

REVOLUTIONARY MOTIVES

Why do the dispossessed revolt? Or, more to the point, why don't they? There is no shortage of reasons; in every direction we look, the fully capitalist world presents itself as an immense accumulation of injury and outrage. And yet, on their own, these reasons rarely suffice as explanation. What is unbearable to one group of proletarians is bearable to another; what produces a rebellion on one occasion, or in one place, fails to elicit any response on another. We might be tempted to approach the problem from the other side and list all the reasons *not* to revolt, chief among them the enormous repressive power of the state. Most revolts end in failure, even if we define success in the most modest terms, and failure means, let's be clear, not only wasted effort but injury, death, imprisonment. Except in situations where survival is truly at stake, there is always good reason to keep one's head down, to stagger on under the nightmare weight of history. But fear explains both too much and too little, since many *do* revolt in situations when the odds are not particularly good and the risks great. At a first pass, we are confronted by an insufficient positive explanation (reasons for) and an insufficient negative one (reasons against). Moreover, as nearly all commentators have noticed, since the odds of success for a revolt are not determined by the force of the enemy alone but by the number of those who participate, there is something circular and self-fulfilling about whatever judgments participants make about the risks. Bad odds can be transformed into good ones if, by misapprehending the situation or ignoring the risks, some small group decides to go ahead anyway, creating felicitous conditions for everyone else. A leap into the void can make the ground appear, just as a refusal to leap can turn solid ground to thinnest air.

The self-fulfilling character of such judgment has led many pro-revolutionaries to conclude that the decisive element is the consciousness of would-be rebels, who must be educated or provided with the right leadership, in order to realise the reasonableness of revolt, the possibility of success given unitary action. This view, which I will call *voluntarist*, finds its most important articulation in the words of Karl Kautsky, as interpreted and popularised by V.I. Lenin in *What Is To*

Be Done? "Socialist consciousness", writes Kautsky, "is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without and not something that arose within it spontaneously."¹ For Lenin, this position necessitates the formation of cadres of "professional revolutionaries" who can provide intellectual leadership to the working class, lest their default to a spontaneous "trade-union consciousness" leave them incapable of effectively combating their domination by capital.² We might think of Lenin's interpretation of the voluntarist thesis as *pastoral*, meaning it emphasises leadership. Other voluntarisms are *pedagogical*, identifying the education of the underclasses as the decisive element. Antonio Gramsci may be the clearest exemplar of this latter variant, but it should be noted that voluntarists are rarely pastoral or pedagogical completely. We can talk here only of tendencies.³ Lenin's professional revolutionaries were to sell newspapers in order to develop close contact with the masses they might later mobilise, and Gramsci himself continuously describes education as a form of leadership.

Most voluntarists acknowledge that revolt does occur independently of pastoral or pedagogical intervention.⁴ A certain class of revolt — riot or strike — is more or less spontaneous, reflexive, and unexplainable except as the result of contingency, our pedagogues or would-be leaders might say. But more massive, durable, open-ended, and strategic revolt depends, in their estimation, on consciousness and leadership. The voluntarist account of spontaneous action must therefore be distinguished from what I call *fatalism*. For the fatalist, spontaneity goes all the way down, and there is no way to cheat the process through acts of will. Fatalists see revolt as unfolding from either inexorable objective mechanisms or, perhaps, the advent of an ineffable event. Why do people revolt? Let me tell you, say the pastors and the pedagogues. We just don't know, say the fatalists.

1. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Essential Works of Lenin* (Courier 2012), 82. There is some debate about the extent to which Lenin's interpretation of Kautsky's views is accurate.

2. Ibid., 147–48.

3. In many essays from the mid-1920s onward, Gramsci emphasises the decisive role of intellectuals and of education in preparing the way for revolution. In short, and at the risk of vulgarising a complex and fragmentary body of work, Gramsci argues that there exists among the working class 'organic intellectuals' who, by virtue of their position in production, control the 'ideas and aspirations of the class'. Organised into a class party, such intellectuals and the educative role they play will secure 'hegemony' for the working class — that is, ensure that working-class ideas are dominant in society. This 'war of position' is a necessary precursor to any 'frontal attack'. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (International Publishers 1971), 3–13, 106–13, 257–63.

4. These views are not confined to Marxists or socialists. Anarchists are often prone to a pedagogical view of human

Declaring something unknowable is always a safe approach. But as I will argue below, political struggles often require people to make assumptions about the motivations of others; in revolutions, such assumptions can prove quite powerful. Indeed, as I show, the pedagogical and pastoral assumptions are at the heart of the processes that allow revolution to turn to counter-revolution. Those who say they don't know now may find themselves, at a practical and intuitive level, relying upon common sense conceptions later on. Obviously, there is a great deal within history that is unknowable. We may never be able to say why, for instance, the murder by the police of a young unarmed man in one instance produces a riot, and in the other nothing more than a few small protests. But we may be able to say something about why the riot continues, dies down, or passes over into insurrection. To do so, we need a theory of revolutionary motives. **The pedagogical and pastoral approaches fail because they confuse people's motives with people's beliefs. Motives, for the most part, and especially revolutionary motives, exist at a deeper level than the sort of consciousness or ideology that pedagogues and authorities can target: survival, desire for increased well-being, concern for the well-being of one's familiars, hatred of oppressive heteronomy. These motives do not need to be taught, even if they are conditioned and transformed by social structure. Nor can they be untaught. For an ideology to succeed, it must work with and not against people's underlying motivations.**

My use of the term motives is more or less identical to the concept of *interests*, though I conceive of interest as broader than self-interest as such, and will use the term "motive" when I want to mark some distance from simple egoism and the utilitarian anthropology that has placed it at the center of any theory of human motivation. I will occasionally use the term "materialist" when referring to the basic

action, even if they are axiomatically opposed to a pastoral one. The popular eco-anarchist (or 'green nihilist') text, *Desert* (2011), rejects the possibility of revolution in its first pages by way of an off-hand anthropology. Revolution, in the views of the authors, can only be made by dedicated revolutionaries, anarchists, and this group will always be marginal: 'Anarchists can be wonderful. We can have beauty, and self-possessed power and possibility in buckets. We cannot, however, remake the entire world; there are not enough of us, and never will be'. Considering very briefly the possibility that revolution may be made by people who are not already dedicated revolutionaries, they quote from a previous eco-anarchist text: 'There is unfortunately little evidence from history that the working class — never mind anyone else — is intrinsically predisposed to libertarian or ecological revolution. Thousands of years of authoritarian socialisation favour the jackboot...' They offer a negative version of the pedagogical thesis; education goes all the way down, producing perfectly compliant social subjects, and only a small number of freaks or deviants will ever break out of the straitjacket of ideology.

motives described above — that is, concern for material well-being — though it should be noted that such concern extends to dependents, companions and intimates. Within Marxist and other left thought, **interests name the deep though often unexplained forces that mobilise the underclasses**. An interest, importantly, is something more than a reflexive action, something other than instinct or drive as such. We use the term to name **internal forces that can be repressed or ignored, that appear as strong inclination or felt need, that motivate action but do not immediately produce it**, and that therefore prompt deliberation or reflection.

Motive is perhaps similar to what Baruch Spinoza called *conatus*, or striving. “Each thing”, Spinoza writes famously, “as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being”.⁵

This being in which people strive to persevere is not identical for every person, and some aspects of it are quite clearly historically determined, unique to particular social relations and institutions, but every society or human community has as its given that it must allow people to survive, if not flourish, and the motives that correspond to these survival needs will form the basis for much (though certainly not all) of what people do: **humans will strive to feed themselves, to find shelter from the elements, and to avoid pain and illness**, to speak of three of the most basic material motives.

In capitalism, these basic motives fuel the fires of accumulation. The apparatus of the wage, for example, depends upon the motivated-yet-free action of proletarians who, dispossessed of the means of production, voluntarily sell their labour power in order to survive. Proletarians are not gripped by capital at a neuromuscular level, their bodies directly recruited to produce things of value. Domination and power is everywhere, and its history thousands of years deep, but people are almost never the simple objects or tools of others. Even those forms of domination which we imagine to operate almost entirely through force and to be more or less indifferent to the consent of the dominated presume some limited margin of freedom.⁶

Prisons are constructed and organised, for example, on the assumption that prisoners will try to escape, and even plantation slavery, which seems in some regards the infernal maximum of dehumanising and

5. Benedictus de Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, E. M. Curley, ed., (Princeton University Press 1994), 159.

6. For Foucault, power presupposes ‘a limited margin of freedom’. He writes: ‘Even when the power relation is

objectifying oppression, presupposed that slaves were free to refuse work, attempt to escape, revolt. Hence its recourse to violent punishment, at every turn, as necessary compulsion.

It should be made clear that a theory of revolutionary motives is not a theory of motives in general. People are no doubt driven by all manner of unique, perverse, and complex desires, understanding of which must be left to psychology if not psychoanalysis. **Since we are talking of inclination rather instinct, motive and interest are probabilistic concepts. Rather than seeking to explain every single thing that people do, interest is similar to the Marxian concept of tendency, asserting itself in the long-run and in the aggregate, despite and against deviations.** A theory of revolutionary motives is concerned with proletarian interests that are basic, common, and elemental. Revolutions have a tendency to bring these elemental motives to the surface, because survival is so often at stake and because they aggregate many actors, thus putting into question what they may have in common as goals. Furthermore, because they involve the breakdown of existing institutions, people can no longer rely on habit or commonplace rubrics, and instead must elaborate, through deliberation and collective conversation, new ways of doing things based on shared motives.

The theory of revolutionary motives therefore emphasises the **practical reasoning** that inhabits the gap between compulsion and action. In revolutionary situations, proletarians reflect on what they are doing. They do not simply act instinctively. The concept of reason will no doubt sound the alarm for some readers, trained by various antihumanisms and structuralisms to see people as character-masks for impersonal forces. Many have critiqued the Marxian theory of interests as universalising a Western or post-Enlightenment philosophy of mind, and there is little doubt that certain presentations of it naturalise a limited and ultimately European psychology.⁷ But reason and “rationality” are not the same thing, and to suggest that people think about what they do is not the same thing as suggesting that

completely out of balance, when it can truly be claimed that one side has “total power” over the other, a power can be exercised over the other only insofar as the other still has the option of killing himself, of leaping out the window, or of killing the other person. This means that **in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would be no power relations at all.** Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954–1984* (Allen Lane 1997), 284, 292.

they are utility-maximising computers or vessels for transcendental faculties. Reason can be irrational by the lights of an Immanuel Kant or a Karl Popper, and when it comes to social practice, what matters is that it works, not that it's correct. In any case, capitalism is now a global phenomenon, and capitalism is, as indicated above, nothing if not a form of unfreedom that acts through reasoned choice, through a paper-thin freedom, constraining and limiting the autonomy of the exploited. Capitalism presupposes the theory of motives advanced here.

Where there is reasoning there are also ideas and though voluntarists over-emphasise the role of ideas, consciousness, and ideology, this is not to say that ideas are inconsequential, nor that there is no role whatsoever for a theory of ideology. Inasmuch as proletarians reflect on what they do, then ideas will play a role in the actions they take, since evaluating the consequences of one's actions depends upon ideas about how the world functions. This is also well described by Spinoza: "Both insofar as the mind has clear and distinct ideas, and insofar as it has confused ideas, it strives, for an indefinite duration, to persevere in its being and it is conscious of the striving it has".⁸ In other words, **contrary to the assumptions of voluntarist theory, ideology is significant inasmuch as it conditions what people do, but it has little effect on the deeper underlying motives.** The motives we are concerned with here are either givens of social reproduction or products of social structures that are unchangeable without a change of structure. They exist at a deeper level than the sort of consciousness or ideology which pedagogues and leaders aim to transform. You cannot unteach hunger.

Many will no doubt want to know why it matters that we know why people do these things. The answer is that, in any revolution, there is always the formation of a dedicated and organised mass whose motives are, in some regard, idiosyncratic, undertaken out of commitment

7. This is the view of many within the Subaltern Studies Group, in particular Dipesh Chakrabarty who, in *Rethinking Working-Class History* (Princeton University Press 1989), argues that Bengali workers' attachment to communal ties cannot be explained in terms of the ability of such ties to satisfy material needs, a Marxist mode of explanation which would project bourgeois rationality onto such workers. Rather, Bengali workers valued such cultural commitments for reasons internal to their culture. See Vivek Chibber for a strident and ultimately too narrow attempt to defend a universalist account of material interests against the Subaltern studies critique of Chakrabarty and others: *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (Verso 2013), 178–207. Chibber points out, importantly, that even arch-relativists like Chakrabarty rely on material interests as explanation in the final instance.

8. Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader*, 160.

to the cause of the revolution rather than personal well-being or the well-being of familiars. Many of the people who write and read texts such as this one, author included, will likely find themselves in this weird class of people, whose motives and desires are no doubt various and deserve study in their own right. This is a porous zone, into which and from which people pass in and out, and certainly not exclusive of other more basic motives. Some may engage in struggle for basic reasons and stay for other ones and, needless to say, **such basic motives can reappear and trump all, such as when a person, threatened with ten years in prison, decides to inform on their comrades.** Nor would we want to imply that whatever forms of altruism, libidinal passion, death drive or need for recognition motivates those who inhabit radical milieus do not exist among others as well. We talk here of distributions and primacies. But the historical evidence is clear that the vast majority of people participating in a revolution do so because of the deeper motives described above and in what follows — a desire for safety, for increased well-being, autonomy for themselves and their intimates — and will withdraw their support if they see nothing of the sort on the horizon. The problem is that **the "organised minority" takes its own motives — and its capacity for sacrifice, discipline, self-abnegation — as evidence of the structure of motivation in general, and as such will frequently turn to pedagogical or pastoral supplement in order to compel the support of the larger revolutionary mass and install in them its own motives.** As I argue in the pages that follow, this is bound to fail, and in fact sets in motion a number of counter-revolutionary processes.

We therefore need a better theory of revolutionary motives. For most of the 20th century, fatalism was supposed to provide that theory. Anton Pannekoek and Paul Mattick demonstrated how the organisations that resulted from voluntarist projects would, during non-revolutionary conjunctures, either be destroyed or integrated into capitalism.⁹ The emergence of any meaningful struggle would always seem "spontaneous" from the vantage of the pastors and the pedagogues. Since it emphasised the futility of the projects and interventions of the active minority, fatalism provided a counter to the voluntarists who

9. Both Mattick and Pannekoek owe a great deal to Rosa Luxemburg, whose account, in *The Mass Strike* and elsewhere, fuses the fatalist and voluntarist positions. Paul Mattick, 'Spontaneity and Organisation' in *Anti-Bolshevik Communism* (Merlin 1978), 117–38; Anton Pannekoek, 'Party and Class' (1936).

insisted on the crucial role of their own education or leadership. But this leaves open the question of what happens during revolutionary conjunctures. It is one thing to counsel non-intervention during quieter moments, but another thing altogether to do so during revolutionary ones, when not only the success of the revolution seems at stake, but when suffering and death are either present or imminent. As the pure distillates of the fatalist position, Monsieur Dupont, the uniplural authors of *Nihilist Communism*, recognise this problem and attempt to find something for the fatalist pro-revolutionary minority to do when it goes down. The answer: disable the voluntarists. In revolutionary conditions, the fatalist minority will be called upon to “actually go against most of the ‘revolutionary’ communist and anarchist milieu”.¹⁰ There is certainly some truth here, in that the attempt by some fraction of the revolution to seize power and begin to lead the revolution will need to be contested vigorously by a revolution within the revolution. But fatalists such as Monsieur Dupont are, in a sense, the weird twins of the voluntarists, relying on a view of the masses of ordinary proletarians as fragile, easily manipulated, diverted, or betrayed, even if capable of spontaneous revolt. Monsieur Dupont lack the courage of their convictions: if the working class is truly capable of organising itself and directing its own action on the basis of motives internal to it, then it is also capable of critically evaluating and rejecting the leadership or education offered. If one believes, as the theory of motives I will develop leads one to believe, that revolutions and the revolutions within revolutions and against counter-revolutions are produced by proletarians acting on the basis of motives internal to them, and by way of innate critical endowments, then intervention as such is no longer a problem. Indeed, one no longer needs to argue, futilely, that the dedicated minority sit on its hands; rather one can articulate the ways in which the kinds of things this minority does can either hinder or help the unfolding of the revolution. One can distinguish, ultimately, between two types of intervention: *vanguardist* and *adventurist*. The vanguardist seeks to control, lead, and shape proletarian action through pastoral and pedagogical intervention and, as such, sets in motion counter-revolution. The adventurist, however, engages in self-directed action that seeks to facilitate the conditions under which the vast majority of people will decide that going in the direction

10. Monsieur Dupont, *Nihilist Communism* (Arden 2009), 20.

of the revolution, of communism, means satisfying their materialist motivations. This may mean expropriating capitals and turning them over to people so that they can meet their needs, engaging in defence of the revolution from capitalist counter-attack, or subverting the attempt by revolutionary factions to establish leadership, or any number of other “communist measures”. The point is that the purely negative theorisation that the fatalists offer is inadequate; people will choose among positive actions, not among action or inaction. We can only evaluate positive actions on the basis of an adequate theory of motives.

The theory of motives matters, then, because it is the basis for action by those who have transcended, always partially and for the moment, materialist motives and begun to act on the basis of their commitment to the cause of reform, revolution, or struggle. Theory is always the product of history, of struggle as it is reflected on by those directly and distantly concerned. Abstracted from immediate struggles as it may be, this essay reflects the ongoing self-examination of the activist and radical milieu as it worries about its own existence and its relationship to the masses of proletarians who would be necessary for any revolution. If the pedagogues and authoritarians wildly overstate the importance of such activists, the fatalists wildly understate it. One attempts to arrogate to this group a power that it can never have, the other engages in perpetually abortive fantasies of the self-abolition of this group. Consider this essay an attempt to cut diagonally across both positions, neither arguing, fallaciously, for the utter insignificance of the active minority nor attributing to it some fictional burden of leadership.

The Materialist Conception of History

Before the interventions of Marx and Engels, nearly all radicals imagined communism or socialism as the conscious, ideologically-motivated undertaking of committed reformers and revolutionaries. The radical milieu into which the pair entered in the mid-1840s viewed the overcoming of capitalism as largely a moral and sometimes a religious project. The League of the Just, whose members joined with Marx and Engels to found the Communist League and commission the text that became the *Communist Manifesto*, had previously rallied around

the moral and religious perspectives of Wilhelm Weitling, who attempted to identify communism with the essence of Christianity.¹¹ But Weitling's eminence within the cluster of communist secret societies of the 1840s eventually weakened, partly as a result of contacts made with struggle-oriented and practical-minded English Chartists and partly due to the emergence of Marx and Engels' Communist Correspondence Committee. At the time, communism distinguished itself from "socialism" and its utopias primarily through an association with the legacy of the Jacobins and the various French insurrectionists who organised in secret during the 1830s and 1840s. Many communist groups had some degree of continuity with the followers of Gracchus Babeuf and his pre-empted uprising against the Thermidorian Directory, the goal of which was to radicalise the egalitarian revolutionary process instigated by the Jacobins and produce "community of goods and labour".¹² Babeuf and his co-conspirators held to both the pedagogical and the pastoral perspectives outlined above. Revolutionary overthrow of the Directory, they concluded, would have to grant power to a "provisional authority" that would rule until such time as the masses were capable of administering the community of goods themselves.¹³ The Babeuvians placed an enormous emphasis on "modifying the human heart by education". Part of the goal of their provisional authority would have been to allow time for the people to be educated in revolutionary "good manners" and disabused of egoism and avarice.¹⁴ Where education failed, punishment would have to suffice, and holding an anti-egalitarian opinion would be a sanctionable offence in the post-revolutionary world of the Babeuvians.¹⁵ Weitling was also both pedagogical and pastoral in his approach to the new world to be built, grounding communism in a reading of the Gospels, insisting on the need for a transitional dictatorship, and imagining a post-revolutionary world premised on "universal duty to work and consisting of a centralised economy".¹⁶

11. The best accounts are in Gareth Steadman Jones' introduction to the Penguin Edition of *The Communist Manifesto* (Penguin 2002), 39–50 and August Nimtz, *Marx and Engels: Their Contribution to the Democratic Breakthrough* (SUNY Press 2000), 27–58.

12. Most of what we know about Gracchus Babeuf and his failed insurrection comes from the memoirs of fellow insurrectionary Philippe Buonarroti, *Buonarroti's History of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality* (H. Hetherington 1836), 153.

13. *Ibid.*, 101.

14. *Ibid.*, 166, 202–4.

15. *Ibid.*, 210.

16. Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 43.

This religious and moral inheritance continued to influence the Communist League, even after Weitling's departure, evidenced by the fact that the predecessor to the *Communist Manifesto* and the first programmatic statement of the League, Engels' "Draft of the Communist Confession of Faith", was modelled on a catechism. But despite this rhetorical form, by the time they entered the league, Marx and Engels had developed both independently and together a potent theory of political action that extended the "critique of religion" of the Young Hegelians and transformed it into a critique of idealist and moralist politics altogether. In *The German Ideology*, they assert bluntly that "it is not consciousness which determines life but life which determines consciousness", rejecting any account of revolution that begins with moral education or consciousness-raising.¹⁷

"Morality, religion, metaphysics" and other "phantoms formed in the brains of man" are "sublimates of their material life process", and therefore a politics that begins with these is doomed to failure, analogised, in their preface to the book, to the actions of "a valiant fellow [who] had the idea that men were drowned in water only because they possess the *idea of gravity*".¹⁸ Historical change occurs, not as the result of various forms of "self-consciousness" as their post-Hegelian antagonists had it, but from the antagonistic "interests" that attend the division of labour and the unequal portioning out of the products of labour. Communism is only possible on the basis of these interests, and specifically, the interest-motivated action of those whom the capitalist mode of production has rendered propertyless. In opposition to the moral communisms and egalitarian political projects of their peers and predecessors, Marx and Engels declare grandly that "Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things".¹⁹

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels further ground this real movement in the class *interests* of the proletariat, interests determined by the development of "bourgeois society". I have so far avoided using the term "self-interest" (often taken as synonymous with interest as such) largely because I want it to be understood as a specific, atomised form that interest can take, one effected in particular

17. Marx, *The German Ideology* (MECW 5), 42.

18. *Ibid.*, 42, 30.

19. *Ibid.*, 57.

by the individualising, competitive relations of capitalist society. Intriguingly, Marx and Engels never speak, in the *Communist Manifesto*, of “self-interest” as a characteristic of proletarian activity. Rather, the term is reserved for the bourgeoisie, which has “pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his ‘natural superiors’ and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment.’”²⁰

We might read these famous lines as implying that **the rule of the bourgeoisie has meant the universalisation of self-interest among all members of bourgeois society, including proletarians, submerged equally in the “icy waters of egotistical calculation”**, and indeed Marx and Engels later describe the proletariat during the early stages of capitalism as an “incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by competition”. But **the centrifugal forces of competition that divide the proletariat are counterbalanced by the centralising development of industry, which gathers the dispersed proletarians and forms them into “compact bodies.”**²¹ As capitalism develops, “the various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalised, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labour.”²² In other words, **for the proletariat, class interest and individual interest are increasingly identical:**

The organisation of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier. It compels legislative recognition of the particular interests of the workers, by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself.²³

The arc of history bends toward the unification of the interests of the working class, whereas divisions among the bourgeoisie are, it would seem, less easy to overcome. Marx and Engels invert the argument about and from self-interest that one finds in Adam Smith, in which the pursuit of self-interest by individual capitalists redounds to the benefit of all. For Smith, it is the capitalist class which finds

20. Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 222.

21. *Ibid.*, 229.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, 230

self-interest and collective interest identical. But for Marx and Engels — and this is the basis of Marx’s many attempts to explain crisis and the crisis-generating aspects of capitalism — such self-interested action ultimately erodes the conditions of possibility for capitalists, “cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products.”²⁴ Here this self-undermining character of capitalism is largely about the political force of a proletarian class that capitalist development unifies but the same argument will later be used to explain how the falling rate of profit results from the profit-seeking behaviour of individual capitalists, to name just one example.

Grounded in a theory of interest-based action, the “materialist conception of history” of Marx and Engels shows little need for pedagogical or pastoral supplement. This is not to say that there is no place for organisation or the elaboration of ideas; rather, these are treated as expressions of class struggle. As they write, **“The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.”**²⁵

25. *Ibid.*, 234.

Paradoxes of Self-Interest

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels assert that **as the social division of labour develops, so too does an opposition between individual and collective interest**. From here emerges their theory of the state, based in part on the earlier works of political philosophy written by Marx, such as “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” and “On the Jewish Question”. The state, for Marx and Engels, is a usurpation of the common interest: under conditions of “contradiction between the particular and the common interests, the common interest assumes an independent form as the *state*, which is divorced from the real individual and collective interests, and at the same time as illusory community, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every family conglomeration and tribal conglomeration — such as flesh and blood, language, division of labour on a larger scale, and other interests.”²⁶ The state exists as a

26. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 52.

false representation of common interest because it allows for the universalisation of the particular interests of the ruling class. The proletariat, however, is unique among classes in that its particular interests really are universal, since there is no way for it to emancipate itself without abolishing classes and thereby itself. The reasons Marx and Engels advance for this special proletarian destiny are multiple: for one, as we've seen, historical experience has brought proletarians together in workplaces where the divisions between them are levelled (as deskilling progresses, so too is there a universalisation of experience, ability, and consequently interest). Marx also seems to suggest, in his early writings on right and the state, that proletarian struggles exhibit a "universal character" inasmuch as they focus on forms of "universal suffering" and needs shared by all humans (such as the need for food and shelter): the wrong that the proletariat suffers therefore is not "a particular wrong" but "wrong in general".²⁷ In other words, proletarian struggles are rooted in the basic and materialist motives described above. There is also, finally, a simple numerical argument: ruling classes are, by definition, minorities. As they write in the *Manifesto*, "All previous historical movements were movements of minorities or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority".²⁸ A revolution in the interest of the "immense majority" can institute a new class rule only by betraying its *raison d'être*; it must abolish classes.

Even though most Marxists will off-handedly speak of class interests, few have attempted to elaborate on or develop any theory of interests, instead turning to confused concepts such as "consciousness" or "ideology" or black boxing the subjects of class struggle altogether. Those who have attempted to develop the theory, such as the writers associated with Analytical Marxism have frequently come to conclusions rather markedly different than Marx and Engels, insisting that the division between individual and collective interest is far more tenacious than originally thought. While most of so-called Western Marxism pursued different themes, the writers willing to investigate the theory of interest were those who mostly rejected core tenets of Marx's thought (especially his value theory) and displayed some

27. Karl Marx, 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' in *Early Writings* (1992), 256.

28. Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 232.

sympathy for the methodologies if not the motives of neoclassical economics, game theory in particular.²⁹ The key text for left-wing and Marxist game theory is probably Mancur Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action*. Though Olson is by no means a Marxist, and in fact elaborates his theory as a critique of Marx's conclusions, the problems that he poses and the conclusions he reaches strongly influence later Marxist investigations of the problem of class interest. Arguing against thinkers such as C. Wright Mills who, noting the relative lack of class struggle around them, concluded that people must not be aware of or capable of acting on their class interests, Olson claims instead that Marx was right to conclude that people are motivated by their interests but wrong to think that this will lead to collective action. "Class oriented action will not occur", Olson writes bluntly, "if the individuals that make up a class act rationally".³⁰ This is because, for Olson, group interests and individual interests diverge in cases where the group is sufficiently large or heterogeneous. Unlike the results of most individual actions (seeking out a better job, for example), actions by groups in pursuit of class interests produce, in most cases, benefits that accrue to all members of the class, whether or not those members participate in group action (think, here, of a campaign to raise the minimum wage or reduce taxes). There is thus a free-rider problem in the case of such class benefits. If individuals truly are motivated by self-interest alone, then they will conclude that it is better for them simply to take whatever benefits accrue to them from the actions of others rather than to suffer the costs of action themselves. The larger the group, Olson argues, the more likely the individual will reason thus, since in the cases of large groups the added benefit of any individual contribution to the group effort is negligible. What does it matter if I, or any one person, goes to the protest, attends the meeting, donates to the strike fund? When the group actions involve thousands or tens of thousands of people, the answer is: very little. Olson defines the matter in mathematically precise terms: if individuals will only find it rational to contribute to group efforts where the benefits from their contribution are greater than their costs, then this means that individuals will

29. Though as we will see, this literature depends upon a number of false assumptions and needless methodological reductions, it deserves serious readers, not least of all for its willingness to investigate questions others had been scared away from by antihumanist dogmatism.

30. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Harvard University Press 1971), 105.

participate only when the fraction of the group benefit they receive is larger than the ratio of their costs to total group benefits. As groups increase in size, such a criterion becomes much more difficult to meet, except in cases where very minimal costs produce very large benefits.³¹ Otherwise, the effects of any extra individual effort will be too small to encourage participation. Whereas Marx thought optimising behaviour on the part of capitalists would lead to suboptimal outcomes for the capitalist class, Olson extends such a view to *all classes*.

As a left-wing institutionalist who worked for a period in the Johnson administration, Olson was committed to finding a rational basis for such things as labour unions and the provision of public goods by a welfarist state. Olson's treatment of the problem of collective action leads him to conclude that large collectives as well as states need mechanisms to compel individuals to act in the collective interest, lest "suboptimal" conditions result. Since the dilemmas of collective action he describes will apply to large groups of capitalists as well as large groups of workers, he argues for the necessity of a state's right to tax (in order to pay for public goods that redound to the benefit of capitalists but which they would not individually pay for, as rational profit-maximisers) as well as the necessity of the closed shop, compulsory union dues, and legal enforcement of strikes, without which, in his argument, no large union can survive. Though he is a rationalist, and relies on a rather blunt, utilitarian view of human action, this leads him to declare *the inevitability of the pastoral supplement* if social reform is desired. (Indeed, he suggests that it is Trotsky and Lenin, rather than Marx, who correctly perceive the consequences of self-interested and rational action and develop a coherent theory therefrom).³² With Olson, we see an uneasy alliance between the rationalist approach, on the one hand, and the authoritarian or pedagogical approach on the other; *if one concludes that rational, self-interested actors can only produce suboptimal outcomes — as Marx concluded of the bourgeoisie but not the proletariat — then one might decide, despite the rationalist anthropology, that a moral, ideological or authoritarian supplement is still necessary for social change*. Though Olson figures social change along left-liberal and reformist lines, rather than revolutionary ones, many Marxists who attempt to elaborate on the Marxian

31. Ibid., 22–43.

32. Ibid., 106.

theory of interests in the wake of Olson's intervention will derive rather similar conclusions.

While most of Olson's Marxist interlocutors hail from the "Analytic Marxist" camp, the most interesting response may be that of Claus Offe and Helmut Wiesenthal, who come to Olson from the Frankfurt School and Jurgen Habermas rather than John Nash and the RAND corporation. Olson actually offers two separate, though related, reasons why individual and collective interests diverge. *Before a collective can even begin to act in an effective way, and before individuals can determine their level of participation, there must be an agreement about common objectives. Therefore, collective action involves fixed "costs of organisation" — investments of time and other resources — that must precede any action and any benefits*.³³

These are *separate from the costs of action* itself, and as groups become more internally heterogeneous (something that is related to but not necessarily dependent on size) the costs of organisation will rise. This provides a second reason why many attempts at collective action fail, or never occur at all, and why the centralisation of power within collective institutions is necessary, since *such institutions have the ability to unilaterally decide on goals and suspend interminable deliberations about what goals should be pursued*.

In their text, "Two Logics of Collective Action", Offe and Wiesenthal expand on this second problem — the heterogeneity problem — and suggest that it is the real limit to proletarian action.³⁴ Olson does not differentiate between groups in terms of class, and his mathematical treatment of the "logic of collective action" provides as its fundamental model a scenario where individual capitalist firms, competing with each other and attempting to maximise profit, must decide whether to restrict output and therefore increase price or expand output and decrease price. Offe and Wiesenthal suggest that this model is inapposite to the situation workers face and that *there is not a single logic of collective action, but rather two logics, a capitalist logic and a proletarian one*. Whereas capitalists can translate all of their desires into money terms, needing nothing more than to find the optima of a production function, *proletarian desires are heterogeneous* (some workers prioritise better pay, others prioritise conditions, others still

33. Ibid., 47.

34. Claus Offe and Helmut Wiesenthal, 'Two Logics of Collective Action: Theoretical Notes on Social Class and Organizational Form' in *Political Power and Social Theory* vol. 1 (JAI Press 1980), 67–115.

more flexible schedules, childcare, health insurance, pensions). Despite the insuperable nature of inter-capitalist competition, firms will find it easier to coordinate and decide on a unitary course of action through business associations because of their singleness of purpose: profit. Workers, on the other hand, will face very high costs of organisation. Though they acknowledge that the problem of size discussed by Olson affects proletarian organisations, such that union strength follows an “inverse U-curve”, reaching a maximum at a certain size and then falling after that, they also insist that proletarian and bourgeois organisations face entirely different dilemmas: because of the heterogeneity of individual interests, proletarian organisations must deal with problems that can’t be attributed to size alone. Regardless of their differences, Offe and Wiesenenthal agree with Olson that effective proletarian class struggle cannot come about on the basis of interest-based action: “only to the extent that associations of the relatively powerless succeed in the formation of a collective identity, according to the standards of which these costs of organisation are subjectively deflated, can they hope to change the original power relation”.³⁵ Offe and Wiesenenthal therefore add to Olson’s pastoral solution a pedagogical, subjectivising one: one must educate workers to understand the benefits of acting in the name of the collective good.

35. Ibid., 78.

The structures of collective action described above are, as many will recognise, forms of the *prisoner’s dilemma*, which is in many regards the primary example for social science of a situation where rational, self-interested action produces outcomes that are inferior for everyone. To review: in the prisoner’s dilemma, two conspirators, arrested by the authorities, are offered their freedom if they agree to inform on their partner (to “defect”, in the language of the game). If one defects and the other cooperates, the defector will be set free and the cooperator will serve 5 years. If both defect, they will both serve 3 years. If both cooperate, they will serve 1 year. The best outcome, from the perspective of the *class of prisoners*, is mutual cooperation. The best outcome is not the rational outcome, however, if the prisoners individually evaluate their chances in the face of the likely actions of the other. Regardless of what the other does, their “best reply” as individuals is to defect, and thus mutual defection is an “equilibrium” point of the scenario. This is in some ways the model for the

profit-lowering effects of capitalist development Marx describes, the suboptimal outcomes of Olson’s unionists, and many other rational irrationalities besides. What the game presumes, however, is that there is no trust between the players, nor communication, nor any awareness of the history of play. It is a one-off event where both players are fully individuated within the solitary confinement of a depthless carceral reason. In scenarios where these relational and temporal assumptions are relaxed, the prisoner’s dilemma can become an *assurance game*—that is, a game where mutual cooperation is an equilibrium point. For Marx and for many Marxists, proletarian action was basically an assurance game, an iterative prisoner’s dilemma which, played enough times and under certain conditions, led to a co-operative equilibrium point. In other words, even if we assume entirely self-interested, rational proletarians, mutual cooperation will be the best result, given that they will find themselves within an environment and structure conducive to cooperation. Collective and individual interests merge.

However, as Olson and Offe and Wiesenenthal demonstrate, when one moves from a bilateral to an n-sided situation, in which one confronts thousands or even millions of actors, assurance is a much more complicated matter. The effects of communication between the parties as well as the weight of history, in cases where past “play” is part of the information available to present players, creates essentially incalculable complexities. Here, organisations and political leaders (“political entrepreneurs” as they are called, chillingly, by some of Olson’s readers) leap into the breach, solving the communicative and deliberative problems of thousand-sided exchanges through unilateral action and centralised communication, transforming the prisoner’s dilemma environment through sanctions and threats of sanction that then make cooperation rational. Organisations then become second-order agents confronting second-order social dilemmas, their ability to act conditioned by the size of their membership but also its militancy. Offe and Wiesenenthal draw rather gloomy conclusions from these second-order effects, showing how proletarian organisations are forced into contradictory behaviour as a result of the structures in which they find themselves: on the one hand, they must demonstrate their *potential* to harm the class of capitalists through the use of the strike weapon, which requires a highly active membership; on the other

hand, in order to wrest concessions from the capitalist class they must use the strike weapon sparingly, and this requires a disciplined membership, one willing to fall in line with leadership. But such discipline will ultimately produce disaffected and passive unionists, unable to mobilise for strike when necessary. Adam Przeworski, in his use of game theory to treat class organisations, confronts a similar dilemma by way of different premises. In the essays included in *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, one of the most thoroughgoing and explicit attempts to create a mathematically rigorous Marxian game theory, Przeworski argues that, if the goal of class organisations is to conquer electoral power (as was the case for social democracy) then they will need to maximise their membership in order to achieve this aim.³⁶ But in almost all countries, the proletarian vote was never large enough for proletarian parties to conquer electoral power on their own, unless they formed coalitions with other parties and other class fractions. Therefore, proletarian parties were forced to either forsake the conquest of electoral power or seek out participants from other classes, where pursuit of the latter would require weakening the class program of the party. But this weakening would, in turn, dissolve proletarian identification with the party, and undermine the basis of proletarian belonging as such, leading proletarians to seek out other parties who might represent their interests on the basis of other forms of identification: Catholicism, or whiteness, for example. The result was failure either way. Whereas Mancur Olson thought that organisational or institutional agency might emend the problems caused by individual rationality and choice, Offe and Wiesenenthal and Przeworski insist that those problems make themselves felt as constraints upon the action of organisations as well. The pedagogical and authoritarian supplements might be necessary to see any results at all, but they are incapable of fully solving the problem. As we will see, it is in fact much worse than that, and these supplements not only fail but in fact exacerbate the problem.

36. Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge University Press 1985), 99–128.

IS IT REASONABLE TO REVOLT?

Both Przeworski's *Capitalism and Social Democracy* and Offe and Wiesenenthal's "Two Logics of Collective Action" are crucial sources for

the important essay on the workers' movement, "A History of Separation", written by the Endnotes collective and published in their fourth issue.³⁷ There, the authors tell the story of a workers' movement continuously hobbled by the opposition between individual and collective interests. For Endnotes the question of class identity revolves around the problem of interest. In their view, the formation of a working-class "identity" was a way for the workers' movement to bridge, however shakily, the gap between the serial and collective interests. This involved the sort of pedagogical and moral (as well as pastoral) solutions described above. Collective interest was, therefore, mostly a construct: "Insofar as they made sacrifices in the name of the labour movement, workers generally were not acting in their immediate interest. To say that they affirmed a shared identity is to say that the movement succeeded in convincing workers to suspend their interests as isolated sellers in a competitive labour market, and, instead to act out of a *commitment* to the collective project of the labour movement". This is because, **contrary to the predictions of Marx and Engels described above, the deskilling dynamic of the factory system did not effectively level the differences between proletarian factions; fragmenting forces at work in labour markets, commodity markets, and neighbourhoods nullified whatever fragile unity might have emerged in the workplace, and even there difference among workers according to skill, race, and gender remained far more tenacious than expected.** Whatever weak, ideological and tentative unity did exist had to be "cobbled together" out of local organisations, and enforced by disciplinary structures that definitionally excluded proletarians who did not conform to the working-class norms (because they were drunks, or black, or shirkers.)

Endnotes is clear that this identity wasn't unilaterally "imposed" by working-class leaders, as some readings of Olson and some variants of the pastoral solution might imagine:

To the extent that workers were willing to believe that having solidarity was morally necessary, they were able to realise — partially and fitfully — the slogan **"an injury to one is an injury to all"**. The phrase never described a preexisting truth about the working class; it was, instead, an ethical injunction.

37. Endnotes, 'A History of Separation' *Endnotes 4* (2015).

But insofar as workers accepted this injunction, their interests as *individuals* began to change: those interests were simplified, narrowed or even wholly redefined, but also partially fulfilled. By this means, competition between workers was muted, but only for as long as the shared ethic and identity could be maintained.³⁸ 38. Ibid., 100.

Not an imposition, then, but a process of re-education and belief in which many workers willingly participated, offering their sacrifice and commitment, the effect of which was to establish in some limited manner a real rather than merely ideological bridge between individual and collective interest. For many of the writers discussed above, transformation of desire through education or compulsion is nothing less than the very basis of any radical transformation of society, the *sine qua non* of both reform and (for those who think it possible), revolution. Offe and Wessenthal or Przeworski may, as Marxists, lament the untenability of Marx's view of proletarians interest, individual and collective at once, and only with a certain chagrin accept the conclusions they reach, that self-interested action by proletarians will scuttle any attempt at collective action, all things being equal, but they suggest that this is simply what we have to work with, and if we seek a different world then we must be clear about what such a search entails. There is no possibility of serial interests converging with collective interest except through the intervention of educators, leaders, or institutions.

Given their reliance on these sources, a reader may wonder whether or not Endnotes is also pessimistic in this way, and similarly resigned to the necessity of the pedagogical or pastoral approach. Those of us familiar with their work, and in particular with the positions taken in the two companion pieces to "A History of Separation" — "The Holding Pattern" and "Spontaneity, Mediation, Rupture" — will know that they are actually considerably more optimistic about self-organisation than the writers referenced above. Toward the end of "A History of Separation", they acknowledge a different perspective on the unfolding of individual and collective interest, describing how, in opposition to the forgeries and falsifications of the collective worker, there may emerge a "real unity of the class... forged in self-organised struggle, when workers overcome their atomisation by creatively

constructing a new basis for collective activity".³⁹

Elsewhere, Endnotes describes this self-organisation as a cooperative solution to the prisoner's dilemma scenarios described in Olson and elsewhere, writing that "the seemingly indissoluble problem of struggle is finally solved only by struggle itself. Computationally, this solution can be described as the possible result of an iterated prisoners' dilemma".⁴⁰ As long as capitalism persists, whatever unifications are produced as a result of struggles will be fragile, transitory. In a communist revolution, however, proletarians produce a "real unification" that is at the same time an abolition of their status as proletarians, since they must become "the beyond of this society by relating to one another, materially, outside of the terms of the class relation".⁴¹ One definition of a classless society is one in which there is no longer an opposition between individual and collective interest (which is not to imply that interests never come into conflict). One of the main motivations of this essay is to further theorise the passage from the situation described in most of "A History of Separation" to the one hinted at in "Spontaneity, Mediation, Rupture".

Part of our task must be to think through the many different forms in which class struggle appears. When applied to the entire class of proletarians, the Wobbly maxim "an injury to one is an injury to all" indeed must remain mere ethical attitude, a transformation of Kant's categorical imperative into the indicative mood, describing an idealised condition of maximum solidarity and universal experience. But the phrase also emerges, I think, as an extrapolation from struggles where the "one" and the "all" do converge, and where the strength and safety of numbers alone is enough to ensure collective action, independent of moral imperative. This convergence depends partly on the size of the group concerned: it occurs with struggles on the scale of the enterprise or neighbourhood, rather than industrial sector or province, because as Olson and others have demonstrated, at such scales the consequences of one's action or inaction are immediately apparent. There is, also, perhaps more importantly the question of the type of struggle under consideration. In many conditions, people are attacked as a group rather than as individuals. If an employer threatens uniform reduction in wages, workers will find it

39. Ibid., 165.

40. Endnotes, 'Spontaneity, Mediation, Rupture' *Endnotes 3* (2010).

41. Endnotes, 'The Holding Pattern' *Endnotes 3* (2010).

advantageous to resist together, since they are strongest that way. In this case, interests converge because of the defensive nature of the struggle and the collectivising character of the attack. Even in conditions where the attack abstracts from the group as a whole, singling out particular individuals, responding en masse may be the best response. Workers may conclude it's in their advantage to oppose the layoff of five of their fellow workers if they think it possible that a subsequent round of layoffs will target them (this indirect self-interest, in which one recognises one's dependence on the well-being of the other, is often called "enlightened self-interest"). In such a case, injury to the other promises the threat of injury to the self, and thus the maxim holds true beyond whatever moral power it may have. In the context of the workers' movement more generally, collective action was not always and only a matter of sacrifice and commitment; in many cases, there were practical and material benefits to joining the union or class party. As Endnotes indicates, the moral redefinition of interests allowed for their "partial" fulfilment. The paradox of the prisoner's dilemma is that the "irrational", morality-based or fanatical actions of some can change the nature of the interaction such that, for subsequent participants, cooperation appears as a real solution, one that can be arrived at through self-interested calculation alone. For those first dozen or so people, organising the union or the political organisation might have been a matter of sacrifice and political passion entirely, with the risks outweighing whatever meagre benefits they would see, but once the organisation has been formed, joining it may be the most logical choice of all, a clear pathway to higher wages and better working conditions.

None of this contradicts the main point of Endnotes' history, which is that the trajectory of capitalist development did more to atomise and fragment proletarians than it did to unify them. As we have seen, though, this history and the problems it introduces continues to lead many to conclude that neither reform nor revolution can occur independent of pastoral and pedagogical supplement. If, by contrast, we imagine revolution as the unfolding of proletarian self-organisation, as a solution to the problem of collective action that emerges as a consequence of struggle itself, then it's necessary to specify as clearly as possible the determinants that lead to this overcoming or, alternately, to the opposition of serial and collective interest. Some

BwO ideas !

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of these determinants have already been mentioned: the size of the collective involved and its homogeneity or heterogeneity; whether the struggle is defensive or offensive, concerned with survival or increased well-being; whether the threat is individualising or collectivising. Struggles have different temporalities, too: they can be immediate or open-ended; focused on short-term or long-term goals; they can feature smooth, gradual change or sudden discontinuities. The formal models discussed above all assume a type of class struggle mediated by national trade unions or class parties, and oriented toward gradual improvements in proletarian welfare through bilateral negotiations. But this is only one of the many forms proletarian struggle can take, and the dilemmas of collective action would appear very different if these authors had taken a riot, a prison revolt, or guerrilla warfare as their foundational example.

Formal, game-theoretic analysis gravitates toward the trade union model, in part, because it can be treated with the techniques of neoclassical economics. Many of the models of rational, interest-based action that are available essentially assume, by treating choices as purchases, that interest is more or less monetary and every need can be given a price, with costs and benefits evaluated in directly monetary terms. This is where, despite the restriction of their own models to the social democratic scenario, Offe and Wieselthaler offer an important criticism of the literature on the logic of collective action, arguing that such reductions conflate a proletarian logic of collective action with a bourgeois one. For capitalists, interest is more or less directly correlated with *interest rate*; capitalists seek to maximise returns on investment, and the interest rate measures the guarantees capitalists would need to decide to invest in a particular endeavor, given the risks. To be sure, inasmuch as proletarians are market-dependent, and some large portion (but not all) of their needs accessible only through money, they also participate in optimising logics. The organisation of capitalist society seeks to monetise and quantify proletarian interest as much as possible, and this is one way to understand what the wage is, a machine for disciplining and conditioning proletarian reason such that it remains congruent with the requirements of capitalist reproduction. The dispiriting conclusions of Mancur Olson and Adam Przeworski result, in part, from the narrow definition of interest with which they begin, and from their assumption

that the work of subsuming proletarian need under money has been completed.

A fine example of the limits that these assumptions introduce is Przeworski's attempt, with Michael Wallerstein, to model class struggle as a pair of simultaneous equations for labour and capital, where labour chooses the wage rate (by its degree of militancy) and capital determines the rate of investment (by virtue of its property rights).⁴²

Since the wage rate affects profit, and the degree of investment affects wages, each actor is forced to maximise an equation (for wages and consumable revenue, respectively) where they control one key variable and their antagonist controls the other. While workers in this scenario are naturally inclined to increase militancy as much as possible and therefore increase their consumption, doing so will provoke disinvestment, and thus, counter-productively, lower future wages. Capitalists, for their part, must reinvest a large enough share of their returns lest they provoke a degree of militancy which will lower the rate of profit.

In such a scenario, the rational strategies that the actors will pursue depend not only upon the productivity of capital but also the degree of certainty that they hold about the future. If both sides are reasonably certain that the present balance of militancy and investment will hold far into the future, then the interdependence of the actors will have a moderating influence, introducing negative feedback that counteracts any increase in militancy or disinvestment. The main thrust of this argument is to show that workers will never choose to move in the direction of total expropriation and seizure of the whole sum of the social product, because any steps in that direction will produce capital flight that will immediately lower workers' future consumption. As a critique of socialisms that imagine a gradual process of socialisation mediated by trade unions and workers' parties, this scenario is absolutely correct, and grasps a key aspect of the problem for such attempts to maximise workers' welfare: their dependence upon a course of accumulation control over which lies entirely in the hands of capitalists. The social democratic project finds itself confronted with an uncrossable "valley of transition", in which deteriorating economic fundamentals make any passage toward eventual improvements impossible if undertaken

42. Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, 151–204; 'Workers' Welfare and the Socialization of Capital' in Michael Taylor, ed., *Rationality and Revolution: Studies in Marxism and Social Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1988).

i need to reflect on this
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on a slow, step-by-step basis. As Offe and Wiesensthal themselves note, dependence upon the rate of investment will mean that workers' organisation must be as concerned about the health of capitalists as they must be about workers' welfare.

Przeworski and Wallerstein arrive at their conclusions in large part because of the narrowness of their assumptions, excluding all sorts of revolutionary projects and motivations that don't fit the neo-classical lineaments of their model. For instance, it is not at all clear that we can model the strategic choices of proletarians in terms of an attempt to maximise future value. Proletarian uncertainty is here defined explicitly as a "discount rate" — that is, an *interest rate*. Workers and capitalists discount (or devalue) future revenue relative to present revenue according to their sense of how likely present arrangements are to continue on the same footing. Not only does this form of reasoning assume the translatability of proletarian needs into money terms pure and simple, but it also requires a prospective, future-oriented, and mathematical rationality. To be sure, most people who live in capitalism understand that money which is not spent but invested grows in value, and capitalism offers the working class options for such investment in the form of pensions, real estate equity, mutual funds and the like, but Przeworski and Wallerstein are imagining a fairly elaborate mathematical reasoning, one based on an actor peering far into the future. Given the inherent complexity and difficulty of proletarian life, these do not seem reasonable assumptions about the strategies proletarians might pursue, even if we agreed to limit welfare to money alone. Notably, however, Przeworski and Wallerstein do not, however, imagine these strategies as pursued by individual proletarians but rather by class organisations: the examples the writers give are of compromises and strategies such as the Matignon agreement signed by Léon Blum's Popular Front government or the pegging of wages to prices by US trade unions and employers in the 1950s and 1960s. In such cases, one can expect highly future-oriented, mathematically sophisticated reasoning by strategic actors, but this is to assume class struggle will proceed along a technocratic path dominated by class institutions. The writers therefore exclude from consideration any instance where revolution unfolds as the result of the self-organised activity by proletarians who respond to local conditions and immediate objectives and take actions that

are, as often as not, opposed by the various class organisations that would represent them and their interests. Nearly all revolutions unfold, at least initially, in this way, as a fragmented field of actions both uncoordinated and contradictory. We see therefore how formal, mathematical representation, in theory, of class interests by writers like Przeworski and Wallerstein bears some relationship to the substitutionist representation of those interests in practice, by parties and trade unions. In both cases, **the heterogeneity of proletarian need must be doused in the universal solvent of money**, and where proletarian reason might lead to dangerous and unreasonable conclusions, such as increased militancy, a moderating form of highly prospective and formal rationality must be asserted. Przeworski and Wallerstein state their assumptions about the rational conclusions of proletarian actors as follows: “workers consent to the perpetuation of profit as an institution in exchange for the prospect of improving their material well-being in the future. In terms of such a compromise capitalists retain the capacity to withhold a part of the product because the profit they appropriate is expected by workers to be saved, invested, transformed into productive potential, and partly redistributed as gains to workers”.⁴³ **The voice we hear in such a passage is clearly not the interests of workers as they are, as they might present themselves to us, but the interests of workers as ventriloquised, as represented by class organisations.**

43. Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, 180.

BEYOND SELF-INTEREST

What, then, can we say about motives, self-interest, and rationality, if models such as these fail? Though not ultimately usable for the purposes of our investigation, recent work within game theory has attempted to use its techniques while abandoning some of its more untenable assumptions about human motivation. Samuel Bowles, for example, has attempted to develop game theoretic models independently of what he describes as the “Walrasian” paradigm, where “individuals choose actions based on the far-sighted evaluations of their consequences” in accord with “preferences that are self-regarding and exogenously determined”.⁴⁴ Bowles offers a much looser sense of motivated action and a very different kind of rationality than, for

instance, Przeworski.⁴⁵ In his models, “individuals intentionally pursue their objectives, but they do this more often by drawing on a limited repertoire of behavioural responses to past experience than by engaging in the cognitively demanding forward-looking optimising processes assumed by the Walrasian approach and by much of classical game theory”.⁴⁶ In other words, the version of game theory that Bowles employs— which he calls *evolutionary game theory*— “assumes that people act with limited information about the consequences of their actions, and that they update their beliefs by trial-and-error methods using local knowledge based on their own and others recent past experience”.⁴⁷ Rather than simply trying to find equilibrium states, and imagining that society conforms to the arrangements at such points, the evolutionary approach stresses the importance of the *order of play* and the temporal sequence leading to such equilibria. Bowles emphasises out-of-equilibrium dynamics and the importance of understanding the steps that lead to any stable point. History matters, in other words, not only as knowledge that actors draw upon in making their decisions (unlike the ahistorical, purely rational actions of the prisoners in a prisoner’s dilemma game) but also as structure, as the set of past outcomes that, in persisting, condition present action. Actions are “path-dependent”. Equilibria may exist but be “evolutionarily irrelevant”— that is, not attainable by any of the paths available to actors. The relevance of this line of thinking to an account of revolutionary transformation is clear. The old, Marxist critique of “utopian socialism” can be rewritten in evolutionary terms. That a utopia is imaginable, and that it would be a workable arrangement of human affairs means nothing if one cannot demonstrate how it might result from the conflicts and motivated actions in the here and now, from the “real movement” of history.

The evolutionary approach to game theory began with early attempts to explain the cooperative behaviour displayed by humans and animals. Since the time of Darwin, many biologists had assumed that cooperation observed in nature had to do with the perpetuation of the genetic material which coded for it.⁴⁸ Natural selection would cultivate

44. Samuel Bowles, *Microeconomics: Behavior, Institutions, and Evolution* (Princeton University Press 2004), 8.

45. We might call this reason, in the sense that involves if-then reasoning, and reserve the term rationality for the more restrictive conceptualisation of Przeworski and others.

46. Bowles, *Microeconomics*, 10.

47. *Ibid.*, 11.

the expression of altruistic “genes” in cases where such behaviour helped to preserve closely-related kin and therefore, by extension, the genetic material that codes for it. And yet, numerous examples of altruistic behaviour cannot be made sense of by kinship theory: how to explain cooperation between species, or cooperation between individuals who share too little genetic material for kinship benefits? The prisoner’s dilemma scenario establishes a high hurdle for such explanation, since cooperation must benefit not only the group (as it most obviously will) but the individuals displaying cooperative behaviour. The seminal breakthrough was the publication by Robert Axelrod and William Hamilton of “The Evolution of Cooperation” which met the challenges of the prisoner’s dilemma directly by establishing the conditions for the “initiation of cooperation from a previously asocial state”.⁴⁹ Axelrod and Hamilton investigate the “iterative prisoner’s dilemma” which Endnotes refers to, examining how through a series of encounters a cooperative strategy might emerge and prevail. In such cases, the best strategy is neither “always defect” nor “always cooperate” but rather “Tit for Tat”, where the player cooperates on the first turn and then mirrors the other player’s previous move on every other turn. In the simulations that Axelrod and Hamilton ran, Tit for Tat not only scored better than other strategies but, in games where the distribution of strategies in a particular round was tied to the payoffs for those strategies in the previous round — i.e., where the number of players using Tit for Tat was proportional to the total payoff for such players — Tit for Tat eventually went to “fixation”, meaning every player was using Tit for Tat and thus every player was cooperating all the time. This is a measure of the “robustness” of the strategy, or how easily it spreads. In addition to “robustness”, Axelrod and Hamilton add two other measures necessary to determine the probable success of a strategy: “stability” and “initial viability”. Tit for Tat is stable because the emergence of players using another strategy will not displace it as the dominant strategy. Initial viability is a bit more complicated. Tit for Tat can take over whenever there is a significant clustering of people willing to employ the scenario. In an evolutionary scenario, this can happen with kinship effects, but Bowles and Gintis provide another explanation for such initial viability among humans. Noting that bands of early

48. R. Axelrod and W. D. Hamilton, ‘The Evolution of Cooperation’ *Science* vol. 211 no. 4489 (1981): 1391.

49. Ibid.

humans were probably too large for such kinship effects to establish initial viability, they propose, instead, that intense inter-band violence and competition for resources created a situation in which those groups which had a high number of altruists (people willing to risk suffering and death for their group) would fare better on the field of battle, and thus their genetic material would be conserved. Whether true or not, the natural historical irony here is impressive. Given the violent crises from which revolutions emerge, we may want to hold in mind the idea that altruistic human behaviour arose as a consequence of inter-group violence.

Tit for Tat is an example of what is called “reciprocal altruism”, which means that other-regarding behaviour is ultimately compatible with self-interest and self-preservation, since the results for the individual are good in the long run. In other words, Tit for Tat does not require humans to be innately altruistic. This is probably how Marx and Engels conceived of not only the class interests of the proletariat but also a communism in which “the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all”. Bowles and Gintis, however, find examples of “other-regarding” and altruistic behaviour far beyond the reciprocal case. In a survey of far-ranging studies undertaken with people in numerous cultural contexts, Bowles and Gintis find that people act with an eye to the benefit of others even when there’s no chance that such action will ultimately benefit them. People generally cooperate in the prisoner’s dilemma, even when it’s a one-off game and they’ll never encounter their partner again. Furthermore, people seem not only to value the well-being of others (beyond family and kin) but also display a distaste for inequality and unfairness: they will give up something to punish those who exploit others and they appear to value this punishment for its own sake and not just its ability to ultimately improve their lot through indirect effects. Strictly egoistic behaviour seems to be largely an artefact of certain situations and relations. In an n-dimensional version of the prisoner’s dilemma — called the public goods game — people conform to the Olson scenario eventually, over time, as a small number of defectors eventually lead people to conclude that cooperation means they are simply being exploited. This helps us understand how the self-interested behaviour we observe in capitalism is a product of wage and market and the individualising structure of modern life, rather than the other way around.

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None of this implies that people sacrifice themselves body and soul to the common good; the well-being of others and equality are values in and of themselves, but by and large people are only willing to give up a certain amount for such principles. If given a magic wand with which they could heal a terminally ill stranger, few people would not do so, if their only cost was the time it took to wave the wand in the air and repeat some magic words. This alone shows that people are not indifferent to the suffering of others. But now, imagine what happens if we increase the cost for the altruist: use of the wand now requires some sacrifice. One can cure the stranger but only if one agrees to go a week without visiting one's lover, to spend a few hours filling out paperwork, or drink tea rather than coffee for the rest of the month. The costs most people are willing to assume in such a situation are not zero, it seems safe to say, but they are also probably not very high. The experiments Bowles and Gintis cite and construct, we should note, involve relatively low stakes. The point for us is that **there are situations, revolutionary situations in particular, in which "social" rather "selfish" preferences, can flourish, but there are also situations which crush them.** Furthermore, the criteria that evolutionary game theory hands down—robustness, stability, initial viability—are a good shorthand for the conditions which communist practices will have to satisfy. They must emerge, they must flourish, and they must repel more or less all subsequent attempts to repel them. Communism would be a situation in which the opposition between social and selfish preference has been undone, where the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. We need not have anything to say about human genetic evolution, of course, nor should we accept the idea that communism relies on the behavioural characteristics of individuals rather than the practices that emerge between them. The evolutionary approach succeeds by thinking the problem of change, but along with the Walrasian paradigm there is still a focus on the micro-economic, on iterative, dyadic encounters, that may not serve to capture the complex, many-sided unfolding of motive and determination in revolutionary situations that involve both individual and collective decision making. Nonetheless, we can summarise the value of the approach of Bowles and others: its **emphasis on equilibrium state as destination rather than origin and its willingness to think through the problems of path-dependency; its elaboration of the**

criteria of robustness, stability, and initial viability; its reminder that egoism and altruism are, to some degree, the results of social structure rather than expressions of human essence and, in any case, only in opposition within certain constraints; and finally, its reminder that group size matters, especially for producing conditions of reciprocity.

TOWARD A THEORY OF REVOLUTIONARY MOTIVES

We now have in place a number of key ingredients for a theory of revolutionary motives. Motives are, let's recall, different from beliefs and ideas, and cannot be subsumed by a theory of ideology, even where such a theory, as in Althusser, sees ideology as the product of particular material institutions and their power to compel action. Motives emanate from underlying needs and desires, and while in the long-term these may be conditioned, formed or generated by social structure, the capitalist institutions cannot compel behaviour through a change of motives. Rather, they must act through a modification of beliefs or ideas about how such motives must be realised. Two proletarians with the same motives, for example, may behave differently for the simple reason that they have different beliefs about the consequences of their actions. The pastoral and pedagogical approaches to revolution often confuse motives with ideology, and think that the former can be educated or transformed in the same manner as the latter. But it is very difficult to educate people's most fundamental desires. One cannot easily educate away, for instance, one's desire to be fed, housed, clothed. A revolutionary theory must work with people's motives, with desires as they are. Nonetheless, a theory of motives does not imply that revolutionary action is reflexive and instinctual, a blind expression of immutable necessity. We should reject what E. P. Thompson called the "spasmodic" view of human action, in which collective action is a "simple response to economic stimuli" and "compulsive, rather than self-conscious or self-activating".⁵⁰

Motives manifest as tendency, on average and in the long-run, and since the consequences of action are unclear, motives unfold through forms of deliberation, reflection and collective discussion. The convergence of proletarian motives (not to mention the motives of other classes) is never a given, despite sometimes

50. E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century' *Past & Present* vol. 50 no. 1 (1971), 76.

optimistic accounts. In certain situations, individual interests oppose collective interests, not because of an inherent egoism but because of the atomising, competition-inducing character of the wage relation, the money-form, and the fragmentation of the labour process and social reproduction. Capitalist society is structured so as to inhibit the formation of collective interests at any sort of scale. Whether or not such a collectivity emerges has to do with a number of factors, as noted previously. To recapitulate, the size of the group and the degree of its heterogeneity matters, with smaller and more heterogeneous groups finding convergence easier. Defensive struggles seem to have an easier time than offensive struggles, and this seems to depend on whether or not the character of the threat is individualising or collectivising; defensive struggles also often focus on rights and privileges that already have a clear subject, whereas struggles for gains or changes not yet achieved have to call a group into being. Struggles have different temporalities, too: they can be immediate or open-ended; they can have short-term goals or long-term goals or no clear goals whatsoever; they can feature smooth, gradual change or jagged discontinuity. The temporality of struggle is, by and large, irreversible, exhibiting a strong degree of path-dependency such that one has to consider the question of viability from given historical conditions and not simply in general. There are all manner of social arrangements incapable of any existence beyond the blackboard. Furthermore, different tactics and strategies may require different degrees of collectivisation: labour organising by way of the strike weapon, riots, and guerrilla warfare will require different degrees of convergence.

As stated earlier, a theory of revolutionary motives is different from a theory of motives in general. A theory of revolutionary motives is concerned with motives that are basic, elemental, and common and operates with the assumption that, in revolutionary situations, these become the basis for collective action. A theory of revolutionary motives is different in this way, from the concept of motive one finds in the criminal courtroom or in literary criticism. In the court, motive is the soul of incriminating evidence; it is what gives forensic shape to the constellation of empirical and pseudo-empirical observations that prosecutors must use to convict defendants. It is an absent cause, rarely observed directly, endowing with meaning the actions of the accused. In the novel and in drama, motive is the watermark that

guarantees the authenticity or coherence of a character, barely discernible between sentences or lines. Revolutionary motives are, on the other hand, the motives of the many. They may be individualising, but they individualise great masses of people. When we move from jury box to barricade, the question of motive is not why one did it but why one would. What convicts the defendant is the ground of the partisans' conviction—acting in common, without judge or jury, often requires laying bare those grounds. Such partisans do not compose a revolutionary “subject”, nor much less a collective protagonist, except by the worst sorts of simplifications. Not only will the basic motives at play be multiple but the ideas about how to realise them, as well as the actions that follow from these ideas will be multiple, inasmuch as the partisans find themselves placed differently and confront different structures and constraints. A guiding assumption for most theorists of revolution is that the class of proletarians must unify itself before any revolutionary undertaking, overcoming its internal differences, in order to act decisively. If the goal is the overcoming of class society, however, such unification may be both unnecessary and counterproductive; counterproductive because it can end up hypostatising the class condition it should abolish and unnecessary because a many-sided fight, a situation of revolution inside revolution, can itself destabilise capitalism and provide the opening for communism to emerge. A theory of revolutionary motives will, ideally, help such partisans understand the plural field of revolutionary actions and its probable unfolding, understand their own and others' motivations. There is no singular protagonist, but there is a shared narrative: the revolution is an epic without heroes, a crime that, if successful, leaves behind no one who might judge it.

Reciprocity under Fire

Many treatments of motive attempt to explain the source of everyday behaviour, to tell us why a consumer may choose one commodity over another or why a worker may choose more free time instead of more money. For my part, I am only concerned with the motivated actions of people in exceptional situations of great social instability where the stakes are extraordinarily high. As such, I can leave undecided the question of whether or not any coherent economic or sociological

theory of motives can be developed from and for quotidian interactions. Revolutionary motives are not necessarily everyday motives, and what serves to explain one may be more or less useless in the case of the other. It is possible that many everyday actions and interactions are habitual or customary, unmotivated, and ungrounded. Riots, rebellions, uprisings, and revolutions, however, are extraordinary situations in which people can no longer rely on habit or custom, on conventional techniques for meeting their needs and getting through their day; they are forced to deliberate and strategise, individually or collectively, in order to meet basic needs. At the same time, these are situations of great optimism, in which the possibility of a total restructuring of society mobilises people's most profound desires, both for their own well-being and, beyond that, perhaps for the well-being of people in general.

Jean-Paul Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is unique, at least among philosophical treatment of motive, in its willingness to situate questions of collective interest and group formation in exceptional moments of crisis and insurrection. One of the key examples in his book is the storming of the Bastille, **an event that transforms the atomised individuals of the working class districts of Paris into an "ensemble of solidarities" or fused group.**⁵¹

For Sartre, group action occurs through the overcoming of **"seriality", defined as the passive being of individuals as they are gathered into inert collectives, unified by and through their separation from each other.** His primary example of seriality is a gathering of people waiting for a bus on a Parisian street corner.

They are a collective, in Sartre's terms, oriented by a common goal (to get on a bus and travel to their destination) but this by no means produces a practical unity. First off, they are set against each other by conditions of material scarcity: there are not enough spaces on the bus for each of them. At the same time, as generic individuals they confront "the impossibility of deciding which individuals are dispensable in terms of the intrinsic qualities of the individuals".⁵² Lest they descend into a war of all against all in the face of scarcity, some mechanism must be introduced which makes it possible to "differentiate every Other from Others without adding anything to his characteristic as *Other*". In the example of the bus stop,

this mechanism is the bus ticket which establishes their first come first serve right to a seat, but, as we learn elsewhere, market prices, gossip and radio broadcast can also serialise individuals quite effectively. In all his examples, worked matter as the residue of past labour (which Sartre calls the *practico-inert*) plays a role in determining the arbitrary orders and establishing the necessary conditions of scarcity which seriality presupposes. The technical characteristics of the bus and the abstract characteristics of the ticket together serialise individuals. The bus can only run so often and can only contain so many people; the tickets are identical and yet, at the same time, marked with a distinct number. Seriality is thus determined by objects but also by a *formula*, some way of ranking or otherwise dividing the members of the collective to assure their fungible atomisation, where "everyone is identical with the Other in so far as the others make him an Other acting on the Others".⁵³ One can know one's place in the line (n) only by taking count of every person before (n-1, n-2, ...) and after (n+1, n+2, ...).

Critique of Dialectical Reason provides an admirable account of the fusion of serialised and opposed interests in the heat of riot. Exchanges between potential insurgents and authorities have the effect of unifying an otherwise serialised crowd. In the breakdown that preceded the storming of the Bastille, for instance, the appearance of troops in the streets of Paris led people to loot the arsenals in the Tuileries as a defensive measure. Sartre is insistent that these were not group actions, but acts of "serial, defensive violence" motivated by *contagion* and *imitation*: "everyone was forced to arm himself by others' attempts to find arms, and everyone tried to get there before the Others because, in the context of this new scarcity, everyone's attempt to get a rifle became for the Others the risk of remaining unarmed".⁵⁴ However, what the authorities saw in the looting of the Tuileries was that "the people of Paris armed themselves against the king". This violent designation as enemy had the effect of unifying Parisians after the fact. As the army took up position outside the working-class district of St. Antoine, residents were massified by the simple fact that they shared a potential future as victims of a massacre. Sartre's discussion is unique in the role it assigns to the material construction of the neighbourhood: "the opportunity for troops to enter the district by coming from the west and

51. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (Verso 2004), 346.

52. Ibid., 261.

53. Ibid., 264.

54. Ibid., 354.

the north-west in order to massacre people there". This "hodological determination" produced a basic division of labour among the unified rebels; some people would have to defend against the troops, whereas others would have to storm the Bastille, whose cannons shadowed the district, and whose stockpiled arms would need to be taken from the troops and distributed to the people. It was the totalising power of the threat that unified the rebels of Paris and made possible later forms of collective action with a more explicit basis.

Sartre also provides a rich phenomenology of collective action, describing beautifully the experience of being swept up within the fused group. This experience, Sartre argues, does not depend on a binary relationship (between the individual and the group) but a ternary one (between separate individuals who, as third parties, themselves stand in for and act as the group for each other). In the unfolding of insurrection, every person becomes the face and voice of the group and anyone can speak up and direct the group: *stand back! watch out! go left! let's barricade this street!* In the same way, every person becomes, through the mediation of the group, subjected to any other person's direction. This state of reciprocity, of seeing oneself in the other and seeing the other in oneself, by way of the group, is the very basis of meaningful collective action. Sartre's book is unique in that it not only tells us what these mass affects feel like but also provides a compelling account of how they originate. Revolutionary motives emerge where material infrastructures (such as the Bastille) and the actions of antagonist forces (such as the French crown) collapse serial and collective interests. With Sartre, we have a properly historical rather than moral account of collective action. We also have an account of how an incipient division of labour results from the material arrangement of spaces and forces, such that even the most spontaneous groups must spontaneously segment themselves in order to confront an enemy that approaches, for example, from two separate directions.

In the chapters that follow his introduction of the fused group, Sartre chronicles how groups decay back into serialised collectives. For Sartre, the differentiation of functions within the group is the necessary but not sufficient condition of such re-serialisation. Groups persist beyond the immediacy of uprising through a form of *pledge*, which maintains group identification despite spatial distance (the members are members even when they are in separate neighbourhoods) and

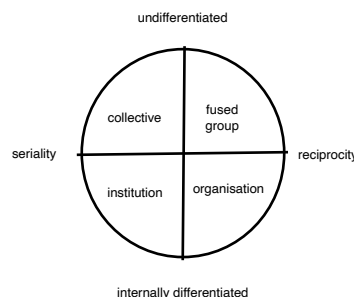
temporal distance (the members agree to stay together because they anticipate a future moment when group self-defence will be necessary). Once pledged, the homogeneity of the group and the fungibility of its members can be maintained despite a differentiation of function. Division of labour is not itself a problem, since reciprocity and the equalities of the fused group can be maintained despite it: anybody can potentially fulfill any of the functions, just as anyone can stand up and direct the group in the middle of a riot. The decay of the group into an institution, a thing, occurs not because of functional differentiation but because individuals become identified with their function such that reciprocity is weakened: *I know what I'm doing, thus I do not need to listen to you.* The result is distrust and dysfunction and the reintroduction of atomising, serial force to which the only response is the creation of immovable structures that compel decision behind the backs of participants: discipline now must be codified by various rules and enforced by sanction, incentive, and organised violence.

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Egoism and Counter-revolution

Sartre thus distinguishes between the collective, the group in fusion, the organisation, and the institution. If the serial individuals waiting for the bus are a *collective*, and the rioters storming the Bastille a *group in fusion*, the *organisation* begins to differentiate itself internally while maintaining the reciprocity of the fused group, whereas the *institution* makes those differentiations the basis of renewed seriality, once sanctioning power stands over and against each individual, weakening reciprocity. This is one way, perhaps, of understanding the opposition between serial and collective interest as an emergent, historical phenomenon rather than an ontological one. We might need to modify Sartre's presentation, however. While it's probably true that the institution emerges as a solution to the problem of seriality, it may be equally true that seriality emerges as the consequence of institutional attempts to remedy it. The cure is also the poison.

The best histories of the revolutions of the 20th century make this much clear. Donald Filtzer's study of Stalinist industrialisation, for example, revolves around a counter-intuitive but compelling argument: workers in the USSR were more atomised, egoistic, and serialised than labourers in capitalist countries, not because they were too weak



but because they were too powerful.⁵⁵ Stalinist industrialisation was extraordinarily wasteful, not only of raw materials but also of labour inputs. Demand for labour quickly outstripped supply, which led not only to widespread job turnover, as workers sought out pay differentials in the fragmented labour market, but also to extreme insubordination: the labour shortage made it difficult for managers to dismiss workers for absenteeism or insubordination. Since this dynamic was not only caused by waste of labour and raw materials but produced it as well, the Stalinist elite were incapable of eliminating the problem at the root. What they could do, however, was lower wages uniformly and, subsequent to that, crush any attempt by workers to organise openly and collectively to protect the value of their labour power. The result was a working class that was weak collectively but incredibly strong individually. Filtzer summarises the conclusions of his study as follows:

Deprived of any means to defend their interests collectively, the labour shortage and the subsequent breakdown of the traditional labour market, in particular the disappearance of the threat of unemployment, placed the workers in a position to appropriate considerable control over the individual labour process, most notably their work speed, how they organised their work, and the quality of the products they produced or the operations they performed. Managers, under their own pressures to meet production targets under near chaotic conditions, had little choice but to accommodate. Managerial concessions to workers were of two types. First were those to do with violations of labour discipline. This was a simple function of supply and demand: workers were scarce and managers could not afford to fire workers who committed grave violations of discipline regulations. As the regime imposed more stringent penalties for absenteeism, lateness, alcoholism, and insubordination, managers found themselves having to take a more active role in insulating workers from these sanctions... Managers needed not only to hold on to their workforces but to achieve some basic degree of

55. Donald A. Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization: The Formation of Modern Soviet Production Relations, 1928-1941* (M.E. Sharpe 1986), 116-24, 254-71.

co-operation in order to minimise disruptions to production endemic in the Stalinist system. They therefore came to tolerate workers' substantial control over how they used their work time, did little to combat the persistence of irrational and inefficient forms of work organisation, accepted relatively high levels of defective or poor quality output, and took steps to protect workers' earnings by keeping output norms low and inflating their wages.⁵⁶

56. Ibid., 256-57.

The Stalinist regime also introduced various moral appeals to labour discipline combined with institutional incentives—first the system of “shock workers” and then “Stakhanovism”. But this only gave the managers more tools to retain workers and introduced more disorganisation into the pattern of accumulation, leading to waste of inputs, defective outputs, and production of goods without any sense of whether they were in demand or not. By making itself into the sole representative of the collective interest of the working class—a collective and pseudo-universal interest disguising particular, opportunist interests—the Soviet elite produced structures that amplified and overdetermined the egoism of Soviet workers, making any sort of merger of collective and serial interest impossible. Institutions of this sort produce serial interest even more than they respond to it.

This is then one way to understand the passage from revolution to counter-revolution. While Mancur Olson and others recommend overcoming the dilemmas of collective action through moral appeal, ideological re-education, and institutional sanction or incentive, these supplements in fact generate serialised, egoistic motive much more than they address it. The result is a vicious cycle in which attempts to resolve these dilemmas exacerbate the problem of serial interest, and then seem to require even more violent or unequal institutional compulsions. (Moral enjoiner is, of course, abandoned at a certain point, except as a fig leaf for organised violence or opportunism). Michael Seidman's *Republic of Egos* demonstrates that counter-revolutionary dynamics cut across ideological divides often thought to immunise virtuous and noble revolutionaries from their deluded or craven peers, plaguing anarchists in Republican Spain just as much as the Stalinist elite in the USSR.⁵⁷ For Seidman, the militancy

displayed in the first few months of the Spanish civil war, motivated not only by a quest for material well-being, but by ideological commitment, heroism, and sacrifice, quickly gave way to a succession of opportunism, cynicism, and finally, when the chance that the revolution would succeed seemed totally extinguished, a survivalist war of all against all. As expected, the subversion of Republican efforts by selfish motives was, in many regards, the result of choices undertaken by militants. For example, military units that provisioned themselves by looting peasants quickly undermined whatever support they might have expected from this group. As Seidman summarises:

The Republic proved incapable of fighting an industrial war, particularly a trench war, which required massive supplies of food, clothing, materials, and weapons. Although Loyalists inherited initial advantages in resources and industry, their enemies proved logistically superior. The ephemeral Republican victories at Teruel and Ebro and even the defense of Madrid may have boosted morale, but they could not resolve its problems of political economy. Privation caused growing alienation. The Republic was unable to retain the commitment and devotion of the urban dwellers who initially sustained it. Nor did it arouse the enthusiasm of rural populations, including collectivists, who resented its price controls... However, internal divisions among workers themselves compounded political tensions and economic deficiencies. Many, if not most, gave priority to their own needs first and then considered those of communities larger than themselves and their families. Activists devoted to a cause had to confront a relatively selfish rank and file. Village requirements provoked more solidarity than region, republic, or revolution. The degree of commitment declined as the group became bigger or the cause more abstract.⁵⁸

57. Michael Seidman, *Republic of Egos: A Social History of the Spanish Civil War* (University of Wisconsin Press 2002).

58. Ibid., 235.

The result was a cascading erosion of solidarity, as seriality was entrenched in all but the most dedicated fighters, and those originally committed to the cause decided, in the face of persistent defeat and privation, that they needed to focus on survival for themselves and their intimates. As the geography of the war placed the Republic in a materially disadvantageous situation (cut off from the grain and cattle lands of the southwest), attempts to ameliorate its logistical problems through "wage and price controls...backfired by reinforcing agrarian egotisms".⁵⁹ These then created the situation for egotism among would-be militants and military defeat. Seidman's book is in many regards under-theorised as an account of revolutionary motives; he doesn't say much about whether or not egotism is the invariant bedrock of social action or, in this case, a contingent feature of unfortunate historical unfolding. His account seems motivated by little more than a desire to overturn the heroising accounts of the Spanish civil war (for many, the only noble 20th-century revolution) and lay bare its tragic flaws. It is nonetheless useful as an account of how revolutions die.

59. Ibid., 236.

Powers of Spite

In Seidman and Filtzer, we see how attempts to overcome the atomisation of interests through moral suasion or institutional compulsion produce further atomisation and further destabilising egoism. We may be inclined to believe in this sense that moral and social motives are in general only strongly held by a small group of people, an active minority which, as the residue of some prior mass action, remains in the space of the insurrection through the prolonging force of the "pledge". This is no doubt one viable revolutionary scenario: the fused group emerges as a consequence of material infrastructures and the actions of antagonist groups but begins to weaken as the urgencies of the insurrection open into the undefined landscape of revolution. Some drift away but others remain through an act of will, bolstered by deep social motivations. Confronted with the impasses and obstacles to collective action and their own dwindling numbers, the group introduces institutional structures that re-serialise both actual and prospective partisans.

But altruism isn't the domain of the activist minority exclusively. As noted earlier, there is extensive evidence that altruist motives are, although fairly weak, present among all but a small minority of the population. Mass action can emerge not only as the result of self-defence or a collective struggle for material betterment but as collective outrage at injustice experienced only indirectly. The police kill an unarmed black man in a way that cannot help but inflame the knowledge in everyone's mind of the profound racism of the police and policing: people take to the streets, attacking the police, burning their vehicles, destroying private property, and looting markets. The black proletarians mobilised are, for the most part, those who have been the direct objects of police violence and repression. Despite the fact that most do not know the victim, they or someone they know have themselves been beaten and persecuted and killed by the police. Still, this is a different scenario than the storming of the Bastille. The participants are not under direct and immediate attack, such that they need to defend themselves by counter-attack on the police. In other words, though they are constant targets of police violence, it's hard to imagine that many conclude a riot will substantially weaken or even abolish the police, lessening the violence they suffer and improving their material well-being. No, the riot provides an opportunity to punish the wicked, to avenge their injuries and the injuries of their beloveds. Without a doubt, the opportunity to loot will encourage some to join for reasons of direct material interest, but as anyone who has ever been out in the streets in a riot like this knows, many if not most are interested in nothing so much as an opportunity to throw rocks at cops, destroy their property, and beat up white racists. Vengeance is the order of the day. It may be that this scenario activates, in a symbolic manner and through forms of group identification, the reciprocities of the Sartrean scenario — makes one feel *as if* one is under immediate attack requiring collective self-defence. Or it may be that such scenarios confirm what Bowles and Gintis have shown — which is that there is a weak altruistic and egalitarian impulse observable in a great range of human societies, independent of any sort of enlightened self-interest, and that furthermore, *this impulse often manifests as spite, as a desire to harm those who harm others, who profit by exploitation and domination and hurt the innocent.*

Revolution and Perfectionism

Such motives can explain a great deal of political behaviour, but they can also explain the *limits* of many mobilisations. Altruism and spite are, for most, weaker than materialist motives and self-interest proper. In most cases, the riots end after a few days, or they shrink to a smaller, hard core, especially if the costs of participation are raised. The passage from punctual, limited flare ups based on outrage and vengeance to something more enduring requires that participants feel that sticking it out and risking their lives is *likely* to produce change that will benefit them. This is quite clearly why riots end; people do not see any future in them, any chance that they might improve their lives, and the value of spite's enactment no longer outweighs the risks. There are, of course, many for whom spite and altruism remain reason enough, even in the face of the heaviest of consequences. *Nevertheless, the fact that material interests supervene over altruism and spite explains not only the dwindling of the riot, but the inability of insurrection to convert into social revolution.* Unlike the riot, the insurrection involves the breakdown of established order; governments collapse, workplaces stand idle, police begin to desert their outposts. As a result, *the theological whims and niceties of private property evaporate: the things of this world no longer appear as possessions of this or that owner, but as unmarked social possibility. Participants take what they need and give what they can.* Even when lives are hardly improved, such scenarios mobilise a tremendous amount of hopefulness. Even if things aren't better today, the proletarian participants reason, there is a high likelihood that they will be better tomorrow. As insurrection passes over into revolution, the faith participants extend to the process is essential; revolutions can persist on these projections, on what we might call *future anterior* motives, for quite some time. *But sooner or later present interests take precedence,* as participants demand immediate rather than pended satisfaction, and the counter-revolutionary dynamics described by Filtzer and Seidman and others unfold.

The future anteriority of revolutionary motives raises a point that has been hinted at but so far not enunciated. Even if survival is almost always at stake in such struggles, proletarians are motivated by more than bare, biological reproduction. The phrase I have used throughout

is “increased well-being”. Not just to live, but to live better: this is the basis of the revolutionary hope described above. There are of course infinite forms such betterment may take: increased comfort and decreased toil, more varied pursuits and new opportunities for learning or spiritual growth, for participation in collective life, in art and play. The term Marx uses to characterise this betterment is “development”: **communism is a state of affairs that allows for “all-round development” or “free development” in opposition to the “one-sided development” imposed by the capitalist division of labour**, which Marx continuously describes as a kind of stunting of body and mind.⁶⁰

The specific content of the improvement or betterment is left undefined, by necessity, since free development presupposes, in some sense, the open-endedness of what it is to be developed. Spinoza’s account of *conatus* is sometimes described as **perfectionist**, inasmuch as his emphasis on “striving” indicates not just simple reproduction of the conditions of being but expansion or improvement of such conditions. In other words, **Spinoza, too, places development at the centre of his concept. Joy for Spinoza is the affect associated with that striving toward the things we desire, and increases as those things increase.**⁶¹ **The point of free development is free development itself, and though the content can be infinitely varied, the form is fundamentally the same.**

Capitalism subsumes these perfectionist impulses, as much as possible, within money and the wage relation: any increase in well-being, in comfort, in freedom from toil, has a price. Furthermore, capitalism is unique in that it both encourages and hinders this development. On the one hand, constant increases in productivity make it possible for proletarians to receive more social wealth (often in a new form) in exchange for their labour as well as a reduction in the amount of time they need to work. On the other hand, crisis dynamics and the rule of profit ensure that these opportunities are foreclosed for some large segment of proletarians. From this dynamic of interrupted and foreshortened development, one can **deduce hatred of oppressive heteronomy as an auxiliary revolution motive**. Proletarians will resist whatever external arrangement hinders this development and accept what do not.

60. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 86, 272, 464–65. On one-sidedness, see *Ibid.*, 81; Marx, *Capital* vol. 1 (Penguin Classics 1992), 470, 548.

61. Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader*, 60–61, 201–4.

development

We should not be misled, however, into believing, as capitalism would have us believe, that “perfection” is a simple function of use-values per person (or, in what amounts to the same thing, decreases in labour time per good). **The very open-ended and historically indeterminate character of development precludes this understanding, and there are no doubt spiritual, aesthetic, and cultural forms of development that escape productive-force reductionism.** At the same time, full development is impossible — at least for most — except where everyone can freely access social wealth and freely participate in social activities without restriction and where survival no longer preoccupies the majority of people’s activity. This is why we can aggregate it with the basic or materialist motives discussed above. It has survival and free access to material necessities as its foundation.

COMMUNIST MEASURES

We are in a position now to draw some preliminary conclusions. Riots, strikes and social movements may be fueled by a diverse arrangement of motives beyond desire for survival and increased well-being, in particular altruism and spite. Revolutions (of which insurrections are the first stem) are different, inasmuch as they involve intense dangers and hardships and therefore activate the most elemental and powerful of motives. Failure may mean death and famine, and thus survival motives are activated. At the same time, these situations activate the deepest hopes that proletarians have for themselves and for each other, the possibility of increased well-being, development, and growth, in innumerable forms. It is the combination of the survivalist and perfectionist motives that makes revolutions such profoundly passionate occasions. Revolutions must activate and satisfy these desires or fail, and they must do so relatively soon, in the medium term rather than the long term. **We make a mistake if we understand counter-revolution as betrayal from within or military defeat. Revolutions will fail when they can no longer harness the enthusiasm of a majority of people, and instead must rely on moral imprecation, violence, and impersonal social structure to achieve their aims, a process which ends up subverting such aims.**⁶²

We do not know what a successful communist revolution looks like, but we can say for sure that it will

62. To be clear, this isn’t the only reason why revolutions fail. See Jasper Bernes, ‘Logistics, →

definitionally involve a massive number of dispossessed people consciously reckoning that communism is the best path. Revolutions involve situations of mass deliberation and mass reason that do not exist in everyday life. In revolutions, people really do consider their options and weigh the risks, and if a revolution succeeds it will be by working with this motivated reason and not against it. The best way to do this is to produce, as quickly as possible, the material benefits that other failed revolutions decided to pend until some future date.

One does not win the civil war against reactionary forces and then make communism; one wins the civil war by making communism, by giving proletarians something to fight for together.

The successful revolution unfolds as a series of enchainé, mutually ramifying “communist measures” that, in their totality, weaken and eventually vanquish class society through a process of communisation. Here, I draw upon the theory of communisation pioneered by Gilles Dauvé, Bruno Astarian, *Theorie Communiste* and other French theorists, and extended in the pages of journals such as *Sic* and *Endnotes*. This theoretical line of inquiry has been enormously fruitful, but what it has lacked is a theory of motives that can help explain not only why revolution in our time must unfold also communisation but also how. Dauvé provides a lucid précis of the concept:

The idea is fairly simple, but simplicity is often one of the most difficult goals to achieve. It means that a revolution is only communist if it changes all social relationships into communist relationships, and this can only be done if the process starts in the very early days of the revolutionary upheaval. Money, wage-labour, the enterprise as a separate unit and a value-accumulating pole, work-time as cut off from the rest of our life, production for value, private property, State agencies as mediators of social life and conflicts, the separation between learning and doing, the quest for maximum and fastest circulation of everything, all of these have to be done away with, and not just be run by collectives or turned over to public ownership: they have to be replaced by communal, moneyless, profitless,

Counterlogistics, and the Communist Prospect’ *Endnotes* 3 (2010), for an account of the many ways in which the ‘worked matter’ of late capitalist restructuring presents strong obstacles to a revolutionary project.

Stateless, forms of life. The process will take time to be completed, but it will start at the beginning of the revolution, which will not create the preconditions of communism: it will create communism.⁶³

63. Gilles Dauvé, ‘Communisation’ *Troploin* (2011).

What must begin from the earliest days are these communist measures. The reason is not simply definitional, but has to do with the counter-revolutionary dynamics we’ve examined; only direct satisfaction of needs through the communist measure can recruit the participation of the majority of proletarians while at the same time abolishing capitalism. These steps must go together. Further, as we’ve seen, actions that mobilise smaller, well-defined groups have the best chance of overcoming the opposition between serial and collective interests. Though there is no upper limit on the number of people that might undertake a communist measure — expropriating and freely distributing some property — for the most part, one will see this happening with groups in the hundreds or thousands if not dozens. Sometimes, these measures will overcome the coordination problem by virtue of the totalising forces that Sartre encounters in defensive struggles, because people are being dispossessed, as a group, of their access to the material necessities. In other situations, the communist measure will provide a clear, tangible objective for which coordination is necessary and therefore entirely in accord with material interests, unlike the often vague and open-ended objectives of reformist struggles. The power of the communist measure derives from this combination of small- to medium-scale with immediate objective, though it should be said communist measures are only communist measures when embedded in a sea of similar measures. Looting a store in the middle of a riot is not a communist measure, since it is quickly reabsorbed by capitalism. Looting a store while hundreds of others are likewise expropriating property during an insurrection is, however, a communist measure.

Communisation is therefore a curious thing, as Leon De Mattis makes clear in his article on the topic, “simultaneously immediate and extended in time, simultaneously total and partial”.⁶⁴ Alongside the *Endnotes* essay “Spontaneity, Mediation, Rupture”, De Mattis goes further than most other theorists in examining this dynamic

64. Leon De Mattis, ‘Communist Measures’ *Sic* no. 2 (2014), 20.

in terms of motive. This paradox is in part explained by the character of human action, which is both immediate and future-looking. Communist measures are not “undertaken unwittingly”, not action undertaken “because the struggle has left no way forward”.⁶⁵

If a group of hungry people raid a warehouse where food is kept, they obviously do so on the basis of material needs, but it would be a mistake to think they had no choice, that such needs produce, by some sort of chemical reaction, reflex action. They might have, at the very least, continued to suffer hunger, wagelessness, and dependency, or perhaps found another way to meet their needs. When we speak of necessity, we speak of constrained choices, and motivated actions. When taken in the context of other similar actions, the raid on the warehouse becomes a communist measure, and has the possibility of mobilising both concerns for well-being, as well as altruism and spite, such as when one distributes the food in the warehouse to other hungry people and recognises that this expropriation weakens the owners of capital who are the source of one’s hunger. However, those who looted the warehouse might also have hoarded the goods in order to sell to other desperate people. **As expropriation rather than appropriation, the communist measure eclipses other forms of action under conditions of reciprocity: one has been the beneficiary of other communist measures and therefore responds in kind rather than hoarding or profiteering.**

The communist measure succeeds because people are not simply short-sighted egoists, but capable of enlightened self-interest and legitimate altruism (which includes spite). It is the capacity of the communist measure to activate all of these motives without pitting them against each other that marks out the course of its potential success. Once communist measures chain together in a communising dynamic, spreading through imitation, and motivating coordinated expropriations on larger and larger scales, they produce the conditions of their own rationality with regard to material interest. One recognises that **the ability of the enemy class to stop such communist measures decreases with their extent, intensity, and the speed at which they spread.** The more there are, the more successful they become, and the more they make sense. Furthermore, once one has taken a communist measure, for example, to provide oneself and one’s neighbours with housing by taking over abandoned condominiums, or with food and

useful things by expropriating land and equipment, then one will naturally want **to protect one’s access to such things by ensuring communisation continues.** As they enchain and proliferate, communist measures become more deliberate and intentional: as De Mattis notes, “in a period of communisation, when communist measures are linking up and becoming widespread, the overall pattern of what is being established becomes obvious to everyone”.⁶⁶

Furthermore, just as the increasingly straitened circumstances of a revolution and the increasing use of violence by activists has a tendency to produce a vicious cycle of egoism and disinvestment, necessitating more political violence, the communist measure has the capacity to unlock a virtuous cycle: as more and more people’s needs for material well-being are satisfied through these measures, altruistic and spiteful motives are allowed to come to the fore. The active minority, people who are willing to risk much for the success of the revolution and who act not only on the basis of material interests, swells. As such, communist measures are undertaken not simply in order to directly satisfy one’s own needs, but in order to weaken the enemy, strengthen communism, and help the afflicted. Self-interested and altruist motives chain together in such actions, such that it is ultimately impossible to tell actions apart in these terms. Once social life is organised in this manner, its motivational appeal for those living in non-communist zones will be almost unstoppable, ensuring almost constant insurrection and undermining the ability of class societies to reproduce. The remaining powers will need to gather together their forces for a final assault on the offending zones — while fending off internal threats — or perish. But here **the power of the revolution as we have defined it is not military nor is it merely negative; it is its ability not simply to negate or destroy capital but to actively posit something that takes its place, something that cuts along rather than against the grain of the deepest revolutionary motivations.**

ADVENTURISM OR VANGUARDISM

In the old farmland where the big wave of the city’s growth had crashed with the real estate market in the years before the revolution, leaving behind thousands of acres of half-completed subdivisions, a few hundred people from one of the decaying suburbs nearby plant

squash, corn, and beans, taking advantage of the warmer climate's longer growing season. They complete some of the houses so that they can stay out there in summer, though most live in town and will only return for harvest, bringing the produce in on expropriated trucks and distributing it directly. In the next suburb over, some people with hepatitis, many of them formerly incarcerated in the nearby prison, have found the engineers who ran the pharmaceutical factory. They have re-started it and, sending for necessary equipment and inputs located in another city, converted it to produce the interferons they need, which have been in short supply since the first days of insurrection. Now that the weather has turned warm, a few dozen of the most committed take from their kitchen cabinets the money they haven't used in over a year, pack a few items into packs, and head north to the edges of the zone, where they will await communication from the partisans and guerrillas. Already food trucks and grain shipments are hijacked daily, sent back into the zone or distributed in the armed proletarian neighbourhoods; police stations and weapons depots are raided, as much to disarm the state as to arm the people. Factories in the areas still held by the state have encountered severe shortages of workers, as people flee to the communist zones where they know life is better. Some of them have taken to imprisoning their workers in order to ensure a steady supply of labour. But this only enflames the subjugated towns further. Already this month over thirty factories have caught fire in the province. Seeing the writing on the wall, many owners flee, leaving the workplaces to the employees.

In the successful revolution, just as in class society, people seek out the means to meet their needs and the needs of those they care about the most (family, friends, neighbours). The communist measure is one such way, but certainly not the only one. Where success is possible, the partisans plant the land, loot warehouses, and hijack trucks, taking what they need. But there is often a surplus, and instead of attempting to profit from it, to hoard, trade, and exchange, they simply gift it to whoever else needs it (whether through prior arrangement or ad hoc distributions). The interaction between constraint and motive is here double: in scenarios where a strong communising dynamic

is already underway, they may not find anyone with whom to trade, since everyone else is already meeting their needs directly or through gifts from others. In fact, signalling one's intention to trade and profit may motivate others to expropriate whatever surpluses one has, with ostracism and exile resulting if one continues. The risks outweigh the benefits, from a purely self-interested perspective. Furthermore, the strong conditions of reciprocity encourage one, from a perspective of enlightened self-interest, to do unto others as they might do unto you, to provide benefits for those from whom one has benefited. And once one's material needs are satisfied, the weak altruism present in most people will be activated.

For some, the activation of this altruism will be so strong, and so little offset by the panics of self-interest that situations of scarcity produce, that they will begin to act in a mostly "selfless" manner. They may travel, as above, into the areas where class society and capitalism are still operative in order to weaken it by expropriating materials and sending it back into the communist zone or delivering it to the needy residents still unfortunate enough to suffer its iniquities. They may participate in catalysing armed insurrection and expropriation of necessities by proletarians for whom such actions would definitely be motivated by self-interest but who may not act unless the scales are tipped. These communist measures are undertaken with a sort of surplus of intentionality — that is, they are a form of the pledge that Sartre talks about, a willed commitment to the cause of the revolution, an intention to intend, a way of extending intention. **We should not let the presence of such will embarrass us**, nor try to explain it away through a theory of human action that imagines it as analogous to biomechanical reflex.

These altruist communist measures are what we might call *adventurist*. They may lead the way, provoke, catalyse, or assist the actions of people motivated by desire for material well-being, but they do not try to direct the actions of others, to incentivise, instruct, or force through violence. **(Violence is of course directed at those who have shown themselves opposed to the cause of liberation, but is all the same not part of the reproduction of the internal workings of the revolutionary zone).** These actions run along rather than against the grain of human motives. Every revolution will always involve individuals and groups whose actions are based on a partial (though probably

never total) transcendence of self-interest. Successful revolutions will see this group swell, while failing ones will see it shrink, as there is for almost everyone some level of risk, danger, and probability where self-interest takes the wheel. These individuals and groups inevitably link together into formations that attempt to intervene in the course of the revolution; such is unavoidable, especially in moments of peril. The question is whether such formations act, as above, in an *adventurist* manner, and through the communist measure provide for others the material basis upon which they will freely choose to go in the direction of communism, or alternately act as *vanguardists*, using moral and pedagogical re-education campaigns, organisational hierarchy, monopoly over resources, direct violence, incentive structures, and other forms of instruction and compulsion, to *force* others down a road presumed to lead to communism but that in fact heads off a cliff.