



I shall therefore say that, where only a single subject (such and such an individual) is concerned, the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject.

Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, by Louis Althusser, is my first foray into Marxism and I gotta say I enjoyed myself. I don't pretend to be an expert on economic systems, nor can I claim that socialism is superior or inferior to other systems. But what I like is how complete Marxism seems as a world view; almost all of human culture and civilization can be viewed under its lens. Louis Althusser, an important Marxist of the last century, wrote this work to define and describe what he called 'Ideological State Apparatuses', or ISA. These are distinct from traditional State Apparatuses, such as government, the police, and the army, which he redefined as Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA). The difference being that where RSAs rule through violence, ISAs rule through ideology. The institutions of the latter are church, school, family, science, law, and most surprisingly for me: art. Let's run through the argument.

If a society can exist because of its economy, or 'modes of production', then it needs to reproduce those modes to continue to survive. To accomplish this the State constructs apparatuses to perpetuate the modes of production irrespective of who's in charge. The eternal thing is the State; humans come and go. (An example is the concept of wages: workers receive currency for their work so they may eat and reproduce more workers.) The created apparatuses can be divided into two camps: infrastructure and superstructure, where the former is the operating economy (ex. capitalism) and the latter are the ISAs and RSAs. Both of these systems are the source of State Power. Now the reason State superstructure needs both an RSA and ISA is because the State cannot rule on force or ideology alone—both are needed (and preferably married). RSAs are part of the public sphere (falsely perceived to be 'accountable') and the ISAs are part of the private one (falsely perceived to be 'autonomous'). While it's true ISAs can challenge RSAs, they for the most part are in alliance, as the ISA receives support and shielding from the RSA while the RSA receives legitimization from the ISA. It's worth noting that while the Church was classically the most powerful ISA, today it is Academia.

In short, Ideological State Institutions manufacture and institutionalize ideologies necessary for the State to operate. Scary stuff. Thus Althusser argues that ideology is both imaginary and unconscious: it does not reflect reality and is not actively chosen by us. This is the key point, as ideology is traditionally portrayed as a world-view that people actively choose themselves. But instead what's happening is that people, who are forced to labor in alienated conditions, accommodate their surroundings with ideological justification (ex. individualism in a capitalism society, honor is a warrior society, etc.). In turn the ISA's take hold and propound these ideologies so the gears can keep turning. Now, when Althusser called ideologies imaginary he meant that they do not accurately reflect a person's relationship with their environment. We see ourselves as autonomous and empowered individuals, when they are in

fact oppressed subjects. Ironically, he also argues that ideology is fundamentally material, in that it manifests in rituals/custom/routine/everyday action. So we don't just think these fictions, we give them substance by playing them out. This is a self-reinforcing system that is difficult to break and harder to perceive.

One effect produced by all these is the transformation of all individuals into State subjects. But because we are born into this system at (and in many ways before) birth, all individuals are always-already subjects. Althusser even claims that those in charge are subjects to the same State Apparatuses, which make them 'The Subject,' to which the rest of us are subject. It gets even crazier when we apply these terms to other power dynamics: for example, in Christian religion all Christians are subjects to God, who is (in this system) the Subject. Suggesting God is ultimately subordinate to the theological apparatus he created. You may ask why anyone would join this system, even unconsciously, but the important thing is that the State Apparatus allows people to self-dictate within the system. In other words, it's a structure that people can 'work by themselves' (hence it is self-reproducing). The illusion of freedom combined with stability is tempting enough, even when it entails class oppression.

Of course the classic Marxist conclusion to all this is that the proletariat must overthrow these systems: both State power and the State Apparatuses. At this point, though Althusser only briefly and mechanically prescribed this antidote, I smelled a hint of fear in his writing. He mentions how Lenin, when leading his revolution, could dismantle both the State power and RSAs, but tormented over the ISAs, which are ingrained in both the culture and people's psyches. It's because society doesn't exist merely in institutions, but in people's history, in their imaginations, and in their hearts. Old roots run deep. Anyways, while all this was interesting enough, the ramification in art is what interests me most. How art has embedded in it cultural axioms that I should be aware of, both as clichés, but also as potentially oppressive elements. Sexism, racism, class insensitivity; you know the drill. Not completely unknown to me, but seeing it here in this Marxist framework was important. I shall do my part to overthrow the capitalist oppressors, one book review at a time.

Before Althusser, Marxists always leaned on a conspiratorial notion of power as embedded in authority, and of domination as emanating from the top to the bottom of a social pyramid. This vulgar class analysis would see power vested in the sovereign, then the new masters, the owners of the means of production, via the state-form. The state protects the property of the bourgeoisie, through the repressive state apparatuses and the ideological state apparatuses.

Althusser moved away from this "reductionism" to the material base. The superstructure and the base are not only overdetermined, they are inseparable. Power is immanent in the whole. There is no conspiracy from the masters; the master is everywhere. Power in this view is a Spinozist conception of democracy as the empowerment of the self, supports the constituent power, the people against institutions, and other forms of bureaucratic and administrative control. The way to overcome dispersed power is to reclaim power where it is dispersed: the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) such as the Church, schools, etc.

Take 2: Ideology has a material existence

Keep this bit in mind:

"...Ideas or representations etc. which seem to make up ideology *do not have an ideal or spiritual existence, but a material existence.*"

Ideological State Apparatuses are realizations of ideologies; as Althusser says:

"While discussing the Ideological State Apparatuses and their practices, I said that each of them was *a realization of an ideology...*"

'Realization' would imply exactly that ideal or spiritual existence which precedes, or *causes*, its material existence — that which Althusser had denied as a possibility mere moments ago. Thus instead of being something *realized* in an apparatus, it is subsequently "returned to" as always *existing in* an apparatus:

"I now return to this thesis: *an ideology always exists in an apparatus and its practice or practices. Their existence is material.*"

An ideology always exists in an Apparatus, and an Ideological State Apparatus is a realization of an ideology. Paradoxically, ideology thus always exists in (precisely that which is) its realization "as a material existence"— of which it is neither cause nor effect.

We see the same paradox in Spinoza's ethics:

Proposition XXXIII: "Things could not have been brought into being by God in any manner or in any order different from that which has in fact obtained"

In note II:

"But in eternity there is no such thing as when, before, or after; hence it follows solely from the perfection of God; that God never can decree, or never would have decreed anything but what is; *that God did not exist before his decrees, and would not exist without them.*"

God is not, and cannot be an actor separate from the act. Both ideology and God are Lacanian inspired "absent causes" that are "*immanent in their effects*" in a Spinozist sense; that is to say, they solely "exist" after the fact, in a retroactive manner, as their effects (namely, the effect of their material effects). Spinoza points out that humans are insistent on imagining God as a *transitive* cause that precedes his decrees, when he is in fact a cause *immanent* in its (his) effects. This Structural Causality is only found in Marx besides Spinoza, where ideology takes the place of the Spinozist God.

Thus in this matter, to be a Spinozist is exactly the same as to be a Marxist.

Take 3: There is nothing outside of ideology

For Althusser, ideology is like Lacan's Symbolic order: it is how a human subject constructs their reality after entering language, culture, the Symbolic order. This reality is not the Real, which is what always escapes symbolization, but it is the subject's representation of their (Imaginary) reality. Such a subject can never hit the Real, as they're always attempting to do so within the Symbolic order, hence they're always "in" ideology (read: in the Symbolic order).

This differs from how ideology was understood in traditional (pre-Althusserian) Marxism. For Marx, ideology was a kind of false consciousness, one that thought it knew reality, but only really knew something it imagined (for someone inside of ideology, they cannot see the reality outside it); the subject could, however, get "out" of ideology (which, for Marx, obscures reality), thereby understanding reality (e.g., by seeing the real economic base of ideology or the superstructure). "[Marx's ideology] is nothing but outside (for science and reality)": once we have a scientific grasp of reality, then we are not in ideology; you're only in ideology when you're out of a scientific understanding of reality, and vice versa.

For Althusser, like Lacan, however, this is impossible because such a subject relies on language (is in the Symbolic order); rather, the subject can only approach the Real by representing the processes (society, economics, history, institutions, etc.) which interpellate it as ideological.

Althusser:

To take a highly 'concrete' example, we all have friends who, when they knock on our door and we ask, through the door, the question 'Who's there?', answer (since 'it's obvious') 'It's me'. And we recognize that 'it is him', or 'her'. We open the door, and 'it's true, it really was she who was there'. To take another example, when we recognize somebody of our (previous) acquaintance (*(re)-connaissance*) in the street, we show him that we have recognized him (and have recognized that he has recognized us) by saying to him 'Hello, my friend', and shaking his hand (a material ritual practice of ideological recognition in everyday life – in France, at least; elsewhere, there are other rituals).

In this preliminary remark and these concrete illustrations, I only wish to point out that you and I are *always already*

subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects. The writing I am currently executing and the reading you are currently performing are also in this respect rituals of ideological recognition, including the 'obviousness' with which the 'truth' or 'error' of my reflections may impose itself on you.

"Althusser here explains, in systematic fashion, his conception of historical materialism, the conditions for the reproduction of capitalist society, and the revolutionary struggle that seeks to put an end to it. His propositions about ideology and the 'apparatuses', put back in the overall framework of his project and the context of his political thought, reveal their object and presuppositions."

"It confronts us with a question that is today less than ever possible to dismiss as obsolete: under what conditions, in a society that proclaims its devotion to the ideals of freedom and equality, is the domination of some people over others endlessly reproduced?"

"it calls for a reading at several levels: it is a political text that bears witness to its period; an introduction to the Althusserian categories for the analysis of capitalism; and a (novel) theory of the 'Ideological State Apparatuses' and ideological 'interpellation'.

"founded on the idea of a march towards socialism by way of a gradual, legal process of public appropriation of the major means of production."

"the first chapter introduces Althusser's thesis about philosophy as a form that presupposes social conflict and scientific work, and about the history of philosophy as a sequence of conjunctures in which novelty arises at the conjunction of decisive 'political-economic and scientific' 'events.'

"Every 'social formation' is characterized by a 'dominant mode of production.'" "In the model as a whole, the base, not the superstructure (Law, State, Ideologies), is 'determinant in the last instance.'"

"it tends to show the constant conditions in which variation occurs, and eventually puts an end to those constant conditions."

"single theory, but a theory with double entries: reproduction and revolution."

"power is exercised by the dominant class. The struggle of the dominated class has, to be sure, an impact on society. Only the dominant class, however, exercises 'power.' Power = the 'excess' of this class's force over that of the dominated class: 'class domination does indeed find itself sanctioned in and by the state, in that only the Force of the dominant class enters into it and is recognized there. What is more, this Force is the sole "motor" of the state, the only energy to be transformed into power, right, laws and norms in the state.' Law, far from countering domination, is simply a moment of domination."

Revolution consists of a practical, common 'appropriation' by freely associated men and women.

"interpretations of society as penetrated or saturated by class relations and subject to a class power that is exercised through the whole set of institutions."

"civil society also provides the terrain on which the progressive struggle of ascendant class, the proletariat, is played out, and, therefore, the terrain on which is played out the revolutionary process itself." "ensemble of institutions as elements of the state machinery thanks to which the bourgeoisie secures its domination."

"a war for the subjection of one class to another, by way of a mobilization of commodity relations and law, which 'sanctions' these relations."

"ideology does not have 'an ideal, idea-dependent, or spiritual existence, but a material one', for 'an ideology always exists in an apparatus' and Ideological State Apparatuses are the site of a 'realization' of ideology." "'every ideology has the function (which defines it) of "constituting" [concrete individuals as] subjects.'"

interpellation of "the free" is actually the opposite: "a lure, an injunction to conform to the social order based on commodity exchange, to the legal forms that rule it, the representations that justify it, and the practices that they call for."

"imperative to show clearly what sort of system ensures the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist production - production being nothing but a means to the end of capitalist exploitation, since, under the capitalist regime, the production of consumer goods obeys the law of profit alone, and thus the law of exploitation."

"the time is ripe because we need to take stock of things and are capable of taking stock of things." failures at a certain point teach more than a victory, said Lenin, "since its consequences force us to go to the bottom of things."

"Let there be no mistake: we need only become aware of the unprecedented crisis into which imperialism, beleaguered by its contradictions and its victims and assailed by the people, has now plunged, in order to conclude that it will not survive it."

"someone who, confronted with a painful occurrence, 'takes things philosophically' is someone who takes a step back, gets the better of her immediate reaction, and conducts herself in a rational way: she understands the event affecting her and acknowledges its necessity."

"it is not a good method to chop things in half and keep only what suits us. We have to take every aspect of the popular conception of philosophy into account."

"the philosopher 'circulates' in a 'world different' from that of spontaneous popular consciousness."

Every concrete social formation is based on a dominant mode of production. The immediate implication is that, in every social formation, there exists more than one mode of production: at least two and often many more.

In the base, which, in the last instance, determines everything that happens in the superstructure -- in the base, that is, in the unity productive forces/relations of production -- the relations of production are determinant, on the basis of the existing productive forces and within the material limits they set.

A mode of production is, as its name indicates, a way or manner (a mode) of producing. Of producing what? The material goods indispensable to the material existence of the men, women and children living in a given social formation.

A way of tackling nature in order to obtain goods is not a state of mind, a behavioral style, or a mood. It is a set of labour processes that together form a system constituting the production process of a particular mode of production.

Technical level of agents of a labor process is always determined by the nature of the instruments of labor and, more generally, by the the existing means of production.

Some argue: "We have understood what a mode of production is: productive forces set in motion in certain labour processes by agents with special skills."

From the foregoing, a good many 'experts' will conclude: 1) that Marx invented nothing new, since all this is blindingly obvious (w/o suspecting that it has only been blindingly obvious since Marx); and, above all, 2) that we have to do, in all this, with nothing more than technology pure and simple: material technology (tools, machines), technical training of the workforce, and technical organization of the labour process. The experts will feel reassured, and their 'spontaneous' tendency, which is technicist or technocratic, will be reinforced.

In fact, we must squarely rebut them. The productive forces do not suffice to account for a mode of production, since they are just one of its elements. The other is represented by the relations of production.

Marx effectively shows in *Capital* that the mobilization of the productive forces (means of production + labour-power) is incomprehensible unless we understand that it takes place under the aegis of definite relations of production, which play the determinant role in the unity productive forces/relations of production.

We will take a look at the key ideas of early Lenin as in his renowned but misunderstood 1902 work *What is to be done (WITBD)* and see how consistent some of his ideas are to those of his later and lesser known — but equally important — 1920 work, *'Left wing' communism: an infantile disorder (LWC)*.

More importantly, we shall extrapolate Lenin's thoughts particularly in these two works and see how they fit and, in fact, provide us with ideas of what we can do in a postK era. They will, however, be re-examined and re-imagined on a new paradigm as befits us today. This approach may upset Marxist/Leninist/communist puritans and enrage

others of different persuasions, but that would at least be in keeping with Lenin's spirit.

A relook at *What is to be done?*

We should thank Lars T. Lih for his important contribution to 20th century political thought with his book *Lenin Rediscovered: What is to be done? in context* (Haymarket Books 2008). Lih also provides an accurate and highly readable new translation of *WITBD* at the end of his book. Briefly, Lih shows convincingly that the version of Lenin handed down to most of us through many textbooks is a jaundiced one and largely due to the misrepresentation of what he was saying in *WITBD*. The Lenin that does come through from *WITBD* is not only an optimist and a bit of dreamer, but someone realistic enough to understand the need for dedication, discipline, secrecy where required, and who was working tirelessly to create an organization of revolutionaries based on the German social democratic model of the time.

He was against terrorism and wanted a merger of a vanguard leadership of revolutionaries by trade with a guided mass movement of the people. The vanguard would be non-elitist and inclusive of intellectuals, advanced workers and anyone else who fit in. This revolutionary class would help merge with the workers or proletariats to create a focused revolutionary force that would lead to the overthrow of social-economic-political repression and instigate a socialist state which would eventually work its way to the ultimate goal of communism.

Lenin recommended secrecy in launching a revolutionary movement because in Tsarist Russia there was a lack of civil liberties. Lenin would not be averse to using traditional democratic and parliamentary methods to establishing a socialist state but realized that it was a pipe dream trying to enact that in the open in Russia. In other words, he was all for political openness as the best way to bring his ideas across as it would allow for education of all classes of citizens on the value of the ultimate communist vision.

If you think this is quite a revision of Lenin, try reading Lih's recent book *Lenin* (Reaktion Books 2011) where he is equally convincing in presenting its protagonist as someone who envisioned a heroic scenario of revolutionaries and change embedded in some form of romanticism. But better than this, we should take the trouble to do a close reading of Lenin's works for many of our preconceptions about him would be clarified. There is surprisingly, especially in the ideas of the later Lenin, even poignancy in what he was trying to do and what, in many instances, failed to do.

We are influenced in our view of Lenin and Trotsky largely by the state violence and repression of the USSR, especially under Stalin. Yet, if Lenin (who in his later years saw through Stalin) and Trotsky were as ruthless and nihilistic as they have been often painted, they would have conveniently liquidated Stalin.

This they did not do, and the rest is literally history.

Instead, Lenin suffered a couple of assassination attempts and then the three strokes that left him painfully crippled in his final months, knowing full well that Stalin would not complete his and Marx's historical mission but would pervert it.

Trotsky for all his intelligence, internationalism and loyalty to Lenin ended up exiled and brutally murdered in Mexico through an ice pick.

Lenin operated within certain parameters. His intellectual and revolutionary integrity, if anything, kept him within certain bounds. But his genuine internationalist approach and commitment to world revolution rather than a desire to be a mere overlord in his own state makes him a genuine visionary. Compare what he tried to do with what history gave him, to what has been voluntarily and gleefully done by cabals in North Korea and Myanmar; and the quasi successful attempts by the neoconservatives in America to turn the republic into a rogue state.

What Lenin was urging the revolutionary class to do was to provide leadership and guidance to the masses/workers whose natural tendency was to push to satisfy grievances that were mainly economic in nature. Those who supported this approach Lenin termed 'economists' and this strategy of only seeking economic rather than political redress, 'economism'.

Reform, revolution, and resistance — each of these concepts exercises a certain hold over the popular imagination of the Left. While they need not be conceived as mutually exclusive, the three have often sat in uneasy tension with one another over the course of the last century, however. The Polish Marxist Rosa Luxemburg famously counterposed the first two in her pamphlet *Reform or Revolution?*, written over a hundred years ago. In her view, this ultimately turned out to be a false dichotomy. Nevertheless, Luxemburg was addressing a real dilemma that had emerged along with the formation of the Second International and the development of mass working-class politics in the late nineteenth century. Even if she was able to conclude that reforms could still be pursued within the framework of a revolutionary program — that is, without falling into *reformism* — this was by no means an obvious position to take.

Still less should we consider the matter done and settled with respect to our current context, simply because a great figure like Luxemburg dealt with it in her own day. We do not have the luxury of resting on the accomplishments or insights of past thinkers. It is unclear whether the solution at which she arrived then holds true any longer. History can help us understand the *momentum* of the present carried over from the past, as well as possible futures toward

which it may be tending. But it offers no prefabricated formulae for interpreting the present, no readymade guides to action.



Neither can the difficulty of relating these three concepts — reform, revolution, and resistance — be avoided by invoking the commonplace of a "diversity of tactics." Each of these ostensibly refers to an overarching *strategy* for achieving emancipation, and thus cannot be reduced to a mere selection of *tactics*. With "resistance," it is uncertain if this activity (or passivity) ever even attains to the level of a conscious strategy, much less tactics. In Foucault's metaphysics of power, resistance is an unconscious, automatic, and reflexive response to power relations wherever they exist. "Where there is power, there is resistance," claims Foucault. As a statement, however, this says nothing of the world as it ought to be, or how such a world might be brought into existence. At most, it only describes a fact of being.[1]

But perhaps all this already assumes too much. The more fundamental question that presently confronts us is the following: What do reform, revolution, and resistance even *mean* today? In their modern usage these concepts each arose historically, in connection with concrete processes and events. These are hardly "perennial" categories reaching all the way back to the dawn of man; indeed, the oldest among them is only as old as the Left itself. A review of the contexts in which these concepts crystallized may help clarify their bearing on the present. Not that history has the final word on what this or that term really signifies. Tracing the origins of a concept's modern usage should not be thought of as a way to recover its "authentic" meaning. However, if a substantial revision has taken place in the conceptualization of reform, revolution, or resistance, we should be honest about this departure. This is especially true with the category of "revolution," which has undergone the most significant renovation in the discourse of #Occupy. For if *reform* was the most problematic figure of thought for Luxemburg in 1900, and *resistance* for [Platypus](#) five years ago, then the most pressing concept in need of clarification for the Left right now is *revolution*. If former conceptions of revolution prove to be inadequate or unrealistic, this does not mean we are forbidden from using the word, of course. But we should at least be clear about the break, so as to not fool ourselves that we are somehow remaining loyal to the good old cause.

These failures, one in the Global South, the other within the European Union, occurred at a moment when the formation of working class identity, especially in the Global North, is facing more challenges than ever before.[2] The manufacturing industries which formed the context in which working class consciousness was forged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries continue to move to lower wage countries. Trade unions, important schools for working class consciousness, continue to decline in terms of density and power, sapping any fighting spirit left in the working class. Perhaps even more tellingly, the entire meaning of "social" and "collective power" is changing. As virtual links between people become more ubiquitous, collective power becomes more voluntaristic, affinity-based, and ephemeral. Temporary on-line movements spring up constantly, attracting people from diverse walks of life who happen to feel allegiance to some goal. The movements are easily joined and make no onerous demands: from the comfort of one's living room one can donate money to local rescues for feral cats and in the next minute sign an on-line petition against human rights violations in Syria. Marx speculated that under communism a person could hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, and criticise after dinner without ever becoming a hunter, a fisher, or a critic. That goal has not been realized, but in a farcical distortion wired capitalism allows one to be an advocate for feral cats in the morning, a proponent of human rights in Syria in the evening and a gamer all-night, without *becoming* (i.e., permanently determining one's identity by identification with the goal) a cat advocate or a human

rights crusader. Identity remains fluid, something to play with and not commit to, unlike Marx's understanding of class consciousness, which would bind individual goals to the collective project. Assuming that there will be no catastrophe that impedes the further development of communication technologies, and that younger generations will be shaped in their sense of self by the changed work and social relationships that on-line environments make possible, nineteenth and twentieth century forms of working class consciousness and struggle seem impossible to revive, at least in the Global North.

Yet, however unsettling to earlier forms of human interaction on-line environments might be, the very fact that the software that enables human interconnection is called "social" media should tell us something important: on-line environments still respond to and serve, as did village squares in the Middle Ages and telephones in the 1960's, the need for human beings to communicate, to interact with one another, to feel that they belong somewhere. Whether they do as good a job as less mediated and more face to face forms of interaction is a question that I leave aside here. The important point is that they are grounded upon and develop out of the social nature of human subjectivity and agency. We cannot be individuals in a vacuum; we need to share our ideas with others, we need their affirmation (and criticism); there are no absolutely self-made individuals but everyone becomes who they are by the appropriation of shared material and symbolic resources, and the creation of the "product"—one's self—is a public performance.

If work identities are being weakened in the Global North, (which is not to say that the need to work is being weakened—if anything, it becomes more important in the age of precarious labour) then what we might call, following Henri Lefebvre, the construction of identities in *everyday life* is becoming more important. Critics might conclude from this turn towards the everyday that since there is little *talk* of socialism in the Global North, and since what explicit struggles there are for it appear to be failing, all the sociological, political, and historical evidence suggests that it is finally time to stop thinking about the alternative to capitalism *as* socialism.[3] Perhaps that is true, if we think of socialism in some doctrinaire way, as the liberation of the productive forces from the fetters of capitalist relations of production achieved through working class revolution led by a vanguard party. But why should anyone think of socialism as it was defined in the nineteenth century as applicable to the twenty-first? One answer that I do not share is that socialism was conceived as the antithesis of capitalism. Therefore, if the problems that capitalism causes are still the same, (and they are), then, if socialism means anything definite at all, it must mean what it meant when it was demonstrated (by Marx and Engels) to be the necessary antithesis of capitalism. If socialism *cannot be realised* in that form, then we should simply stop talking about socialism and give another name to the alternative which society struggles against capitalism and seeks to build. I see the sense in this argument, but I will not heed its advice. Nor, however, will I seek to rescue the doctrinaire definitions of socialism from what I regard as the passing of its historical moment of possibility. Instead, I want to defend a conception of socialism (which we can also find in Marx and Engels, although I will not focus on their texts here) as a value system (leaving open the question of institutionalization) which is grounded in certain permanent needs of social individuals, needs which capitalism systematically fails to satisfy (or satisfies only in distorted form). Since capitalism cannot satisfy these needs in any ultimately satisfying way, it will never be fully stable or its future permanently secured. Although the means of struggle may change and the political identities that lead the struggle might shift, the alternative towards which the struggles tend, if they are genuinely progressive struggles, will always best be called 'socialism' because the good they seek to ensure is the good of life-valuable self-realization *enabled by* cohesive, ecologically sustainable, and democratic societies.

The point of maintaining the word 'socialism' is to emphasise that the conditions for meaningful and life-valuable individual freedom are found in our deep (transhistorical, cross cultural) capacity to cooperate, to recognise and respond to harm across cultural differences, to feel equally affirmed by our own and others' successes. This foundation in the depth sociality of human beings is what McMurtry calls the "life-ground" of value in its interpersonal, social, and ecological dimensions: "People feel the common life-ground without knowing it ... Humans need to be near to other forms of life to be fully alive, radiating out to and in from the infinite life-field that makes their living now possible. The more one participates, the better. This is the life-code felt in intuition." [4] When we think of socialism as emerging out of this depth sociality, it becomes clear that its achievement (or not) is never an all or nothing singular event, but an open ended process of institutionalization in a variety of forms, organically across generational time by principled commitment to using natural resources and social wealth to satisfy fundamental natural and socio-cultural life-requirements. Thus, rather than see public health care, for example, as part of a reformist agenda for a better capitalism, my position sees it as an element of socialist society existing within capitalism, albeit in inadequate under-resourced and bureaucratic form. If my view is correct, then the process involves, but is not reducible to, political struggle against specific, structural blockages to further development. Beneath these particular explosions is a deeper process of structural and normative change across time carried forward by rejection of socially enforced beliefs in the superiority of one group of people *vis-a-vis* another, and therefore loss of legitimacy of the institutions of socially enforced exclusion and deprivation. The vehicle by

which this goal is carried forward, therefore, is not class-consciousness in the narrow sense, but recognition of the life-ground, that is, attunement to the needs all human beings share. The reality of these needs is daily pressed home for the majority of people because their lives under capitalism are unsatisfying and unhealthy (in the broadest sense of the term). Once we trace those everyday feelings of deprivation to the dynamics of capitalist society as their cause, revitalized movements against capitalism and for socialism, i.e., collective commitment to all-round life-requirement satisfaction but open-mindedness as to institutional forms, become possible.