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**Social Justice and Modern Capitalism: Historiographical Problems, Theoretical
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Social Justice and Modern Capitalism: Historiographical Problems, Theoretical Perspectives

The collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 marked the end of a historical constellation dominated by a divide between socialism and capitalism. The decade after 1989 has been prone to celebrations of the triumph of the latter over the former. “Real socialism” has indeed effectively ceased to exist – almost no country today pursues a socialist path of development. However, we see the historical failure of real socialism, not as justifying a simple neoliberal triumphalism in which global capitalism has swept all before it, but as an opportunity for retrieving alternative critiques of capitalist society. For 1989 inevitably also eroded the conceptual pairing of socialism versus capitalism that structured historical, theoretical, and political debate. This essay and the papers to follow are an attempt to write new histories of capitalism and social justice by reappraising diverse critiques of capitalism, their historical genealogies and theoretical workings, their impact on political economy, and their continuing legacy and relevance today.

As the first industrial nation, Britain offers a uniquely rich field for this revisionist project. The dialogue between intellectual traditions, social movements, and modern capitalism first took shape in Britain in the eighteenth century. The imperial and transatlantic dimensions of British power ensured that this dialogue was never an insular, self-contained story; rather, it connected with vast areas of the globe. Equally important, Britain’s pioneering path to modernity made the British case the ideal or critical model for political debate and economic developments elsewhere. Although other countries faced different problems and conceived these from within different traditions, they often

did so within a context in which the British experience and British debates provided constant points of reference.

If the end of the simple division between socialism and capitalism makes it possible to tell new histories, related developments in philosophy and history have changed the way in which these can be told. Historical studies have followed a range of linguistic, cultural, and postmodern turns promoting greater sensitivity to the languages and beliefs of the past. Meanings are no longer reduced to “real” socio-economic developments in the way they were in much elder social history. And with this has come a greater sensitivity to diverse critiques of capitalism than was common in the elder social history with its more or less exclusive concern with the rise of a mature class consciousness. The pioneering role of British social historians in the international development of social history as a professional subject and ideological commitment meant that the arrival of the linguistic turn provoked particularly charged and often explosive debates in the community of British historians.¹ Once again, then, the British case offers a convenient entry point into larger methodological and theoretical arguments.

¹ See the exchange between Patrick Joyce, Lawrence Stone, and Gabrielle M. Spiegel in Past and Present, 133 (Nov.1991), 204-209 and 135 (May 1992), 189-208. David Mayfield and Susan Thorne, “Social history and its discontents: Gareth Stedman Jones and the politics of language”, in Social History, XVII, 2 (May, 1992), 167-88; Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor, “The poverty of protest: Gareth Stedman Jones and the politics of language -- a reply”, in Social History, XVIII, 1 (Jan. 1993), 1-15. Patrick Joyce, “The imaginary discontents of social history: a note of response to Mayfield and Susan Thorne, and Lawrence and Taylor”, in Social History, XVIII, 1 (Jan. 1993), 81-5; James Vernon, “Who’s afraid of the ‘linguistic turn’? The politics of social history and its discontents”, in Social History, XIX, 1 (Jan. 1994) Patrick Joyce, “The end of social history?”, in Social History, XX, 1 (Jan. 1995), 73-91; Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, “Starting over: the present, the post-modern and the moment of social history”, in Social History, XX, 3 (Oct. 1995), 355-64. David Cannadine, “British history: past, present and -- future?,” Past and Present, CXVI (1987), 169-91. Gareth Stedman Jones, “The Determinist Fix: Some Obstacles to the Further Development of the Linguistic Approach to History in the 1990s”, in History Workshop, 42 (1996), 19-35. For the reception of the linguistic turn in a country with a different tradition of histories of society, such as German Gesellschaftsgeschichte, see e.g. Thomas Mergel, Thomas Wellskopp, eds., Geschichte zwischen Kultur und Gesellschaft (Munich: Beck, 1997).

Our theoretical approach and the historical questions we seek to pose can sit comfortably alongside many of the linguistic or post-modern turns. We want to explore the location of diverse critiques in intellectual traditions rather than returning to the reductionism implicit in orthodoxy. Equally though we want to tie traditions to practices and their development to dilemmas so as to encourage new ways of conceiving of the interaction of economy and culture. If the old social history suffered from a materialist account of ideas and culture, the new preoccupation with language has often led to an unfortunate divorce of ideas and culture from the changing material world of political economy. By contrast, our interest in reform traditions is concerned with the relationship between ideas and praxis, between the interaction of ethical, social, and political efforts to reform or transcend capitalism and the development of commercial, industrial societies. Retrieving alternative critiques of capitalist society is therefore also an opportunity for reintegrating the historical study of ideas, society, and political economy.

The essays collected in this volume seek to unpack diverse critiques of capitalism by exploring how different accounts of capitalism are constructed from within wider webs of beliefs often embedded in distinct social and political movements. In addition, they seek to explain these beliefs and movements by reference to the traditions and practices that informed them, and to the dilemmas in response to which people developed or modified the relevant traditions and practices. Our opening essay aims to provide a pathway to the principal historiographical and theoretical underpinnings of this revisionist project. A brief discussion of the intellectual and political challenges to orthodoxy points to continuity and populism as prominent themes within alternative narratives of capitalism and its critics. We then highlight methodological and theoretical blind-spots in

the new literature, especially the twin problems of explaining change and of situating languages in beliefs and practices. New, more persuasive narratives, we suggest, will benefit from exchanging a problematic view of language as a quasi-structure in which individuals are provided with beliefs to one in which historical individuals inherit intellectual traditions but are nonetheless creative actors who can adopt and change beliefs within any given language. In turn, this shift opens up fresh questions and perspectives on the evolving relationship between modern capitalism and ideas of social justice. Greater attention needs to be given to the pluralistic and evolving nature of intellectual traditions, how individuals and groups deal with dilemmas and change their beliefs, and the ways in which reform traditions and capitalism are not merely opposites but interwoven processes, deeply implicated in the evolution of each other.

Historiographical Issues: Class and Language

The orthodox historiography emerged in the late nineteenth century alongside the socialist movement, and it then remained largely unchallenged within social history until the 1970s.² Orthodoxy attracted Marxists, labourists, and some progressives, ranging from G. D. H. Cole to the Hammonds, and E.P.Thompson to Eric Hobsbawm. These historians generally told a unified and linear story about capitalism and its critics. Capitalism, they argued, possessed an innate, largely natural trajectory that was defined by its inner laws. Initial opposition to capitalism took the form of Luddite resistance that

² See Mark Bevir, "Republicanism, Socialism, and Democracy in Britain: The Origins of the Radical Left", Journal of Social History 34 (2000), 89-107. For non-Marxist traditions of social history, see Miles Taylor, "The Beginnings of Modern British Social History", History Workshop 43 (1997), 155-176.

was soon exposed as naïve.³ Social critics and others had to learn to come to terms with a capitalist society that was generated independently of their beliefs and their actions. Once the workers caught up with reality, once they acquired greater class-consciousness around 1832, they began increasingly to aim at class cohesion as a means of acquiring political power.⁴ Their class-consciousness appeared and grew in Chartism, the trades union movement, the Labour Party, and the welfare state. Orthodox historiography thus defined a clear research agenda around the topics of class, production, the rise of trades unions and the Labour Party, and the central state as the agency of socio-economic transformation.

Orthodox historiography sometimes drew on a materialism and determinism associated with Marxist theory. Equally important, however, was the ease with which it fit into general accounts of the nineteenth century as a time of unprecedented growth and modernisation. The Industrial Revolution, historians were convinced, resembled a sudden, rapid “take off” to modernity in the early nineteenth century. It marked a decisive break with “traditional society”, producing factories, the bourgeoisie, political reform, and also an organized working class, and consequently class conflict and accommodation.⁵ Even when social historians, led by E. P. Thompson, emphasized human agency against the crude, reifying Marxism of the Stalin era, they still studied the way agents had made this modern world. When Thompson studied “the poor stockinger,

³ Eric Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959).

⁴ E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London: Harmondsworth, 1981; 1st edn 1963).

⁵ W. W. Rostow, The Stages of Economic Growth: a Non-Communist Manifesto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Asa Briggs, The Age of Improvement, 1783-1867 (London: Longman, 1959) G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); Harold Perkin, Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880 (London: Routledge, 1969); and G. M. Young, Victorian England: Portrait of an Age (London: Oxford University Press, 1936).

the Luddite cropper, the obsolete hand-loom weaver, the utopian artisan”, he did so not only to rescue them “from the enormous condescension of posterity,” but also to show how they had made a modern, organized, and politically conscious working class.⁶

Although Thompson emphasized the part played by English radical protestantism, agency was fundamentally taken to rest on more or less pure experiences of socio-economic reality. Moreover, because the nature and transparency of this socio-economic reality was not questioned, the turn to agency left the orthodox historiography in tact even as it broadened the research agenda to encompass more subjective aspects of the past.

The challenges to orthodoxy that arose in the late 1970s and the 1980s reflected both the failings and successes of Thompson’s intervention as well as a changing political and social landscape marked by the rise of the new conservatism, de-industrialisation, identity politics, and new social movements. These challenges propelled, on the one hand, a reconsideration of the apparent failure of the working-class and, on the other, a greater appreciation of non-class based identities. Together, they prompted a recognition of the gulf between language and material reality. Marxist historians had long appealed to various alibis to explain the embarrassing failure of the working-class to fulfill its revolutionary role. The rise of Thatcherism posed a broader difficulty for orthodoxy as a whole: the march of labour from the factory through class consciousness and political organization to the welfare state had ended in a way that raised questions about its efficacy as the dominant story of modernity.⁷ Historians sometimes attempted to deal with such embarrassments by appealing to theories about the peculiar natures of the

⁶ Thompson, Making of English Working Class, p. 12.

⁷ For an orthodox attempt to deal with this difficulty see Eric Hobsbawm et. al., The Forward March of Labour Halted (London: New Left Books, 1981).

British bourgeoisie and workforce or to theories about hegemony and social control.⁸

Thompson, in contrast, associated his turn to agency with an influential repudiation of theorizing in favour of a focus on the experience of the people of the past.⁹

Gareth Stedman Jones was one who defended theory in the wake of Thompson.¹⁰ While his early work still appealed to social control as a way of explaining the “failure” of the working class,¹¹ his later study of Chartism, treated the language of protest as relatively autonomous from the external development of capitalism.¹² The language of Chartism revealed a political movement as much as a social one, and one that was less the inauguration of a modern working-class looking forward to the twentieth century and more the end of a popular radicalism reaching back to the eighteenth century. While this argument can be read as a response to the orthodox concern with the workers’ failure to perform their allotted role, it at the same time undermined the foundations of orthodox historiography. On the one hand, the absence of the working-class meant it no longer needed an alibi for its failings. On the other, however, its very absence, and the gap between social reality and language, shattered the orthodox narrative of modern history as the story of classes that arose inexorably out of the industrial revolution.

⁸ See Eric Hobsbawm, “The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth-Century Britain”, in Labouring Men (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), 272-315; Tom Nairn, “The Fateful Meridian”, New Left Review 60 (1970), 3-35; Stuart Hall, “The Great Moving Right Show”, in Stuart Hall & Martin Jacques, eds., The Politics of Thatcherism (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980).

⁹ E. P. Thompson, “The Poverty of Theory”, in The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays. The conflation of a concern for agency with a dismissal of theory has left an unfortunate legacy on British history. A commitment to theory has characteristically come to mean an eschewal of agency, as amongst most followers of linguistic, cultural, and postmodern turns who conceive of language as quasi-structure, see n.1 above, and p.000 below.

¹⁰ Gareth Stedman Jones, “The Pathology of English History”, New Left Review 46 (1967), 29-45; and Gareth Stedman Jones, “From Historical Sociology to Theoretical History”, British Journal of Sociology 27 (1976), 295-305.

¹¹ Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

Ironically, parallel challenges to orthodoxy also arose out of the very success of Thompson's intervention. Thompson's conviction of the moral importance of conferring voice and agency on hidden figures of the past inspired numerous historians. Of course, Thompson held an idealized view of a robust masculine working-class engaged in public bodies and didactic self-improvement, a view that echoed a long-standing cultural bias amongst socialists and radicals towards production at the expense of commercial mass consumption. Engaging with the mass culture of the 1960s and 1970s, however, some historians began to unpack the rather different voices and agency of workers interested in the music hall, football, and private leisure activities.¹³ An interest in acts and sites of consumption also began to recast the study of cultural and political identities and so to challenge the privileging of production within orthodox historiography.¹⁴ The shift in research from the factory floor to the family household, the department store, and the imperial museum, received part of its momentum from the energy released by new social movements and new feminist and post-colonial theories giving voice and agency to women, gays, minorities, and colonial subalterns. Their inclusion in the historical record pointed to frequent contrasts and tensions between such people and the workers. Joan

¹² Gareth Stedman Jones, "Rethinking Chartism", in Languages of Class: Studies in English Working-class History, 1832-1982 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹³ E.g. Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); Peter Bailey, Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Ross McKibbin, "Working-Class Gambling in Britain, 1880-1939," Past and Present, 82 (Feb. 1979); Chris Waters, British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990). Gary Cross, Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993). Note, both Gareth Stedman Jones and Patrick Joyce have done work on the music hall.

¹⁴ See, e.g. Judith Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992); Ellen Ross, Love and Toil (Oxford, 1993). Victoria deGrazia, ed., The Sex of Things (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); and most recently, Erika Rappaport, Shopping for Pleasure : Women in the Making of London's West End (Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 2000); Frank Trentmann, "Bread, Milk, and Democracy: The Reconfiguration of Consumption and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Britain", in

Scott explicitly argued, for example, that the Victorian working class was a masculine construction defined in contrast to a middle class that thus acquired a correspondingly feminine identity.¹⁵ A new generation of imperial historians highlighted the racist elements of many social and political reform movements in nineteenth-century Britain.¹⁶ A greater awareness of issues of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and consumption thus cut through the comfortable unifying thread of an orthodox narrative in which the working class, as the natural champion of people's rights and interests, was walking towards the telos of industrial modernity and social democracy

The turn to non-class based social categories, like gender and ethnicity, was accompanied by a theoretical shift that widened the gap between language and social reality further. Scott criticised Stedman Jones for adopting a too conservative conception of language. Appealing to French post-structuralists such as Michel Foucault, she urged historians to pay attention to the way in which language constructed both subjects and their worlds. Patrick Joyce has made much the same point while arguing that class was at best one identity among many, and had little relevance in the nineteenth century when a

The Politics of Consumption, eds. Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001).

¹⁵ Joan Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). Cf., Anna Clark, The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). For an argument of the political construction of the middle class, see Dror Wahrman, Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of class in Britain, c. 1780-1840 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁶ Catherine Hall, White, Male, and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Antoinette Burton, Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context (New York: Routledge, 1995).

discourse of “the people” dominated.¹⁷ Class thus became reduced to one possible linguistic construct.

The shift away from the orthodox core concept of “class” stands as part of a general re-thinking of the relationship between politics, society, and economy. Much attention has focused on the creation and reordering of these spheres as knowledge systems in a way that challenges the older account of the linear evolution of modern “society” and “economy” as somehow given and self-explanatory spheres. Rather than presuming the economy to be some essential sphere that impinged directly on the lives of historical actors, recent studies have shown how the understanding of social and economic processes remained embedded in larger religious, moral, and political knowledge systems. It was only in the Victorian period that political economists and social analysts came to define the “economy” as a separate secular sphere, from which “social” problems could be read off, and which was seen to be composed of self-regulating individuals; arguably, well into early twentieth century politics, subjects like “consumption” remained embedded in popular normative understandings of civil society and citizenship.¹⁸ In short, the orthodox narrative of modernity operated with key categories of “society” and “self”, structure and agency that were themselves historically specific categories of the time period in question, rather than universal analytical ones.

¹⁷ Patrick Joyce, Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1840-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See also James Vernon, Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c.1815-1867 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁸ Mary Poovey, Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Patrick Joyce, “The End of the Social?”, Social History 20 (1995), 73-91, and Joyce, Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Boyd Hilton, The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988). Frank Trentmann, “Civil Society, Commerce, and the ‘Citizen-Consumer’”, in Frank Trentmann, ed., Paradoxes of Civil Society: New

Orthodoxy was thus implicated in a language of “society”, which many post-modernists, following Michel Foucault, saw as responsible for a modern “disciplinary individualism”. As a result, the emancipatory project of older social history has become increasingly problematic.

Continuity and Populism

The various challenges to orthodoxy point to the outlines of an alternative story in which two themes dominate: continuity and populism. We want to endorse these themes generally, but at the same time point to problems within them to which this volume hopes to provide some theoretical and analytical resolutions.

Continuity has emerged as a leading theme as the chasm between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been bridged from both ends. For the eighteenth century, J. G. A. Pocock, Donald Winch, and other intellectual historians have explored the diverse, complex languages within which social theorists and economists responded to the rise of capitalism, commercialism, and market society.¹⁹ For the nineteenth century, Stedman Jones, Eugenio Biagini, Greg Claeys and others have traced the persistence of these very languages in various radical protest movements, including the Painites, Owenites, Chartists, and liberal radicals.²⁰ Indeed, popular radicalism continued to have a definite

Perspectives on Modern German and British History (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), pp. 283-305.

¹⁹ J. G. A. Pocock, Virtue, Commerce, and History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Donald Winch, Adam Smith's Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978). For an extreme revisionist emphasis on institutional and social as well as intellectual continuities between the eighteenth and nineteenth century, see Richard Price, British Society, 1688-1880: Dynamism, Containment, and Change (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁰ Greg Claeys, Citizens and Saints: Politics and Anti-Politics in Early British Socialism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Greg Claeys, Thomas Paine: Social and Political Thought (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Greg Claeys, “The Origins of the Rights of Labour: Republicanism, Commerce, and

presence in the late nineteenth-century “socialist revival” and the Labour Party.²¹

Although we should be careful not to neglect the transformation wrought on political languages by the Enlightenment, evangelicalism, and romanticism,²² it now seems clear that early critics of capitalism often drew on a form of popular radicalism that resembled eighteenth century republicanism at least as much as it does twentieth century socialism.

It is helpful to situate the British historiographical turn to continuity alongside the simultaneous global revival of interest in “civil society”, and its suspicion of totalising ideologies and the state.²³ Where orthodoxy asked questions about class formation, class conflict, and the relationship between class-based parties and the state, this movement pointed to the rich heritage of “civil society” as a relatively autonomous space outside formal politics, an idea of toleration and difference, and the culture of voluntary associations. Here again, studies retrieved the importance of pre-socialist ideas for the analysis of modern society, such as Tom Paine’s vision of a vibrant civil society with a minimal state.²⁴ Social historians retrieved the continued significance of voluntary

the Construction of Modern Social Theory in Britain, 1796-1805”, *Journal of Modern History* 66 (1994), 249-90; and Stedman Jones, “Rethinking Chartism”. On the persistence of the language of moral economy see also Joyce, *Visions of the People*, pp. 87-113.

²¹ Jon Lawrence, “Popular Radicalism and the Socialist Revival in Britain”, *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992), 163-86; Eugenio Biagini, Alastair Reid, eds., *Continuities of Radicalism*; Duncan Tanner, “The Development of British Socialism, 1900-1918”, *Parliamentary History* 16 (1997), 48-66. Mark Bevir, “The British Social Democratic Federation 1880-1885: From O’Brienism to Marxism”, *International Review of Social History* 37 (1992), 207-229.

²² Boyd Hilton, *Age of Atonement*; Mark Bevir, “English Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century”, *History of Political Thought* 17 (1996), 114-127.

²³ John Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives* (London: Verso, 1988). Andrew Arato and Jean L. Cohen, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1992). John Hall, ed., *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995); Frank Trentmann, ed., *Paradoxes of Civil Society*.

²⁴ John Keane, “Despotism and Democracy: The Origins and Development of the Distinction between Civil Society and the State 1750-1850,” in *Civil Society and the State*, ed. Keane, 35-71. See also, Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, eds., *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). For the role of association in British socialist thought, see Paul Hirst, *The Pluralist Theory of the State: Selected Writings of G.D.H. Cole, J.N. Figgis and H.J. Laski* (London, 1989). The idea and praxis of civil society, concerned with ideals of

associations.²⁵ Instead of looking at the politics of social movements primarily in relation to the state, the turn to civil society takes seriously the idea that many groups direct their collective action towards self-governance and the reform of society from within. In contrast to a simple divide between capitalism and its critics, we now have a richer understanding of the reform aspirations of groups like co-operators and radicals who embraced policies such as Free Trade in the hope of strengthening their own autonomy and that of civil society against commercial capitalism.²⁶

Populism is a second theme in many of the works challenging the orthodox historiography. By contrast to the orthodox preoccupation with class as the defining identity of modern society, interest today has shifted to other identities, and class has been diffused, even dissolved. At times, class is reinterpreted as just one identity, which is created and maintained in tandem with others, such as gender. Thus, historians have debated the ways in which the making of the middle and working classes was intertwined with the making of patriarchal domestic ideology. Patriarchy at the same time cut across and reinforced class distinctions: both working-class and middle class women were excluded from the public sphere, but the former experienced this principally in labour markets while the latter did so in the household.²⁷ What is more, historians have not

tolerance the ability to disagree, ought to be distinguished from the concepts of community and public sphere that have made their way into some of the historiographical literature on radical continuities, e.g. Eugenio Biagini, ed., Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁵ R.J. Morris, "Clubs, societies and association," in F.M.L. Thompson, ed. The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950, III, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 395-443.

²⁶ Trentmann, "Civil Society, Commerce, and the 'Citizen-Consumer'".

²⁷ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850 (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Catherine Hall, "The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology", in Sandra Burman, ed., Fit Work for Women (New York: St Martin's, 1979), pp. 15-31; Anna Clark, Struggle for the Breeches; Dror Wahrman, "'Middle Class' Domesticity Goes Public: Gender, Class, and Politics from Queen Caroline to Queen Victoria," Journal of British Studies 32 (1993), 396-432. Cf.

limited themselves here to the categories associated with identity politics – gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. In defiance of the orthodox denigration of primitive rebellions, they are paying increasing attention to the impact of religious, aesthetic, moral, and patriotic beliefs on radical politics.²⁸ Finally, historians of the populist turn have argued that “the people” or “demos”, rather than class, acted as the main frame of collective identity for workers in the nineteenth century.²⁹

The new focus on continuity and populism alike has a symbiotic relationship to studies of the long and ambivalent nature of the industrial revolution.³⁰ Industrialization,

John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999).

²⁸Steven Yeo, “A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain 1883-1896”, *History Workshop* 4 (1977), 5-56. Miles Taylor, “Patriotism, History and the Left in Twentieth-Century Britain”, *Historical Journal* 33 (1990), 971-987; Raphael Samuel, ed., *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, 3 vols. (London: Routledge, 1989); Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Royal Historical Society, 1998); Greg Claeys, “The Lion and the Unicorn: Patriotism and Orwell's Politics”, *Review of Politics* 57 (1985), 186-211; Graham Johnson, “British Social Democracy and Religion, 1881-1911”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51 (2000), 94-115; Michael Kenny, “Socialism and the Romantic ‘Self’: The Case of Edward Thompson”, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 5 (2000), 105-127; Meredith Veldman, *Fantasy, the Bomb and the Greening of Britain: Romantic Protest, 1945-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). See also our own work on this problematic, Mark Bevir, “British Socialism and American Romanticism”, *English Historical Review* 110 (1995), 878-901; Mark Bevir, “Annie Besant's Quest for Truth: Christianity, Secularism, and New Age Thought”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 50 (1999), 62-93; Mark Bevir, “The Labour Church Movement, 1891-1902”, *Journal of British Studies* 38 (1999), 217-45; Frank Trentmann, “Wealth versus Welfare: The British Left between Free Trade and National Political Economy before the First World War”, *Historical Research* (1997), 70-98.

²⁹Joyce, *Visions of the People*; Joyce, *Democratic Subjects*; Vernon, *Politics and the People*; John Belchem, “Republicanism, Popular Constitutionalism and the Radical Platform in Early Nineteenth Century England”, *Social History* 6 (1981), 1-32; Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*. See also James Epstein, “The Populist Turn,” *Journal of British Studies*, 32 (1993), 179-89.

³⁰N.F.R. Crafts, *British Economic Growth During the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); Maxine Berg, *The Age of Manufactures, 1700-1820* (London: Fontana, 1985); Peter Kriedte, Hans Medick, and Jürgen Schlumbohm, *Industrialization before Industrialisation: Rural Industry in the Genesis of Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Sidney Pollard, *Peaceful Conquest: The Industrialisation of Europe, 1760-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); Martin Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1700-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). James A. Jaffe, *Striking a Bargain: Work and Industrial Relations in England, 1815-1865* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2000). Raphael Samuel, “The Workshop of the World: Steam-power and Hand-technology in Mid-Victorian Britain”, *History Workshop* 3 (1977), 6-72; Jonathan Zeitlin and Charles Sabel, “Historical Alternatives to Mass Production: Politics, Markets and Technology in Nineteenth Century Industrialisation”, *Past and Present* 108 (1985), 133-176. See David Cannadine, “The

it is now clear, was a gradual process with uneven regional dynamics in which older trades and socio-economic relations continued to flourish well into the nineteenth century and played as important a role in economic growth and development as did the new trades of cotton, iron, and steel, which previously had been seen as the “leading sectors” responsible for the “take-off”. Workshops dominated much of the country, with factories, and the industrial relations that came with them, being of relatively little significance until the second half of the nineteenth century. Economic growth rates have been downscaled. Finance and trade, as well as older trades like wool, are now seen as important to growth and development as new industries. This new perspectives on continuities has been reinforced by the rediscovery of the many “modern” dynamics of the eighteenth century, the creation of the “fiscal-military” state and its contribution to imperial, financial, administrative expansion, on one hand, and the rise of the ‘middling sort’ and the proliferation of consumer culture, on the other.³¹

At the same time, the reappraisal of domestic trades, shopping, and imperial contexts has energised research into non-class identities underlying the turn to populism. Historians have emphasized the crucial role of women engaged in business, workshops

Past and the Present in the English Industrial Revolution, 1880-1980”, Past and Present 103 (1984), 131-172.

³¹ Patrick K. O’Brien, “The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1600-1815,” Economic History Review, 41 (1988), 1-32; John Brewer, Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783 (1990) Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, eds., The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialisation of Eighteenth-Century England (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).; John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., Consumption and the World of Goods (London: Routledge, 1993); John Brewer, The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1997). Paul Langford, A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989). See also the debate about “gentlemanly capitalism”; P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, “Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Overseas Expansion,” Economic History Review, 2nd ser., XXXIX and XL, (1986, 1987), 501-25, 1-26. Cf. Martin Daunton, “‘Gentlemanly Capitalism’ and British Industry, 1820-1914,” Past and Present, 122 (1989), 119-58.

and especially domestic production.³² As attention shifted to commerce and trade, so the role of imperial subjects and relationships became increasingly important.³³ Conversely, the sociological dialectic of an industrial bourgeoisie as the dynamo of economic modernity to which the working class reacted has been superseded by studies which have shown the divided nature of the middle classes and emphasised instead the crucial contribution played by Whig aristocrats, evangelical thinkers, and ultimately popular radicals themselves in the creation of a modern political economy based on Free Trade.³⁴ Together, these studies have effectively severed the direct link between politico-economic development and the sociology of class.

Although we would endorse a greater recognition of continuity and populism in the languages of social justice and radical reform, the new historiography is not free of unresolved problems. Two principal questions arise: how to explain ideational or linguistic change and how to situate populist discourse so as to recognize its diverse forms and possibilities. If postmodernists and other exponents of the new historiography have not ignored change and diversity altogether, the tendency has been to neglect these problems or to answer them from outside their own theories.

³² Maxine Berg, "What Difference did Women's Work Make to the Industrial Revolution?" History Workshop 35 (1993), 22-44.

³³ C.A. Bayly, Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830 (London: Longman, 1989); Kathleen Wilson, The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785 (Cambridge, England, 1995); Patrick K. O'Brien, "The Costs and Benefits of British Imperialism 1846-1914," Past and Present, 120 (1988), 163-200; Hall, White, Male, and Middle Class. Burton, Burdens of History. Subaltern Studies; Gyan Prakash, ed., After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Gyan Prakash, Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

³⁴ Boyd Hilton, Corn, Cash, Commerce: the Economic Policies of the Tory Government, 1815-1830 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Hilton, Age of Atonement. Peter Mandler, Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990); Mandler, "The Making of the Poor Law Redivivus," Past and Present, 117 (1987): 131-57. A.C. Howe, Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846-1946 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); Frank Trentmann, "Political Culture and Political Economy", Review of International Political Economy, 5:2 (1998), 217-251.

The new historiography on continuity has problems dealing adequately with change because of its theoretical assumptions. Inevitably, the relative autonomy given to language in relation to the development of capitalism renders problematic any direct appeal to experience as a source of cultural change. Within postmodern theory, indeed, the rejection of the real surely should preclude all attempts to evoke a world outside of discourse as a source of change, no matter how indirect. In addition, the frequent emphasis on language as constitutive of all subjectivity renders problematic any appeal to agency. If individuals merely construct their selves in terms given to them by a social discourse, they must lack the capacity to modify or transform such discourses. All too often, then, the new historiography invokes languages or discourses as quasi-structures. In so far as these quasi-structures produce both the social and agency, without in turn being produced by either of these, it is hard to grasp how and why they come to change. And without an analytical space for agents and agency, it becomes difficult to link languages of social justice and radical reform projects to the changing nature of political economy and the changing ways in which capitalism is understood, contested, and reformed.

The second and related problem stems from the neglect of the diversity of populist discourse or the confusion of such diversity with difference. The concern with language as a quasi-structure has encouraged historians to look for a common set of meanings or conventions as opposed to the diverse beliefs that agents express in speech and action. Populism often acts as little more than a broadening out of the concept of class from a narrow Marxist notion to one that covers how workers and artisans used “class”: few people in Britain described their beliefs as populist, whereas many invoked class in just this way. The implication of this, surely, is that we ought to pay more attention to diverse

beliefs about “the people” and “class” rather than deploy the former as an amorphous category. When exponents of the new historiography do unpack diversity, they generally do so in terms of the different connotations given to binary concepts by an overarching quasi-structural language: women are defined as other than men, or the east as other than the west, within a discourse. Much less attention is paid to the diverse beliefs that agents hold, for reasons of their own, about women or the east.

Theoretical Resolutions

While the new historiography provides welcome departures from orthodoxy, the underdevelopment of its theoretical assumptions creates historical blind-spots within it.³⁵ To address the blind-spots of situating languages and explaining change, we need to rethink these theories.³⁶ Rather than rejecting the new historiography, therefore, our aim is to propel it forward by resolving key methodological shortcomings and by opening up new historical questions.

Let us begin with the nature of language. Earlier we suggested that the new historiography does not sufficiently situate languages: it typically takes discourses to be quasi-structures that generate conceptual pairings or differences irrespective of the reasoning of the speakers. This problem can be resolved once discourses are conceived instead as the products of individual agents using languages to express their beliefs. The shift of perspective here is from a concern with discourse as quasi-structure to a

³⁵ This has been recognised by some leading authors of the new historiography, notably Gareth Stedman Jones, “The Determinist Fix: Some Obstacles to the Further Development of the Linguistic Approach to History in the 1990s”, *History Workshop* (1996), 19-35.

³⁶ Throughout this section, we draw on Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

conception of discourse as an abstraction based on people's beliefs. Whereas the first presents discourse as a quasi-structural framework that gives individuals what they can believe as well as the words through which they express their beliefs, the second view reclaims individuals as agents who can adopt beliefs for reasons of their own within any given language.³⁷ By conceiving of discourse as an abstraction based on people's beliefs, historians are able to think about who precisely held the beliefs or meanings, and thus to situate these meanings more precisely within the social and cultural environment of actors. What is more, by unpacking discourses in relation to the beliefs of particular individuals, we open up the possibility that individuals held very different beliefs even if they did so through much the same words, concepts, or language – we encourage a sensitivity to diversity as well as difference. What varied webs of beliefs have critiques of capitalism been tied to?

To shift attention to beliefs and to question the quasi-structural nature of discourse, it must be stressed, need not entail a naïve return to an autonomous subjectivity. It has been unfortunate that so much of the energy of the internal debate about the future of social history has gone into constructing an extreme choice between a post-modern notion of discourse and an older view of autonomous actor, where theory favours structure and an interest in agency is seen to favour empiricism, a methodological dogmatism that has prevented theoretical dialogue and tended to create tunnel-vision on both sides.³⁸ The concept of tradition offers one way out of this dilemma by capturing the

³⁷ Whereas Joyce contrasts an orthodox faith in “preconstituted subjects” who construct meanings with his conviction that “meanings construct subjects” – Joyce, *Democratic Subjects*, p. 11 – we want to recognize that subjects do indeed construct meanings though they only ever do so within the context of a tradition that gives them their starting point.

³⁸ See for instance the tone as well as content of the recent debates in *Social History*, cit. in n 1 above.

socially embedded nature of the subject. Historical actors do not have neutral experiences or unmediated knowledge of capitalism as a given, monolithic reality. Rather, they encounter various forms of capitalism through diverse traditions that are socially constituted and disseminated. To prevent traditions becoming disembodied in much the way that languages often are, however, we must avoid reifying them. Traditions are not given objects we can define by reference to alleged core ideas within which individuals can be located in so far as they hold these core views. Traditions are contingent and changing objects that individuals produce through their particular utterances and actions. We can unpack the content of a tradition and trace its development only by following the processes through which its exponents inherited, applied, and modified a loose collection of changing themes. While traditions are thus the products of human agency, it remains the case that agency always occurs within the context of a social inheritance. Individuals experience the world only through their existing beliefs, and they initially inherit these from their society. To avoid reducing beliefs or discourses prematurely to experience, therefore, historians need to locate beliefs within the context of intellectual traditions. How have varied critiques of capitalism continued to embody traditional legacies and when and how have they transformed traditions?

While the concept of tradition helps to forestall a premature reductionism, it should not be taken simply as a tool of high intellectual history -- far from it. Traditions are prevalent throughout society where they are embedded within practices and social and political movements. Just as our individual beliefs inform and respond to our actions, so social traditions inform and respond to collective practices. We can unpack beliefs and traditions, then, not only by looking at written texts but also by exploring the meanings

embedded in the practices of various social movements. Similarly, we might unpack beliefs and traditions not just for their own sake but also to better grasp the nature of social practices. By rethinking language as beliefs embedded in traditions and practices, it thus becomes possible to connect the new intellectual history to social and political history, and to bridge the gulf between languages of social justice and the development of capitalist society. What practices have critiques of capitalism given rise to? And how has capitalism, the state, and society been influenced by alternative beliefs, traditions, and practices?

The conceptual shift from discourse as quasi-structural to an abstraction of individual beliefs embedded in traditions also points to a resolution of the second blind-spot of the new historiography: how to explain change. The concept of tradition has the advantage over that of language or discourse that it clearly allows for agency as well as the socially embedded nature of the subject: it acknowledges that the relevant social structure is one into which individuals are born, and which then acts as the background to their later beliefs and actions, whilst also allowing for the possibility of their modifying and developing much of this structure for reasons of their own. Change can thus be interpreted as a process of local reasoning, that is, of agency within the context of tradition. Here traditions, and so practices, typically change as people respond to dilemmas or problems. Whenever people adopt a new belief or action, they have to find a way of accommodating it within their existing beliefs or practices. A dilemma arises for individuals or groups whenever they adopt a new belief or action, no matter how strongly or consciously, that stands in opposition to their old beliefs and thus puts existing traditions into question. In this way dilemmas can explain change without postulating a

teleological process or a universal rationality immanent in subjectivity. Dilemmas do not have correct, let alone historically necessary, solutions. Because traditions cannot fit their own criteria of application, when people confront new circumstances or new beliefs, they necessarily change traditions in a creative process.³⁹ In short, to explore change, historians should trace contingent processes of local reasoning. What dilemmas prompted people to modify the traditions and practices in which various critiques of capitalism arose, and under what circumstances were these dilemmas generated?

By associating dilemmas with new beliefs, we have precluded a straightforward identification of dilemmas with social or economic pressures in the “real” world. People modify their beliefs and actions in response to new beliefs irrespective of whether or not these new beliefs reflect material changes in the world and irrespective of whether or not they arise from changing social knowledge about forms of capitalism or from theoretical and moral debate. Nonetheless, it is useful to recall, people do have experiences of the world, including capitalism, and their interpreted experiences often constitute the dilemmas to which they respond. Just as we hope to explore the genealogy of different beliefs, traditions, and practices, so we want to problematise these genealogies in relation to changes in the political economy of Britain. Instead of portraying traditions and practices as lurking in a detached linguistic realm, this collection of essays inquires into their development and revision in response to historical dilemmas that were often composed of interpreted experiences of capitalism, relations of production, and markets.

³⁹ The inability of traditions to fix their own application arises by analogy from Wittgenstein’s analysis of rule-following, for which see L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), ##. 143-242.

How did different traditions and practices inspire diverse ways of comprehending and responding to changes in political economy?

If it is wrong to presume that people have unmediated experiences of markets, it is equally unhelpful to think that critiques of capitalism exist in an intellectual vacuum unrelated to the changing socio-economic and political landscapes inhabited by actors over time. The main questions should be about how these landscapes are interpreted or mediated in different traditions, and how they change as a result of people's contingent responses to the dilemmas they help to generate. It would be misleading to picture the relationship as a one-way street, as if thinkers and social movements merely "respond" to the prior workings of capitalism. The idea of capitalism as a distinct system of relations with its own rules has been the historical product of classical and neo-classical economic thought. We need to recover the awareness of the social and political contexts of capitalism, found in thinkers of the eighteenth century, including Adam Smith, and amongst later historical economists.⁴⁰ Equally, we should recognize the extent to which various forms of capitalism help shape the contingent outcome of politics. Here again, the exploration of change in relation to dilemmas and interpreted experience helps to connect the new intellectual history to social, economic, and political history. What economic changes inform the dilemmas in response to which people transform traditions and practices? And, finally, how do people's responses to dilemmas transform the social and political contexts of different forms of capitalism?

⁴⁰ Winch, Adam Smith's Politics; Werner Sombart, Der Moderne Kapitalismus (Munich, 1922, 5th edn); See also Friedrich Lenger, Werner Sombart, 1863-1941: eine Biographie (Munich: Beck, 1994); Alon Kadish, Historians, Economists, and Economic History (London: Routledge, 1989); Charles S. Maier, In Search of Stability: Explorations in Historical Political Economy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Emerging Questions

The conceptual shift towards the dynamics of change and the ways in which languages are situated in beliefs and practices opens up several new perspectives for our understanding of the relationship between social justice and capitalism. Here a focus on the way languages are situated in beliefs, traditions, and practices prompts us to explore, first, the cross-cultural dynamics underlying ideas of social justice, and, second, the diversity of critiques of capitalism. Likewise, a focus on the way changes arise out of dilemmas – which themselves often derive from interpreted experiences of the social – prompts us to explore, first, the relationship between cultural critique and social change, and, second, the impact of critique on the political economy of capitalism. These four problems are taken up by the essays that follow.

The concept of tradition opens up a space for thinking about reciprocal relationships with beliefs and practices within and outside Britain – notably within the Empire and through a transatlantic flow of ideas. A concept of language as a quasi-structure prompts a concern with the way that quasi-structure of itself sets up certain differences or oppositions – the east is other than the west. A concern with traditions, in contrast, encourages an inquiry into the transnational, interactive nature of many critiques of capitalism. By undoing the functionalist link between a specific material environment and a particular set of beliefs, we open the way for a less insular study of the beliefs and practices connected to capitalism and greater sensitivity to the interplay as well as relative autonomy of diverse traditions. Sandra den Otter explores such interplay in her essay on the legal project of Henry Maine to entrench in mid-nineteenth century India capitalist

ideas of contract in agrarian relations and to institute a market economy in labour. Far from documenting a simple hegemonic, top-down extension of British ideas on Indian practices, however, she shows how ultimately “India wrote itself upon its would-be legal reformers” and led Maine to question a universalist equation of capitalism with modernity and custom with backwardness.⁴¹ The transatlantic dimension of ideas of social justice informs Marc Stears’ reading of early twentieth-century socialist pluralists in Britain and new nationalists in the United States. While these two groups shared basic beliefs about a just distribution of social and economic opportunities, his essay shows how pluralists in Britain developed a greater skepticism of the state.⁴² Here is an example of how a shared tradition develops in different directions because of different interpreted experiences of state structures.

The emphasis on the relative autonomy of beliefs and traditions encourages further new inquiries into the pluralistic nature of British critiques of the market. Building here on new treatments of class that have explored non-class based forms of collective identity, several essays in this volume ask how different groups understood and hoped to order the economic environment. There is no empirical or analytical reason why we should associate critiques of the market with socialism, the working class or the poor any more than with other social groups. One consequence of this is that our interests move beyond varieties of social democracy to include radical, utopian, co-operative, and liberal traditions in their own right, not just as part of an alternative grand narrative that connects

⁴¹ In this volume, pp.00000 below, cit. at p.000000.

⁴² In this volume, pp. 00000 below.

radicalism to social democracy by means of a liberal embrace.⁴³ A second implication is that we need to rethink the ways in which the evolution of capitalism was not simply the product desired by economic liberals or resisted by a core of radicals-to-become-social democrats, but always also shaped by diverse non-socialist as well as socialist critiques.⁴⁴ Free Trade, for example, drew support from various social and political groups which understood it to be a source of social and international ethics that would help supersede an acquisitive market-oriented society. Here was a diverse set of radical, liberal, and social-democratic beliefs propping up a politico-economic regime, which, with hindsight, we can recognise assisted the global expansion of market society.⁴⁵

The diversity of social critiques of the market is a thread that weaves itself through many of the essays in this collection. In her chapter on socialist feminist critiques of the market Laura Mayhall fills in an important part of the pluralistic picture of critiques by analysing the divergence of socialist from liberal traditions.⁴⁶ Extending the comparative approach of this volume, Jamie Bronstein takes seriously the appeal of land reform visions in nineteenth Britain and the United States. Her chapter shows how land reform politics in these two countries developed differently not simply because of their

⁴³ For the latter, see Eugenio Biagini, Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Eugenio Biagini and Alistair Reid, eds., Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour, and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). It is worth noticing how the emphasis on an amorphous populism – one that does not situate that discourse with respect to particular agents – encourages such a replication of the Victorian Liberal attempt to embrace radicalism.

⁴⁴ See Jose Harris, “Political Thought and the Welfare State, 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for Social Policy”, Past and Present 135 (1992), 116-141; Mark Bevir, “Welfarism, Socialism, and Religion: On T. H. Green and Others”, Review of Politics 55 (1993), 639-661. Mark Bevir, “Socialism, Civil Society, and the State in Modern Britain”, in Trentmann, ed., Paradoxes of Civil Society, pp. 332-351; and, more generally, Donald Sassoon, One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century (London: I. B. Taurus, 1996).

⁴⁵ See Frank Trentmann, “Civil Society, Commerce, and the ‘Citizen-Consumer’”; and on the location of such beliefs within Labourite, socialist, and Fabian traditions, see Trentmann, “Wealth versus Welfare”.

⁴⁶ In this volume, pp. 000000.

different institutional and economic settings, but because of diverse traditions: Jeffersonian republican languages in America favoured ideals of self-sufficiency and the myth of the independent farmer, whereas in Britain the diversity of liberal and conservative views of industrial society meant land reform came to be viewed as an anachronistic nostalgia.⁴⁷ It is fruitful to read these inquiries alongside the two substantial review articles which function as critical bookends to this volume. James Jaffe in his discussion of the early industrial period emphasizes that popular feelings towards capitalism were mainly ambivalent. Markets retained moral qualities and nineteenth-century critiques developed out of earlier beliefs about property rights, virtue, and civil society.⁴⁸ For the later half of the twentieth century, Simon Caney's essay on the English school of international relations is a much-needed reminder of the global dimension of the debate about social justice.⁴⁹

The introduction of the concepts of dilemma and of interpreted experience opens up a space in which to reimagine the relationship of economic change to social critique beyond the older action-reaction model. Social critiques and movements constitute integral elements of the clusters of actions, practices, and institutions that shape the very development of capitalist society. Jim Cronin's contribution to this volume follows the changing meaning of planning in the British Labour party in the twentieth century. It shows how industrial policies after 1945 reflected, and also were constrained by, deep-seated assumptions about both class, especially the traditional conservatism of

⁴⁷ In this volume, pp.000000. For the transatlantic nexus of social reform in this period, see Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Progressive Politics in a Social Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁴⁸ In this volume, pp. 0000000000000000.

⁴⁹ In this volume, pp. 0000000000000000

businessmen as members of the “establishment”, and new technologies as the path to socialism.⁵⁰ The power of beliefs to transform the relations between state, economy, and society is no less important at times when social critiques develop to accept a larger degree of capitalism. Colin Hay’s chapter unravels the ways in which a belief in globalisation as an allegedly non-negotiable external constraint came to define Labour’s view of political economy and legitimate its increasingly modest understanding of its role as an agent of reform.⁵¹ Far from being a political response to global material pressures, the growing popularity of the globalisation thesis since the 1970s is here understood very much in terms of choice, agency, and interpreted experience, in short, as a way in which Labour politicians have sought to resolve the dilemmas of the 1970s-80s, such as the Conservative revival with its own narrative of governmental “overload”. Here then is another testimony to the impact of beliefs and language on the development of political economy: the “Third Way” as a self-fulfilling prophecy which helps to liberalise political economy in the globalising direction to which it was said to be a response.

What these essays collectively show is that much can be gained by situating beliefs in larger traditions, by being sensitive to their own understandings of social justice and capitalism that inform their collective identity and reform politics, and the way in which groups have the ability to develop beliefs in diverse directions. If these studies depart from an older heroic picture of social actors preparing for the overthrow of

⁵⁰ In this volume, pp. 0000000000.

⁵¹ In this volume, pp. 0000000000. For earlier examples of the way in which perceptions of supposedly given external constraints and narratives of crisis and decline shaped social and economic critiques, see Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Trentmann, “Political Culture and Political Economy”. Susan Pedersen, “From National Crisis to National Crisis: British Politics, 1914-1931,” *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), 322-35. Richard English and Michael Kenny, eds., *Rethinking British Decline* (New York: St Martin’s Press. 2000).

capitalism in the long run, they are also a critical warning against a fashionable neo-liberal fatalism. Critiques need not be understood solely as engaged in a win or lose battle with capitalism. Instead they have acted as part and parcel of the way capitalism itself operates. The workings of capitalism have been affected by various policies and collective actions that grew out of critiques of it. In other words, we cannot properly discuss the scope of capitalism and its operation without picturing it as part of a continuous, dynamic relationship intertwined with intellectual traditions and their projects of reform. Interpreted experiences of capitalism and arguments for reform can generate dilemmas even for those who do not seek to overthrow the system. In grappling with these dilemmas, actors rethink, and so reconstitute, capitalism in ways that effect its development. Critical and historically informed reflection on this process remains an essential part of evaluating projects for social justice today.