

een gesprek met david maclellan en paul walton

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Inleiding

Onderstaand gesprek vond plaats op 15 april jongstleden, toen de paden van McLellan en Walton elkaar kruisten op het Sociologisch Festival.

David McLellan studeerde in Oxford, Parijs en Frankfurt, en is op dit ogenblik Senior Lecturer in Politics and Government aan de Universiteit van Kent te Canterbury. Hij redigeerde twee bundels: Karl Marx: The Early Texts en Marx's Grundrisse, en schreef The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx (1969), Marx Before Marxism (1970), The Thought of Karl Marx (1971) en Karl Marx: His Life and Thought (1974). Zojuist verscheen in de Fontana Modern Masters-serie het beknopte Marx.

Paul Walton studeerde in Durham, en is momenteel Lecturer in Sociology aan de Universiteit van Glasgow. Hij redigeerde samen met Stuart Hall de bundel Situating Marx, schreef samen met Andrew Gamble From Alienation to Surplus Value, en samen met Taylor en Young The New Criminology en Critical Criminology. Doet op dit moment televisie-onderzoek en werkt samen met Andrew Gamble aan het dit jaar verschijnende Capitalism in Crisis.

Question: Professor McLellan, you have stated in your lecture that Marx' theory must not be interpreted as being strictly scientific or materialist, but harbours significant ethical elements as well. At the same time, you have stressed that Marx escapes the 'Humean dilemma' according to which systems of thought must be either ethical or factual in content. Does Marx come somewhere 'in the middle'? Given the fact that Marx' theory is scientific on its own terms, within the dialectical vocabulary, how must science, in the Marxian sense, be understood?

McLellan: I would quarrel somewhat with trying to situate Marx on an axis of supposedly pure facts and supposedly pure values, and to assert that Marx comes somewhere 'in the middle', because that implies to some extent accepting the necessity of a dichotomy. I think that there is no such thing as a fact-value dichotomy, and, certainly, for anybody who is thinking within the Hegelian tradition, the notion of

either pure facts or pure values must be rejected. When we see it as axiomatic that facts and values are inextricably connected in Marx, the question then becomes, I suppose, in what sense Marx' or Marxist thought is scientific. It is difficult to make this precise. Partly because the word Wissenschaft in German has a much wider connotation than the word 'science' in the Anglosaxon tradition. Even Hegel called his main work the Wissenschaft der Logik. But it is clear that what Marx meant by science was something that was rigorously argued, and to some extent empirical. We must remember that when Marx talks about science he does so usually in terms of the distinction between essence and appearance. Next to this, some account of the methodology is given in the general introduction to the Grundrisse, where it is asserted that arguments must proceed from the abstract to the concrete. That, in a sense, is the correct scientific procedure, although it is still very much within the Hegelian framework.

Question: Nevertheless, there are passages in Marx's writings in which he compares the scientific rigour of his own work with that present in the natural sciences of his day.

McLellan: The passage that sticks in my mind is the passage in which he says: it is not really like chemistry, it is not really like physics, it is a bit like biology. Now I would contend that some of the utterances in the prefaces to Capital are put there for propaganda purposes, taken in the best sense of the word. Marx is anxious to give the impression of a scientific work in something more approaching the ordinary sense of the word than the later contents of volume I of Capital would actually warrant. But I do agree that if you push the notion about biology far enough, you would approach the sort of positivism that, in my view, is not characteristic of Marx' work. I think he becomes clear on that topic when he talks, in the Paris Manuscripts, about the feasibility of a scientific study of society in exactly the same way as he talks about the natural sciences. So I would not deny the comparison with something like biology, but, even so, I think Marx did cling very strongly to the phrase he used to quote from Vico, to the effect that the difference between the history of the man and all other histories is that man has made it. And that puts into the equation a sort of imponderable, making it impossible to reduce it to a system and to get rid of the unknown quantity which is constituted by the subject.

Question: It seems to me that up till now the polar opposites constituted by a completely objective theory of reality and a theory which departs from certain ethical norms which are 'external' to reality, have only been 'superseded' by a negative argument. Can you state in a more positive way how Marx conceives of the crucial notion of critique and how

subjective and objective elements are fused in his notion of critique?

McLellan: I don't think you can give a precise account of the way in which ethical elements and empirical elements mix in Marx. You could say, I suppose, that the notion of alienation is at the same time a description and an evaluation in terms of an ongoing process which must be determined in terms of progress as well as process. Other words, like 'exploitation' for instance, obviously imply certain value judgements as well as being descriptive. For Marx, I suppose, the notion of critique is never purely ethical in that his works are a critique - they normally are subtitled 'critique' - of something - that is 'already there'. I think that is where the real descriptive element enters into Marx' thought. All these critiques are directed at a body of ideas which is relevant to, or springs out of, a particular given situation. And of course Capital is a critique of political economy, i.e. the body of ideas developed by Smith and Ricardo who explain - quite correctly, according to Marx - the workings of bourgeois society. In general, I suppose, a critique is non-utopian and therefore not purely "evaluative", because it refers to a body of ideas that exist and reflect a real situation. It is not purely factual either, because this body of ideas is being criticized at the same time that the state of affairs that is described is being criticized.

Question: Do we not arrive at a certain circularity of argument, in the sense that normative elements and descriptive elements serve to sustain each other? The notion of critique is, in the end, grounded in itself.

McLellan: I don't see the circle. I really think it cannot be otherwise. I see these things as interacting. The meaning of the dialectic lies in the very fact that evaluation and factual description inform each other.

Walton: I think the resolution of this problem occurs very clearly in Marx' work. What does he mean when he claims to stand Hegel on his head? He says that the whole business, including Feuerbach, whom he admired immensely, is a formal exercise, and that Feuerbach discovers anthropology and man, which means that philosophical problems can only be resolved when one grasps that they are in fact social questions, questions of the relationships between men. From that juncture onwards he says that philosophy ends with Feuerbach. I think he means that proposition to be taken very literally. Let me give you an example from Oxford philosophy. The interesting thing about the whole of linguistic philosophy is that it invents the sentences and the words or concepts in which it analyses. It does not depart from natural conversation, it does not take language as it is used between incum-

bents. Even Wittgenstein who actually allowed the possibility of the study of normal language and created a revolution in philosophy by doing so, invents all his sentences. If one proceeds in that way one is doing philosophy, not science. To do science, you examine relationships. Since we are concerned, in the last analysis, with humanity, the relationships must be among real people and real groups. The mistake of all philosophy prior to Feuerbach was that it obscured this very crucial fact. This was Feuerbach's great discovery, even though it sprang from a theological base. For Marx, to be radical is to grasp the root of things. The root of things human is man. The only starting point, for Marx, is man himself. And he opposes all positions which wish to eradicate that which is peculiar to the relationships between man. Most of philosophy, so he argues, attempts to do that. Most of economics attempts the same. Most of social science he termed bourgeois by that very nature, and he termed it bourgeois not in the kind of way people sling epithets around nowadays. What does Marx start with when he starts Capital? He starts with the analysis of the reification of commodities as the fundamental characteristic of bourgeois society. It reifies relationships, it obscures the fact that social relationships are presented as relationships between things, between entities which are relatively fixed and impenetrable. Why does he put that piece there? It only fits if you are aware of the fact that the whole work is an exercise in dialectical anthropology. And that is a scientific exercise. Marx says himself in the early letters to his father that without reading Hegel he would have had no understanding of how to bridge the Kantian gap between 'is' and 'ought'. What makes Marx' work scientific, it seems to me, is the juncture which he manages to situate concretely, and he situates it concretely via anthropology.

McLellan: Let me add to this. The study of Marx's early writings is very important, in that it may illuminate themes that are not very explicit in Marx's later writings. When I was rereading yesterday the general introduction to the Grundrisse, where there is a long and exceptionally Hegelian bit about the relationships between distribution, exchange, consumption and production, I was again struck by the fact that the statement that production is the most important element is not argued for at all. It is not argued for because, it seems to me, Marx had already worked out quite clearly for himself in such writings as the 1844 Manuscripts that man is the centre and that man is above all a producing animal. It is one of the presumptions there, as well as in the beginning of Capital. In a way the whole labour theory of value can be seen to derive from that general notion. When you say this argument is circular, anybody who talks about an argument being circular must pose the two components of

the circle as being in some way distinct, because we get back to the Humean fork. If that is supposed to be an objection, it must be in terms of things that are distinct. But they are not distinct. And any view which is Hegelian and dialectical must start from the premise that indeed they are not distinct. And that is what makes a work like Marx', it seems to me, to be scientific.

Walton: I think it is a little more than that. This is a set of premises which are to be argued for: they are demonstrable. The analysis which starts from an anthropological base argues that relationships exist between groups and classes and that the structure of human society is obscured such that those relationships cannot be seen without being subjected to critique. It is necessary to grasp the real nature of those relationships, to engage in dereification, to engage in demystification, to defetishize those relationships. Once you engage in that sort of critique and you make statements about those processes, your scientific exercise is of a very different order from the arguments about the premises, because it revolves in large part around empirical questions. Marx, for instance, states in the preface to Capital that the relationships between classes can at some levels be measured with the objectivity of science. Either the relationships between people imply dominance and control or they do not. Either the relationships between classes implies subjugation or it does not. There are two ways in which Marx claims to be a scientist. In the first place he is saying: the problems of philosophy are at an end, because it does no longer provide us with interesting solutions. All solutions turn out to be imagined. If, however, you begin with man, you reach a juncture at which you can check such solutions, you have the possibility of verifying them, because you are examining factual relationships. In the second place, whenever you speak about relationships, consciousness is an important part of the structural context and consciousness itself is not amenable to the objectivity of science. This presents you with a constant dialectical problem. I am not implying that when Marx is talking about the structure of the economy, he does not feel that he is being absolutely objective, that the relationships are such that people exchange labour in an unequal way, and such that an unequal exchange exists between capital and labour, which forces upon one class an acceptance of a set of social relationships which is in no sense in their real interest. I feel very strongly about this. That is why I have always liked McLellans's work. Although it seems to me to remain uncommitted to Marxism, it has the strongest virtue possible of non-Marxist scholarship

McLellan: Nice to hear.

Walton: ... in that it does not isolate anthropology from the economic system. And what happens with most Marxist, as well as non-Marxist scholarship, is that it pretends that these are different things.

McLellan: I am not quite clear what you are saying. Are you making a distinction between those parts of Marx's thought that can be tested in this scientific manner, because they have nothing to do with consciousness, like the relationships between capital and labour, and other things that are not amenable to quite this sort of testability, which do have a connection with consciousness? These, you are saying, are different in the sense that you go about verifying them or arguing for or against them in a different manner.

Walton: One is a process of deduction and induction from a set of premises which seem to me to be totally unchallengeable. If you want to analyse society in any way, you have to start with the relationships between people, with social production as a fundamental activity which mankind has to return to again and again. These are the premises which Marx works out and rarely restates. Societies are fundamentally social. Non-Marxist work on society will easily veer towards some kind of mistake whereby it obscures this very crucial fact. I do not see how one could work from other premises, if one wants to be consistent.

McLellan: It sounds rather tautological, societies being social and so on.

Walton: It isn't tautological, because large numbers of people engaging in the analysis of society work from premises which are fundamentally unsocial.

Question: Part of our problem could be that this dichotomy between objective description and ethics is a reflection, in consciousness, of the real structure of our society. Social relationships are indeed to a large extent objective processes in which subjective wishes and ideas play only an insignificant role.

Walton: I do not think that is correct. Marx shows that position to be incorrect in the sense that our values, our wishes and our beliefs do have a quite determinate effect on the outcome of social processes.

McLellan: You are right, though, in stating that the very distinction between facts and values is a product of a particular sort of society. Its particular success in the Anglosaxon world, for instance, strongly correlates with an ideology like that of bourgeois liberalism.

Walton: I tend to think practically nowadays (hear, hear). Take, for instance, the question of female oppression. It is quite obvious by a number of objective indices that women

do not receive equal treatment, even in the most advanced societies. They don't get equal job placement, the distribution of income works against them, their occupational positions are not made for them to be able to bear children and work, and so on. So anybody who wants to argue that women are not differentially treated and that this, in some way, is a subtle form of oppression, is just fundamentally wrong. There is no point in arguing with such people unless one feels that somehow, at the level of values, you can win them over to a different point of view. It is an entirely different position to say: oppression of women is there, but it is wrong, and I want to do something about it. Now I am faced with a practical dilemma: how do I treat my wife, my mistress, my lover? Then, of course, immediately all the structural overweight producing the systematic oppression of women in the first place is brought to bear on you. Men are in a privileged position. The mere raising-to-consciousness of this privilege and the attempt to alter it in all sorts of subtle and unsubtle ways will not alter the fact that society is organized in an thousand ways that we have not yet seen, let alone begun to think about or to do anything about. Such oppression will be part of our everyday existence, with whatever man or woman we live. So it is not a value question. At the empirical level the objective indices are there. Individuals' values are relatively unimportant when it comes to big social questions.

Question: Is that not central to our problem? Individuals' values are relatively unimportant and are necessarily constrained by the structural context which surrounds the individual.

McLellan: It certainly accords with a simple definition of alienation: men being dominated by what they themselves have in some way created. However, the terms with which you are measuring depend on what you view as a relatively non-alienated state of affairs.

Walton: Marx's measure is quite clear, it seems to me. In the last instance, societies have to return to production. The prime prerequisite for abolishing alienation must therefore be the abolition of class. All of the other things are incidental, because alienation is rooted in the fundamental relationships of production. Other models start at such a level of abstraction that you cannot actually chart relationships between people. They do not appear, except in the most formal kind of way, when models are built of isolated atomistic individuals who do not exist. The bulk of theories in the field of political economy make contact with reality only at a minor point. They have no notion of the courses of events and the phenomena they are seeking to examine. If social science can still proceed a hundred years after

Marx as if, for instance, state expenditure was a relatively unimportant question, that could just be adjusted like a thermostat on a heating system, then the very blindness of that system to its own dynamics will bring it to destruction. Government advisers and professional economists today are a joke. They are going to lapse into a situation similar to the one which existed prior to Keynesianism, and they are looking around for another revolution in economics. Forget it. There won't be another revolution in economics. It is a political question.

Question: If bourgeois political economy only relates to reality at a minor point, you are obliged to explain why so much money and effort is put into this kind of economy. Are all those who operate it struck blind?

Walton: They are not aware of the fundamental processes. You see, there have only been two revolutions in the history of political economy. One was the marginalist revolution, in which the whole politics of economics, the politics of Ricardo and Smith and all the early political economists was stripped such that you simply got a market statement about how things operated at the margins. The other revolution was the Keynesian revolution, which insisted that people accord the state a central role in the economy. Now we have seen a period of forty years in which recognition of the role of the state was fundamental to national bourgeois economies. And what can be the transition after the state? The international state? It is not possible with private capital accumulation. We now have a situation in which Keynesianism fails. Keynesianism has introduced the state into the arena of the management of the economy. What do you introduce after the state? Do you now argue that it is possible for an international capitalist financial system to occur, such that capitalism truly becomes an international system, that you can allow the destruction of national boundaries, that the European community can grow into a world capitalist community? In the main, every nation state will continue protecting its own national interest. National interest still takes precedence over bourgeois economic interest.

Question: But is not the growing international organization of capital itself more powerful than any national government?

Walton: The crisis is manageable for each country at the national level if it were not for the international movement of capital and finance. That contradiction destroys all these economies. We are facing a long-term decline in the operating feasibility of capital because it cannot internationalize, it cannot set up an international government, it cannot have an international currency. How can you legislate for the removal of one country's surplus such that it

is distributed amongst all those in longterm deficit?
You legislate away private ownership.

McLellan: Does it not depend on the extent to which capital in a country is under the control of that particular country? Isn't there a contradiction between the growing control of the state over the economy and the apparent inability of the state to get together with other states with some sort of share-out?

Walton: They cannot share out because they do not control production. They only control distribution. And they do not control the income returns. All Marxist political economy is premised on the fact that capital cannot become international, that it is not possible to have an international capitalist order. Interestingly enough, the present crisis and the collapse of the dollar have led many people to restudy the Grundrisse, which has a theory of money built into it. Nowhere else does Marx explicitly lay out the theory of money. What is money? It is a claim on labour. This is argued by Marx throughout the book, as Nicolaus in a very peculiar and constrained way points out in the Introduction. Marx takes the Proudhonist time-chitters (Stundenzettler) to task because he speaks about the abolition of evaluating things by labour-time, and not about another form of computation. It is the very measurement of things by labour-time which creates a discrepancy between the currency and the prices of production. What, indeed, are you measuring? You are measuring something which seems to be unmeasurable. You are measuring something you have no conception of: socially necessary labour-time. This must be done on a value basis, not on an objective basis. Therefore currency is never objective. It is not an objective medium. It will operate as such a medium, as a store of value, if in the long run some country holds a hegemony over the rest of the world economy, or attains a partial hegemony. The moment that it loses such a position of dominance, the currency is undermined. What we see at the moment, with free-floating exchange-rates, is in fact the attempted exchange of commodities by labour standard. In other words, the currencies move up and down in terms of the wage-rates in each country, compared with the income rates.

Question: It seems rather easy, as a Marxist, to predict the breakdown of the system within 20 or 30 years, but where, in Marxist theory, do we find a clear connection with the subject who should revolutionize society?

Walton: You have to differentiate between breakdown theory and some theory of revolution. In Marx's works there is no indication that revolution is inevitable. There is every indication that breakdown is inevitable. In moments of crisis the resolution, from the twenties onwards, has always

been the increased socialization of production, whether it be under fascism in some form, or whether it be towards socialism.

Question: Still, a relative silence is maintained about the subject of revolution. What do you feel about Habermas' thesis in Technik und Wissenschaft als Ideologie, which proposes that groups free from direct production, i.e. students, young people in high schools etc. are the main lever of social change?

Walton: I think it is wrong, because it does not understand the basis of class conflict. Habermas explicitly rejects the basis of class conflict, he explicitly rejects the labour theory of value and fundamentally misunderstands it. On what basis does he reject it? He argues that a large percentage of the work force is now skilled and works with heavy capital, with machinery and developed technology. The application of science and technology might well intensify the productivity of individual workers, but it is irrelevant to the labour theory of value. It is a fundamental misunderstanding. How people can look upon Habermas as a Marxist and fail to recognize this fundamental point remains an amazement to me. Now, in so far as Habermas is engaged in a fundamental critique of positivism, it is a brilliant exercise. For instance, he shows in his work wonderfully well that phenomenology has an empiricist base. That is a very difficult thing to do because phenomenology is very difficult to grapple with. But when Habermas comes to questions of the state and society, questions with which Marx was centrally concerned, it is quite clear that he has never read Capital, or that it has been such a cursory reading that he can in no way apply it. In his recent work, where he quotes political economists, like James O'Connor and his book The Physical Crisis of the State, he quotes precisely those people whose position very much derives from a Marxist position, but who say nothing about its basis. O'Connor does not use Marxist terminology in any consistent way. He forgets and confuses all of the central terms, such that they all become fuzzy. And Habermas cheerfully praises this. It is an indication of the inability of the best of German near-Marxism and the whole heritage of the Frankfurt School to confront political economy. It seems to me a very significant omission in the history of Marxism that there have been very few Marxist political economists since Marx. The inability of the Frankfurt School to turn its hand to that area hangs very heavy on German intellectual life.

Question: But does not Habermas retain some of the most cen-

tral insights of Marx' political economy? In Legitimationsprobleme im Spätkapitalismus a central problem of capitalist society, according to Habermas, is socialized production for aims that are not apt for universalization (vergesellschafteten Produktion für nicht verallgemeinerbare Ziele).

Maybe he threw out the labour theory of value, but he kept a central Marxist insight und puts it at the centre of his critique of late capitalism.

Watson: It is not a question of arbitrarily defending the labour theory of value. It is a question of defending a position which seems to me to reveal things about the inner workings of an economy which accumulates private capital. Of course, you can use a number of Marxist terms to express problems with such economies by way of analogy. That is not doing science. It remains the case that capitalism cannot universalize satisfaction, if you mean that you cannot abolish hierarchy and cannot abolish certain relationships of distribution. But why can't capitalism do it? Habermas' work, like the work of Marcuse in that area moves at the level of assertion. Unless you are very precise about the relationships between value and price and you go into the whole question of the transformation problem and the question of the relationships between nation-states, i.e. unless you get into political economy you are merely doing work at the level of assertion.

McLellan: You are right about Marcuse and the whole Frankfurt School tradition in that they have abandoned all class and economic analysis of society. Marcuse in particular, and Habermas in some respects, is looking for a subject of salvation which is basically outside society, whether it be students or whatever. This connects him, in a certain way, with the anarchists: we have to look outside society for the people to overturn it, and not to those groups that, because of their integration in society and because of the pressure of the social-economic processes upon them as a class, are the harbingers of a future society. In that respect Marcuse and Habermas are, I would have said, not Marxists. And curiously enough, they share with the Althusserians an excessive concern with the super-structure, certainly from a Marxist point of view. Here are all these intellectuals, gazing at the super-structure from their ivory towers, who have abandoned any attempt to analyse the situation in terms of the determination by the economy, even in the last instance.

Question: You disagree, of course, with Habermas' contention that the class struggle has become latent.

Watson: In Habermas' view the class struggle has become latent because of the predominance of scientific rationality as a mode of ideology, such that a lesser and lesser amount

of ideology is actually ideology, but is bound up with scientific practise. The whole of his notion of routinization of scientific practise and its incorporation into the activity of the bourgeois state relies on a fundamentally Weberian personalism. He just documents these developments, but furnishes no explanation. At the precise point where he abandons the labour theory of value he introduces some topsy-turvy notion of the importance of science and the application of science to technology. Marx had gone through all of those questions. Habermas' work seems to me to be just a bow to an intellectual audience, an attempt to justify a particular view of society which is not very grounded.

There is no attempt in Habermas to turn back to fundamental socio-economic questions, except when he talks about the institutionalized incorporation of a certain kind of rationality. And what does that rationality depend on, we ask? It depends on the production of an expanding economy. How do you produce an expanding economy? How do you continually produce more goods? Marcuse's argument rests upon precisely that. Capitalism can produce happy consciousness as long as the system continually expands. Habermas asserts that science and technology will assure that the system does expand. If you believe that the relationships between the production of exchange values and the production of use values are such that the fundamental inequality of that exchange will produce structural contradictions, such that you would permanently have problems of distribution, which appear as problems of over-production, once you grasp -and here is where Marx begins the analysis- the difference between the extraction of surplus value rather than simple surplus (i.e. under feudalism), once you look at the neatness of Marx' analytistic work and the way it does describe real relationships, you would not trade it for some hair-brain piece of picked-up Weberianism, pushed at you through the aeons of German philosophy.

Question: Mr. McLellan, this morning you have summed up your objections to the Althusserian School in three main points. Could you restate them and maybe elaborate upon them?

McLellan: The first point concerns a particular issue in the interpretation of Marx which seems to me, quite simply, to be a mistake. It would be a mistake to try and divide Marx up into two or three distinct periods which are characterised by conceptual schemata that are closed within themselves and do not share any concepts. In that respect, the lack of any discussion of the Grundrisse in Althusser's original work -and I am quite open to the suggestion that he has changed his view and I gather that he has in his latest book- seems to me to be significant.

The second point is of a rather more philosophical nature, and concerns the issue of what constitutes the meaning of a given piece of writing. I would say the meaning is inseparable from the general historical context and in particular from the intention with which something is written. You cannot give an account of the meaning of a piece of work without reference to the intention. The particular example, which raises difficulties of interpretation concerning Marx, is the obvious one of irony.

The third point is something rather different. The success of Althusser's doctrines, and particularly in France, seems to place them in the category of ideology, in this sense that they are attractive to the very large group of intellectuals who wish to associate themselves in some way with the Communist party but yet remain self-respecting intellectuals. A whole stream of quite prominent intellectuals in the PCF have been thrown out of the party: Lefebvre and Garaudy are ready examples. They have been thrown out because they seemed to verge on non-communist doctrines, maybe existentialism or left-wing catholicism. At length somebody has come to the fore who is intellectually extremely respectable -Althusser's structural interpretation of Marx is extremely intellectual- but who is at the same time quite clearly a communist, or who at least has nothing to do with things like existentialism or catholicism. He is quite clearly orthodox, so to speak. There is none of this muddying of the waters, and a quite clear commitment.

Secondly, -and this is particularly attractive to intellectuals- it is a Marxism which does not demand any particular practical commitment, there being such things like theoretical practise, which is more important at a particular juncture than actual political or economic practise. You are fully entitled, with a very good consciousness, to sit in your study and to do your research in your university and think purely theoretical thoughts. Before the arrival of this particular version of Marxism I suspect that a lot of people would have had rather bad consciences about sitting in their studies and thinking about Marx. They might have said to themselves: after all, Marx proclaimed the unity of theory and practise, now here's my theorizing, but where is my practise? In the Althusserian vocabulary, they are now able to say: my practise is theoretical. Such an explanation of the success of the structuralist interpretation of Marxism is not devoid of practical significance, for if you believe that one of the fundamental aspects of Marxism is, after all, the analysis of fundamental economic categories, a commitment to the class struggle and the unity of theory and practise, you could say that the structuralist version of Marxism is, in this respect, on all fours with the Frankfurt School: they are abandoning these fundamental concepts that commit people to certain forms of action.

Watson: I would certainly go along with that. Something to be said in favour of both Althusser's and Habermas' work is that it is phenomenologically sensitive. In so far as it raises questions of phenomenological problematics they perform interesting work. But by and large I concur with David's position. I do not really understand what a notion of theoretical practise would be, as it is proposed by those groups which have constituted themselves and have called their work Theoretical Practise, because it stands unrelated to anthropology and dereification. In fact, they make explicit attacks on such positions.

Question: The periodisation problem is, of course, directly connected with the problem we discussed earlier on, concerning a humanistic or scientific interpretation of Marx. The prime motive for separating the juvenile from the mature Marx, to the Althusserians, is precisely to safeguard the scientific character of his system.

McLellan: Scientific in a non-Marxian sense, in a fundamentally French Comtien positivist sense.

Watson: I agree, and I think it is rather odd that again there aren't any Althusserians who are doing work in political economy, with the lone exception of Godelier. What is in about the structure of Althusserian thought that says that the prime task is the scientific analysis of the social relations of commodity production and then does not engage in it? That must be ideology.

Question: What, in your personal view, is the relevance of occupying yourself with Marx, and how do you confront the call for critical political action?

McLellan: Well, Paul is obviously much more practical than I am. What I would hope to do, I suppose, is simply to interest the growing number of students in a deep and serious study of Marx and the later Marxists, to enable them to do what they may wish to do with it, and thus to supply a kind of service. I have spent the last ten years trying to get to grips with Marx because Marx, for my own person, seemed to be about the best thinker -it is difficult to make this not sound too naive- who explained society, the role of ideas in society, and so on. To try and transmit not my particular reading of Marx, but to act as a kind of guide to students who are going into business, journalism, government, whatever, and to give them those tools that I think are absolutely vital for them to get to grips with the problems they may confront.

Watson: I do not think Marx' work is of any use unless it is developed. This is not in any way to dismiss what David does because he probably does much more service to the students than I do. Probably my relationship with the stu-

dents is very bad, in the sense that I spend most of my time working out what I view as practical problems for Marxist scholarship. I very rarely give lectures on Marx. One, because I find it impossibly difficult, and I am not really sure that I understand the work.

Question: You sound very confident, though.

Watson: Oh, well, maybe that's an expression of my ambivalence.

Question: What would you say is the difference between the work David does and your own?

Watson: David's work has been of great service, despite the fact that I have to view it as the work of a Marxologist rather than a Marxist. I find it immensely useful to the Marxist movement to have such work. What I try to do, and what I may easily fail to do, is to apply Marxism to areas where it has not been applied, or where it needs to be applied in a more adequate way. The two areas I have concentrated upon until now have been criminology and deviance theory.

The new criminology concerns itself with the social group which was written off by some Marxists as the lumpenproletariat, namely the criminal classes, the dangerous classes. When we learn, for instance, that there are five million people in the U.S. prisons, which is many, many more than in the army, then a consideration of the role of criminality becomes as important as the role of the military, both in terms of collective numbers and in terms of the experience of various social groups and classes. Criminology has had a very reactionary history. Originally, it was basically biological in orientation. What I wanted to show was that Marxists could do work which would be accepted in criminology, and to stimulate people who were interested in the rather restricted field of deviance, of transactionalism, of a very Americanized pragmatism, to move beyond it. And I think we have had some success: we have made it at least legitimate for people to talk about Marxist criminology.

Question: But surely the difference between Marxism and Marxologism must be more than a difference between application of Marxist theory and general interpretation?

Watson: We try to connect with political movements. But it is a long way from transforming a debate in the groves of academe to effect in the prison movement, although it is not such a long way. Moreover, one has to treat the university as one treats any other place of work. This is where I exchange my labour, for cash, in which I am given time and I feel the responsibility to work towards the transformation of particular questions in order to make them more clear.