to include the progressive freeing of activity and relationship from a background grid of entrenched social division and hierarchy. The religious element in democracy is the search for social arrangements that make us more fully available to one another as the context-transcending individuals the religion of the Bible proclaims us to be. The weak point, however, is the failure to translate this asserted connection between religious vision and democratic progress into a promising institutional conception.

The consequences of this failure are manifest in the Brazilian dealings between religion and politics. Three political theologies are on offer in the country.

The first such theology is the residue of the traditional social teaching of the Catholic Church. The interwar corporatist communitarianism of "Quadragesimo Anno," with its design of a "third way" between capitalism and communism, lost its attraction: first, because of its proximity to fascist corporatism; and second, more profoundly, because of its unwarranted reliance on established economic institutions – corporations and unions of workers and employers – as an adequate template for the communitarianism it

proposed. This neofeudal doctrine has been followed by a demand for a social solidarity increasingly devoid of institutional content. The empty space is occupied by the familiar tax-and-transfer programs of contemporary social democracy, unsupported by any attempt to democratize access to productive resources and opportunities.

The second political theology is the attempt, characteristic of the Pentecostal movements, to secede into a purified world of reciprocal respect and self-improvement, exacting occasional concessions from government while accepting the established order. However, the unchallenged and unchanged larger world strikes back against the little worlds of the would-be secessionists and self-improvers, limiting their development and arresting, in the chains of outward control and inward submission, the dynamic of exemplary personal relations.

The third political theology is the liberation theology of the radicalized Catholic Church. Its political instrument is the *de facto* partnership between the Church and the PT [*Partido dos Trabalhadores*]. Unlike the other two political theologies, it renounces institutional conservatism and confronts entrenched power. However, it does so without proposing institutional alternatives in the organization of state, economy, civil society, and family. The commitment to a practice – grassroots organization and self-organization – fills the void left by the absence of a reconstructive vision. As a result of this default, a growing divergence arises between the transformative or prophetic intention and the redistributive or ameliorative content of the social campaigns in which the radicalized Church engages. The grassroots activism degenerates into a new form of guidance, in which the activist priest or partisan replaces the patron. Thus, the institutional emptiness of the third political theology ends up complementing rather than contradicting the institutional conservatism of the other two political theologies.

3 The Macro-Micro Thesis

Tocqueville remarked that the French Revolution was momentous because it combined a political and a religious revolution. The rational kernel in the mystical shell of the idea of political revolution is, today, the macropolitics of institutional change. In the idea of religious revolution, the rational kernel is the micropolitics of change in the dominant styles of personal relationship and expression. What this translation leaves out on the religious side is the element of urgent and enacted belief, making sense of the imperative of change and rooting it in a vision of human possibility and solidarity.

Although the link between macropolitics and micropolitics is widely acknowledged to be indispensable, it is in fact rarely secured. Where one of these forms of politics becomes strongest, the other often remains weakest. As a result, programs of institutional change are commonly perverted or reversed in their effects by the style of personal association that they have left unchanged. Cut off from hopes of social reconstruction, the cultural-revolutionary politics of personal relations turns inward toward private experimentalism and narcissism.

A religious consciousness, freed from the spiritual defect of world-abandonment and from the political defect of institutional fetishism, can resist this severance of macropolitics from micropolitics. Its overriding political work is to remind the institutional imagination of the recalcitrant realities of personal need – especially people's need for one another – while challenging the narcissistic perversion of individual emancipation and experimentalism. To accomplish this work, however, the religious consciousness requires insight into social and institutional possibility. But there is no place in contemporary high culture where it can safely find such instruction. It must somehow compensate for the consequences of this intellectual absence by developing surrogate practices of institutional imagination.

In Brazil, as in much of the world, the bridge between macro- and micropolitics remains unbuilt, in part because religion has failed to build it. The political theology of the Pentecostals focuses on a microworld exempt from the macroworld it has failed to challenge or change. The political theology of the radicalized Catholic Church reduces the problem of reshaping the macro- and microworlds to the promotion of a practice of engagement and resistance. The political theology of the traditional Church has retreated to the nostrums of tax-and-transfer social democracy, having lost confidence in the formula of corporatist communitarianism. All three political theologies are now institutionally empty. Their institutional emptiness weakens their prophetic force and disorients their political vision.

4 The Antiparticularism Thesis

A religious experience grounded in the personalist dynamic of transcendence and love undermines ethnic, national, cultural and gender privileges and exclusions, even when it seems to give such distinctions a religious meaning and value. This subversive potential has two main roots in religious experience – at least, in the religion of the Bible. The first root is the effort to act upon the insight that there is more in us than in the particular discursive and practical

worlds that we build and inhabit. We can develop arrangements respecting and moderating this disproportion. The second root is the impulse to make ourselves practically and passionately available to one another as individuals, rather than as placeholders in the divisions and hierarchies of society and culture.

The historical religions differ in their explicit valuation of the significance and finality of national distinctions: Christianity and Buddhism on one side; Hinduism and Judaism on another; and a broad range of religions (e.g., Japanese and African) in between. Even in the supposedly particularizing and exclusive religions, however, prophecy opposes to the mystery of national election and distinction (related to our embodied and situated character) the counter-mystery of our power to act on the knowledge that the divisions within mankind belong to the plot rather than to the message, and must, in the end, be defied.

The privatization of religion in contemporary liberal-democratic societies muffles this subversive and universalizing impulse by compelling religion to speak in the public world a purely secular language of rights and enlightenment. The most ferocious religious assertions of particularism are thereby deprived of their religious enemies. Moreover, the institutional emptiness of the dominant political theologies makes these theologies powerless to resist what is becoming the dominant form of group chauvinism in the contemporary world: the assertion of an abstract will to collective difference, which becomes ever more intense as actual differences of custom and sensibility wane.

One people struggles to be apart from its neighbors less because it has a distinct form of life to maintain than because it does not have one but wants one, or wants to think it already has one. The peoples who have done best at sustaining practical autonomy are the most relentless pillagers of world practices and institutions, in the opportunistic search for what works best. The failure to develop or sustain real differences makes the assertion of these imagined or desired differences all the more relentless: abstract identities, unlike concrete arrangements, lie beyond compromise or recombination, and impotence makes for rage.

The more fully and freely religion engages in politics, the less likely it is to join this battle solely on the particularizing side. The better a political theology equips itself with an institutional imagination, the more it can help to develop different forms of life and to strengthen, with this experience of collective power, the magnanimity of the self-possessed.

The religious life of the Brazilian people allows us to see these circumstances from yet another perspective. The absence of a real struggle within and outside religion between universalizing and

particularizing tendencies helps to keep the level of religious energy low for the vast majority of Brazilians. Both traditional Catholic religiosity and its Pentecostal rival enter social life in a way that is neither political nor individualistic but, rather, domestic: a set of ritual practices, half-believed beliefs, and fragmentary commonalities, reinforcing family life and dulling despair. What the traditional Catholic rituals and beliefs do for the salaried middle classes, their Pentecostal counterparts have come, increasingly, to do for a mass of workers trying to lift themselves up to a condition of self-reliance and self-improvement. High-energy religion exists at the margins. Low-energy religion remains the rule. This generalized religious demobilization, obscured by the more notorious religious conflicts highlighted in the contending political theologies, is both cause and consequence of the suppression of problems of race and gender.

5 The Missing Agent Thesis

As the content of religious belief shifts, so must the agents of religious action change. Who are the agents of a practice of religion placing exemplary personal experience at the center, recognizing the relation of faith to democracy, connecting the wider world of institutions to the smaller world of personal relations through a practice and vision of social reconstruction, and letting loose the particularism-subverting force of its prophetic intimations?

The modern history of religion has seen the diffusion of the idea of the priesthood of all believers. But there are two problems. The first problem is that the religion described in the first four theses requires that all believers be prophets as well as priests. The second problem is that the characteristic experience of living faith has today become one in which the same people are simultaneously believers and nonbelievers. Neither the church nor the political party, nor the partnership between the two, can adequately speak for such a religion and such an experience. Who, then, can?

The moral and psychological danger is that this religion may provide the vehicle and opportunity for charismatic leadership – not just in politics narrowly understood, but in every setting of social life. The followers of the charismatic leaders, like the workers mobilized by the prophetic activists of the radicalized Church in Brazil, then feel torn between the sense of being inspired and the sense of being excluded from the power and the grace of original inspiration. The antidote is to link the realms of institutions and of personal relations, making people parties to conflicts of vision. Such a link reminds people of their power to resist, transcend, and connect, diminishing reliance upon the privileged agency of charismatic leadership. To that end, we need political and economic

institutions and styles of personal association accelerating experimentalism in every part of social life. It is the way to help everyone to become a prophet.

Roberto Mangabeira Unger
February 1994

Bibliographical Notes

AIMS AND NATURE OF THESE NOTES

THESE bibliographical notes have four aims. The first is to acknowledge direct debts for ideas, arguments, and observations. The second objective is to compensate for the lack of a detailed intellectual-historical or polemical setting in a book that is almost entirely constructive. (For a more extended view of the intellectual background to the argument, refer to *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*.) The third goal is to point to scholarship that explores in greater detail some of the past and present social situations mentioned in the text. The fourth and controlling purpose is to recruit and to help co-workers in a common endeavor by sharing with them elements of a study plan.

Remember that this work is frankly speculative. The bibliographical references are therefore meant to elucidate, guide, and connect, not to prove by induction or persuade by exegesis. Traditional footnotes would not serve the main purpose of this commentary. They also seemed inappropriate for two additional reasons. On the one hand, there was no reasonable point at which to stop; an informative citation could always be added to a citation already included. On the other hand, a massive apparatus would increase the danger of mistaking examples for proofs.

Some parts of the book, especially those dealing with historical events, are annotated at greater length. Others, particularly the long chapter that offers a program of social reconstruction, have few annotations. Titles appear in English if an English translation is readily available. A particular list of references departs from chronological order whenever another sequence seems preferable. The text page numbers to which this commentary refers appear at the outside margin. Themes that key in with the text are in italics.

I. THE NATURE AND INTENTIONS OF THE ARGUMENT

Explanatory and Programmatic Themes

For a statement of the intellectual and practical-political settings of the argument see the text and notes of *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*.

A few clarifications may be helpful here. I characterize *deep-structure social theory* and *positivist social science* as tendencies defined by the recurrence of particular explanatory moves. No one thinker or book ever fully exemplifies any such tendency, nor is the most interesting exposition of a tendency usually found in the thinker who remains most faithful to it.

Thus, Marx and the Marxist tradition supply the most powerful instances of deep-structure analysis. Consider the core account of the system-preserving and system-transforming laws of capital in *Capital* and the broader evolutionary ideas about the succession of modes of production presented in *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, *The German Ideology*, and the *Communist Manifesto*. Yet Marx's writings also include some of the most useful points of departure for the construction of a practice of explanatory social theory that carries the conception of society as artifact beyond the constraints imposed on it by deep-structure assumptions. See, for example, the criticism of political economy worked out in the *Poverty of Philosophy*, the *Grundrisse*, and the discussion of "the fetishism of commodities" in *Capital*, vol. 1, chap. 1, section 4.

Although later Marxists have elaborated the deep-structure tenets, they have also developed the contrasting themes in Marx's work. See especially the political Marxists mentioned in item 3 of the list of general influences in the later notes to this chapter.

A social theory may give a less prominent role to deep-structure assumptions without coming any closer to a developed alternative. Weber's intellectual trajectory confirms the point. Some of his work conforms to the evolutionary variant of deep-structure theory and even exhibits the particular merger of deep-structure premises and functional methods discussed in *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*. See *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilization* and the treatment of bureaucratic rationalization in *Economy and Society*. Major portions of Weber's work fail to fit this model without, however, providing an explanatory alternative. Some, like *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, remain close to a causally agnostic scrutiny of meanings and intentions. Others, such as large parts of *Economy and Society*, provide a similarly agnostic typology of social forms.

Notice that much recent work defends or criticizes Marxism and other comprehensive social theories as views that assign a central role to functional explanations: to explanations that account for a social situation or process by appealing to the consequences it tends to produce. See G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defense*, Princeton, Princeton, 1978, pp. 249-296; Jon Elster, "Marxism, Functionalism, and Game Theory: The Case for Methodological Individualism," *Theory and Society*, vol. 2 (1982), pp. 453-484; G. A. Cohen, "Reply to Elster on 'Marxism, Functionalism and Game Theory,'" *Theory and Society*, vol. 2 (1982), pp. 483-496.

In *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*, however, I have argued that in these theories functional explanations gain their characteristic

structure and generate their characteristic problems only when combined with deep-structure assumptions about the distinction between formative contexts of frameworks and formed routines, about the indivisibility of those frameworks, and about the lawlike constraints or developmental tendencies that supposedly govern them.

The key to *positivist social science* (and to its counterpart, naive historiography) is not hostility to general explanations that cannot be directly verified or falsified – the most prominent theme in the polemic about positivism in social and historical studies. Nor is it the appeal to reductionist or economistic views of personality and social relations. It is, rather, the failure to recognize the centrality, variability, and implications of the contrast between the formative institutional and imaginative frameworks of social life and the practical or argumentative routines these frameworks help shape. The varieties of positivist social science may therefore be usefully distinguished by the way in which each disposes of the framework–routine distinction.

Consider contemporary American economics as an example. There is an austere general-equilibrium analysis that seeks to cast economic theory beyond and above particular institutional contexts of production and exchange. See, for instance, Gerard Debreu, *Mathematical Economics: Twenty Papers of Gerard Debreu*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1983. There is an ideologically aggressive economics that represents a particular institutional framework as mandated by efficiency requirements (e.g., the Chicago School and its successor, rational-expectations theory). And there is a policy-oriented economics that acknowledges in principle the decisive importance of particular institutional arrangements while in practice eviscerating the significance of the acknowledgment (e.g., the American Keynesians, like the later Samuelson, Tobin, and Solow). This third variant of economics as positivist social science studies the direct relation among large-scale economic aggregates of, say, investment or unemployment as if an existing set of institutional arrangements – however revisable, accidental, and recombinable they may be – could produce or tolerate lawlike economic regularities.

The text defines *the radical project* inclusively. On this definition, John Stuart Mill, Alexander Herzen, Karl Marx, P.J. Proudhon, and Virginia Woolf were all champions of the cause. Whether so inclusive a definition makes sense depends at least in part on what we can do prospectively to develop and unify the radical project. It depends on our success at carrying forward the interplay between the speculative themes that distinguish and often oppose these varieties of liberal, leftist, and modernist radicalism and the practical social arrangements that are made to represent these themes. So the message, at least in this initial chapter is: Suspend judgment.

The Proto-Theory

The statement of the proto-theory provides a convenient occasion to enumerate some of the major influences on the development of

the theoretical view presented here. The same list appears at the outset of the notes to *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task*. The ideas and arguments of this book do not represent a synthesis of the conceptions contained in the following sources. But neither are the components of the list a random assortment of ideas, linked only by the accidents of one individual's intellectual trajectory. They rank among the materials available today to whomever wants to combine, as *Politics* does, the reconstruction of social thought along antinecessitarian lines with the anticipation of practical forms of social life that can more fully realize the radical project. Each of the nine sets of ideas, themes, or forms of intellectual practice contained in the list can be, and has been, used in ways that conflict with the intellectual program advocated in this book. Yet all nine together can be enlisted in the execution of this program. Their availability lends support to the claim that we already have at hand the building blocks of an antinaturalistic social theory able to give new life and new meaning to the cause that leftists, liberals, and modernists share.

1. The theme of the rigid and the fluid, the hot and the cold, moments of social life. This theme has been present, in one form or another, in virtually every period and tradition of social thought. Its most famous formulations in classic European social theory can be found in Durkheim's discussion of the moments of collective ecstasy (*The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. J. W. Swain, Free Press, 1969, pp. 240-242) and in Max Weber's treatment of charisma and routinization (*Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, Bedminster, New York, 1968, vol. 3, chap. 14, pp. 1111-1155). It reappears as a central idea in Sartre's late work; see *Criticism of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, New Left Books, London, 1976, pp. 256-404. It plays a prominent role in the writings of Victor Turner; see *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Cornell, Ithaca, 1977. Francesco Alberoni has given this idea its most elaborate and rewarding contemporary formulations. See particularly *Movimento e Istituzione*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1981.

2. Karl Marx's criticism of English political economy, particularly as evidenced in the *Poverty of Philosophy*, the *Grundrisse*, and the early sections of *Capital*. This criticism represents an example of how the portrayal of an extended area of social practice as an expression of eternal laws of social organization may be attacked with the purpose of changing the content and character of social and historical explanations. The task is to find an affirmative explanatory voice more responsive to the spirit of this critique than Marx's affirmative explanations, with their search for the "laws of motion" of capital and their story about the succession of modes of production.

3. The writings of Marxists, or of writers sympathetic to Marxism, who emphasize and explore the autonomy of politics, in both

the narrow and the inclusive senses distinguished in the note at the beginning of Chapter 1: the conflict over the mastery and uses of governmental power and the strife over any of the formative terms of social life. Some are thinkers and activists who attempted to theorize transformative political practice. See Antonio Gramsci, "The Modern Prince" and the "Critical Notes" on Bukharin, in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, International Publishers, New York, 1971, pp. 123-205, especially 136-145, and 419-473. Others are contemporary historians who have studied traditions of collective organization and class consciousness. See, for example, E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Vintage, New York, 1963; Robert Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe," *Past and Present*, no. 70 (1976), pp. 30-75, and "The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism," *Past and Present*, no. 97 (1982), pp. 16-113; Gareth Steadman Jones, *Languages of Class: Essays in English Working-Class History, 1832-1982*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1983. Still others are sociologists who have probed comparatively the relations among class structure, state conflict, and governmental politics. See, for example, Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Beacon, Boston, 1966; Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1979.

These varieties of political Marxism should be distinguished from the related tendency to put in place of the privileged causal connections emphasized by Marx a notion of generalized reciprocal causation. See the classic expositions in Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, MIT, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 83-222; Karl Korsch, "Marxism and Philosophy" (1923), in *Marxism and Philosophy*, trans. Fred Halliday, Monthly Review, New York, 1978, pp. 29-97.

At times the political Marxists have sacrificed the development of their insights to the desire to retain a connection with the central theses of historical materialism. To them these tenets have seemed the only available basis for theoretical generalization and for critical distance from the arrangements and circumstances of the societies they lived in. At other times, the political Marxists have simply given up on theory. See, for example, E. P. Thompson, "The Poverty of Theory or an Ornerly of Errors," in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, Monthly Review, New York, 1978, pp. 1-210. They have then paid the price in the loss of an ability to convey a sense of sharp institutional alternatives for past, present, and future societies. The constructive theory of *Politics* just keeps going from where the political Marxists leave off. It does so, however, without either renouncing theoretical ambitions or accepting any of the distinctive doctrines of Marx's social theory.

4. A loose and apparently unrelated set of forms of twentieth

century social analysis that has emphasized the institutional indeterminacy of abstract types of social organization such as a pluralistic democracy or a market economy and that has demonstrated the dependence of supposed economic or social laws upon unique, transitory institutional arrangements. I have found the most interesting discussions of the interplay between institutional arrangements and social or economic regularities in the writings of interwar economists. One group of writings concerns the strategies of economic recovery in the West (Keynes, early Kalečki, Hayek). Another body of literature grows out of the Soviet industrialization debate, so intimately connected to the formative events of the late 1920s (Preobrazhensky, Bukharin). On the other hand, the idea that there can be markets or democracies radically different from the democratic or market systems we normally take for granted or imagine possible has been most extensively explored by the critical legal studies movement in the United States. See the discussion in Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *The Critical Legal Studies Movement*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 5-8, 22-40, 97-99. Once you get the point of institutional indeterminacy, the old-fashioned literature of German, French, and English institutional history becomes a priceless storehouse, providing countless illustrations of the unique character of different institutional arrangements, of their made-up and pasted-together quality, and of their decisive effects.

Political thinkers and practical politicians alike have always understood "that what are called necessary institutions are only institutions to which one is accustomed and that in matters of social constitution the field of possibilities is much wider than people living within each society imagine" (Alexis de Tocqueville, *Recollections*, trans. George Lawrence, Doubleday, Garden City, 1970, chap. 2, p. 76). The point is to turn this ironic proviso into a principle of insight.

5. The ideal aspirations of nineteenth-century liberal thinkers, like Benjamin Constant, Alexander Herzen, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Alexis de Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, and T. H. Greene, reinterpreted from the standpoint of a continuing though submerged strand in Western social thought. This strand relates political pluralism, in the narrow sense, to the prosperity, empowerment, and collective self-organization of the "little people." Three stages in the evolution of this tradition of thought can be found in James Harrington, *The Oceana*, in *The Oceana and Other Works*, (reprint of the London 1771 edition), Scientia Verlag, Aalen, 1980, especially the second part of the preliminaries, pp. 57-72; Henry Sumner Maine, *Village Communities in East and West*, Murray, London, 1871, which should be read together with Henry Sumner Maine, *Lectures on the Early History of Institutions*, Murray, London, 1875; and Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. The classical liberal creed supplies a motivating impulse. But the other mode of thinking, with its focus on the

practical bases of pluralism, helps save the impulse from unwarranted identification with the institutional commitments of nineteenth-century liberals. The help doubles in force when the resulting insights combine with the ideas about institutional arrangements – their trumped-up character and their crucial influence – suggested by the sources mentioned in item 4 of this list.

In this connection, there is much to learn from the study of the recurrent problems of social reform in the great agrarian-bureaucratic empires that shaped so much of world history. The boldest reforming statesmen in these empires repeatedly tried and failed to preserve the independence of a class of smallholders who might provide central governments with a direct fiscal and military base and counterbalance the influence of landowning magnates. Such efforts were undoubtedly inspired by a policy of state security and social stability rather than by a devotion to pluralism and equality. But few things can better strengthen a sense of the relations between the vitality of social pluralism at the grassroots level and the particular institutional design of a society than a study of the attempts of, say, the Toba regime during the period of disunity between the Han and T'ang dynasties in China or the Macedonian dynasty in Byzantine history to make an intensely hierarchical society safe for a class of state-serving smallholders.

6. The tradition of petty bourgeois radicalism. The importance of this tradition has been borne out by a renewed appreciation of the continuing role played in modern Western history by predominantly petty bourgeois movements and theorists in challenging the dominant form of Western industrialism. Publicists like Proudhon, Louis Blanc, and Lassalle tried to combine practical proposals and speculative conceptions in ways that resisted the archaizing impulse.

An encouraging development in contemporary historical writing has been the appearance of studies that emphasize, against the shibboleths of orthodox liberalism and orthodox Marxism alike, the significance, tenacity, and suppressed potential of challenges to what eventually became the system of mass production and of property-based markets. Some of these writings are plangent in tone, underlining the ties that bound the radicals to social aspirations and forms of rights consciousness current in preindustrial and pre-revolutionary Europe. See, for example, Fernand Braudel, *Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism*, trans. Patricia M. Ranum, Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 1977; William H. Sewall, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1980; Craig J. Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: The Social Foundation of Popular Radicalism During the Industrial Revolution*, Chicago, Chicago, 1982. But other studies have demonstrated the continuity of the alternative that has been pejoratively labeled petty or simple commodity production, its reemergence under new guise in the most advanced sector of modern manufacturing, and its value as a model for more far-reaching industrial reconstruction. See Charles

Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin, "Historical Alternatives to Mass Production," *Past and Present*, no. 108 (1985), pp. 133-176. Whether despondent or hopeful, this literature supplies an alternative to the traditions of conservative or radical necessitarianism that have dominated thinking about the history of the institutional forms of production and exchange. But it does so without embracing the simple and sentimentalized story of big bad people eating up good little people that has too often appeared to be the sole available alternative. See, as an example of the earlier challenge to the conservative or radical mainstreams, R. H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, Harper, New York, 1967 (reprint of the 1912 edition).

7. Ultra-leftist ideas about collective mobilization and grassroots organization, current today through the third world. These ideas are relevant to the effort undertaken in this book not only as points of departure for programmatic thinking about social reconstruction but also as examples of attempts to think about social contexts and context change in a way free from the confining assumptions of deep-structure social analysis. Though often clothed in Marxist language, their distinctive concern is better described as the attempt to perpetuate in ongoing, routine activity what the sources mentioned in item 1 of this list would call the fluid or hot moment of social life and to do so for the sake of a vision of the individual and collective empowerment that may result. There is no handy doctrinal source in which to study these ideas. Yet they are everywhere. Sympathy for them may appear irreconcilable with an interest in the revival and reconstruction of the petty bourgeois alternative mentioned in item 6. But the impression of irreconcilability begins to dissipate with the help of two intellectual transformations encouraged by the approaches evoked in items 2 through 6 of this list.

The first such change results from the conclusion that the program of petty bourgeois radicalism cannot succeed until and unless it abandons the stubborn dream of privatistic withdrawal into a protected domain of family property and local concerns. In the place of this dream it must put forms of decentralized economic and governmental organization that can prevent concentrations of power and wealth more effectively than current representative democracies and regulated market economies are able to do.

The second indispensable transformation is to disabuse ultra-leftism of its prejudice against detailed programmatic proposals and institutional commitments. If the vague ideals of contemporary ultra-leftists have a chance of being partly realized in the world, the reason is that formative institutional and imaginative contexts differ in the extent to which they impart to routine social existence the qualities of the fluid, context-revising moments of social life.

8. The portrayal of human nature in such modernist writers as Proust, Joyce, and Beckett and the discursive counterpart to this image of man in the writings of such philosophers as Heidegger and Sartre. That such a modernist image of man in fact exists, that

it can be understood as a recognizable transformation of the Christian-romantic tradition of thinking about personality, and that it can be weaned away from its habitual indifference or hostility to political concerns and from its disbelief in the possibility of changing the relation between freedom and structure are all theses argued in *Passion: An Essay on Personality*, Free Press, New York, 1984. The view of personality and personal relations developed in that book and the account of society and society making presented in *Politics* are meant as parallel explorations, different in focus and level of detail but mutually reinforcing.

9. The philosophical attack on the belief in privileged methods and representations – that is to say, in representations and methods whose privilege consists in their insensitivity to changes in our empirical beliefs. This attack has been carried out by the second generation of analytic philosophers, led by such thinkers as Quine and Putnam. Their work helps free social and historical thought from the prejudice that received views about necessity and contingency, causality and explanation, enshrined in the natural sciences, must be dealt with on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Moreover, as polemically interpreted and extended, this attack on the unavowed remnants of the synthetic a priori becomes easy to connect with the assault on comprehensive, necessitarian historical narratives that has been mounted from a very different philosophical tradition. See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and The Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, Princeton, 1979. The combined criticism of privileged beliefs and metanarratives serves as a source of encouragement in the attempt to free radical social criticism from deep-structure assumptions.

Politics is also the product of two very different experiences. One experience is the exposure to the rich, polished, critical and self-critical but also self-consciously disintegrated and Alexandrian culture of social and historical thought that now flourishes in the North Atlantic democracies. This social-thought culture suffers from the influence of a climate of opinion in which the most generous citizens hope at best to avert military disasters and to achieve marginal redistributive goals while resigning themselves to established institutional arrangements. The other shaping experience is practical and imaginative engagement in the murky but hopeful politics of Brazil, a country at the forward edge of the third world, where, at the time of writing, at least some people took seriously the idea that basic institutions, practices, and preconceptions might be re-constructed in ways that did not conform to any established model of social organization.

Much in this work can be understood as the consequence of an attempt to enlist the intellectual resources of the North Atlantic world in the service of concerns and commitments more keenly felt elsewhere. In this way, I want to contribute toward the development of an alternative to the vague, unconvinced, and unconvincing Marxism that now serves the advocates of the radical

project as their lingua franca. If, however, the arguments of this book are correct, the transformative focus has intellectual uses that transcend its immediate origins and motives.

2. THE MAKING OF SOCIETY THROUGH POLITICS: ROUTINE WITHOUT REASON

The Western Reform Cycle

There is a considerable literature about the reform cycles in the contemporary North Atlantic democracies. It provides one of many links between positivist social science and a style of social analysis concerned with the institutional foundations of routine policy decisions. For early formulations, see W. Nordhaus, "The Political Business Cycle," *Review of Economic Studies*, vol. 42 (1975); D. Hibbs, "Political Parties and Macroeconomic Policy," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 71 (1977), pp. 1467-1487; G. D. MacRae, "A Political Model of the Political Business Cycle," *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 85 (1977), pp. 239-263. The most comprehensive formulation can be found in Edward Tufte, *The Political Control of the Economy*, Princeton, Princeton, 1978. For later writings that both develop and criticize the earlier statements, see R. Winters et al., "Political Behavior and American Policy: The Case of the Political Business Cycle," in *Handbook of Political Behavior*, vol. 5, ed. S. Long, Plenum, New York, 1981; D. Hibbs and N. Vasilatos, "Macroeconomic Performance and Mass Political Support in the United States and Great Britain," in *Contemporary Political Economy*, ed. D. Hibbs and H. Fossbender, Elsevier, Amsterdam, 1981; T. Brown and A. Stein, "The Political Economy of National Elections," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 14 (1982), pp. 49-97; James K. Alt and K. Alec Chrystal, *Political Economics*, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1983, pp. 103-125.

The criticism in these writings addresses a view emphasizing the coincidence of the reform cycle with the business cycle. The formulation in this book focuses not on the coincidence between these two recurrent swings but rather on the extent to which both can be explained as products of the same or overlapping institutional arrangements and imaginative preconceptions. Furthermore, the discussion in the text implies a very informal definition of the reform cycle. The existence of the phenomenon that this definition describes requires no extended corroboration other than the facts readily available to an active, informed citizen in the contemporary democracies.

For an attempt to relate the reform cycle to particular institutional arrangements, see Claus Offe, "Competitive Party Democracy and the Keynesian Welfare State," in *Contradictions of the Welfare State*, ed. John Keane, MIT, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 179-206.

For an interesting case study of two moments of the reform cycle in the same country, see Nigel Harris, *Competition and the Corporate*

Society: British Conservatives, the State and Industry, 1945-1964, Methuen, London, 1972; Leo Panitch, *Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy: The Labour Party, the Trade Unions and Incomes, 1945-1947*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1976.

The Communist Reform Cycle

- 49-51 The discussion refers to the Soviet model: the Soviet Union itself and, to a lesser extent, the East European countries. This communist reform cycle may seem to be more narrowly economic in character than its Western counterpart. But that is only because the economic and the narrowly political considerations connect more tightly and transparently. Not surprisingly, the best analysis appears in writings that discuss problems and oscillations of economic policy and production. See David Garnick, *Enterprise Guidance in Eastern Europe*, Princeton, Princeton, 1975; Janos Kornai, *The Economics of Shortage* (2 vols.), Elsevier, Amsterdam, 1980; Janos Kornai, *The Dilemmas of a Socialist Economy*, Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin, 1979. On the relation of the economic and the political-control aspects of the communist reform cycle, see Moshe Lewin, *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates*, Princeton, Princeton, 1974; Marc Rakovski, *Towards an East European Marxism*, St. Martin's, New York, 1978, pp. 18-38, 73-104. For a clearer sense of the relation between economic constraints, instabilities, or recurrences and institutional conditions, you have to look to an earlier body of work growing out of the Soviet industrialization debate of the 1920s. See the later notes to the discussion of the genesis of the Soviet model in Chapter 4.

Closed Options in the Agrarian-Bureaucratic Empires

- 88-92 For a general discussion of pluralism and conflict in agrarian-bureaucratic empires, see S. N. Eisenstadt, *The Political System of Empires*, Free Press, New York, 1969.

For an economic analysis of the typical crisis and tailspin of the agrarian-bureaucratic empire, see Carlo M. Cipolla, *The Economic Decline of Empires*, Methuen, London, 1970, pp. 1-15. For a case study of the crisis and tailspin, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman, 1964, vol. 2, pp. 773-788, 813-872; A. H. M. Jones, "Over-Taxation and the Decline of the Roman Empire," *Antiquity*, vol. 33 (1959), pp. 39-43.

Despite the importance of the policy options discussed in this section and their recurrence in so many societies, no general comparative discussion seems available. In the fragmentary, monographic literature the most inclusive treatments I have encountered are: Stefan Balázs, "Beiträge zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte der T'ang-Zeit (618-906)," *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin, Osiasiatischen Studien*, vol. 34 (1931), pp. 1-92, vol. 35

(1932), pp. 1-73, vol. 36 (1933), pp. 1-62; George Ostrogorsky, 88-92 "The Peasant's Pre-emption Right: An Abortive Reform of the Macedonian Empire." *Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 37 (1947), pp. 117-126. The Byzantinists often demonstrate the best grasp of the reform options, perhaps because of the remarkable continuity of these problems and debates in Byzantine history. I discuss these matters in greater detail in *Plasticity into Power: Comparative-Historical Studies on the Institutional Conditions of Economic and Military Success*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1987. The following notes cite specialist studies that have proved especially helpful in understanding each standard policy option to which the agrarian-bureaucratic empires regularly resorted.

1. The policy of recruiting a bureaucratic staff from groups directly below the landowning aristocracy. On the Chinese experiment in weakening the link between the bureaucratic staff and local landowning elites through the reforms of the late T'ang and the Sung, see James T. C. Liu, *Reform in Sung China: Wang An-Shih (1021-1086) and His New Policies*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1959; Denis Twitchett, "The Composition of the T'ang Ruling Class," in *Perspectives on the T'ang*, ed. Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, Yale, New Haven, 1973, pp. 47-85; Brian E. McKnight, "Fiscal Privileges and the Social Order" in *Crisis and Prosperity in Sung China*, ed. John Winthrop Haeger, Univ. of Arizona, Tucson, 1975, pp. 79-100; David G. Johnson, *The Medieval Chinese Oligarchy*, Westview, Boulder, Colo., 1977, pp. 19-20, 149-152; Patricia Ebrey, *Aristocratic Families in Early Imperial China*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1978. To Professor Timothy Brook of the University of Toronto I am indebted for accounts of writings of Niida Noboru and other Japanese historians of China. On the repeated failure of attempts clearly to sever the connection between bureaucracy and landowning elites and on the consequences for the constraints within which policy had to move, see E. A. Kracke, Jr., "Family vs. Merit in Chinese Civil Service Examinations," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 10 (1947), pp. 103-123; Victor Lippit, "The Development of Underdevelopment in Chinese History," *Modern China*, vol. 4, (1978), pp. 251-328. But for a view that emphasizes the role of official status as a source rather than a consequence of landowning status, see Ping-Ti Ho, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China*, Columbia, New York, 1967.

On the Ottoman palace system as an attempt to achieve through very different measures objectives similar to the aims of the Chinese examination system, see Joseph von Hammer, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, Hartleben, Pest, 1828, vol. 2, pp. 218-249 (at the time of the death of Mohammed II); Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, Knopf, New York, 1972, pp. 49-60; Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1976, vol. 1, pp. 113-139.

For a representative study of the use of this technique by the prerevolutionary absolutist monarchies of Europe, see Otto Hintze,

88-92 "The Commissary and His Significance in General Administrative History: A Comparative Study," in *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, ed. Felix Gilbert, Oxford, New York, 1975, pp. 267-301. See also Martin Göhring, *Die Amterkäuferlichkeit im Ancien Régime*, Ebering, Berlin, 1938; Roland Mousnier, *La Vénalité des Offices sous Henri IV et Louis XIII*, Presses Universitaires, Paris, 1971; Eckart Kehr, "Zur Genesis der Preussischen Bürokratie und des Rechtsstaates," in *Moderne Deutsche Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Kiepenheuer, Cologne, 1973, pp. 37-54.

2. The policy of making the nobility dependent for land tenure upon service to the state. On the system of *pomestye* land in Russia and its assimilation to *votchina* tenure, see Jerome Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russia*, Princeton, Princeton, 1961, pp. 170-188, 252-255. On the Korean system of Merit Subjects and the comparable development it underwent, see Edward W. Wagner, *The Literati Purges: Political Conflict in Early Yi Korea*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 19-21; Susan S. Shin, *Land Tenure and the Agrarian Economy of Early Yi Korea*, 1973, doctoral dissertation on file at Yenching Library, Harvard University.

Consider as a further example the status of "bannermen" within the Manchu conquest elite in China. See Jonathan D. Spence, *Ts'ao Yin and the K'ang-hsi Emperor, Bondservant and Master*, Yale, New Haven, 1966, pp. 2-18; Robert B. Oxnam, *Ruling from Horseback: Manchu Politics in the Oboi Regency, 1661-1669*, Chicago, Chicago, 1975, pp. 38-40, 47-49, 124-126, 170-175. Compare to the Mughal *mansabdars* (rank holders) and *jagirdars* (land-revenue assignment holders). See Stephen P. Blake "The Patrimonial - Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 39 (1979), pp. 77-94, and the Mughal studies cited later.

3. The policy of agrarian dualism.

a. The reliance of central government upon landlords who, although not involved in central administration, have special fiscal and military obligations. On the Byzantine *ktemata stratiotika*, see Hélène Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Etudes d'Histoire de Byzance à propos du "Thème des Caravisiens," Services d'Édition et de Vente des Production de l'Éducation Nationale*, Paris, 1966, pp. 99-114; Arnold Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, Oxford, London, 1973, pp. 134-145. On the Ottoman timariots, see Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1, pp. 125-127; Gyula Kaldy-Nagy, "The First Centuries of the Ottoman Military Organization," *Acta Orientalia Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 31(2), (1977), pp. 147-183. On the Mughal *zamindars*, see Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)*, Asia Publishers, London, 1963, pp. 136-189; M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangazeb*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966; Norman Ahmad Siddiqui, *Land Revenue Under the Mughals*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1970, pp. 21-40. On the Aztec military life-tenants, see Nigel Davies, *The Aztecs: A History*, Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman, 1980, pp. 80-81. On the Byzantine *pronoia*, see

Georges Ostrogorsky, *Pour l'Histoire de la Fléodalité Byzantine*, 88-92 trans. Henri Gregoire, Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves, Bruxelles, 1954.

b. The reliance on state-obligated smallholders and peasant communities.

On the exemplary Byzantine developments and debates, see Paul Lemerle, "Esquisse pour une Histoire Agraire de Byzance," *Revue Historique*, vol. 219 (1958), pp. 32-74, vol. 219 (1958), pp. 254-284, vol. 220 (1958), pp. 43-94; George Ostrogorsky, "The Peasant's Pre-emption Right," pp. 117-126, and *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey, Rutgers, New Brunswick, N.J., 1969, pp. 269-276; Arnold Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, pp. 122-134. For the aftermath of the failure to uphold the policy of smallholder protection, see Angeliki E. Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire*, Princeton, Princeton, 1977.

On the policy of agrarian dualism at its most successful and aggressive in Chinese history, see Wolfram Eberhard, *Das Toba-Reich Nordchinas: Eine Soziologische Untersuchung*, Brill, Leiden, 1949, pp. 206-221, which should be considered against the background of Eberhard's "Zur Landwirtschaft der Han-Zeit," *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin, Osiasatische Studien*, vol. 35 (1932), pp. 74-105; Denis Twitchett, "Lands Under State Cultivation Under the T'ang," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 2 (1959), pp. 162-336 (on the connection of agrarian dualism with the system of military colonies); Denis Twitchett, *Land Tenure and the Social Order in T'ang and Sung China*, Oxford, Oxford, 1962. For the Northern Dynasties and Sui versions of the *fu-ping* system (divisional militia based on smallholders with military responsibilities), see Arthur F. Wright, "The Sui Dynasty (518-617)," in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 3, *Sui and T'ang China, 589-906*, part 1, ed. Denis Twitchett, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1979, pp. 96-103; and for the T'ang version, see Howard J. Wechsler, "T'ai-tsung [reign 626-49] the Consolidator," in the same volume, pp. 207-208. See also Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 15-20. On the effect the failure of the policy of agrarian dualism had on agrarian structure in the subsequent Sung period, see for two somewhat contrasting views: Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past*, Stanford, Stanford, 1973, pp. 69-83; Joseph McDermott, *Land Tenure and Rural Control in the Lianghe Region during the Southern Sung* (doctoral dissertation on file at Cambridge University, 1978). It is important to distinguish the policy of support for smallholders from the vaguer and looser set of anticoncentrationist agrarian ideals present at all stages in Chinese history. See Hsü Chung-shu, "The Well-Field System in Shang and Chou," in *Chinese Social History*, trans. E. Tzu Zen Sun and John de Francis, Octagon, New York, 1972, pp. 3-17; Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past*, pp. 47-51, 59-63; Denis

- 88-92 Twitchett, *Financial Administration Under the T'ang Dynasty*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 1-11; Joseph Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1968, vol. 3, pp. 16-43.

In *Plasticity into Power: Comparative-Historical Studies on the Institutional Conditions of Economic and Military Success*, Chapter 1, I argue that the failure of the policy of support for smallholders and of the other standard reform options condemned the agrarian-bureaucratic empires to revolve in certain well-defined cycles of commercial vitality and decommercialization, administrative unification and fragmentation. Only a few societies broke through these cycles, enlarged the range of social possibilities, and revolutionized the world as a result.

4. *The agency of the common people in a social world that revolves within the limits set by the rehearsal and frustration of the reform options previously discussed.*

a. *The privileged urban mob.* See Paul Veyne, *Le Pain et le Cirque: Sociologie Historique d'un Pluralisme Politique*, Seuil, Paris, 1976.

b. *The temporary stabilization of the policy of agrarian dualism.* On the Byzantine peasant commune, see Georg Ostrogorsky, "Die Ländliche Steuergemeinde des Byzantinischen Reiches im X. Jahrhundert," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 20 (1927), pp. 23-108; George Ostrogorsky, "La Commune Rurale Byzantine," *Byzantion*, vol. 32 (1962), pp. 138-166. For a comparative discussion emphasizing the link between the redistributive and the control aspects of the peasant commune, with the eventual substitution of smallholding by enserfment, see G. I. Bratianu, "Servage de la Glèbe et Régime Fiscal: Essai d'Histoire Comparée, Roumaine, Slave et Byzantine," in *Etudes Byzantines d'Histoire Economique et Sociale*, Geuthner, Paris, 1938.

On the nineteenth-century redistributive Russian village community, see Geroid Robinson, *Rural Russia Under the Old Regime*, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1972, pp. 117-128; Francis W. Waters, "The Peasant and the Village Commune," in *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, ed. Wayne S. Vuanich, Stanford, Stanford, 1968, pp. 133-157; Jerome Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russia*, pp. 504-535.

On village communities and the role of village officers under the Southern Sung, see Brian E. McKnight, *Village and Bureaucracy in Southern Sung China*, Chicago, Chicago, 1971.

On peasant-held *raiyati* villages in Mughal India, see Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Asia Publishers, London, 1963, pp. 111-135; Ishtiagi Husain Qureshi, *The Administration of the Mughal Empire*, N. V. Publications, Lohanipur, pp. 281-294.

On the village and the leading village families under the Tokugawa *bakufu*, see Thomas C. Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, Stanford, Stanford, 1959, pp. 1-11.

c. On peasant rebellion as a confirmation of the structure it

defies, see the discussion of the Japanese experience in Irwin Scheiner, "Benevolent Lords and Honorable Peasants: Rebellion and Peasant Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan," in Tetsuo Najita and Irwin Scheiner, eds., *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period, 1600-1868*, Chicago, Chicago, 1978, pp. 39-62.

Closed Options in the Ancient City-State Republics

The discussion of closed options in the ancient city-state republics has been chiefly influenced by the following writings. Taken together, these studies present a striking series of explorations in the relation between constraints on the range of feasible governmental policies and limits to mass participation in governmental politics. 92-95
 A. Andrewes, *The Greek Tyrants*, Harper, New York, 1963; Victor Ehrenberg, *The Greek State*, Methuen, London, 1969; Victor Ehrenberg, *From Solon to Socrates*, Methuen, London, 1973; Jacqueline de Romilly, *Problèmes de la Démocratie Grecque*, Herman, Paris, 1975; M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1973; M. I. Finley, "Athenian Demagogues," in M. I. Finley, ed., *Studies in Ancient Society*, Routledge, London, 1974; Paul Veyne, *Le Pain et le Cirque*; E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae (264-70 B.C.)*, Oxford, Oxford, 1958, pp. 192-225; E. Badian, *Publicans and Sinners: Private Enterprise in the Service of the Roman Republic*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1972, pp. 82-118; Christian Meier, *Res Publica Amissa: Eine Studie zur Verfassung und Geschichte der Späten Römischen Republik*, Steiner, Wiesbaden, 1966; Mathias Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility*, trans. Robin Seager, Blackwell, Oxford, 1975; P. A. Brunt, *Social Conflicts in the Roman Republic*, Norton, New York, 1971; Claude Nicolet, *Le Métier de Citoyen dans la Rome Republicaine*, Gallimard, 1976.

A close study of the Gracchan reform period, of its social aftermath and agrarian setting, illustrates the twin limits to the politics of the city-state republics discussed in the text. See J. Carcopino, "Les Lois Agraires des Gracques et la Guerre Sociale," *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Bude* (January 1929), pp. 3-23; G. Tibetti, "Ricerche di storia agraria Romana," *Athenaeum*, vol. 38 (n.s., vol. 28), (1950), pp. 183-266; G. Tibetti, "Il latifondo dall'epoca gracchiana all'impero," *Relazioni del X. Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche*, Rome (1955), vol. 2, pp. 235-292; Arnold J. Toynbee, *Hannibal's Legacy*, Oxford, London, 1965, vol. 2, pp. 190-210, 486-517; E. Badian, "Tiberius Gracchus and the Beginning of the Roman Revolution," in Hildegard Temporini, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, Gruyter, Berlin, 1972, vol. 1, pp. 668-731; David Stockton, *The Gracchi*, Oxford, Oxford, 1979.

On the failure to assimilate mass politics, see also Gaetano de Sanctis, *La Guerra Sociale*, La Nuova Italia, Florence, 1976; Emilio Gabba, *Republican Rome, the Army and the Allies*, trans. P. J. Cuff, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1976, pp. 20-37, 154-161.

Appendix: Economic Policy, Reform Cycles, and Formative Contexts

115-124 On the relation between economic regularities and institutional arrangements in the Soviet-type model, see the books of Kornai, Lewin, and Rakovski cited earlier and the commentary on the discussion of the making of the Soviet model in Chapter 4.

On the same relation in the self-management (i.e., Yugoslav) system, see Ljubo Sirc, *The Yugoslav Economy Under Self-Management*, pp. 133-137, 173-178; Włodzimierz Brus, *Socialist Ownership and Political Systems*, trans. R. A. Clarke, Routledge, London, 1975, pp. 62-93.

Much can be learned about incomes policies, corporatism (i.e., deals among central governments, organized labor, and big business), and other characteristic moves of policy in the current Western economies by studying – with an eye both to what they say and to what they do not even discuss – policy-oriented reports such as Paul McCracken, *Towards Full Employment and Price Stability: A Report to the OECD by a Group of Independent Experts*, Paris, OECD, 1977.

3. THE MAKING OF SOCIETY THROUGH POLITICS: A SPECTRUM OF SOCIAL EXPERIMENTS

The Idea of Large-Scale Options

125-128 Many remote counterparts to the idea of the large-scale options of social life can be found in the literature of social theory. But some
164-171 of these counterparts (the types of modes of production in Marxism) are part of the machinery of deep-structure social theory. Others (Weber's typology of forms of domination, Parsons's pattern variables) oscillate between being a classification without clear explanatory uses or presuppositions and serving a residual evolutionary role. The theory served by the descriptive categories presented in Chapter 3 includes evolutionary themes. But the evolutionary sense is transformed by the thoroughgoing rejection of deep-structure assumptions. Moreover, a single generative principle commands the formulation of these categories: the extent to which different practices, institutions, or beliefs possess the quality of denaturalization or disentanglement.

Experiments with the State: Privilege and Right

128-134 For analogy and contrast, see Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, Vintage, New York, 1975, pp. 212-241; Georges Gurvitch, *L'idée du Droit Social*, Scientia Verlag, Aalen, 1972 (reprint of the 1932 edition).

These two analyses share in common the concern with the separation and the rapprochement of the formal legal status of the

individual and his social circumstance. The idea is that liberalism, for all its achievements, has a cost. See, in the same regard, Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: An Essay on the Caste System*, trans. Mark Sainsbury, Chicago, Chicago, 1970, pp. 231–234; Louis Dumont, *Homo Aequalis: Genèse et Epanouissement de l'Idéologie Economique*, Gallimard, Paris, 1977.

By contrast, the classification in the text is written from a perspective that wants to redeem liberalism through more liberalism. The crucial conceptual move here is the disengagement of the liberal impulse from the institutions and practices to which it has been committed. The criticism of rights in modern legal thought has made this disengagement possible. See Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *The Critical Legal Studies Movement*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1986. The programmatic argument of Chapter 5 makes good on the notion that another set of entitlements might be less rigidifying and hierarchy-creating than the classical liberal system of contract and property rights.

On the European *Standestaat* as an example of what the text calls *the system of privilege*, see Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *Law in Modern Society: Toward a Criticism of Social Theory*, Free Press, New York, 1976, pp. 155–166.

Experiments with the Microstructure: Patron and Client

For a general view of patron–client relations that contrasts with the approach taken by the text, see L. Graziano, *A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Clientalism*, Cornell University Western Societies Program Occasional Papers, no. 4, New York, 1975; S. N. Eisenstadt and Louis Roniger, "Patron–Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 22 (1980), pp. 42–77. 135–144

On clientship in the Roman Republic, see Christian Meier, *Res Publica Amissa*, pp. 24–63.

On the generalized patron–client relations between the prince and the mob especially in the Hellenistic states, see Paul Veyne, *Le Pain et le Cirque*, especially pp. 689–690.

On patron–client relations in contemporary Mediterranean settings, see E. Gellner and J. Waterbury, eds., *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, London, Duckworth, 1977.

On patron–client relations in a Latin American (Brazilian) setting, see Vitor Nunes Leal, *Coronelismo, Enxada e Voto*, Alfa-Omega, São Paulo, 1975; Roberto Schwartz, *Ao Vencedor as Batatas*, Duas Cidades, São Paulo, 1977.

On the extension of patron–client relations beyond the situations in which they are publicly recognized as legitimate, see Vincent Lemieur, *Le Patronage Politique: Une Etude Comparative*, Laval, Quebec, 1977.

Experiments with the Microstructure: The Organization of Work

- 144 For an interpretation of bureaucratic organization that emphasizes, in a French setting, *the effort to avoid personal, clientalistic dependencies* and studies the paradoxical consequences, see Michel Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, Chicago, Chicago, 1964, especially pp. 193-194, 220-224.
- 145-147 The *analogy between styles of reasoning and ways of organizing work* has two quite distinct sources. One is the so-called kinematic theory of machinery as expounded in Franz Reuleaux, *Theoretische Kinetik: Grundzüge einer Theorie der Maschinenwesens*, Braunschweig, 1875. This approach to machine design suggests and exploits links between styles of reasoning and of work organization. The history of this tradition of thinking about machines is explored in Theodor Beck, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Maschinenbaues* (2nd ed.), Springer, Berlin, 1900. The links among view of reason, principles of machine design, and approaches to the organization of work stand out even more clearly in Leonardo da Vinci's pioneering work. See Ladislao Retti, "Elements of Machines," in Ladislao Retti, ed., *The Unknown Leonardo*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1974, pp. 264-287. On the special way in which classical political economy recognized these connections, see Maxine Berg, *The Machinery Question and the Making of Political Economy, 1815-1848*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1980, pp. 75-110. Another spur to the formulation of the practice conception of reason and labor developed in the text is Kant's transcendental deduction, with its heavily operational language. See *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, St. Martin's, New York, 1965, pp. 129-176. Piaget's developmental psychology picks up on this Kantian theme. See *Genetic Epistemology*, trans. Eleanor Duckworth, Columbia, New York, 1970.
- 147-149 The discussion of *the staff and the line* is indebted on the business side to an American tradition of writing about business history. See especially Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1977, pp. 415-468. See also Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., and Herman Daems, eds., *Managerial Hierarchies: Comparative Perspectives on the Rise of the Modern Industrial Enterprise*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1980.
- 147-149 On the administrative side I have found most help in the tradition of German administrative history, particularly the writings of Otto Hintze and his school. See "The Origins of the Modern Ministerial System: A Comparative Study," in *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, ed. Felix Gilbert, Oxford, New York, 1975, pp. 216-266. See also the studies in Otto Hintze, *Staat und Verfassung: Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Allgemeinen Verfassungsgeschichte*, ed. Fritz Hartung, Koehler, Leipzig, 1941. Very much in Hintze's spirit is Joseph Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*, Princeton, Princeton, 1973. See also J. Vicens Vives, "La struttura amministrativa statale nei secoli XVI e XVII," in E. Rotelli and P. Schiera,

eds., *Lo Stato Moderno*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1971, vol. 1, pp. 223–246; and the studies in H. Hofmann, ed., *Die Entstehung des Modernen Souveränen Staates*, Kiepenheuer, Cologne, 1967. See generally Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State*, Stanford, Stanford, 1978.

On standard operating procedures and continuous hierarchy, see Alvin W. Gouldner, *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy: A Case Study of Modern Factory Administration*, Free Press, New York, 1954, pp. 215–228; Alan Fox, *Beyond Contract: Work, Power and Trust Relations*, Faber, London, 1974, pp. 13–119; M. Maurice, F. Sellier, and Jean-Jacques Silvestre, “La Production de la Hiérarchie dans l’Entreprise: Recherche d’un Effet Sociétal,” *Revue Française de Sociologie*, vol. 20 (1979), pp. 331–380. 149–151

For a version of the distinction between mainstream and vanguardist industry cast in terms of a view of stages of industrial maturation, see William J. Abernathy and James M. Utterback, “Patterns of Industrial Innovation,” *Technology Review*, vol. 80 (1978), pp. 2–9; William J. Abernathy, *The Productivity Dilemma: Roadblock to Innovation in the Automobile Industry*, Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 1978, pp. 147–174. For a contrasting version presented in sectoral terms, see Michael J. Piore and Charles Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide*, Basic Books, New York, 1984. Many ideas crucial to this and other parts of the arguments developed in the course of conversations with Charles Sabel. 154–158

For textured descriptions of the vanguardist sector of industry, see F. Ferreo and S. Scamuzzi, eds., *L’Industria in Italia: La Piccola Impresa*, Riuniti, Rome, 1979; George A. V. Russell, “Flexibility as a Factor in the Economic Exploitation of Some Rolling Mills and Some Technical Means for Its Realization,” *Journal of the Iron and Steel Industry*, vol. 130 (1934), pp. 25–125; and especially Charles Sabel, *Work and Politics: The Division of Labor in Industry*, Cambridge, Cambridge, pp. 194–231. For the relation between the primacy of mass production and the international division of labor, see Folker Fröbel, Jürgen Heinrichs, and Otto Kreye, *The New International Division of Labor: Structural Unemployment in Industrialized Countries and Industrialization in Developing Countries*, trans. Pete Burgess, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1980, especially pp. 44–48; Rolf Dick, *Die Arbeitsteilung zwischen Industrie- und Entwicklungsländern im Maschinenbau*, Mohr, Tübingen, 1981; Michael J. Piore and Charles S. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide*. 155–156

For the internal generation of investment funds as a means with which to compensate for instability in capital markets, see Alfred S. Eichner, *The Megacorp and Oligopoly: Micro Foundations of Macro Dynamics*, Sharpe, New York, 1976, pp. 68–70, 84–85, 111–116, 123–125. 159

On the extension of the distinction between the rigid and flexible variants of rationalized collective labor to warfare, see the related contrast between attrition operations and relational-maneuver operations in Edward N. Luttwack, “The Operational Level of War,” 161–163

International Security, vol. 5 (1980-1981), pp. 61-79. For the example of tank warfare, see Field Marshal Lord Carver, *The Apostles of Mobility: The Theory and Practice of Armoured Warfare*, Weidenfeld, London, 1979; Edward N. Luttwack, "The Strategy of the Tank," in *Strategy and Politics*, Transaction, New Brunswick, N.J., 1980, pp. 295-304.

4. THE MAKING OF SOCIETY THROUGH POLITICS: IMAGINING TRANSFORMATION

Private Enterprise and Governmental Policy

- 177-180 For the classic American study of the early nineteenth century transformations discussed in the text, see Louis Hartz, *Economic Policy and Democratic Thought: Pennsylvania 1776-1880*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1948. On the later American developments, see Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., "Government Versus Business: An American Phenomenon," in John T. Dunlop, ed., *Business and Public Policy*, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard, Boston, 1980, pp. 1-11; Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1920; William H. Becker, *The Dynamics of Business-Government Relations, 1893-1921*, Chicago, Chicago, 1982.
- 179 On the German and Dutch experience, see Max Barkhausen, "Staatliche Wirtschaftslenkung und freies Unternehmertum in Westdeutschen und im Nord-und Südniederländischen Raum bei der Entstehung der Neuzeitlichen Industrie im 18. Jahrhundert," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 45 (1958), pp. 168-241. On the Japanese comparison see Thomas C. Smith, *Political Change and Industrial Development in Japan: Government Enterprise, 1868-1880*, Stanford, Stanford, 1955. Compare, further, the late Ch'ing Chinese experience discussed in Albert Feuerwerker, *China's Early Industrialization: Sheng Hsuan-Huai (1844-1916) and Mandarin Enterprise*, Atheneum, New York, 1970, pp. 22-26, 242-251; Wellington K. K. Chan, *Merchants, Mandarins, and Modern Enterprise in Late Ch'ing China*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1977, pp. 67-153.

The Genesis of the Work-Organization Complex: General Conception

- 180-183 For a simplified statement of the conservative (classical-liberal) version of the mythical history of modern Western institutions of production and exchange, see D. C. North and R. P. Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1978.
- For the radical Marxist version of this history, see Karl Marx, *Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, International Publishers, New York, 1970, pp. 20-21; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the *Communist Manifesto*, section 1; Karl Marx,

The German Ideology, International Publishers, New York, 1970, part 1, section c, pp. 68-81; Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, International Publishers, New York, 1967, vol. 1, chaps. 13-16, pp. 322-518.

For the development of the Marxist themes at a more detailed historiographic level, see Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, International Publishers, New York, 1978.

The Genesis of the Work-Organization Complex: Manufacturing

For a study of early forms of the institutions whose making this section discusses, see Sydney Pollard, *The Genesis of Modern Management: A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain*, Arnold, London, 1965. For an analysis of the translation of this model of industrial organization and labor discipline into a managerial ideology, see Reinhard Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry: Ideologies of Management in the Course of Industrialization*, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1956, especially pp. 198-253. For a critique emphasizing the control aspects of the new industrial model as against its claim to represent a uniquely superior solution to technical and economic goals and constraints, see Stephen A. Marglin, "What Bosses Do? The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production," *Review of Radical Political Economics*, vol. 6 (1974), pp. 33-60. For a criticism of this thesis, see Oliver E. Williamson, "The Organization of Work: A Comparative Institutional Assessment," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, vol. 1 (1980), pp. 5-38. The last paragraph of the section in the text on "contemporary debates" defines the relation of my argument about work organization to the Marglin-Williamson debate. 183-187

On the *proto-industrialization thesis*, interpreted in the text as an attempt to square the apparent diversity of early-modern forms of manufacturing and town-country relations with the stereotypical "English route" to economic growth, see F. F. Mendels, "Proto-Industrialization: The First Phase of the Industrialization Process," *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 32 (1972), pp. 241-261; P. Kriedte, H. Medick, and J. Schlumbohm, *Industrialization Before Industrialization: Rural Industry in the Genesis of Capitalism*, Past and Present Pub., Cambridge, 1981. For criticism of the proto-industrialization thesis, see P. Jeannin, "La Proto-Industrialization: Developpement ou Impasse?" *Annales E.S.C.*, vol. 35 (1980), pp. 52-65; Maxine Berg, Pat Hudson, and Michael Sonnenscher, "Manufacture in Town and Country Before the Factory," in M. Berg, P. Hudson, and M. Sonnenscher, eds., *Manufacture in Town and Country Before the Factory*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 1-32; D. C. Coleman, "Proto-Industrialization: A Concept Too Many," *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol. 36 (1983), pp. 435-448. 183-184

For an analysis of *suppressed and contained diversity in the industrial*

institutions of modern Europe – an analysis to which this part of my argument is heavily indebted – see Charles Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin, "Historical Alternatives to Mass Production," *Past and Present*, no. 108 (1985), pp. 133–176.

- 185–186 On the experiences of the West Riding, see Pat Hudson, "From Manor to Mill: The West Riding in Transition," in Maxine Berg et al., *Manufacture in Town and Country Before the Factory*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1983; Pat Hudson, *The Genesis of Industrial Capital: A Study of the West Riding Wool Textile Industry c. 1750–1850*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1986. On the Sheffield cutlery trade, see G. I. H. Lloyd, *The Cutlery Trades*, Longmans, London, 1913. On the Lyonnaise textile industry, see Michel Laferrière, *Lyon, Ville Industrielle*, Presses Universitaires, Paris, 1960.

186 The petty entrepreneur and the small-scale enterprise as frustrated protagonists of a contained, alternative style of industrial organization have persistently reappeared far from the home ground of North Atlantic industrialism. See, for example, Johannes Hirschmeier, *The Origins of Entrepreneurship in Meiji Japan*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1964, pp. 44–110; Henry Rosovsky, "The Serf Entrepreneur in Russia," in *Explorations in Enterprise*, ed. Hugh G. J. Aitken, Harvard, Cambridge, 1967, pp. 341–372. In each instance these groups were condemned to remain satellites unless they established an institutional order that thoroughly fragmented both economic and governmental power.

The Genesis of the Work-Organization Complex: Agriculture

- 187–191 For accounts of the variety of agrarian forms in late medieval and early modern Europe that explicitly relate agricultural diversity to the troubles of the mythical history, see Robert Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe," *Past and Present*, no. 70 (1976), pp. 30–75, the many critical discussions of this article in subsequent issues of *Past and Present*, and Brenner's response and restatement, "The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism," *Past and Present*, no. 97 (1982), pp. 16–113.
- 189–190 For an in-depth study of one particularly successful case of deviation from the English stereotype, see Jan de Vries, *The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age, 1500–1700*, Yale, New Haven, 1974, especially pp. 119–121, 236–245. See also Franklin F. Mendels, "Agriculture and Peasant Industry in Eighteenth-Century Flanders," in William N. Parker and Eric L. Jones, eds., *European Peasants and Their Markets: Essays in Agrarian Economic History*, Princeton, Princeton, 1975, pp. 179–204.
- 100 On the impact of alternative agrarian trajectories on industrial growth rates, see Patrick O'Brien and Coglar Keyder, *Economic Growth in Britain and France, 1780–1914: Two Paths to the Twentieth Century*, Allen, London, 1978.

For a comparative discussion of continuing agrarian diversity in

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Jerome Blum, *The End of the Old Order in Rural Europe*, Princeton, Princeton, 1978. For an early twentieth century example of agrarian deconcentration in the context of general industrialization, see Ann Waswo, *Japanese Landlords: The Decline of a Rural Elite*, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1977.

On the interplay between petty proprietorship and governmental support in an American setting, see Grant McConnell, *The Decline of Agrarian Democracy*, Atheneum, New York, 1977. 191

For examples of the contemporary defense of small-scale family farms as a concomitant to industrialization (in the contemporary third world), see Erik Eckholm, *Land Reform and Sustainable Development*, Worldwatch Paper 30, 1979; Alain de Jainvry, *The Agrarian Question in Latin America*, Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 1981. For a discussion of the shared hostility of traditional development theory and Marxism to small-scale private or cooperative production in the countryside, see Michael Lipton, *Why Poor People Stay Poor: Urban Bias in World Development*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1977, pp. 89-141.

Eastern Europe between the wars provides an extraordinary historical laboratory in which to study the frustrations of a petty bourgeoisie that wins parcels of state power without developing suitable models of industrialization, constitutional government, and grassroots organization. See the discussion of the peasant parties in Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, Univ. of Washington, Seattle, 1974.

The Genesis of the Work Organization Complex: Contemporary Debates

On the key role of the artisanal or petty bourgeois classes as challengers to the dominant model of industrialism, see William H. Sewall, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1980; Craig J. Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: The Social Foundation of Popular Radicalism During the Industrial Revolution*, Chicago, Chicago, 1982. 192-195

For studies of particular movements that served as bearers of the petty bourgeois ideal, see G. S. Kealey and B. D. Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1982; Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists*, Temple Smith, London, 1984. 193-194

On the continuing role of traditional small enterprise and its relation to the party-political self-assertion of the petty bourgeoisie, see Suzanne Berger and Michael J. Piore, *Dualism and Discontinuity in Industrial Societies*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1981. 194-195

The Genesis of the Private-Rights Complex

On the paradox of origin, see the discussion of the consolidation of absolute property rights under statist and absolutist regimes in 198-200

Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, New Left Books, London, 1974, pp. 424-426.

On the doctrinal and intellectual background through and against which the theory of absolute property rights and its contractual counterpart developed, see Franz Wicacker, *Privatrechtsgeschichte der Neuzeit*, Vandenhoeck, Göttingen, 1967, especially pp. 234-237; Stephan Buchholz, *Abstraktionsprinzip und Immobiliarecht: Zur Geschichte der Auffassung und der Grundschrift*, Klostermann, Frankfurt, 1978; P. S. Atiyah, *The Rise and Fall of Freedom of Contract*, Oxford, Oxford, 1979, especially pp. 102-138; Kenneth Vandavelde, "The New Property of the Nineteenth Century: The Development of the Modern Concept of Property," *Buffalo Law Review*, vol. 29 (1980), pp. 325-367; James Gordley, "Equality in Exchange," *California Law Review*, vol. 69 (1981), pp. 1587-1656.

The traditional doctrinal literature has often made it appear that some form of communal ownership represents the sole alternative to the system of consolidated property rights. See, for example, Otto Gierke, *Das Bürgerliche Gesetzbuch und der Deutsche Reichstag*, Hermann, Berlin, 1898.

200-204 On the paradox of specification, see, for the coexistence of classical liberal and statist principles, Duncan Kennedy, "The Structure of Blackstone's Commentaries," *Buffalo Law Review*, vol. 28 (1979), pp. 205-382.

202-203 On the coexistence of classical liberal principles of property and contract with antiliberal forms of organizational hierarchy and surveillance, see Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, trans. Colin Gordon et al., Pantheon, New York, 1972, pp. 78-108.

204-207 For the paradox of superfluity study the literature that establishes and explores the generalization of the concept of right and its consequent loss of any implicit institutional content. See Wesley Hohfeld, "Some Fundamental Legal Conceptions as Applied in Legal Reasoning," *Yale Law Journal*, vol. 23 (1913), pp. 16-59. For the historical background, see Joseph Singer, "The Legal Rights Debate in Analytical Jurisprudence from Bentham to Hohfeld," *Wisconsin Law Review* (1982), pp. 975-1059. For an account of the paradox of superfluity and an effort to disengage legal rights and legal doctrine from the model of consolidated property, see Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *The Critical Legal Studies Movement*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1986.

The Genesis of the Governmental-Organizational Complex

213-214 For a characteristic statement of the expectation of revolutionary change from universal suffrage, see John Wilson Croker, *The Croker Papers* (2nd ed., rev.), ed. L. H. Jennings, Murray, London, 1885, vol. 2, p. 113.

For the idea of the relation of modern party politics to the *suppres-*

sion or privatization of confessional disputes, see Harvey Mansfield, Jr., *Statesmanship and Party Government: A Study of Burke and Bolingbroke*, Chicago, Chicago, 1965, pp. 1-19.

For one version of the replacement of early liberal filtering-out techniques by party politics, see Martin van Buren, *Inquiry into the Origin and Course of Political Parties in the United States*, Hurd, New York, 1867; Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840*, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1969. 210

For another version see Theodore Zeldin, *The Political System of Napoleon III*, Norton, New York, 1958, especially, pp. 1-9, 46-65, 154-168. 210

Central Themes of the Institutional Genealogy

For Marx's criticism of petty or simple commodity production, see Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie*, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt, section on "the progressive epochs of social forms of the economy," pp. 405-411; G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History*, pp. 186, 314, 332; Bob Rowthorn, "Neo-Classicism, Neo-Ricardianism and Marxism," in *Capitalism, Conflict and Inflation: Essays in Political Economy*, Lawrence, London, 1980, pp. 34-38. See also the discussion of Marx's criticism of the Gotha Program in Karl Korsch, "Introduction to the Critique of the Gotha Programme," *Marxism and Philosophy*, trans. Fred Halliday, Monthly Review, New York, 1978, pp. 145-170, emphasizing Marx's belief that Lassalle's scheme of state-supported cooperatives was unacceptable except as part of a general transformation of economic institutions. 221-230

The Making of the Communist Alternative

On the period of World War I and of its aftermath as a time of challenge to the formative contexts of European societies, see F. L. Carsten, *Revolution in Central Europe, 1918-1919*, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1972; Charles Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade After World War I*, Princeton, Princeton, 1975. On mid-twentieth-century adjustments of the formative institutional contexts of North Atlantic democracies, see also Margaret Weir and Theda Skocpol, "State Structure and Social Keynesianism: Responses to the Great Depression in Sweden and the United States," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, vol. 24 (1983), pp. 4-29.

On the soviets and the initial revolutionary experiments in conciliar, direct democracy, see Oskar Anweiler, *The Soviets: The Russian Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers, 1905-1921*, Pantheon, New 234
238-239

York, 1974. See also Serge Bricanier, *Pannenkoek and the Workers' Councils*, trans. Malachy Carroll, Telos, St. Louis, 1978.

- 234-238 On the debate about alternative trajectories in the formative period of Soviet history, see the literature by and about "rightist" and "leftist" economists: E. A. Preobrazhensky, *The Crisis of Soviet Industrialization*, Sharpe, New York, 1979; Alexander Erlich, "Preobrazenski and the Economics of Soviet Industrialization," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 64 (1950), pp. 57-88; Nikolai Bukharin, *The Politics and Economics of the Transition Period*, trans. Oliver Field, Routledge, London, 1979; Stephen E. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, Knopf, New York, 1974; Rudolf Hilferding, "State Capitalism or Totalitarian State Economy?" in Julian Steinberg, ed., *Verdict of Three Decades*, Duell, New York, 1950, pp. 445, 453; Alexander Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924-1928*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1960; Moshe Lewin, *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates*, Princeton, Princeton, 1974, pp. 97-124; Paul Costello, "Reaping the Whirlwind: Soviet Economics and Politics, 1928-1932," *Theoretical Review*, no. 27 (March-April, 1982), pp. 1-11.
- 234-236 On the particulars of the grain crisis, the transformation of agriculture, and the end of the land commune, see Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization*, Norton, New York, 1968; Susan Gross Solomon, *The Soviet Agrarian Debate: A Controversy in Social Science*, Westview, Boulder, Colo., 1977; R. W. Davies, *The Socialist Offensive: The Collectivization of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1980.
- 237-238 On the broader social background, see Charles Bettelheim, *Les Luttes de Classes en URSS*, part 1, 1917-1923, part 2, 1923-1930, part 3 (2 vols.), 1930-1941, Maspero, Paris, 1974.
- 238 On the role of the technical intelligentsia in the order resulting from the institutional settlement of the late 1920s and early 1930s see Kendall E. Bailes, *Technology and Society Under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917-1941*, Princeton, Princeton, 1978.
- 241-246 My discussion of the Chinese Cultural Revolution has been especially influenced by Livio Maitan, *Party, Army, and Masses in China: A Marxist Interpretation of the Cultural Revolution and Its Aftermath*, trans. Gregor Benton and Marie Collitti, New Left, London, 1976, as well as by the following writings: Lowell Dittmer, *Liu Shao-ch'i and the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1974; Charles Bettelheim, *Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organization in China: Changes in Management and in the Division of Labor*, trans. Alfred Ehrenfeld, Monthly Review, New York, 1974; Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Case Study*, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1978; Roderick MacFarquar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Columbia, New York, vol. 1, 1974, vol. 2, 1983.

Theory of Context Making

The view of context making presented in the second part of the chapter plays in the argument of this book a role similar to the role played in Marxism by the theory of the evolution of modes of production. The Marxist counterpart is the general historical materialism of the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* or the *Communist Manifesto* rather than the specific analysis of *Capital*. The early pages of this commentary list sources and inspirations of the theory of context making. The following references are almost entirely confined to acknowledging particular intellectual debts or suggesting where to look for more extended discussions of particular historical examples. 246-254

For the background to the example of the new artillery pieces and flexible infantry tactics, the French revolutionary army and the response of the German reformers, see Friedrich Meinecke, *The Age of German Liberation, 1795-1815*, trans. Peter Paret and Helmuth Fischer, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1977. On the specifics, see Peter Paret, *York and the Era of Prussian Reform, 1807-1815*, Princeton, Princeton, 1966, pp. 117-153, 173-150, and Scharnhorst's "Three Essays on Light Troops and Infantry Tactics," printed as an appendix to this book, pp. 249-262. For an earlier set of examples illustrating the same principle in the same domain, see Michael Roberts, "The Military Revolution, 1560-1660," in *Essays in Swedish History*, Univ. of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1967, pp. 195-225. 283-285

For three examples of conservative reforms that tried to assimilate and reconstruct a successful technological and organizational style, see Stanford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire Under Sultan Selim III, 1789-1807*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 71-199, compared with the Köprülü reforms discussed in Joseph von Hammer, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, Hartleben, Pest, 1830, vol. 6, pp. 1-90; W. C. Beaseley, *The Meiji Restoration*, Stanford, Stanford, 1972, pp. 350-404; Ting-yee Kuo and Kwang-ching Liu, "Self-strengthening and the Pursuit of Western Technology," in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 10, *Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911*, part 1, ed. John K. Fairbank, pp. 500-504, 517-542. In the Chinese experience, you can study an elite that begins to understand the institutional implications of the effort to master and reconstruct a foreign technological and organizational style and yet refuses to go far enough. See Mary Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-Chih Restoration, 1862-1874*, Stanford, Stanford, 1957, pp. 196-221; Joseph R. Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1953; Hao Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Intellectual Transition in China*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1971; Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1971.

The idea of coercive surplus extraction plays a central role in 285-288

Marx's social theory. See the discussion in G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History*, pp. 207-215.

- 277 The term *negative capability* comes from a letter of Keats to his brothers, dated December 28, 1817. See *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Maurice Forman, Oxford, Oxford, 1931, vol. 1, pp. 75-78. Although the term takes on a very different meaning in the text, a connection to Keats's meaning remains.
- 277-282 The thesis of *negative capability* generalizes and transforms a view that has long been familiar in many more limited versions. For one such version, see Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities*, Yale, New Haven, 1982.
- 286 On the particular point of the importance of technological and organizational innovation relative to levels of savings and investment in Western industrial economies, see Robert Solow, "Technical Change and the Aggregate Production Function," in *Review of Economics and Statistics*, vol. 39 (1957), pp. 312-320. For a view that emphasizes the relatively modest level of the tax burden in an agrarian-bureaucratic empire that had not yet industrialized, see Yeh-chien Wang, *Land Taxation in Imperial China, 1750-1911*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1973. For the claim that taxation levels and total government revenues under the late Ch'ing regime were roughly comparable to those of Western industrializing countries of the mid-nineteenth century see Albert Feuerwerker, *The Chinese Economy, ca. 1870-1911*, Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, no. 5, Ann Arbor, 1969. For a polemical development of the implications, see Mark Elvin's comment on Victor Lippit, *Modern China*, vol. 4 (1978), pp. 329-330.
- 312-319 For the idea of *multiple pathways* and *sequential effects* as employed in contemporary evolutionary theory see, for example, Ernst Mayr, "Cladistic Analysis or Cladistic Classification?" in *Evolution and the Diversity of Life*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1976, pp. 433-476; Stephen Jay Gould, "Bushes and Ladders in Human Evolution," in *Ever Since Darwin*, Norton, New York, 1977, pp. 56-62. Remember, however, that the idea of multiple possible pathways does not go far enough in distinguishing the argument of the text from evolutionary deep-structure social theory. The argument of *False Necessity* frees the analysis of sequential effects from the appeal to a preestablished set of possible trajectories.
- 312-315 A good place in which to identify the theoretical ramifications of the way we understand the influence of preestablished contexts upon context change is the debate about the "transition from feudalism to capitalism." See, for an example of the influence of deep-structure moves on the understanding of sequential effects in context change, Paul Sweezy et al., *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, New Left Books, London, 1976.
- 332-337 The discussion of functional explanation is indebted to the exchange between Jon Elster and G. A. Cohen cited in the notes to Chapter 1.

The discussion of counterfactual explanation is equally beholden to the exchange between Brian Barry and Jon Elster in *Political Studies*, vol. 28 (1980): Brian Barry, "Super Fox; Review Article," pp. 136-143; Jon Elster, "Treatment of Counterfactuals: Reply to Brian Barry," pp. 144-147. 337-340

5. THE PROGRAM OF EMPOWERED DEMOCRACY:
THE REMAKING OF INSTITUTIONAL
ARRANGEMENTS

From Explanations to Programs

For the conception of *normative argument as a historically located and imperfectly justifiable practice*, see again my book, *Passion: An Essay on Personality*, Free Press, 1974. Note that the overlapping practices of internal argument and visionary justification can address either existential projects (as in the essay to *Passion*) or social visions and programs (as in the argument of this chapter). The two translate into each other. Remember also that what is visionary from one standpoint may seem internal from another. 350-355

The Justification

On the minimalist idea of democracy as a commitment to a *government not hostage to a faction*, see Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Harper, New York, 1942, pp. 269-283. See also the skeptical elite theories of Pareto and Mosca and the celebrated discussion of the "iron law of oligarchy," in Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul, Free Press, New York, 1962, pp. 342-356. 369

On the idea of *the supremacy of the will* over social life as distinctive to certain modern forms of both despotism and democracy, see Henry Sumner Maine, *Lectures on the Early History of Institutions*, Murray, London, 1875, lecture XIII, pp. 371-400. 373-374

On the received party-political programs, look to the platforms of the political parties, less for their explicit commitments than for their implicit institutional assumptions. The more discursive statements of the programmatic positions are usually just as elusive in their institutional commitments. Some representative writings follow. For the classical liberal position, see Friedrich von Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, Gateway, Chicago, 1960. For the centrist corporatist and communitarian view, see the interwar papal encyclicals such as *Quadragesimo Anno*. See also the writing of the so-called legal institutionalists: Albert Broderick, ed., *The French Institutionalists: Maurice Hauriou, Georges Renard, Joseph T. Delos*, trans. Mary Welling, Harvard, Cambridge, 1970. For a recent statement of the social-democratic position in a particular national setting, see David Owen, *A Future That Will Work*, Viking, London, 1984. For a detailed study of the evolution of social-democratic 377-379

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389-391

ideas under the influence of office, see Kenneth Morgan, *Labor in Power, 1945-1951*, Oxford, London, 1984.

The Practice

395-397 Contemporary ideas about political practice usually fall into one of two categories. Some reflect the meeting of deep-structure and specifically Marxist assumptions with the problems of revolutionary movements. Others deal with the business-as-usual politics of redistribution or retrenchment.

Gramsci comes closest to an inclusive theory of transformative practice. See *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, International Publishers, New York, 1971; *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920, 1921-1926*, trans. Quintin Hoare, International Publishers, New York, 1977, 1978. But his ideas remain both fragmentary in formulation and cramped by Marxist assumptions. Gramsci's activities repay analysis as much as do his doctrines. See Anthony Leeds, *Antonio Gramsci and the Revolution That Failed*, Yale, New Haven, 1977. The student of transformative practice can still learn from Machiavelli, and even more from the Machiavelli of the *Discourses* than from the Machiavelli of the *Prince*.

407 For an interesting set of studies that throws light on the problems of a transformative movement in quest of power, see Alain Touraine, *Mouvements Sociaux d'Aujour'hui: Auteurs et Analystes*, Editions Ouvrières, Paris, 1982.

415-419 For an example of the consequences of failure to deal with the problem of the cadres, see Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics, 1915-1922*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 343-349.

432 For insight into the problems of the transformative movement in power, see writings on the transition to socialism, Serge Cristophe Kolm, *La Transition Socialiste: La Politique Economique de Gauche*, Cerf, Paris, 1977; Sergio Bitar, *Transición, Socialismo y Democracia: La Experiencia Chilena*, Siglo Veintiuno, Mexico City, 1979.

432-436 Support for the thesis of the primacy of institutional change over redistribution can be found in work suggesting an inverse relation between the more stable redistribution that occurs through changes in disparities among primary incomes (e.g., Netherlands, Finland, Sweden) and the less secure redistribution that takes place through tax-and-transfer (e.g., Israel, Norway). The former is likely to depend on institutional change. See J. Corinna M. van Arnhem and Geurt Schotsman, "Do Parties Affect the Distribution of Incomes? The Case of Advanced Capitalist Democracies," in Francis G. Castles, ed., *The Impact of Parties: Politics and Parties in Democratic Capitalist States*, Sage, London, 1982, pp. 283-364.

The Institutions

441-444 As stated at the outset of this commentary, three traditions of thought and practice represent the closest influences upon the pro-

grammatic argument of this chapter. The first tradition is the work of such late eighteenth and nineteenth century liberals as the makers of the American constitution, and such thinkers as Benjamin Constant, Alexis de Tocqueville, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Alexander Herzen, and John Stuart Mill. The point is to extend the impulse and enlarge the genre while revising the received institutional ideas. The second source is petty bourgeois radicalism as represented by movements like Chartism. The third source is the ultra-leftist advocacy of collective self-organization that reappears today throughout the third world.

On the dualistic system in the interwar European constitutions, see Boris Mirkine-Guetzevich, *Les Nouvelles Tendances du Droit Constitutionnel*, Girard, Paris, 1931. For the ideas of the architects of the dualistic system see Hugo Preuss, *Verfassungspolitische Entwicklungen in Deutschland und Westeuropa: Historische Grundlegung zu einem Staatsrecht der Deutschen Republik*, ed. Hedwig Hintze, Berlin, 1927; Hans Kelsen, *Die Verfassungsgesetze der Republik Deutschösterreich* (5 vols.), Deuticke, Vienna, 1919-22. 444-448

For a classic statement of the terms on which parties devoted to speculative principles can be reconciled with political stability, see David Hume, "Of Parties in General," in *Essays*, Scientia Verlag, Aalen (reprint of the 1882 London edition), vol. 1, pp. 127-132. For an analysis and typology of the types of parties that result from the divorce between the style of partisan rivalry and conflict over formative contexts, see Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1970. 463-464

For the discussion of an alternative to corporatist and contractualist styles of voluntary association I am indebted to Tamara Lothian. 476-480

The main contemporary inspiration to the economic part of this program has been the literature on markets in socialist economies, if only because it invites thought about alternative market forms. See especially Włodzimierz Brus, *The Market in a Socialist Economy*, Routledge, London, 1972; Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, Unwin, London, 1983. See also the report "Into Entrepreneurial Socialism," *The Economist*, March 19, 1983, pp. 23-31. For a statement of the idea of alternative market systems, see Charles E. Lindblom, *Politics and Markets: The World's Political-Economic Systems*, Basic, New York, 1977, pp. 93-106. 491-493

Recent work has emphasized the extent to which the multidivisional corporation exercises, in relation to its subsidiary parts, some of the roles attributed to the capital-auctioning or capital-rationing fund under the scheme proposed in the text. See, for example, Oliver Williamson, *Markets and Hierarchies: Analysis and Antitrust Implications*, Free Press, New York, 1975, pp. 143-148; Oliver Williamson, "Corporate Governance," *Yale Law Journal*, vol. 93 (1984), pp. 1225-1226. Much the same can be said of some of the more extreme varieties of decentralization under the Soviet-model economy, such as the attempts described in the *Economist* report cited above. But the transformative significance of all such 494-497

experiments is limited by the institutional framework of capital allocation and civic engagement within which they occur. Though they can serve as points of departure for the realization of the economic proposals discussed in the text, they are no substitute for more far-reaching institutional change. As a small example of the constraints the current system of capital allocation imposes upon the emergence of the capital-auctioning or capital-rationing investment fund, see, on the economic disincentives to lending to workers' cooperatives such as those existing in contemporary Western democracies, Branko Horvath, *The Political Economy of Socialism: A Marxist Social Theory*, Sharpe, New York, 1982, p. 456; Oliver Williamson, "Corporate Governance," pp. 1226-1227.

491-508

I have also found inspiration for the development of the economic proposals in the writings of nineteenth century publicists, especially Proudhon, Louis Blanc, and Lassalle. A study of Lassalle's debate with Rodbertus and Marx proved especially helpful. Lassalle, an early leader of German social democracy, criticized as impractical and demobilizing Schulze-Delitzsch's cooperativist ideas. Emphasizing the importance of access to capital, Lassalle advocated the establishment of state-supported cooperatives. Central government would supply the necessary capital and supervise the sector of producers' cooperatives, which would eventually outcompete the private-firm sector. See Ferdinand Lassalle, *Herr Bastiat-Schulze von Delitzsch: Der Oekonomische Julian oder Kapital und Arbeit*, Vorwärts, Berlin, 1912 (original edition, 1893). Lassalle's program gave new life to Louis Blanc's plan for industrial social workplaces, which in turn codified ideas current among radical circles and politically engaged skilled workers in the 1830s and 1840s. See Louis Blanc, *Organisation du Travail* (enlarged version), Nouveau Monde, Paris, 1850, chap. 5, pp. 70-84; William H. Sewall, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France*, pp. 232-236. Rodbertus criticized Lassalle's proposals as both impractical (because the producers' associations would not be able to compete successfully with private firms within an economy based on current principles) and unjust (because if the proposals did succeed, they would produce a new system of group privileges). See the correspondence between Lassalle and Rodbertus: Ferdinand Lassalle, *Nachgelassene Briefe und Schriften*, ed. Gustav Mayer, Biblio, Osnabrück, 1967, vol. 6, pp. 285-381. The same series of letters is largely reproduced in Johann Karl Rodbertus, *Gesammelte Werke und Briefe*, ed. Th. Raum, Zeller, Osnabrück, 1972, vol. 6, pp. 23-109. This volume includes an interesting "fragment on the relation with Lassalle," pp. 111-117. In his parallel debate with Lassalle, Marx argued for the inefficacy of reforms that failed to change and to replace, on a societywide basis, the laws of the capitalist economy. See Ferdinand Lassalle, "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Lassalle and Marx," in *Nachgelassene Briefe und Schriften*, vol. 3; and Karl Korsch's previously mentioned discussion of Marx's criticism of Lassalle. Rodbertus drew gradualistic conclusions and Marx revolutionary conclusions from what was essen-

tially the same argument. See also George Brandes, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, trans. Bergman, New York, 1968 (original edition 1874-1875, 1881), pp. 156-167; Edward Bernstein, *Ferdinand Lassalle as a Social Reformer*, trans. Eleanor Marx Aveling, Greenwood, New York, 1969 (original edition 1891), chap. 7, pp. 134-147; Shlomo Na'aman, *Lassalle*, Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, Hanover, 1970, pp. 635-640.

British guild socialism extended, and failed adequately to reconstruct, the tradition of Louis Blanc and Lassalle. See G. D. H. Cole, *Guild Socialism Restated*, Transaction, New Brunswick, N.J., 1980 (reprint of 1920 edition); G. D. H. Cole, *The British Cooperative Movement in a Socialist Society: A Report to the Fabian Society*, London, Allen, 1951.

The economic proposals of *False Necessity* can be viewed as a Lassallean program that has tried to absorb the force of the criticisms offered by Rodbertus and Marx. Its key move is to advocate a changed system of capital allocation and a broader set of mutually reinforcing governmental and economic arrangements. These arrangements cut through the contrasting dilemmas of self-management and statist models of economic organization. They avoid the weaknesses of the self-management approach without seeking a corrective in commanding, centralized power.

On the *design of work*, see the writings cited earlier that describe the vanguardist sector of contemporary industry and Alan Fox, *Beyond Contract*, pp. 134-144. 497-499
506-508

On the methods of thought and the technical legal categories that can serve the system of *legal rights* outlined in the text, see my book, *The Critical Legal Studies Movement*. On the complex injunctions and the related legal-theoretical ideas that help inspire the concept of *destabilization rights*, see Lewis Sargentich, "Complex Enforcement" (unpublished paper on file at the Harvard Law School Library). 508-539

On the *reorganization of mass-production industry* (which the text describes as one of several opportunities for the advancement of the program of empowered democracy), see Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide*, Basic, New York, 1984, pp. 258-308. On the Swedish experience (subsidization of industry as an occasion for reallocating elements of control over investment decisions), see Walter Korpi, *The Working Class in Welfare Capitalism: Work, Unions, and Politics in Sweden*, Routledge, London, 1978. 542-543
554

The Spirit

For the conception of empowerment and of its relation to ideals and experiences that seem antagonistic to it, see Unger, *Passion: An Essay on Personality*. 575-585

The closest counterpart within the liberal tradition to the social forms of empowerment described here is a conception of affirmative 579-580

freedom. See, for example, T. H. Green, *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, Longmans, London, 1917, section 7, p. 9.

On the theme of fantasy and enactment, see Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, trans. Richard Miller, pp. 163-165. On the background and intentions of Gance's *Napoleon*, see Kevin Brown-law, *Napoleon: Abel Gance's Classic Film*, Cape, London, 1983.

For a concise statement of the classical republican vision, see Montesquieu's discussion of the democratic type of regime in *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent, Hafner, New York, 1966, chap. 3, pp. 20-22.

*Note on Aids to the Development of the Personalist Counterpart to
the Institutional Program*

556-570 Only a brief section of this chapter deals with the transformation of personal relations that extends the institutional program of empowered democracy. This note evokes some of the writings and studies that help inform the ideas of this section, to be developed more fully in a future Part II of *Politics*.

The argument of the fragment on cultural revolution stands in close relation to the main part of my book, *Passion: An Essay on Personality*. That essay presents a moral vision in the manner of a modernist transformation of the Christian-romantic image of man. By contrast, the discussion here addresses the personalist counterpart to an institutional program. It emphasizes certain discrete qualities of personal relations rather than, as does *Passion*, the whole individual in relation. Despite these differences in scope, concern, and form, I hope that no serious conflict of beliefs or consequences exists between the two efforts.

The ideas anticipated in the brief passage on cultural revolution have three main sources. The first source consists in the writings of certain philosophers. These writings include the middle works of Heidegger and Sartre, notably *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Harper, New York, 1962, and *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes, Philosophical Library, New York. But the assumptions of my argument differ crucially from their doctrines in its insistence upon our ability to change the relation between freedom and structure as well as in its focus on the link between an approach to personal relations and a program of social reconstruction.

Among earlier philosophers the cultural revolutionary can find guidance in Hegel and Kierkegaard. See Hegel's exploration of the convolutions of a sensibility no longer at one with allotted social stations in the later parts of *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie, Harper, New York, 1967. See also Kierkegaard's treatment of the problems of moral evaluation once people cease to credit conventional hierarchies of value as flawed approximations to an objective moral order: *Either/Or* (2 vols.), trans. Donald F. Swenson and Lillian Marion Swenson, Princeton, Princeton, 1959.

Only in the efforts of contemporary feminist theorists and in the occasional writings of third world ultra-leftists have I found a shared discourse that develops the speculative themes of these nineteenth and twentieth century philosophers into the beginnings of a cultural-revolutionary program.

A second source of help consists in the novels, poems, and tracts of the great modernist writers of the twentieth century, such as Proust and Joyce, Musil and Virginia Woolf. You need not read their works didactically to find in them materials for a moral psychology. The insight into personal and social possibility that these artists provide far outreaches the sentimental or cynical views dominating so much premodernist thought about human nature. Lesser modernist writers can be equally rewarding for a study of particular experiences and intentions central to the program of cultural revolution. Thus, some (such as Clarice Lispector) have probed the incongruous use of social stations while others (like Chung-shu Ch'ien) have explored the confusion of conventions that attends the clash of cultures. See also Edward Mendelson, *Early Auden*, Harvard, Cambridge, 1981, as a study of a modernist sensibility treading a long but representative itinerary of hopes for personal and social improvement.

A third inspiration is the worldwide pop culture. One way to understand its cultural-revolutionary message is to watch and compare television soap operas in different countries. These melodramas express the anxieties and longings of particular classes and communities in particular societies. They also rehearse the ancient, sentimentalized formulas of the Christian and pagan romance. But both the distinctive, local concerns and the familiar romantic tropes come out transformed by their combination with role jumbling and role defiance. See *TV Guide*.

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