Notes

PREFACE

1 For example, in his otherwise excellent The End of Growth: Adapting to Our New Economic Reality, Richard Heinberg (2011, 156) states: “Talk of limits typically elicits dismissive references to the failed warning of Thomas Malthus—the 18th-century economist who reasoned that population growth would inevitably (and soon) outpace food production, leading to general famine. Malthus was obviously wrong, at least in the short run: food production expanded throughout the 19th and 20th centuries to feed a fast-growing population. He failed to foresee the introduction of new hybrid crop varieties, chemical fertilizers, and the development of industrial farm machinery.”

2 In 1957, C. Wright Mills (2000, 237) wrote a letter to the editor of Commentary, in which he discussed the influence of Marx on his thinking; his comments summarize well my own interest in Marx: “Let me say explicitly: I happen never to have been what is called ‘a Marxist,’ but I believe Karl Marx one of the most astute students of society modern civilization has produced; his work is now essential equipment of any adequately trained social scientist as well as of any properly educated person. Those who say they hear Marxian echoes in my work are saying that I have trained myself well. That they do not intend this testifies to their own lack of proper education.” While I have serious reservations about Marx’s socialist vision, I find his analysis of capital to be extraordinary.

1 PRINCIPLES OF MACROSOCIOLOGY

1 See Macrosociology: The Study of Sociocultural Systems (Elwell 2009b), which discusses the theories of twelve modern theorists and their relationship to the “big four.” C. Wright Mills (1959, 125), who is strongly rooted in Weber, also remarks on the phenomenon: “It is out of the classic work . . . that most of the ideas being used on the sub-historical and on the trans-historical levels of work have in fact arisen.”
I proudly sent the manuscript off to Marvin Harris, whom I had briefly met years before, for a prepublication endorsement. He liked it very much (although he did take offence at a few changes I had made to his theory). He also told me in no uncertain terms to lose the title. My publisher didn’t like it either. I ended up with *Industrializing America: Understanding Contemporary Society Through Classical Sociological Analysis*, which seems to promise another exploration of the Industrial Revolution. The title actually makes sense, in that much of the book argues that recent changes in American institutions and ideologies were determined by the growth of industrialism—but you had to read the book first to understand that sense.

As we will see, Weber also wrote about the rise of capitalism in relation to such structural elements as the state and material elements such as communication and transportation technology, contact with early factory systems, and invention and natural resources.


See Harris (1981, 98–115) for an extended discussion of his proposed relationship between population pressure and the relaxation of homosexual prohibitions.

This is a Lamarckian process whereby sociocultural systems can learn innovations from one another or from different institutional sectors within the sociocultural system itself. Many call social evolution “Lamarckian” after Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, who hypothesized that a biological organism could pass on to its offspring characteristics that it had acquired during its lifetime.

I thank you, Google Books.

“Unilinear” evolution, or the notion that all societies pass through a parallel sequence of stages toward a single endpoint, has long been rejected in the social sciences as it has in biology, although not by most Marxists. Even Spencer was hardly unilinear in his evolutionary theory: see Carneiro (2003, 229–35).

I borrowed these infrastructural concepts from Marvin Harris (1979, 51–54) although I have modified them slightly by explicitly adding the “division of labour.” Harris used the term “work patterns.”

Some might question the inclusion of Marvin Harris in this list, but to exclude him would be to overlook his focus on the impact of bureaucracies on American culture in *America Now* (1981).
2 MATERIALISM IN MACROSOCIOLUM

1 While Marx and Engels always begin with material conditions, they give weight to the non-material as well. As they said of their approach: “Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract and senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure . . . also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggle and in many cases preponderate in determining their form” (1962, 488).

2 Malthus (1798, 34) elaborates further: “Where there are few people, and a great quantity of fertile land, the power of the earth to afford a yearly increase of food may be compared to a great reservoir of water, supplied by a moderate stream. The faster population increases, the more help will be got to draw off the water, and consequently an increasing quantity will be taken every year. But the sooner, undoubtedly, will the reservoir be exhausted, and the streams only remain.”

3 Malthus (1798, 112) is quite explicit in rooting human motivation in material conditions: “The first great awakeners of the mind seem to be the wants of the body. . . . They are the first stimulants that rouse the brain of infant man into sentient activity, and such seems to be the sluggishness of original matter that unless by a peculiar course of excitements other wants, equally powerful, are generated, these stimulants seem, even afterwards, to be necessary to continue that activity which they first awakened.”

4 Boserup’s characterization here of Malthus as focusing exclusively upon agriculture as a limiting factor is an overstatement. Malthus well recognized the reciprocal relationships between food supply and population; the speed of the growth in food supply was simply not an important factor in his theory, for he posited that this growth could not long keep pace with unchecked population growth. But Malthus did focus upon the limiting effects of agriculture on population, while Boserup’s interests lay with the stimulating effects of population growth on agricultural development.

5 This discussion of the mode, forces, and relations of production owes much to Marvin Harris’s discussion in Cultural Materialism (1979, 64–66).

6 That the social relations of production are based on the material forces of production is also evident in the following passage from Marx’s A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy:

   In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these
relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material forces of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which legal and political superstructures arise and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness. ([1859] 1911, 11)

It is here that Weber ([1923] 2003, 302) also defines the difference between a machine and an apparatus: “We think at once of the steam engine and the mechanization of work, but the machine had its forerunner in what we call ‘apparatus’—labor appliances which had to be utilized in the same way as the machine but which as a rule were driven by water power. The distinction is that the apparatus works as the servant of the man while in modern machines the inverse relation holds.”

The direct application of science in the process of invention is a critical development: Weber ascribes Cartwright’s invention directly to the rationalization process rather than to invention by tinkers and dreamers. Here Weber explicates the rationalization process—the use of observation and reason to achieve a desired end—in the general evolutionary process; he goes on to marry rationalization to capitalism, asserting that the former bears primary responsibility for the modern character of the latter.

Just as a division of labour in manufacturing requires a certain minimum number of workers, so, too, are a minimum number of people and population density necessary for a fully developed division of labour in society. However, Marx [1867] 1915, 387) asserted that population density within a society is relative, dependent upon communications and transportation systems among the population: “A relatively thinly populated country, with well-developed means of communication, has a denser population than a more numerous populated country, with badly-developed means of communication; and in this sense the Northern States of the American Union, for instance, are more thickly populated than India.”

Marx ([1867] 1915, 419–20) explains this relationship at length:

But more especially, the revolution in the modes of production of industry and agriculture made necessary a revolution in the general conditions of the social process of production, i.e., in the means of communication and of transport. In a society whose pivot, to use an expression of Fourier, was agriculture on a small scale, with its subsidiary domestic industries, and the urban handicrafts, the means of communication and transport were so utterly inadequate to the productive requirements of the manufacturing period, with
its extended division of social labour, its concentration of the instruments of labour, and of the workmen, and its colonial markets, that they became in fact revolutionised. In the same way the means of communication and transport handed down from the manufacturing period soon became unbearable trammels on Modern Industry, with its feverish haste of production, its enormous extent, its constant flinging of capital and labour from one sphere of production into another, and its newly-created connexions with the markets of the whole world. Hence, apart from the radical changes introduced in the construction of sailing vessels, the means of communication and transport became gradually adapted to the modes of production of mechanical industry, by the creation of a system of river steamers, railways, ocean steamers, and telegraphs. But the huge masses of iron that had now to be forged, to be welded, to be cut, to be bored, and to be shaped, demanded, on their part, cyclopean machines, for the construction of which the methods of the manufacturing period were utterly inadequate.

11 Unbeknownst to me at the time, this analysis parallels Weber’s discussion of the evolution of modern industry described earlier in this chapter.

12 According to Miller, two additional factors are responsible for economic growth. The first is “total capital” (physical capital, such as tools and machines, and human capital, or the amount of knowledge gained from research and education), which he estimates accounts for one-third of the growth rate in per capita income. The other factor is an increase in productivity, which Miller believes is responsible for the remaining portion of economic growth.

13 An apocryphal story illustrates how devoid of meaning such Christian teachings have become for those under a capitalist system. Many years ago, the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations was taking English lessons, and when he was asked to translate the statement, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God,” he exclaimed, “Do you mean that a capitalist country would allow something like that to be printed?”

3 EVOLUTIONISM IN THE WORK OF THE FOUNDERS

1 As noted in chapter 1, this is asserted explicitly by both classical sociologist Herbert Spencer, in 1850, and contemporary sociologist Gerhard Lenski, in 2005. It is a position I very much agree with.

2 Inorganic evolution refers to the development of the physical universe from unorganized matter. Herbert Spencer (1867, 327) first posited this
unity of the evolutionary process: “Evolution, then, under its primary aspect, is a change from a less coherent form to a more coherent form consequent on the dissipation of motion and integration of matter. . . . This proves to be a character displayed equally in those earliest changes which the Universe at large is supposed to have undergone, and in those latest changes which we trace in society and the products of social life.”

Weber ([1923] 2003, 306) illustrates how science—a supreme form of rationalization—has combined with capitalism to greatly speed up industrial production: “Finally, through the union with science, the production of goods was emancipated from all the bonds of inherited tradition, and came under the dominance of the freely roving intelligence. It is true that most of the inventions of the 18th century were not made in a scientific manner; when the coking process was discovered no one suspected what its chemical significance might be. The connection of industry with modern science, especially the systematic work of the laboratories, beginning with Justus von Liebig, enabled industry to become what it is today and so brought capitalism to its full development.”

Spencer (1974–98, 2:241) emphasizes the role of intersocietal conflict and social co-operation in social evolution:

We must recognize the truth that the struggles for existence between societies have been instrumental to their evolution. Neither the consolidation and reconsolidation of small groups into large ones; nor the organization of such compound and doubly compound groups; nor the concomitant developments of those aids to a higher life which civilization has brought; would have been possible without inter-tribal and inter-national conflicts. Social co-operation is initiated by joint defense and offense; and from the co-operation thus initiated all kinds of co-operations have arisen. Inconceivable as have been the horrors caused by this universal antagonism which, beginning with the chronic hostilities of small hordes tens of thousands of years ago, has ended in the occasional vast battles of immense nations, we must nevertheless admit that without it the world would still have been inhabited only by men of feeble types, sheltering in caves and living on wild food. (Emphasis added.)

Marx ([1867] 1915, 89) added the communal form to his evolutionary stages somewhat later, perhaps in response to contemporary anthropological findings. In a footnote to Capital, he states: “A ridiculous presumption has latterly got abroad that common property in its primitive form is specifically a Slavonian, or even exclusively Russian form. It is the primitive form that we can prove to have existed amongst Romans, Teutons, and Celts, and even to this day we find numerous examples, ruins though they be, in India. A more exhaustive study of Asiatic, and especially of Indian forms of common property, would show how from
the different forms of primitive common property, different forms of its dissolution have been developed.”

6 Marx ([1867] 1915, 789) describes these decades: “A mass of free proletarians was hurled on the labour-market by the breaking-up of the bands of feudal retainers, who, as Sir James Steuart well says, ‘everywhere uselessly filled house and castle.’”

7 Marx and Engels ([1848] 1954, 10, 11–12) detail the growth of this class:
From the serfs of the Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghe rs of the earliest towns. From these burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed. . . . Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class. An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, an armed and self-governing association in the mediaeval commune; here independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany), there taxable “third estate” of the monarchy (as in France), afterwards, in the period of manufacture proper, serving either the semi-feudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the nobility, and, in fact, corner-stone of the great monarchies in general, the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world-market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

8 Again, I would assert (along with many others) that Marx himself made no such claim that the means of production determined all.

9 For Weber’s speech, which is very revealing but not widely available, see http://www.faculty.rsu.edu/users/f/felwell/www/Theorists/Weber/Weber1909.pdf.

10 This last comment, “Who could escape it?” is a reflection of my own judgments of value and faith—the value that I place on Max Weber’s sociology, faith in my fellow students—rather than of my sociology.

11 For example, see Durkheim ([1893] 1997, 140–41).

12 The distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity is related to Durkheim’s view of individuals as “homo duplex”: “As we have said, there is in the consciousness of each one of us two consciousnesses: one that we share in common with our group in its entirety, which is consequently not ourselves, but society living and acting within us; the other that, on the contrary, represents us alone in what is personal and distinctive about us, what makes us an individual” ([1893] 1997, 84).

13 Durkheim ([1893] 1997, xxxix–xlvi) advocated measures to strengthen the collective consciousness through the formation of intermediate professional organizations in order to counter this trend, but this is more a social program than a part of his theory, more a hope than a reality.
Marvin Harris’s “cultural materialism” in anthropology (see Harris 1979) is closely related to Gerhard Lenski’s ecological-evolutionary theory. In fact, cultural materialism greatly influenced Lenski’s thinking, although much of his theoretical development occurred before he was exposed to Harris. In fact, it could easily be argued that the two theories vary only in their theoretical origins (anthropology and sociology). But Lenski does take cultural materialism an evolutionary step further with his concept of intersocietal selection within the global system of societies. While I use Lenski’s ecological-evolutionary theory as the model of evolutionary theory in this chapter, I could almost as easily have used cultural materialism as the basic model (and I have in fact done so in previous writings). I use Lenski as the basic model because he is a sociologist, his concept of intersocietal selection is a useful one, and I find it easier to integrate Weber into Lenski’s framework than into Harris’s.

Those whom Lenski believes had the most direct influence on his thinking include (in rough chronological order) Thomas Robert Malthus, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels, Albert Keller, V. Gordon Childe, William Ogburn, George Peter Murdock, George Gaylord Simpson, Leslie White, Julian Steward, Amos Hawley, and Marvin Harris. Notice that anthropologists dominate the latter half of the list, although, even in anthropological circles, social evolution was in considerable disrepute in the first half of the twentieth century. Lenski was later joined in his mission of bringing social evolutionary theory back to sociology by Patrick Nolan and Stephen Sanderson. While both Émile Durkheim and Max Weber are conspicuously absent from Lenski’s acknowledgement of classical theorists, one can easily find their influence in his writings.

I use the words “largely determines” with some trepidation. In a similar context, Marvin Harris used the phrase “probabilistically determined” but was often criticized for being overly deterministic. I understand that other forces are at play that affect human behaviour—Weber claimed a special place for the charismatic, who, through the sheer force of personality, could inspire others to overthrow long-standing tradition or rational rules. Any social theory must make room for free will and the impact of individuals, psychology, biology, chemistry, physics, and random chance. But my concern here is with sociology; I believe that social forces are more often dominant in determining human behaviour and thought than not. But like all macrosociologists, I explicitly state
that macro theory is probabilistic and non-deterministic (cf. Lenski 2005, 16–17).

4 Weber, of course, is only the classical founder of the theory. Modern sociologists who have used Weber’s rationalization-bureaucratization theory (and at least partly connected rationalization to the growth of population, division of labour, and industrialism) include C. Wright Mills, George Ritzer, Krishan Kumar, and Norbert Elias.

5 Weber’s analysis is, by the way, entirely consistent with that of David S. Landes in *The Unbound Prometheus* (2003).

6 It should be noted how closely Lenski’s definition of technology parallels Weber’s concept of rationalization. However, I believe Lenski overstates his case here; while technology is arguably our primary adaptive mechanism, it is the individual who adapts to environmental change, not the society as a whole. In addition to adopting new technologies, individuals adjust to changing environments through actions such as changes in work patterns, diet, and living standards, and modification of birth rates (through both technological or natural means).

7 Harris’s cultural materialism is similar in this regard.

8 Weber’s followers on this point would include C. Wright Mills ([1951] 1973, 195; [1956] 1970, 7) and George Ritzer (1993). Both have attributed the centralization and enlargement of bureaucratic structures to the increasing complexity of production and the rise of population. Both have also written of the resulting rationalization of modern societies under such tags as “bureaucratic rationality over reason” (Mills) and “McDonaldization” (Ritzer).

9 In estimating the number of societies that existed during the hunting-and-gathering era, Lenski is relying on the working definition of a society to which most sociologists subscribe: a group of people who live in a particular territory, are subject to a common political authority, and share an identifiable culture. This definition can likewise be applied to past empires and to feudal states. Today, there are fewer than two hundred nation-states in existence, and each of these is generally considered to represent a society. The problem with such a definition is that many of these political units are home to a diversity of cultural traditions, while at the same time they may be economically, culturally, or even politically integrated with other political units. Where does one draw the boundaries of such “societies”?

Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) argues that “society” is too vague and misleading a concept to be very useful in social science. Instead, he advocates the concept of a “world-system,” a unit of analysis that encompasses the complete division of labor necessary for the survival, sustenance, and growth of a majority of the people who live within the territory covered by the world-system (1974, 5; 2000, 74–75). Wallerstein
(2000, 139) identifies three types of world-systems. *Mini-systems* are self-contained sociocultural units such as hunting-and-gathering, horticultural, herding, and fishing societies. *World-empires* are made up of multiple political units that have been brought under the control of a centralized political authority that uses military force to extract surplus from those it dominates. *World-economies* are characterized by a worldwide division of labour, needed to produce and distribute the necessities of life, and a multiplicity of political structures, among which the division of labor is extremely unequal. In Wallerstein’s view, individual nation-states can be understood only in the global context of their era, particularly the economic relations of production and exchange—a perspective that emphasizes the importance of both the material foundations and the social environment of sociocultural systems. (For a discussion of the capitalist world-economy, see chapter 6.) Despite this familiarity with the social sciences, Diamond makes only passing reference to social theory.

Wells singles out a change in the human genome that has many parallels to Weber’s *Zweckrational*, or goal-oriented rationality. The idea that the emergence of this ability for abstract thought, problem solving, and rapid adaptive behaviour evolves as a result of extreme environmental stress is interesting, to say the least.

This migration required the development and use of watercraft, since even at that time, with greatly lowered sea levels due to the Ice Age, the colonization required crossing many channels of water, some as wide as fifty miles.

See also Harris (1977, 40-43; 1989, 488–90).

See also Marvin Harris’s *Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture* ([1985] 1998).

In Harris’s terms, one might also say that the mode of production and reproduction (infrastructure) will “probabilistically determine” (that is, strongly affect) the political and domestic structure, which in turn will probabilistically determine the behavioural and mental superstructure.

See also Neil Postman’s *The Disappearance of Childhood* ([1982] 1994).

5 **BUreaucratization**

Weber’s definition of the ideal type: “An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according
to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct. . . . In its conceptual purity, this mental construct . . . cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality” ([1903–17] 1949, 90).

Of course, Weber did not list the modern communication and transportation systems specifically, but these are in keeping with this passage.

Co-evolution is a biological term that refers to the evolutionary process by which two organisms evolve in relation to one another rather than simply to changes in the environment. The classic example is the predator-prey relationship in which successful predation creates selective pressure toward faster prey, which creates selective pressure for faster or stealthier predators, and so on: yet another autocatalytic relationship. The analogy holds for the relationship between state and corporate bureaucracies (although it is difficult to determine which is predator and which is prey).

The profit motive is widely recognized as a spur to efficiency par excellence, a truism that political candidates play to when they claim they will “run government like a business.” Business can be “ruthless” in its pursuit of efficiency for profit’s sake (forsaking all other values but the bottom line). This has been somewhat moderated by considerations of long-term versus short-term profits and by enlightened self-interest (it is necessary for my neighbours to do well so that I can prosper). However, the rise of managerial capitalism with its focus on annual performance as well as globalization has severely weakened these forces of moderation.

This is reminiscent of a quotation widely attributed to Marx: “The oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class are to represent and repress them.”

One can readily see this within the nuclear family in which both parents work, thus often creating great strain on the marriage as the demands of the two jobs pull them in different directions socially and geographically.

Of course, junior officials sometimes only pretend to share these opinions and views as they wait to achieve upper level offices before truly expressing their independence. The problem with this strategy is brilliantly explored by Kurt Vonnegut in his book *Mother Night* and can be briefly summarized as “We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.”

See also Nisbet (1975, 54–56) on this point.

Mills’s later writings became much more polemical as he increasingly took on the role of social critic.

Mills was a far-left radical; Nisbet is widely considered to be a conservative, as well as a Durkheimian rather than a Weberian. Other sociologists who have written extensively on US militarism are Immanuel
Wallerstein and John Bellamy Foster (both Marxist sociologists) and Stjepan Meštrović (another follower of Durkheim).

“Astroturfing” refers to political movements that are formally sponsored and organized by special interests but are disguised as popular grassroots movements.

I ran across an example of critical thinking that might be a little closer to my reader’s experience than mechanical tomato harvesters. It is the story of a junior high school principal who had a problem. It seems the Grade 7 girls had discovered the joys of makeup, and groups of them would congregate in the lavatories throughout the school to doll themselves up. Many would put on lipstick and then kiss the mirror in an effort to smooth it out, with the result that the mirrors were covered in lipstick. The principal passed rules against it, asked the girls not to do it, handed out punishments for offenders who were caught, and finally pleaded with them—all to no avail. Finally, she called the ten coolest girls in and took them to a lavatory with mirrors that had been covered in lipstick. Appealing to their better selves, she said: “I want to show you what a burden you place on our hardworking custodian who has to clean this mess up. Mr. Perkins, please show them how difficult it is to get this off the mirrors.” Mr. Perkins then took his cleaning brush, dipped it in the commode, and proceeded to scrub the lipstick off the mirror. That solved the problem, and I submit the principal’s solution as an excellent example of critical thinking.

6 CAPITAL

Richard Heinberg (2011, 39) remarks, “There is a saying now in Russia: Marx was wrong in everything he said about communism, but he was right in everything he wrote about capitalism.”

2 See also Harris (1977, 251–67; 1999, 163–74).

3 Of the peasantry, Marx ([1867] 1915, 817–18) further comments: “With the setting free of a part of the agricultural population, therefore, their former means of nourishment were also set free. They were now transformed into material elements of variable capital. The peasant, expropriated and cast adrift, must buy their value in the form of wages, from his new master, the industrial capitalist. . . . They were transformed into an element of constant capital.”

4 See also Lenski (2005, 181–83).

5 See also Wallerstein (1974, 52–63).

6 In Capital, Marx ([1867] 1915, 828) described the rise of banks and the development of their relationship to the state:
At their birth the great banks, decorated with national titles, were only associations of private speculators, who placed themselves by the side of governments, and, thanks to the privileges they received, were in a position to advance money to the State. Hence the accumulation of the national debt has no more infallible measure than the successive rise in the stock of these banks, whose full development dates from the founding of the Bank of England in 1694. The Bank of England began with lending its money to the Government at 8%; at the same time it was empowered by Parliament to coin money out of the same capital, by lending it again to the public in the form of banknotes. It was allowed to use these notes for discounting bills, making advances on commodities, and for buying the precious metals. It was not long ere this credit-money, made by the bank itself, became the coin in which the Bank of England made its loans to the State, and paid, on account of the State, the interest on the public debt. It was not enough that the bank gave with one hand and took back more with the other; it remained, even whilst receiving, the eternal creditor of the nation down to the last shilling advanced. Gradually it became inevitably the receptacle of the metallic hoard of the country, and the centre of gravity of all commercial credit. What effect was produced on their contemporaries by the sudden uprising of this brood of bankocrats, financiers, rentiers, brokers, stock-jobbers, &c., is proved by the writings of that time, e.g., by Bolingbroke’s.

7 Weber ([1923] 2003, 353) disagrees with Marx on this, stating that the gold and silver from the New World simply flowed through Spain and even acted to suppress capital development. Although it may have “fertilized” capitalist development in other European countries, these societies were already in the “process of transformation in labor relations which was favorable to capitalism.”

8 For example, early Christian prohibitions on usury and on working on the Sabbath, as well as the conviction that wealth corrupts, were gradually cast aside.

9 As Weber ([1923] 2003, 354) noted, “In the last resort the factor which produced capitalism is the rational permanent enterprise, rational accounting, rational technology, and rational law, but again not these alone.”


13 See Braverman ([1974] 1998, 190–95) for a more extended discussion of many of these issues.

Marx and Engels ([1848] 1954, 46) continue: “They desire the existing state of society minus its revolutionary and disintegrating elements. They wish for a bourgeoisie without a proletariat. The bourgeoisie naturally conceives the world in which it is supreme to be the best; and bourgeois socialism develops this comfortable conception into various more or less complete systems. In requiring the proletariat to carry out such a system, and thereby to march straightway into the social New Jerusalem, it but requires in reality, that the proletariat should remain within the bounds of existing society, but should cast away all its hateful ideas concerning the bourgeoisie.”

15 Marx ([1867] 1915, 836) elaborates:

As soon as this process of transformation has sufficiently decomposed the old society from top to bottom, as soon as the laborers are turned into proletarians, their means of labor into capital, as soon as the capitalist mode of production stands on its own feet, then the further socialization of labor and further transformation of the land and other means of production into socially exploited and, therefore, common means of production, as well as the further expropriation of private proprietors, takes a new form. That which is now to be expropriated is no longer the laborer working for himself, but the capitalist exploiting many laborers. This expropriation is accomplished by the action of the immanent laws of capitalistic production itself, by the centralization of capital. One capitalist always kills many. Hand in hand with this centralization, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever-extending scale, the co-operative form of the labor-process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labor into instruments of labor only usable in common, the economizing of all means of production by their use as means of production of combined, socialized labor, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market, and with this, the international character of the capitalistic regime.

16 Marx ([1867] 1915, 504) describes how the process feeds on itself, building its own momentum:

Along with the development of the factory system and of the revolution in agriculture that accompanies it, production in all the other branches of industry not only extends, but alters its character. The principle, carried out in the factory system, of analysing the
process of production into its constituent phases, and of solving
the problems thus proposed by the application of mechanics, of
chemistry, and of the whole range of the natural sciences, becomes
the determining principle everywhere. Hence, machinery squeezes
itself into the manufacturing industries first for one detail process,
then for another. Thus the solid crystal of their organisation, based
on the old division of labour, becomes dissolved, and makes way
for constant changes. Independently of this, a radical change takes
place in the composition of the collective labourer, a change of the
persons working in combination. In contrast with the manufactur-
ing period, the division of labour is thenceforth based, wherever
possible, on the employment of women, of children of all ages, and
of unskilled labourers, in one word, on cheap labour, as it is charac-
teristically called in England.

Marx ([1867] 1915, 554) showed considerable prescience in his descrip-
tion of the industrialization of agriculture:

In the sphere of agriculture, modern industry has a more revolu-
tionary effect than elsewhere, for this reason, that it annihilates the
peasant, that bulwark of the old society, and replaces him by the
wage-labourer. Thus the desire for social changes, and the class
antagonisms are brought to the same level in the country as in the
towns. The irrational, old-fashioned methods of agriculture are
replaced by scientific ones. Capitalist production completely tears
asunder the old bond of union which held together agriculture and
manufacture in their infancy. But at the same time it creates the
material conditions for a higher synthesis in the future, viz., the
union of agriculture and industry on the basis of the more perfected
forms they have each acquired during their temporary separation.

*Capitalist production, by collecting the population in great centres, and
causing an ever-increasing preponderance of town population, on the
one hand concentrates the historical motive power of society; on the other
hand, it disturbs the circulation of matter between man and the soil, i.e.,
prevents the return to the soil of its elements consumed by man in the
form of food and clothing; it therefore violates the conditions necessary to
lasting fertility of the soil. By this action it destroys at the same time
the health of the town labourer and the intellectual life of the rural
labourer.* (Emphasis added.)

As Marx ([1867] 1915, 495) wrote: “The enormous power, inherent in
the factory system, of expanding by jumps, and the dependence of that
system on the markets of the world, necessarily beget feverish produc-
tion, followed by over-filling of the markets, whereupon contraction
of the markets brings on crippling of production. The life of modern
industry becomes a series of periods of moderate activity, prosperity,
over-production, crisis and stagnation. The uncertainty and instabili-
ity to which machinery subjects the employment, and consequently
the conditions of existence, of the operatives become normal, owing to
these periodic changes of the industrial cycle.”

19 Marx ([1867] 1915, 470) describes the cycle initiated by the replacement
of workers by machines:

The instrument of labour, when it takes the form of a machine,
immediately becomes a competitor of the workman himself. The
self-expansion of capital by means of machinery is thenceforward
directly proportional to the number of the workpeople, whose
means of livelihood have been destroyed by that machinery. The
whole system of capitalist production is based on the fact that the
workman sells his labour-power as a commodity. Division of labour
specialises this labour-power, by reducing it to skill in handling
a particular tool. So soon as the handling of this tool becomes
the work of a machine, then, with the use-value, the exchange-
value too, of the workman’s labour-power vanishes; the workman
becomes unsaleable, like paper money thrown out of currency by
legal enactment. That portion of the working-class, thus by machin-
ery rendered superfluous, i.e., no longer immediately necessary for
the self-expansion of capital, either goes to the wall in the unequal
contest of the old handicrafts and manufactures with machinery,
or else floods all the more easily accessible branches of industry,
swamps the labour-market, and sinks the price of labour-power
below its value.

20 Marx ([1867] 1915, 694–95) explains how capitalism creates the problem
of unemployment:

The expansion by fits and starts of the scale of production is the
preliminary to its equally sudden contraction; the latter again
evokes the former, but the former is impossible without disposable
human material, without an increase, in the number of labour-
ners independently of the absolute growth of the population. This
increase is effected by the simple process that constantly “sets free”
a part of the labourers; by methods which lessen the number of
labourers employed in proportion to the increased production. The
whole form of the movement of modern industry depends, there-
fore, upon the constant transformation of a part of the labouring
population into unemployed or half-employed hands.

21 As Marx ([1867] 1915, 694) observes: “The mass of social wealth, over-
flowing with the advance of accumulation, and transformable into addi-
tional capital, thrusts itself frantically into old branches of production,
whose market suddenly expands, or into newly formed branches, such
as railways, &c., the need for which grows out of the development of
the old ones. In all such cases, there must be the possibility of throwing great masses of men suddenly on the decisive points without injury to the scale of production in other spheres. Overpopulation supplies these masses.”

22 For example, pharmaceutical companies could focus on developing drugs to fight tuberculosis and malaria, diseases that kill millions in Africa. However, far more profit can be made by developing additional drugs to treat impotence and baldness (Bakan 2004, 49). Thus, the need for profit keeps drug companies from serving broader human needs.

23 Engels (1847, 14) continues: “It is impossible, of course, to carry out all these measures at once. But one will always bring others in its wake. Once the first radical attack on private property has been launched, the proletariat will find itself forced to go ever further, to concentrate increasingly in the hands of the state all capital, all agriculture, all transport, all trade. All the foregoing measures are directed to this end; and they will become practicable and feasible, capable of producing their centralizing effects to precisely the degree that the proletariat, though its labor, multiplies the country’s productive forces.” Before one gets too excited and begins to see a program to establish communism through liberal reform, one must recognize that Engels saw bourgeois reformers adapting many of these same strategies to soften some of the hard edges of capitalism for the purpose of preserving the capitalist system.

24 Engels (1847, 15) described a utopic vision of a society in which the needs of all were met:

There will be no more crises; the expanded production, which for the present order of society is overproduction and hence a prevailing cause of misery, will then be insufficient and in need of being expanded much further. Instead of generating misery, overproduction will reach beyond the elementary requirements of society to assure the satisfaction of the needs of all; it will create new needs and, at the same time, the means of satisfying them. It will become the condition of, and the stimulus to, new progress, which will no longer throw the whole social order into confusion, as progress has always done in the past. Big industry, freed from the pressure of private property, will undergo such an expansion that what we see now will seem petty in comparison as manufacture seems when put beside the big industry of our own day. This development of industry will make available to society a sufficient mass of products to satisfy the needs of everyone.

25 Braverman admits that the methodology is somewhat crude. There will be some occupations included in his working-class estimate who are paid closer to a managerial scale and enjoy a degree of autonomy.
However, there will be other occupations excluded from his estimate, particularly in some of the technical fields, where employees have little autonomy or compensation.

26 It should be noted that these figures do not include agriculture, a significant occupation in 1900 (in terms of numbers). Braverman argues that while the compensation for such an occupation was uneven (although often low), the skills needed were very high indeed. More importantly, most of these workers did not work for capitalist entrepreneurs but rather in the production of commodities for their own consumption or personal profit.

27 From 1983 to 2001, the total labour force grew by 34 percent, from 100,834,000 to 135,073,000. In that same time period, the growth of the Manager and Professional Specialty categories grew by 77 percent, from 23,592,000 to 41,894,000.

28 Some people, of course, are excluded from the estimate who should be included, and others are included who should not be.

29 See also Heinberg 2011.

30 The recent crash was due to the deregulation of markets throughout the world. In this deregulation, nation-states were acting at the behest of and in the short-term interests of the capitalist class. While many also make the absurd claim that it was poor people buying houses and defaulting on their mortgages that brought the United States, and ultimately the world economic system, to its knees, the evidence is simply overwhelming that this was not the case. I suspect the claim is made to divert attention from those in the financial sector who were actually responsible. For discussions, see, for example, Joseph Stiglitz (2010), Charles Ferguson (2012), Chris Hedges (2010), Hacker and Pierson (2010), and many others.

31 In “How Wall Street Killed Financial Reform” (Rolling Stone, May 2012), Matt Taibbi reports on the tactics used:

   The fate of Dodd-Frank over the past two years is an object lesson in the government’s inability to institute even the simplest and most obvious reforms, especially if those reforms happen to clash with powerful financial interests. From the moment it was signed into law, lobbyists and lawyers have fought regulators over every line in the rulemaking process. Congressmen and presidents may be able to get a law passed once in a while—but they can no longer make sure it stays passed. You win the modern financial-regulation game by filing the most motions, attending the most hearings, giving the most money to the most politicians, and, above all, by keeping at it, day after day, year after fiscal year, until stealing is legal again. “It’s a scorched-earth policy,” says Michael Greenberger, a former regulator who was heavily involved with the drafting of Dodd-Frank. “It requires constant combat. And it never, ever ends.”
Unfortunately, Weber ([1921] 1968, 110–11) did not think that any economic system would do better with regard to the irrationality factor. Socialism would inevitably weaken formal rationality through the weakening of incentives to work and investment. “Where a planned economy is radically carried out,” he wrote, “it must further accept the inevitable reduction in formal, calculatory rationality which would result from the elimination of money and capital accounting. Substantive and formal (in the sense of exact calculation) rationality are, it should be stated again, after all largely distinct problems. This fundamental and, in the last analysis, unavoidable element of irrationality in economic systems is one of the important sources of all ‘social’ problems, and above all, of the problems of socialism.”

Trading on insider information is not limited to corporate people. On 23 June 2012, a Washington Post article entitled “Members of Congress Trade in Companies While Making Laws That Affect Those Same Firms” reported: “One-hundred-thirty members of Congress or their families have traded stocks collectively worth hundreds of millions of dollars in companies lobbying on bills that came before their committees, a practice that is permitted under current ethics rules, a Washington Post analysis has found. The lawmakers bought and sold a total of between $85 million and $218 million in 323 companies registered to lobby on legislation that appeared before them, according to an examination of all 45,000 individual congressional stock transactions contained in computerized financial disclosure data from 2007 to 2010.” The major difference between Congress and corporate people trading on inside information is that for members of Congress, it is perfectly legal.

According to the tally currently available, the Republicans outspent the Democrats by roughly $113.5 million: $1,246,902,432 versus $1,112,041,699 (for updates, see http://www.opensecrets.org/pres12/index.php#out). These figures represent spending by the candidates, the national parties, and outside interests. As I write, the figures for 2012 federal elections overall are preliminary, but so far they total slightly over half a billion more than the total for 2008. In view of the recent Citizens United decision, however, these figures probably miss much.

All data in this chapter on campaign contributions and lobbying are available on the website of the Center for Responsive Politics, www.opensecrets.org.


See http://www.opensecrets.org/revolving/top.php?display=G.


The emphasis is mine. The complete text of Eisenhower’s speech is available at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/eisenhower001.asp.

Note the functional nature of the quotation.

The 1991 General Accounting Office report, “Southwest Asia: Cost of Protecting U.S. Interests” contains this qualification: “For purpose of this report, only those countries in Southwest Asia that throughout the 1980s and early 1990s were considered of strategic importance to the United States are included. These are oil-producing countries in the Middle East, particularly those located in the Persian Gulf area, as well as non-oil producers bordering strategic transiting points and key regional allies” (http://www.gao.gov/assets/220/214823.pdf, p. 1, n. 1).

See also Nisbet ([1953] 1990, 94–95; 1988, 105); Mills (1958); and Foster (2006).

This strongly echoes Mills’s writing in The Sociological Imagination (1959).


In business, “controlling interest” is defined as owning 51 percent or more of an enterprise. A case can be made that the controlling interest in the United States by corporations is considerably higher.

In a speech before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society in 1859, a year before he became president, Abraham Lincoln commented on this idea: “It is said an Eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him the words: ‘And this, too, shall pass away.’ How much it expresses! How chastening.
in the hour of pride! How consoling in the depths of affliction!”
(http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/fair.htm).

8 RATIONALIZATION

1 I owe much of this interpretation of Durkheim to Stjepan Meštrović’s
Émile Durkheim and the Reformation of Sociology ([1988] 1993) and The
2 There is some disagreement over whether Durkheim’s conscience
collective should be translated “collective conscience” or “collective
consciousness.” As Collins and Makowsky (1989, 105) point out, the
confusion stems from the fact that the French term conscience means
both. I have tended to prefer “conscience,” although in some contexts
“consciousness” makes clearer sense.
3 I was once teaching a Scholars seminar to some of the brightest students
at our university. In exchange for a full scholarship, these students, who
were mainly business and pre-med majors, were required to take a semi-
nar on social issues each semester. I had had them read Wendell Berry’s
The Unsettling of America (1977) and was having trouble getting the dis-
discussion started. Looking at their bored faces, I asked: “Don’t you even
care? Doesn’t it bother you that people are being moved off the land
in droves? Doesn’t it worry you that farms that have been in families
for generations are being repossessed, that we are losing a tradition of
knowledge and care for the land?” One student replied, to general class
agreement: “Well, they were inefficient and therefore had to go under.”

9 THE SYSTEM

1 Both Durkheim and Freud were greatly influenced by Arthur
Schopenhauer.
2 There are, of course, reasons other than infrastructural intensification
and the resulting depletion for the rise in energy and commodity prices
and in the increasing pollution of the environment; the existence of
elites and corporate structures that manipulate the system for their own
gain also bear heavy responsibility.
3 See the May 3, 2011, UN Press Release based on projections by the
Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social
The enhanced purchasing power of the lower classes is probably a significant factor.

Lenski (2005, 217–18n) ruefully admits this, remarking on the clever nature of these “golden rubles” in disguising the true amount of inequality from social scientists: “Thus while government data showed only minimal inequality of incomes measured in number of rubles received by elites and rank-and-file workers, gross inequalities actually flourished. For decades, most western observers were fooled by this arrangement and were greatly impressed by Communist ‘successes’ in reducing economic inequality.”


Ibid.

Ibid.

Kennedy’s 1962 address is available at http://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=Address_on_the_First_Anniversary_of_the_Alliance_for_Prosperity&oldid=2950898.