

‘Challenges of self-image and self-determination’ in Political Economy

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Problems of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and other modes of identity by which societies are stratified have typically been marginalized in economics; except, that is, where they have been victim to attempts to show these concepts can be explained by the logic of one existing theory or another. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this situation, protracted as it has been, has tended to produce more contention than consensus, and little constructive analysis. In this paper I will discuss, in general terms, how Marxist and Institutionalist schools have dealt with the various modes of stratification. From this discussion I will bring critical insights from each school together to form a general outline of how to approach this subject and the implications for social change. But first, some work must be done in defining these schools of thought.

The Marxist tradition is of a sufficient age and vastness as to make the term itself a vague descriptor for any social theorist. Because of the broad spectrum of Marxist analysis, and a long history of misunderstanding, many authors preface their membership to the tradition with a distinction between their own type of Marxism and others. Often the line is drawn between vulgar, Soviet, classical, or official Marxism, and progressive, or critical Marxism¹ where much of the historical criticism is routed to the former, while the latter proceeds as an evolving argument with roots in Marx. To keep an explicit nomenclature in this paper, and for purely aesthetic reasons, I have chosen the distinction to be between classical and critical Marxism.

In similar fashion William Dugger has posited a dichotomy within the field of original institutional economics (OIE). This split is between the ‘radical’ and the ‘liberal’ or ‘traditional’ institutionalists, where the former “emphasize the need to take collective action against ceremonialism, while liberal institutionalists see ceremonialism being weakened ‘naturally’ by the spread of education, enlightenment, and new technology,” [Dugger and Sherman 1994, 103].

In the course of my education I have not yet come across an institutionalist (in the OIE tradition) who would admit to the view ascribed to ‘liberal institutionalists’. The term ‘naturally’ in fact implies a teleology that would place this school at more than arms length from the institutionalism with which I am familiar. As such, I am inclined to agree with Miller, who writes,

the distinction between traditional and radical institutionalism (if I may be permitted the use of an oxymoron as well as a redundancy, respectively) seems to me to be both unclear and pointless... In truth, institutionalism is neither radical nor conservative. Yet, in a sense, it is both. It is part of its incisiveness and integrity that it follows no controlling path. [Miller 1996, 98].

In the course of this paper I will hold a singular conception of institutionalism.

Section two will lay out the basic commonalities and differences of these two traditions within political economy and discuss the need for further research into race, class, gender, and so on from both institutionalists and critical Marxists.

Section three will examine the various ways in which these schools of thought have taxonomized society as well as the problems imposed by a methodology that is not only historical in nature, but also defers to the observed ways in which individuals group themselves and each other—that is, problems of identity. I will argue that Veblen’s industry-exploit dichotomy and his examination of the evolution of ‘habits of thought’ are a necessary starting point which can be buttressed by the more recent contributions of institutionalists and critical Marxists.

In the concluding section I will discuss the implications of the theoretical considerations discussed in previous sections for not only *how* societies change over time, but also in what direction they *ought to* move. Matters of democracy, liberation, and equality—of prime importance to many of the key figures discussed herein—are the focus of this section.

A Cursory Look at Political Economy

Political Economy houses a large number of very different, often contentious traditions. However, there are several principles on which all of these tend to agree, if to varying degrees. Albeda *et al.* [2001, Ch. 6] define these clearly as the ‘four C’s of political economy’: historical and institutional *context*, *collective* behavior (individual and social), *conflicting* interests, and *change*. While these may seem self-evident, they are the very principles which, for instance, mainstream economics is often lacking. Thus it is important to note that, while in this paper I

will compare and contrast traditions outside of the orthodoxy, these traditions inarguably have fewer differences among themselves than with the neoclassical mainstream.

An additional point of agreement can be found in the non-teleological nature of these theories. As Dugger and Sherman [1994, 118] note, “the popular propaganda of official Marxism pointed toward a simple progression from slavery to feudalism to capitalism to socialism to communism in all societies;” however, “this view was never defended by serious Marxist scholars.” Institutionalism enjoyed from its outset a refutation of teleology and, as such, has suffered such accusations far less frequently. The point remains, in any case, that “Institutionalism done well is not teleological...Marxism done well is not teleological either,” [Dugger and Sherman 1994, 109].

With regard to basic difference, it would appear that at heart the Marxian and Veblenian analyses are clearly separable at their beginning, though probably becoming more similar as they are fleshed out. The Marxian framework begins with structure, social relationships—particularly vis-à-vis the means of production, the system of material provisioning (or the material system of provisioning). Within this framework, the patterns, or habits, of thought of people are not of prime importance; they are, rather, an ancillary component of the theory, dealt with in those latter portions of the narrative concerning social change. Per Balibar and Wallerstein [1991, 115], the development of class in the Marxist tradition follows a path from a class *an sich*—defined by its relation to the means of production but unaware of its own interests—to a class *fur sich*—having realized its material interests. The bourgeoisie, for instance, became a class *fur sich* when it realized its class interests in overthrowing feudal and royal power.

In what I find to be an (if not *the*) important contrast, Thorstein Veblen’s unique analysis saw that social institutions, habits of thought, are at the outset the prime theoretical consideration—as they remain to the end. Dugger and Sherman put the contrast well: in classical Marxian class analysis,

members of a class should acquire a class consciousness and when they do not, they are said...to suffer from false consciousness. But what people believe and why they have come to do so is often given short shrift. In institutional analysis...enabling myths...are taken as the basis of the problem. How people came to believe

them is an important element of theory building and problem solving. [Dugger and Sherman 1994, 106]

To be sure, the institutionalist focus does not preclude the social relations of production, conflict stemming from these relations, and so on. It does, however, cast a somewhat different light on the historical evolution of human societies which may in turn offer us a view of present society with a finer resolution than that offered by traditional historical materialism.

Veblen's and the classical Marxian frameworks have at least one common link in this regard that would make this distinction somewhat traversable. This is the former's connection between habits of thought and the circumstances of everyday life—specifically those comprising the normal work environment. Veblen was, however, explicit in distinguishing his view from the 'early Marxists.' The latter explained the impact of economic circumstances on social institutions by way of "a selfish, calculating class interest," [Veblen 1901, 226]. Veblen's theory, on the other hand, maintained that economic relations affect (not effect) institutions simply because "habits of thought are the outcome of habits of life. Whether it is intentionally directed to the education of the individual or not, the discipline of daily life acts to alter or reinforce the received habits of thought," [Veblen 1901, 226].

Further distinctions will be discussed in the following sections. For now it is sufficient to say that the unique approach of institutional economics, and other traditions such as critical Marxism, can contribute substantially to the subject of social stratification. Shulman [1996, 251-2] observes that it is in neoclassical and classical Marxist economic theory that most of the work on race has been done. Sturgeon *et al.* [1997: 1-2] note similarly a reluctance among institutionalists to construct a more robust theory of class, grounded in Veblen's own work. To understand what contributions have and could be made to these important areas of research, we should begin with a very general look at how Marxist and Institutional traditions have gone about categorizing people at a theoretical level.

Social Identification, Theoretical Classification

We begin with two important questions of methodology in Marxist and Institutional thought: 1) how do these theories group individuals—that is, what are the criteria by which any given person is considered 'in' a theoretical category or categories (and why); and 2) how have

these groups come about in the historical development of the community at issue (and, again, why)?

Classical economic theory, in general, maintained the familiar taxonomic tradition of dividing factors of production into land, labor, and capital. Veblen in 1901 noted that while,

[t]he theoretical aim of the economists in discussing these factors and the activities for which they stand has not remained the same throughout the course of economic discussion, and the three-fold division has not always lent itself with facility to new points of view and new purposes of theory, ... the writers who have shaped later theory have, on the whole, not laid violent hands on the sacred formula. [279]

Two important points spring from this quote. First, though written over a century ago, this statement, given today, would not likely raise economists from their seats in protest. The classification is not only pervasive—tacitly or otherwise—in the theoretical work of the discipline, but also in the common discourse of society.² Nor have economists enjoyed any letting-up of the difficulties associated with this centuries-old taxonomy—Sturgeon *et al.* [1997: 5] note, for example, “the chronic difficulty which Marxian theory has had in accounting for the problematic existence of the middle classes in capitalist society.” Second, land, labor, and capital are not simply ‘factors of production’ in economic theory; they are symbols of actual human activity. This, however, does not go far enough as these classes were, and are, theoretical representations also of, occupations, people, and interests. The broadness of their meaning obstructs a deeper analysis into the components of their meaning.

The classical Marxian analysis uses, of course, the classical taxonomy of land, labor, and capital, focusing on the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Whether exploitation is defined specifically as the extraction of surplus product through the capital-labor relationship, or more broadly as the use of advantage to manipulate others for one’s own benefit [Elliot 1996], the issue is of power.

Even though workers are not tied to one employer, as under slavery or serfdom, to be a proletarian is to be dependent for employment and survival on some capitalist somewhere. Hence, the sale of the power or capacity to labor is ‘forced’ despite its

apparent free and voluntary contractual character... [Elliot 1996, 57]

This quote describes a structural power stemming from relations to the means of production (material, non-discursive, or economic relations) that is a key component of Marxian analysis. A tendency, however, among classical Marxists—and an important difference between these and critical Marxists—is toward economic reductionism:

Traditional, revisionist, and vulgar Marxist types of historiography focus primarily on powers within nondiscursive structures—e.g., powers of kings, presidents, elites, or classes—and reduce the powers within discursive structures to mere means for achieving the intentions, aims, needs, interests, and objectives of subjects in nondiscursive structures. This reductionism is not wrong; it is simply inadequate. [West 1982, 49]

Proper reductionism may in fact be rare. Nevertheless, the emphasis among more than a few social theorists remains traditional economic relations, to the neglect of the totality of social activity—particularly, those habits of thought not directly (or obviously) associated with production and sale. The principle source of power is economic in nature and thus, for instance, “because the capitalist class has economic power, it also has political power,” through, for example, ownership of mass media, foundation-funded academics, and the threat of capital flight [Dugger and Sherman 1994, 112]. To echo West’s argument, this is by no means untrue, just incomplete.

The theoretical precedence that class structure takes over all other relationships is, in Harvey’s terms [1991, 117], a straightjacket to classical Marxian analysis.¹ The traditional taxonomy in which this precedence is rooted, moreover, may in fact distort analyses concerned with relations that are not strictly economic in nature—race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, and all other components of individuals’ identities. A theory that considers social relations with recognition of both economic and non-economic components of identity will inevitably have to abandon the classical method of grouping and begin at the base of individual (and then collective) habits of thought without discarding the community’s mode of production.

¹ A similar argument can be found in Shulman [1996, 251-2] who argues that both classical Marxism and neoclassical theory “are based on a purely dollars-and-cents type of reasoning, which is necessarily limited in its historical and contemporary relevance.”

Starting from scratch, so to speak, will necessarily present the numerous problems associated with identity that the classical emphasis on structurally determined classes so gracefully avoids.

Rhonda M. Williams is a key figure in considerations of identity in the Marxist tradition. Per Forstater [2002, 43-4],

identity for Williams is complex, complicated, contingent, and contradictory.... People do not make their own identity just as they please...yet, individuals do have some agency with regard to their identity—the degree they do differs in differing social and historical circumstances. Identity is not static, but ever-shifting.

Thus the criteria by which a social theory classifies members of the community must recognize that there is some degree of self-identification [contra Dugger 1996, 23],² while at the same time identity is not wholly a product of “individual preference and choice,” but also “culture and coercion,” [Dugger 1996, 23].

It is important to note at this point that analyzing collective and individual identification behavior constitutes the first step in an empirically grounded classification method in which groupings are not handed down by the theoretician based on a notional system, but rather gleaned from activities and relationships within the community and its history. This process presents conceptual issues in addition to those above. For instance, as Albeda and colleagues [2001, 129] explain, “white implies black, male implies female, and wealthier implies poor. To analyze group behavior means to analyze a group’s relation to its *counterpart group*,” but “we also can explore the group’s relationship to noncounterpart groups.” Recognition that these groups, being socially derived, imply counterpart groups must be accompanied by the acknowledgement that these groups are never autonomous, rarely stable, and necessarily imprecise. As Williams wrote, “no two persons belong to exactly the same set of socially defined groups,” [quoted in Forstater 2002, 44]. Moreover,

Supposedly stable and already constituted social groups—“Women,” “Blacks,” “Workers,” “Lesbians”—are so often falsely universalized, the particular presented as the universal (“all the women are white [middle class, heterosexual], all the blacks are

² The normative implications of the recognition of self-identification will be discussed in the concluding section of this paper.

[heterosexual] men”), marginalizing the excluded. [Forstater 2002: 44, braces in original]

Because societies are ever-evolving and because these classifications are socially constructed, it follows that these groups are themselves constantly changing. An understanding of their ‘social construction’ [Williams 1999, 305] over time is, thus, as necessary as an understanding of their interconnections.

To recapitulate, a classification of the whole of discursive and non-discursive relationships of a community must include an understanding of individual and collective identification of themselves and each other in historical context. This constitutes an approach which classical Marxism tends to eschew, but which fits easily into critical Marxism and institutionalism. Stewart and Coleman [2005, 121] define a ‘collective racial identity’ as “the aggregate constellation of behaviors and values of individuals who actively identify with a particular racial classification.” This same definition, in an evolutionary framework, can be broadened to all dimensions of identity.

The analysis of Thorstein Veblen is often noted for several unique, but disparate, insights; however, as Sturgeon *et al.* [1997, 3] explain, it is not commonly acknowledged that this work, “taken as a whole, presents an implicit class analysis of contemporary industrial society. But, Veblen was a class theorist from first to last. It permeates his entire career and body of work.” As an economist, the concern on this front was primarily of the occupation component of identity (Veblen would generally use the term ‘employments’); however, this was in no way to the exclusion of other modes of distinction.

Veblen’s framework starts from a distinction between exploit and industry—that is, “command of the animate forces vs. the inanimate objects of nature,” [Sturgeon *et al.* 1997, 3].³ In earlier communities, differentiation in employments was generally made by sex, with women pursuing industrial activities, and men, those of exploit.⁴ When, and if, a community would develop a predatory way of life, this distinction would confer a higher status to those in exploitative occupations. With the development of the institution of property—initially of women and their product—wealth would be added to the criteria by which an individual is judged (classed) in the minds of the community.

There are several key points in Veblen's analysis of the origins of these modes of stratification. First, rather than, for instance, surplus values, "the concept of dignity, worth, or honour, as applied either to persons or conduct, is of first-rate consequence in the development of classes and of class distinctions," [Veblen 1899, 9]. In predatory societies (ours included) wealth and exploit—appropriation of surplus [Sturgeon *et al.* 1997: 3]—is a means to status in the habitual, invidious distinctions of the community. Second, though at its earliest point the narrative suggests occupational differentiation by sex, not gender, the framework implicitly suggests a development of contemporary habits of thought based on the interplay of gender and occupation. By extension, this could, and should in a full analysis, include all components of identity.

While Veblen's work saw no shortage of inquiry into the non-economic side of group identification, it is well here to move ahead to the work of more recent social theorists. Harvey has observed the similarity of the dual labor market hypothesis—wherein minorities and women are concentrated in lower-paying and less-secure jobs—to the industry-exploit dichotomy: "Blacks and other minorities have, in many instances been relegated to the role played in more primitive societies by women and by the aged and otherwise feeble," (1991: 121). Controversies concerning the dual labor market hypothesis aside, if Harvey's observation is in fact the case, then it is in order that an account be made of how these invidious distinctions came to dominance in the minds of the contemporary community. To this end the scholarship concerning the origins of race provides a rich starting ground.

The first problem that presents in the analysis of race is its character as a recent matter of antagonism. Oliver Cromwell Cox argued that prior to modern times there was no race antagonism. Rather there was 'Jew-heathen-infidel antagonism', estate, caste antagonisms, and so on [Forstater N.D., 4-5]. This point, then, demands an evolutionary narrative of the changes from which the modern concept of race was born. For Cox and others, these changes were the expansion of capitalism, the profit motive, and related historical developments [Forstater N.D., 4-5]. In an Institutionalist framework much of this could fairly accurately be translated into the results of the pecuniary motive and technological advances in transportation.⁵ However, this explanation neglects the discursive side of society and its evolution—that is, it neglects the full set of relevant institutions and their evolution.

In *Prophecy Deliverance!* Cornell West “takes the position that both discursive and non-discursive formations have immanent power, and there is ‘no direct correspondence’ between them. Discourse cannot be seen as simply a reflection of the economic base,” [Forstater N.D., 7]. West understands,

‘the structure of modern discourse’ to be the controlling metaphors, notions, categories, and norms that shape the predominant conceptions of truth and knowledge in the modern West...determined by three major historical processes: the scientific revolution, the Cartesian transformation of philosophy, and the classical revival. [West 1982, 50]

These historical processes habituated Western communities with notions of objective, scientific analysis, emphasizing taxonomy, and the exaltation of the Ancient Greek standard of beauty.⁶ His argument concludes,

the authority of science, undergirded by a modern philosophical discourse guided by Greek ocular metaphors and Cartesian notions, promotes and encourages the activities of observing, comparing, measuring, and ordering the physical characteristics of human bodies. [Forstater N.D., 48]

Thus, from the discursive history of western civilization, the emergence of the invidious distinction that identifies some as ‘white’ and others as ‘black’ and then posits the superiority of the former over the later “seems ‘inevitable,’ not only to justify the exploitation of peoples of color, but because the logic of the structure of modern western discourse left no alternative,” [Forstater N.D., 8]. While these additions are far from completing the whole analysis (See Forstater N.D., 8), I hope sufficient progress has been made to reexamine the subject of power from this alternative framework.

The industry-exploit dichotomy of employments can be broadened to the more familiar instrumental-ceremonial theory of value. Here ‘instrumental’—the correlative to industrial—pertains to “the continuity of human life and the noninvidious recreation of community,” [Tool 1996, 108]. Ceremonial institutions, which, loosely, would encompass the exploitative activities, are the product of earlier ways of life and habits of thought. These social vestiges are often

conservative forces against industrial progress from technological advancement. However, “the ceremonial function is not just ritual behavior that retards progress; rather, it is more often an expression or a reinforcement of invidious uses of power,” [Horner 1996, 226].

According to William Dugger, this reinforcing function is manifest in what he terms ‘enabling myths.’ These 1) “provide opportunistic rationalization of privilege,” 2) “create a superstitious dread of the unknown in the midst of the top dogs,” 3) create the “otherness of the victim,” and 4) “make it possible to deny that injustice occurs by encouraging the underdogs to blame themselves,” [Dugger 1996, 33]. In short, they “enable one group or individual to get others to do what is wanted of them, even when it is not in the interest of the dominated group or individual,” [Dugger and Sherman 1994, 103]—they are the mechanisms of exploit for its own sake.

Here it is certain that power is more than a functional social constraint. In West’s critical Marxian framework,

powers are subjectless—that is, they are the indirect product of the praxis of human subjects. They have a life and logic of their own, not in a transhistorical realm but within history alongside yet not reducible to demands of an economic system, interests of a class, or needs of a group. [West 1982, 49]

With West’s concept of power and the subjects of identity discussed in this paper in mind, I propose that a key facet of social powers is the power to transcend given identity. From the other side of the coin, this could be described as freedom from undesirable, invidious, and inescapable identification. Taking either definition, this concept places focus on the institutions that permit some, and deny others, the option to traverse the complex of socially constructed identities, or, more accurately, the activities associated with these identities.

This is clearest with regard to occupation and, in fact, has been at least an implicit issue for some time. Alvin So discusses Erik Olin Wright’s work with ‘contradictory class location,’ the problem of managers living in the interstices between capital and labor: while these individuals “carry the characteristics of both ends, they are also torn between the two opposing class interests,” [So 1991, 40; See also Sturgeon *et al.* 1997, 5]. Three quarters of a century earlier, however, Veblen had dealt with this same issue, finding the problem in that “the distinction at this point has been drawn between classes of persons instead of between classes of

employments...This endeavor has, of course, not wholly succeeded,” [Veblen 1901. 206]. The primacy of habits of thought in Veblen’s framework saved him from conflating institutions and the individuals of whose activities they are comprised. The advantaged individuals are, by their activities, rather, and to varying degrees, capable of transcending classes of employments. The business man is a key example: “When, as may happen, the undertaker steps down from the pecuniary plane and directs the mechanical handling and functioning of ‘production goods,’ he becomes for the time a foreman,” [Veblen 1901, 219]. The regular foreman or the engineer, e.g., does not enjoy the same capacity to step ‘up’ to a businessman.

A similar effort has been put forward by Sturgeon, Bowles, and Jumara. In this work the authors begin the “articulation of both an instrumental and a ceremonial basis for differentiation among the working classes of industrial society, as well as from the ownership, or capitalist, class,” [Sturgeon *et al.* 1997, 1]. In sorting the working classes a ‘skills matrix’ is devised by scope (‘complex and varied’ versus ‘simple and repetitive’ work) and domain (‘manual manipulation of materials’ versus ‘abstract manipulation of symbols’). The focus here is primarily of an instrumental nature; the point, however, is that, given this matrix, an analysis of how individuals move from one quadrant to another—say, from unskilled to skilled manual labor—is possible. The conclusion in this regard is that,

the evolved technical requirements of production in conjunction with certain prevailing social norms will determine the degree of cultivation of what specific skills will be required for advancement into the more highly skilled classes. [Bowles 1996, 5]

From this framework the institutions that constrain or facilitate movement among classes are an express focus. Moreover, the valuation of these institutions within the instrumental/ceremonial dichotomy is emphasized. This is important for a number of reasons. First, there is a tendency among many social theorists to neglect possible instrumental functions of hierarchy in production. For example, as Balibar writes,

The *capitalist* division of labour has nothing to do with the complementarity of tasks, individuals and social groups: it leads rather... to the polarization of social formations into antagonistic classes whose interests are decreasingly ‘common’ ones. [Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, 7]

While this may be an attempt to define the ‘capitalist division of labour’ itself, no other division of labor is generally named within the overall capitalist system. The framework presented by Sturgeon, Bowles, and Jumara does not, however, deny the presence of conflict within the contemporary ‘class system.’ Income is still distributed on a largely ceremonial basis, and the efficiency of a too-strictly hierarchical organization is less than a more ‘equal and collegial’ situation would produce [Sturgeon and Bowles 1997, 14-6].

In sum, I propose that a synthesis of the Institutional (or instrumental/ceremonial) theory of class discussed immediately above and the works of Veblen, West, Williams, and many others is not only possible, but a sorely needed addition to our understanding of social stratification. This synthesis would be evolutionary in nature, recognizing the necessity of explaining the development of modern habits of thought—‘how we got here,’ as it were. It would also deal carefully with the issues surrounding identity—including self-identification and socially constructed (given) identity—in the process of identifying classes of people. Furthermore, this classification process will not be handed down from high theory, forcing observed identities into theoretically given molds; it will, instead, be earned through a careful study of the way individuals and groups actually identify themselves and others. Finally, this framework would make no claim to freedom from value judgments. It would, on the contrary, actively engage the issue of ‘what ought to be done.’

Social Change: Liberation, Democracy

While in select situations it may be accurate to describe Institutional versus Marxist theories of social change as reformist versus revolutionist, respectively—where the former denotes change ‘within capitalism,’ the latter movement ‘away from capitalism’—this differentiation in general misunderstands the complexities of both schools. Revolution, broadly conceived, merely denotes a type or scope of reform. However, to say that revolutionary theory is simply reformist theory with blinders is inadequate. The more fundamental differences in the theories discussed in this paper are not in the scope or number of modes of social change, but in the nature of the reforms themselves.

Marxist theories of social change tend to be structural, equating meaningful change to the dissolution of exploitative relationships, to the liberation of one class from another. The

foundation is the class structure rooted in the mode of production; habits of thought—class consciousness—play a subsidiary role to this class structure. West [1982, 137] describes a number of ‘streams’ of thought concerning change in the Marxist tradition. These include the Bernsteinian stream advocating change through peaceful, legal means; the Stalinist stream advocating a dictatorial vanguard to guide the proletariat through violent revolution; and the Councilist stream advocating a self-organized and self-guided movement of the working class in which the movement itself prefigures the society it will create. All of these maintain the traditional class taxonomy, varying essentially only in method of change and form of leadership.

The Institutional theory of social change differs from the Marxist theories in many important respects. Incremental change, the tenet of minimal dislocation, is, firstly, an explicit component. However, in a sense, revolution is not necessarily beyond the framework. Dugger [1996, 27] notes that “slavery was an either/or institution. It could not be reformed; it could only be abolished. It was not amenable to institutional adjustment.” However, the abolition of slavery can be seen as an instance of institutional adjustment wherein the degree of the increment by which adjustment proceeded was simply of a ‘revolutionary’ scale—a consequence of the entrenchment of the institutions changed, or, in this case, overcome. When these institutions are thoroughly rooted and adjustments are painful, a ‘revolution’ may be said to have occurred; however, in the theoretical sense, only further adjustments of the habits of thought of the (surviving) members of the community have occurred.

Because the institutionalist theory of social change begins and ends with the way people think, class consciousness as a step toward social change is not necessary; it does, however, have a counterpart in the institutionalist concept of ‘recognized interdependence.’ This concept holds that in the instrumental processes of the community, individuals from otherwise different and ‘unequal’ groups must cooperate to some degree to complete the tasks necessary to provision for society. Thus, “recognized interdependence might involve only a single group or class, but many classes are often thrown together as in modern organizations,” [Sturgeon *et al.* 1997, 7], and any social change may require, not an absolute struggle *between* these groups, but a change of habit *across* them.

These matters aside, institutionalists and critical Marxists converge, importantly, in their emphasis on democracy and individuality. This convergence is a product of a shared understanding of the many facets of power in society. In the previous section, I argued that the

power to transcend identity—or freedom from demeaning identity—is a key component of the greater system of social power. This, of course, is not to the exclusion of other forms of power. As West [1982] argues, for example, the areas of production and politics are crucial in terms of control over the institutions that affects one's life.

The guiding principle of these theorists remains in each case a normative commitment to a democracy wherein participation and self-determination are key. Social change in this direction would require leaving behind those habits which, on ceremonial grounds, deny individuals control over their work, government, and so on. The result, I think, would not be too far off of Veblen's 'Industrial Republic' [Tilman 1996, 13], Dewey's Democracy, or West's 'Human Liberation' [West 1982, 112].

Another integral part of an individual's life, identity is historically and contemporaneously interconnected with productive and political activities. Because of this, the freedom from invidious identification cannot be divorced from the broader goal of securing control over the institutions that affect one's life. This is to say self-image and democratic participation are part and parcel to self-determination—a point often recognized where diversity is promoted along-side democratic goals. Stanfield and Stanfield [1996, 128] for instance, argue that the "basic purpose of the economy is to provision and encourage, and not to obstruct or distort, the development of individual personalities." On a more fundamental level, Brown [1996, 176] notes this idea in Dewey's pragmatism:

Dewey was a believer in equality, but he believed in diversity as well. Of equality he said, "It does not mean sameness; it is not to be understood quantitatively, an interpretation which always ends in ideas of external or mechanical equality."

Finally, the inseparability of self-identification and self-determination, equality and diversity, can be found in West's humanist norms which,

promote personal development, cultural growth, and human freedom... foster the fulfillment of the potentialities and capacities of all individuals, encourage innovation and originality in Afro-American culture, and expand people's control over those institutions which deeply affect their lives. [West 1982: 91]

To the full extent that socially constructed components of identity are given on grounds of invidious comparison, all individuals, in the ideal, should be free to choose their identity and associated activities as they please—or, perhaps more intuitively, no individual or group should have the power to impose an inferior identity on any other. This principle is a correlate of the ideals of democratic control over social institutions, both of which are the logical moral conclusions of the institutionalist and critical Marxist traditions.

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¹ West (1982) for instance, made the distinction between Classical and Progressive Marxism, Dugger and Sherman (1994) between official and Critical. It should be kept in mind that 'classical' here is meant to denote the orthodox variety, not the progressive. Rhonda M. Williams, discussed later, used classical in another sense, preferring instead 'traditional' to denote the orthodoxy.

² The popular, apologist ideology that argues against the distinction between capitalist and laborer ('we are all the same') comes to mind as an exception. Whether this is violence of hand or sleight of hand, however, is another matter entirely.

³ To be excessively clear it is worth quoting directly: "Industry is effort that goes to create a new thing, with a new purpose given it by the fashioning hand of its maker out of passive ('brute') material; while exploit, so far as it results in an outcome useful to the agent, is the conversion to his own ends of energies previously directed to some other end by another agent," [Veblen 1899, 8].

⁴ Veblen speculated that this was a result initially of differences in "mass, physiological character, and temperament" then widening through a "cumulative process of selective adaptations to the new distribution of employments," until the proper exploit-industry distinction develops at the point of "hostile contact with other groups," [Veblen 1899, 8].

⁵ This is an admittedly crude translation that, worse yet, ignores the importance of a thorough examination of the institutional evolution with regard to race (&c.) of societies as they transitioned into capitalism. Because of the preliminary nature of this paper and its focus on methodology over application, I will have to leave this as it is for the time being.

⁶ Forstater [N.D., 9] clarifies that this was more likely the Enlightenment Era conception of the Greek aesthetic, not the "actual aesthetic criteria of Ancient Greece."