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A Libertarian Socialist Critique of the Political Sociology of Late Modernity

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DPhil in Social and Political Thought

University of Sussex

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

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Acknowledgments

I must confess to being a somewhat avid reader of acknowledgment pages. Part of me enjoys that one or two pages where the academic mask slips and you get to see some of the ‘real person’. As a result I have noticed a divide in how such pages are constructed: on one side we have the ‘professional’ acknowledgment page, listing the people who have read parts of the work, pointing out that the author is to blame for mistakes and thanking their department(s) for a period of leave (if they were so lucky). On the other side is the more ‘personal’ page, this involves ‘namechecking’ not just colleagues but friends, partners and family. These will also sometimes acknowledge intellectual inspirations and throw in some jokey asides. The writing of a PhD, not just an academic exercise but also a ‘life-stage’ event, inevitably lends itself more to the latter of the two. This is lucky, because they’re always the more interesting to read!

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DPhil in Social and Political Thought

A Libertarian Socialist Critique of the Political Sociology of Late Modernity

This thesis argues that despite the proclamations within the sociological field of ‘late modernity’, socialism is still of great relevance as both a form of critique, and as an alternative political model. Nevertheless, such an argument requires a refinement of both of the key terms. Firstly, via discussing the work of the three most prominent sociologists of late modernity (Zygmunt Bauman, Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens), this thesis argues that there have been significant changes with the shift to ‘late’ modernity, most notably the, contested, emergence of ‘individualization’. I discuss how the ‘disembedded individualization’ favoured by Beck and Giddens is flawed empirically. However the ‘embedded individualization’ developed by Bauman and other researchers is a much more faithful depiction of the continued inequalities and privatisation of previously collective political concerns within late modernity. Using such a distinction can demonstrate the flawed nature of the political alternatives offered by Beck and Giddens and can, potentially, open the door to an alternative socialist conception.

This socialist alternative also has to be reconsidered. To do this I draw upon a tradition of ‘libertarian’ socialism, best elaborated in the work of Emile Durkheim and G.D.H. Cole. This focuses upon the development of internally democratic associational groups as forum for individuals to express their functionally differentiated desires. I argue that this model has great potential for a period of individualized late modernity. It is also my claim that elaboration of such a project can be a criticism against the suggestion that there is a natural ‘fit’ between neoliberal capitalism and late modernity. In short, socialism, when defined as a libertarian form has the potential to be both a form of critique concerning the role of the state and market under late modernity, as well as providing a possible alternative.

Introduction: The (In)compatibility of Socialism and Late Modernity

‘Is socialism “a vestige of time gone by”? Were it indeed the case, we should be grateful to the “time gone by” for leaving us such a vestige, no less than we are grateful to it for the rest of our civilized heritage. But it is not the case. Like the phoenix, socialism is reborn from every pile of ashes left day in, day out, by burned-out human dreams and charred hopes. It will keep on being resurrected as long as the dreams are burnt and the hopes are charred, as long as human life remains short of the dignity it deserves and the nobility it would be able, given a chance, to muster. And if it were the case, I hope I’d die a socialist’

Zygmunt Bauman¹

This thesis is an exploration of the compatibility between two concepts often taken to be incompatible: late modernity and socialism. This incompatibility is seen to have both empirical and normative grounding. The world of socialist theory, with its industrialised working class, collective organisation and the extreme poverty of the proletariat, is seen as irrelevant to an individualized, middle class and ‘post-scarcity’ world of consumers which constitutes late modernity. Meanwhile, the normative goals of socialism are seen as either impossible – due to globalised capital and the lack of a ‘socialist’ constituency – or undesirable; late modernity is a world which has come to terms with the authoritarian nature of ‘actually existing’ socialism (Giddens 1999b).

I argue that this supposed incompatibility is founded on a narrow application of the two concepts. Instead I set out how late modernity is a time not only of individualization and the flourishing of life politics, but also a time of frustrated political claims and continuing forms of collective recognition and inequality. In addition to this, socialism is not purely the theory of the organised working class but also, in its ‘libertarian’ form, takes the ability of the individual to realise and express their own political desires as both its analytical base and normative goal. Also, whilst the emergence of late modernity, as a post-cold war world, has often been taken to signal the death of socialism (Franklin 1985, Fukuyama 1992, Giddens 1993, Kolko 2006) it is entirely possible to make the opposite argument, namely that the fall of the USSR and the dichotomy within socialism between either communist or social democrat allows for a reassessment of socialism (Gorz 1982, Kitching 1983, Hobsbawm 1991a, Habermas

¹ Bauman and Tester (2001:155).

1991, Miliband 1994, Wright 1996), something this thesis contributes towards. The combination of socialism and the political sociology of late modernity helps us understand more fully the politics of late modern societies, most notably their flaws, but also suggest improved forms of political organisation, which I outline.

I have taken the UK as the focus for this argument; there are multiple reasons for this. Firstly, 'late modernity' can take many forms in different parts of the world (to the extent we can recognise a society as 'late modern') and thus placing the focus on the UK inevitably makes this concept more precise. Secondly, the UK is also a prime location for my argument that late modernity and neoliberal capitalism are distinct, albeit mutually occurring, categories. Other national societies we may identify as in certain ways 'late modern' (such as France, Germany or Italy) have not to this point had the same experience of neoliberalism. Thirdly, much of the literature I survey on late modernity takes the UK as its focus, either openly or covertly. The criticism that late modernity is a concept largely of Western Europe and the US is an entirely justified criticism, and one that has been acknowledged, sometimes reluctantly, by many of the writers on the concept. Thus, I have chosen to be open with this restricted focus (although I hope the socialist aspect of my argument may be of worth outside the UK). Finally, the election of the Cameron coalition government, which occurred during the writing of this thesis, has led to claims that the government will develop a 'Big Society' whose localism and focus on association may sound similar to some of the themes touched on here (cf. Cameron 2010, Norman 2010). However, I argue for more a more left-wing project than the, admittedly vague, Conservative big society program.

This thesis begins by, in chapters one and two, outlining both the general and political sociology of late modernity. As will be seen I use three thinkers as the basis of my understanding of this concept: Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman. The reader will note throughout the thesis that my own understanding draws more heavily upon the broadly critical work of Bauman than of the other two. This being said the observations Giddens and Beck make are central to understanding late modernity. However, their generalised understanding of late modernity requires qualification or, failing this, becomes an orientation point against which one argues. Also in these chapters one finds the outlining of my own understanding of 'embedded' individualization, as well as a survey of empirical studies which contribute towards an understanding of late modernity. From here I offer suggestions as to why the political

alternatives offered by Giddens and Beck are greatly flawed. Chapter three serves as a bridging chapter. This outlines, on the basis of the previous two chapters, the four key themes a late modern theory of politics would need to account for whilst also providing an outline of the theory of libertarian socialism, drawing on the work of G.D.H. Cole and Emile Durkheim. Chapter four through seven then deal in turn with the themes identified in chapter three: individualization, the increased politicisation of everyday life, the late modern state and neoliberalism. Each chapter both delves more deeply into its respective factor, and also provides a discussion of both the libertarian socialist critique of the theme, as well the possibility of an alternative political system. Finally, the conclusion both brings the argument together, and outlines how the argument contained in this thesis is part of Bauman's 'sociology of hermeneutics' (Bauman 1976a, 1978, 1987b, 1989b, 1992b, 2000a).

This thesis is unapologetically sociological, rather than the social theory or political philosophy in which arguments concerning the potential of socialism are sometimes made. A result of this is that my argument always returns to the observable conditions of late modernity, which are reflected through the findings of research studies and the arguments of sociological theory. Any predictions made upon the basis of this are inevitably tempered by the difficulty (some would say impossibility) of sociology as a predictive science. As a sociologist my concern is with how human activity and recognition is negotiated and ordered in late modern societies, rather than a suggestion of how human activity *should be* realised in the world. This may also mean some of my suggestions are not as radical as the reader hopes for, since they are tempered by this sociological view. As I outline the conclusion, this thesis' success should be judged in relation to the ideas currently dominant within this field. In effect, this is an attempt to question the political sociology of late modernity on its own terms. It is only by doing this that the 'socialist phoenix' can be once more reborn.

On Neoliberalism: A Definition

As mentioned above, the UK has partly been chosen because of its experience of neoliberalism. This is a major part of my analysis going forward and therefore I will now provide a brief definition of what is meant by this term, both empirically and theoretically.

Empirically, neoliberal economies are those which encourage increased marketisation via enacting policies favourable to capital. Labour markets are transformed into 'flexible' markets (Sennett 1998); business regulation and taxation is lessened in order to encourage 'entrepreneurship' and economic growth. Within neoliberal economies the role of the state has been to privatise public resources in order to create new markets and to provide very minimal regulation of those already existing. States must now also 'compete' for capital by developing an attractive market for investment (Strange 1994, Blair 2005). Such states become 'neoliberal states...whose fundamental mission [is] to facilitate conditions for profitable capital accumulation on the part of both domestic and foreign capital', with a particular emphasis on deregulation and privatisation (Harvey 2005:7).

Neoliberal economies can be traced back to military coups in Chile (1973) and Argentina (1976), often cited as the 'experimental' areas for neoliberalism (Harvey 2005, Klein 2007). The results were almost entirely negative, with economic decline (albeit with an increased concentration of wealth) being combined with extremely oppressive forms of right-wing dictatorship. Such 'shock therapy' has since only been implemented, as largely state-led projects, in the 'Tiger economies' of Southeast Asia, and the transition states of Eastern Europe (Klein 2007). In more gradual forms, neoliberalism made its entrance into the wider world in the early 80s, with the election of the Thatcher and Reagan governments, who enacted massive privatisations and/or tax cuts whilst, notably in Thatcher's case, facing down industrial strife. These policies built on the actions of earlier administrations, such as the Nixon government's 1971 dropping of the gold standard and Labour-implemented policies of the late 70s, enacted as preconditions for an IMF loan. Since then neoliberal policies have entered into other parts of the world, most notably China, Mexico, Sweden and South Korea. In addition, IMF and World Bank funding has often come with neoliberal strings attached (for example the privatisation of utilities). However, much of Western Europe has remained beyond neoliberal reach and these states have continued to favour a more 'collectivist' form of capitalism (Hay 2005).

Within neoliberal economics is a strong theoretical conception, utilised as justification:

'A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional

framework characterized by strong private rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of the markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture...according to this theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit' (Harvey 2005:2)

This ideology found its first advocates in the immediate post-war period (perhaps most famously Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman) before going on to achieve wider popularity in the mid to late 70s. In the early 80s such an ideology became 'mainstream' through the election of the Reagan and Thatcher governments and was institutionalised in its adoption by bodies such as the IMF, forming the famed 'Washington Consensus'. The final step from here becomes its adoption as 'common sense' (Crouch 2004).

It is the ideology of neoliberalism which is of special concern for this thesis. The extent to which neoliberal economies 'exist' has been greatly questioned. Whilst it is not my claim that neoliberal policies have not been carried out; neoliberalism is real and is not a 'myth'. It can instead been argued that the conditions said to be essential to neoliberalism, such as flexible markets made up of insecure, part-time work, or mobile capital which has no connection to domestic conditions, is simply not borne out by careful study (Gilbert 2000, Fevre 2007, Hay 2007:90-152, Doogan 2009). Instead the strength of neoliberalism is its effect at the individual level: '[i]nstability is meant to be normal, Schumpeter's entrepreneur served up as an ideal Everyman' (Sennett 1998:31). Differences of class, gender, ethnicity etc. are supposedly removed, or greatly lessened, from the equation through the equalising mechanism of the market, which rewards talent and originality, rather than entrenched advantages (Bauman 2007b:55 ff.). It is partly due to this idea of self constitution via market exchange and entrepreneurship that individuals are imagined to be rationally and economically driven, rather than being

swayed by emotional or social allegiances, which Sennett (1998) terms the ‘corrosion of character’.

Consequently, the strength of neoliberalism exists not in its (somewhat limited) material occurrence, but rather in its theoretical take-up and dominance:

‘We hear it said, all day long – and this is what gives the dominant [neoliberal] discourse its strength...this is as a result of a whole labour of symbolic inculcation in which journalists and ordinary citizens participate passively and, above all, a certain number of intellectuals participate actively’ (Bourdieu 1998:29)

It is the role of intellectuals which is especially significant for this thesis. For Fevre (2007) and Doogan (2009) Bauman, Beck and Giddens have become part of the ‘neoliberal chorus’ (Doogan 2009:11) by seeing neoliberalism as a reality rather than an ideological project. This is partly due to neoliberalism’s narrative strength (cf. Cameron and Palan 2004), it seems to ‘fit’ with the increasingly individualized and uncertain – ambivalent in Bauman’s (1991b) terms – conditions of late modernity. In the next chapter I will conceptualise this as the ‘elective affinity’ between neoliberalism and late modernity. It is this affinity which needs to be questioned critically, rather than accepted as inevitable, which is one of the goals of this thesis, since:

‘To understand new capitalism, at the end of the day, is to understand an ideological offensive, a mode of domination, as Bourdieu suggests, that seeks to create uncertainty and anxiety and fear on the side of labour in order to guarantee its compliance’ (Doogan 2009:214)

Chapter 1: The Sociology of Late Modernity

This chapter serves as a discussion of the sociological grounding of this thesis. More specifically: what is meant by the term ‘late modernity’? This will be discussed with reference to the work of three major sociologists: Zygmunt Bauman, Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, and what they consider to be ‘new’ in late modern societies. Also this chapter will answer the question of why this concept of late modernity is empirically useful.

The timeline of late modernity is mostly left unelaborated beyond the suggestions that it begins to emerge in the second half of the twentieth century (cf. Bauman 2000a, Giddens 1990, Beck 1992). I would suggest it is useful to think of late modernity as an unfolding process, this first begins to emerge in the 1950s/60s, with the emergence of the welfare state. However, late modernity could only be said to be established in the 1980s onwards, since it is here that factors such as individualization and the post-traditional order, can first be seen to sprout, which partly helps to account for the concept’s emergence in sociological discourse in the early 1990s. As I outline below, it is often suggested that some late modern processes (most notably individualization) were partly found in earlier modern societies. The argument is instead that late modernity has both quantitatively extended such processes and qualitatively changed their form. As noted in the introduction, the focus of this thesis is on Britain specifically, however late modernity is argued to be the common situation of most, if not all, Western societies, but not of countries beyond the West (Giddens 1994a, Bauman 2000a, 2005a:22, Beck and Grande 2010)¹.

The three thinkers utilised in this thesis are the basis of my understanding of late modernity. Throughout I will provide qualifications and modifications of their thought (most significantly concerning their understanding of individualization) in light of my own critique and analysis of empirical work which is sometimes lacking in their work. Through this I will offer an adjusted view of what late modernity is as historical stage,

¹ There have been some recent attempts to combine the concepts of ‘multiple’ and ‘late’ modernity by suggesting that ‘non-Western’ parts of the world are experiencing ‘varieties of second modernity’ (Beck and Grande 2010, Maharaj 2010). This includes: East Asia (Han and Shim 2010); China (Yan 2010); Japan (Suzuki et al 2010); South Korea (Kyung-Sup and Min-Young 2010); and Argentina (Levy 2010). Such attempts have been accused on some naïve historicity, and of ignoring differences (Calhoun 2010, Gilroy 2010).

but my focus is equally upon critiquing the understanding of late modernity popular in sociology, of which the theorists under consideration here are representative. Since all three do not universally use the label ‘late modernity’ to describe the current social setting, we must first consider what they share to make such a classification both useful and accurate².

On Modernity

The best place to start with such an elaboration is with the very basis of their thought, i.e. their understanding of modernity and modernisation. All three state that we have not had a definite break from modernity and entered a new stage. Instead the current phase of late modernity is both a direct result and answer to the factors associated with ‘simple modernity’³. This differentiates them on one side from writers working within the framework of postmodernity and on the other from writers such as Habermas who see the continuation of modernity. Despite this, each has used their own terms for the discussion of modernity; Bauman originally spoke of postmodernity (Bauman 1987b) and has since shifted his focus to ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman 2000a). Beck has devoted much of his work to a development of the current phase of ‘second modernity’ as a ‘risk society’ (Beck 1992) and Giddens has given various titles to the stage from second modernity to high modernity (Giddens 1990) or late modernity (Giddens 1991a). Giddens and Beck however are bound together by their emphasis on ‘reflexive modernisation’ as the process categorising this stage (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994). This re-engagement with the understanding of modernity is central to their shared sociology since it means the end of the ‘Ma(r)x Weber’ consensus (Beck 1997:21) whereby there were many different sociological paradigms, but at least a common

² My choice of the term late modernity comes as a result of two considerations. Firstly, many other terms used to categorise societies of the late 20th Century can misleadingly suggest a radical break with what has come before (such as ‘post’ or ‘second’ modernity). As will be seen, I argue that late modernity emerges from an earlier form of modernity, and in some ways is its very realisation. Secondly, ‘late’ modernity has come to be established in the literature as the term used by those who do not use a postmodern framework (see Adkins 2002, Heaphy 2007, Young 2007 and Atkinson 2010a amongst others), whereas terms such as ‘liquid’, ‘high’ or ‘hyper’ modernity are generally used to refer to the thought of a specific theorist.

³ Here I borrow the term from Giddens (1990). The obvious contrast to late modernity, ‘early’ modernity was not used because it could suggest a misleading periodisation of modernity. Here I am referring to what is more generally referred to as simply ‘modernity’. This covers a time period from roughly the early nineteenth century, through to the mid-twentieth. It should be noted that since many of the processes of late modernity are realisations of those found in simple modernity it is possible to identify simple and late modern processes existing alongside each other. For example a society could have strong forms of collective welfare provision, alongside the privatisation of identity which is part of late modernity. Germany would be a good example of such a society (Mills 2007).

understanding of what modernity was. With the break in this consensus all three argue the goal of sociology must be to try to understand the basic tenets of modernity and how they have influenced our current stage of late modernity. Therefore the problematic of modernity as a process becomes the basis of their sociology.

It was in fact the concern with this dialectic between simple modernity and late modernity which differentiated Bauman's work on postmodernity from other writers working within that framework. As noted by Tester (2004), Bauman's idea of postmodernity was a different type to that offered by many writers; instead more often than not Bauman used the term not to suggest 'a stage of postmodernity', but rather a better way of understanding modernity. As an example, Bauman sees postmodern ethics as being embodied in the actors as a 'perspective' or a 'vantage point' (Bauman 1993:2, 14). Bauman later justified his use of the term postmodernity in similar language, suggesting it as a form of diagnosis, not prognosis:

‘I thought and wrote of the “postmodern” as of a new perspective...which one may use to turn modernity around and bring into vision what otherwise would remain unseen...a shorthand from the “external observation point”’ (Bauman and Beilharz 1999:339)

Consequently one of the many reasons Bauman stopped using the term postmodernity was that, try as he might, it did signal a different phase from modernity:

“‘Postmodern’ was also flawed from the beginning: all disclaimers notwithstanding, it did suggest that modernity was over. Protestations did not help much, even as strong ones as Lyotard's (“one cannot be modern without being first postmodern”) - let alone my insistence that “postmodernity is modernity minus its illusion”. Nothing would help; if words mean anything, then a “postX” will always mean a state of affairs that has left the “X” behind’ (Bauman and Yakimova 2002)

This is part of the reason why Bauman changed his use of signifier to liquid modernity (Bauman 2000a). As a result of this, throughout this thesis I will treat postmodernity and liquid modernity in Bauman's work as if both were describing the same, late modern, society⁴. Whilst this equation of post and liquid modernity in Bauman's work

⁴ Bauman has argued recently that his use of ‘liquid’ modernity is akin to the way others use ‘late’ modernity. The differences between the two concern not the underlying conditions they wish to describe but rather ‘the choice of the name’ (Bauman 2011b:11-12).

is not without controversy⁵, I would argue Bauman's frequent and vociferous claims that his 'liquid turn' was brought on by both associations with theorists such as Baudrillard and Lyotard (Bauman and Beilharz 1999) and the suggestion of a 'new' stage are not factors related to what the theory said, but rather the way it is read. In short, liquid modernity is a better metaphor for the form modernity takes in the late 20th century/early 21st, not a new stage after postmodernity⁶. Neither of these terms suggest a new kind of modernity. It is possible to find liquids in solid modernity, and vice versa, but there is a shift in the 'manifest and latent purpose' within these two epochs, from a focus on creating new 'solid' forms of social order, to more 'liquid' and contingent forms (Bauman and Dawes 2011:132-133). As noted by Smith post/liquid modernity in Bauman's work is; 'a thorn inserted from the start in modernity's body' (Smith 1999:192).

A similar relation to modernity occurs in reflexive modernisation as elaborated by Beck and Giddens (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994). Reflexive modernisation is not a stage as in liquid modernity, nor a perspective as in Bauman's postmodernity, but rather the very engine of late modernity. Beck defined reflexive modernisation as: '*A radicalisation of modernity which breaks up the premises and contours of industrial society and opens paths to new modernities or counter-modernities*' (Beck 1997:17). Reflexive modernisation opens up the key concepts and assumptions of modernity, increasing understanding of how these have developed and impacted society. This happens not only at the institutional level, leading to internally reflexive systems (Giddens 1990), but also at the micro level where individuals become reflexive agents. Individuals construct their self and identity in a critical manner (Beck 1992, Giddens 1991a). Such reflexive agents are especially central to Giddens, whose structuration theory bases many of its assumptions upon their very presence (Giddens 1984). The reflexive nature of the modernisation project during late modernity is also hinted at by Bauman, postmodernity was: 'Fully developed modernity...that acknowledged the effects it was producing through its history' (Bauman 1991a:173).

⁵ Tester (2004:169-182) for example argues liquid modernity is a micro-theory, used to discuss life-politics, rather than the macro-theory of postmodernity, whose role is filled by the concept of globalization. Elliott (2007) and Heaphy (2007) also treat the two separately.

⁶ This is a more widely taken view on Bauman's work, discussed by Davis (2008) approvingly and Ray (2007a) in a more critical manner. This view of Bauman's work also receives backing from the fact that many themes which emerged in his 'postmodern' work are discussed after his 'liquid turn', using the same concepts (for example: morality (Bauman 1993, 2008a); globalization (1998a, 2006); and consumerism (1992a, 2007b)).

These views link directly to what categorises modernity as a period: the modernisation process and how this has adjusted in late modernity, whilst maintaining some of its original components. For example Bauman takes his views on this process directly from Marx (specifically the Communist Manifesto) and Freud's discussion of civilisation (Freud 1930/2001). Whereas modernisation was originally classified as the 'melting of solids' for Marx and the dominance of the reality principle over the pleasure principle for Freud, with the resulting valuing of security over freedom, for Bauman the impetuses behind these processes remain, however their direction changes. Whereas the melting of solids had previously resulted in the production of 'new' solids more fitting to the capitalist order they are now melted purely to remove obstacles to human choice (Bauman 2000a). This, as we shall see in chapter five, is most notable through the expansion of the market principle into areas of social welfare, since this is seen to provide choice against the supposed simple modern 'one size fits all' model of welfare. This is also due to the adjustment of Freud's concept of civilisation. The reality principle no longer rules over the pleasure principle, instead they become mutually sustaining. The satisfaction of the pleasure principle becomes the very basis of maintaining the reality principle. This is most significantly a *capitalist* process, whereas previous, simple modern, form of capitalism were based on delaying gratification in order to maintain the security of the present (most notable in Keynesian policies) the focus is instead upon instant gratification. The prevalence of consumer credit is its most obvious manifestation. Hence, instant pleasure is seen to define the representation of reality⁷:

'The reality and the pleasure principle strike a deal...It did not occur to either the managers of capitalist factories, nor the preachers of modern reason that the two enemies could strike a deal and become allies, that pleasure could be miraculously transmogrified into the mainstay of reality and that the search for pleasure could become the major (and sufficient) instrument of pattern maintenance' (Bauman 2002a:187)

Bauman however is very clear that this is not an end to the civilisation process but rather an adjustment to a more effective form of modernity for contemporary times. Whilst also maintaining many of its original features such as order-building, human

⁷ It could be said that this argument outlines a world before the Credit Crunch of late 2007 and the ensuing recession. However, Bauman argues that the focus on 'getting banks lending again' is an indication of how the reality principle continues to rule, even after clear demonstrations of its shortcomings (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrado 2010).

waste and the dominance of economic considerations (Bauman 2004a). The very centrality of Bauman's social theory has to be seen as the reversing of the Freudian process of civilisation, with freedom now taking pre-dominance over security. This is manifested in the neoliberal drive to 'roll back' the state's welfare provision, as well as in the supposed transcending, or lessening impact, of traditional forms of social stratification.

A similar process is identified by Giddens, who refers to modernity as a 'juggernaut' (Giddens 1990). During simple modernity individuals were effectively 'along for the ride', the juggernaut knew the route to be taken and the end destination. However this changes under late modernity, modernity is still a juggernaut and it still has a very definite end-point on the path of modernisation. Nevertheless it is now possible to have more freedom in the direction the juggernaut takes. The processes of reflexive modernisation allow a revaluation of modernisation and the ability to choose the direction of this juggernaut (Giddens 1990, 1999a). This is done largely through the interaction with expert systems (discussed below). Beck would seem to have some accordance with this view (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994:29). Therefore all three see freedom, in terms of actor's ability to act, as a central part of late modernity. Whereas for Bauman this freedom is to some extent illusionary, repression has lessened, but this has been replaced by seduction (Bauman 1992a)⁸. For Giddens, and to a lesser extent Beck, this is a positive freedom allowing for some (albeit slight) influence over modernity.

The above has outlined a general discussion of how the concept of modernity is dealt with by our three theorists; this will be developed further during the course of the thesis. However, were one to offer an exact definition of modernity common to all three it would be 'disembedding', i.e. the disruption of what already exists (be it social customs, norms or structures) to be replaced by 'newer' forms. Modernity always aimed to destroy what had come before, whether it be traditional ways of living, belief, or sociality. In simple modernity all three agree modernity not only had a telos but was justified by a tautology: modernity emerged in order to create modern societies⁹. It is the result of this disembedding which shifts during late modernity. For Giddens and

⁸ This is due to Bauman's link of freedom in late modernity to the consumer market (Bauman 1988, 1992a, 1997, 2007b, 2008a). This is expanded upon below and returned to in chapter five.

⁹ Modernisation is modernity's 'mode of being' (Bauman and Beilharz 1999:339).

Beck the reembedding is not justified by what is to come, but instead is also justified by what has come, hence its 'reflexive' nature. Bauman on the other hand sees the disembedding occurring without reembedding, hence the 'liquidification' of modernity, itself a result of a reflexive awareness of the problems caused by previous reembedding. Such problems include the awareness of man-made climate change (Beck 1992); the Holocaust (Bauman 1989a); and structural inequality (Giddens 1982c). Also notable here is a suggestion of the increased importance of individuals as agents of modernity. This is part of a significant trend of late modern sociology to favour a more, albeit not wholly, micro sociological approach. Individuals and their lifeworlds are the main subject matter of this field of sociology. The next section discusses what is considered to be new in this discussion

Life in Late Modernity: Individualization and the Engagement with Expert Systems in a Post-Traditional Order

The starting point for a discussion of what categorises late modernity must be individualization. Whilst late modernity cannot be reduced to individualization, without it the theory loses any sense of internal coherence. It is at this point that we begin to see a significant difference for Bauman in comparison to Beck and Giddens¹⁰, namely his focus is on late modern processes as forms of stratification, rather than of integration. Individualization is very much a contested concept and, as noted by others, most of the proponents of the concept have provided sometimes abstract, or open-ended, definitions (Beck 2007, Mills 2007). In the following section I will discuss in more depth some of the secondary analysis of this concept, and chapter four is devoted to a discussion of individualization in a more political sense. For now it is enough to say that for our three theorists, individualization refers to the way in which identity is transformed from a 'given' into a 'task' and that individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for this task (Bauman 2000a:31-32). At the same time individualization is seen as more than an individual orientation and is also a form of social organisation. This involves both the dissolving of collective allegiances and orientations in favour of individuals being given greater responsibility for their own social positioning and

¹⁰ Whilst it is true that Giddens talks only rarely of individualization directly (Atkinson 2007b, 2010a, unless prompted: cf. Giddens and Pierson 1998:118 ff.) his work clearly contains a theory of individualization, which is why he is given so much attentions in secondary discussions (Howard 2007b, Elchardus 2009).

activity. In the most radical reading, social reproduction shifts from being structurally produced, to individually produced.

To make this clearer, I will begin with Beck, whose elaboration of individualization has been the most comprehensive – whilst not, perhaps, being the most impressive. For Beck and Beck-Gernsheim individualization occurs when ‘the individual is removed from traditional commitments and support relationships’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002:203), much of the impetus towards this has been institutional. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim make a point of arguing that when translated into English individualization has too readily been seen as part of the Thatcherite neoliberal market hegemony. In this reading individualization is aligned with individualism, with the latter given its everyday meaning to mean selfish, or self-orientated behaviour. Instead Beck and Beck-Gernsheim are concerned with ‘institutionalised individualism’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002:xxi). By this they mean the aiming of societal benefits towards the individual which has not been seen in the same negative light as the right wing individualism of the free-market. The reason for this is that it has (a), largely gone unspoken, if not unnoticed and (b), has been spread by some of the valued mechanisms of the left;

‘Central institutions of modern society – basic civil, political and social rights...are geared to the individual and not to the group. Insofar as basic rights are internalised and everyone wants to or must be economically active to earn their livelihood, the spiral of individualization destroys the given foundations of social coexistence. So – to give a simple definition – ‘individualization’ means disembedding without reembedding’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: xxi-xxii)¹¹

Modernity has always created individuals, the focus now for Beck and Beck-Gernsheim is that, partly due to the post-traditional order discussed below, these individuals are removed from collective categorisation. The social cohesion of categories such as class and the family had helped compensate for the institutional individualization of simple modernity. However for Beck and Beck-Gernsheim their legitimacy was largely based on tradition. With tradition’s passing influence and the removal of any authority these categories had, the process of individualization becomes complete. Correspondingly

¹¹ Here we see the centrality of the disembedding of modernity mentioned above. This is not only a definition of modernity itself, but also the responsibility of the institutions of modernity (cf. Bauman 2000a).

this has a paradigm shifting effect for the rest of our sociological understanding since it devalues our previous analytical concepts into purely ‘zombie categories’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002) so-called since they are sociologically alive, but empirically dead, such as class, gender and the family. It is important to note at this point that for Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, the process of individualization is universal, the genie will not go back into the bottle and as such the concern becomes finding new analytical concepts to replace these zombie categories. The freeing of women from traditional expectations, norms and routines is seen as especially important for Beck (Beck 2000b, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002)¹² as is the decrease in class identification (2005b, Beck 2007)¹³.

We see a similar concern with individualization for Giddens, especially its impact within the obligation to engage in ‘day-to-day decisions on how to live’. These decisions are made at an individual level, since this is the only justification that will be accepted for their authenticity (Giddens 1991a:14). Giddens does place much more focus on a linear process of biography construction than that found in either Beck or Bauman (Howard 2007a), but generally his discussion largely chimes with that of Beck. This is especially true when Giddens sees modernity as being a long-term process of individualization, which has now taken on specifically late modern forms (Giddens 1982a, 1990, 1994b). It is here that we see the centrality of Giddens’ reflexive, knowledgeable agents in his sociology (Giddens 1984) and as already mentioned such agents are in fact agents of reflexive modernisation, carrying out the opening up and questioning of modernity in a critical manner. This echoes my earlier point that individualization is often argued to bring with it a change in social reproduction, as in Beck’s discussion of individualization where ‘the individual is becoming the basic unit of social reproduction for the first time in history’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002:xxii).

¹² Which ensured Beck’s elaboration of individualization would come in for criticism from feminist authors. Indeed this critique has come largely from feminists working within a Bourdieuan framework, discussed below.

¹³ It is class *identification* which is significant here. For Beck you may be able to identify a group who share disadvantages because of their social position, but this same group won’t identify as members of the same class. Therefore class as a concept is not sociologically useful (Beck 2007:681-687, 2005b).

Central to the consideration of individualization in this thesis, is that Beck and Giddens both treat it as a universal process¹⁴. This is true not only in that all become individualized (the objective aspect), but all take reflexive responsibility for their lifeworld (a subjective condition). In an oft-cited section, Giddens points to the single black mother as being required to be as reflexive and individualized as anyone else (Giddens 1991a:85-86). There is little suggestion that some individuals are *more individualized* or *more reflexive*. Individualization itself is not stratified – all are individualized equally. To some extent this can be seen as a continuation of the rest of their sociology, for example the discussions on risk, the importance of which is its universal application (Beck 1992, Giddens 1998a). Indeed, whilst Beck initially gives the production of risk the central role in stratifying societies, individuals are exposed to more or less risks (Beck 1989, 1992), individualization later comes to take on more of this role (Beck 1997, 2000b). Inequalities do occur, but, these don't affect *collectives*, rather *individuals*, i.e. inequalities are not due to shared social characteristics (such as class), but rather due to *individual* choices and resources. It is on this point that I wish to point to a major divergence between Beck and Giddens on one side, and Bauman on the other.

Bauman's discussion of individualization does share similarities with that of Beck and Giddens¹⁵. I have already cited his discussion of how identity becomes an 'individual task', which shares notable similarities with the view of Giddens, although he sees this as a disjointed task, rather than Giddens' more linear narrative (Howard 2007a). Bauman does also have strong overlaps with Beck with regard to zombie categories, most notably that of class (Atkinson 2008, Bauman 1982). Although Bauman is more likely to refer to 'echo words...reverberating long after the crash that caused them has died down' (Bauman 2008a:62). Nevertheless there is a significant and notable difference between Bauman and our other two thinkers, and this is contained in his consideration of the effects of individualization. For Bauman there is stratification as a within individualization, as can be seen here:

'Being an individual *de jure* (by decree of law of by the salt of personal guilt being rubbed into the wound left by socially produced impotence) by no means guarantees

¹⁴ The problems caused by such generalisation will be considered later in this chapter and throughout the thesis.

¹⁵ The English translation of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's *Individualization* contains a preface by Bauman (Bauman 2001b).

individuality *de facto*, and many lacked the resources to deploy the rights implied by the first in the struggle for the second' (Bauman 2007a:58)

Whilst Bauman agrees that individualization opens up new possibilities of self-realisation and expression, the ability to partake in these is greatly limited to those who have the resources. Some *are* more individualized than others. Bauman links this to monetary resources, but can also include the ability to have one's choice identified as 'legitimate' (Bauman 2005a, 2005b). This means that despite the freedoms offered by individualization, individuals may desire to have their choices verified by 'reference communities' (Bauman 2004b, 2007b). These are groups, or more likely individuals, whose choices are seen as being a guide to what would be the 'correct' choice to make, particularly what good to buy, such as celebrities, but could also stretch to friends. Those unable to have their choices verified, or to act up their choices, are what Bauman terms 'faulty consumers' (Bauman 1998b, 2005b, 2007b). Therefore, Giddens outlines not a process of emancipation but rather a 'redistribution of freedoms' (Bauman 2000b:218) and it goes without saying from what has gone thus far, this is an uneven distribution. Individualization does promise new freedoms to some, but a large number do not have the resources to realise this in the way Giddens and Beck imagine them to.

In short, individualization is process which, as a result of the institutionalised individualism of simple modernity, places individuals in a position of choosing their own identity and accepting responsibility for it. This responsibility is then also seen to be expanded beyond identity to a position of individualized 'problem solving' within the individual's lifeworld. It is these two aspects of individualization: choice in identity and what Bauman terms the 'subsidiarisation' of social problems to an individual level, which are the main instances of individualization. Subsidiarisation means the process whereby previously collective decisions, such as the provision of welfare or environmental actions, become decided by individual consideration and choice. Below I will assess these claims in light of evidence and also expand upon this claim of subsidiarisation. Before that, individualization emphasises the relevance of 'expert systems', and their place in a 'post-traditional order'.

Expert systems, and their late modern significance, were brought to the forefront by Giddens (Giddens 1990). These are defined by Giddens as: 'systems of expert knowledge, of any type, depending on rules of procedure transferable from individual to

individual' (Giddens 1991a:243). In application this is taken to be a body of knowledge about any area of social life which is in turn recognised as 'expert' (Giddens 1990:25 ff.). Once these are expressed symbolically they become 'abstract systems', which help co-ordinate behaviour and reproduce sociality (Giddens 1991a:22-3).

For Giddens the interaction with expert systems becomes ever more disembodied from the expert representing them. This is due to the expanded access of both education and information afforded by the political and technological circumstances of late modernity; ecology is often cited as an example of this (Giddens 1991a:221). As an example he discusses the builder hired to build your house. The individual builder is not trusted with such a task because they seem like a person worthy of your trust, but because you trust the expert system the builder represents (Giddens 1990:27-28). Late modernity also sees the growth of expert systems; with not only long surviving expert systems becoming fractured into specialities but also appearing in areas previously beyond their purview (Giddens points to intimacy as an example of this (Giddens 1992)). It is not possible to have complete knowledge of more than two or three expert systems, it is impossible for a lay person to obtain a 'complete' sociological knowledge in exactly the same way as it is not possible for the 'expert' sociologist to have a 'complete' knowledge of human genetics. Therefore, it is impossible to have a complete knowledge of the expert systems which affect my everyday life¹⁶, especially with their expansion (Giddens 1990, 1991a). Despite this qualification, actors become even more knowledgeable and gain a wider, if not complete, knowledge of multiple expert systems. These expert systems are intrinsically part of Giddens' sociological worldview since the ability of actors to affect the *durée* (the flow of social action) in his theory of structuration relies on having the expertise to do so (Giddens 1984). By affecting the *durée* in such a way, to return to our previous discussion on modernity, Giddens sees the reembedding of expert systems as a way of taking some control of 'the juggernaut'. Therefore expert systems become reembedded through agents' actions (Giddens 1984, 1990). For example, by making reference to 'what is green' to guide my actions I re-embed green forms of actions.

¹⁶ Such as the aforementioned example of the builders of the various buildings I inhabit, but also those of road design, food production, sewage disposal etc. (Giddens 1990).

The impact of expert systems is even more profound because of Giddens' discussion of the post-traditional order (Giddens 1994b), where societal precedents about how to act no longer carry any weight:

‘A post-traditional order, in which the question, ‘How shall I live?’ has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat – and many other things – as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity’ (Giddens 1991a:14)

For Giddens this is mostly a positive process, it enables actors to take what he terms ‘an active orientation to the self’ (Giddens 1998a) where individuals reflexively engage in a process of self-constitution and definition, leading to Giddens’ concern with ‘life politics’ and emancipatory ‘life-chances’ (Giddens 1998b)¹⁷. Agents increasingly become empowered to create their own self, identity and to some extent, lifeworld, removed from societal constraints and/or precedent. It is here we see that we see the interplay between individualization and the post-traditional order, the choice present within individualization is expanded by the declining influence of tradition upon these choices. This is what Giddens has termed the ‘reflexive biography’ (Giddens 1991a).

Beck takes a slightly more cynical approach to the discussion of expert systems, suggesting that scientists and other experts have effectively become as unsure as the lay population themselves and ‘society has become a laboratory where there is absolutely nobody in charge’ (Beck 1998:9). Reflexive modernisation provides us with an understanding of the effects of our actions, but there is no corresponding action offered to stop these effects. Those who generate risks, such as scientists or industry are initially removed from democratic accountability, this leads to what Beck (1998) terms a ‘organised irresponsibility’. Therefore the question of ‘who is responsible’ for climate change, inequality or natural disasters is not clearly answered. For Beck the correct response is ‘modernity, through its unintended consequences’, but since this is not an individual or group, responsibility becomes free-floating and universal; we’re *all to blame* for climate change (Beck 1995, 2009). Beck sees this as a contrast in his understanding of reflexive modernisation vis-a-vie Giddens; whilst for Giddens it is knowledge that becomes reflexive and has an impact; instead for Beck it is ‘non-knowledge’ (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994:177-178). This is reflected in Beck’s use of

¹⁷ Life politics is dealt with in depth in chapter two.

climate change as an example of the failure of reflexivity to produce solutions without an appropriate shift to late modern realities (Beck 1995). Expert systems are still operating using simple modern paradigms and have not made the appropriate shift to a late modern paradigm (Beck 1997), so climate change is discussed at a national level and as an issue of development, rather than as a global question of humanity. This knowledge deficit is largely reflected in ‘day-to-day’ life, for Beck we are forced to find ‘biographical solutions to systematic contradictions’:

‘All the experts dump their contradictions & conflicts at the feet of the individual and leave him or her with the well intentioned invitation to judge all of this critically on the basis of his or her own notions. With detraditionalisation and the creation of global media networks, the biography is increasingly removed from its direct sphere of contact and opened up across the boundaries of countries and experts for a long-distance morality which puts the individual in the position of potentially having to take a continual stand. At the same moment as he or she sinks into insignificance, he or she is elevated to the apparent throne of a world-shaper.’ (Beck 1992: 137)

As this quote shows, expert systems are much more about uncertainty than offering a definite answer. This also returns us to the responsibility of individuals present within individualization, the command ‘to judge all of this critically’ is also a command which demands a response from the individual, a response which is often unclear.

But, I would suggest that there is a great contradiction here for Beck. By arguing that the supposed experts of late modernity are equipping themselves with the ‘wrong’ concepts he automatically places himself in a position to know what the ‘right’ concepts are. This is a major basis for his work on individualization and cosmopolitanism, which will follow in the next chapter. Both these concepts are related, not only in content, but also in this assumption that Beck is that rarest of late modern experts, one who knows the correct concepts and information¹⁸.

Also here we see the second process of the changing role of expert systems, although agents are now free to craft their own reflexive biography, because of the influence of

¹⁸ Also, although Beck is eager and correct to point out differentiations between him and Giddens on this issue (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994:174-184), we would be amiss if we didn’t reassert the similarities. Apart from the focus on constant justification of the lifeworld as noted by Giddens (1991a) we can also say that Giddens (1990) never truly asserts that expert systems will have the ‘correct’ answer to problems confronting the agent. They may have such an answer, but it is more likely such an answer emerges as the information is reembedded by the agent’s actions.

the post-traditional order (which Beck refers to as ‘detraditionalisation’) they also have to constantly justify it without recourse to societal expertise and/or precedent, instead relying on the ‘biographical solutions’ Beck pinpoints. This in turn leads to Beck’s focus on ‘democratisation’ as very much part of late modernity itself. Since responsibility for risk-production often lies outside the formal democratic sphere, for example in business and science, these areas are increasingly subjected to public scrutiny and encroaching democratic control (Beck 1992, 2009). This is due to the increased ‘risk consciousness’ of individuals, who aim to hold risk producers to account¹⁹.

This returns us to the relation between expert systems and individuals. Both Beck and Giddens see this as a universal process; *everyone* is affected by the processes of late modernity, it is individuals’ responses to them which will be more or less effective. Bauman is in general agreement with the thrust of this argument, seeing members of society as in the same boat, or in this case, plane;

‘Since we hear occasionally that what other people do and what happens to them somehow affect the life we live and the chances of living life the way we would like to be lived, we guess that we may be travelling, all of us, on board the same superjumbo jet; what we do not know is who – if anybody – is sitting in the pilot’s cabin. For all we know, the cabin may be empty and the reassuring messages flowing from PA speakers may be messages which have been recorded at an unknown time in places we would never see by people we would never meet. We can hardly put our trust in the impersonal wisdom of automatic pilots, because time and again we hear and watch yet more disturbing news: that people sitting in traffic-control towers have failed to control, and added to the chaos instead of guarding order...Last though not least, we have not the slightest idea what people like us, the passengers of a superjumbo jet, can do singly or severally to influence, change or improve all that, especially the course of the aircraft in which we are all locked...’ (Bauman 2002a:48-49)

This apocalyptic message for Bauman shows his double concern to expert systems, firstly we don’t think there is anyone who is ‘expert’, to Bauman a correct assumption, there is no pilot on the plane in this case and secondly when there is a replacement for the lack of a ‘human expert’ (in this case the automatic pilot) we don’t trust that because

¹⁹ This is part of Beck’s discussion of the emergence of ‘sub-politics’, via which such holding to account is conducted. This is discussed in the next chapter.

we've heard stories about them 'adding to the chaos instead of guarding order'. Adding to the confusion, late modernity is categorised by 'pointillist time' which is broken up into 'separate morsels, each morsel reduced to a point ever more closely approximating its geometric idea of non-dimensionality' (Bauman 2007b:32). Therefore, truth claims are purely of the moment, and even then uncertain since time is not a linear narrative but rather episodic and disjointed due to the liquidification present within late modernity (Bauman 2007b, Lee 2005). Also for Bauman, although we may experience the insecurity of the jumbo jet together; some will be better insured than others, some will be first class passengers. For example Bauman (1998a) discusses how globalization creates 'absentee landlords', these are those (for example company executives) who are no longer tied to a specific locality but can move around the globe as needs be and effectively move 'away from the trouble', whilst maintaining their power (through the use of capital and/or regulation) over the area they just abdicated. Therefore the emergence of a post-traditional order and the reflexive biography will have differential effects depending upon the individual's social circumstances (Bauman 1996). Indeed this can sometimes appear to be a new form of domination: 'Employees have been 'empowered' – the endowment which boils down to bearing responsibility for making themselves relevant and valued to the company' (Bauman 2002a:34). In short, the responsibility and through this, the supposed emancipation, at the heart of individualization assumes resources both material and mental, in the form of knowledge and expertise are held by the individual. At the same time, the conditions of late modernity makes it increasingly difficult to hold onto such resources over the long term.

Thus, what categorises late modernity more than any other trend are individuals who are removed from simple modern identities and allegiances and thus free to experiment with multiple forms of identity and lifestyle. Yet, this seems like a torturous situation. Exactly what passes for expertise is unclear and, at the same time, individuals have to make decisions within multiple fields which require some level of expertise. The unanswered question is how accurate is this picture? We now turn to secondary research on this central concept of individualization.

Empirical Work on Late Modernity and Individualization

The relationship between empirical research and the theories of Bauman, Beck and Giddens is, to say the least, troubled²⁰. None of the three have conducted sustained empirical research to back up their theories and their use of such research conducted by others can be selective at best. Bauman tends to rely more on newspaper articles, as well as some selective use of research and theory, both classical and contemporary. As noted by Ray (2007b) there is little systematic engagement with classical sociological theory, or literature reviews. This is partly a conscious decision on Bauman's part. Some of his earlier work (most notably *Hermeneutics and Social Science* (1978)) did adopt this structure by beginning with the classics and advancing the argument through the use of more contemporary theory. His latter work eschews this strategy as part of an hermeneutical attempt to make his work relatable to the objects of study, rather than to other academics, as part of his attempt to turn sociology from a legislative to an interpretive science (Bauman 1987b, 1989b, 2000a:202-216, Bauman and Gane 2004, Bauman and Welzer 2002, Tester 2004:159-160)²¹. Giddens would accept some of what Bauman has to say about the role of hermeneutics (Giddens 1990:43)²²; however this does not seem to account for his selective use of empirical evidence. For example, his work on intimacy cites the *particular* form of self-help magazines since, for Giddens, these are the best demonstration of the *universal* trends he is discussing (Giddens 1992:vii). Beck on the other hand tends to rely on examples as well as some selective use of statistics and secondary literature (Beck 1992, 1997, 2000a). As a result all three, but especially Giddens and Beck, have been argued to have a 'common sense' justification for their theories, i.e. they are believed because they 'make sense' to the middle class intellectuals/policy makers who read their work (Savage 2000, Skeggs 2004, Atkinson 2010a). Such criticisms are particularly important when Giddens and Beck both argued that their theories can be used as a guide for empirical research

²⁰ Doogan (2009) places all three within the group of theorists (also including Castells, Sennett and others) whose ahistorical and aempirical reading of contemporary capitalism has had a dangerous impact on the possibility for left-wing politics.

²¹ Bauman himself acknowledges that this approach can lead to an overgeneralisation of argument, however this is acceptable as part of a hermeneutical discussion (Bauman 1978, 1992b:10-11, 2007b:23-24). See the conclusion of this thesis.

²² His discussion of the 'double hermeneutic' as the way in which sociological research findings then become part of everyday understanding is presented in this light, with Machiavelli's *The Prince* provided as an example (Giddens 1984:350-354, 1990:42-44). Delanty (1999:163) terms this the theory of the 'sociological society'.

(Giddens 1984, Beck, Bonss and Lau 2003)²³. Beck has also established a ‘Centre for the Study of Reflexive Modernization’ in Bonn (findings summarised in Beck and Lau 2005). But it is not clear whether this centre is actually engaged in empirical research, or follows a similar research strategy to that of Beck himself²⁴. However, this does not mean their theories are not an accurate depiction of late modern society. By synthesising the large literature which has attempted to question specific parts of their theory it is possible to draw some conclusions of validity.

To do this I will focus specifically on empirical research which studies individualization. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, as discussed above, individualization comes to be the central factor of late modern society, thus the form it takes will impact the rest of the theory. Secondly, many of the critics have questioned all three as *theorists of individualization*, rather than of late modernity (Jamieson 1998, Adkins 2000, Howard 2007a as just three examples). In turn, those who have discussed them as theories of late modernity, accept the central premise of individualization (Ellison 1997, Heaphy and Yip 2003, Young 2007 amongst others).

It is possible to categorise research on individualization as falling into three groups, which I will term: ‘modernist’, ‘Bourdieuian’ and ‘Foucauldian/discourse’. To begin with the modernist camp, these are critics who argue that individualization, to the extent it exists, is not in any way ‘new’. Instead, individualization is very much part of simple modernity (Alexander 1996). Individuals were always encouraged to take responsibility for their self and construct their own identity (cf. Lukes 1973). In turn researchers argue that human behaviour is just as ordered and predictable based upon structural constraints (especially that of class cf. Goldthorpe (2002)). This is true when it comes to labour market participation (Mythen 2005), political participation (Gaiser et al. 2010, Hustinx 2010), employment patterns (Fevre 2007), Dutch and Belgian national values/lifecourse (Elchardus and Smits 2006, DeBeer 2007) and voting behaviour (Anderson, Yang and Heath 2006). Also, it is suggested that changes in interpersonal

²³ Bauman is excluded from this. His agenda for sociology does not take account of research methods as commonly understood, but instead advocates a form of hermeneutical theory, dedicated to furthering human freedom (Bauman 2008c, 2010c, Bauman and May 2001, Bauman and Gane 2004).

²⁴ The centre’s website (http://www.sfb536.mwn.de/index_e.html) lists publications which are all in German, with the only English publications being those of Beck himself. Also, Beck and Lau’s summary seems to suggest the centre engages in research in a similar way to Beck.

relationships towards models of the ‘pure relationship’²⁵ (Giddens 1992, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995) or disposable relationships (Bauman 2003a) exaggerates the uniqueness of late modern detraditionalisation (Gross 2005). Therefore, through the selective use of examples, and a limited reading of history (Doogan 2009, Holton 2009), all three draw conclusions suggestive of uniqueness and change when in fact late modernity is a picture of stability and continuity.

In addition to their generally critical attitude towards the uniqueness of individualization modernists also share the use of quantitative research. They test the soundness of individualization theory via its application to longitudinal, often national-level, data sets. This approach has an impact upon their conclusions:

‘A review of the literature revealed a remarkable distinction (and likely high correlation) in the methodology used in the studies that either support or refute the individualization thesis. There was generally overwhelming support for individualization from qualitative studies and patent falsification from studies employing quantitative methods’ (Mills 2007:77)

As noted above, the proof of individualization is argued not to reside in large-scale quantitative research studies, since it is a question of self-identity and relation (Beck 2005b, 2007). Thus behaviour may still be predictable by class, but the individuals themselves do not feel attachment to that class label/identity. Or behaviour can be shared across individuals as a form of Bauman’s ‘reference community’ (Mills calls this ‘default/conformist individualization’ (2007:70-71)). Thus purely quantitative studies of individualization don’t give us a full understanding of individualization, as even its strongest critics attest (Atkinson 2010a:35).

Beck’s ‘institutionalised individualism’ is an example of how the sociologists of late modernity accept the basic premise of Alexander et al., that individualization as a phenomenon is not entirely new. It is rather that the specific form it takes in late modernity i.e. that of reflexive, knowledgeable individuals who have increased responsibility for their identity, actions and lifeworld is new. It is this which distinguishes the late modern process of individualization from the forms of individualism outlined by Lukes (1973) which focused on the modern subject as

²⁵ The pure relationship is one ‘entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with one another’ and is ‘sexually and emotionally equal’ (Giddens 1992: 58, 2).

atomised. Instead individuals are not only individuals but, it is argued, have *the responsibility for being individuals*. Consequently, whereas individualization originally emerged as a result of other processes – the aiming of welfare to the individual or entry into the consumer market – it is now argued to come before such processes. To put it in theoretical terms, individualization has become the ordering mechanism of late modernity. It is on this point that we can turn to the Bourdieuan and Foucauldian perspectives, which are more supportive of individualization, but with notable qualifications.

The Bourdieuan perspective²⁶ is so called because most of its proponents utilise Bourdieu's theory of social practice²⁷. This argues social action is conducted within certain 'fields' (semi-autonomous social areas categorised by a shared understanding of the situation and relationships between actors), which each require their own 'habitus' (forms of behaviour acceptable within the field) and forms of capital (Bourdieu 1977). Especially notable here is work which focuses on class and gender, either jointly or separately, both major themes of Bourdieu's (1984, 2001). Their point of attack is on a very specific part of the theory of individualization, namely the part which seems, as argued above, to place reflexivity within the individual:

‘The individuals of Beck and Giddens’ social theories are lonely. They see the reflexive individual as the product of global and system-wide social conditions, rather than linked to more proximate social relations around the firm, family, neighbourhood, social network and social class...To be sure, these people search out others, for instance as they seek the kinds of ‘pure relationships’ that Giddens (1991[a]) emphasises as a key feature of late modern identity, but such relationships remain contingent’ (Savage 2000:105)

The Bourdieuans argue this is a flawed understanding of how reflexivity works, it can overlook the importance of reflexivity as culturally embedded (Adams 2003, 2008) and its temporally-dependent nature and contingent conclusions (Jackson 2010). By considering this, the Bourdieuans introduce two factors: relationality and stratification.

²⁶ This perspective could also be termed ‘interactionist’ because of the focus on reflexivity with social interaction and the use of symbolic interactionists, such as Mead. I have restricted the label here since the wider political goals of this thesis focus attention on the inequality noted by those utilising Bourdieuan concepts.

²⁷ Ironically Bourdieu himself, judging by his brief discussions of individualization, would most certainly be a Foucauldian (Bourdieu 2003:30, Bourdieu and Waquant 2001:6).

To be positioned within a field requires reflexivity in order to discern the habitus. To see how one should act, one assesses the success in others at ‘position taking’ within the field (Adkins 2000, 2002, 2004). The key aspect of this however is that this reflexivity is relational; my concern is not purely myself, but rather the ways in which the performances of others provide me with codes of behaviour. To return to an earlier example of Giddens’, questions of what it means to be a ‘mother’ are not answered internally, but with a reflexive awareness of what other mothers in that woman’s field act out (Dickens 1999). In this sense the Bourdieuan perspective hopes to introduce the question of relational identification to individualization (Denscombe 2001). Whilst also highlighting the roles of others in an individual’s determination of what is ‘authentic’ or ‘decent’ behaviour (Mendez L 2008, Ebert 2010). What makes this specifically late modern is that the Bourdieuians argue there is greater pressure *on individuals* to conduct this process of identification. This is partly due to the changing role of tradition, its lessening impact in some fields, reassertion in others (cf. Adkins 2000).

Such considerations introduce the question of the other, as an object of relation, into individualization. This is, to use the language of late modernity, an unintended consequence of the individual’s need to reflexively determine their surroundings, and their resulting habitus and social position. For example, research around green consumerism suggests a strong ethical desire to do the ‘right thing’ as an individual, even if the ‘right thing’ is somewhat mysterious (Adams and Raisborough 2008, Connolly and Prothero 2008) whilst individuals can also feel an increased responsibility for (Hoggett et al. 2007, Holdsworth and Morgan 2007) or emotional attachment to (Holmes 2010) others. This can also be noted by research which goes directly against the assumptions of Beck and Giddens by arguing that such reflexive awareness can lead to the joining of social movements (King 2006, Yeatman 2007, Ødegårda and Berglund 2008) and the adoption of a political ideology (Benton 1999). Since these are focused on the individual’s position in the world, and the responsibility they feel for their surroundings and others. This leads to calls for sociologists to adopt what Sweetman (2003) terms ‘habitual reflexivity’ and Adams (2006) calls ‘hybridising habitus and reflexivity’, reflexivity is situated within the individual’s habitus and, as a result of individualization, there is a greater emphasis on this reflexivity being continually exercised within these circumscribed boundaries.

Once the Bourdieuians have established that the process of individualization can contain the seed of collective identification and awareness, the next step is to argue that individualization and reflexivity are themselves stratified. Some are accorded either more reflexivity, or the ability to act out their reflexivity more fully (Adkins 2002). These fit traditional, ‘zombie category’ forms of stratification. This is particularly notable for women, in the work place they may be forced to adopt a ‘male’ habitus (Brooks 2008, Skelton 2009) or a ‘retraditionalised’ version of the female habitus (McNay 1999, Adkins 2000). Meanwhile, within the home they may face greater pressure to maintain the ideal of the ‘perfect wife/mother’ alongside this (Jamieson 1998, Dickens 1999), whilst also taking on greater ‘emotional responsibility’ (Jamieson 1999). Bourdieuians argue there is still individualization here, but it takes on a qualitatively different form for women, which includes new demands and restrictions which their individualized choices need to accommodate.

This stratification is also notable within class. The middle classes may have more options available as a result of their reflexivity (Plumridge and Thompson 2003), or believe that their reflexive choices will have a greater opportunity of being realised. Ferguson (2003) identifies this with regard to welfare services, whilst Nollmann and Strasser (2007) argue it exists within education and work. Also, processes of late modern ‘experimentation’, such as re-skilling for new work opportunities (seen to hold emancipatory potential by Beck 2000b), will be impacted by the amount of cultural capital the individual holds (Warrington 2008). Meanwhile, the pressure to engage in reflexive identification can take on a distinctively challenging form for the working class (Jackson 2009) who are encouraged to identify with the ‘responsible’ members of their class, against the ‘scroungers’ (Savage 2000), the problem being that what fits these categories is decided by others (Skeggs 2005). In turn class identities may still be of significance to the individual (Scott 2006, Atkinson 2007a, 2007b, 2008), but these occur *as a result* of individual reflexivity (Skeggs 2004, Atkinson 2010b). It is also possible to find stratification within gay and lesbian communities according to the individuals’ reflexive identification with certain identities. For example, the reflexive identification as a ‘butch’ or ‘femme’ lesbian can place the individual within pre-existing forms of inequality (Jamieson 1998:153, Heaphy and Yip 2003). This will of course be further impacted by the criss-crossing of identities. Individuals are not solely a ‘butch lesbian’ or ‘working class’, either during the life-course as a whole, or at any

particular point within it. Rather, the expectations accorded to multiple identities the individual holds (such as in Skeggs' 2004 discussion of working class women) can make these processes even more demanding, in a kind of individualization 'double jeopardy'. These studies suggest not only that reflexivity may be stratified but also that the utilisation of reflexive strategies can be unequal in their possibility for realisation and by the resultant identity placing individuals within unequal forms of social stratification

The Bourdieuan discussion of individualization is very strong. It accepts the shift in late modern society to a form of individualization categorised by the increased responsibility for self-constitution and reflexive awareness. But, it also adds an appreciation of the ways in which this is 'other-centred'²⁸ and unequal. Part of this involves the continued significance of collective forms of identification, such as class, as 'individualistic strategies which draw on collective values' (Lehmann 2009:631). The Bourdieuan critique is also useful since, following their intellectual inspiration, the theories they construct are placed within empirical research. I also wish to suggest that their findings open up a distinction in the understanding of individualization between a radical transformation which involves the complete freeing of individuals from structural constraints in an emancipatory fashion, which the Bourdieuans strongly reject, and a view which focuses upon the privatisation of previously collective decisions, which they largely advocate. We have seen this in regard to individualized decisions (green consumerism, political movements) and the pressures of individual identification. I will return to why this distinction is useful after outlining the Foucauldian approach to individualization.

The Foucauldian, or discourse²⁹ perspective wishes to place the discussion of individualization within the political context of neoliberal societies. Individualization, with its focus on reflexivity, choice and self-responsibility is 'neoliberalism in action' (Lazzarato 2009). This is linked to Foucault's later concerns with 'governmentality' (Foucault 1988a). For Foucault governmentality is the 'conduct of conduct', to govern 'is to structure the possible field of action of others' (Foucault 1982:221).

²⁸ Sometimes this also involves a return to symbolic interactionist perspectives, particularly George Herbert Mead (Holdsworth and Morgan 2007, Jackson 2009, 2010 Holmes 2010). Mead's influence is expanded upon in chapter four.

²⁹ This label acknowledges the fact that some of the researchers within this perspective draw as much from Bourdieu's work on doxa as that of Foucault on discourse (for example Brodie 2007 and Doogan 2009).

Individualization helps to structure the field of action by constituting individuals whose choices and resultant actions will contribute towards the reproduction of neoliberalism. Prominent here is a concern with social policy which adopts a certain concept of the social (contained in terms such as ‘social exclusion’) that individualises failure in a supposed meritocracy (Gillies 2005, Brodie 2007). In turn Foucauldians emphasise the responsibility of individuals to not only take control of their own lives, but also to adopt ‘entrepreneurial’ strategies for success (Dean 1999, Howard 2007b) creating a situation in which those reliant on the state are seen as ‘dependent’ upon it (O’Malley 1996). As argued by neoliberal discourse, every individual has the chance to succeed, as long as they take responsibility (Brannen and Nilsen 2005) and practice self-control (Elchardus 2009). Foucauldians argue that, on the contrary, so called zombie categories are still materially important, class still impacts life chances for example, but within discourse they are rejected; class inequalities have dissolved and all can take advantage of neoliberal opportunities (Houston 2010). In short, individualization is simply a kinder way of saying neoliberal governmentality. Any ‘individualism’ it contains is rather the output of collectively shared choice (Henman 2007). This particularly radical Foucauldian reading effectively reduces individualization to purely neoliberal discourse, rejecting the link with late modernity, to the extent that this can be defined separately from individualization, found in Bauman, Beck and Giddens.

So, how effective is this neoliberal governmentality? The results are mixed. For Elchardus (2009) it is effective since it makes behaviour predictable, despite the belief, expressed by individualization theorists, that individuals have more choices. Also, researchers such as Brodie (2007) and Doogan (2009) point to the increasing belief in the disappearance of class and emerging meritocracy when the facts say something different. This effectiveness is especially significant when many of the subjects of such governmentality are those on welfare, most notably *women* on welfare (Gillies 2005, Brodie 2007). However, many of the findings also go some way towards suggesting the complexity of individualization and the inability to reduce it simply to neoliberalism. For Brady (2007) whilst much social policy aims to reproduce neoliberal values through techniques of care for the self, her research on single mothers shows it can have the opposite effect. Individuals can become increasingly critical towards these very same policies (Brady 2007:198-205). The initial spur to individualization has taken the form of what Foucault termed ‘techniques of the self’: ‘an attitude, a mode of

behaviour...evolved into procedures, practices and formulas that people reflected upon, developed, perfected and taught' (Foucault 1988a:45). These techniques help develop 'technologies of the self':

'[W]hich permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault 1988b:18)

Therefore, although policies may be implemented to further neoliberal governmentality, the techniques it uses to do this can be subverted by the individual to be critical about these very policies (Foucault 1988b:16-22). Such technologies have been found in welfare recipients (Ferguson 2007) and cultural workers (Banks 2006). This privatisation of responsibility reasserts the role of the Other and their role in the individual's lifeworld, counter to the more limited individualism of neoliberalism. This leads Howard (2007b) to suggest that within the discursive field of individualization it is possible to identify many discourses. Neoliberalism is one of these, and certainly the most dominant, but one could also find communitarian, multicultural or tribal understandings of individuality, amongst other possibilities (Howard 2007b:3-6).

It is on this point that one can attempt to create a true synthesis of the Bourdieuan and Foucauldian perspectives. For Binkley (2009) it may be possible to say that the Foucauldians are correct and that individualization either began or was furthered by the discourses of neoliberalism. However, he also argues that the orientation of actors towards the future and the realisation and security of their habitus may well provide contradictions to the desires of governmentality by, for example, leading to increased ethical orientation towards others (Binkley 2009:102). In this sense the Bourdieuans are also correct. The implication of this being that once reflexivity occurs and becomes part of temporal practice the controls on it become limited (Binkley 2009:88). Individualization can either further the current social order, or lead to a questioning of it. Therefore the Foucauldian perspective can help place the Bourdieuan perspective within a political context and suggest some of the issues of power which may be part of this.

The relationship between late modernity and neoliberalism is therefore more complex than some Foucauldian critics initially suggest. It is the tendency of some of the

Foucauldians to reduce the former to the latter (Brannen and Nilsen 2005, Elchardus 2009). However, it would be more correct to argue that they are two distinct forms. I would argue that late modernity, as has been suggested in this chapter, is a continuation of the modern process of disembedding, but this time extended to the micro level, to individuals themselves. This involves the development of a post-traditional order, as well as an expansion of expert systems to help individuals cope with their new found responsibilities. Conversely, as discussed in the introduction, neoliberalism is a theory of, and a type of economy, which claims favouring of the increased marketisation of society is a way of defending individual liberty. Whilst it is accurate to say these two have similarities, these similarities form at the most an ‘elective affinity’ between the two. An example of such an effect can be seen in how neoliberalism not only claims to defend individual liberty but also influences the very definition of liberty since: ‘freedom other than free enterprise was cast as selfish, infantile, or killing, and placed in ignominious counterpoise to commitment, maturity, discipline, sacrifice, and sobriety’ (Brown 1995:9). The contemporary form of individualization has been impacted by its presence within neoliberal economies and, in turn, the provision of goods and services within this market has been influenced by individualization (Elliott and Lemert 2009). The impact is mutual, if not causal (Howard 2007b). This elective affinity could be only a temporary marriage of convenience – one is tempted to say a pure relationship – rather than a long-term union. The techniques of the self developed via neoliberal policies reassert the centrality of the social – most notably in the question of the other – to individualization and it is this aspect of individualization which is central to this thesis.

The Embedded and Disembedded Theories of Individualization

In light of this discussion it is now time to reassess the concept of individualization. For this concept to be empirically valid we need to distinguish between disembedded and embedded individualization (Dawson 2010a). The disembedded position argues that individualization is nothing less than the disappearing significance of social characteristics previously taken as impacting social action, here we include ‘zombie’ categories such as class, family, neighbourhood and, potentially, gender (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002:203, 102-103). Agents’ actions are based on individually defined and valued terms, as a reflection of the reflexive biography. As Lash puts it: ‘reflexive modernisation is a theory of the ever-increasing powers of social actors, or

“agency” in regard to structure’ (Lash 1994:111). The post-traditional order helps in this process by removing the validity of claims based on social position or traditional practice, even if they were to be called upon. Under such a definition inequality and/or community formation are discussed *as a result* of the choices disembodied individuals make rather than as existing prior to these choices (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002:30-31). Sociology also faces some grave problems under the disembodied thesis. Categories of social differentiation, long the basis of sociological research, become zombie categories. In short, disembodied individualization means the increased empowerment of individuals above and beyond previous forms of social constraint.

The evidence above has shown this perspective to be greatly flawed, apart from occasional (largely white, male, middle class, such as in Williams 2008) examples there is simply no evidence for it. It’s a different story with the embedded definition of individualization. This focuses more on the way in which late modern society privatises (Bauman 2008a:88) or ‘subsidiarises’ (Bauman 2006:4) previously collective concerns or fears to a private level and the individual is seen as responsible for not only their own fate, but also that of their own lifeworld. This has often been seen as a result of the disembodied thesis, but can exist without it. In this field of individualization Bauman is largely in agreement with both the Bourdieuians and Foucauldians, individualization asks individuals to take responsibility, without also giving them the power to do so. I will outline the political reasons for this in the next chapter and chapter five, for now it is enough to say that Bauman’s focus within individualization is often on the ways in which, whilst agreeing with Beck that individuals are encouraged to ‘find biographical solutions to systematic contradictions’, this is simply not available to most (Bauman 2002a). Instead this privatisation of responsibility, disguised as freedom (Bauman (1992a), often puts an intolerable hold on the individual, being as it is constantly defined by ambivalence (Bauman 1991b) and uncertainty (Bauman 2007a:1-4)³⁰. For an example of this situation, let us return to Connolly and Prothero’s research on green consumerism, where they argue individualization is:

³⁰ It is true that Bauman does discuss the disembodied thesis, and Beck the embedded (Bauman 2000a:32-34, Beck 1997:54). Here I am discussing more a question of focus, Bauman’s focus falls more prominently on the embedded, Beck the disembodied. As part of this it should also be noted that one blind spot of Bauman’s analysis is his lack of focus on gender as a means of inequality (Branaman 2007). Whilst accepting this critique, we have seen how, in the work of feminist thinkers such as Adkins and Skeggs, embedded individualization can cater for gender.

‘A process that has led to individuals feeling both responsible for and empowered in dealing with risks to both themselves and to the wider environment. [The participants] felt that they had an obligation to and could act to address global (and local/national) environmental issues. At the same time, they also felt uneasiness about how to act. The feelings of empowerment described are not in opposition to or detached from the accompanying feelings of confusion, ambivalence or uncertainty, but are in fact a result of a feeling of being individually responsible’ (Connolly and Prothero 2008:141)

What is being described here is a process of embedded individualization. Their participants felt the responsibility to be ‘good green’ citizens, but weren’t sure about what exactly was the most ‘green’ path to follow. The expert systems were both withdrawn from their lifeworld, and beyond their comprehension. At the same time the reason they wanted to be green was because of a reflexive awareness of their responsibility to an other. This can in turn be enhanced by one’s social circumstances. One may be a green consumer because of one’s class position, either because it ascribes cultural capital, or simply because one has the money to do so. Forms of stratification are not removed in this model of individualization; instead they *situate* individualization (Dickens 1999). In short, the theory of embedded individualization suggests that late modern societies are categorised by increased individual responsibility, as part of an ‘ideology of privatisation’ (Bauman 2008a:88) and reflexive awareness of an other(s), but yet at the same time the opportunity to exercise this is not universally available. Continual forms of stratification are important, and instead of being displaced by individualization they can actually help to extenuate it.

So what of the disembedded thesis? Should this simply be rejected? As we have seen the critique against the disembedded thesis has not only been its lack of evidence, but its classed nature, which has dangerous political consequences. To provide a few examples from a large selection:

‘These “new” speculations of Urry, Beck and Giddens, therefore, should be seen for what they are: that is, projects for intellectual grandisement (Bauman [1987b]). Class is displaced and effaced in these new modes of mobility and individualization, by the very people whose ideas are institutionalised and help reproduce class inequality more intensely – especially in Giddens’ case as a friend of Clinton and Blair. This enables a particular middle-class habitus to be institutionalised in government policy, evidenced in

the “New Labour” agenda on social exclusion as a way of speaking class, knowing, naming and positioning others’ (Skeggs, 2004:54, see also Bernstein 1989)

‘Giddens’s vocabulary is the empty, anachronistic vocabulary used by today’s politicians, bureaucrats, and professionals: freedom, agency, globalization, security, democracy, etc.’ (Mestrovic 1998:ix)

‘One may see the perfect illustration of the cunning of imperialist reason...in the dual persona of Tony Blair and Anthony Giddens...Giddens has emerged as the globe-trotting apostle of a “Third Way” which...begins by warning that “the poor today are not the same as the poor of the past” and that “likewise, the rich are not the same as they used to be”...and, finally, “concerns itself with mechanisms of exclusion at the bottom and the top (sic)”, convinced as it is that “redefining inequality in relation to exclusion at both levels is consistent with a dynamic conception of inequality”. The masters of the economy, and the other “excluded at the top”, can sleep in peace: they have found their Pangloss’ (Bourdieu and Waquant 2001:6)³¹

It has been argued elsewhere that Giddens is a representative of the ‘happy consciousness’ so readily criticised by Marcuse as ‘the belief that the real is rational, and that the established system, in spite of everything, delivers the goods’ (Marcuse 1964:82, Mestrovic 1998, Adams 2008) and I would argue Beck can face the same accusation, despite his slightly more pessimistic nature. Therefore, it is important to question the empirical universality of individualization as developed by Giddens and Beck, which the Bourdieuians and Foucauldians have done well, but we should not reject the prominence of it as what C.Wright Mills (1940) termed ‘the common vocabulary of motives’.

For Mills societies will differ, both across time and space, in the justifications which are acceptable for certain actions. When individuals are called to account for their behaviour, the justifications they give, when spoken, become ‘motives’. Acceptable motives form part of ‘common vocabulary’ of that particular society (Mills 1940:906-907). It is my argument that disembedded individualization is the common vocabulary of motives for late modern society. This is different to saying it is a discourse, a discourse aims to change the way people perceive the world, the common vocabulary of motives is the way people *explain* themselves to the world. But, at the same time, these motives are, as Skeggs and others correctly argue; only open to the middle class.

³¹ All emphasis/annotation in quotes are from the original author, unless noted otherwise.

In short it is possible for both the embedded and disembedded thesis to be correct, if we assert that the former describes the conditions in which individuals live their life in late modernity, and the structural processes which further this, whilst the latter describes the justifications accepted for action. Such a definition is, of course, of the ideal typical kind, and inevitably the distinction between the two is not so clear cut. Nevertheless such a description is more empirically plausible than the collapsing of the two found in Beck and Giddens' theories. It is in this sense that this thesis understands individualization, and thus life, in late modernity. It is essential for any form of late modern political sociology to have an awareness of individualization, but at the same time be aware that this individualization also contains the seeds of sociality, orientation towards an other and inequality. As noted above, Bauman's work on individualization is especially useful for this discussion, which will be reasserted in the next chapter. Chapter four also devotes consideration to the distinctively political impact of embedded individualization.

Before that however, the next chapter considers the political alternative already offered by our three theorists. Here it is argued that the alternatives of Giddens and Beck are greatly limited, partly due to their understanding of individualization, but also due to other factors, including the role of the state, politics as government and the value of socialism in late modernity. As will also be shown, although Bauman doesn't offer much in the way of alternatives, his political sociology opens some fruitful paths for further study.

Chapter 2: The Political Sociology of Late Modernity

In the previous chapter I provided an outline of the sociological changes that occur with the shift to late modernity and its three central processes of individualization, post-traditional order and expert systems. I also outlined critiques of the central concept of individualization from modernist, Bourdieuan and Foucauldian perspectives. The last two were especially important to my own conception of ‘disembedded’ individualization, which focuses on privatisation and inequality, versus ‘embedded’ which argues for the ‘freeing’ of individuals from structural constraints.

In light of the discussion thus far, I would suggest late modernity sees at its heart a quandary. On the one hand changes such as the post-traditional order and individualization provide the individual with a great deal of freedom to create their own life-world and, in the terms of Giddens, influence the *durée* in whatever way they wish. Yet, with this comes a great deal of uncertainty, often making itself felt in existential anxiety and a lack of ontological security (Giddens 1984) with an awareness of institutional uncertainty (Beck 1992)¹. Thus whilst the individual is free to engage in a process of self-creation this has to occur with little recourse to societal precedent or expertise (Beck’s ‘insignificant world-shaper’) and can in fact be differentially experienced and acted upon (Bauman’s individuality *de jure/de facto*). Life in late modernity is ruled by ambivalence (Bauman 1991b, 1993) and the type of uncertainty Beck identified at the institutional level is also felt at the individual level (Beck 1998). As a result the political sociology of late modernity has a central focus: the way in which individual desires and orientations can be recognised politically which is, at its very heart, a collective process. For all three this is seen as present today in some form, although it may be limited (Giddens and Beck) or corrupted (Bauman).

Therefore this chapter has four goals: (1) to outline what each thinker suggests categorises late modern politics; (2) why they dismiss socialism as part of (1); (3) to discuss any alternatives they may offer; (4) to evaluate these in light of the understanding of late modernity already developed. As we shall see sometimes the distinction between points (1) and (3) is not as clear as would be hoped (especially in

¹ Such concerns are also raised in the sociology of Richard Sennett (1974, 2003, 2006). Sennett would broadly fit into the discussion offered below from Bauman. The late modern political imperative is to reassert a sense of togetherness, as Bauman terms it ‘turning individuals into people’ (Sennett 1974, 2003, Bauman 2007c).

the work of Beck). Much like the last chapter, one of the goals here is summary of their views, but there is a greater focus on assessment, especially the question of why we should reject both their political alternatives and their own rejection of socialism as an alternative. One of my main points is that despite the supposed intellectual individualism of Giddens and Beck, their political sociologies actually marginalise the individual in favour of state and/or intellectual-led forms of governance. It has been argued that any 'new', late modern form of political sociology would need to be 'human-centred' (Taylor 2010:198) and focused on 'democratizing social action' (Nash 2010). It is my argument that such a goal would, ironically, involve the rejection of theorists like Giddens and Beck who would seem to be the prime candidates for such individually focused theoretical ends. Therefore, my concern throughout this chapter is not to give a complete overview of each thinker's political sociology, but rather to provide a reading of all three which draws out this conception of the political individual in late modernity. I would argue this is not only useful for my own argument concerning 'political individualization' (see chapter four), but also is central to each thinker's argument. Supposedly late modern transformations such as life or sub politics, risk awareness, cosmopolitanisation, dialogical democracy, privatisation and globalization are all seen to *directly* alter the conceptions and orientations individuals as political actors have. In Beck's words, late modern political sociology has often been concerned with 'the individual returning to society' (Beck 1999). Therefore, my reading of all three as political individualists is the building block for the elaboration of the libertarian socialist alternative – itself defined by a focus on individual activity – which follows this chapter.

I suggest each thinker's political ideas move through two separate phases. The foci and timing of these phases differ for all three, however there are common problems, most significantly: agency, the role of neoliberal capitalism, the state and their basis for rejecting socialism. It goes without saying that given these goals and the breath of all three theorists' oeuvre, this will be a lengthy discussion. I shall begin with perhaps the most prominent and famous political ideas of all three, those of Anthony Giddens.

Anthony Giddens: 'Blair's Brain'

Giddens has been without a doubt the most influential of the three in contemporary politics. His understanding of The Third Way (Giddens 1998b, 2000) has been

advocated, if not followed, by: Tony Blair (Blair 1998), Bill Clinton and (briefly) Gerhard Schroeder (Hombach, Blair and Schroeder 2000) amongst others (cf. Giddens 2001)². This marks Giddens out as not only fulfilling the role of a ‘public intellectual’ to a greater degree than Beck and Bauman – resulting in him receiving a peerage. But also, he becomes intrinsically ‘simple modern’ in his political work, constructing a policy framework for implementation by a political party, strikingly similar to Bauman’s idea of the ‘modern’ intellectual ‘engineering through manipulation’ (Bauman 1987b, 2008c, Mestrovic 1998). This makes Giddens’ work particularly notable since it can be seen as part of mainstream policy debate during late modernity.

Although *The Third Way* attracts the most attention and comment (cf. Callinicos 2001, Leggett 2005) Giddens’ political ideas have a long history which, he has argued, stretch back into his consideration of structuration theory (Giddens 1991b). Hence it is central to take a holistic look at Giddens’ political theory. When doing this it has been claimed that:

‘Giddens’s work has always embodied a political project characterised by an attempt to combine liberalism with aspects of socialism. In practice the emphasis on renewing liberalism has always overshadowed the residual commitment to any more radical socialist or libertarian project’ (Loyal 2003:4)

Loyal argues this balance between socialism and liberalism shifts further towards liberalism with the passing of time, partly due to political convenience (Loyal 2003:166), but also because of the false equation of ‘actually existing socialism’, with all possible forms of socialism, which is largely achieved by Giddens ignoring any literature which doesn’t agree with this view (Loyal 2003:140, 166). This is indeed a persuasive categorisation of Giddens’ political thought, and we shall see the way this plays out across the stages. The first stage covers Giddens’ work on structuration and his *Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* which, although not directly focused towards politics, does have some interesting and useful points, for example around the centrality of the reflexive individual and the role of the state. From there it

² It is important to note that Giddens’ understanding of the Third Way has notable differences to that advocated by ‘professional’ politicians, with Blair being no exception (cf. Driver and Martell 2000, Merkel 2001, Leggett 2002, 2005). Although Giddens suggests New Labour was broadly faithful to his understanding of the term (Giddens 2004).

will be argued Giddens' second stage, beginning with *Beyond Left and Right*³ and continuing to the current day, quite often neglects the points from the first stage in the enthusiasm to construct a coherent Third Way policy platform. Therefore (as with both Beck and Bauman) the separation of Giddens' work into 'stages' should be seen as not purely a chronological division, but a change of focus and intent. My argument is similar to Loyal's in that I identify the fall of the USSR to herald a change in Giddens' political viewpoint, and thus signals the shift from liberal socialism, to purely liberalism.

Giddens' First Stage: Structuration Theory and 'The Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism', 1981-1993

For a book with such grand ambitions and scope, *The Constitution of Society*, Giddens' definitive statement on structuration theory (Giddens 1984) gives little space to a discussion of politics. Nevertheless the centrality of this text to Giddens' wider social theory necessitates its discussion here. The lack of a direct political engagement in this work has led to a teasing out of the political assumptions of structuration theory in the secondary literature, with broadly two positions being taken. This disagreement is partly due to the fact that the worldview contained in structuration theory is somewhat vague, and sometimes contradictory (Bryant and Jary 1991). However, it is central to first understand the political tenor of structuration to then appreciate Giddens' wider political sociology (Giddens 1991b)

The first position, taken by Kilminster (1991), argues that Giddens' theory 'dovetails' with a particular strand of 20th Century European liberalism, most notably with the centrality of the reflexive agent, as he puts it:

'The new liberalism was partly a political doctrine, but it was also an ontology of the individual, seen as the unique, bounded and dynamic centre of self-activity, set against arbitrary power in the political realm and against "society" in general...like all liberalism,

³ This text is very much a transition between the two stages, for the argument here it is part of the second stage, but a different form of emphasis (for example an emphasis on the role of social movements) may place it in the first stage.

this dimension of [structuration] theory seeks to maximise the conditions for rationality so as to minimise, and thus control, the irrational' (Kilminster 1991:79)⁴

On one hand Kilminster's critique is on very solid ground. Giddens does see a major purpose of the structuration project to be the bringing of the intelligent reflexive agent into social theory (Giddens 1981a) and indeed such an agent is a major underpinning of the brand of liberalism identified by Kilminster and Loyal (2003:38). In response Stones (2005) argues that this exaggerates certain aspects of structuration theory. For Stones, Giddens' theory is practically 'politically neutral', although it may contain liberal tenets it also contains tenets of communitarianism and cosmopolitanism which, Stones argues, cancel each other out. Indeed when referring to Kilminster Stones argues that his argument was too narrow since it saw Giddens' individuals as being placed 'against society' (as in the above quote) rather than embedded in and helping to construct society (Stones 2005:195-197). Thus, agents are aware of restrictions upon their action within different societal settings, since it is within these settings that the structuring process is conducted.

Whilst Stones' critique of Kilminster is very convincing it is more difficult to go from his point on the embeddedness of agents to saying that structuration is politically neutral or ambivalent. In fact it has important political implications since agents are seen to have a large stake in and ability to influence political movements, ideas and policies. This is perhaps best shown in Giddens' idea of the double hermeneutic as a way in which ideas from the political elites will not be able to pass without their acceptance by agents. At this point agents may influence the ideas through public opinion, a hermeneutical re-interpretation through implementation or direct rejection (Giddens 1981a, 1984). As a result Giddens does not see individual agents' capabilities and knowledge as an impetus towards fighting against politics and government, as for Kilminster, but as an engagement with it. This then leads to the question of political action in structuration, for Kilminster any action is seen as a negation of society, a way of removing yourself from it. Instead of this retreat from society Giddens' theory actually seems to suggest reflexivity can lead to an engagement with societal constraints and a corresponding wish to change them. This centrality of the reflexive agent

⁴ This then could in turn, 'dovetail' with neoliberalism, see the section on individualization (especially the Foucauldian critique) in the previous chapter. Although Kilminster, with his focus on 'classic' liberalism, would be a modernist critic of individualization.

identified in structuration theory is prominent in Giddens' political sociology, beginning with his work on historical materialism.

This engagement with historical materialism occurs in a two volume 'contemporary critique' (Giddens 1981a, 1985a) and is a signifier of his ambivalent relationship with Marx:

'Marx's aphorism that human beings "make history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing" states in a nutshell a position I have tried to elaborate in considerable detail...Yet there is much more in Marx that I would reject than accept' (Giddens 1989:259)

This kind of acceptance and differentiation influences Giddens' texts on historical materialism which for large stretches simply do not engage with Marx⁵, but instead act as a re-statement of Giddens' work on structuration (Giddens 1981a) or his views on the nation state (Giddens 1985a). However it is when Giddens does engage with Marx that we can see some development of a political theory⁶.

Giddens' view on Marx and Marxism is expressed as:

'Let me try to put the facts of the matter as bluntly as possibly. If by "historical materialism" we mean the conception that the history of human societies can be understood in terms of the progressive augmentation of the forces of production, then it is based on false premises, and the time has come finally to abandon it. If historical materialism means that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles", it is so patently erroneous that it is difficult to see why so many have felt obliged to take it seriously. If, finally, historical materialism means that Marx's scheme of the evolution of society...provides a defensible basis for analysing world history, then it is also to be rejected. Only if historical materialism is regarded as embodying the more abstract elements of a theory of human *Praxis*, snippets of which can be gleaned from the diversity of Marx's writings, does it remain an indispensable contribution to social theory today' (Giddens 1981a:1-2)

This quote suggests two of the key elements of Giddens' first stage of political thought. Firstly, there is a strong rejection of 'evolutionism' in the guise not only of Marxism,

⁵ This lack of engagement with Marx in texts concerned with him is best shown in Giddens (1985b)

⁶ In the below I will not devote much consideration to Giddens' exact formulation of historical materialism. There are two reasons for this: (a) to do so would take us off topic and (b) this formulation is largely vague, and mostly consists of a restating of structuration theory.

but also of functionalism (cf. Giddens 1984) and secondly the centrality of the reflexive, intelligent, capable agents. Giddens' major critique of Marx and Marxism is that it sees agents, especially workers, as 'dupes' of capitalism and modernity (Giddens 1981a:16, 223). These 'dupes' are confronted with processes beyond their control or comprehension; demonstrated by what Giddens believes to be the unnecessary concept of 'false consciousness'. Instead for Giddens *praxis* is not a state to be achieved, but rather a 'fundamental trait of human social existence' (Giddens 1981a:53). There is an inherently social, reflexive engagement with one's surroundings which is enhanced by the conditions of late modernity (Giddens 1991a). Giddens points to worker's movements within capitalism as examples of agents not being dupes of the state, but rather seeking out their own desires within capitalism (Giddens 1982c). Therefore 'writing off' freedoms already given as 'bourgeois freedoms' for Giddens is false, since workers have consciously desired and worked towards them. As a result, contra Kilminster, Giddens sees agents within capitalism as engaging in the confrontation and questioning of power relations (particularly around the nexus of class (Giddens 1981b)) instead of attempting to remove one's self from these processes (cf. Giddens' (1982c) critique of Marshall (1950)).

Giddens' critique from here expands onto his concern with making Marxism more relevant to the time of the nation-state (Giddens 1985a, 1985b). For Giddens the nation-state should be seen as the main 'power container' of the modern and late modern era, replacing the city. From here Giddens' theory of structuration outlines a specific form of power; that of authoritative resources. These focus around both knowledge and the organisation of life chances rather than control of capital and/or property, which are termed allocative resources⁷. It is the ability of the state to control these authoritative resources, particularly through the use of surveillance and violence as a last resort, which makes it the major holder of power in modernity. Yet, when trying to provide concrete examples of authoritative resources one runs into difficulties since Giddens was somewhat vague regarding their form. The following is the definition of authoritative resources from the glossary of *The Constitution of Society*:

⁷ In the following these terms are treated in a general manner, in keeping with the way Giddens uses them. In chapter six, I develop a more complete definition of what these resources may be in practice.

‘Non-material resources involved in the generation of power, deriving from the capability of harnessing the activities of human beings; authoritative resources result from the dominion of some actors over others’ (Giddens 1984:373)

In this definition authoritative resources become part of power relations and their identification with the state seems logical. Indeed it is these very resources which cause Stewart to suggest Giddens’ theory of power is in fact one of domination (Stewart 2001:14). But, when engaging in concrete discussion of authoritative resources Giddens sees them as more universally accessible. He cites universal literacy, memory retrieval and the mass media as areas in which these resources are utilised on an everyday basis for self-constitution and in relations to others (Giddens 1984:258-262). So following Giddens’ theory through to its logical conclusion, in modernity the state becomes the ‘storage container’ of power through its ability to gather information and knowledge in the form of authoritative resources. At the same time Giddens sees these same resources as being used by reflexive agents on an everyday basis. This would seem to suggest relations and conflicts of power occur. This is what Giddens terms ‘the dialectic of control’, whereby ‘the less powerful manages resources in such a way as to exert control over the more powerful in established power relationship’ (Giddens 1984:374). This in turn means that power relations are relations of both power and autonomy:

‘The power relations sustained in the regularised practices constituting social systems can be considered as *reproduced relations of autonomy and dependence in interactions*. *Domination* refers to structured asymmetries of resources drawn upon and reconstituted in such power relations. “Domination” here is used in the sense of “permitting dominion over”, “dominion” concerning the sway actors have over others, and over the material world they inhabit’ (Giddens 1981a:50).

Thus not only does Giddens’ political sociology, both analytically and normatively, aim itself at the individual (Loyal 2003:25). These individuals in turn orientate themselves towards the state, in relationships where they are both dependent and autonomous.

However, it is not clear whether the power of the state as holder of these resources is legitimate to Giddens. Giddens sees legitimation as being the acceptance of practices by agents; however he also sees a large amount of agent’s actions being based on routine which, as unmotivated actions, cannot be seen as reflexive legitimation or

acceptance (Giddens 1984:60-64). Hence it is difficult to see whether the state's control of authoritative resources is legitimate or instead as simply a routinalised occurrence. Taking the dialectic of control as our starting point it might be possible to say that being able to control the use of authoritative resources would be an expression of power, but beyond brief mentions of public opinion or the reembedding of practices through structuration it is hard to see in Giddens' theory how agents gain access to these resources except if the state willingly provides them. Thus Giddens' 'dialectic of control' is greatly skewed towards one end, in this case represented by the state, without a full consideration of how the other end, here represented by agents, are able to overcome this seeming inequality. In some ways Giddens is never clear whether this inequality can be overcome⁸, it seems from what he argues in his structuration theory they can, since social change is agent driven and resources are utilised in such change. But yet when explicitly discussing the dialectic Giddens argues those in a subordinate position can 'influence' which, needless to say, is not the same as 'change', their superior's position (Giddens 1984:16). Thus although Giddens is placing this understanding of power at the centre of his theory, at the same time he is not fully thinking through the ways in which this can be effective at both ends of the dialectic. Thus, whilst it is clear we see a theory here of reflexive individuals whose action is orientated towards the state as the holder of resources. It is less clear how, if at all, the state is orientated towards these individuals, and individuals' power over its actions.

This leads us on to Giddens' political hopes and normative position in his first stage, central to his views on socialism. Here we find a strong assertion from Giddens: he is trying to form a socialist critique of capitalism as it currently stands, and remove any Marxist historical materialist overtones. Giddens identifies himself with a form of 'libertarian socialism' (Giddens 1981a:175)⁹ and argues that the emancipatory potential of socialism is worth embracing (Giddens, Bleicher and Featherstone 1982:64-65,72). This is more a normative assertion rather than a fully developed analytical framework¹⁰ but there is some very basic development. By placing so much focus on the ability to

⁸ With the exception of the worker's movement for citizenship rights, to some extent marked out by Giddens because of its uniqueness.

⁹ Needless to say this is different from the form of libertarian socialism this thesis outlines from the next chapter onwards. I will emphasise the role of associations and internal democracy as ways of giving power to individuals. Giddens' 'libertarianism' is more in keeping with more dominant liberal definition of removing constraints from the individual.

¹⁰ Giddens claimed that these ideas would be discussed in the original second volume of the 'contemporary critique', 'Between Capitalism and Socialism', this was eventually shelved and remains unpublished in its original form (Giddens 1981a:1, 1994a).

call upon authoritative resources in the form of expert systems, Giddens develops a situation where *control* of the mechanisms for maintaining and transmitting these authoritative resources becomes central. By arguing these resources are in the hands of the state Giddens is effectively arguing the state controls the means for late modern life to be conducted. But, as noted, Giddens never fully confronts the way in which the state can fulfil this role objectively, especially when Giddens gives capitalism agency in the development of the nation state form (Giddens 1981a:182-202). Consequently Giddens never truly brings his analytical and normative assumptions together to suggest a critical theory about the role of the state in a capitalist society. One of the consequences of this lack of consideration of both the state, and the inequality in the dialectic of control, is that Giddens develops a benign, compliant, view of the state, not necessarily seeing it as ‘cut off’ from the rest of society, but certainly maintaining a large amount of autonomy and yet using this to act in a consensual manner. This is shown through Giddens’ insistence that ‘public opinion’ can be one of the ways in which political ideas are impacted, rather than the more sophisticated argument of Bourdieu (1971) as seeing public opinion and polls thereof as part of the construction of political power relations rather than a simple ‘reading’ of wider opinions. Conflicts and antagonisms between the state and individuals are largely overlooked. I will return to this question, and develop Giddens’ possible critique in chapter six. For now it is important to note that Giddens doesn’t fully develop an understanding of the way the individual is linked to a collective political system, except in brief circumstances, such as the citizenship rights movement.

Also central in a socialist conception of the first stage of Giddens’ political thought is the role played by the market and capitalism. Whilst Giddens is trying to ‘add-in’ the concept of authoritative resources to Marxism he is not willing to totally overlook the original material resources such as capital and the means of production: allocative resources. Allocative and authoritative resources interact with each other to create possible forms of domination. The question of whether the market fulfils such a dominant role (as both a mediator of means and ends and as a forum for social action) is unanswered for Giddens, despite his insistence upon ‘market relations’ for determining class (Giddens 1985b:173). For Bauman, as will be seen below, the market comes to be the dominant form of societal reproduction (Bauman 2000a, 2007b). This means access to both forms of resources is limited by the restricted nature of market distribution.

Thus if one were to sum up Giddens' first stage, he attempts to reformulate Marxism for late modern times, but removes the possibility of social change for a theory based upon this, whilst professing change is still possible.

Conclusions from Giddens' First Stage

Any analysis which tries to take account of Giddens' political sociology pre-*Beyond Left and Right* is going to rely less on critiquing what Giddens said and more on drawing out assumptions from his writings. This is mostly because at this point, by Giddens' admission (Giddens, Bleicher and Featherstone 1982), we do not have a political theory, but rather the suggestion of where one may lie. For Giddens being a reflexive *agent* in the sense of being able to take action on the basis of that reflection requires resources to be implemented, most notably Giddens' authoritative resources. Nevertheless Giddens sees a large amount of such resources in the control of the state through the use of surveillance and information; in many ways it is these resources which help define the state. By not drawing these two themes of his analysis together Giddens missed a path for his normative claims to have a state critical theoretical basis. Such an analysis will be elaborated later in this thesis, however at this point by returning to our discussion of late modernity we can see this becomes central. Partly it is a question of 'which side the State is on', is it complicit in the furthering of a neoliberal discourse and material reality? Or is it interested in the increase of agents' positive freedom as part of the make-up of late modernity? In Giddens' first stage there are tentative suggestions in both directions. In his second stage he posits the state to be the latter of these options. This issue of power becomes more pronounced in Giddens' 'second stage' of political sociology.

Giddens' Second Stage: Beyond Left and Right and 'The Third Way', 1994-

Beyond Left and Right is effectively an attempt to combine Giddens' critique of historical materialism with his discussion on late modernity. This is both an assessment of how politics is currently conducted, as well as suggestions for more effective alternatives. For Giddens this political position will no longer be ruled by a division between the Left and the Right and instead will be based around the conjuncture of life and generative politics, however before discussing these central points we must first understand some of Giddens' basic political definitions and assumptions.

With an increased awareness of the unintended consequences of simple modernity Giddens argues that the two main political ideologies of this period (conservative and socialist) have to reassess the impact of their political achievements during simple modernity and adjust their political position accordingly. A result of this for Giddens is that 'conservatism becomes radical...socialism becomes conservative' (Giddens 1994a:2), Giddens sees this reflected in the concern of socialist parties in the late 20th Century to maintain the welfare state as opposed to moving forward with new projects or policies. Although Giddens is arguing equally that 'old' conservatism and socialism are no longer relevant for late modernity a large amount of his argument is given to a discussion of the death of socialism. Giddens himself moves personally away from an identification with socialism, from suggesting that although the fall of the USSR means that socialism as a practice becomes redundant its ideals are still useful (Giddens 1993) to rejecting both the practice and ideals of socialism and looking for these ideals from the wider 'progressive left' (Giddens 1994a, 1995a). Here one can criticise Giddens' conception of socialism, since it becomes so tied up with the welfare state it is hard to differentiate the two. Although he does acknowledge that the welfare state was not originally a project of socialism he then suggests that it becomes its 'core concern'. As a result when outlining ten reasons why socialism becomes conservative in late modernity, nine of them are related to the welfare state (Giddens 1994a:69-77). Socialism is reduced to the welfare state, itself more accurately described as a social democratic project.

As noted by Callinicos (2001) this socialist defence of the welfare state is not the result of a failure to 'come to terms with' late modernity but rather the fact that during the 80s and early 90s most European nations (including Britain which Giddens acknowledges he is focusing upon (Giddens 1994a:23)) had conservative governments hoping to cut back on the welfare state. If the positions had been reversed it is entirely possible that this kind of 'conservative socialism' would have been less pronounced. As a result Giddens' rejection of the traditional 'left/right' dichotomy may be less based on the processes of late modernity and more a result of electoral politics and the emerging hegemonic nature of neoliberal policies circa 1980-1994. To use the language of this thesis, Giddens doesn't demonstrate that there is a *mandatory link* between late modernity as a social process and neoliberalism. It may also be noted that Giddens places a large amount of blame for this death of socialism on the fall of the USSR,

whereas previously he had stated the kind of socialism he was advocating was different from that practiced in the Soviet Union (Giddens 1981a). Effectively, Giddens is arguing some old ideas are acceptable ('philosophic' and Disraelian 'one nation' conservatism) since they can be argued to have late modern relevance, but:

‘There is also an acute failure by Giddens to engage in a vast literature...which argues that such a distinction [between the USSR and other forms of socialist theory] is necessary. Ironically, in his evaluation of Marx in *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* written admittedly in a more sympathetic political climate, Giddens has made exactly this criticism of other writers. Such a *petition principii* is therefore perhaps not merely a logical or semantic failure on his part. On the contrary, such an ideological compression is probably based on a political rationale’ (Loyal 2003:166)

As we shall see, this political rationale becomes increasingly significant to Giddens’ second stage.

Giddens’ political sociology does attempt to make its claims more intimately linked to late modernity. For example, he sees new social movements as being an expression of the reflexive biography (Giddens 1991a, 1994a:87) and civil associations as being an extension of the pure relationship (Giddens 1992, 1994a:118). But perhaps the most prominent change Giddens identifies is the relevance of dialogical democracy for late modernity. This rests on some of the key sociological factors previously discussed by Giddens, individualization leads to a situation where alliances and relationships rely more on trust and/or a shared (chosen) personal interest (i.e. green politics, workplace policies, individual ‘causes’ etc.) rather than societal conditions beyond the person’s control (ascribed characteristics such as class, ethnicity, gender etc.). Along with this the shared awareness of the unintended consequences of simple modernity and the ability to access expert systems means that individuals now have a large number of shared interests. In fact at points Giddens comes close to a Habermasian view of identifying a large amount of universal values, but prefers the idea of universal ‘responsibility’ as a result of individualization (Giddens 1994a:20-21). These values and responsibilities lead to a situation where dialogue becomes central for Giddens as politics calls upon expert systems to help understand the problems of late modernity and discuss solutions to them. To draw another Habermasian link Giddens is implicitly arguing that the pure communication act becomes accessible with the occurrence of late

modernity¹¹. Therefore, perhaps the key question is: how do individuals access these forms of information, and engage in debate to fulfil their universal responsibilities?

This brings us back to Giddens' conceptions of life and generative politics; which are the two key components of late modern politics for Giddens. Life politics is defined as:

‘A politics, not of *life chances*, but of *life styles*. It concerns disputes and struggles about how (as individuals and as collective humanity) we should live in a world where what used to be fixed either by nature or tradition is now subject to human decisions’ (Giddens 1994a:15)

This is a natural extension of Giddens' discussion of late modernity as a time of a post-traditional order where decisions about day-to-day activity cannot be justified with a call towards traditional ways of acting, but instead rely on individual justification. He suggests as an example the increasing number of female divorcees deciding how to carry out the roles of both ‘woman’ and ‘mother’ (Giddens 1994a:91). Life politics is therefore the way in which choices can become the choices of ‘agents’, i.e. how these choices can affect the *durée* and be accepted as legitimate paths of action (Giddens 1991a:214-215). As we’ve already discovered, the ability for this to take place lies in the agent’s ability to access and utilise resources, this is where we turn to generative politics:

‘Generative politics exists in the space that links the state to reflexive mobilisation in the society at large...The limitations of neoliberalism, with its idea of the minimal state, have become very apparent. Generative politics is a politics which seeks to allow individuals and groups to *make things happen*, rather than have things happen to them...It works through providing material conditions, and organisational frameworks, for the life-

¹¹ The broad similarities between Giddens and Habermas' political sociology remain surprisingly under-discussed. Partly since Giddens argues, in a similar way to his relationship with Marx, that he has both learned much from Habermas, but yet hopes to reject most of what he says (Giddens 1982b:155). Nevertheless their similarities are most notable in Habermas' discussion of the emergence of political conflicts ‘concerning cultural reproduction, social integration and socialisation’ which ‘are not ignited by distribution problems but by questions having to do with the grammar of forms of life’ (Habermas 1987:392) much akin to Giddens' life politics. Also significant here is Habermas' focus on the reflexivity of intersubjective communicative action (Habermas 1976:128). Such similarities mean Beck feels no qualms in citing Habermas as an advocate of reflexive modernisation (Beck 2010:66-67). There are differences between Giddens and Habermas, concerning the concept of *praxis*, beyond the discussion here (Giddens 1982b:160-161, Habermas 1982:268). Habermas' exclusion from this thesis is due to his rejection of any possibility of ‘late’ modernity; his role outside sociology (Outhwaite 2009); and Bauman's discussion of the lack of conception of the individual in his political sociology (Bauman and Welzer 2002:111).

political decisions taken by individuals and groups in the wider social order' (Giddens 1994a:15)

Hence, generative politics is the ability and responsibility for the state to provide the resources for life politics to occur. The increasingly varied ways of being a 'woman' or 'mother' are recognised by the providing of resources in line with this. Examples of this could be flexible childcare, support for divorce, education and political representation. The major way Giddens sees generative politics as being achievable is through welfare, and particularly what he terms 'positive welfare' (Giddens 1994a:151 ff.). He suggests that welfare recipients are aware of risks resulting from their actions/inactions and therefore should be assisted through welfare in stopping (using Beck's (1992, 2009) terms) these risks becoming catastrophes. Giddens provides examples such as cutting down on the environmental causes of cancer, the prevention of road accidents through policies such as safer cars, lower speed limits and greater public transport and also finding ways to generate more trust within relationships through 'educational, regulative and material components' (Giddens 1994a:154-155). When making such suggestions Giddens seems to be on relatively safe ground, after all no-one is suggesting measures to cut down on cancer, deaths on roads or domestic violence are in some way bad ideas. Nevertheless it is suggestive of a major problem at the heart of Giddens' approach in *Beyond Left and Right* and in fact is part of a major 'shift' in Giddens' work which has gone unnoticed.

Importantly, at the start of *Beyond Left and Right* Giddens renames his reflexive, knowledgeable actors as 'clever people' (Giddens 1994a:7), the difference here should not be seen as purely linguistic since now reflexive modernisation seems to become important at the institutional, rather than individual level. Whilst actors are still accorded a level of individual reflexivity they are no longer accorded the same level of reflexivity since instead of critically engaging with expert systems actors are instead seen as simply having knowledge of them. This then becomes amplified in Giddens' discussion of how life and generative politics interact. Although he suggests both should be seen as interacting on an equal level (Giddens 1994a:14-15) he then goes on to (implicitly at least) give more authority to generative politics which becomes the property of political parties (who must become 'generative in character' (Giddens 1994a:246)) and consequently the state, through the governing party. These bodies have the role of deciding who receives generative policies. The logical consequence of

Giddens' work is that it then becomes the responsibility of the state to decide which (if any) life political claims will be granted credence. The examples, mentioned above, that Giddens offers amplifies this, since particularly with regard to creating trust within relationship it implies that agents must either be *told* the 'correct' way of acting, implying a lack of engagement with expert systems, or helped to understand them, implying a knowledge, but lack of the critical engagement Giddens previously discussed (cf. Giddens 1991a, 1992). Consequently governments have to decide who should be 'accorded autonomy' and thus find ways to 'generate resources...promoting productivity' for these groups (Giddens 1994a:93 ff.). This model could perhaps be termed a paternalistic social state, individuals are not orientated towards it, as in Giddens' first stage, but instead are subsumed, and dictated to, by it, albeit with the best of intentions¹². This could also be seen as problematic when many of the examples Giddens cites fit broadly into the category of 'identity politics'. Many of these movements are not concerned with simply attaining generative policies or 'recognition', but rather invoke a radical critique of the state. It seems unclear why governments and state-funded organisations would want to give such groups generative policies. Treating these groups as concerned with the politics of recognition goes some way towards blunting their critique and their radical potential, since this:

'[C]ast the state as if it were or could be a deeply democratic and nonviolent institution; conversely, it renders radical art, radical social movements, and various fringe populations as if they were not potentially subversive, representing a significant political challenge to the norms of the regime, but rather were benign entities and populations entirely appropriate for the state to equally protect, fund and promote' (Brown 2001:36)¹³

The upshot of these considerations is that the agents in Giddens' world become dramatically less significant. There also arises the unanswered question of whether *all* life political claims are accorded autonomy. To say they do rests upon a contradictory position, since if all have the chance of being recognised by the state, why does there need to be a redistribution of authoritative resources? Whereas originally life politics is

¹² Here Giddens also overlooks a tradition of the feminist critique of the welfare state which criticises exactly this paternalistic tendency as a reflection of patriarchal power and women's dependence upon it (cf. Brown 1994:166-196).

¹³ See the final section of chapter seven for more discussion on the potential of such groups for a late modern socialist politics.

conceived as the *de facto* late modern form of politics (Giddens 1991a), instead it becomes secondary to the state-sanctioned generative politics. At this point we must ask the question of why Giddens ‘downgraded’ the ability of social agents? The answer to such a question rests in Giddens’ original work on structuration.

Giddens saw power in structuration as an enabling force; as a result social action does not occur without the willingness of the agent (Giddens 1984:308). ‘Ontological security’, not power is identified as the spur towards social action, this is defined as: ‘Confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity’ (Giddens 1984:375). Whilst it may be suggested that maintenance of ontological security would seem to favour continuation of the status quo, Giddens argues that routinalised action, suggesting as it does an unquestioning acceptance of the current order, cannot itself justify the existing order in light of reflexive agents (Giddens 1984:61-64). Such justification needs to be continuously reasserted, individual action and the social environment are reflexively monitored to ensure ontological security is maintained (Giddens 1984:64). In turn, the need to maintain ontological security can lead to desires for social change (Giddens 1984:227).

This is perhaps questionable in practice. As noted by Bauman (1989b) Giddens has lost the use of ‘structure’ as a constraining force, understood here as a factor which influences agents to act in a particular fashion. Structure is instead given a productive character (Giddens 1984:374). As a result ontological security comes to play the role of a constraining force; determining both the type and amount of action individuals pursue. However, ‘what Giddens calls “transformative capacity” could equally well be called “stabilising capacity”’ (Loyal 2003:67). Ontological security is seen as providing the impetus to social action, but in actuality could also limit action. The maintenance of the status quo or simply inaction may produce more comfort than reflexive engagement. But, because of the very pliability of ontological security, it is individually situated and therefore can be individually overcome; it apparently leads Giddens to believe that any change actors desired in their political system, from revolution to proportional representation would have already occurred. Hence, changes in politics, like other social changes, would purely require the purposeful social action of multiple actors, through the use of ‘public opinion’ or through the reembedding of state-mediated expert systems as part of the *durée*.

The unclear division between forms of social change and of social conservation seems to have eluded Giddens during his construction of structuration theory. For instance, when defending his theory we can see him shift from defending the lack of focus on formal constraint via structure by claiming ‘most of human history has not been a chronicle of social change’ to claiming that we need a ‘concrete analysis of the rise to prominence in modern history of organisations and social movements...geared to influencing change’ (Giddens 1985b:171). The ways in which human history, modern or not, is a story of social change is unclear in this description. More important from a political standpoint: it tends to obscure the unique forms of power relations which occur within social epochs.

This returns us to the factor of political convenience. Were Giddens to follow his social theory through to its logical political conclusion his role as an ‘expert’, or ‘legislator’ to use Bauman’s term (1987b), would be limited. Intellectual-led social change becomes less easily achievable due to the double hermeneutic and the role of reflexive agents. Hence when Giddens does come to a situation where, as an expert, he wishes to suggest such changes as those outlined in *Beyond Left and Right* he has to engage in a reclassifications of agents. These agents are still one step beyond the ‘dupes’ Giddens saw as part of Marxism but not the creative, reflexive agents Giddens previously identified. This allows him not to be open to the criticism he, rightly or wrongly levels at Marxist critics, but at the same time removes some of the uniqueness of his original political view.

Yet there was another consideration open to Giddens he chose not to follow. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, even research hostile to Giddens’ normative or analytical framework acknowledged that the reflexivity of agents was present. Such an example of this was Ferguson’s (2003) study of welfare recipients, who thought critically about the way they received welfare and had suggestions for changes/improvements, but these suggestions were not recognised and thus there were no ‘generative politics’ to allow this life political choice. At issue here is the willingness of the state or other powerful organisations to automatically recognise life political claims for *all* groups and thus find appropriate generative policies. It is on this point that Giddens is vulnerable to the criticisms listed in the first chapter of universalising a particularly middle class view of the world (Savage 2000, Adkins 2002, Skeggs 2004). In effect there are seen to be dual processes occurring here, on the one

hand agents are seen to free to engage in the search for their own individual solutions to the issues they encounter, through life politics. Through this they will receive the kind of generative policies that make this effective. In such a scheme the stated goal is that the state becomes limited as a form of agency itself. Although Giddens argues for a ‘strong’ state, this is only so it can produce the necessary generative policies in response to life political claims Giddens (1994a:93) rather than pursue its own, or a particular group’s, interests. But, when we think through Giddens’ theory it would require the state deciding which of these life political claims will be met. Without providing mechanisms for access for those wishing to make life political claims, it would seem the Foucauldians are correct; Giddens’ form of individualism perpetuates the current, neoliberal, order. I would argue Giddens is missing an *agora* space, i.e. a mechanism for having individual claims recognised and equalise access (Bauman 1999)¹⁴.

This quandary around the state and its place in late modernity became even more pronounced in what follows *Beyond Left and Right*, namely Giddens’ formulation of The Third Way (1998b, 2000, 2001). I will not devote a large amount of space to discussing the content of these works since much of it is a continuation of what is to be found in *Beyond Left and Right*, but will instead look at the significant things it did and did not do in light of Giddens’ wider sociological project.

The most significant factor is that even the limited non-state factors identified in *Beyond Left and Right*, such as dialogical democracy and new social movements no longer are part of Giddens’ thought, instead the concern becomes purely with the actions of governments. As discussed by Leggett (2002, 2005), the Third Way, and in particular its appropriation into New Labour, took for granted many social and political processes as not only existing but also beyond the control of agents (both singly and/or collectively) to change or impact. This is true not only for factors such as individualization or the post-traditional order, but also processes such as globalization. As a result opposition to these is seen as a futile gesture and thus the question should be how to deal with the processes themselves. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001) suggest Giddens’ argument is one that we need to ‘come to terms’ with our globalised capitalism. In turn: ‘despite the fact that the gap between the highest paid and lowest paid in the UK is now greater than it has been for the past 50 years, Giddens asserts,

¹⁴ This concept of the *agora* will be discussed more fully when the discussion turns to Bauman’s political sociology.

rather glibly, that this may change' (Loyal 2003:162). Giddens' shift to a purely governmental outlook greatly hurts his claim to be making a politics for late modernity since this, especially with its focus on 'life politics', would seemingly be individually situated and/or generated. Individuals thus need the resources to engage in this, with any inequality of them surely limiting their ability to do so. Although at points Giddens does seem to wish to return to discussions of poverty as central to life political chances, and make bold, yet vague, statements of the need to 'democratize the market economy' (Diamond and Giddens 2005:116-117). He also is quick to say he's not advocating any redistribution of poverty through the increase of taxes, and that what is needed is to tackle 'social exclusion at the top', by encouraging the rich to see paying their taxes as a worthwhile act of citizenship (Diamond and Giddens 2005:112). Indeed as we move through Giddens' work within his second stage we lose any ideas about individuals or agency and instead the world of *politics* for Giddens becomes the world of *government* (cf. Giddens 2007a).

A second factor to consider is Giddens' strange relationship with the Left in the Third Way. On one hand the Third Way is consciously an effort to leave behind anything called the Left (cf. Giddens 2000), but yet on the other hand Giddens is quick to paint it as part of a project of social democracy (cf. Giddens 1998b, 2001). Thus Giddens can place himself in a strange, seemingly contradictory position, since he suggests the Third Way is a position based on pragmatism (namely the conditions of late modernity) as a result governments can be 'Third Way' without acknowledging it, especially since the other two 'ways' (socialism and neoliberalism) are supposedly out-dated (Giddens 2001:1, 15). But also argue that the division between Left and Right will always remain and as a result the Third Way takes on a normative character (Giddens 2001, see also Leggett 2005). If we then accept this normative claim of the Third Way being a left wing project it then amplifies the neglect of power relations, as highlighted, in a somewhat pithy manner, by Callinicos (1999):

'The Third Way offers no consideration of the highly unequal structures of power in the contemporary world...Giddens' failure to do so makes his attempt to "renew" social democracy seem almost frivolous. A cynic might conclude that the relations of

domination cease to be visible to those who have decided to embrace them' (Callinicos 1999:85)¹⁵

Thus the Third Way is not only a flawed project, but seems to be counter to much of Giddens' late modern sociology. In fact as we move chronologically through Giddens' writing, one is left with the feeling of a sociological giant who has somehow lost his powers. He becomes a party intellectual of the worse kind, wishing to warn New Labour against the negatives of purely focusing on 'equality of outcome' at the expense of structural material inequality, but yet not able to actually criticise the party enough to suggest anything beyond policies such as better education or investing in social capital, neither of which seem different from New Labour's 'new egalitarianism' (Blair 1998, Diamond and Giddens 2005:114-117). As a result, for some in the academy he becomes a figure of ridicule, one who has traded in his considerable intellectual capital in order to chase some short term political renown. Indeed, a review of his latest work in a leading British sociology journal argues he doesn't appreciate that: '[h]aving the capacity to say something is not the same thing as having something worth saying' and also that:

'He has used his considerable reputation as both a scholar and public intellectual to voice arguments that lack credibility, novelty or timeliness. In short, this is a book that either should not have been written or which ought to have taken much longer to write (resulting, one would hope, in a much better text)' (Castree 2010:156)

The story of Giddens' second stage is a somewhat tragic story of decline.

Conclusions from Giddens' Second Stage

We have seen that during Giddens' second stage some of the main concerns from his first stage, most notably the reflexive agent, slowly begin to disappear from his analysis and instead we are left with an analysis which equates politics purely with government. I would also suggest another major problem contained in his work. As discussed by Mouzelis (2001) Giddens' Third Way has a very simplistic view of capitalism. This was effectively the view that in the face of a Third Way government capitalism would acquiesce to the demands and priorities of that government. Such a theory, unwittingly

¹⁵ Sometimes Giddens' transformation from critical sociologist to embracer of power can take on a tragic comic turn. This is best shown by his defence of Muammar Gaddafi as a leader who can create a 'Norway of North Africa' and who presides over a state which is 'not especially repressive' (Giddens 2007b).

perhaps, adds to the elective affinity between neoliberal capitalism and late modernity by not providing either resources, or an institutional form appropriate for the inequality present within individualization. As Rustin (1995:21) puts it, Giddens ‘turns a blind eye’ to any forms of inequality or power which may put his optimistic Third Way view in question. What we have here once again is an issue of power, namely Giddens’ lack of opposition. He suggests a world in which the merits of the Third Way are so clear to all that *all* life political claims get the appropriate generative politics. Although Giddens himself suggests his emphasis on a strong state differentiates his theory from neoliberalism, this often relies on strong states despite its theoretical assumptions (Harvey 2005). Therefore Giddens’ claims do not automatically set him against neoliberalism, but rather *the claims* of neoliberalism. There is a disconnect between what Giddens claims to desire, and the theory he produces, which could be linked to his increased role as a public intellectual.

Therefore Giddens’ theory of how politics is conducted within late modernity does not fully account for the circumstances of embedded individualization, either currently or potentially. But, is there anything to take from his second stage? I would suggest that the concept of life politics is a useful concept if shorn of the ways in which Giddens applies it. At the very heart of the matter, life politics is a suggestion of how the everyday activity of individuals, as privatised social activity, can have a political realisation and resource application. The problem is not life politics itself, but the way in which life politics currently means the abdication of responsibility without a transfer of power (Bauman 2002a).

Giddens and Late Modern Politics: An Assessment

To return to the four points outlined in the introduction:

- (1) Giddens argues late modern politics is categorised by a shift from earlier forms of emancipation, based upon both a classed understanding and material condition, to a form of emancipation based upon life political claims. Political parties and governments are therefore concerned with distributing generative policies to allow these life political claims to be realised and acted out.
- (2) Socialism is no longer of relevance for this type of late modern society since it becomes too embedded in the welfare state, with its standardised and material

focus. Also, the death of the USSR means either: (a) socialism has been tried and failed, or (b) socialism is forever tainted by its association with Communist tyranny¹⁶. We can maintain some of socialism's end goals, but must 'come to terms' with the globalised capitalism of late modernity.

- (3) Giddens advocates a greater awareness of life political claims, and for states to provide enabling mechanisms. Most notably through the provision of 'positive welfare' schemes which hope to further individual autonomy/distribute authoritative resources. It should be noted that what Giddens says is already happening, at least within countries with centre left governments, is what he advocates as a normative vision.
- (4) There were two significant problems with much of what Giddens argues. Firstly, he gives the state, perhaps unwillingly, an incredible amount of power as the holder of authoritative resources to decide which life political claims should be realised. Secondly, individuals are largely removed from his discussion which places the realm of the political purely within governments. Individuals are effectively 'forced to be life politically free', by a paternalistic state, and their political agency removed. This is partly due to his removal of opposition, from individuals up to anti-capitalist movements. The Third Way, which is a social democratic project, is also the only pragmatic 'way' left.

Thus Giddens helps draw out the central focus of late modern politics, the politically active individual, and the role of the state. But his answers are analytically flawed, and normatively unattractive. Ulrich Beck has some similar concerns to Giddens and I will now assess how effective he is at answering them.

Ulrich Beck: Sub-Politics as Part of a Cosmopolitan Vision

Although much like Giddens and Bauman we can see two 'stages' in Beck's political sociology he has been the most consistent thinker of all three. Partly this is a result of his writings pre-*Risk Society* (1986 in German, 1992 in English) not being available to the non-German reader, but also because the question of the globality of politics is omnipresent throughout. Whilst Beck's writings may not have had the 'mainstream' impact, outside of academia, of Giddens, it could be claimed that they have had a larger

¹⁶ As noted above, a reading of Giddens can find evidence for both of these positions.

academic impact. This makes his writing worth commenting upon as one of the most prominent elaborations of late modern politics within the academy. Below we will see the way that Beck's political work begins with his writings on 'Risk Society' and the consequences of such a society for politics. Although Beck did devote books to political sociology (cf. Beck 1997, 1999) much like Giddens' first stage we still find a relatively 'incomplete' sketch which nevertheless does have important implications for late modernity. Beck's attempt to create a concrete theoretical framework for late modernity occurs mostly in his second stage on cosmopolitanism. Throughout both these stages we will see that there are issues with Beck's use of individualization and an opposition between politics and government. This only becomes more pronounced in the second stage of his work where, it will be argued, Beck removes the possibility of any opposition to the picture of social reality, itself questionable, he draws.

Beck's First Stage: The Reinvention of Politics, 1986-1999

Much like Giddens, Beck sees the emergence of late modernity and the process of reflexive modernisation leading to the questioning and subsequent rejection of the political labels used during simple modernity. Socialism, liberalism and conservatism as political ideologies become 'zombie categories' (Beck 1992, 1997, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). There are two major factors for this, the first is the change in politics from a discourse of 'either/or' to 'and' the second being the birth of 'risk society'. Both help create 'sub-politics'. I will discuss these in turn.

In a similar fashion to Giddens (1999b), Beck argues that politics in simple modernity was categorised by a collection of dichotomies. The most prominent among these was the distinction between Left and Right, at both the national and international levels. This then manifests itself in the Cold War and the stark choice between capitalism and communism¹⁷. However for Beck these choices are no longer relevant:

'The antagonisms of the political world – liberalism, socialism, nationalism, conservatism – that still dominate people's minds, parties, parliaments and institutions of political education descend from the rising industrial age. However, when they speak of global environmental devastation, feminism, the criticism of experts and technology and

¹⁷ Itself open to question, Hobsbawm (1991b) suggests the competition was not between capitalism and socialism, but rather between liberal democracy, and democratic centralism.

scientific alternative views, that is to say, the remodernisation of modernity, these political theories are like blind people discussing colours' (Beck 1997:137)

In many ways Beck's critique is more radical than Giddens, whereas Giddens simply wants to 'move beyond' these dichotomies but maintain some of their essential components, Beck says they are already useless, there is no need as such to 'move beyond' them except in the sense of how we speak about them. At no point does Beck suggest he wishes to maintain aspects of these ideologies, their very simple modern nature means they must be rejected in totality¹⁸.

The end of the distinction between left and right at the national and international level is just one of the shifts Beck sees from a politics of either/or towards a politics of 'and' defined by concerns 'simultaneity, multiplicity, uncertainty, the issue of connections, cohesion, experiments with exchange, the excluded middle, synthesis, ambivalence' (Beck 1997:1). This is linked into a late modern concern with difference, both in its recognition and acceptance, thus, what Beck argues to be, the lessening importance of factors such as xenophobia, homophobia etc since 'individualization processes, considered globally, abolish prerequisites for constructing and renewing national oppositions of own-groups and strangers' (Beck 1997:75)¹⁹. Part of the impetus towards the politics of 'and' for Beck is the inherently global nature of politics in late modernity. This is true not only at the level of political institutions (i.e. a lessening impact of the nation-state etc.) but also the awareness of global processes on the part of agents. However there is another result of a politics of 'and', the suggestion that politics can be categorised by its ability to assume aspects of all ideologies within its current setup leads to the logical conclusion that nothing exists in opposition, the opposition has been co-opted and institutionalised. As a discussion of contemporary party politics this may be true (Bauman 2008d). The problem is that Beck seems to also suggest this is how late modernity will always be. This is the unclear dividing line, found so often in Beck's work, between what he thinks politics in late modernity should be like, and what it actually is.

¹⁸ The one exception to this is Beck's (2008) suggestion that climate change and globalization could lead to a 'new social democratic era'. Significantly however, this should not be concerned with 'restoring past glories' (Beck 2008:80).

¹⁹ This is undoubtedly controversial, and with Beck's lack of evidence becomes even more so (this particular quote is offered as part of a generalised discussion of Europe). I will return to this aspect with the discussion of cosmopolitanism in Beck's second stage. Needless to say, I find it greatly questionable.

This returns us to Beck's *Risk Society* (1992) which suggested radical political implications for late modernity. The scope of this text, along with Beck's other thoughts on risk (cf. Beck 1989, 1995, 2009) has had significant sociological impact. In particular, Beck's work had been commended for introducing a conception of nature into sociology, as well as developing links with technology, whilst maintaining a normative framework (cf. Benton 2002 for such praise within a broadly critical outline). Central to Beck's argument is the claim that 'the social production of *wealth* is systematically accompanied by the social production of *risks*' (Beck 1992:19). This is due to the lessening of material scarcity and the unintended, negative, consequences of simple modern processes. The realisation of these hazards then has systematic and political consequences for our relation to nature and to technological advancement in the name of modernisation. Further modernisation is inhibited and influenced by our assessment of risk and from where it came (hence modernisation's *reflexive* form). As a result the distribution of risks (for example, the risk of climate change or of nuclear fallout) comes to replace and displace the distribution of wealth as the key ordering mechanism of societies. Although I will expand on some of this in what follows, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to outline all of the factors related to Beck's conception of risk (cf. Franklin 1998; Adam, Beck and Van Loon 2000; Elliott 2002; and Mythen 2004 for such outlines), instead – as suggested earlier in the chapter – I will be concerned with the political impacts of this. The political focus of *Risk Society* is often underplayed, four of its eight chapters (including all of part III of the text) are concerned with questions of politics and Beck is quite clear that he is interested in bringing a 'new political culture' into being which is broadly left-wing or left-of-centre (Beck 1992:195, ff.). What is significant for this thesis' argument is the way in which this, with its focus on 'sub-politics' and 'risk awareness' (Beck 1992:204, ff.) draws us back to the question of the political subject as the individual and the flaws within this, to which I now turn.

Risks are differentiated from 'dangers' by being both man-made and (somewhat) predictable. By saying something is a 'risk' one suggests that it could become a catastrophe²⁰, but the exact manifestation this catastrophe will take or indeed the likelihood of it occurring becomes problematic to predict (although this does not stop us

²⁰ The term favoured by Beck for a risk (environmental change, terrorism) which becomes a reality (cf. Beck 1992, 2009).

predicting, for Beck the discipline of risk analysis is very much a late modern child (Beck 1992:22)). As a result much of the concern of late modernity is in finding ways to 'deal' with these risks (themselves unintended consequences of simple modern actions), in terms of finding a way to make life liveable rather than a constant concern with risk. Examples of such risks for Beck are often environmental – ecological changes via climate change, or nuclear fallout – but can also include the constant awareness of terrorist attack or unidentifiable disease (Beck 1992, 2009). These risks interact in a Kafkaesque manner with individualization since one can never be sure whether once the risk becomes a catastrophe it will happen to me, 'us' or someone else. This is because Beck sees all the risks of late modernity as 'democratic', i.e. as affecting all equally (Beck 1992:36, 1989); a nuclear fallout has no respect for neighbourhood and climate change will not stop on the borders of wealthy nations. Individualization is perpetuated by this process since it lessens the role of collective political action. In simple modernity problems happened to a group, most notably to a class. This group could then collectively protest with a claim of 'we're angry'. Risk society however leads to a claim of 'I'm afraid' and although we may all be afraid this could be for different reasons (Beck 1992:49). Although Beck does hint at points that some individuals or nations may be better protected from risks the key here is that this is only protection from *the results* of risks, rather than the risks themselves (Beck 1992:35-36). For Beck the universal nature of risk is indicated by them having no relation to income or status, but instead being ascribed with citizenship.

As noted in the first chapter, Beck argues much of this 'risk awareness' is already leading to the democratisation of many risk-producing areas, such as science and business, as well as the pressure for more (Beck 1989). He identifies a new phenomenon which, in unison with individualization, is helping bring this about: sub-politics. It has been noted by Giddens that in some ways Beck's concept of sub-politics has overlaps with his own concept of life politics (Giddens 1994a:128) and indeed they are similar. Both concepts rely upon the idea of a reflexive biography orientating itself towards political decisions and also upon an individualized society where traditional concepts for political claims such as class or gender no longer carry as much weight. Nevertheless we must differentiate the two concepts from each other. Giddens' life politics had a somewhat solipsistic nature, the large majority of examples Giddens discusses as an elaboration of his conception lead towards questions of how the

individual perceives societal changes, so questions about motherhood only become significant when they happen to the individual. Beck's work on sub-politics is on the contrary more social in its conception, the examples Beck cites – such as protests in Bavaria to stop the building of a nuclear power plant (Beck 1997:105) – rely on the temporary alliance of actors to achieve a goal. To utilise a definition offered by Lash (1994:115-116), life politics is 'self-reflexivity', whilst sub-politics is 'structural reflexivity'. Although theoretically there is no reason for this split, since both could prima-facie be used for both self and structural reflexivity the way they are utilised in substantive discussion for Beck and Giddens leads to such a distinction²¹. This then impacts Beck's discussion of sub-politics as:

'Those decision-making areas which had been protected by politics in industrial capitalism – the private sector, business, science, towns, everyday life and so on – are caught in the storms of political conflicts in reflexive modernity' (Beck 1997:99)

Beck distinguishes sub-politics from 'politics' as traditionally understood. Sub-politics, which involves citizens forcing issues into the public domain, is to be seen as a direct result of 'politics', in the form of governments, parties and politicians themselves, failing to account for or discuss these factors (Beck 1997:94-109). This then creates what Beck terms the 'individual returning to society' (Beck 1999), where these agents through sub-politics make their impact on society. This increased democratisation across various fields leads to what Beck suggests is an increased politicisation of multiple levels of social life. Sub-political actors are given the responsibility of 'rule-alerting'²², in light of governments' 'rule-following'²³ behaviour (Beck 1997:135). Climate change is often provided as an example of this, the actions of individuals forces

²¹ Another distinction to see between the work of Beck and Giddens is that although it has been claimed frequently that Giddens is the more normative minded of the two (Delanty 1999, Dodd 1999, Heaphy 2007). I would suggest in fact it is Beck who can be seen as the more normative thinker. This is true in the sense that (a) his basic assumptions are much more radical, suggesting that everything we have amassed during simple modernity becomes effectively useless and (b) as will be even more pronounced when we move to his work on cosmopolitanism, he sees what he describes and advocates as the *only* option which, close as he may come, Giddens never truly suggests. Although part of the reason for Giddens' perceived stronger normative streak may be his unflinching optimism, it does not seem prima facie essential for a normative theory to be optimistic.

²² Defined as creative attempts to change the 'rules of the game' regarding how politics are conducted (Beck 1997:134).

²³ Which can be creative 'but it operates *within* the rule system of industrial and welfare state society in the nation-state' (Beck 1997:133-134).

governments to change their behaviour in light of individual's demands (cf. Beck 1995, 1997)²⁴.

However, despite Beck's theoretical aims, and discussion, such a differentiation does pose problems since it automatically equates 'politics' with the government and state and places it in the dominant position of the dichotomy (sub-politics is only 'successful' when climate change becomes a 'political' issue for example). Such a dichotomy doesn't account for the state's ability to reject issues as 'political' or change their content substantially when making them 'political' (of which climate change itself is the best example). In this sense, despite Beck's claim that sub-politics extends politicisation, it reasserts a dichotomy of the political being whatever governments do, and thus could potentially overlook their ability to distort the demands of an individualized sub-politics.

It is the supposedly individualized nature of sub-politics which is especially significant here. For the purpose of this thesis there are two factors to discuss. Firstly the claim that risks are in some way 'equal' seems very open to question, Alexander (1996) argues that Beck took too much of a rationalistic, universal view of risk both at a micro and macro level, without developing a more complex idea of their distribution. Indeed Elliott (2002) classes Beck's work on risk as having 'deep affinities with neo-classical economics and rational-choice theory, and thus necessarily shares the conceptual and political limitations of these standpoints also' (Elliott 2002:300). Elliott also argues that Beck does not pay sufficient attention to social and culturally ascribed definitions of risks, seeing risks instead as something that exists 'outside' individuals and their lifeworlds, rather than existing within them, an analysis echoed by Mary Douglas (1992). The significance of these criticisms is that they raise the question of the situation facing the political agent. Beck argues individuals are placed in a very trying situation (the 'insignificant world-shaper') because he sees risks as occurring and being defined outside the individual and therefore the agent is in a situation of simply having to 'deal with them' rather than have a more complex, socially and culturally mediated, understanding and involvement with them. This is of course related to Beck's discussion of individualization being an universal process itself, removing the impact of

²⁴ Although he is critical of such an approach (Beck and Willms 2004:220) we see a process of differentiation of social systems here, in this case between that of sub-politics and politics, similar to that of Luhmann (Luhmann 1995, cf. Alexander 1996).

the kind of categories Alexander, Elliott and Douglas are advocating, but as we saw in the previous chapter claims of the ‘death’ of these categories seem exaggerated. This returns us to the importance of adopting the embedded definition of individualization. Risk are situated within, and understood through, an individual’s social position.

This however leads us into the second political criticism of Beck’s work on risk, simply to what extent are risks ‘real’? The events lying behind the risks are real, Chernobyl did happen, climate change is happening etc., but Beck does not automatically link the risk to the catastrophe, to some extent the risk exists independently of the catastrophe, so if climate change were not occurring or suddenly stopped, the risk would still exist since: ‘risks and the social definitions of risk are one and the same’ (Beck 2009:31). A result of this is that it leads us to the question of who exactly does the defining of these risks, is there an unequal process at work? This is tied up with what Beck terms the ‘staging’ of risks (Beck 2009) where risks are recognised and placed in a wider political framework, hence climate change becomes ‘staged’ as a risk when governments accept it as either a problem that needs tackling with legislation or as a questionable process that would cost too much to solve were it happening. Beck goes as far as saying that these ‘relations of definition’ replace Marx’s relations of production as the main source of domination in late modernity (Beck 2009:32 ff.). When we assess the political impact of Beck’s work on risk the culturally embedded and subjective understandings of risk take on greater significance than if we were to focus our attention on Beck’s meta-level discussions of the relations between society and nature. I would argue this is especially significant given Beck’s normative desires in *Risk Society*.

Such considerations therefore impact Beck’s utilisation of the sub-politics concept, in two ways. Firstly, Beck assigns sub-politics huge capabilities, seeing it as able to dictate the political agenda to the highest degree and also, one may say, ‘stage’ risks themselves:

‘Sub-politics has won a quite improbable thematic victory. This applies not only to the West, but also to the Eastern part of Europe. There, the citizens’ groups – contrary to all the evidence of social science – started from zero with no organisation, in a system of surveilled conformity, and yet, lacking even photocopiers or telephones, were able to

force the ruling group to retreat and collapse just by assembling on the streets' (Beck 1997:100)²⁵

Then in another text the powers of definition seem so overpowering that Beck can only offer hope that political parties 'get the message':

'Everyone asks: Where will the opposing forces come from? Presumably it would not be very promising to place a missing ad for the "revolutionary subject" in the most abstruse publications. Of course, it feels good, and hence is harmless, to appeal to reason with all the means at one's disposal because, viewed realistically, it leaves few traces behind. One could found yet another circle for solving global problems. It is indeed to be hoped that political parties will get the message' (Beck 2009:43)

I would suggest this contradiction is due to Beck conceptualising sub-politics in such a way as to remove any late modern uniqueness. Beck frames sub-politics in late modern language as a result of individualization and the importance of the individual biography. But, when he utilises his concept he uses examples such as the aforementioned protests by citizens over a new nuclear power plant in Bavaria, or a proposed citizen referendum on recycling in the same area both of which fit under the simple modern category of 'protests'. They are movements by citizens to either change or influence the policy of the government and/or state to fit their concerns. In fact in many ways they are the antithesis of late modernity since, as Beck admits, they are based in locality. The citizens of Bavaria were not brought together because of an individualized concern about nuclear power (although it is safe to suspect this did exist) but because the nuclear power plant was being placed in the part of Bavaria they all happened to inhabit; citizens in Berlin were, most likely, less incensed. As a result Beck's concept of sub-politics becomes very muddled; in the same text as we find the above two examples we also find Beck suggesting that the rulings of judges (on speed limits in Germany and government corruption in the 'clean hands' saga of Italian politics) also qualify as sub-politics (Beck 1997: 105-106) – it appears judges are the revolutionary subject Beck wanted to put an ad out for. What is left of sub-politics after this is basically 'movements to make/force the government to change their policies', which don't even have to be conducted by citizens, but in the case of judges can be conducted by those who Beck sees owning the 'means of definition'. Put simply, what would differentiate

²⁵ This is also a reflection of a notable sociological trend (present in the work of Giddens) to take the events of 1989 as a 'cut-off' point. The result of this is that a simple monocausal explanation of this most complex of political events is adopted (Rosenberg 2005:40-58, Outhwaite and Ray 2005).

earlier forms of collective protests, such as CND activity or poll tax marches, from the Bavaria protests, or tuition fees/stop the cuts protests of late 2010/early 2011, aside from the fact that one happened later than the other? In Beck's work it seems unclear both what exactly sub-politics is (is it a new form of individual empowerment, or a more complex system of checks and balances?) and what makes it significantly late modern. Beck's response to this may be, with a nod to the politics of 'and', that sub-politics can be all these things, in which case his formulation of it seems so broad as to be useless.

This is not to suggest that a concept akin to sub-politics for late modernity is without purpose, much in the same way as life politics. Both concepts offer a way of seeing the action of late modern citizens as intrinsically political, but both see politics as effectively meaning 'government'. Research into political movements (Benton and Redfearn 1995, Benton 1999, King 2006) suggests that the initial spur to join such a group may come from a reflexive awareness of individual responsibility. In turn, once entering into such a group, individuals become involved in a wider web of movements focused towards the critique of society as currently formed, often with reference to a particular ideology. Whereas Beck and Giddens see strict political ideologies as an anathema to late modern reflexive individuals (for Beck they are suggestive of an 'either/or' for Giddens because we move 'beyond them') such ideologies – be they green, socialist, anarchist etc. – can easily become an orientation point for individual reflexivity. This is in many ways more radical than the way Beck utilises the concept of sub-politics since such groups (most notably the green movement, Benton 1999) are not, in the first instance, orientated towards the state, but rather aim to change cultural practice, in Giddens' terms, to reform late modern praxis, the reflexive justifications individuals offer for their actions. The implication of such research is that the reflexivity born of individualization can be both critical *and ideological* whilst being based upon an individual orientation towards collective practice. Interestingly this is the one manifestation of the politics of 'and' missing from Beck's discussion (Beck 1997:8).

This raises the question of the so-called 'death of socialism' argued by both Beck and Giddens. Because of the 'politics equals government' formula they develop an institutionalised idea of socialism. It could be that this owes some debt to a restricted definition of socialism, as we have seen for Giddens socialism becomes synonymous

with social democracy and Beck's highlighting of the lack of a 'revolutionary subject' would seem influenced by theories of state socialism/Communism. As a result of this tautological reasoning socialism becomes redundant because governments and political parties cease to profess it. Agents are seen as largely ideological and, to some extent, apolitical since they become concerned with only pragmatic solutions. In this sense the frequent criticisms against Beck and Giddens for outlining a world of 'rational choice' individuals have a valid point (Alexander 1996, Elliott 2002 amongst others). Agents as ideologically or ethically driven only periodically enter the worldviews of Beck and Giddens, those who are green or anti-nuclear do so because of the impact it has upon *them* rather than an idea of what is moral (Beck 1997:128-130). Bauman criticises Giddens on this point (Bauman 1993:106) and, as we shall see, imagines a role for socialism as a kind of late modern 'privatised ideology'.

Conclusions from Beck's first stage

We have seen how during Beck's first stage he suffers much of the same fate as Giddens. Namely there is a temptation to treat 'politics' as meaning purely 'government' and also a very ambivalent and unsure orientation towards the state and its importance in late modern politics. This is not to say that Beck's political ideas here are not useful, on the contrary when combined with Giddens' they begin to show us the importance of individualization in late modern politics and its need to be conceptualised fully. As a result, much of this thesis is an attempt to argue against their political ideas, in order to achieve their stated normative goals.

Also like Giddens, Beck seems to be placing a large amount of power in the hands of the state by giving it a large stake in the means of definition of risks along with scientists, whilst at the same time giving sub-politics a large amount of ability and power to force issues into the public sphere and 'stage' risks such as climate change. Beck does not seek to confront this apparent contradiction in his social theory, one which at its very base is a question of power, in this case the power to stage risks and act upon them. This is partly because at the same time as giving the state the power of the means of definition of risks, Beck is decrying the end of the influence of the nation-state due to globalization (Beck 2005a, 2006, 2009). Because of this Beck is not truly leaving room for the factor of opposition within his political sociology. By 'opposition' I mean any agent or ideology which goes against the project he outlines. Instead, much

like Giddens, he imagines a world where one pragmatic perspective comes to dominate and be accepted by the populace. The reality of this may be that the Foucauldian critics are right, and this simply furthers neoliberalism.

Many of these problems continue into Beck's second stage of political thought, some (notably the question of opposition) become amplified and new issues are added. It is to this second stage I now turn.

Beck's Second Stage: The Cosmopolitan Turn, 2000-

As we have seen the ideas of Beck's first stage are mostly a collection of disparate ideas suggested either as part of texts on risk or 'the reinvention of politics', this disparate nature means some questions in Beck's theories remain unanswered. This is different in Beck's second stage which, whilst still encountering problems, can in fact be seen as a realised framework centred upon cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism itself is of course a widely covered field with a cacophony of different writers and perspectives. The aim of this discussion is to provide neither an overview nor a critique of such ideas but instead to engage with the form of cosmopolitanism suggested by Beck as intrinsically late modern.

This idea rests upon some key central tenets. Firstly, Beck sees globalization as having greatly lessened the power of the nation state, this is not only true in the face of the growing power of international capital, but also because of the creation of global regimes (international human rights and non-state actors such as Greenpeace being two prominent examples) which undermine the ability of the state to both self-rule and to claim a monopoly of allegiance from its citizens. This leads to the second aspect of Beck's cosmopolitanism – in fact the aspect that truly makes it 'cosmopolitan' since the previous factors occur as part of Beck's 'first stage' (cf. Beck 1999) – namely the growth of awareness of the mixed cultural components of individuals' lives. As Beck puts it:

'What do we mean, then, by the "cosmopolitan outlook"? Global sense, a sense of boundarylessness. An everyday, historically alert, reflexive awareness of ambivalence in a milieu of blurring differentiations and cultural contradictions. It reveals not just the "anguish" but also the possibility of shaping one's life and social relations under conditions of cultural mixture' (Beck 2006:3)

Beck is clear that what is particularly late modern about cosmopolitanism is not the mixing of cultures which of course could also be seen as simple modern, but the awareness of this (Beck 2006:21). Thus cosmopolitanism becomes an orientation of agents, this allows Beck to say ‘cosmopolitanism...basically means the recognition of difference, both internally and externally’ (Beck 2006:57). In a similar fashion to sub-politics, cosmopolitanism is already occurring via, what Beck argues to be, the lessening power of the nation state and to some extent via the orientation of agents. But, we currently experience banal cosmopolitanism (where we feel the effects of cosmopolitanism without the appropriate concepts and institutions to realise it); Beck wishes to outline a form of methodological cosmopolitanism, where these cosmopolitan processes are elaborated and discussed fully (Beck 2006).

There are a variety of issues that can be raised with reference to Beck’s form of cosmopolitanism, for example some have questioned Beck’s ability or willingness to actually consider other cultures and instead argues he privileges a white, European standpoint (Bhambra 2007) or that he was incorrect to assume that classical theories naturally equated society with a nation instead of a more global conception of the social (cf. Rosenberg 2000, Turner 2006, Inglis and Robertson 2008). There are two overlooked factors I wish to highlight. The first is that in some ways it is hard to see the advance cosmopolitanism offers from Beck’s original work on late modernity. The quote above concerning the ‘cosmopolitan outlook’ is a perfect example of this since it seems hard to differentiate it from Beck’s idea of seeking biographical solutions to systematic contradictions, except there is the addition of cultural differences, which Beck already suggested were part of late modernity with its politics of ‘and’ (Beck 1997). Indeed Beck often conflates the two, so the risk society becomes cosmopolitanism (Beck and Grande 2010). Therefore since cosmopolitanism is not being used to describe a ‘new’ experience but rather to recapitulate something Beck has already discussed without the concept it becomes a question of what exactly do we see cosmopolitanism as? Beck’s initial suggestion of there already existing banal cosmopolitanism suggests that it can be seen as almost an entire societal logic along the lines of instrumental rationality. But instead Beck places it in the lineage of political ideologies such as socialism, nationalism and neoliberalism as the next ‘big idea’ to follow these (Beck 2005a:xvi). Although this quandary is never truly answered it is fair to say that Beck sees himself as an advocate for cosmopolitanism in the same way one

can be an advocate of socialism, nationalism or neoliberalism (cf. Beck 2006:163-178). Therefore a normative vision becomes an analytical reality. Beck has recently tried to clarify this by distinguishing more fully between ‘cosmopolitanism’ as a normative goal and ‘cosmopolitanisation’ as a process which is unpredictable, and can lead to multiple outcomes (Beck and Grande 2010). However, as discussed by Calhoun (2010:607-616) this simply gives conceptual furnish to a vision of one’s analytical vision being borne out by selective use of evidence; cosmopolitanisation can only mean that which leads to cosmopolitanism.

This leads us to the second important factor regarding Beck’s cosmopolitanism. When I say that Beck sees cosmopolitanism as akin to previous political ideologies with himself as a spokesman I do not necessarily mean to demean his goals since it is partly the lack of such a construction I criticised his first stage for lacking. Nevertheless, it does put Beck in somewhat of a bind because he places himself in the position of an advocate for an ideology which in some ways runs counter to his sociology of late modernity. Beck acknowledges that ‘globalization is being fashioned by the powerful against the interests of the poor’ (Beck 2005a: xvii), this is very much in line with his writings on risk society and the ‘staging’ of risks (Beck 1992, 2009) and indeed Beck does suggest he wants to construct cosmopolitanism in such a way to overcome these problems. Then later in the same text we see Beck arguing that the processes of cosmopolitanism, most notably human rights and democratic government, are complete meaning no longer can agents act contrary to these. It is from this point that Beck argues:

‘Whoever (still) fails to see and understand the “good” in the cosmopolitan order at any given stage of pragmatic self-justification doesn’t *want* to see it, and this reflects back onto them. But those who lack such understanding *must* be excluded...Cosmopolitanism’s good world order and value systems knows no alternatives, it is self-justifying, and it is no longer dependent on elections and ballots that are always arbitrary’ (Beck 2005a:306)

The above quote is part of what Beck terms an ‘(ironic) self criticism’ (Beck 2009:238) in which he casts cosmopolitanism as a *fait accompli* and exaggerates his claims in order to ‘immerse ourselves and thoughts of...an utterly utopian, non-realistic, cosmopolitan world view’ (Beck 2005a:281). In effect, Beck sets out to act as his own critic and stretch his cosmopolitan claims to their most radical, and objectionable, conclusion. Here he argues that his form of cosmopolitanism leaves no room for sub-

politics, sub-political actors will either be pro-cosmopolitanism, making their purpose questionable, or simply stubborn. Also after being so concerned with the ‘democratisation of democracy’ Beck is able to argue that cosmopolitanism doesn’t truly need this, ballots are only ‘arbitrary’ and even when they do occur are basically a reasserting of an already existing consensus (cf. Beck 2005a:305 ff.). As a result Beck’s political agents become much like Giddens’, at the whim of political process upon which they have no control or input. This runs counter to Beck’s ideas around politics as ‘and’ with the idea of the ‘the individual returning to society’. To return to our discussion of late modernity, Beck’s analysis takes a political project, in this case cosmopolitanism rather than neoliberalism, for granted (Beck 2005b) and late modern agency occurs within this, rather than possibly against it or to make adjustments to it.

As I have already mentioned Beck offers the above quote as part of his ‘ironic’ self-critique, nevertheless it does not require irony to reach such conclusions when one turns to Beck’s ideas on power within cosmopolitanism. Beck sees power relations in late modernity as being played out against the background of cosmopolitanism, the result of which (the lessened nation state, international human rights, a ‘common cosmopolitan consciousness’ etc.) Beck terms the ‘meta-game’:

‘The players are not pre-given; instead, they are made into players by the meta-game. They have to constitute and organise themselves politically within the game, as part of the game. In other words, what is at work is an interactionist logic of reciprocal social constitution as players and opponents. Opponents’ opportunities for power...are only formed in the first place by the moves they make and on the basis of their own self-interpretation, articulation, mobilisation and organisation – they gain (or lose) their identity and power to act in the course of mutual conflict’ (Beck 2005a:14-15)

Beck sees these possible players as capital, global civil society and the state.

The possibilities for individualized politics in such a scheme of power look limited, although in the above quote Beck leaves open the potential of opposition which we can assume would at least partly revolve around issues of ‘risk staging’ or ‘risk cultures/religions’ (different cultural appreciations of what risk is, and where it comes from), at their base an issue about both access to and use of expert systems (Beck 2009:24-46, 67-80). When we look closer at Beck’s idea of cosmopolitanism however such potential opposition becomes limited. This is because by seeing the meta-game as

cosmopolitanism Beck casts the background reality incredibly wide and inscribes a cosmopolitan reality within his normative project. Instead of focusing on a social reality such as globalization Beck also includes factors he claims to be occurring as a result of that reality, many of which are questionable. For example Beck's views on power have been questioned either for having too consensual a view of political processes relating to either states (Martell 2008) or human rights (Martell 2009); for a neglect of power relations between elites at both a micro or macro level (Murray 2009) or as mentioned previously for ignoring power relations between the genders (Skelton 2005) and classes (Elliott 2002). Hence when Beck says 'the cosmopolitan regime has only *proponents* (sic)' (Beck 2005a:306, 2006:109-119) he is arguing that those who may be *prima facie* anti-cosmopolitanism and thus try to fight back against it are effectively fighting a losing battle since cosmopolitanism already exists in this wide manner. Whilst it may be possible to identify non/anti-cosmopolitan occurrences, these are bound for extinction, and therefore further proof of the power of the process of cosmopolitanisation. As discussed by Ray (2007b:52-54) this is effectively a 'get-out' clause for Beck to claim consensus and verification when evidence suggests conflict and falsification.

As a result we can say that not only do the individuals in Beck's late modern world become at the whim of political processes beyond their control but to Beck any action they take against this (even if it initially appears successful) is simply a further entrenching of cosmopolitanism. Indeed Beck argues denial of the reality of cosmopolitanism, at least in a European context, rests upon a '*clinical* loss of reality' (Beck 2006:117, my emphasis). Meanwhile, the resurgence of far right parties and figures in Europe, seemingly the most anti-cosmopolitanist occurrence there could be, are dismissed in the following fashion: 'The careers and career setbacks of Jean-Marie Le Pen and Jorg Haider, for example, show both how spectacular and how flawed the actions are of the anti-cosmopolitanism movement' (Beck 2005b:136). I don't believe it would be an exaggeration to say that claiming Le Pen's success in getting onto the final ballot for the 2002 French presidential election, whilst dislodging the pro-cosmopolitan position of Lionel Jospin, is a demonstration of nationalist failure and cosmopolitan success takes a strong amount of ideological blindness.

Conclusions from Beck's Second Stage

As was seen above, whilst Beck imagines and indeed advocates a late modern politics framed around ‘returning the individual to society’ in actuality what we discover is a system that takes on a major tenet of neoliberalism, namely that ‘there is no alternative’ to cosmopolitanism and effectively the individual is simply given the ‘power to agree’ and reproduce a cosmopolitan order. Much like Giddens, Beck is effectively suggesting a world in which there is only one ‘correct’ ideology and that even those who disagree and reject it are still bound to act it out. Whilst doing so Beck gives little consideration to capitalism’s ability to dictate political ideas and/or policy. Like most other actors, actors of global capital remain national in focus, for example lobbying states over taxes, but this ignores that ‘reality’ is no longer national, and such actors need to experience ‘cosmopolitanisation...a compulsory re-education programme in openness to the world’ (Beck 2006: 101-102). This is not only questionable, but is also a contradiction. On the one hand capital is powerful, but yet also impotent, an aporia Beck never truly tries to confront and instead simply suggests capitalism will be affected by sub-politics. As has been discussed, neoliberalism has its own agenda, and it is not clear why this would be thwarted in the face of sub-politics, or cosmopolitanism.

Beck and Late Modern Politics: An Assessment

To summarise Beck’s political sociology in light of the four goals of this chapter

- (1) Beck argues late modern politics is marked by two major changes: (a) the increased ‘risk awareness’ of the unintended consequences of simple modernity means the risk society produces increased democratisation of these ‘risk producing’ areas (science, technology, business etc.). This democratisation is then furthered by the rise of sub-politics, which involves individuals coalescing around individualized political claims to ‘change the rules of the game’. Many political occurrences, from the fall of Communist regimes, through the political awareness of climate change, can be traced to sub-politics. And (b) an increased cosmopolitan awareness of difference and collective responsibility produced by globalization and the nation-state’s corresponding loss of power

- (2) Socialism is no longer relevant since it clings to simple modern zombie categories, such as class and the nation state²⁶. Politics have moved beyond the strict division of perspectives, the politics of ‘either/or’, in which socialism thrived as a result of its opposition to capitalism, to a politics of ‘and’, categorised by the awareness of side effects and of having multiple orientations
- (3) Beck advocates two major strategies: (a) political institutions, as ‘rule-following’ bodies should become more susceptible to the increased critical reflexivity of late modernity, and open to the ‘rule-altering’ claims of sub-politics. And (b) states should adopt methodological cosmopolitan strategies, which mean realising the impossibility of purely national action in a time of cosmopolitan inequalities and democratic international problems. Even more than Giddens, Beck is guilty of claiming his normative vision is at the same time a discussion of empirical reality
- (4) Beck’s first stage, with its focus on sub-politics, was flawed analytically by not outlining what specifically was ‘new’ here and instead subsuming all political action under its label. Whilst this was advocated as a form of individualized politics, Beck’s application seemed to suggest it was very much a collective form. In turn sub-politics seemed to fall into the trap of Giddens’ life politics by limiting the role of the political to government. In his second stage his theory of cosmopolitanism overlooked issues of inequality and the possibility of individual activity, but was most notably flawed by the lack of separation between a normative goal and an empirical reality, to the point that Beck begins to suggest those who disagree with him are simply in denial.

Therefore, we can see some similarities between Beck and Giddens not only in some of their concepts, but also in the flaws which arise from them²⁷. Before turning to the last of our three theorists, I wish to take a slight diversion and clarify what exactly my critique of their theories is.

²⁶ To be fair to Beck, he doesn’t claim the nation-state is a true zombie category; states still exist, they are just powerless. The nation as a complete and independent entity could be called a zombie category (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002:25).

²⁷ Although I would suggest that, perhaps ironically for two theorists so joined together in the sociological zeitgeist, it would be impossible for both to be correct politically. Giddens’ Third Way, with its largely national-level focus, is an anathema to Beck’s cosmopolitanism which rejects the possibility of national action.

Individualization and the Problem of Politics

Much of the criticism of the political ideas of Beck and Giddens²⁸ has focused around the role of the individual. These have argued that their political ideas are simply too individualistic, they imagine that individuals have the opportunities to engage in forms of political self-constitution in radically new ways, with the aid of governments. This then leads to the dual criticism that their political ideas don't pay enough attention to the social position of the individual, and the inequalities these bring (cf. Bernstein 1991, Benton 1999, Callinicos 1999, 2001, Savage 2000, Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001). My argument is instead that when one assesses their political ideas and the logical conclusions to which they lead, they are actually anti-individualist; politics becomes removed from individual activity and is withdrawn to the sphere of governments. Individuals are conceptually and potentially left, against Giddens' and Beck's political aims, awaiting the state's next move.

This returns us to the distinction between disembedded and embedded individualization. As we saw, to take account of embedded individualization a theory must be aware of the way in which this involves relational identification and situation, as well as the continuing inequality of structural categories such as class, as well as the inequalities within late modern processes such as reflexivity. Such individuals are simply not part of Giddens' and Beck's political theory, since they fall back upon the disembedded definition. This can be seen in how their imagined political actors are seemingly engrossed in matters of individualized identity removed from the political situation in which this occurs. Whilst I am not claiming that individualization automatically produces individuals who are instinctively politically engaged and active, it can produce a situation in which the reflexivity within individualization can lead to a consideration of the limitations upon the actions and the political roles of others. By not providing a mechanism in which individualized political desires are connected into a collective process of political debate and action, Giddens and Beck are left in a position of effectively ignoring individuals in their political sociology, their discussions become policy or geopolitically led, without much of a consideration of how this relates to any form of embedded individualization. Utilising the disembedded individualization can

²⁸ Most notably Giddens, whilst Beck's political ideas as part of his cosmopolitan vision have garnered heavy criticism, his views of sub-politics have received much less attention (Adkins 2000 and Elliott 2002 being two of the few researchers to give Beck's political conclusions for late modern individualization, rather than just purely individualization itself, sustained attention).

lead to only two logical conclusions: one could, as noted in the discussion of Giddens' work, argue that political change is created by the structuration of late modern societies. Individuals simply re-embed their critical appraisals of politics as currently constituted through their reflexive action, and thus intellectuals are left purely to observe. Or, one could argue the goal is to create this disembedded individualization out of those who cling to outdated ideas of class, stratification and power inequalities. Beck and Giddens' (later) path seemed to be the latter of the two. This seems to automatically place the individuals in the subservient position to government authorities whilst they await the next 'individualizing' policy, much like the Foucauldians' worse fears.

Bauman on the other hand does provide some useful ideas and observations on this topic and asserts the centrality of embedded individualization. It is his political sociology to which I now turn.

Zygmunt Bauman: Socialist Utopias in a Liquid Modern World?

I have drawn significant overlaps between the political work of Beck and Giddens; Bauman's work is more categorised by its difference from these two. This is partly due to his focus on embedded individualization, but can also be seen in other factors. Notably, Bauman is more committed to a socialist critique than either Beck or Giddens (although, as we shall see, this is a very specific form of critique). This is perhaps reflective of what some have seen as the continual presence of a Marxist viewpoint within his work (Bauman 1987a, Beilharz 2000, Tester 2007, Davis 2008). This leads towards divergent conclusions on the outcomes of late modern political processes. These, counter to the political sociologies of Giddens and Beck, neither side-lines the individual as a form of analysis, nor, either analytically or normatively, reduce politics to government. Therefore the purpose of looking at Bauman's work is not only his intellectual impact but also as a 'late modern counterweight' to Beck and Giddens. Of especial importance to this thesis is the way in which the question of alternatives to/improvements to the current political system are both omnipresent and overlooked in Bauman's work, which can be traced to his view on intellectuals.

*Bauman's First Stage: Socialism the 'Active Utopia' and Freedom, 1972-1988*²⁹

²⁹ Bauman's writing on politics stretch back into the 1950s (cf. Tester 2004), however due to their only being available to the Polish reader, I will be purely concerned with his English language writings (themselves large enough!).

Bauman's political sociology has a different relation to the rest of his sociology than that seen in the work of Beck and Giddens. It is possible to say that the latter begin with a sociological framework (structuration or the risk society) then implement this into a theory of politics. Bauman however uses a political position to amplify a sociological critique (Ghetti 2007). This has important implications for the ways in which he uses this political framework. In Bauman's first stage this is conducted through an analysis of socialism. Bauman does this through both an analysis of socialism as an ideal, and Communist societies as a specific realisation of this ideal.

Bauman's major work on socialism (Bauman 1976b) emerges as a companion piece to his work on developing a 'critical sociology' (1976a). Bauman argued the goal of sociology is to act as the 'science of unfreedom' and to question 'second nature' (Bauman 1976a). This leads to Bauman's normative goal of sociology; to further human freedom (cf. Bauman 1988, 1990b:17-18 1992a:213-214, 2000a:216, 2010c, Bauman and Gane 2004, Bauman and Welzer 2002). Is it in this context that Bauman turns to socialism and frames it as a 'utopia'. Bauman argues utopias have four specific roles: to relativise the present; demonstrate the aspects of culture which operate as manifestations of the present; demonstrate splits in society by whom is defending what; and exert influence on events (Bauman 1976b:13-17). This is opposed to the idea of 'utopia' being an expression of the impossible (the idea of 'mere utopia') with the four roles (and most specifically the fourth) demonstrating the purpose of utopianism for politics.

The usefulness of socialism as an 'active' utopia for Bauman comes from its opposition to capitalism, Bauman in particular cites the notion of commonsense and the questioning thereof that socialism provides (Bauman 1976b:65-76). Nevertheless Bauman wishes to advocate a particular type of socialism, different from the dominant simple modern formulations of socialism. These for Bauman focused overly on the economic system at the expense of the emancipation of the individual. As a result socialists and socialist movements became more concerned with the means rather than the ends to which these means should be put. The natural result of this is that socialism (and here Bauman is referring specifically but not exclusively to the USSR) becomes manifested in the urge to control for those seeing themselves as 'socialists'. This urge to control, and to structure (Bauman 1973), is part of Bauman's very definition of modernity:

‘I take here the concept of “modernity” to stand for a perception of the world, rather than (as it has been misleadingly intimated) the world itself; a perception locally grounded in a way that implied its universality and concealed its particularism. It had been the decisive feature of modernity so understood that it relativized its (past and contemporary) adversaries and thereby constituted relativity itself as an adversary; as a spoke in the wheel of progress, a demon to be exorcized, a sickness to be cured’ (Bauman 1992a:12)

The role of the intellectuals was to exorcise that demon, to produce order through the construction of blueprints to be carried out. These blueprints were often literal, as in Bauman’s discussion of architecture (2003b). In this the intellectuals were aided by their alliance with ‘the gardening state’, a nation-state form which took as its ultimate goal the construction of a perfect society, by removing any sources of disorder (Bauman 1991b:20). Communism was in no way removed from these processes, it became ‘socialism’s impatient younger brother’ who hoped to speed up the process of modernisation (Bauman 1992a:166). Groups which promised order had to be identified (the proletariat, ‘organic-intellectuals’) and so too groups of disorder (the capitalists, the kulaks) who were then removed. The result of these processes is that the focus increasingly turns to the emancipation of groups (for Bauman at least partly present in actually existing socialism (Bauman 1976b:54)) as opposed to the emancipation of individual. For Bauman this is in fact the definition of socialism:

‘In the last analysis, the attempt to build a socialist society is an effort to emancipate human nature, mutilated and humiliated by class society. In this crucial respect the Soviet experiment conspicuously failed’ (Bauman 1976b:101)

By its very implementations socialism loses any utopian claim it previously had, the utopian must always remain ‘in the realm of the possible’ and instead becomes another formation of common sense:

‘Socialism paid the usual price of a successful utopia; having ceased to inspire imagination...it has lost its power of supervising the next stage of the human search for perfection. It has gained a firm grasp of reality, it has penetrated commonsense, but in the process it has lost its visionary capacity’ (Bauman 1976b:112)

But yet the ‘success’ of this utopia was a very limited one since it required the ‘simplification’ (Bauman 1976b:32) of this utopian theory to the level of a governing,

intellectual-led, ideology. In this sense it did not fulfil the utopian aspects Bauman sees as central for a political ideology based upon the critique of ‘unfreedom’ (Bauman 1976a).

At this point the question arises of what this might mean for socialism as a material reality, namely: is it even possible, or is socialism best kept as a utopian ideology? Bauman’s response to this thirty-four years later was clear:

“‘Socialist nostalgia’? It would be, if I had ever abandoned my belief in the wisdom and humanity of the socialist stance (which I have not), and it could be, if I did not perceive “socialism” as a stance, an attitude, a guiding principle, but viewed it as a type of society, a specific design and a particular model of social order (which I have not for a long time now). Socialism means to me a heightened sensitivity to inequality and injustice, oppression and discrimination, humiliation and the denial of human dignity. To take a “socialist stance” means opposing and resisting all those outrages whenever and wherever they occur, in whatever name they are perpetrated and whoever their victims are’ (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrazo 2010: 16)

At the time of *Socialism: The Active Utopia* there were suggestions a more humane form of socialism could be implemented (Bauman 1976b:138-141). This shift to socialism as a ‘stance’ is partly linked to Bauman’s discussion of ethics in late modernity, which will be discussed during the second stage. But it is also due to why Tester considers Bauman to be a ‘humanistic socialist’ (Tester 2004:33). His idea of socialism is more concerned with the critique of the society it finds itself in, than with policy or with realising a certain image of the world. Socialism manifests itself as part of Bauman’s sociological enquiry, by questioning ‘second nature’ and ‘unfreedom’. However the outcome of this is:

‘[S]ocialism as Bauman defines it, can never be identical with any party platform, governmental procedures or policy initiatives that are based on a presumption of the inevitability of the actual. Bauman’s socialism is inherently critical. It is always *living forwards* in relation to the actual’ (Tester 2004:60)

Thus to proclaim a state of ‘socialism’, either emerging or present, blunts the possibility of socialism as a potent form of critique. In fact socialism itself should be turned against those societies proclaiming themselves as socialist. The relevance of this for late modernity will be considered below.

But, actually existing socialism, along with its capitalist counterpart, was an attempt to realise human freedom, itself a central concern of Bauman's political sociology. Freedom or the pursuit thereof has taken two separate forms, the first (simple modern form) can be seen as 'state sanctioned' whereby the state, through recourse to intellectuals, decides the 'correct' amount and/or manifestation of freedom for agents which most likely will manifest itself in welfare and the welfare state (Bauman 2008b:140)³⁰. This is of course linked to the above discussion of Bauman's gardening state (Bauman 2008b:139). This kind of freedom was best shown through Foucault's focus on the panopticon, which leads Bauman to suggest that freedom at heart is a question of relation:

'The freedom of some makes the dependence of others both necessary and profitable; while the unfreedom of one part makes the freedom of another possible. The panopticon is not a supplement to the parliamentary reform; it incorporates the latter as its own condition and legitimation' (Bauman 1988:19)

Within the simple modern model of freedom, my freedom to act is partly a result of the security offered to me by the social position in which I find myself. In turn this security is due to the limits placed upon the freedom of other actors. This was attainable for a select group, but most found themselves administered to in the panopticon.

The second kind of freedom is that encountered in late modernity, where, following the wider trend for modernity to reject previous forms of security, freedom becomes manifested through the consumer market and 'the volume of freedom depends solely on the ability to pay' (Bauman 1996:51)³¹. Initially the consumer market seems to offer a more immediately realisable and universally available form of freedom since: '[t]he consumer market is therefore a place where freedom and certainty are offered and obtained together; freedom comes free of pain, while certainty can be enjoyed without detracting from the conviction of subjective autonomy' (Bauman 1988:66). But, whilst the promise of the consumer market may be strong, Bauman suggests three criticisms against the consumer market's ability to deliver on this promise.

³⁰ I would suggest this is reflected in Giddens' focus on 'generative politics' with its strong emphasis on state policies.

³¹ This is also due to the changing role of the state away from the gardening model, as will be discussed in Bauman's second stage.

The first of these problems concerns the divide between ‘perfect’ and ‘flawed’ consumers (Bauman 2002a, 2005b, 2007b). Perfect consumers are those with the resources to continually consume, as well as the inclination to ‘keep up’. Flawed consumers are those ‘short of cash, credit cards and/or shopping enthusiasm, and otherwise immune to the blandishment of marketing’ (Bauman 2007b:4). In this sense the market stratifies along material and ideational grounds, those with the money and the consumer mentality have huge advantages. This leads into the second critique. Whilst the consumer market may offer individuality this is mostly illusionary, not only does mass production remove such a component, but one’s success at consumerism becomes measured by comparisons with others, what Bauman terms ‘reference groups’. These references need constant updating (Bauman 2007b:84) and come to be the form of security which individuals need in order to be able to act (Bauman 2007a:58). However, these forms of security are temporary at best, and their lack of long-term effectiveness is a reflection of the individualist logic which helped move the realm of freedom to the consumer market (Bauman 1988:38). Therefore, to be reproduced, the market must not offer a state of freedom, categorised by satisfaction, but rather a continual search for freedom, categorised by desire: ‘It is the *non*-satisfaction of desires, and a firm and perpetual belief that each act to satisfy them leaves much to be desired and can be bettered, that are the fly-wheels of the consumer-targeted economy’ (Bauman 2005a:80).

Bauman’s final criticism is that the market removes ethical considerations from action, it adiabatically removes (Bauman 1993). The link between what I do as a consumer and the results of my actions are removed from my awareness due to the individualized focus of the consumer market. This means that ‘[o]ne cannot desire the prolongation of African famine without hating oneself; but one can rejoice in falling commodity prices’ (Bauman 1988:80). This ethical component of late modernity will be returned to below, since, in Bauman’s second stage, he suggests an expanded relevance for the ethical within late modern politics.

The significance of this discussion to Bauman’s political sociology is twofold, one point analytical, the other normative. Firstly, this search for freedom has come to be the main goal of modern political systems. Simple modern systems, be they capitalism or Communist, hoped to achieve this through the security and regularisation of state driven activity. This was not only restricted, but demonstrated that by creating freedom for

some, the state had to create unfreedom for others. Capitalist societies had their prisons and poor houses, Communist societies the Gulags and the secret police. Late modern systems then reject the security seen to be provided by regularised and standard state-driven freedom, in favour of that from the market. Thus the possibilities for, and the type of, freedom in societies relies on the political system that society embraces. The second point however is Bauman's discussion of the results of freedom. As noted by Davis (2008), there is a quandary at the heart of Bauman's sociology, whilst spending so much time discussing freedom and advocating its realisation as the goal of sociology, he doesn't actually see it as a positive state. To be free is to be left purely with one's own counsel and to have full responsibility for one's action; this can be troubling, confusing and perplexing (Bauman 2008a). This is partly due to Bauman's conception of freedom and security as opposites, not in a continuum, but in a pendulum (Bauman 1997:1-4). As soon as one has complete security, one longs for some freedom, and vice versa. Thus the goal of political systems should be to provide a middle point between these two extremes, to allow for the freedom of individuals by providing security in the form of resources, in the terms of Giddens, both allocative and authoritative, to make this actual. Whilst this doesn't mean the pendulum will not swing again, it does reduce both the inequality present within the possibilities of freedom, and allows for more long-term considerations of what the 'good society' would be, rather than short-term considerations (Bauman 2008e).

Conclusions from Bauman's First Stage

As we have seen Bauman's first stage of political work has two major considerations: the development of a concept of socialism as an active utopia and the understanding of two types of freedom, state and market led. These two will also be part of Bauman's second stage. But also significant here is the role of intellectuals, a common theme of Bauman's work. Politics in simple modernity occurred in unison with the intellectuals, be it capitalist or Communist (Bauman 1972, 1973); late modernity goes some way towards breaking this link. This promises new possibilities but also seems to put Bauman himself in a somewhat contradictory position regarding the possibility of a political alternative driven by a normative critique.

Bauman's Second Stage: Being an Interpreter in a Liquid Modern World in Search of Politics, 1987-

What I am terming Bauman's second stage is certainly the most commented upon. However, the normative political conclusions which can be drawn from it are still surprisingly under theorised. His work from *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987b) onwards has often been seen as the starting point of his postmodern/liquid modern work and therefore has attracted the most attention³². Indeed Carleheden (2008) provides a detailed analysis of Bauman's political view without mentioning anything from before this text's publication. This tendency to take *Legislators and Interpreters* as such a 'splitting off' point is somewhat surprising. The main argument of that text is that simple modernity casts the intellectual into the role of 'legislator' helping furnish the levers of state power. Whereas late modernity will cast them as 'interpreters', less powerful in any traditional sense but a more fitting role for Bauman with his focus on sociology as 'conversation' (Bauman 1987b, Bauman and Beilharz 1999, Bauman and Welzer 2002) had been elaborated in *Socialism: The Active Utopia* (Bauman 1976b:83). As we saw above, Bauman's first stage highlights the false nature of an intellectually implemented political project for all stages of modernity, not just the late modern. Whilst, as we shall see below, this role is less available in late modernity, this does not mean it was acceptable when the role was available. The sociologist for Bauman must maintain the role of the critical interpreter, which is opened up further by late modernity. This role comes to dominate Bauman's late modern political sociology, for better and for worse.

This political sociology rests on two observations: (a) the emergence, and faults, of life politics (Bauman 1999, 2002a, 2005a) and (b) the changes to the state through late modern consumer capitalism and 'negative globalization' (Bauman 1998a, 2006, 2007a). Both of these combine to suggest a decoupling of power from politics (Bauman 2009)³³.

For Bauman there is a great contradiction at the heart of late modern politics, on the one hand we believe we have freedom, in fact it is this very 'ideal type', or common vocabulary, vision of the individualized individual as the 'free-chooser' (Bauman

³² It should also be noted that during this period there has been the suggestion that Bauman's views are attracting attention with the upper echelon of the Labour Party (Ramesh 2010). Earlier attempts to do so during the era of Blair and Brown were fruitless, since he was 'too depressing' for the optimistic nature of the early New Labour days (Lawson 2010).

³³ There is also the suggestion that late modernity brings with the lessening of distinctions between the Left and Right (Bauman 2007c, 2008d). This is due to the increased acceptance of neoliberalism by all political parties, and thus can be linked to the discussion of the state which follows.

1988:6) who we use to frame our understanding of others. At the same time whilst recognising this freedom the agents of a late modern society believe there's nothing they can do with their freedom to change the world around them or that anything they try would be futile (Bauman 1999)³⁴. Central here are the absence of an *agora* and the colonising of the public by the private which this causes. The centrality of these two concepts result from Bauman's definition of politics, as the transferring of private, individual concerns into public (and potentially shared) concerns (Bauman 1999:4). The space traditionally used for this was the *agora* space. This is 'the space where private problems meet in a meaningful way...to seek collectively managed levers powerful enough to lift individuals from their privately suffered misery; the space where such ideas may be born and take share as the "public good", the "just society" or "shared values"' (Bauman 1999:3-4). Bauman is never entirely clear what form the *agora* took in simple modernity, but his assertion that it has disappeared in late modernity is clear.

Part of the reason for this disappearance of the *agora* can be seen as the success of the neoliberal ideology in declaring the death of other ideologies. For Bauman this leads to the end of a self-questioning society, which restricts the role of politics:

'The announcement of the "end of ideology" is on the part of social commentators a declaration of intent more than it is a description of things as they are: no more criticism of the way things are being done, no more judging or censoring the world through confronting its present state with an alternative of a better society. All critical theory and practice is from now on to be fragmented, deregulated, self-referential, singular and episodic as postmodern life itself' (Bauman 1999:127)

Since 'there is no alternative' (Bauman 2007c) this neoliberal ideology then encourages the kind of privatisation of societal problems as part of embedded individualization. As already mentioned, this privatisation involves the devolution of previously collective decisions (such as welfare provision or healthcare strategies) from the state to individuals acting as consumers. This creates a sense of 'unsicherheit' (a combination of uncertainty, insecurity and 'unsafety', Bauman 1999:5) in individuals which, by lessening security, lessens the ability to act (Bauman 1988, 1997, 1999, 2002a, 2007a).

³⁴ This concern with 'remaking the world' is a central concern throughout Bauman's sociology (Bauman 1973) and has been linked to his early adoption of a form of Gramscian Marxism (Beilharz 2000:62-66, Tester 2004:53, Davis 2008).

It is in this setting which Bauman sees the development of life politics. Bauman has a very different view of this to that of Giddens, since his focus is on their utilisation as a futile attempt to find solutions for the ideology of privatisation found within embedded individualization (Bauman 2008a). This privatisation, at the heart of life politics, lacks the resources to be emancipatory: ‘systematic contradictions cannot be *resolved* through individual life politics’ (Bauman 2002a:168). And it is this futility which means it is reproduced:

‘With joyful abandon, the state sheds its past ambitions and cedes the functions it once jealously guarded against extant or budding competitors. “Deregulation” is the motto, “flexibility” (read: no long-term commitments) the catchword, “cutting public expense” the substance of the state’s vocation...Biographical solutions to socially gestated troubles are encouraged to be sought and expected to be found. Vacated by state politics, the public stage falls an easy prey to life politics. The new electronically operated public scene serves as a magnifying mirror in which life politics, blown up far beyond its naturally confined proportions, fills the whole frame, leaving the rest of the picture out of sight. The pursuit of happiness and meaningful life has become the major preoccupation of life politics, shifting from the construction of a *better tomorrow* to the feverish chase of *a different today*. A chase never grinding to a halt, lasting as long as the succession of days crying out to be made different’ (Bauman 2002a:20-21)

This quote is suggestive of Bauman’s particular life political focus, since this is seen as both individually driven to an extent unacknowledged in Giddens’ work (the focus becomes an individualized pursuit of happiness, rather than recognition) and focused on immediate experience, as part of the pointillist time of late modernity. In short, the process of transferring the private to public contained in the *agora* has disappeared, but the expression of private concerns has continued to grow. As a result Bauman compares the public sphere to a TV talk show:

‘Among the items most conspicuously missing from the list of offers is the prospect of collective means to be collectively used in handling/solving individual problems. The public – the gathering of other individuals – can only applaud or whistle, praise or condemn, admire or deride, abet or deter, nudge or nag, incite or dampen; it would never promise to do something that the individual could not do herself or himself, to tackle the problem *for* the complaining individual (being but an aggregate of individual agents, the listening/commenting public is not an agency in its own right), to take the responsibility off the individual’s shoulders. Individuals come to the talk-shows alone with their

troubles and when they leave they are sunk yet deeper in their loneliness' (Bauman 1999:65-66)

Therefore we may say for Bauman, Giddens' life politics or Beck's sub politics are a futile gesture, since: 'at the heart of life-politics lies a profound and unquenchable desire for security; whilst acting on that desire rebounds in more insecurity' (Bauman 1999:23). This is due to life politics' identification with consumerism which, with its contingent, unequal and uncertain outcomes is linked to insecurity (Bauman 2007c)³⁵. Therefore the state will not provide the generative policies to match these claims, this task is left to the market. In turn individuals tend to find 'substitute targets' for their anger against the inequalities and insecurity caused by a global neoliberal economic system. Primary amongst these for Bauman are fears about paedophiles or asylum seekers (Bauman 1999:9). These fears are in turn picked up on by politicians and the mass media to produce a cycle of fears:

'Were there a competition for the best composite political formula for the current edition of officially endorsed fear, the first prize would probably go to the *Sun* – for a phrase that in addition to being eminently easy to ingest leaves nothing to guesswork or the imagination: "We have an open invitation to terrorists to live off our benefits" A masterstroke indeed. The novel fear of the terrorists merged and cemented with the already well-entrenched, but constantly in need of new food, hatred of "spongers", killing two birds with one stone and arming the ongoing crusade against "welfare scroungers" with a new, indomitable weapon of mass intimidation' (Bauman 2004a:54)

Without an *agora* space in which private concerns and fears can be expressed, socially judged and solved, individuals are left striking out at seemingly 'credible culprits against whom one can wage a sensible defensive (or, better still, offensive) action. One would then perhaps be barking up the wrong tree, but at least one would be barking' (Bauman 1999, p. 18).

The willingness of the state to play this blame game leads us to the second point of Bauman's political sociology: the process of 'negative globalization' (Bauman 2006). This is defined as the globalization of trade and capital; surveillance and information; coercion and weapons; and crime and terrorism without the corresponding globalization of a way of dealing with these. Therefore, the political, as a national occurrence,

³⁵ This linking of life politics with consumerism will be further discussed in chapter five.

becomes detached from power, which occurs above this (Bauman 2006:96, 2009). The state, or to be more exact, the individuals who make up governments, make the decision not to fight a losing battle with power, but instead to give up responsibility for that which it cannot achieve, and instead stake its claim to legitimacy on the basis of security, both against those aspects of ‘human waste’ (asylum seekers, benefit ‘scroungers’ etc.) at the level of citizens, and against the threat those very same citizens would face from global capital (Bauman 1998a:65-68, 2002a:70, 2006:4). As reflected in the above quote concerning the politics of *The Sun*.

What we gain from Bauman’s political sociology in comparison to those of Beck and Giddens is twofold. Firstly, he tempers much of the celebratory nature of their work by placing changes at an individual level in the context of the continuing economic demands of capitalism in its neoliberal phase. Secondly, his political sociology is very much based around individualization, especially the difference between individuality *de jure* and *de facto*. Here *de jure* individuality is the kind of freedom offered in late modern politics to consume and offer your private views and *de facto* individuality is the type of freedom Bauman advocates politics creating through the *agora*. Thus Bauman focuses our attention once more on the ways in which an individualized politics requires some institutional form for connecting the individual and the collective (Bauman 2010b); otherwise the fears of the Bourdieuians and Foucauldians regarding individualization will come true (Bauman 2007c). Inequalities become further embedded and neoliberalism is reproduced through this embedding. Unanswered thus far is the question of how exactly Bauman imagines stopping this. Before turning to this I will point to one aspect of Bauman’s late modern political sociology which may sound more optimistic than what has come thus far: the role of ethics.

In fact the centrality of Bauman’s sociology of ethics to his political theory has, mistakenly, been largely overlooked. To summarise his argument, simple modernity was the time when morals rested upon a philosophy of universalism (Bauman 1993). This made the assumption that individuals should be trained to be moral. Such a morality was (partly) developed by and, almost wholly led by, the state, which saw as its goal the setting down of rules for action by the citizens it claimed sovereignty over. This allows for the large-scale adiaphorization of action, which Bauman sees as

instrumental in the conduct of the Holocaust (Bauman 1989a)³⁶. With the passing of the gardening state and questioning of the possibility of moral universalism late modernity is a time where, as part of embedded individualization, moral choices become individually decided and acted out, ethics becomes individualized to personal morality. For Bauman this reasserts a conception of morality present in the work of Levinas, as care for an other as part of pre-societal obligation (Bauman 1990a). This perspective had got lost amongst the earlier attempts of society, or more specifically, nationalist figures, to manipulate morality to fit their own ends (Bauman 1993:69). Although he acknowledges the difficulty of constant moral re-affirmation, he sees it as, potentially, liberating: ‘however humans may resent being left alone to their own counsel and own responsibility, it is precisely that loneliness that contains a hope of a morally impregnated togetherness’ (Bauman 2008a:106)³⁷.

This impacts on Bauman’s definition of individualization where instead of seeing individualized agents as in search of pragmatic solutions, as I suggested lie behind the conceptions of Giddens and Beck, Bauman sees it as a search for *ethical* solutions (Bauman 2008a, Crone 2008)³⁸. As we saw in chapter one, when one adopts an embedded understanding of individualization this role of the other as an ethical object, i.e. as an object which impacts individual consideration and action, has empirical backing (Benton 1999, Hoggett et al. 2007, Connolly and Prothero 2008, Holmes 2010). The political significance of this for Bauman rests in his assertion of ‘universality’ (Bauman 1999, 2008a) i.e. that morality produces a situation of concern for an other which in turns needs institutionalisation in a system of ‘justice’ (Bauman and Tester 2001:62-69). Therefore his advocacy of the *agora* space is not in order to create new

³⁶ The bureaucratic structure of the simple modern gardening state judged action only according to its appropriateness within that structure itself (i.e. did it follow procedure, was the person ordering in a position to do so etc.), rather than by its moral outcome.

³⁷ I must acknowledge not giving Bauman’s sociology of morality, as opposed to his moral sociology (Blackshaw 2005) as much space as it may deserve in this thesis. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the sheer breath of Bauman’s sociology would require a thesis, or multiple theses, to give it justice and I inevitably will have to summarise some of his work. Secondly, although morality is of a central importance to Bauman’s sociology *tout court* when discussing political sociology, as in this thesis, his discussion of morality can pose some dead-ends (Crone 2008), since ‘moral *practice* can have only *impractical* foundations’ (Bauman 1993:81). Bauman has provided some tentative suggestions towards the link between morality and justice (Bauman 1999, Bauman and Tester 2001). At the time of writing, these need some greater development.

³⁸ This could also be a critique against the implementation of The Third Way in practice since this all too often favoured a ‘managerialist’ conception of individuals (Gilbert 2000, Jordon 2010). In this conception individuals were only concerned about whether a policy/initiative ‘worked’, rather than its moral worth.

conditions within late modernity, but rather to build upon those ethical considerations already present.

This returns us to the question of a normative alternative in Bauman's work. Although he suggests the difference between individuality *de jure* and *de facto* he does not suggest a way it is possible to move from one to the other. For example, the exact shape of the possible *agora* space is largely unspoken³⁹. *In Search for Politics* does contain the rare example of Bauman coming very close to legislating since here he offers a case for the adoption of a universal minimum salary. For Bauman such a proposal would remove some of the pressures of consumer society by lowering the number of 'flawed consumers' and also provide some of the basic enabling rights needed to be a citizen (the lessening of *unsicherheit* and exclusion) (Bauman 1999:180-189). Providing these rights should become the main mission of the Left (Bauman 2007d). Although he is enthusiastic in his advocacy of such a policy he sees it as almost impossible since with the lessening unilateral power of the state he finds himself unable to answer the question of who will enact it⁴⁰. Therefore in some sense Carleheden (2008) is right to classify Bauman's political sociology as a kind of 'dead-end', it argues politics is (to use worryingly 'Cameronian' language) 'broken', and through not offering a solution makes this fault seem permanent. Therefore it is suggested that Bauman's lack of a political alternative makes his description of late modern politics seem even bleaker than it actually is (Christodoulis 2007, Elliott 2007, Schutz 2007).

But what of socialism? Bauman differs from Giddens and Beck by reasserting his own socialist viewpoint (Bauman and Tester 2001:153, Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrado 2010:16, Jeffries 2005). However his views on the relevance of socialism for late modernity tend to be general statements along the lines of the following:

'At some point, therefore, the resurgence of the essential core of the socialist "active utopia" – the principle of collective responsibility and collective insurance against misery and ill fortune – would be indispensable, though this time on a global scale, with

³⁹ Leading Davis (2008:149) to assume Bauman is advocating a literal definition, akin to the Greek *agora*, which would seem problematic in late modernity as developed by Bauman. This is due to public spaces being areas in which one encounters 'strangers' (Bauman 2003b).

⁴⁰ The centrality of the universal minimum wage to late modern sociology will be discussed further in chapter seven.

humanity as a whole as its object' (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrado 2010:69, see also Bauman and Tester 2001:155)

Alternatively there are suggestions of following a model closer to the Swedish understanding of social democracy (Bauman 2007c, 2007d). The exact form these ideas would take is not thought through. I would suggest this is partly due to Bauman's idea of his role as an interpreter, rather than a legislator. However, Bauman tacitly acknowledges that advocating an alternative does not automatically equal the role of 'modern legislator'. The difference here is between 'engineering through manipulation' and 'engineering through rationalisation' (Bauman 2008c). 'Engineering through manipulation' is the description of the modern legislative intellectual making 'an offer addressed to the corridors of power: we will help you to achieve whatever kind of order you decide to establish in the society or part of society under your sovereign rule which we do not question' (Bauman 2008c:237). 'Engineering through rationalisation'⁴¹ in which:

'Sociology is meant to expose the relativity of what is, to open the possibility of alternative social arrangements and ways of life, to militate against the TINA ("There Is No Alternative") ideologies and life philosophies' (Bauman 2008c:238).

Indeed, Bauman criticises the unwillingness of late modern intellectuals to engage in this form of critique:

'Standing up to the status quo demands courage, considering the terrifying might of the powers supporting it; courage, however, is a quality which intellectuals, once known for their bravura, or downright heroic fearlessness, have lost in their dash for new roles and "niches" as experts, academic gurus and media celebrities' (Bauman 2011b:49-50)

Here the prominence of Bauman's 'sociology of hermeneutics' can be seen. This places sociology as engaging in a 'conversation' with those it describes (Bauman and Welzer 2002). Within such a conversation the validity of the interpretations is determined by the lay actors' ability to relate to them and open up new areas of understandings. Suggesting alternatives can effectively become part of this conversation, participants

⁴¹ This is an unusually poor choice of language for Bauman, with 'engineering' suggesting something quite sinister, and 'rationalisation' put an emphasis on the rational otherwise not found in Bauman's sociology. This is perhaps due to his acknowledgement that these terms originated from his work in the 50s, in the full flight of state Marxism (Bauman 2008c:237). I suggest an alternative formulation in the conclusion.

can reject these alternatives, or alter them through re-embedding in a model similar to Giddens' double hermeneutic.

By being driven by a clearly normative vision as part of sociological critique, which suggests society doesn't have to be a certain way, but at the same time lacking a suggestion for what this other way may be, Bauman is put in a problematic position. The suggestions of alternatives can be a way of refining this critique, of engineering through rationalisation. It is in this vein that this thesis goes on to suggest an alternative political system, to some extent building upon Bauman's critical political sociology. I hope to tie Bauman's critical political sociology to a normative project.

Conclusions from Bauman's Second Stage

As a discussion of politics as they currently stand Bauman's second stage is a very useful discussion. It points towards the impact of individualization and provides a critique of the seeming prevalence of life or sub politics not as a way of furthering the political participation of individuals in late modernity, but rather a way of lessening it. This is then linked to a critique of the role of the consumer market within late modernity. It also reasserts the role of ethics and of providing institutionalised forms of security, most notably in the *agora*, for the furthering of freedom. Bauman's political sociology also reintroduces a role for neoliberal capitalism into late modern political sociology, rather than the largely pliant view of Beck and Giddens

However, if Bauman's goal, as he often states it to be (cf. Bauman 1976a, Bauman and Gane 2004), is to critique the second nature of the current society we have suggested it becomes useful for that to have an alternative political idea. As argued by Christodoulidis (2007) and Campain (2008) the normative goals Bauman sets his own sociology could be aided by a return to his socialist critique. Although this thesis is not suggesting the socialist critique is the ONLY such critique available, it will outline a certain form which could be seen as appropriate.

Bauman and Late Modern Politics: As Assessment

To return to our four central questions

- (1) Bauman argues late modern politics is categorised by the passing of the gardening state, which then privatises social problems and political concerns to

an individual level. These individuals are then left to look for political solutions on the consumer market; a search which promises to be incomplete. At the same time the dismissal of any possible alternative means that the many inequalities within this political system are allowed to continue unquestioned.

- (2) Bauman does not dismiss socialism. But his conception of socialism places this as purely a stance on the world, or a utopian vision, rather than something to be achieved.
- (3) The alternatives suggested to this are rather limited. The universal minimum wage is one specific example, beyond that there are suggestions that some aspects of socialism, such as a collective concern, would be useful as well as a rather general advocacy of the *agora* space.
- (4) Bauman's political sociology is useful for late modernity since it takes embedded individualization as its starting point. From here it is suggested that without forms of security, and ways of linking to the individual to the collective, current forms of inequality will continue apace, and neoliberalism will be allowed to re-embed itself. In short, much of Bauman's political sociology is the base for the understanding of this thesis, and I will return to his discussion throughout what follows. However, his implicit suggestion of the difficulty of offering alternatives was rejected in light of his own sociology of hermeneutics, which argues sociology engages in a conversation as equals, rather than legislating as elites.

Therefore, Bauman's political sociology operates as an effective counter-weight to that of Giddens and Beck. The latter draws out the central question of the role of the individual in late modern politics, but have faulty discussions of this, both analytically and normatively. Meanwhile they equate politics and government and overlook the role of the state as a political agent. Bauman on the other hand is able to discuss the ways in which the individual experiences late modern politics.

The object of critique is clear: the role of neoliberal capitalism and the state in a period of an increasingly politicised everyday⁴² lifeworld due to the privatisation within

⁴² This is the focus of chapter five. Here I focus especially on the importance of 'choice' to the everyday noted by all three, albeit in different forms.

embedded individualization. The alternative to this is presently unclear. The next chapter begins by outlining what aspects such an alternative would need to account for, before suggesting the form of libertarian socialism which will then become the thesis' central guide throughout the remainder of the text.

Chapter 3: The Basis of a Libertarian Socialist Critique Within Late Modernity

I have outlined and critiqued the political sociology of late modernity whilst also providing some rejoinders to the claim that, according to Beck and Giddens at least, late modernity necessitates the ‘death of socialism’. I now turn my attention to the substantive discussion of this thesis, specifically: what might a late modern theory of socialism look like, and why such a theory would aid our understanding of late modernity. As what follows this chapter will show, it is my contention that although the political sociology of late modernity has provided some interesting material, at times it has got lost in the discussion of the emancipatory changes late modernity brings without a full discussion of continuances from simple modernity and the new forms of domination/inequality. In this chapter I will outline four key themes of late modern politics identified thus far and then outline the understanding of socialism drawn upon in this thesis. In the chapters that follow, this understanding will be applied to each of these four themes, before the material is brought together in the conclusion. Since most of the justification for this specific alternative occurs in the chapters to follow, I must ask the reader to reserve judgement until this has been fully elaborated.

What this chapter has to offer is the following two points: Firstly, the suggestion that the combination of G.D.H. Cole and Emile Durkheim’s political sociologies provide a promising theory of socialism for late modernity. Others have suggested overlap between Cole and Durkheim (Black 1984:222) however the links between the two as *socialist* thinkers have not been discussed. The goal here is to outline their argument; the rest of the thesis is devoted to the justification of my claim that it has late modern relevance. Secondly, in what follows I outline what aspects of the sociology of late modernity outlined thus far I am maintaining and which I reject.

The Four Themes

From what has gone thus far I suggest there are four significant themes we can identify concerning late modernity which any political sociology needs to account for at the analytical and normative levels¹.

Individualization- Whilst I accept the centrality of individualization to a period of late modernity I reject the disembodied in favour of the embedded form. Politically this also means I accept the importance of the processes by which the individual becomes linked to the collective, as highlighted in the previous chapter. However, I also argue in the next chapter that it is somewhat naive to overlook the forms of collectivity present within individualization. I will also consider the ways in which individualization creates a form of ‘politicisation without democratisation’. Whilst this has similarities to the work of Beck especially, I also argue the suggestion that late modernity automatically means the emergence of ‘new issues’ and the disappearance of ‘old issues’ is a flawed assumption.

The Increased Politicisation of Everyday Life- This leads on from the above, we have seen that one of the results of embedded individualization has been the increasingly political nature of day-to-day decisions. This is not just a process of previously political decisions becoming increasingly so, but areas that were previously considered non-political, being transformed into political ones. Thus I am accepting not only the individual focus of late modern sociology, but also the result of this: a focus on everyday activity.

The term *increased* politicisation is a suggestion that this process does not begin with the emergence of late modernity, but rather is an acceleration of processes present within simple modernity. This is also an instance of my rejection of the tendency towards suggesting a ‘grand break’ between simple and late modernity². The sociology emerging from the former can be useful to the latter, although this must be proven.

The State- We now move our focus to two areas to which the sociology of late modernity has not devoted enough attention. The significance of the state has not been a major concern of much of the late modern political sociology mentioned thus far. It

¹ At this point I should note that I am not claiming these four themes are relevant for any and all studies, either theoretical or empirical, of late modernity, but instead that they are the ones which are most pertinent for this thesis.

² See Holton (2009:57-63, 82) with regard to Beck, Ray (2007a) and Jay (2010) for Bauman and Alexander (1996) for Giddens.

was mentioned very briefly in Giddens' first stage, and then seen as a benign instrument in his second; rejected by Beck as unimportant to cosmopolitan times; and blamed by Bauman. What I plan to offer is a theory of the 'late modern state' separate from theories of the 'neoliberal' state. At the same time I am hoping to expand late modernity's understanding of politics beyond the state which, as government, has often been the totality of political discussion. A major focus here is the state's dual role of increasing the prominence of everyday politicisation. Through this discussion of the state and the two previous factors I am also trying to counter the 'politics = government' tendency which, as was noted in the previous chapter, is so present in the work of Beck and Giddens (Alexander 1996, Ray 2007a, Holton 2009:57-63).

Neoliberal Capitalism- The final factor is what I consider late modernity's 'elephant in the room'. I have already mentioned that whilst some researchers who discuss late modernity also discuss the importance and impact of capitalism, it has been noticeable by its absence in the work of Beck and Giddens. Much as with the state, Bauman stands out as an exception to this and some of his most recent work gives capitalism a determining nature:

'We have come to know that capitalism's strength lies in its amazing ingenuity in seeking and finding (or indeed producing) new species of hosts whenever the previously exploited species get thin on the ground or are extinguished; we came to know, too, the virus-like expediency and speed with which it manages to readjust to the idiosyncrasies of its new grazing pastures. The present "credit crunch" does not signal the end of capitalism – only the exhaustion of the latest grazing pasture' (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrado 2010: 17)

The specific importance of neoliberalism in chapter seven concerns how the strength of its 'doxa' (Bourdieu 1992) has removed from consideration not only possible alternatives, but also produced a notable strand of anti-economism within the sociologies of Beck and Giddens that needs to be overcome given the continued importance of economic inequality on an individual level, and neoliberal ideas at the collective level.

These four themes will be tackled one-by-one during the rest of this thesis. To recap, I am maintaining the following from late modern sociology: an individual, everyday focus; the concern with linking the individual to the collective politically and the

centrality of embedded individualization along with factors such as the post-traditional order and expert systems which help bring this about. However, I am rejecting the following: the anti-economism present within Beck and Giddens; the false universalism present with the disembedded theory of individualization; their equation of politics with government and the suggestion that there is a ‘grand break’ between simple and late modernity rendering anything from the former irrelevant to the latter.

The discussion for the rest of this thesis will also be influenced both analytically and normatively by libertarian socialist theory, which I will now outline

Libertarian Socialism: An Outline

We can discuss socialism in two different ways; as a theory critiquing current society and as an assertion concerning what society should/could look like. As put by Wright: ‘Socialism has presented itself as two kinds of doctrine, a positive doctrine of analysis and explanation and a normative one of morality and values’ (Wright 1996:35). In this sense it is a ‘utopian’ theory, but in the sense of relativising the present and suggesting things do not have to be a certain way (Bauman 1976b, Kumar 1991). Both forms of socialist discussion will be utilised in this thesis.

The definition I offer is as a form of ‘libertarian socialism’³. This involves a concern with the possibility of individuals to participate fully in the political processes located within the varied areas of social life in which they engage. It is argued this then allows him/her to realise their desire/goals. The practical suggestion here involves the extension of democratic forms of organisation into more realms of society, not just the economic (which is of course a major focus). In the work of Cole, discussed below, this means guilds and co-operatives are also part of the ‘civic services’, under which label he includes health and education as well as organisations dealing with ‘spiritual and mental’ wellbeing, such as the church (Cole 1920a:96). This is echoed in the latter

³ My choice of the label ‘libertarian socialism’ against other possible categorisations (such as ‘associational socialism’ or ‘associational democracy’) is threefold. Firstly, the term libertarian socialism has become established in the field as an alternative term for Cole’s ‘guild socialism’ (Wyatt 2006, Schecter 2007:120-127) and in this thesis I also apply the term to Durkheim’s socialist theory. Secondly, the use of associations is not an end in itself, but rather a means towards the end of allowing for individual self-expression and realisation (as noted in the second tenet, below). Finally, the use of ‘socialism’ is intentional, with its suggestion of an anti-capitalist form of politics, involving economic redistribution (which is expanded upon in chapter seven).

work of Hirst (1994, 1997)⁴ where forms of associative democracy provide services in health, education, housing etc., which is also tailored to individual preferences (for example religion). These associations are collectively formed and organised. As Hirst also notes, whilst such theories attracted a large amount of attention and devotees in the early 20th Century (especially in England) they have attracted much less attention in the latter half of the century. A reappraisal of these theories may help us rediscover their initial attractiveness.

There are three central tenets to this thesis' definition of libertarian socialism:

1. The lack of differentiation between individuals' functional activity within liberal democracy
2. That it is only through collective associational control of these functions that individuality can develop fully
3. Socialism exists as the counter-culture to capitalism, with its libertarian form being an especially potent counter to neoliberalism

Functional Differentiation- The best example of the first of these is the work of Cole on guild socialism, defined in the following manner:

'Guildsmen (sic) assume that the essential social values are human values, and that Society is to be regarded as a complex of associations held together by the wills of their members, whose well-being is its purpose. They assume further that it is not enough that the forms of government should have the passive or "implied" consent of the governed, but that the Society will be in health only if it is in the full sense democratic and self-governing, which implies not only that all the citizens should have the "right" to influence its policy if they so desire, but that the greatest possible opportunity should be afforded for every citizen actually to exercise this right...Moreover, and this is perhaps the most vital and significant assumption of all, it regards this democratic principle as applying, not only or mainly to some special sphere of social action known as "politics", but to any and every form of social action, and, in especial, to industrial and economic fully as much as to political affairs' (Cole 1920a:12)

⁴ Hirst himself rejects the label of socialism for his form of associative democracy whilst also acknowledging his desire to construct an updated version of Cole's alternative. Therefore I will make use of his work throughout this thesis in this light. I will also utilise the term 'associative democracy' to refer narrowly to the internally democratic nature of association and their negotiation with each other. In this sense forms of associative democracy are part of libertarian socialism, rather than (in my use anyway) an entirely different practical framework.

Notable here is the assertion that liberal democracies have come to rely on passive or implied consent. As argued by Levin (1989) it is this aspect of liberal democracy which initially raised the ire of Marx and Engels. This is then seen as a lack of legitimacy since it assumes that individuals' 'silence' signals happiness and that if the individual wished to break their silence they would have the possibility of doing so. Such a criticism is seen by Cole as particularly significant when the state is entering into further realms of society and using this faulty form of legitimacy as the basis for such intervention. It is from this analytical base that Cole makes a normative assertion: not only must there be an appropriate outlet for an individual's desire to be expressed (i.e. beyond the occasional vote and right to free speech, important though these may be) but also that within each area the individual operates they be given a democratic voice (Cole 1920b). It is this which Cole terms functional democracy, where 'function' is the purpose or group of purposes for which an association is formed, perhaps most notably, an occupational group (Cole 1920b:49-51). Cole's normative view of libertarian socialism is summarised in the following quote:

'The essentials of democratic representation, positively stated, are, first, that the represented shall have free choice of, constant contact with, and considerable control over, his (sic, and here after) representative. The second is that he should be called upon, not to choose someone to represent him as a man or as a citizen in all the aspects of citizenship, but only to choose someone to represent his point of view in relation to some particular purpose or group of purposes, in other words, some particular *function*. All true and democratic representation is therefore *functional* representation...Brown, Jones and Robinson must therefore have, not one vote each, but as many different functional votes as there are different questions calling for associative action in which they are interested' (Cole 1920a:32-33)

Therefore part of the basis of libertarian socialist critique in Cole's hands is that each individual engages in many different fields of action however they currently have only one person, and one vote, to represent them in all these fields. This makes the faulty assumption that one person can represent us fully in all those different fields. Instead, for a society to be democratic the individual should have a vote in all their different functions. Hence, one would vote as a worker, as a user of a school, as a member of a church etc. From here Cole outlines how this will occur in a form of socialism where guilds are formed for each industry and service (1920a:47 ff.). These guilds would then have the responsibility of self-regulation for their respective industry.

Cole's system when outlined is impressively detailed⁵, guilds themselves operate at the local, regional and national level within each functional groups, with each level given different tasks ranging from the election of managers up to laying down national standards of practice and production quality. Whilst specialists would still be hired and votes not needed on every issue, the default consideration is whether a certain policy is a democratic one. These guilds then negotiate with each other as needed, for example on the purchase of each other's goods. There would remain a central state-like body, 'the commune', however this would be greatly reduced to being a co-ordinating body or final body of appeal, since democratic debate should remain in as small a grouping as possible (Cole 1920a:133-134). Whilst this form of producer democracy occurs Cole also proposes consumer representation through co-operatives and collectives. These bodies then represent the individual in their many different functions as consumers and negotiate between each other when needed⁶. Therefore, for Cole, this accounts for the complexity of modern societies which rests upon the increased number of functions requiring ever greater specialisation. In this sense Wright (1979) argues Cole is not as much developing a democratic theory of socialism, but rather a socialist theory of democracy.

This is the first principle to take from the socialist critique of current society: that the democracy that manifests itself in modern societies does not fully differentiate between the functions each individual carries out.

Individuality through Collectivity- Cole's work contains a well thought of model of socialism; nevertheless, his work was, to some extent, lacking a full discussion of whence this complexity came. In short; it lacks a sociology. This is why I am also going to draw from someone not automatically identified as a 'socialist theorist' but who links similar suggestions as Cole to a wider sociological theory of change, Emile Durkheim⁷.

⁵ Cf. his *Guild Socialism Re-Stated* (1920a) for the most detailed discussion.

⁶ There is a detailed outlining of Cole's ideas concerning consumer representation in chapter seven.

⁷ The socialist nature of Durkheim's political sociology, especially in the suggestion of the corporations as an alternative social form has been noted by many, in different ways. Gane (1984) argues Durkheim's work was suggestive of a strongly socialist political orientation, whereas Black (1984) argues this political belief is in the importance of guild forms of organisation (which he shares with Cole). Alternatively it has been suggested by Giddens that Durkheim's believed in a form of 'reformist socialism' despite the broadly liberal, and sometimes conservative, aspects of his sociology (Giddens 1978:17). For Fournier, it is more accurate to see this as a balancing act between liberalism and socialism (partly explained by Durkheim hostility towards Marxism (Durkheim 1897, 1899a)), an attempt to create

Durkheim's political sociology is somewhat dispersed throughout his many texts, although *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* (1992) contains most of his key political ideas. Giddens has subjected these ideas to some of the best systematic treatment (Giddens 1978, 1982d, 1995c)⁸. My focus in what follows is inevitably going to be selective to focusing on what exactly is relevant for my discussion. Most notably, Durkheim's argument for what he terms 'corporations'. These are similar to Cole's guilds in that these corporations would be self-organising and hold sovereignty over their own realm of economic life. But, perhaps unsurprisingly considering Durkheim's wider sociology, they were also given moral agency, as in the below quote:

'For if we deem it indispensable it is not because of the services it might render the economy, but on account of the moral influence it could exercise. What we particularly see in the professional grouping is a moral force capable of curbing individual egoism, nurturing among workers a more invigorated feeling of their common solidarity, and preventing the law of the strongest from being applied too brutally in industrial and commercial relationships' (Durkheim 1984:xxxix)

Hence the justification for a guild/corporation system in Durkheim's work is not (at least primarily) an economic one, but rather as a way of developing and sustaining forms of solidarity in a society producing progressively more forms of anomie. These solidarities are also function specific and hope to remove divisions not only within the functions, but to link each group to a wider societal goal (Durkheim 1908). The corporations were advocated on the basis of forming a middle layer between the individual and the state, to both link the individual to some form of collective, and temper the worst excesses of the state (Durkheim 1899a:145)⁹. Durkheim terms them a form of 'intermediary electoral unit', whose presence means the state can operate solely on the national questions for which it is appropriate (Durkheim 1992:103-106). Their role is therefore to develop a form of solidarity which is collectively shared amongst the

a 'third way', with recognition of economic groups (Fournier 2005:55). I would suggest the question of whether Durkheim personally was a socialist is not relevant to this discussion, and rather am in agreement with Collins (2005:107-109) and Fournier (2005:54) that any socialism in Durkheim's work is not born of normative orientation but as a result of his conception of sociology as an academic discipline partly involved in the discovery, and offering of possible solutions to, social problems. Durkheim has a socialist theory because his sociology theory led towards socialist forms, not because of personal belief.

⁸ Perhaps ironically given the accusations I laid against him in chapter two, Giddens' critique against Durkheim is that he overlooks the classed nature of the state's actions.

⁹ Here we find the first appearance of the controversy of the state in Durkheim's work. This is outlined in chapter six, but for now it is enough to say that Durkheim's concern is to find ways 'to prevent the State from tyrannizing over individuals' (Durkheim 1992:106).

occupational group, whilst also being embedded within the everyday activity of the individual given the functional differentiation of organic solidarity (Durkheim 1992:6). This also means that individualism can be adjusted from what Durkheim considers its purely negative form (freedom from) into a positive form, which allows for individual action within the collectivity. Political freedom can thus become a means, rather than an end (Durkheim 1898/1969:82-83). Therefore, individual activity is both specifically functional, but through functional activity, also allows the individual to become part of the collective 'association' of society (Durkheim 1992).

The main appeal of libertarian socialism in late modernity is not as a replacement for an individual focus, but rather rests upon the ways in which individuality can be developed most completely through collective political organisation. Both Durkheim and Cole argue that it is only through collective organisation and representation that individuals can have the potential for full self-development. Socialist critics of the USSR have often criticised it upon these grounds (Blackburn 1991, Fromm 1967, Bauman 1976b:101). In this sense Giddens' work on life/generative politics or Beck's sub-politics have similar normative goals to these critics, since (especially in Giddens' case) they aimed to allow for the full development of individuality through political means. What differentiates Giddens and Beck from these theorists of socialism is that the latter only see this as possible when collective forms of organisation are allowed to claim autonomy in greater areas of social life, especially the economic (Callinicos 2001:118). I suggest that to fully pursue the normative goals of Beck and Giddens it is essential to recognise Bauman's critique and consider ways in which this individualism could be pursued universally. It is this question which libertarian socialism seems to provide a promising case for. The argument here is that, returning to Cole, it is not possible to make one's view known fully under liberal democracy because of the lack of recognition of functional differentiation. Because of this some functions may receive disproportionate attention as a result of the abundance, or lack, of resources of those who make up that function. When combined with the practical forms contained in Durkheim's socialist theory we can then say that pursuing individualism within a certain function would also be aided by a sense of solidarism within the function. Durkheim would acknowledge individualism can become anomic and splinter groups off from one another. But, it can also be aligned with this political goal if each differentiation is given its own political outlet. Indeed, Durkheim's whole sociological

project has been presented as an attempt to combine individualism and a non-Marxist form of socialism (Stedman Jones 2001:128-131).

This is the analytical grounding for the second tenet of libertarian socialism: the development of individuality relies upon having control, through an associational collectivity, of the individual's multiple functions. Much of this appeal rests upon the way that Durkheim utilises the concept of professional ethics (Durkheim 1992:1-12). This has a strong moral form, but also it has a social form, found in Durkheim's focus on interpersonal recognition and identification encouraging forms of solidarity. This is part of Durkheim's focus on an 'associational' model of society, i.e. not only of finding a place for political associations, but also in seeing society itself as an association which, much like its smaller counterparts, requires the ability for all to be consulted on any decisions taken (Durkheim 1885:90)¹⁰. Upon this rests Durkheim's assertion of the primacy of the social as a way of both recognising individualism but yet also avoid anomie.

The particular strength of libertarian socialism for late modernity is that, especially in Durkheim's formation, it hopes to overcome the strict dichotomy between the individualism of people and the collectivity found in the associations. The basis of this claim rests in Durkheim's assertion that individualism is a 'social religion', given shape by collective representation of what it is to be 'an individual', rather than from 'egoistic sentiments' (Durkheim 1898/1969:81). The result of this is that the recognition of individualism can only occur in a collectivity and it is through this collectivity that individuals not only have their individualism validated, but expressed. In order for my individualism to be recognised and effective I must be able to utilise forms of 'political freedom' as a means to achieving this (Durkheim 1898/1969:82). These forms of political expression must utilise a form of collective representation and organisation in order to ensure that my own individualism does not become detached from the collective sentiments which give my individualism form and structure. This is especially true when, as one individual, it is impossible for me to fully realise the social interests I must take into account when acting (Durkheim 1992:14-15). Whilst it is true that an undifferentiated collectivity – such as that found when the state is the only form

¹⁰ Ironically, it is whilst making this point that Durkheim makes his strongest 'anti-socialism' remarks (1885:86-88). However, as noted by Giddens (1982d), Durkheim's anti-socialist remarks were often aimed at Marxism and/or anarcho-syndicalism, rather than socialism *tout court*.

of collective representation – can lead to the ‘oppression’ of individuality (Durkheim 1992:96), the specific, and individually based, nature of the associations assures individualism is given expression and recognition without being limited by collective forms. In turn, the uniting of the associations within what Durkheim terms ‘political society...the coming together of a rather large number of secondary social groups’ (Durkheim 1992:45) means that any collective sentiment of individual desires does not overwhelm any other groupings. This overcoming of the individualism/collective dualism is especially significant for the next chapter on the political impact of individualization

Counter-cultural project- The final point concerns socialism as a set of morals or values or, more widely, a critique of not just the reality upon which liberal democratic societies are formed, but also its very principles. This is in addition to, and compliments, the democratic principles of libertarian socialism I have already outlined, rather than being in opposition to it. What I refer to here is socialism as a form of cultural critique (Beilharz 1994, 2001, 2005) or as a (counter-) hegemonic project (Laclau and Mouffe 2005, Miliband 1994). This critique has a unique position, since socialism is a product of those same principles it aims to reject, as suggested by Durkheim:

‘Socialism is not a science, a sociology in miniature – it is a cry of grief, sometimes of anger, uttered by men (sic, and here after) who feel most keenly our collective *malaise*. Socialism is to the facts which produce it what the groans of a sick man are to the illness with which he is afflicted, to the needs that torment him...Moreover, the theories ordinarily offered in opposition to socialism are no different in nature and they no more merit the title we refuse the latter...Such policies are maintained by needs of another kind – a jealousy of individual autonomy, a love of order, a fear of novelty, misoneism as it is called today. Individualism, like socialism, is above all a ferment which affirms itself, although it may eventually ask Reason for reasons with which to justify itself’ (Durkheim 1959:7)

Socialism, in all its forms, is a product of modernity in the sense that it critiques the manifestation of modernity, but yet at the same time uses the principles of it as the defence of its own ideas and policies. Durkheim also argues that socialism’s recognition of the increased plurality and specialisation of economic life, indeed it is

this it wishes to make public, is recognition of its modernist form¹¹. This leaves socialism in the position of becoming, what Bauman terms, the ‘counter-culture’ of capitalism (Bauman 1976b). Like any counter-culture it opposes the norms and/or values of the dominant culture (in this case the capital-wage/class relationship, limited forms of democracy, commodification of nature, products and others etc.) but yet owes its existence to those factors and, in some cases, will also claim to be able to deliver some of the principles of modernity capitalism cannot (such as in the above discussion concerning individual autonomy). The significance of this understanding of socialism is twofold, its relevance for late modernity generally, and for the cultural claims of neoliberal capitalism.

With regard to the first, Beilharz argues that, much as how socialism as a critique of modernity from within modernity developed at the end of the 19th Century, postmodernity emerges as a similar critique at the end of the 20th (Beilharz 1994:23). Whilst there are differences between the theories of post and late modernity, we can see some similarities with Beilharz’s discussion of ‘identity-politics’ to concepts such as life politics with their focus on ‘individual or personal identity’ (Beilharz 1994:38). Postmodernism and socialism share the same focus on the ‘romantic sense of loss’ and ‘the Enlightenment prospect of hope’ (Beilharz 1994:38). Hence for Beilharz the birth of the postmodern critique springs from the same well as the socialist critique, except socialism attempts to take the romanticism and Enlightenment potential beyond the individual to the social. But, as we have seen, it does this because it is only in this form that individual self-development – after all one of the claims of modernity – can fully occur. Libertarian socialism is especially important here. The reason for this is, as we have seen with the two tenets identified thus far, the theory rests upon an alternative conception of individuality and on the purpose of politics. By emphasising the need for functional differentiation, whilst also pointing to the ability for individuality to develop collectively through this, libertarian socialism places itself directly against the claims of liberal democracy, whilst still setting some of the same normative goals.

The second basis for the continual relevance of socialism as a counter-culture is more specific, and refers to the suggestion that neoliberal capitalism is a specifically ‘cultural’ project. By this I mean that neoliberal capitalism aspires to, and gains, a hegemonic

¹¹ This is counter to what Durkheim terms ‘communism’, which comes from the writings of Plato and others. This wishes to suppress economic activity and create universality (Durkheim 1959:40).

position through its use of claims about how people should act. Sennett (1998, 2003, 2006) has identified a new ‘character’ of capitalism. This has a strong focus on worker uncertainty and insecurity, which workers’ accept as given and beyond questioning. Whilst some have criticised Sennett for overlooking the truth, or the lack thereof, to these claims (Doogan 2009:143-168), what is of more significance at this point is Sennett’s finding that neoliberal claims are almost universally accepted without question, which Doogan himself accepts they are (Doogan 2009:194-206)¹². As mentioned in the introduction the significance of neoliberalism resides in its conception of the individual, of which we see a contrasting form in libertarian socialism.

The ideological critique was nascent within libertarian socialism as advanced by Cole and Durkheim. This was perhaps due to the differing political situation of the time. Nevertheless we can identify a claim concerning individuals, as co-operative and concerned with collective identification and moral recognition, which runs counter to the ideological claims of neoliberalism. Both Cole and Durkheim’s political sociology places individuals as part of association collectivities at the micro and macro level as a way of developing individuality. As a result late modernity, with the emergence of neoliberal claims on individual development, through individual action, re-emphasises the importance of such an ideological conception¹³. In chapters to come I will argue this project has some formative empirical backing.

Here we have the third tenet of socialism which is of importance for this thesis: the claim of socialism being a counter-culture or a counter-hegemonic project. The significance of such a critique is not only that it ensures society continues to question itself – for Bauman, something it has ceased to do (1999, 2000a, 2001a, 2002a) – but also that it helps show the flaws and faulty logic of the current culture/hegemonic idea. Such a purpose is common to all forms of critique but, needless to say, is especially important for a socialist one concerned with the increasing de-politicisation of neoliberal capitalism. This will be returned to in the chapters of neoliberal capitalism and the state.

¹² This disconnection between the two theorists can partly be explained through a difference in method, as I have discussed elsewhere (Dawson 2010b).

¹³ Indeed, this can be an instance of a left-wing hegemonic project of the type advocated by Laclau and Mouffe in response to the emergence of the ‘post-industrial age’ (Laclau and Mouffe 1987, 2005).

These three tenets will be part of the development and application of the libertarian socialist critique to late modernity in the chapters to come. Its initial promise can seem to reside in the way in which it aims its political appeal towards the individual, but yet argues that this individuality can only exist within associational forms. This may well hold the key for fulfilling Bauman's goal of developing individuality *de facto* through the utilisation of multiple *agora* spaces.

Why not 'A Social Democratic Critique?'

At this point the reader may be curious as to why I'm choosing to argue for a libertarian socialist alternative and not a social democratic one. Whilst they may have accepted many of my criticisms of Giddens' Third Way they may also feel that his aim, a social democratic framework fit for late modernity, remains intriguing. This may be especially so with the election of a new Labour party leader who, next to Tony Blair, could pass for Michael Foot. Whilst the rest of this thesis will attempt to justify the libertarian socialist path, I will now suggest the background to my reluctance to walk the social democratic one. To do this I will consider an alternative offered by Bauman, the 'social state' (cf. Bauman 2004a, 2006, 2007a, Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrado 2010).

Like most of Bauman's alternatives, the social state is in fact a suggestion, which is not entirely worked out. This suggestion is one which is of a classically social democratic form; a state which, in a capitalist system, takes the well-being of all its citizens, especially the weakest, as its over-riding concern, and hopes to build a fair and 'good' society, as in the following:

'The purpose of the social state in the society of consumers is, just as it was in the society of producers, to defend society against the "collateral damage" that the guiding principle of life would cause if not monitored, controlled and constrained...Its task is to salvage human solidarity from erosion and to keep the sentiments of ethical responsibility from fading' (Bauman 2008b:143)

Bauman also argues this is all often sacrificed at the altar of economic efficiency, as in the Third Way model (Bauman 2008b:142). It is then the job of the left to reassert the social nature of the state (Bauman 2009, Lawson 2010). To borrow an analogy from another theorist, Bauman seems to be arguing that now is the time to reassert the importance of the 'left hand' of the state, made up of 'the spending ministries which are

the trace, within the state, of the social struggles of the past', whilst downplaying those belonging to the 'right hand...the technocrats of the Ministry of Finance, the public and private banks and the ministerial cabinets' (Bourdieu 1998:2)¹⁴.

So, rather than throw the social state baby out with the neoliberal bathwater, why not reassert the left hand? There are two reasons for this, which also lead into a wider justification of why classic forms of social democracy may not be a long-term answer for late modernity. At the same time I do not wish to follow a Beckian strategy of suggesting social democracy is redundant, rather that it has flaws which, at the time of writing, make its application problematic. It is possible to use Bauman to argue against Bauman here, although I would not go as far as to accuse him of inconsistency or contradiction, since the social state is so tangential to his wider theoretical project.

This concerns the nation-state's impossibility of playing such a role, in two ways. Firstly, for Bauman, too many problems occur globally for the social nation-state to be effective:

'It is no longer possible to construct a "social state" that guarantees existential security to all its members within the framework of the nation-state. Globally produced problems can be only solved globally. The only thinkable solution to the globally generated tide of existential insecurity is to match the powers of the already globalised forces with the powers of politics, popular representation, law, jurisdiction; in other words, there is a need for the remarriage of power and politics – currently divorced – but this time at the global, planetary, all-humanity level.' (Bauman 2009:2)

This is a demonstration of the 'ethical cosmopolitanism' present in Bauman's political sociology, without his subscription to cosmopolitanism as a political project (Bauman 2001c:56-8). The social state is a concern of a global nature. If we accept this as an instrument with which one can tame global capital, there remains the concern of what takes place at the local, national or sub-national level. It is at this level that I am arguing for libertarian socialist forms of political organisation. This occurring in unison with a global social state may prove to be a promising marriage; however it is beyond the scope of this thesis. Here I am placing my focus within the UK, it would be arrogant to argue what is sketched here is appropriate for every nation or that it could

¹⁴ Bauman's admiration for, and affinities with, Bourdieu's later, polemical, political sociology is often overlooked, despite Bauman being open and effusive in his praise for this part of Bourdieu's intellectual biography (cf. Bauman 2002b).

simply be applied at a global level. The outline of a global social state would require a separate thesis. As noted by Hirst (1994) associational-based forms of political organisation cannot, like all political systems, solve all outstanding issues, and the lack of global political organisations is one of these.

The second problem with the social state is one of trust. Part of Bauman's concern for the possibility of the social state is that there is currently no institution individuals feel is capable of achieving such a goal. Instead they tend to see their own state as effectively impotent (Bauman 1999, 2002a, 2007a). Instances of the state's success in, for example, reorganising public services, are outweighed by the government's own proclamations of impotence regarding global financial markets and migration. We can add to this that individuals simply do not trust their state. The economic crash, as well as the MPs' expenses scandal, has made dents in the already low levels of faith in the state and its representatives (Hansard Society 2010). This is also shown in public policy focus on 'trust' (Norman 2010, Seldon 2010). This is an especial problem for the social democratic Left, which hopes to increase social equality by, at least at first, asking some to contribute more in order to achieve a long-term goal which may not be attainable for a few years.

This links to Giddens' conception of 'active trust' which 'has to be won' and 'presumes autonomy rather than standing counter to it' and becomes 'a powerful source of social solidarity' (Giddens 1994a:14). The emergence of a post-traditional order was, for Giddens, the time for active trust to be reasserted in the abstract system of liberal democracy. Instead, a lack of what Giddens terms 'trust in persons' of politicians – which was hardly uncommon when Giddens was writing in the early 90s, but yet was overlooked – became a loss of 'trust in systems' of liberal democracy (cf. Giddens 1990:88). This is not to say this loss of trust is terminal, but is significant enough to suggest some changes to the system. Therefore the hope that the left hand of the state could be reasserted effectively is open to question, and perhaps instead there needs to be a process of reinstituting trust in the process of governance through transferring the power to take part in it. In short, reasserting the civic morals Durkheim saw as central to any political community (Durkheim 1992) or: creating 'access points' where 'trust can be maintained or built up' (Giddens 1990:88). Whilst reform, such as anti-corruption schemes may seem to achieve a similar goal, for Durkheim the reassertion of such civic morals is more effectively achieved by ensuring the links between the state

and ‘political society’ being reasserted to ensure each acts as a minder of the other, especially prominent in a democracy (Durkheim 1992:76-98).

It is on this later point that libertarian socialism can seem to hold untapped potential for late modernity. Ed Miliband has suggested the only way to ‘rebuild the case for politics is from the ground up’ (Miliband 2011). Behind the vagueness of this statement, which any politician is likely to make, there lies great problems for a social democratic party. Is the ground there to support the centre, with the failure of the latter feeding down to the former, or is the ground something to be appeased, with its disappointment leading to resurgence in popularity for another centre? Either way, it seems active trust becomes trust in persons, such as the Labour party, rather than trust in systems. This echoes the history of the Labour party as one which favours ‘weak democracy’ (Barrow and Bullock 1996), which argues ‘elect the socialists and let us work’ (Thompson 1960).

At certain points in British history this was entirely plausible, the processes and circumstances of late modernity makes it much harder to achieve. This thesis inevitably has to take these into consideration. This includes not just the factors outlined above, but also the centrality of late modern individualization. As we shall see in the next chapter, individualization helps to produce political identification at a local, micro level. This can be functional or ‘identificational’ and, as I argue in the next chapter, leads itself to associational forms. This is part of the explanation for the wide acceptance of neoliberalism as an economic system which uses marketisation as a way of providing (albeit greatly limited) forms of individually driven recognition and activity away from the state. State-led, paternalistic understandings of social democratic conceptions would seem not to fully allow for such practices of democracy.

None of this should be taken as an ‘anti’ social democracy statement, rather a suggestion of what the potential of late modernity may lead to. Let us now turn to that potential.

Chapter 4: Political Individualization and Libertarian Socialism

This is the first of four sections dealing with the major themes a late modern theory of socialism needs to account for. I have already devoted considerable space to an outline and critique of individualization. This has included providing my own differentiation between embedded and disembedded individualization.

This chapter is concerned with the political impact of individualization, more specifically: what are the political results of individualization and the forms which can allow for it fully realised? Whilst many, especially the Foucauldian critics, have seen individualization as ‘neoliberalism in action’ (Lazzarato 2009), I argue that whilst it is true that neoliberalism has benefited from individualization and, to a lesser extent, brought it about, it is not then logically true to say that it can *only* benefit the advancement of capitalism. Instead, individualization can and is (in some forms) leading to the critiquing of capitalism¹. It will be shown in the chapters to come that this potential can only be realised in combination with transformations of both capitalism and the state (for which, needless to say, there will be overlaps), but for the moment I limit myself to the individual. There are four major aspects of individualization which allow for such potential: reflexivity, knowledge, ethics and its politicised nature.

There are two contributions this chapter hopes to make in addition to what has been said above, the first is to build upon the definition of individualization already provided in this thesis by further developing the concept of embedded individualization for political sociology. The way in which this is done will also be significant; I build upon the Bourdieuan and Foucauldian critiques to provide a late modern critique of individualization, i.e. to place the discussion of individualization within the sociology of late modernity, rather than in opposition to it. As I have already noted, such a discussion is gravely needed given the central importance tied to individualization, without the presence of its careful elaboration one would expect.

The second contribution is to provide a late modern aspect to the classical sociological debate of how increased individuation can possibly be reconciled with collective

¹ Such a critique can be seen in some forms of ‘identity politics’ which base their appeal on ‘counter-normative practices’ (Cooper 2004:207). I discuss these in the final section of chapter seven. Here the focus is more on factors directly related to individualization.

political activity. This was a central spur to the political sociologies of Cole and (especially) Durkheim, and maintains – we may even say, reasserts – its relevance in an era of individualization.

The Aspects of Individualization

Below are the central characteristics of what makes up late modern individualization. Some of these come from Bauman, Beck and Giddens either in whole or in part (reflexivity, knowledge, morality). Whilst others are aspects often missing from their discussion (politicised, morality in certain forms). A more detailed reading of these various can lead to a different interpretation of their late modern political impact.

Reflexivity- This term has become somewhat of a ‘catch-all’ phrase in the literature and sometimes has been poorly elaborated². An exception to this is Holmes who, in her critique of common assumptions regarding reflexivity, offers the following definition:

‘Reflexivity is an achievement that describes the mediatory process via which people react to the situations they find themselves in. Through this process people attempt to find ways through the world and a place in it. They hope that within that place they might be able to exercise some control and to be the kind of person that they want to be, within the roles available to them. These reflexive processes involve relational struggles’ (Holmes 2010: 143)

This quote demonstrates two key aspects of reflexivity. Firstly, individuals are seen to interact with the world not in a passive or taken-for-granted manner, but instead the meaning of the stimuli within this world – be it other people, events or the natural world – are interpreted with reference to the individual’s own ideas and definitions. Secondly, and what is ‘new’ here, is that with the detraditionalisation of the lifeworld reflexivity is not only the individual reflecting upon their own experiences and position, but also upon the way in which they give meaning to the exterior. This is then seen as part of a wider project for being ‘the kind of person they want to be’ and ‘exercise some control’.

Holmes, as a Bourdieuan critic, also gives prominence to the consideration of others. Reflexivity cannot be seen as a purely individual activity, it will entail others in the

² Such elaboration is sometimes done by a comparison with ‘reflection’ (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994) or ‘reflex’ (Elliott 2002) to suggest the sophistication of reflexivity. However as with many distinctions of this type this tends to produce problems of its own. Specifically regarding how these terms are defined.

sense that other people are objects about which I will be reflexive and also that my own conclusions about myself will be made with regard to these others. By taking account of ascribed categories and pre-existing power relationships, embedded individualization sees reflexivity as mediating these relationships. Therefore, I would argue it is important to maintain the centrality of the social in the discussion of reflexivity. This has been maintained by Beck and Giddens as a causal component; reflexive modernisation and institutionalised individualization help bring about reflexivity at both the macro and micro levels but it is also important to maintain a conception of reflexivity as socially exercised. By this I mean that the process of being reflexive will concern not only the individual's self-assessment, but also their assessment of their social surroundings.

In this sense I am combining the definition of reflexivity offered by Bauman, Beck and Giddens with that of George Herbert Mead (as suggested by Jackson 2009). Mead's analysis of reflexivity can initially seem unpromising. His discussion of 'reflectivity' or 'reflexive intelligence' (Mead 1934:354-378, 90-100) focuses heavily on the development of consciousness and psychological instinct. This would seem to validate the modernist critique of individualization, especially with Mead's focus on the emergence of rationality as a mark of reflexive intelligence (Mead 1934:96). However, Mead's thought opens up a new understanding of the operation of reflexivity. This is due to Mead's thoroughly social conception of the reflective process; the process of being reflexive only emerges when one encounters an other, who in turn impacts our awareness of our self:

'The individual may affect itself as it affects other individuals, and may therefore respond to this stimulation as it would respond to the stimulation of other individuals; in other words, a situation arises here in which the individual may become an object in its own field of behaviour' (Mead 1934:360-361)

To be reflective upon ourselves and our conduct involves, for Mead, the automatic assumption that we assess ourselves and behaviour from the position of the Other (Mead 1934:366). Indeed, to be reflexive without some sort of awareness of that outside the individual would be a contradiction in terms of Mead, there must be a standard/set of considerations against which my own reflections can be tested. This can involve a reflection which is orientated towards the other, the passage of time (Mead 1934:100, Jackson 2010), or a consideration of my role (Mead 1934:362). So, Mead's

conception of the self, as constantly involving the consideration of the generalised other, embeds the social within reflexivity.

The consideration of the separation of roles is not purely a classificatory, but also an evaluative, process. My consideration of their role involves the consideration of whether the other occupies a dominant position to my own. Mead's example is that of a child learning to evaluate the multiple expectation from authority figures (be it parents, teachers or childminders). The child's 'success', the ability to function smoothly within interaction, rests upon its ability to negotiate these, perhaps contradictory, role demands and expectations to present a coherent self (Mead 1934:368-369, 377). Thus the subordinate in relationships of power may have to be aware of more 'others', in order to have their performance validated. The individual and the collective may still need to be linked through democratic mechanism³, but they are both co-present with the construction of the self and one's political positioning. This positioning involves the realisation of inequalities of power within the definition of the situation. Mead is useful since his concept of reflexivity is *politically situated*, i.e. aware of structural inequalities of power.

But, we must also consider a late modern process missing from Mead's analysis: detraditionalisation. For Beck and Giddens detraditionalisation means traditional class roles lose their power to become universalised into a generalised other⁴ since individuals now have multiple paths of action to follow. However, the Bourdieuan critique reminded us of the continued importance for such categories to individual reflexive considerations. Hence, whereas for Mead the key was identifying and internalising a generalised other, in late modernity such an other requires a process of construction, of a discovering a role, such as Adkins (2002) and Skeggs' (2004) participants found. Thus, whilst adopting Mead's analysis of how reflexivity occurs into our understanding of the process, we should note that the awareness of relationships of power has itself become an individualized project. The generalised other is not purely to be located, but also to be 'discovered' and deciphered. Utilising such a definition means that reflexivity is both a social and a critical activity, if we

³ Mead advocated the extension of democratic forms as a way of allowing for the expansion of individual reflexive identification and expression beyond the individuals specific social surroundings (Mead 1934:221).

⁴ Without using such language, Beck (2007) is a good example of this.

define the latter term as assessing stimuli in light of the individual's assumptions and knowledge, rather than taking it for granted⁵.

The importance of this for a late modern theory of socialism returns us to the use of socialism as a counter-culture, with a critical 'socialist stance' (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrazo 2010). Here we see that a critical stance is becoming part of the very make-up of how individuals relate to each other and the world around them. It also reintroduces a collective component, whilst this is not automatically a classed formation (although for Savage 2000, Plumridge and Thompson 2003, Skeggs 2004, it can be) which is argued to be missing from the potential for late modern socialism (Giddens 1994a:188, 249, Beck 1997:148-151) it does go against the supposed presence of 'cut-off' individuals. Collective groups maintain a reflexive importance and themselves are stratified by the ways in which they utilise reflexivity.

Part of this monitoring of activities brings with it the awareness that although reflexivity is posited as being universal some will have a greater opportunity to act out their desires or, as Holmes puts it, have more roles available to them. The inequalities within individualised life opportunities are recognised by the reflexivity which is part of this process. Hence, much like many of the factors under discussion in this thesis, the significance of reflexivity is that it offers much, but delivers on much less. But, at the same time, it makes the awareness of this difference between promise and delivery more profound. What we also see here is the increased awareness of political decisions having an impact in many fields, but the lack of means of making opposition to such decisions known; an increased politicisation, without an increased democratisation. This is part of the appeal for libertarian socialism, by providing a framework in which the private concerns of individuals within certain fields can have a formal way of becoming public via associational forms.

⁵ It should be noted at this point that the discussion of reflexivity I have laid out would be heavily criticised by Atkinson (2010a) who, as a result of his research on British workers across multiple professions, suggests the reflexivity thesis has no grounding. Whilst Atkinson's argument is strong, he has a different point of attack to what I am suggesting here. For Atkinson, the theory of reflexivity he wishes to destroy is one he portrays as an imagined view of being freed from structure constraints, and in its place he wishes to insert a Bourdieuan theory of class formation, with phenomenological furnishings. I am largely in agreement with Atkinson's findings, but am also suggesting that: (a) the demand to be reflexive is both heard and carried out within these phenomenological fields, which Atkinson doesn't deny, but rather wishes to see the social conditions behind it (Atkinson 2010b). Also (b) that this form of reflexivity is often differentially experienced and acted upon according to social conditions, thus reasserting forms of stratification such as class

Knowledge- Knowledge is significant in two ways. Firstly, that we are encouraged to develop an opinion and orientation towards many different topics. Secondly, with the entry of expert systems into more areas of life we are expected to have an even greater knowledge of these areas. The research on the environment and green consumerism mentioned earlier demonstrates both of these processes well (Benton 1999, O'Brien 1999, Connolly and Prothero 2008). We should nevertheless be careful not to generalise what may be the experience of a certain group, in this instance middle class individuals who have the chance to research these fields and make informed choices, as universal experience, as noted by the Bourdieuians (Dickens 1999, Plumridge and Thomson 2003). It is not my argument that all individuals do this, but rather that individuals are encouraged to, here we return to disembodied individualization as containing a new 'vocabulary of common motives' (Mills 1940).

This very inequality is, of course, of importance to a political discussion. The key aspect here is a difference between how people are encouraged to act (as knowledgeable, reflexive individuals) and how they act, which may be based on many different considerations. Also, whilst knowledge may be more accessible and readily available, this does not mean it can be universally accessed. Of significance here is the conception of function whereby engagement in a certain function also means that individuals have the ability, through collective association, to access the knowledge available for that field. Hence, the recognition of functional democracy is, by its very nature, recognition of the need for accessibility of knowledge, since being able to engage in the democracy of each function requires knowledge of that function. This leads to a reassessment of the position of expert systems. For Giddens, these exist outside the activities of the individual, expert and abstract systems are, by their very definition, abstract and socially shared (Giddens 1991a:243). At the same time they become increasingly important to our everyday activity, with some expert systems becoming more prominent in some fields than in others. Therefore, the twinning of knowledge, and the expert systems occurring as a result of this, with individual's activities could go some way towards the lessening of the need to 'filter' information highlighted by Bauman (2010a:99-101). Once again here we return to a late modern theme, whilst the importance of expert systems increases, there is little consideration on the ability to gain access to these. The role of libertarian socialism here is to allow access to functional knowledge through the collective associations. For example,

Durkheim's advocacy of them as a place in which individuals are able to discover, and then exercise, their rights (Durkheim 1992:14-26).

I am aware that, in what has been said above, I could be accused of the same kind of class-bias present within the theories of Beck and Giddens. Most notably Atkinson (2010a:77-105) claims that the focus on expansion of education, and thus the growth of knowledge, as a harbinger of increased individualization carries within it a classed focus. Whilst acknowledging this I would argue that increased knowledge is not tied to education, nor that knowledge need be academic knowledge. My point is largely that at the same time as knowledge becomes increasingly significant⁶ it has become both more readily available, but also stratified in its availability. Therefore, as in a general theme for individualization, there are both new possible forms of emancipation and at the same time continuing forms of inequality. It would be fair to say that the role of politics is to extend this emancipatory aspect.

Moral- As we have seen throughout this thesis, the effects of individualization mean that individuals are left with a multitude of day-to-day decisions. Each of these decisions will then have a collection of options for individuals to choose between. This is one of the points at which I depart from Beck and Giddens on individualization. Their assumptions of how individuals act are mostly rational, as noted by Loyal regarding Giddens: 'Thus, in practice his thought...is individualistic, *rationalistic* and deductive; it generalises and universalises, employing fixed criteria of validity. Giddens takes the isolated *rational* individual as the basis for his whole sociology' (Loyal 2003:25, my emphasis, also see Mouzelis 2010:273) or, as put by Mestrovic: 'Giddens's agent is all mind and no heart' (1998:78). Instead choices individuals make will inevitably be influenced by the moral ideas those individuals hold, as Bauman puts it: 'morality is the secret to sociality' (Bauman 1990a:16).

Whilst I am not arguing that all choices *will be morally based*, it seems clear that many choices, especially those related to the other, will at the very least *be morally influenced*. It was outlined in chapter two how Bauman suggests late modernity privatises moral questions and ethical considerations. Bauman is extremely optimistic concerning the results of this, since he sees it as a re-affirmation of the inevitably

⁶ Perhaps most notably in economic value; with the growth of so-called 'knowledge economies' (see Sennett 2006).

individual nature of morality and ethics, as opposed to simple modernity's state-led forms: 'The search that starts from the disbelief in the self's moral *capacity* ends up in the denial of the self's *right* to moral judgement' (Bauman 1993:69). Thus choice, and its increased prominence in an era of late modernity, can be a possible spur for increased moral consideration (Bauman 2008a:106).

We have already seen this potential. The work of Benton (Benton 1999, Benton and Redfearn 1995) suggests how engagement in the two factors mentioned above, reflexivity and (gaining) knowledge will inevitably lead to the development of moral standpoints on issues such as the environment. Meanwhile Skeggs (2005) has shown how individuals have to negotiate with moral judgements from others in their own identity formation⁷. This was also significant to the Foucauldian critics who highlighted the expansion of technologies of the self. The significance of this is that late modern processes of individualization are encouraging the development of moral positions regarding the concerns individuals encounter on a daily basis. This is part of the wider 'privatisation/subsidiarisation' noted in chapter one. However, whilst individualistic neoliberalism gives primacy to self-centred individuals we can see from the research that the reality is more complex. The evaluative concerns of individualization can go towards reasserting a collective concern through moral consideration, such as that found at the base of political activity. In short, the extended realms of moral choice reassert the collective nature of social activity, at the same time as current forms of political activity individualise action. In effect what I am arguing is that morality, and its relation to individualization, is central to the growth of the next factor to be discussed: 'political' individuals.

Politicised- Politicisation in this thesis has a dual meaning. One is that everyday life itself becomes politicised; the topic of the next chapter. The second meaning is that when faced with a collection of choices individuals will not only make evaluations based upon rationality or morality, but also based upon political ideas of what is desirable in a particular situation, or according to a certain ideology. Bauman and Beilharz (1994, 2001, 2005) pick up on the relevance of socialism for the second meaning since they argue socialism becomes a form of individualized ethical ideology.

⁷ Similar findings occur in Heaphy and Yip (2003), Gross (2005), Adkins (2007) and Adams and Raisborough (2008).

However, for this late modern socialism to occur, it must give up all claims to practical, political, impact.

As we have seen this is Bauman's very definition of socialism. Late modernity has corrected the balance and returned socialism to its original, humanist, home, by individualizing the ethics it contains. Beilharz certainly shares this view, seeing socialism as purely cultural, rather than political (Beilharz 1994:viii).

'The case for a postmodern socialism remains that it is necessary only to commit to the in principle possibility in which we know that there is a better way to live. Utopia still counts, in this way of thinking, not as an imminent state of affairs or dynamic in the process of realising itself, but rather as an ethic. The postmodern ethic, after all, is also a reinvention of the modern socialist ethic which preceded it...*The idea of socialism is desirable precisely not because it is inevitable but because it is unachievable as a fact.* Socialism ought be understood neither as a systemic imperative nor as a vital impulse: its ethical value – choice – is an indicator rather of autonomy. The idea of socialism always lies before us. It moves, and it moves with us' (Beilharz 2005:32, my emphasis)

Whilst these positions are placed within Bauman's own discussion of the privatisation of ethics, and thus seem to have some empirical claim, there seems to be a logical flaw here concerning the way ethics are utilised. Whilst they may be individually created/appropriated and justified they only have meaning to the extent in which I act out my ethics in relation to an other. This is true whether the other is co-present (Bauman's (1993) 'moral party of two') or an imagined, or 'generalised', other ('beyond the moral party'). Assuming my ethics are in some way socialist, either partly or wholly it seems clear that not only do I adopt such a viewpoint in relation to the other, but also that I act out these ethics with the other, co-present or generalised. Therefore, despite their individualized nature, ethics are collective in the sense that they impact our behaviour with an other. This then can become 'politicised' in the sense that questions running from who to vote for, where to shop, which charity to donate to, whether/where to volunteer, which company to work for etc. are all potentially ethically driven-choices. Hence an individualized socialism⁸ will inevitably influence collective action, if such a belief is shared by enough people.

⁸ This would also be true of other political ideologies, for example an everyday form of nationalism (Billig 1995).

My argument here is that, contrary to Beck and Giddens, we should not imagine individualized agents to be apolitical, rather the individualization of choice and concerns can perhaps create increased political identification (Benton 1999, Skeggs 2004, King 2006). The significance of this normatively is that if one wishes to act as a moral or political individual the choices are currently limited. There are attempts to do this, the (limited) growth of ethical consumerism, people choosing to give up their cars in favour of public transport etc. But, these attempts often have to manifest themselves in the same sphere as being a consumer, instead of in a democratic sphere. Beyond this, other political forums (such as civil society organisations) lack the ability to engage in governance of function and instead often operate as lobbying organisations which, as noted by Ødegårda and Berglund (2008), can be a source of frustration for members who hoped to have a direct functional political outlet. Such forms of direct political action currently have few, formal, potential outlets. As noted by Riley et al. (2010) current limited forms of political expression are rejected by their supposed incompatibility with individual activity. This is part of the justification for libertarian socialism since it aims to do exactly this, by moving forms of democratic control into more areas of social life. By increasing democratic formations to further areas of social life there is the possibility of expanding the possibility for ethically and/or politically influenced action to be carried out in all spheres.

This political understanding of individualization goes against much of what is commonly found in the literature (especially in the work of Beck and Giddens). Whilst it is true that I have drawn upon much of the Bourdieuan and Foucauldian critique, the synthesis I provide around the four categories of reflexivity, knowledge, moral and politicised outline a conception of individualization which is both collective *and* individual. This involves the realisation that individualized political activity need not be reduced to self-interested or self-directed life/sub politics, but can include a collective and critical consideration. This is especially notable when reflexivity is conceptualised within a Meadian framework. In turn the moral and political questions which arise as a result of it (both in terms of choice, expanded upon in the next chapter, and of personal identification) go against the disembedded definition.

As we saw in the previous chapter, this connection of the individual and the collective was a major consideration in the work of Durkheim⁹. Here, part of the justification of the corporations was the ability for those of shared expertise and experience to realise their common concerns, as only a group of such specialists could: ‘Activity within a profession can only be effectively regulated through a group close enough to that profession to be thoroughly cognisant of how it functions, capable of perceiving all its needs and following every fluctuation in them’ (Durkheim 1984:xxxv). Whilst there is overlap in that Bauman and Durkheim both see potential spaces of expression as an intermediary between the individual and the state (Hirst 1995:112) for Durkheim they are less defined by being a specific space, but more in the formal associational structures they inhabit and their specialised nature. This specialised nature means that individuality is developed with the collective association, rather than giving the state the excess responsibility of creating individuality (Durkheim 1899a). The benefit of this for late modernity is the way in which it would go towards lessening the inequality of access, since it would be part of an individual’s function, rather than a separate space requiring some form of entrance pass. Therefore, as I expand upon in the next chapter, we can identify a need for multiple *agoras*, rather than one central form. This reflects the above discussion of individualization by highlighting its collective, as well as resulting stratifying nature.

Therefore, there is a socialist conception at the heart of this form of individualization. This is true in two ways. Firstly, the relevance of critique of neoliberal forms, as in the Foucauldian conception, especially concerning the ethical basis of action, aligns itself with much of the counter-cultural aspects of socialism mentioned in the last chapter. Secondly, the Meadian conception of reflexivity, with its focus on inequality, reasserts the difficulty for many in achieving Bauman’s *de facto* individualism. Therefore, this conception of individualization is central to how we should understand individual political activity in late modernity, and will be utilised throughout what is to come.

⁹ In the process of drawing links between Bauman and Durkheim it would be dishonest not to also point to Bauman’s strong antipathy towards the work of Durkheim (best shown in Bauman 2005c). This antipathy is built on two justifications. Firstly, for Bauman Durkheim is the ultimate intellectual as legislator, with his use of ‘society’ being a statement of intent to recreate that which it names (Bauman 1978, 2005c). Secondly, and leading on from the first, Bauman criticises Durkheim’s focus on morality coming from society rather than the individual. Such an equation Bauman actually sees as the denial of morality (Bauman 1993:69). Whilst some of Bauman’s points are worthwhile, he could also be accused on not fully engaging with Durkheim’s sociology beyond some basic comments. Bauman’s purely partial engagement with classical theory was criticised by Ray (2007a).

Reflexive activity draws upon knowledge to make choices in a moral and political way. All the while actors are made to be aware of structural inequalities.

Before this however, we must consider the more prominent claim that individualization is actually benefiting neoliberalism more than it ever could any kind of socialist politics.

The 'Elective Affinity' Between Individualization and Neoliberalism

There are two explanations for the link between neoliberalism and individualization. The first, voiced by Bauman, is that individualization produces individuals who are in competition with each other:

‘Left increasingly to their own resources and acumen, individuals are expected to devise individual solutions to socially generated problems, and to do it individually, using their own individual skills and individually possessed assets. These expectations set individuals in mutual competition, and mean that communal solidarity...is perceived as by and large irrelevant, if not downright counterproductive’ (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrado 2010:42)

This mutual competition is effective for neoliberalism since, as noted, it removes the idea of collective concerns which individuals and the state may be asked to handle. But it ignores differences of circumstances and assumes there is an equal starting point from which individuals compete for success. This is effectively a Foucauldian understanding. The second argument is slightly different from this. This is noted by Savage’s contention, outlined in chapter one, that individuals are seen as ‘lonely’ (Savage 2000:105). Whilst not in the kind of direct competition Bauman suggests, they still, in this view, become self-interested since there are no communal bonds tying individuals together. Both views give credence to Bauman’s suggestion that capitalism in late modernity reproduces itself through the continued consumption of individuals (Bauman 2001a, 2004a, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a)

At first glance these views seem plausible. Indeed, there is an affinity between late modernity and neoliberalism (Brannen and Nilsen 2005, Howard 2007b, Binkley 2009). In the first chapter I actually suggested there was an elective affinity between the two since, much like in Weber’s use of the term, we can say there is a symbiosis, if not a causal relationship between them. As Weber’s (1930, cf. Gerth and Mills 1948:63)

protestant ethic helped sustain the early forms of capitalism, individualization helps sustain its late modern, neoliberal form in the UK.

But, to say the two logics will always/must sustain each other would be a misreading of the political results of individualization. The assumptions made above regarding the competitive/lonely individual rest upon the disembodied thesis of individualization which we have already shown to be false. This is clear when it is arguing that individuals are removed from any collective or common bonds and are left to, effectively, fight it out amongst themselves. Even Bauman, who I offered earlier as the best demonstration of embedded individualization, suffers here, since he isn't connecting the critical things he has to say about individualization to the possibility/presence of collective concerns. Whilst Bauman suggests the continued importance of collective concerns, echoing his discussion of embedded individualization. He does not discuss fully how the 'faulty consumers' he identifies become part of such concerns. Instead more often than not they are portrayed as impotent and acquiescing to the demands of consumerism¹⁰. Although it may be suggested this is still a link to a collective, albeit a passive one, Bauman points out that consumerism is not only carried out individually, but also relies upon an individualized justification. As I have suggested above, the assertion that the actions of individualized actors will follow purely rationalistic or self-interested motives, does not hold up to scrutiny. But, this is in effect the assumption upon which an argument which assumes the irreversible connection between neoliberalism and individualization rests.

To make this connection would be to subsume the complex reasons for social actions covered above into a single neoliberal tendency for self-focused and rationalistic action. This overlooks that, as noted above via Mead, the definition of the individual involves a conception of the collective. To return to Durkheim, he argued that the decreased 'discipline' of economic functions¹¹ means that other social spheres do not allow for non-economic justifications of actions 'bringing with it a decline in public morality'

¹⁰ This comment is one regarding the way Bauman discusses late modern political agents, whilst I believe it unfair to make this a claim about his view of agents *tout court*, some others have done this (Elliott 2007).

¹¹ By this he means not only the lack of self-governing organisations within productive industries, but also the increased uncoupling of economic justifications from wider societal justifications (Durkheim 1992:1-12). The unison of the latter was one of the aspects Durkheim had believed held together organic solidarity, as in his famous 'there is a non-contractual element to contracts' idea (Durkheim 1984).

(Durkheim 1984:xxxiv). Hence, he is quick to criticise others who justify the associational form as simply an improved form of economic management, since:

‘They have regarded it only as a utilitarian body whose entire effect would be to improve the ways in which we organise our economic interests, whereas in reality it should constitute the essential element in our social structure’ (Durkheim 1984:lv)

Therefore part of the appeal of the associational form is the ability to allow for non-economic forms of actions in multiple spheres. Whilst Durkheim was warning of a troubling trend within individualism and its possible anomic forms, Bauman’s work suggests this has become a wider concern with the emergence of a consumer society. There may be moral resistance, but this resistance is left fighting a battle without reinforcements (Bauman 2008a:111-124). Because of this Durkheim’s critique of emerging issues within organic solidarity takes on poignancy in late modernity, both with regard to the dominant social trend, and resistance to this. Durkheim’s focus on allowing for activity which exists outside economic expectation is indeed of central importance to a late modern society (Durkheim 1984, 1992).

The response to the above would be that even if we remove the assumption of individuals being rationalistic the very presence of individualism will always favour capitalism, with neoliberalism simply being the most recent realisation of this. Such an assumption rests upon a long-held view that capitalism, in neoliberal and earlier forms, relies upon individualism to succeed. Such assumptions have been questioned by Abercrombie et al. (1986). They argue that whilst the West did go through a process of ‘discovery of the individual’ this was more often than not related to a religious conception, rather than an economic (Abercrombie et al. 1986:33-72). Individualism did not ‘create’ capitalism, though it had a role in shaping it, but such a connection was not inevitable (Abercrombie et al. 1986:120). Indeed Japanese forms of capitalism have been able to succeed (and in some case outperform the West) without ever having such an individualist conception of people, either in an economic or religious form. They also argue that any previous link between individualism and capitalism, even a non-causal one, can no longer be said to occur. This is partly because of what they term the ‘Foucault paradox’ (Abercrombie et al. 1986:180) whereby the identification of individuals means that they have to be accommodate for via welfare services and thus will have to gain some basic forms of surveillance and identification (ID cards and NI

numbers for example). Meaning that what begins as a individual system becomes a bureaucratic one which largely treats individuals as interchangeable. Therefore 'Capitalism becomes collectivist and bureaucratic, and the discourse of individualism loses its prominence' (Abercrombie et al. 1986:3). Therefore:

'Individualism thus loses its position of discursive dominance, both because it is no longer so closely associated with capitalism and because of the political and discursive strength of rival collective discourses. In such a situation a plurality of discourses of the individual flourishes, individuality in high culture and individualism in popular culture. There is no dominant ideology in modern capitalist societies' (Abercrombie et al. 1986:191)

The collective discourses suggested in this quote are ones of class/gender movements, amongst others. Therefore not only does capitalism not automatically rely on individualism, but 'late capitalism' does not rely on it at all, any forms of contemporary discourse about the individual locate themselves elsewhere, such as in 'culture' in its more limited sense. There are of course important clarifications to attach to the discussion of Abercrombie et al., the main one being that capitalism does have a dominant ideology now, neoliberalism, and that a major part of this ideology is the view of the sovereign individual (Bourdieu 1992, 1998, 2003). Thus, whilst some of the conclusions from their text are questionable sixteen years on the important aspect to take from it is that individualism is not automatically and inevitably linked to capitalism. Rather, that neoliberalism as a discursive form utilising one conception of the individual to its advantage. However, this reasserts the potential for alternate discourses of the individual. Such a conception can be seen in the Foucauldian critique's focus with technologies of the self and within what I have identified as the other-centred aspects of political individualization.

The 'Cut-off' Individual

What has gone above, by focusing upon the relation between individualization and neoliberalism, has only partially answered the criticism about an alternative potential within individualization. It hasn't dealt fully with the claim that individuals are cut off from each other, the supposed solipsism of individualization. I have two responses to offer to this, the first is an empirical one, the second theoretical. The first is a reassertion of the flawed nature of the disembedded theory of individualization, with its

lonely and cut-off individuals. This is clearly flawed in light of the discussion above concerning the role of a Meadian conception of the self within embedded individualization.

My second comment is that such an association of individualization and solipsism is somewhat sociologically naive. It would perhaps not be beyond the realm of plausibility to suggest that sociology has always had as its concern the question of how increasingly individualized individuals come together to make up a society. It was certainly this central concern which drove the sociology of Durkheim and his focus on combining individualism with forms of associational professional ethics to protect and further it. Ray (2007b) argues, the forms of sociality we can identify as being the most intrinsically ‘late modern’¹² not only open up new forms of sociality, but are also a continuation of the forms of integration highlighted by Durkheim since they are ‘constrained and accomplished...by situated actors within embodied and localised social settings’ (Ray 2007b:138) meaning ‘individualization is still structured by collective identities to a considerable extent’ (Ray 2007b:55). Much like the Bourdieuan critique suggested, this means that individualized individuals must still navigate such collective identities.

Durkheim’s shift towards the corporations as a social form was based upon similar concerns. Here, the increasingly anomic nature of modern society (especially in its economic forms) was seen as systemic. This was because the professional groups had no means of self-regulation and thus the inability to form professional ethics (Durkheim 1984:xxxvi). Professional ethics are forms of conduct which are recognised and shared amongst a group which is both larger than the family, but smaller than civil society itself (Durkheim 1992:5). Hence they are common concerns and activities which can only be recognised through the continual interaction with, and official recognition of, the decentralised corporate bodies (Durkheim 1992:6). This allows individuals to realise their own concerns as part of a collective and have them solved via the collective. The lack of such associations means that anomie becomes a feature not just of individuals, but of groups, or of economic activity itself (Durkheim 1992:8-13). The conclusion of Durkheim’s sociology was akin to the tenets of libertarian socialism noted in the last chapter: for individualism to flourish there had to be collective associations

¹² Either in terms of chronology or via the logic of late modernity, the example Ray looks at in depth is internet sociality (via e-mail, instant messaging or social networks).

for individuals to express their individually situated concerns and identity, at a level below the state. Without this individualism exists as, effectively, only a word, rather than a condition (Durkheim 1898/1969). Individualism and collectivity are not opposing conceptions of human activity but rather allow for each other to flourish by ensuring that individual activity is recognised, given an outlet for governance and resources accorded for it to be conducted. There is a similar conception at the heart of Bauman's argument that the late modern has emphasised freedom for individuals, and in so doing has removed their security to act upon this freedom (Bauman 1988, 1992, 1999, 2002a, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2010a).

The problems we have noted with regard to political individualization are similar to this in the sense that individuals are encouraged to find (following Beck) 'biographical solutions to systematic contradictions', without any systematic way of realising and solving their problems. To take an example from the empirical literature on individualization, Connolly and Prothero's (2008) participants wished to enact a form of ethical activity, here to do with 'green consumerism', but the lack of a political body in which they could express such desires and have them recognised led them to question the very effectiveness of their activity and its overall worth. In effect, the same problems that led Durkheim towards a form of socialism are the same problems facing individualization today. This is due to the linking of the private to public, in Beck's words the biographical to the systematic, as part of the associations and the ability from here to cultivate relations and realise collective concerns. In short, how individuals can utilise the resources of collective organisation in order to further their own individualization. For Durkheim this requires the assertion of collectively shared professional ethics, which also recognises the plurality which brought the associations into being (Durkheim 1984, 1992).

Before discussing this further, allow me to outline one attempt to link the private to public in a late modern form: Ken Plummer's (2003) *Intimate Citizenship*. Plummer's argument has strong political implications for individualization since he argues part of the way reflexivity is utilised is in order to identify with a certain group and to place ourselves within this group, similar to what I said regarding Mead earlier in this chapter. Plummer points to the LGBT movement as an example. By identifying with a certain group the individual inevitably places themselves within pre-existing power relations and, at the same time, ensures that individuals recognise and classify him/her according

to their membership of that group. Hence, individualization is not simply extinguished by the group but is validated and expressed. Thus, as I have outlined above, reflexivity combined with individualization means that individuals find and identify themselves with unequal power structures. 'Coming out' is not only a way of identifying who you are, it is also identifying yourself in relation to others, in a position which guarantees negative stereotypes and the realisation of power relationships (Weeks 1977). For Plummer this is the area in which citizenship operates, the increased importance of personal identity for public debate is a way for individuals to claim justice for their own, identified, collective group. Through identification and assimilation to the reflexive biography individuals can, and often do, become pitched in collective struggles concerning this collective identity. Whilst, on the face of it, this sounds very similar to Giddens' life politics, they differ not only because of a focus on shared identity but also since, for Plummer, such movements are only a partial political answer since they include individuals already able to enter the public sphere. These groups will be able to 'fight for justice in an unjust society' (Plummer 2003:66) but citizenship will not create a just society on its own, unless met by structural transformations. Such transformations include the ways in which these private identity concerns can enter the public sphere. In addition to this some LGBT groups base their appeal not solely upon a lifestyle, chosen or not, but also on a radical critique of heteronormative forms of social order (Weeks 1995). Whilst such groups may face more obstacles due to what Brown (1995:28) terms the 'plastic cage' which limits political debate to dominant conceptions of freedom, Plummer argues that some of the more 'moderate' demands of the LGBT movement were helped not only by its relatively large size, but also by the growth of internet spaces for LGBT expression (Plummer 2003:80-82). Of course, not all groups have such spaces. The associations are the recognition that where there may be *de jure* group formations there is often the need to recognise these as *de facto* institutions. This brings us to a criticism of libertarian socialism: it is not enough to have functional representation, but also identity groups need representation, especially since some groups are under-represented. This is of course a question of the appeal of libertarian socialism for late modernity

Appeal and Identification

A consideration of Plummer's work leads us to the claim that there are 'new' issues politics has to take account of and new ways in which political parties and politicians

should appeal to individuals (Giddens 1994a:109-110, Beck 1997:142-147). Some of these new issues are external to the individual (such as climate change or international development) but the majority of new issues are things unique to the individual, most notably questions concerning identity, life choices and self-definition away from the workplace. As we have seen the responses to this are divergent. For Giddens and Beck this requires a complete overhaul of how politics is done to provide a greater emphasis on the already emerging forms of life/sub-politics. These, being agent-driven (DeBeer 2007), are forms which are already accounting for these new issues of identity. Political parties/institutions need (and are forced) to respond to them. For Bauman there is a different response in his instigation to reassert the collective nature of these identity concerns.

Each of these perspectives has its own worthwhile points, but neither can claim complete accuracy. As my above discussion on the collectivity present in individualization demonstrates Bauman's point has a strong empirical and theoretical basis. However to make a jump from this to suggesting that previous conceptions of socialism can be applied *tout court* to late modernity would be to overlook one of the central justifications of these models, the centrality of the workplace not only as a mode of social organisation and a separate function, but as a place of identification.

The use of guilds or other forms of associative democracy had an economic component in two ways. The first is that individuals inevitably engage in society as both producers and consumers, therefore such a central function requires some form of democratic representation. As Cole put it:

‘There are indeed two distinct kinds of bonds which may link together in association members of the same community...The first bond is that of common vocation, the performance in common of some form of social service, whether of an economic character or not: the second bond is that of common interest, the receiving, using or consuming of such services’ (Cole 1920a:34)

This is still a central point in late modernity, not only because of the inevitability of one operating as both a producer and consumer but also many of the resources useful for individualized individuals are located within the economic realm. As a result the control of the economic system through collective, associative democracy is a relevant concept for late modernity and the reasons for this will be expanded upon in chapter

seven. But, as I mentioned, there is a second reason why democracy within the workplace was seen as central for libertarian socialism. This was as an area which individuals increasingly identified with. This was less prevalent in the work of Cole¹³ but was central to the work of Durkheim. As we have seen Durkheim's advocacy of associative democracy was an attempt to create professional ethics. Durkheim is clear he has chosen the professions since they have an increased significance:

‘Yet we must not forget the ever more important place that our profession assumes in our lives as work becomes increasingly segmented...Since nowadays the family is dispersed with each generation, man (sic) spends a not inconsiderable part of his existence far removed from any domestic influence. The corporation does not experience any such interruptions: it is as continuous as life itself. Thus the inferior position it may evince as compared with the family is in certain respects not uncompensated’ (Durkheim 1984:xlvi)

Whilst it would be untrue to say that Durkheim's favouring of professional corporations over, for example, association by town, region or age was *entirely* pragmatic (see Gane 1984:305). It would be fair to say its justification was *mostly* a pragmatic one based upon the societal conditions he observed, one offered as a sociologist and not as a socialist (Durkheim 1899b, 1959, Collins 2005, Fournier 2005). Durkheim observed that with the specialisation of work individuals are spending more time in a specific profession, this profession is then a long-lasting area of activity for them and therefore individuals come to identify with it over and above other realms such as the family.

This is where we face an important issue, namely that work does not maintain the same central position to one's identity, as indicated by Sennett's 'corrosion of character' (Sennett 1998). He argues that changes regarding work such as: the constant changing of profession, the threat of redundancy, the growth of low-skill service work etc. means that individuals are both less likely to take pride in their work and, even if they wish to, the lack of permanency and expression in the workplace has been lessened by the changes of late modern capitalism.

There are two possible responses which could be offered to Sennett's claim. The first is to accept his claim but argue that if the chance to express one's self democratically were introduced into the workplaces individuals would once again develop the identification

¹³ Although see Cole (1917) and Cole (1920a:33) where he speaks of the need to recognise the realm in which individuals perceive they have 'interests'.

with their work Durkheim outlined. Sennett's recent emphasis upon the return of the 'craftsman' as a form of expression and permanency to the workplace would suggest he has certain sympathy with this view (Sennett 2008). However, I fear that whilst this may be feasible at a logical level, to use it as a justification for a political viewpoint involves more prescription on the motives and desires of individuals than one would wish to make in a work of political sociology. Therefore I would offer the distinction that whilst democratic control of the economic system is central to the concept of function – defined as areas in which individuals are socially active – it does not fully account for a second consideration, that of identification – defined as areas in which individuals are socially active AND where either this activity helps defines part of their identity (e.g., joining an environmental movement) or where individuals are active because of their given identity (e.g. joining an LGBT group).

Therefore, in order to make this theory of socialism more appropriate to late modernity one would have to recognise not only functional groups such as professional groups or the workers within a particular company/site, but also what I am terming identity groups. Identity groups can be defined as groups which base their appeal or wholly or mostly upon an individual's identity separate from their economic activity. A good example of this would be LGBT groups, both as a general form and in a more specific sense (by this I mean LGBT groups which give out health advice or campaign on particular issues etc.). I should point out at this point that I am not claiming that such groups are simply concerned with 'recognition'. Neither am I claiming that such groups would be defined by consensus; sticking with LGBT groups as an example it would be possible to find some who value same-sex marriage and others who see this as a reassertion of dominant, heteronormative, practice. Therefore, many groups which can be termed 'identity groups', also contain a radical critique of the state which draws upon anarchist values. As Cooper (2004:207) puts it, such groups often rest upon 'counter-normative practices'. In this sense, such groups are not simply a claim that the status quo can be corrected if their claims are recognised, but rather that it is the status quo itself which is faulty. This can be manifested in focus on transcending or transforming the current structure in order to achieve forms of political liberty which are situational yet not reductive to a single identity (Pleyers 2010). It has been claimed that the marginalisation of such claims as simply ones for equal rights (i.e. equal pay, gay marriage etc.) is one of the successes of neoliberalism (Fraser 2009). A radical critique

is instead transformed into a lifestyle which, like any lifestyle, can be accommodated within the choices offered by neoliberalism. I will draw more upon this critique in chapter seven. For now my focus concerns the role of such groups as highlighting the plurality of late modern societies. Such plurality would seemingly be central to any form of late modern libertarian socialism; this in no way reduces such groups to purely claims of recognition, but instead argues that any politics which is concerned with equality will need some way of conceptualising difference (Cooper 2004).

Therefore, there would still be a need to provide means to ‘recognise’ or, in less loaded political language ‘functionalise’, these groups. What I mean by this term is that any body which takes legislative decisions would either have to consult these groups or, assuming this body were formed by the election of representatives of functional groups (such as the role the commune fulfils in the theory of Cole) would have to make space for these groups on an equal pegging to both consumer and producer groups. This then allows us to link forms of association and governance more closely to Plummer’s discussion of how citizenship is both imagined and carried out in late modernity. Identity, which we identify as the preserve of the individual but yet collectively formed and shared, becomes a means of entering the public realm in the same way that our functions require self-government. This is an expansion of Cole’s focus on the ‘civic guilds’ to take account of the increased significance of individual identity, away from the more ‘service-based’ nature of Cole’s discussion (Cole 1920a:96-115). However, it maybe suggested this opens up problems, how does the ‘functionalising’ in a libertarian socialist state? Is there a libertarian socialist Leviathan which hands out such recognition? I would argue the strength of libertarian socialism for a pluralised society is that it is not left to the state or commune to ‘recognise’ groups, rather associations – more immediately involved in the field and self-forming – have the role of governance. This means the more significant act is the forming of an association by its members, rather than the recognition of it by the state; groups which come together as a political organisation are defined internally, by their members’ desire to organise, rather than the state’s desire (or not) to recognise them. As will be seen in chapter six, the role of the state becomes one of arbitration and economic distribution, rather than governance in the classic, liberal sense. This potentially goes some way towards fulfilling the goals of radical democrats writing on plurality, such as Mouffe (2000), of allowing for the

recognition of plurality to not also include the blunting of difference and normalising any radical critique such difference may include (cf. Bauman 2011b).

By introducing this concept of identification there are similarities with Paul Hirst's work on associative democracy (Hirst 1994, 1997). This seeks to form a democratic system based upon people's joining of associations based upon their own choices and identities. Significantly Hirst identifies this with a similar kind of private to public shift that I have identified above:

‘Governance of activities is devolved to associations, this makes the “private” a sphere of social cooperation and collective governance through voluntary bodies. At the same time the “public” sphere becomes the association of associations, that is, the mechanism for providing both the rules and the funds that enable the various self-governing private institutions to work’ (Hirst 1994:167-168)

However, there is a significant difference between Hirst's work and my formulation, which will become clear in the chapters to come. Whereas for Hirst these forms of associative democracy are seen as sitting alongside capitalism (Hirst 1994:19) I will argue this is not possible without in the short term, at the very least, drastic changes in the formation of neoliberal capitalism. The reason for this is that a system such as the associative democracy of libertarian socialism hopes to (re)politicise areas of social life which are currently treated as non-political. This is part of my focus on the role of consumer capitalism in the process of politicisation, which is a major focus of the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that political individualization is an intrinsically collective occurrence, both in the sense of how it operates and the results of it. It produces reflexive individuals who have the potential for identification with many different areas of their lifeworld and who face political and moral decisions within these realms. I have then suggested that much of the obstacles individualization presents in terms of individual development are similar to the concerns of the form of libertarian socialism outlined in the previous chapter concerning the relations between individuality and collectivity. Especially its insistence on collective, democratic control of each individual's function. However, I then went on to argue that we cannot ignore the fact that individualization also produces both more prominent and new forms of

identification, which I argued should be recognised as socially equal to that of function. This chapter has shown that there is some potential for late modern socialism within individualization since it seems to account for many side-effects of this process. It does this by expanding the democratisation of society to go along with an increased politicised nature of decision. Such democracy also allows for a greater ability to transmit public issues into private concerns, and thus tap into the collective nature of individualization.

Most significant to take from the discussion here is that when we reassess individualization as producing new forms of sociality and collective identification we also reassert the relevance of collective political projects. Throughout this chapter I have suggested some of the potential appeal of libertarian socialism to this form of society. The chapters from now on hope to elaborate upon this.

Chapter 5: The Increased Politicisation of Everyday Life in Late Modernity

In the previous chapter it was argued that embedded individualization produces political, collective concerns. Many of these chime with the major issues tackled by the theorists of libertarian socialism. Most notably, how individual political considerations can be realised in a collective forum. Meanwhile it was also shown that previous writing on individualization had imagined late modern individuals as ‘cut-off’ and subscribing to ideas of individual (neoliberal) self-constitution. Instead we saw how individualization will almost inevitably concern the question of ‘the other’ and that its key component, reflexivity, has an active social orientation. Hence, part of the appeal of the forms of libertarian socialism outlined thus far, is that they aim to extend democratisation to match this increased politicisation.

It is this factor of politicisation which this chapter expands upon. I argue below that whilst theories of late modernity have been relatively explicit about the increased political nature of everyday life – notable in Giddens’ definition of life politics (Giddens 1991a:214-217) – the ways in which this occurs and is experienced is not fully elaborated, with the former a notable theoretical blind spot. As often throughout this thesis, Bauman is an exception to this by seeing such politicisation as a result of the state moving problems ‘downward’ to mask its own impotence in the face of global capital. Whilst there is some truth to this, it is also possible to see the actions of the late modern nation-state as an extension of already present processes of simple modern politicisation. This becomes an *increased* politicisation in a quantitative sense (simple modern everyday life was political, late modern is more political) which takes on a different qualitative form as part of this increase (as we will see, there is a greater focus on choice). To discuss this I will make use of Henri Lefebvre’s classic work on everyday life (1971, 1991, 2002, 2005) before turning to the potential alternative of libertarian socialism.

There are two contributions this chapter hopes to make, beyond the above. The first is to provide a more comprehensive discussion than that currently provided of the politicisation of everyday life in late modernity and its wider significance. The second is to combine the literature on late modernity, specifically the work of Bauman, with that of Lefebvre, in order to fulfil this goal. The absence of Lefebvre from the sociology of late modernity is somewhat puzzling considering the explicitly ‘everyday’

nature of the field. This most likely can be explained by Lefebvre's overtly Marxist stance, a theoretical perspective with few defenders and even fewer adherents within the field¹. It could perhaps also be explained by a trend already noted in this thesis, the desire on the part of some theorists of late modernity to 'wipe the slate clean' and assume that everything must be reconsidered and entirely new theories created. I have rejected this idea of a radical separation from simple modernity.

For the purpose of this chapter, everyday life is defined as: the areas of an 'ordinary'² individual's lifeworld (defined as their unique experience of the world around them) in which things both routinalised and non-routinalised are experienced. But, limited to the areas in which an individual's ability 'to do otherwise', in the words of Giddens, is possible. Thus, everyday life is that part of the individual's unique experience of which they can, theoretically, if not in actuality, personalise. This definition does owe much to the definition of everyday life implicit in the work of Giddens³. Also, in the work of Lefebvre, the possibility of personalisation within the everyday is appealed to for the reproduction of capitalism (Lefebvre 1991:138-175). Finally, this definition has partly been chosen because it echoes one of the major themes of the study of everyday life within late modernity: choice (Bauman 2008a).

Late Modernity and Everyday Life: The Importance of Choice

As shown in chapter one, the key to everyday life for the sociology of late modernity is that it becomes a realm of increased choice, where questions of self-identity, lifestyle and preferences must be decided; as Giddens puts it: 'political decisions flowing from freedom of choice' (Giddens 1991a:215). At the same time this sphere is destabilised since whereas previously tradition provided a guide for choices, the post-traditional order removes such options and individuals are left with only their own council with which to make such decisions, and then to justify them (Giddens 1994b). Meanwhile, having to deal with this constant supply of choices is the only factor in late modernity which is not itself a choice, but instead is an inevitability: 'Being an individual (that is,

¹ Giddens' association through disassociation with Marx in his *Contemporary Critique* is the best example of this limited relationship. See chapter two, specifically the section on Giddens' 'first stage' for a discussion of this. Also, see Bauman's limited defence of the Marxist approach (Bauman 1987a).

² Following Bennett and Watson (2002:x), this term refers to what we might also call the non-elite, the general public or may have been termed in the past 'the masses', i.e. the large majority of the population who do not hold positions of domination.

³ Since Giddens emphasises the ability to affect the segmentation of the *durée* as one of the keys to understanding day-to-day activity (Giddens 1984:73).

being responsible for your choice of life, your choice among choices, and the consequences of the choices you chose) is not itself a *matter of choice*, but rather a *decree of fate*' (Bauman 2008a:53). In this perspective everyday life itself is taken as an object of transformation. The processes of late modernity have drastically altered how everyday life is conducted, and the result is everyday activity progressively defined by choosing.

There is also another idea in the literature which reverses this relationship. This is the suggestion in Beck (1997) regarding sub-politics. As shown in chapter two, sub-politics is generated from within the individual's reflexive biography and then finds its expression in individualized action. Sub-politics is 'rule-altering', governments are 'rule-following' (Beck 1997:134). In this sense everyday life, or, to be more exact, the expression of political choice within everyday life, is not only transformed, but is also transformative. In Beck's theory, through choosing sub-political actions and allegiances actors can alter institutionalised ways of doing politics, or the topics considered political. Whilst the way Beck theorised this seemed problematic (with his insistence that this is the cause of the fall of communism and the emergence of environmental politics) the principle of transformative everyday life seems plausible.

However, these theoretical assertions seem to take their inspiration from the universality inherent in the disembedded thesis of individualization. The ability to act, in this case to choose, will be differentially situated and effective. Depending upon the forum within which choice is exercised (i.e. consumer choice versus elector choice) different attributes or qualities are assumed to be held by the chooser. Therefore, one of the key questions for late modern politics is to assess where the possibility for choice is seen to reside, and from whence it comes. I will discuss this with reference to the work of Lefebvre and Bauman

Henri Lefebvre's (and Bauman's) 'Critique of Everyday Life'

During his lifetime Lefebvre produced four texts concerning everyday life: his three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life* (1991 [1947], 2002 [1961], 2005 [1981]) and the more concise *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (1971). These texts discuss many historical trends and events for the period in which they were published as well as

covering many aspects of the topic of the everyday⁴. Therefore I will not provide an overview of the texts, but instead draw out the relevant aspects for this thesis. Especially relevant here is Lefebvre's argument concerning the ways in which everyday life can become a form of critique itself whilst also being the 'base' of a consumer society.

It is important to note that, for Lefebvre, the everyday is, and always will be, political. There are two reasons for this. The first is that it is the realm in which political processes, with their 'aura of technicality which makes them appear totally concrete (questions of law, finance, budget, etc.)' actually have their impact, an impact which tends to be class-specific (Lefebvre 1991:89). Hence what we generally call the 'political', made up of parties, leaders, parliament etc., only has such a name because it is able to impact, and change, the everyday. The second point leads on from this: due to the unequal political impacts on everyday life we have what Lefebvre terms 'uneven development' where 'small farmers would continue to work the land by hand and go hungry while an "elite" of technicians and managers would be exploring outer space' (Lefebvre 2002:316). Importantly for Lefebvre those affected are aware of such uneven development. This awareness comes through the increased presence of 'signals' and social texts in modernity which require the individual to 'read, decipher and explain' the social world around them (Lefebvre 2002:297-307). There is also an increased representation of such unequal development via technological media. Thus, the inequality mediating the affects of politics is most profound at the everyday, individual, level since it is at this level that the inequality is realised. Due to this he suggests: '*the critique of everyday life involves a critique of political life, in that everyday life already contains and constitutes such a critique: in that it is that critique*' (Lefebvre 1991:92). Lefebvre therefore sees the very politicisation, and the unequal nature of this, as the basis for a critique regarding the causes of such inequality. Lefebvre then goes onto suggest in his third volume that 'daily life'⁵, becomes externalised and detached from the actual experience of everyday life. It is the increased disconnection between these two which allows for new forms of critique between what is promised and what is

⁴ Within the four texts there are discussions of: the position of women, technology, the press, material production, thinking, post-war France, the USSR, the US, literature (a major focus) and leisure, amongst many others. Meanwhile almost all of volume two of the *Critique* is given over to theoretical and methodological considerations.

⁵ This is seen as separate from everyday life. The latter is defined as lived experience, whilst daily life is seen as 'above/or below it', as a representation of what everyday life is supposedly like for the large majority of people.

delivered in everyday life (Lefebvre 2005: 4, 10-11). Therefore Lefebvre's central concern is the presence of an emerging reflexivity and the assertion of an ideal – classed – experience of this. Both of these, with the latter taking the form of a common vocabulary of motives, then become key components of individualization. In effect, Lefebvre's political observations are, by placing individual everyday activity front and centre, beginning to anticipate some of the concerns of late modern sociology.

What is to gain from Lefebvre is a discussion of causality. Whilst some of the inequalities contained within everyday life are at the level of fundamental human need (i.e. the above quote about the farmer unable to eat), many are what Lefebvre terms 'social needs' based on desire (Lefebvre 1991:9). Whilst Lefebvre argues individuals inevitably have a large collection of needs, in a 'consumer society...the manufacturers of consumer goods do all they can to manufacture consumers. To a large extent they succeed' (Lefebvre 2002:10). Hence the processes of everyday life identified by Beck and Giddens, regarding choice and a pluralisation of interests are not entirely new to late modernity, but instead, with their focus upon choice, are the realisation of the attempt by capitalism to model itself around the manufactured needs, presented as autonomous choices, individuals hold. It is because of this that Lefebvre gives this consumer society the somewhat unwieldy title of: 'the bureaucratic society of controlled capitalism' (Lefebvre 1971) since an increasingly bureaucratised capitalism (cf. Abercrombie et al. 1986) aims to reproduce itself through the control of desire and 'social needs'. These social needs are relational, determined by 'one-upmanship' or through fashion, and base themselves around choice. This involves capitalism moving itself, via the manufacture of such needs, into everyday life. The idea of the individual becomes based around an economic 'user' as opposed to a 'citizen' (Lefebvre 2002:78). Meanwhile, and in an echo of Cole's critique, the controlled production of desire and needs removes the potential for the development of true individuality, which is at the same time capitalism's major 'selling point', instead: 'individualism ends up as the impersonality of the individual' (Lefebvre 1991:237). Thus the emergence of the everyday as a realm of choice coincides with (and is partly brought about by) the extension of consumer capitalism.

Because of this everyday life is increasingly 'political' for Lefebvre, since it is the realisation of economic forms of domination. Capitalism is directly causal in this account, but for Lefebvre the processes it engenders (increased choice, unequal

development etc.) are presented as results of modern development or technological process. In the last volume of his *Critique* Lefebvre argues modernist technologies (most significantly, IT) allow the ‘programming’ of consumer society in an efficient and rational way, akin to the Foucauldian critique (cf. Henman 2007). Such technologies are also presented in a non-ideological fashion, their presence is seen as a reflection of ‘the end of ideology’, whilst they are still very much embedded in capitalist power relations (Lefebvre 2005:50, 136-153). Hence capitalism, and the liberal democratic state has, despite its inequalities, reached a level of stability and self-justification which only a revolutionary situation would disturb (Lefebvre 2005:172)⁶.

So, for Lefebvre everyday life is *transformed* by the changes to capitalism, but he also wishes to appeal to its *transformative* potential. The basis for this appeal is the realisation of the difference between what is promised and what is delivered, as Lefebvre terms it: ‘the critique everyday life makes of itself, the critique of the real by the possible and of one aspect of life by another’ (Lefebvre 1991:9). Everyday life holds political potential as the meeting ground of macro political processes. As a result, the field becomes more complex and those within it, more sophisticated and politically aware⁷. The development of such a critique within everyday life via political individualization was echoed in the previous chapter. The second way Lefebvre sees everyday life as being potentially transformative is once again due to its increased political nature, but here the focus is upon the increased sphere of the political this engenders. More activity gets drawn into the, previously restricted, political field and as a result the personal becomes increasingly political. Whilst feminist movements have a hand in this, for Lefebvre, it is mostly a result of the political having to ‘justify itself’ in more fields (Lefebvre 2005:24). For example, in an echo of Habermas’ (1976) legitimization crisis, governments provide services in more social fields through the welfare state. Here we have a link to Beck in his discussion of how the everyday form of sub-politics can carry a ‘rule-altering’ agenda. But what we gain from Lefebvre is a link between the transformation of everyday life and how it can become, and to a lesser extent already is, transformative at a ‘higher’ level, shorn of Beck’s questionable examples. Lefebvre’s analysis is effectively one which discusses how the everyday is

⁶ Lefebvre had become notably negative in retrospect about the impact of the events of 1968, in which he had been a favoured theorist (Lefebvre 2005:76-78).

⁷ Lefebvre also talks of the personalised critique coming from everyday life, as everyone having ‘his (sic) critique’ (Lefebvre 1991:29). This is similar to the findings of research from Benton (1999) and King (2006) regarding the joining of political movements.

linked to the other levels of society in relationships of interdependence, meaning action within one realm can have profound impacts in another. This is very much an unintended consequence, akin to what the Foucauldians have to say about late modern individualization. But, Lefebvre saw little potential in the transformative mechanisms within everyday life (IT, consumerism), hence his focus on the stability within consumerism and the need for revolution.

Whilst Lefebvre's view is useful as a basis for the discussion of the politicisation of everyday life, there is a major qualification we can make to it. This concerns the way in which everyday life is politicised in late modernity. Lefebvre's finishing point of the *Critique* came on the cusp of the emergence of neoliberalism, thus he did not fully take account of changes in everyday forms to account for this shift, nor for the processes of late modernity outlined thus far. In many ways his work reaches a similar conclusion of that as Abercrombie et al. discussed in the previous two chapters. This is a view that the contemporary capitalism they confronted had reached a 'post-ideological'⁸ stage. Such a view becomes more difficult to hold in late modernity, partly because of the emergence of neoliberalism and its corresponding opposition (Pleyers 2010). Also, perhaps even more importantly, because of the role of the state in utilising this ideology for its own ends. Hence, whereas Lefebvre assigns causality to capitalism in the processes he observed in simple modernity, Bauman gives it to the state responding to global capitalism; in a process he terms 'privatisation' (Bauman 1999, 2002a, 2008a).

To recap this perspective: Bauman argues that the nation-state has lost a large amount of power due to negative globalization (cf. Bauman 2006, 2007a, 2008b, see chapter two, Bauman's 'second stage'). The 'absentee landlords' (Bauman 1998) set themselves up against the state as new 'imagined communities'. Their perceived influence is enough to impact the actions of state in a favourable fashion; they don't need direct, face-to-face, interference (Bauman 2002a:10). As a result the state's previous claims to sovereignty become implausible, much of the economic resources it would previously have placed its claims for power upon are beyond its control; instead 'sovereignty walks on crutches' (Bauman 1999:40). For Bauman the state could respond to these changes in two ways. The first is to 'own up' to its lack of power and look for ways to regain it

⁸ I use this term in order to avoid confusion with an 'end of ideology' claim, whilst Lefebvre does use this term, Abercrombie et al claim capitalism has no dominant ideology. This does not mean ideology has no impact beyond capitalism.

in order to, in Bauman's words, 'reconnect power and politics' (Bauman 2009)⁹. This would be a difficult task which, in the first instance at least, would involve the state giving up power to transnational bodies whilst also confronting many of the same interests upon whom governing parties owe their position. In addition to this, it would involve admitting impotence, something governing parties are not eager to do; therefore such parties, and through them, the state, pursues their second option. This is categorised by giving up responsibility to the market (Bauman 2002a)¹⁰. The state's responsibility for Marshall's famed 'social rights' is given up: education, health, housing and many other social services are given over to the market (Bauman 2007c:69). Such state action is then justified with the suggestion that 'there is no alternative' to this path of action (Bauman 1999), often with explicit reference to the new 'global society' in which we live. And, even if there were an alternative, this deregulation is presented as liberating, the chance for the consumer to be an active shaper of their own lifeworld, to engage in true life politics, free from restrictions (Bauman 2002a).

This means politicisation is manifested in the increased prevalence of choice. This becomes valorised since the ability to consumer is seen as the very ability to be free and secure (Bauman 1988:66, 1996). Whereas social rights were previously presented as universal, not only in provision but in the form they take, they are now presented as personalised. Such personalisation is activated by the individual being an 'active consumer' of their services. Bauman points to Margaret Thatcher's dictum 'I want a doctor of my choice, at the time of my choice' as government approval for the expression of such choice being the late modern form of service provision, and from here, all life politics (Bauman 2007b:143). But, as we have seen, Bauman is sceptical of the emancipatory potential of such processes¹¹, as he puts it: 'expropriation came in the disguise of endowment. The break-in occurred while wearing the mask of emancipation' (Bauman 1999:64). The consumer market limits access and is defined by a continued emergence of 'new' possibilities, hence reaching an end state of freedom becomes impossible (cf. Bauman 1992a). To put this into the language of this thesis, a consumer model of political action argues disembedded individualization is a reality

⁹ A task Bauman sees as one for socialists/social democrats above all others.

¹⁰ Bauman is never entirely clear as to whether this transfer of responsibility also means an intentional transfer of power in addition to responsibility. The clearest way of categorising his view would be that the state doesn't challenge power claims of the market, rather than an active process of transfer.

¹¹ See chapter two, on Bauman's 'second stage' for a further discussion of this.

thus there are no collective concerns and instead the government should aim to increase the personalisation and choice of each individual's lifeworld. This ignores, and exacerbates, the collective concerns present in embedded individualization since this strategy of consumer choice contains its own inequalities. Bauman points to the Thatcher government as the starting point for many of these processes and he also argues this was part of the policies of the Blair government (Bauman 2007c), and the Cameron government's focus on the 'Big Society' (Ramesh 2010).

I propose that to understand the politicisation of everyday within late modernity you have to provide a confluence of the theories of Bauman and Lefebvre, whilst they do complement each other in some ways, their differences improve each theory, and make such a theory sociologically relevant in late modernity. This perspective argues the politicisation of everyday life has a long history and can be traced back to the growth of a 'consumer society' in the post-war period. This began to place the focus upon choice, but also began to show the inequalities within such a process. In this sense the causal link is traced to capitalism. Within late modernity this process took on an added component, due to the pressures from global capital the state begins to shed some of its functions and increase the choice aspect of everyday life. This process is then presented as either a pragmatic or inevitable process which can't be questioned, and why would one wish to question it, when it provides such emancipation? The politics of everyday life, with the focus on choice and personalisation is then expanded, at the expense of collective forms of politics¹². In this stage capitalism is determinative, if not in material process then instead in the consideration of 'what would be good for the economy', but it is not causal. This causal role is adopted by the state, but it doesn't start with a blank slate, and instead builds upon and enhances the processes inherent in simple modernity. One of the benefits of such an explanation is that it also brings capitalism and the state 'back into' a late modernity theory of politics which, as we have seen, is often conspicuous by its absence. The nation-state's contested decline can be a result of its own choice, rather than something which is purely foisted upon it.

Bauman and Lefebvre are tied together by their identification of the negative nature of this for politics in a broader sense, i.e. the ability to realise collective concerns and lessen inequalities. The shift to the 'consumer activist model' of political action

¹² Bauman is fond of saying the difference here is between 'life politics' and 'Politics with a capital P' (Bauman 2008b:147).

(Bauman 2007c:68)¹³ means that the role of the political to question what is and evaluate alternatives is blunted in favour of the continuation of the status quo. At the same time this status quo is justified based upon a false universalism. The inability for all to access the kind of intermediary forms of political organisation found in the associations means that Durkheim's (1992) fears seem to come true. Not only are forms of anomie increased (here in the oft-cited emergence of 'political apathy') but also forms of economic activity and social organisation become apolitical and justified purely by their continued existence. For example, the current economic system is not called to account for its inequalities and structural inequalities come to be seen as 'collateral casualties' of economic growth (Bauman 2007b). As Durkheim put it: 'industry, instead of being still regarded as a means to an end transcending itself, has become the supreme end of individuals and societies alike' (Durkheim 1952:216). Such a lack of economic justification requires alternative forms of political organisation where different, non-economic, ends can be considered and realised.

It is on this point that we see the only irreconcilable difference between Bauman and Lefebvre: the question of alternatives. Whilst Lefebvre emphasises the critical nature of the everyday, Bauman feels an increase in solidarity is required before such a critique can take place. At this point therefore we encounter the question of alternatives: if everyday life faces an increased politicisation, and this is a case of 'uneven development', is there actually any alternative? This is especially marked when we have suggested, via Lefebvre, that everyday life is not only transformed, but transformative. I now turn to the alternatives offered in the literature by Lefebvre, Riley et al. and Bauman.

Alternative Forms of Everyday Politics

For Lefebvre the goal of the critique of everyday life is changing the world through revolution. This involves critical thought 'to traverse daily life under the lightning flash of tragic knowledge' (Lefebvre 2005:171). Such critical thought helps to create actors engaging in 'total praxis' which 'is nothing other than the idea of *revolution*' (Lefebvre 2001:241). Whilst Lefebvre's ideas of what form this revolution would take are sketchy at best, there is a large focus on not only emancipation through labour, but through the

¹³ A model Bauman accuses Giddens of 'obliquely opting for' (Bauman 2007c:68).

realm of the ‘fabulous’ – which Lefebvre identifies with the unique and creative – whether this involves sexuality, art or leisure (Lefebvre 1991:40-58, 2005:53-58).

A different view is found in the theory of ‘neo-tribes’, which are defined as groups with a shifting and temporary membership, with members moving between tribes based on shared values/norms and/or consumption patterns. For Maffesoli (1996) such, relatively informal, groups are a unique occurrence of the late modern and suggest a shift away from individualism. For example, Riley et al.’s (2010) neo-tribal discussion of dance music culture is given a distinctively political edge through their argument that ‘these groups create temporary pockets of sovereignty over one’s own experience...the focus on sovereignty creates an aloof stance towards official organizational institutions of power’ (Riley et al. 2010:358).

Whilst these political projects (revolution or neo-tribalism) are presented as an alternative to politics as currently formed, and as forms which already have some reality, both seem problematic. Indeed, they seem to come close to argue that politics is only achievable by rejecting the everyday, by removing one’s self from the political realm in order to either delve into the fabulous of artistic creativity or to enter a form of shifting allegiances. The problem here is that, as noted by Cohen and Taylor (1992) and Lefebvre himself (1991:40) the idea of stepping beyond the everyday is impossible since this would inevitably rely upon the same techniques made available within everyday life. Also, as noted by Bauman, the rejection of the formal political sphere as a political strategy is misguided, and could only provide some short-term satisfaction, if that:

‘The emancipation of the political sphere (in its institutionalised orthodox meaning) is self-propelling, as the loss of relevance of the successive segments of national politics rebounds in the erosion of the citizens’ interest in institutionalised politics, and in the widespread tendency to replacing it with the drive to experiment with “free floating”, electronically mediated quasi- or inchoate/incipient politics – eminent for its expeditiousness, but also for its ad hocness, short-termism, one-issueness, fragility and staunch resistance, or perhaps even immunity, to institutionalization (all those qualities mutually dependent and reinforcing)’ (Bauman 2010b:204)

Thus the concern becomes one of reformulating politics and its role in everyday life to help realise the democratisation to match the increased politicisation. For Bauman this

would involve the reinstitution of the *agora* space. Whilst this serves a practical policy end, it also has a moral and critical end:

‘Under conditions which they did not choose, but in which they found themselves at the end of Blair’s rule, “individuals” must first reintegrate themselves as “people” before they earnestly set out to renegotiate and change, “the main structuring principle of the form within which they live”...There is more than one response to the pressures of globalization and globalised competition. The excuse that “there is no alternative” was the biggest and most odious political lie of the late twentieth century. It depends on the post-Blair generation whether or not the twenty-first century will go down as the time of calling its bluff’ (Bauman 2007c:73)¹⁴

Here we are re-encountering the concern we found in the previous chapter. Late modernity continues to have collective concerns but there are few ways in which these can be effectively recognised, no opportunity for the individual to become collective. For the remainder of this chapter I will discuss how libertarian socialism links to the understanding of everyday life offered above.

Libertarian Socialism as the Politics of Everyday Life

At this point let us recapitulate the argument presented in this chapter. We have seen that everyday life in late modernity is increasingly politicised. This is both a quantitative increase and a qualitative shift which focuses around the valorisation of ‘choice’ as liberation. This politicisation was initially linked to the processes of capitalism within a ‘consumer society’, but was later exacerbated by the state covering up its own supposed impotence by acting in the interests of the market and engaging in a process of privatisation. This was a negative outcome for politics in two ways: firstly, it created inequalities of access to the political by equating it with the market; secondly, it removes the potential for realising the collective nature of individual concerns inherent within late modernity. Therefore, any political model which claims an improvement upon the political potential within everyday life would have to overcome these two criticisms whilst also avoiding a complete retreat from a formal political sphere. In what follows I claim libertarian socialism may be able to do so.

¹⁴ The final sentence is part of a notable trend in Bauman’s recent work; whilst he is still reluctant to suggest concrete alternatives (beyond those noted thus far) he quite often shifts the burden to do so onto younger generations. Specifically the group he terms ‘generation y’, those below 28 during the financial crisis, a group which your author finds himself in (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrado 2010:168-171, Bauman 2010a:46-50).

The first part of this is to return to Bauman's point concerning the need for an *agora* space to convert individually experienced private issues into collectively shared, public ones. For this aspect of the thesis our starting point is that the politicisation of everyday life during late modernity is atomising. As we have seen this is due to both the appeal for individuals to find ways to accommodate their social rights, and in the form of delivery, with the focus on the consumer market. This does not mean that politics is individual, rather that the ways in which politics is conducted emphasises an individual appeal and expression. Hence, Bauman alights on the *agora* space, as he puts it: 'the space neither private nor public, but more exactly private and public at the same time...the space where such ideas may be born and take shape as the "public good"' (Bauman 1999:3). The goal here is to allow for individual expression as part of a collective sharing of problems. These may be experienced individually, but are 'solved' socially. Bauman conceives of these spaces as literal spaces where people meet, hence the problem is that: '[t]he old *agoras* have been taken over by enterprising developers and recycled into theme parks, while powerful forces conspire with political apathy to refuse building permits for new ones' (Bauman 1999:4)¹⁵. Bauman's focus on the need for psychical space, I would suggest, comes largely from his reading of Sennett's classic *The Fall of Public Man* (1974) which, inevitably given its author's background in geography, focuses on the losses of such spaces as central to the decline of the civil sphere¹⁶. However public spaces do not have a monopoly on the forming of collectivity and we may wish to consider other ways in which individuals associate.

Individuals associate in order to fulfil certain goals, or in order to carry out specific functions. These associations could be ad-hoc, or formalised in institutional forms, but the key factor is that they involve a collective form, often based around a central concern. It is not the space itself which is the base of the collective organisation, but rather the institutional form it accommodates; a trade union meeting in a meeting room at their workplace, or a local group meeting in a community hall meet there not because

¹⁵ Bauman does at points link the *agora* to a concept of civil society (Bauman 1999:107), but its predominant use is in the classical, Greek sense of a physical space. Some commentators have seen Bauman's use of this concept as a demonstration of his implicit republicanism (Carleheden 2008:187). Political readings of Bauman are diverse, I have emphasised his socialist aspect, as have other commentators on his work (the best example being Tester 2004). Meanwhile others have drawn links to liberalism and conservatism (Davis 2008). In this plethora of political interpretations he is, ironically, in similar company to Durkheim.

¹⁶ This focus on the lack of spaces with cities as both depoliticising and adiaphorizing is a constant theme in Bauman's sociology (cf. Bauman 1990a:26-7, 2003b). Sennett's *Uses of Disorder* also assigns such public spaces similar political consequences (Sennett 1971).

it is a shared space, but because they have a shared concern. This is the observation by Cole where he argues:

‘[M]en (sic) make, and enter into, associations for the purpose of satisfying common wants, that is, in terms of action, for the execution of common purposes. Every such purpose or group of purposes is the basis of the *function* of the association which has been called into being for its fulfilment’ (Cole 1920b:49)

In order to achieve a certain goal or carry out a specific task it will often, if not always, be essential for the individual to seek out others who operate within the same function as themselves. This may be due to the need for specialised knowledge, a division of labour or the ability to ‘make your voice heard’ more clearly when in a group. For Cole the focus here is mostly on functional association or, association in order to fulfil a specific task or because of a shared occupation. Whilst *the individual* may be universal for Cole – much as in Durkheim’s religion of individualism – *an individual* is limited, or to be more exact, is manifested, within the functions they engage in (Cole 1920b). I would add, following the discussion of the last chapter, they also manifest within forms of identification. It is from this observation that Cole puts forwards his analytical basis for the associative democracy form. The form of association here is not an association via space but an association via institutions, via the associative democracy.

In the previous chapter we saw that the collective basis at the heart of associations is not opposed to individualization, but rather can be a logical result of it. Thus the concern, much like that facing Cole, is developing ways in which this collectivity has a political outlet. I would suggest it is useful to think of this in late modern terms as individuals having ‘multiple points of entry’, i.e. of identifying sites in which people can act as political agents beyond the occasional act of voting. The functional groups of Cole would continue to have a relevance here, as the workplace and occupation remains a key site of everyday activity, but also we can imagine identification groups which involve activity, local groups and internet groups as all allowing for the individual to be politically active in a personalised and individualized way, which still links to some form of collective body. The late modern provides an extra backing for this by expanding the realm of political choice and thus leading to a more pluralised political sphere, not only in terms of views within the sphere, but also in terms of activities and places in which political activity becomes relevant, as we have seen above.

A possible response to this may be that there is no *prima facie* reason to favour forms of democratic association over public *agora* spaces or some other forum (for example purely devolved local government or the ‘Big Society’ theme of the Conservative party). This is where the work of Durkheim has late modern significance. As we have seen, Durkheim advocates the corporation on the basis that such associative control of specific professions leads to the development of professional ethics amongst its members (Durkheim 1984:xxxvi-xxxix). Significantly for our discussion this involves the realisation of shared interests through the collective organisation of the function with which the corporation is concerned, as well as the formation of any possible rules that may emerge out of such an association. Hence, in Durkheimian language, the associative democracy form is useful to the extent that it helps mitigate against an anomistic tendency. In late modernity it is partly anomie we are concerned with but also the possibility to provide an *individual and collectivist* counterpoint to the individualizing trends of late modern everyday politics. For Durkheim the increased utilisation of economic mechanisms (such as the consumer market) for political ends has the effect of depoliticising action (Durkheim 1992), much as Bauman notes with regard to the consumer market. Thus, the use of associations is a way of reinstigating the political within the everyday on practical, institutional and ideational grounds, without turning away from it. Cole’s work also took one of its key normative goals to be the increased politicisation of more fields of social life (Cole 1920a:12). Politicisation has occurred in a way contrary to the desire of Cole since it is a politicisation divorced from the extension of the democratic resources in which to realise it. The democratisation of everyday life can step into an already occurring process of politicisation of everyday life.

This can be seen in the specialised nature of the association. Individualization opens the door to a pluralisation of desires and identifications, as was noted in the previous chapter regarding identity, morality etc. Currently, such specialisation is seen as the preserve of the market, since it is here that the choice within everyday life can be exercised; this is counter-intuitive. The consumer market is made up not of individual and specialised products, but of mass-produced and standardised goods. Although there are unique goods available, the large majority of goods are provided by large corporations which, by definition, standardise their product. Such goods often also use similar reference points, which could be to certain fashions or brand identities. Whilst

these may be presented as individual it may be more correct to term them standardised individuality. It would be foolish to condemn this as negative in totality (Davis 2008). Nevertheless, it does lessen the ability of the market to be a realm of self-realisation which means, from the libertarian socialist standpoint, its ability to be a political forum is greatly limited.

This is partly since, as we have seen thus far, identification is relational. When accessed via the market these relational forms are limited (in both quantity and availability) and largely pre-determined. This differs from the political sphere as imagined under libertarian socialism. The decision to join an association can come from a common activity (such as Durkheim and Cole's suggestions of such forms occurring from economic groupings) but can also be a purposive act of identification through association. The joining and participation within an association is indeed part of the realisation of collectivity, but is also an affirmation of identity at the individual level. The difference here vis-a-vis the market is that associations are of a specialised and of a small-scale concern whilst also being internally democratic. As a result identification can be specialised and have an individually generative component. Such a formation also links into the idea of choice as part of the everyday since, as Hirst (1994) notes, it would be possible to have alternative service providers, each appealing not just to identification, as the market does, but to a function and thus providing a political outlet. Therefore, the use of associations builds upon the already present emphasis of choice within the everyday whilst also hoping to make this choice effective politically. Here we account for both the individual (through the development of multiple forms of identification, sophistication via reflexivity and expert systems and choice) and collective (through identification, and continuing importance of collective identities) components of individualization. This also mitigates against the privatisation which Bauman sees as one of embedded individualization's more troubling aspects. In this model everyday political activity has an outlet, and through these outlets, resources to make it effective. Perhaps most significantly, individualism and collective political identification and activity go hand-in-hand. Multiple *agora* spaces not only allow for collective and formal political activity, but also individual identification.

Here we return to the theme of everyday politicisation being matched with democratisation, In a somewhat roundabout way the last two governments have made noises in this area. Upon taking power, and before the credit crunch, the Brown

government announced a – never realised – policy of allowing voters in local areas to decide how council budgets are spent, along with other ‘pro-democracy’ local initiatives (Wintour 2007). The Cameron government has also made similar claims as part of its ‘Big Society’ theme, with its goal of fostering ‘social action’ (Cameron 2010). Such schemes are part of a realisation on the behalf of governments and political parties that late modernity has produced new political realities. However, in light of what has been said above, we can point out how they are lacking. Firstly, in the New Labour case, these are linked to localism. Whilst this may, or may not, be an improvement on the centralised form it does not take account of the differentiation between people in a certain area by function (for example voting on money for an apprentice scheme run in the area will impact one group, the scheme users, more than any other, this is also true of a service such as childcare) nor does it seem to hold the potential for developing collective concerns of the more specialised form of associations outlined above. As Durkheim puts it, they rely on a ‘local patriotism’ which, whilst present in times of low functional differentiation ‘no longer exists nor can they exist’ (Durkheim 1952:357). Secondly, the ‘Big Society’ theme falls more directly into the criticisms of Bauman since it is effectively a removal of responsibility from state to ‘third sector’ groups or private companies. The forms of democracy within these groups run from small to non-existent. The limitation of this in light of the above is that it does not seem to provide any model for the realisation of the collective concerns for which Bauman initially advocated the *agora* space. These only come within democratic forms, since it is within these that access and opportunity are emphasised. Also, the ability to be one of the ‘Big Society’ providers may come down to the financial ability and knowledge to provide such services. In effect here we return to the limited access of the consumer market and the difficulties with imagining this as the realm through which political action can be manifested in late modernity.

Conclusion

We saw in chapter two how Beck and Giddens advocated their forms of everyday politics (sub/life politics) as allowing for the growth of political movements from within individual identification. These are notably problematic for two reasons. The first is that there is no possibility within such ideas to convert private concerns into public issues, which I have noted is a major aim of politics. Secondly, they exist outside institutionalised political forms. Therefore, the state is left with the position of

adjudicating between claims, a problematic position. Hence the potential within libertarian socialism is twofold, as we have seen above. It provides a way to extend political institutions into the areas which have seen increased politicisation within late modernity whilst also basing their appeal upon individual situations. Whereas the latter was part of Giddens and Beck's schemes the important aspect of the associative democracy forms is that they extend this individual identification into collective realisations. This political forum allows for the individualism within individualization, and also maintaining its collective form, whilst removing some of the inequalities of access found on the consumer market. This builds upon the politicisation of everyday life and also individualism and shared morality, emphasised by libertarian socialism, to flourish.

Hovering in the background through this discussion though have been two obstacles to possible political alternatives, the state and neoliberalism. Since the critique of libertarian socialism often aims itself at these above all, I will now discuss why these two inter-connected factors would have to be radically transformed to realise this promise.

Chapter 6: The Late Modern State and the Libertarian Socialist Critique

The previous two chapters discussed the potential for libertarian socialism in late modernity. This potential has resided within the late modern processes of individualization and the increased politicisation of everyday life. More specifically, it can be identified in the continuing collective component within individualization and as a counter to the unequal access of the ‘consumer activist model’ of political action (Bauman 2007c). These aligned with justifications for libertarian socialist forms offered by Durkheim and Cole, especially concerning the ability for individualism to be effective in large scale modern societies. Because of this, their intermediary forms of political organisation, the associations, seemed to hold some promise for late modern conditions. The next two chapters expand upon the practical form such a system could take, and obstacles in the way of it, here attention is directed towards the state, in the next chapter it is economic activity and neoliberalism. These two are discussed separately partly because I reject, for reasons discussed below, the idea of the state being *purely* a ‘neoliberal state’ (Harvey 2005). This chapter also suggests what a libertarian socialist alternative to the state, as currently formed, may look like. Needless to say this is inevitably tempered by its predictive nature. The next chapter will discuss economic associations and governance in more depth.

Thus, the main aim of this chapter is to develop a libertarian socialist critique of the state fit for late modernity, as well as the suggestion of an alternative, but there is also another purpose. As noted in chapter two, the state has been surprisingly under-theorised by many political sociologists of late modernity. The state is often unproblematically located in mediatory ground between ‘capital’ and ‘the people’. The issues with this, especially regarding the issue of life/sub-politics, were discussed in chapter two. There are a couple of exceptions to this, Bauman theorises the state as a ‘re-commodifier of the market’ (Bauman 1987b) and there is an interesting, undeveloped, critique of the state in Giddens’ early work. It is upon these limited building blocks that a late modern theory of the state can be constructed. This ‘late modern’ state can be seen as distinct from theories of the ‘neoliberal’ or ‘competition’ state. These are of value, but I am aiming to extend this definition beyond the largely economic one offered in such theories.

Put simply: is the state a vehicle of socialist renewal, or an obstacle to it?

The Late Modern State Form

My focus in analysing the late modern state is twofold: firstly, how does/can the state fulfil the roles given to it by Beck and Giddens; and secondly, what might libertarian socialist theory say about this. To do so I will separate out the distinctively libertarian and socialist components of the critique before drawing them together. This division can also be seen as a distinction between the life political claims of individuals and the political economy on the other. However, both lines of argument lead towards the same conclusion: the current late modern state form not only doesn't fulfil the tasks assigned to it within late modern politics, but it is also not able to do so.

Libertarian- The libertarian aspect of the critique is especially significant for an era of individualization. In the original critique, most notably from Cole, the state was defective as a form of governance given the complexity of individuals. Much of this complexity of individuals in the original critique was placed with different functions or spheres of activity, such as Durkheim's almost pragmatic advocacy of the workplace as the democratic forum. This continues to reflect the original reasons for Cole's antipathy, and sometimes downright hostility (Wright 1979:32-49), to the state as a democratic forum¹. This focused on the connection of representative democracy with the nation state, making it impossible for one representative to represent individuals in all their activities and opinions (Cole 1920a:30-33). The state assumed its own omnipotence by neglecting the multiple allegiances of the individual (Cole 1920b), which also lessened the ability of individuals to participate fully as political agents. This removed the forum for them to express their full 'human personality' (Cole 1920a:25). Whilst the state also responds to pressure groups and other bodies which exist outside forms of representative democracy the effectiveness of such bodies to realise their demands is, in turn, influenced by the amount of resources available to each grouping.

It has been argued that this workplace conception doesn't fully account for the orientation points available to late modern individuals, thus I added the conception of identification alongside function. This added complexity puts the state's role as democratic body front and centre. To assess this it is useful to return to an implicit

¹ Although Cole was sometimes ready to give the state immense, even dictatorial, powers during the transition towards socialism (Wright 1979:139-175). Wright puts this down to immediate short-term political considerations, rather than a long-held theoretical creed.

critique of the state from Giddens. This is contained in his *Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (1981a) and has been sorely overlooked by both Giddens himself² and those who have drawn inspiration from his political sociology. It is based in his claim that the state is the main ‘power container’ of authoritative resources³ (Giddens 1981a:92). The state’s role is significant given the centrality Giddens gives these resources during late modernity.

Ironically, considering the criticisms levelled at him in chapter two, Giddens’ *Contemporary Critique* takes a rather economically determinist view as part of his historical analysis of the modern state’s development. Here he argues that authoritative resources⁴ are the ‘fundamental lever of change’ in pre-capitalist societies (Giddens 1981a:92-94). However, the emergence of capitalism shifts the focus towards allocative resources, most notably the ownership of natural resources, land and capital. Giddens asserts that the nation state emerges alongside capitalism and that the latter is ‘inherently involved with’ (Giddens 1981a:210) the emergence of the former, as the most effective way for it to develop as an economic system (Giddens 1981a:182-202, 209-210). The emergence of the state involves it becoming the main ‘power container’ for both forms of resources, a role it assumes fully with the decline of the city (Giddens 1981a:129-181)⁵. Therefore it is Giddens’ argument that the modern state emerges since it is the most effective way for allocative resources to be held and distributed in order to perpetuate class power and capital reproduction. It is the continuing ability of the state to do so which ensures its dominance. The state also holds authoritative resources but, beyond the development of literacy, Giddens considers these to be less significant in simple modernity.

Surprisingly Giddens himself is never entirely clear what exactly we can identify as authoritative resources, beyond statements such as ‘constitution of chances of self-

² Partly due to his use of the state as an instrument for developing the Third Way, a paternalistic understanding which, for Mestrovic (1998), is present throughout Giddens sociology.

³ These were discussed in chapter two. To recap, authoritative resources concern the organisation of life chances and time-space distanciation and are linked directly to life-politics (1991a). Examples of these could cover recognition of certain groups as worthy of consideration in decisions or the availability of further education (Giddens himself is somewhat vague on these resources). Allocative resources are instead material components, such as capital. For Giddens the redistribution of these are more indicative of an earlier form of simple modern emancipatory politics (1994a).

⁴ Defined more narrowly than in their late modern use (see below), here the term refers to information and the ability to access it (i.e. literacy).

⁵ Although it should be noted that Giddens greatly questions the extent to which any city ever held sway as the sole holder of such resources in pre-capitalist times. On this point he heavily criticises Weber (Giddens 1981a:142-143).

development and self-expression' (Giddens 1981a:52). This poses problems of empirical application, but also demonstrates some 'sloppiness' of definition, common to Giddens' sociology (Gregson 1989, Craib 1992, Mestrovic 1998, Adams 2008), therefore, a more concrete definition is required for late modern usage. A useful political distinction is that authoritative resources are mainly defined by the parts of governance which concern the ability of self-organisation, most notably in the form of laws which concern a specific group or people (e.g. laws concerning the amount of time an individual can claim a certain benefit) or the provision of a certain service (how that individual accesses that welfare, or the forms of healthcare available within a certain area). They can also be seen as the ability of the individual to access either forms of expression (e.g. having the vote, a forum in which to express concerns etc.) or of communication (including such a forum, but stretching beyond this to the basis of communication, such as literacy). Such a definition maintains the basis of Giddens' work, whilst providing a more concrete form. More specifically, authoritative resources are defined both by the role and the opportunities the individual has in governance. In this sense they constitute some of the resources which both Cole and Durkheim saw as residing within the associations, and formed the backbone of their advocacy, albeit for slightly different reasons.

Such resources are distinct from economic resources and involve the ability of the individual to act as they wish in the public realm, regardless of the economic resources they hold. Although they could apply to an individual's economic activity (e.g. workplace democracy) Giddens uses them mostly to refer to activity of a non-economic type. In this form they are instruments of citizenship (Giddens 1981c). When put in this sense the link Giddens' develops between the holding of these and life politics is clear. Therefore, it is surprising that Giddens didn't question the role of the state as the prime holder of these resources. Instead, as noted in chapter two, he seemed to imagine the state as responding in a benevolent and omnipotent way to all life political claims, instead of questioning whether a body defined by its holding of such resources, would not be more selective and perhaps prejudiced in its distribution of them. This was perhaps most notably seen in many of the Foucauldian critics of individualization. This is especially true when Giddens argues authoritative resources are not only defined as resources for the individual who holds them to act upon, but also as resources which allow individuals/institutions to control the behaviour of others (Giddens 1984:373).

So, holding authoritative resources doesn't just allow one to be political, but also to exclude others. Thus, centralisation of resources is the concern, one of the things which makes a state totalitarian is its ability to direct individual activity through the centralisation of authoritative resources (for example, through surveillance, Giddens 1985a).

Hence, when looking at a late modern sociology of the state and authoritative resources, we face two issues: of access and allocation. For Giddens the appeal of life politics is that it allows previously excluded groups the chance to speak. Here we face an instant concern; access to the state is limited. Returning to the earlier libertarian critique of the state, one of the main aspects of the state form is a tendency to treat all citizens as being equal in their citizenship (Cole 1920a). However, some individuals will be more able to access state forms of national democracy than others. This can be due to: levels of social capital; power accorded by economic resources; or membership of an interest group more amiable to the state's policies. For Cole, the lack of functional differentiation also limits any possibility of active citizenship. Therefore, if a particular group, or individual, wishes to access authoritative resources by having a hand in a law which will affect them, or by increasing service allocation, their ability to do so will be greatly hampered by the amount of authoritative resources already at their disposal; as well as their ability to access activity-specific political forms.

Giddens not only outlines an unproblematic relationship of the state with its citizens but also, in his second stage of political thought, of the relationship between the state and outside bodies which may wish to influence it, most notably expert systems, which impact the state's policies of allocation. We should consider the extent to which ideas about the state's appropriate activity influence what it does. Such a conception of the state's activity may be influential in two ways, either through the government who currently holds office, or something external to this. Such conceptions can influence who gets authoritative resources, for example the seeking of approval from the 'market' or bodies such as the Confederation of British Industries for government changes to welfare policy. Giddens wishes to resolve the first factor through having a 'Third Way' government in office; however this overlooks the second factor. The neoliberal conception of the state outlined in the introduction would be an expert system, and whilst a Third Way government might not subscribe to it (although many such as Callinicos 1999, Bewes and Gilbert 2000 and Cammack 2004 argue it would) this does

not mean other individuals/bodies in the state will not. Plus there may be pressure from outside the state, say from multinational corporations or financial bodies, to adopt policies the government of the day may or may not agree with. In these conflicts some will have an advantageous position due to their accumulation of resources, rather than the 'truth' of their claims (cf. Hay 2007, Doogan 2009). It seems these are not the same groups Giddens feels benefit from the era of life politics, such as his example of the single black mother (Giddens 1991a:86). This involves a lack of consideration on Giddens' part as to how the state does not exist benignly but instead is caught up, and constituted within, conflicts of power and inequality between other groups in society. Such conflicts may involve the state 'picking sides', rather than simply responding in a semi-omnipotent manner. This is also common to Beck's political sociology, such as in his suggestion of the state responding to sub-politics in an open and fair manner (Beck 1997, see chapter two).

If authoritative resources are to assume the role so often given to them in late modern sociology⁶, then the inequality of access to these resources, in turn a result of an initial unequal distribution, must be confronted. The concern here is with what I have identified as the central concern of late modern politics, the linking of the individual to the collective. This means that authoritative resources – much like allocative resources – remain unequally distributed, with little possibility of equalising such a distribution. Therefore the emancipatory promise said to be contained in the concepts of life/sub-politics seems questionable, both at the micro-level (as in the 'consumer activist model' of political action), but also at the macro-level, since the state's role of equal distributor is highly problematic. This is a reflection of the continuing trend for Beck and Giddens to universalise what may be seen as a middle class position. Libertarian socialist strategies on the other hand would suggest a 'decrowning' of the state. This will be expanded upon later in this chapter, but for now it is enough to say that the state is stripped of its ability to distribute authoritative resources and instead these are functionally differentiated, as in Cole's, and Durkheim's, legislative roles for the associations. The state fulfils the role of initially distributing the authoritative resources, whilst also ensuring a constitutional system is put in place to ensure that their initially equal distribution is not overcome by factional strategies. Durkheim's focus on

⁶ Whilst I have mostly discussed Giddens in the above, and indeed he is the only one to use such a term, a similar relationship can also be seen in Beck's discussion of sub-politics as a distinctively late modern form of political action. See chapter two for the discussion of how these two overlap.

the associations as being both individualist and collectivist, and thus ensuring individual development occurs within collective conceptions, is especially important here.

Before expanding on this alternative, I turn to the other side of the critique, to what extent is the late modern state an instrument of neoliberalism?

Socialist- Cole echoed many later socialist theorists of the state by arguing that it comes to see capital accumulation as one of its main roles. But he differed from more Marxist theorists by arguing neither that capitalism gave birth to the modern state form (here Giddens is much more Marxist than Cole) or that capital accumulation was *the main* or *only* goal (Cole 1920b:148, ff.). Therefore, for Cole, functional democracy would remove some of the conflict between the democratic process, and the state's economic roles. Durkheim's view of the state is somewhat more problematic for this thesis. This was discussed briefly in chapter three, but is worth covering in more depth here. It has often been suggested that Durkheim imagined the state as the 'sacred' figure of modernity, of that which individuals plead allegiance to and that which maintained modern forms of social order (Giddens 1978, Bauman 1993, 2005c). Therefore Durkheim is not critical enough about the state, he sees it as the ultimate body which makes a society modern and functional (Giddens 1995c), and it is this which makes his theory flawed for a pluralist conception of associative democracy/libertarian socialism (Hirst 1995), especially since he doesn't consider how the state may become complicit in capital accumulation (Giddens 1982d, 1995c). As a result of this Durkheim becomes a representative of the false 'container theory' of sociology, whereby the nation-state represents society (Beck 2000a, although see Inglis and Robertson 2008).

It would be impossible to deny there is some truth to these claims, to pick just one instance of Durkheim's view on the state:

'The more societies develop, the more the State develops... Progress towards centralization runs parallel to the progress of civilization... the State has in fact rather been the liberator of the individual... In history individualism has advanced hand in hand with Statism' (Durkheim 1899a:144)

But yet to see Durkheim as simply a cheerleader for the state would also be incorrect. The only reason Durkheim suggests the state can fulfil this role is with the acceptance of its citizens, that they become part of its operation: 'Society is an association, a kind of joint-stock company in which all concerned should be consulted concerning the

managing of the undertaking' (Durkheim 1885:90). It was then the very impossibility of the state to solely fulfil this role of association which lead Durkheim to the associational form (1984, 1992:39-40). These associations form the basis of the political society on which the state rests. This involves performing tasks for which there is no pre-existing unity within the associations of political (Durkheim 1992:92). Thus, the state relies upon, rather than conjuring up from thin air, the customs and values upon which its allegiance depends (Durkheim 1992:83). Therefore, for Durkheim, democracy is a balancing act between the functions of the associations and the state; the latter 'should not do everything, but it should not let everything be done' (Durkheim 1885:88). Importantly for a socialist theory, one thing it should not 'let be done' is to allow the 'amoral character of economic life' move beyond the 'industrial and commercial sphere', but instead should encourage forms of civic morals (Durkheim 1992:12). Therefore, Durkheim did imagine a permanency to, and central role for, the state however this had to be (a) built upon associational forms of political organisation, (b) provide the 'collective representations' for society as a whole and (c) not corrupted by economic concerns.

It is on this final point that we confront the role of the late modern state as a neoliberal state. This is a state which is predominantly committed to capital accumulation, through the application of neoliberal theory. Therefore, it takes the spreading of the 'amoral character of economic life' as its very *raison d'être*. This involves: lessening labour regulations; lowering taxes; cutting social spending; breaking down trade barriers and pursuing any other 'pro-business' regulations. This can most notably be seen by the privatisation of previously state-run services, from energy production and supply through to the health service and welfare provision (Crouch 2004). Such privatisation exists with the goal of introducing 'competition' into multiple sectors which, for Durkheim (1952:216), allows particular interests – making money – to exist above social interests. In the conception of Harvey (2005) this can also take a rather authoritarian nature, since the state is used to suppress any discontent that may emerge as a result of these policies. In this sense the state is used as both a social and an economic instrument, to enhance capital accumulation and lessen labour rights. For a state to be 'neoliberal' it would also seem necessary for the very form it takes to be determined by neoliberalism, in much the same way as theorists such as Lefebvre

(1964, 1979) Poulantzas (1969, 1978), Jessop (2002) and Crouch (2004) argued regarding the varying state types they identified.

Indeed it is possible to identify such forms. I have already highlighted the privatisation of state forms as a way in which the state begins to adopt the 'global firm' model (Crouch 2004). Also, we could point to the increased switching of employment between the private sector and the civil service. This has been particularly noticeable in recent years where the Brown and Cameron governments took opportunities to import those with a background in business into government, either as part of the government (Digby Jones' appointment as a trade minister being a good example) or to conduct reviews over which they seem to have little knowledge or ability beyond the fact they are 'businessmen' (sic) (John Browne's review into the funding of higher education). This is often accompanied with the claim – especially prominent in the Cameron government – that such an appointment will bring all the principles of the private sector into government, and that this is unquestionably to be welcomed. The opposite shift, from government to the public sector, is just as notable (Alan Milburn's appointment as advisor to Pepsi and Tony Blair and Jonathan Powell's appointments to Morgan Stanley being just two examples). Hence, the late modern state could be seen as neoliberal since it not only adopts the principles of business in its own operation, but also because it provides a clear connection of employment between the private and public sector.

We can also identify the continued relevance of Poulantzas' critic in a possible neoliberal state form. Poulantzas argued that one role of the state is as an area for the internal contradiction between different factions of the capitalist classes to be worked out, so that a historical bloc of shared interests can be formed (Poulantzas 1978:144-145, also Lefebvre 1964). It could be argued that in late modernity the state becomes the place for the contradictions of neoliberal theory to be worked out; especially the most significant contradiction concerning the state itself. The pressures between a strong state to enforce neoliberal policy, yet a small state not to interfere with the market are internalised within the very make-up of the state. This can be done not only to present a common front, as a historical bloc (in Poulantzas' use of this term), but also in contradictions regarding policies of the state. While a government may drastically cut social spending, or bodies which regulate business, it may also set up new bodies which assess governmental financial policies and actions, such as in the Cameron government's Office of Budgetary Responsibility and 'Star Chamber', which both aim

to assess the financial responsibility of government actions. Thus the contradictions concerning the role of the state under neoliberalism are expressed internally, via increasing regulation in order to, ultimately, decrease regulation.

Therefore there are clearly ways in which we can identify the late modern state as a neoliberal state⁷ and this is a common assumption in late modern political sociology when the state is theorised, such as in the work of Bauman. For him the state has always taken what is in the ‘interests of the economy’ as its primary focus (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrazo 2010:37). However, in a consumer society these interests are less defined by capital accumulation and more by credit accumulation. Therefore, ‘the state is “capitalist” in as far as it assures the continuous availability of credit and the continuous ability of consumers to obtain it’ (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrazo 2010:24). Thus, for Bauman, the state moves from acting in a purely ‘capitalist’ manner, to acting more in a ‘consumerist’ manner, since this assures continuing capitalist profit. This finds its inevitable manifestation in the credit crunch of late 2008 (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrazo 2010:20). Thus whilst the end goal, of profit and capital accumulation does not differ, the role of the state, to ensuring a continuous flow of credit, does. I do not wish to dismiss such a view, which is convincing, but instead to build upon it. To do this I will now turn to a factor noted as being both part of the role of the neoliberal state, and a major part of embedded individualization: privatisation.

Privatisation has a dual meaning here. In the first sense it refers to an economic process of transferring assets from public to private hands. Its second sense concerns the way in which previously collective concerns are moved to an individual level, which was covered in chapters one, two and four as part of embedded individualization. While these two meanings often occur in unison (cf. Calhoun 2006), they are analytically distinct; one does not require the other, nor is either caused purely by the existence of the other (although the first may encourage the second). The non-economic form of privatisation is part of the conception of embedded individualization laid out in this thesis. Bauman identifies the state as complicit in this process due to its role in the first form of privatisation, and by giving up any attempt to develop a collective ‘good’ in

⁷ Indeed sometimes these motives can be incredibly blatant. A contemporary example is the Cameron government’s policy of turning ambassadors into roving salesman for ‘UK PLC’ (Black and Norton-Taylor 2010). Such an idea is also manifested in the concept of the ‘competition state’ or Jessop’s (2005) ‘Schumpeterian workfare post national regime’ state. Links between the former and the policies of David Cameron have been drawn elsewhere (Evans 2009).

order to become a ‘recommodifier of the market’ (Bauman 1987a, 1999). Whilst I think Bauman is right to lay much of the blame at the state, this is not purely a ‘marketising’ activity; instead it is also a question of personalisation.

If Poulantzas is correct to see the state as developing individualization in simple modernity (Poulantzas 1978:63-75) then, in its expanded late modern form, this process has gone beyond what was in effect the development of citizenship. As a result the state is in a position of response to life political claims rather than creation of individualized citizens. In such a scenario state institutions have only one mechanism to turn to which rests upon, and claims to provide, personalisation: the market, more specifically, market-based choice. To take one example, when the state aims to personalise service provision to fit the more differentiated lives of individuals, with healthcare as an example, the idea of choice seems to hold much promise. As we saw in the previous chapter, consumer choice becomes the very conception of political action. The only way choice can be currently exercised, is via the consumer market, itself a limited choice. The result of this is that deciding on the ‘correct’ kind of healthcare, what course of treatment to be followed, what hospital to have the treatment etc., is removed from the state. Instead it is largely and progressively privatised towards the individual. This enhances the processes of embedded individualization already mentioned while also increasing the marketisation of services. As a result the state works in unison with the market, but this does not mean there is a purely pro-market agenda on the behalf of state actors or the institutions themselves. Whilst in many cases there may well be, the transformation of the state from a provider to a contractor of services can also be traced to the processes of late modernity, it is partly as a response to the desire for more specialised services. In short, the politicisation of everyday life has created a depoliticisation of the state’s moves towards privatisation.

It is in this sense that a set of policies which it may be incorrect to see as purely ‘neoliberal’, such as Giddens’ Third Way, can appear neoliberal when they are either mapped out or implemented in some form, since they aim to emphasise choice as part of their appeal⁸. To paraphrase Giddens, whilst the Third Way may not be a form of ‘weak’ neoliberalism, in the sense that its author does not intend to further a neoliberal

⁸ A similar point, in a different context, has been made by Fraser (2009). She argues that whilst second-wave feminism was, clearly, distinct from neoliberalism, it was easily subsumed within the later by being presented as a politics of recognition and choice.

project, it can be accused of having ‘strong’ neoliberalism since its implementation can have this outcome (cf. Giddens 1976:710-711). As outlined in chapter two the inevitably ‘selective’ nature of the state’s provision of authoritative resources can be exacerbated by their place within neoliberal economies. Since, when the state is seen as the main distributor of authoritative resources, it has nowhere but the market to turn in order to distribute them. This doesn’t mean states and governments do not actively choose to follow the definitions of privatisation as joint strategies but means that even in instances where this desire is not present, the lack of alternatives means the emergence of embedded individualization can encourage economic privatisation. The state furthers capital accumulation since no other forum is seen as possible for individualized political concerns. This was a concern for the Foucauldian critique. Individualization currently only occurs within the ‘discursive field’ of neoliberalism (Howard 2007a) and thus, as I suggested in chapters two and four, the elective affinity of late modernity and neoliberalism is strengthened.

Therefore, without consideration of the inequalities within late modern societies and the ‘bads’ (cf. Giddens 1994a:100-101) emerging from the expert system of neoliberal capitalism and the consumer market, late modern sociology furthers neoliberal governance by letting the state ‘off the hook’. The state is either benign (Giddens and Beck) or entirely capitalist (Bauman), without considering the pressures placed upon it. As already suggested, most notable of these is the pressure to extend the sphere of the economic as, to use a term beloved by Giddens, an unintended consequence of its need to distribute authoritative resources without considering other ways this could be done⁹.

In light of this it becomes essential to reconsider the state form as a means of allowing for effective political action. Especially whether it is possible to provide an alternative forum for specialisation, or, is it inevitable that the differentiated demands of late modernity lead to economic privatisation? It is this question to which the rest of this chapter is devoted.

The ‘Late Modern Libertarian Socialist State’?

We have seen thus far in this chapter that the late modern state suffers from the same flaws that were central to the earlier critiques of Cole and Durkheim, from both the

⁹ This echoes Jordan’s (2010) argument that the Third Way utilised purely contractual, rather than moral forms of obligation.

libertarian and socialist aspect of their theories. Furthermore, although the critique of the state has not been a central part of the political sociology of late modernity, it was implicit to Giddens' conception of modernity, and the lack of its application was part of the explanation for the flaws in his normative alternative. We should still be concerned – much as Cole and Durkheim were – with how the state, as a centralised body, can allow the differentiated and specialised activity of individuals to be politically realised.

Let us now turn our attention to how this may occur; the question of whether we can imagine a late modern, libertarian socialist state (henceforth LMLSS) and if so, what exactly would it look like? It is clear both from what has been considered in this chapter and in the previous two that this state must fulfil two roles. The first of these is to allow for the development of collective organisation, as in the Bourdieuan critique of individualization. The second, is to be an effective body at matching authoritative resources to political claims, once these are voiced, without perpetuating forms of neoliberal governance, as in the Foucauldian critique. As will become clear in what follows, in order to achieve these goals there is a need to decrown the state and move many of its responsibilities to the kind of associations mentioned in the previous two chapters.

Decrowning the State and Areas of Late Modern Associational Promise

It is here we return to the concept of 'decrowning' the state. I do not mean by this an advocacy of a 'small' against a supposed 'big' state of late modernity, rather a reconsideration of the centrality of the state to political processes centring on authoritative resources. The basic outline of such a role can be found in Cole's work. For Cole the central state – or 'commune' – was left with four broad responsibilities: co-ordination between bodies; allocation of resources; demarcating barriers as being within the purview of one body or another; and as being the final court of appeal on disputes (Cole 1920a). Although Cole can be seen as an advocate for a 'small' state, his commune is in fact given 'considerable constitutional powers', which has often been a point of criticism (Wyatt 2006:104). Instead there is a 'reforming' or a 'reconstruction' of the state (Wright 1987, Wyatt 2006) which involves a depoliticisation or, as I am terming it, decrowning, of the state through the extension of functional democratic forms 'below' the state level. This process of decentralisation and apoliticisation can continue to be our guide. This means that the state is left to conduct the tasks for which

it is most suited – for example national issues (regulation, tax collection/distribution) and international affairs, whilst also ensuring that those things which can be done at a more specialised level are done so. Much as Durkheim argued, the state exists for considerations on which there is a pre-existing, national, association and to provide collective representations of such a grouping. Hence, the decrowning of the state is a strategy which aims to increase political agency and participation by extending the democratic sphere through the expansion of the associations. Let us consider the ways in which power could be moved away from the centralised state.

This would involve the state helping to foster a new forum for personalisation currently claimed to reside in the market: the associations. The state would engage in an active process of transferring not just responsibility for providing a service but also of the power to decide how that service is provided to relevant associations. Meaning that the right to legislate on these areas, as well as the administration of them, is no longer within the purview of the state and, in effect, it gives up sole sovereignty over these areas. These associations would be internally democratically accountable whilst also inevitability involving some amount of localism, to reflect individual's everyday awareness and conducting of collectivity. By moving this responsibility downwards the state ceases to be the major distributor of authoritative resources. The ability to both engage in the political process, via the democratic setup of the association, and the allocation of resources in response to claims – which both make up authoritative resources – are localised and specialised. This is due to the fact that they are now held by associations who are dedicated to more narrowly defined areas of activity than the national one of the state. They can decide how and when services are provided, as well as providing the local and specialised ability for individuals to engage in governance, in turn they would be made up of both the providers and users of services and, where relevant, other interested parties, such as local communities. Here we follow Cole's precept that every function should have a democratic outlet.

At this point the reader may be wondering whether these associations are going to be conjured up out of thin air; that the LMLSS would have to create these associations since they do not already exist. Instead I would argue it is possible to see forms of associations built around shared activities (functions) and forms of identification. These have a long lifeline, the role of associations in governance has been identified as a form of 'private interest government', such as trade unions, regulatory boards, neighbourhood

associations, which are used to maintain, and strengthen, social order alongside the state, market and community (Streeck and Schmitter 1985). These exist:

‘As an alternative to direct state intervention and regulation, the public use of private organized interests takes the form of the establishment, under state licence and assistance, of “private interest governments” with devolved public responsibilities – of agencies of “regulated self-regulation” of social groups with special interests’ (Streeck and Schmitter 1985:16)

In the UK, these have often occurred on what Wilson and Butler (1985) call a ‘functional role’, whereby there has been a recognition that certain things the state cannot do, or that other groups already do well, will be left alone to be run by an association. It is only when things begin to break down, or the state is under pressure, that it will intervene in these areas (Hughes 1985).

Most of these associations have roles in economic activities (i.e. regulating a certain trade or practice) and it is this which may raise questions for their late modern relevance: surely neoliberalism has lessened the centrality and popularity of associations? Whilst this claim may make some rhetorical sense, a closer empirical look suggests not. Instead it is not that neoliberal governments lessened the number of associations, but simply ignored them as part of their analysis of individual’s orientations for action (Crouch and Streeck 1997). This is especially notable in the UK, where Graham (1997) suggests that the relative failure of the Conservative government to grow the economy was down to their ignorance of how people may act associationally. Institutions and associations, be they trade unions or other forms of interest group forms exist within the increased liberalisation of the economy, rather than being removed by it (Hollingsworth and Boyer 1997, Streeck and Thelen 2005). These associations maintain an importance concerning both individual activity and orientation. In fact one would expect them to since, following Giddens, the associational activity of individuals is reembedded as part of their daily activity (Crouch and Keune 2005). Individuals continue to act within associational forms, such as suggested by the Bourdieuan critique of individualization, and it is this activity which in turn reasserts the importance of associations. Indeed, the construction of the UK as an ‘ideal type’ of neoliberal economy can overlook the ways in which traditional, corporatist or not, forms of associations continue to exist (Hay 2005). Despite the many claims of the decline of unionised power, these groups, especially in the role of the Trade Union

Council could potentially exercise more power (Doogan 2009). The unwillingness of them to do so is, for Doogan, a result of neoliberal success in influencing the views of union members and the wider public.

The late modern relevance of associations is also not purely an economic, or occupational, occurrence. Instead, the associational form continues to have relevance to everyday activity outside economics. This can be seen in the growth of new, admittedly currently less formal, protest groups, such as UK Uncut or 38 Degrees, the latter of which was notably successful in achieving a U turn from the government on their proposal to privatise large parts of the UK forests. Also, as noted by Plummer (2003) the supposed growth of ‘identity politics’ presupposes associations which represent these identity groups. These can be seen in groupings such as Stonewall, the Muslim Council of Britain, ‘Mumsnet’, PETA and so on. All of these groups, in different ways, emerge through – to put in the terms of Giddens and Beck – the reflexive awareness and construction of identity, as highlighted by Young (1995). Indeed the associational nature of late modern political action is implicit in Beck’s very conception of sub-politics, but is mostly submerged amidst his claims that this is individualized activity (Beck 1997:98). Pleyers (2010) also notes how late modernity can also see the emergence of groups focused around ‘the way of subjectivity’, which ‘against the commodification’ of neoliberal capitalism allow individuals to

‘[A]ssert their creativity and their subjectivity, understood as the affects, emotions and thoughts raised by or created by the will to think and to act by oneself, to develop and express one’s own creativity, to construct one’s own existence’ (Pleyers 2010:35-36)

In short, much as was the basis of Cole’s original critique, individuals still turn to associational groupings, whether these be unions, professional (regulatory) associations, protest groups or online groupings to ‘get things done’ politically (Schmitter 1993, also see Cohen and Rogers 1995), without at the same time subsuming their individuality within the groups. Indeed, the centralised nature of the UK liberal democratic state makes this essential since, as already noted, individual entry points are greatly limited, meaning associations are a political inevitability for those seeking to become late modern political actors. The other-orientated aspects of reflexivity only encourage this (Benton and Redfearn 1995, King 2006, Mouzelis 2010). The forms of associations discussed here hope to supplement a single point of political entry, that via the state,

with multiple points of entry. These forms of entry are based not within a separate, public realm as citizens, but emerge from within the individual's everyday experiences of either function and/or identification, as in the realms of everyday politicised action discussed in the last two chapters. In late modern terms: from their reflexive biography, in this sense the sites of identity construction also become sites of governance. This was largely the aim of late modern political sociology as conceptualised by Beck and Giddens, to reconcile subjectivity with institutional political expression (cf. Beck 1997:97 ff.).

Therefore, the implementation of more associational forms of politics is not something enforced from above, but rather a recognition that states already have to negotiate the desires of such groups (Rustin 1985, Schmitter 1993) and that this inevitably involves the formations of associations for the individualism of their members to 'progress towards making a reality of the famous precept: to each according to his works' (Durkheim 1898/1969:83). Nevertheless, it would be naive to overlook some of the issues which could occur with these associations, the state would still need to arbitrate between some claims and, much as Cole suggested, may need to be the final court of appeal for disputes between them. Thus the state becomes arbitrator par excellence, in a similar role to that currently played by ACAS. This does not mean the state would become an entirely 'objective' adjudicator. As Durkheim argues, part of the state's role is to 'think' for society, to produce collective representations (Durkheim 1992: 51, ff.) which, in a libertarian socialist society, would require a conception of the 'common good'. This would focus around the potential for individuals to associate and have their views recognised. This for Durkheim ensures a more 'democratic' society by allowing the particular sentiments of the associations to become more aligned with the collective concerns of political society (Durkheim 1992:42-110).

The LMLSS and (In)equality

Thus far I have argued that the principle of 'decrowning' the state, of moving its responsibility of authoritative resources down to an associational level, would lessen issues of access and of economic determinism noted by the original libertarian socialist critique. The continued presence of associational activity within individual lifeworlds makes this a promising path, as well as building upon the collective and unequal nature of individualization noted in chapter four, and the politicised nature of everyday

activity, driven by choice, noted in chapter five. Therefore, the principle of associational activity creating multiple points of access for individual political activity, akin in a pluralisation of Bauman's *agora* space, seems to hold late modern promise.

This does not mean the issue of inequality of access would easily disappear. There will most likely continue to be issues of inequality such as the amount of time individuals have, economic inequalities, educational levels, specialised knowledge and the individual's desire to participate. Issues of time and desire will be dealt with in the possible criticisms section at the end of the next chapter. For now, it is important to admit what a political system, such as libertarian socialism can't do, it will not solve economic inequality, although through more equitable forms of redistribution, to be discussed in the next chapter, it could greatly lessen it. Nevertheless the expansion of access is a significant factor, whilst the lessening of the inequality of authoritative resources could conceivably go some way towards lessening the inequality in their allocative counterpart, through allowing less advantaged economic groups to impact political decision making.

There is a different consideration to be made regarding the 'systemic' inequality of an associational model such as libertarian socialism. There are generally two ways in which this is noted. The first is what Dahl (1982) terms 'stabilising political inequalities' and 'distorting the public agenda'. These terms suggest that initially groups which form associations will already occupy a position of privilege, whether this be via economic advantage, education or ability to organise. The associations will be able to ensure only their concerns are deliberated and their alternatives considered. The result is that current inequalities will be reinforced and perhaps exacerbated as the only alternative considered would be those which harm those who don't have the opportunity of organising. The second consideration of inequality is contained in what Cohen and Rogers (1995) term 'the problem of faction'. They agree with Dahl that the initial formation of associations may well reflect current forms of inequality, but also through such a system factional interests may come to override general interest and new forms of inequality could be produced.

This is of course a damaging criticism to aim at any potential political system, but particularly at one which claims to be socialist, and thus takes increased equality as one of its main goals. There are two responses I would offer to the question of inequality,

one concerning the associations themselves, the other concerning forms of governance 'above' these. With regard to associations there are various steps that could be taken to ensure forms of inequality do not distort the system before it has the chance to work. Firstly, limits could be placed upon the size of associations, with a corresponding limit on the amount of material resources available to them. Secondly, in the initial expansion of associations the state could take an active role in encouraging the development of associations amongst those groups currently unorganised or facing obstacles to organisation¹⁰. Thirdly, it would be possible to draw up a constitution, such as Cole argued, which required consultation for actions taken by an association which impacted any other interested parties, akin to the current forms of consultation required for new buildings with a local community, but given greater powers to send applications back to be reconsidered. And finally, each association would also be limited not only in its size, but also in the amount of fields of activity it could cover.

All of these steps however will not remove competition between associations fully. The only way this could be done would be to greatly limit associations to a few monopolies. Such a set-up would hardly seem to be useful for answering the multiple life political claims of individuals. The goal instead is to remove unfair competition, competition between associations for members could be a useful way for discovering preferences of individuals whilst, by lessening the potential of monopolisation, insuring that this competition allows all to enter freely. This is especially true if the state is given the role of collecting and redistributing capital, since the membership of associations, freely entered into and exited could be one indication of the desire for its cause to be recognised (as in Hirst's (1994) associative democracy model). However, this would not stop associations acting in a factional or 'anti-socialist' fashion.

This point returns us to Durkheim's claim regarding associations as forms of generating professional ethics. Befitting Durkheim's wider sociological concerns, it was his argument that rules in and of themselves are never enough to generate moral concern for another. The localised and specialised nature of the associations means that it 'communicates itself to the moral discipline it establishes and this, it follows, is respected to the same degree' (Durkheim 1992:8). Thus, functional democracy, via its concern with the everyday activities of individuals can go beyond the use of rules to

¹⁰ Obviously this statement both assumes that (a) there is a government in office which is pro-this system, which is clearly a pre-requisite and (b) that initially the state maintains enough power to do so.

establish forms of moral and personal connections to the others who make it up. These reassert the role of the other, one of Bauman's justifications for the *agora*, whilst also a major aspect of the Bourdieuan critique of individualization (Yeatman 2007, Jackson 2010, Holmes 2010). This is in many ways fitting with the focus on 'personal communities' within late modernity (Spencer and Pahl 2006), whereby individuals create multiple communities based upon shared interests and activities, rather than structural obligation. These in turn are not exclusive but rather overlapping groupings due to individual's multiple fields of activity. Such personal connections mean social solidarity can exercise more immediate influence upon the individual (Durkheim 1952:358).

The LMLSS and Identification

As suggested above, a major role of the LMLSS would be to move authoritative resources away from itself and downwards. This would then result in multiple levels of governance and would, at least seemingly, allow for a more pluralist conception of socialist politics, essential for late modernity (Rustin 1985, McLennan 1989). Such pluralism would be expressed internally within associations and also between them. With regard to the latter it is possible to imagine associations based around specific identities, such as we have now. I have cited examples of these above, they may exist around what Giddens would see as more 'traditional' forms of identification (i.e. religion, gender etc.) or more 'post-traditional' forms (i.e. sexuality, green politics, consumer groups) highlighted in Pleyers' examples of the 'way of subjectivity' (2010:33-105). However, the place of identification within political systems is complex. This is why I focus on *activity* as the key for deciding this. Any activity¹¹ which concerns a field related to the individual's identification would require some form of representation of this. To take an example, the provision of child care as an activity would be of significance to all parents and may impact certain individuals, say single parents, in different ways and therefore there should be some of representation of this group within the body carrying out such an activity. It is clear from this that the associations themselves will need to be representative democratic bodies, as suggested by Cole and Durkheim, since identificational activity will cut across functions. This

¹¹ By this I mean any action individuals engage which requires collaboration with others, or the use of facilities not within the direct individual ownership of the individual. It would most likely be able to use discretion concerning how large such representation by identification would be.

also highlights a late modern concern of socialism to shift the focus of the discussion from 'who votes' to 'where they vote' (Bobbio 1987) or, as I termed it in the previous chapter, matching the increased politicisation of late modernity with increased democratisation.

Here we return to one of the focuses of late modern political sociology, to recognise the multiple subjective allegiances in individual's lifeworlds with forms of democratic expression (Beck 1997:100). The model of libertarian socialism here argues that the institutional political sphere itself needs to be pluralised, rather than, as in life/sub-politics, simply attempt to 'recognise' plurality. This holds potential by not, as Bauman feared, rejecting formal political structures and thereby exacerbating political disillusionment. Instead these structures are pluralised and reinvigorated within everyday activity.

The LMLSS and Conflict

In light of the above it is worthwhile to return to a point I made earlier concerning the role of the state vis-a-vie other institutions. Here I suggested it was important, contrary to the implications of Giddens and Beck, to consider the state as existing in conflict or competition, with other bodies such as expert systems, whilst also recognising the individuals operating within state institutions are themselves embedded within relationships of inequality. In light of this it is worthwhile to ask why the state would give up some of its power and, were it to do so, what new forms of conflict it may find itself in. These are of course separate questions, and will be dealt with as such. The first question, of why the state would engage in a transfer of not only responsibility, but also of power, is effectively one of transition, and I will deal with this more fully in the next chapter. For now I will say that this should be seen as a gradual transformation, which has many benefits by both allowing for some testing grounds of the ideas as well as introducing new forms of governance at a slower pace.

As already mentioned, it seems likely that forms of conflict resolvable via negotiation would occur between the associations, and by moving some of its own forms of power away from itself, the state becomes less of a target of conflicting claims. What libertarian socialism offers to this is a twofold strategy. Firstly, by moving some of the responsibilities of governance to associational forms it is hoped this will both ease access and mean that any conflicts that do occur can be resolved either by the

associations themselves, or with arbitration from state bodies. Secondly, libertarian socialism creates its own expert system concerning the role of the state, in Durkheim's words, a collective representation concerning the purpose of politics, so it should not be assumed that the state will remain beholden to expert systems which are anti-socialist. This is especially true if we make what would seem to be a safe assumption, that if these changes in state form were to go ahead there would have already been an acceptance of libertarian socialism as an expert system. This links into the third tenet of socialism outlined in chapter three concerning the ideological base of socialism, which I will also return to in the next chapter. But there is also a wider sociological point here, that it becomes part of the sociological project of late modernity to recognise and highlight the already highly confrontational aspects of political discourse, as noted by Bauman, and in Bourdieu's focus on the 'doxa' of neoliberal capitalism (Bourdieu 1992, 1998, 2003). One of the purposes of the LMLSS is as an area, at least initially, whereby this counter-discourse can be expressed. This stands opposed to the somewhat glib cosmopolitan acceptance of current forms of liberal democracy as the only, and best, game in town found in the work of Beck and Giddens. Recognising that the state currently is tied up in conflicts concerning its forms of action recognises that it is possible for it to be used as a critical force in those conflicts, which the LMLSS would need to do. In short, Durkheim's role of the state as a body for recognising forms of civic morals may still be significant.

The LMLSS and Neo-Pluralism

I started this section arguing that the discussion of late modern politics leads towards a discussion of the decrowning of the state and I have outlined how this could take place. In effect a LMLSS is left with roles which require a long-term or international focus, or ones of arbitration and negotiation. Beyond that the specific use of authoritative resources in response to life political claims would come within the associational form.

This model could be seen as similar in conception to that offered by neo-pluralist thinkers on the state. Like such theories it focuses on the desirability of multiple forms of political activity and representation. To discuss this further I will refer to the work of Dahl, not only because he has developed a strong neo-pluralist critique of the state, but also because he has a detailed plan for alternative state forms, which allows for direct comparison with the model of the LMLSS.

Neo-pluralist theory argues that classic pluralists, of whom Dahl was a leading light, overlooked the power of certain groups to have their claims recognised, most notably the power of large corporations (but not capital in general) to: directly impact decisions; control the agenda; and mobilise bias. This leads to a ‘deformed polyarchy’ which gives large business interests a privileged position (Held 2006:171, Dahl 1982, 1985). One solution offered for this was the extension of democracy into the workplace to ensure a basic level of economic equality in order to allow for political liberty and equality to be guaranteed (Dahl 1985). Non-economic organisations have also gained a certain level of independence and self-governance due to conflicts between these organisations and governments (Dahl 1982). The alternatives offered by Dahl have been linked to the both the associative democracy framework of Hirst (Hall 2007:53) and the critique of the state offered by the Miliband/Poulantzas debate (Held 2006:176). Thus, the similarities are clear¹², nevertheless, I differentiate myself from this school in two ways.

The first concerns the eventual role of the state, i.e. what should the state do if the alternatives offered by the neo-pluralists were implemented fully. Whilst Dahl, as I mentioned, does allow for devolved governance by associations, beyond the economic realm he seems to imagine the large amount of ‘social’ administration – in the language of this thesis: the distribution of authoritative resources – would remain in the hands of the state. These associations would largely, beyond some basic forms of regulation which some already perform, continue to be lobbying groups for state action. This is largely why his focus is predominantly on the economic realm as a way of levelling out inequality in the civic realm. This is indeed an important factor to be considered but whilst the levelling out of economic inequality would go a long way towards levelling out political inequality it would perhaps not be enough. Dahl’s state would effectively be left in a similar position to the quandary regarding Giddens’ generative policies. This is also part of a wider trend in the neo-pluralist school to see liberal democracy with a centralised state as the ‘best’ form of democracy, which simply needs its distortions removed (Dunleavy and O’Leary 1987), an echo of Beck and Giddens can be heard here.

¹² In addition, others have pointed to the neo-pluralist concern with modernity, and the disillusion with it, a central theme for Bauman and Beck (Dunleavy and O’Leary 1987:272).

The second consideration in neo-pluralist accounts is the dominance of large corporations in rational terms. By this I mean that it is supposed that corporations pursue their own ends, as would any other group, but due to their more powerful position their interests are realised and not others'. This is an account surprisingly bereft of ideological considerations. Dahl does discuss the state's dependence on capital having an impact on the state's actions but, once again, this is discussed in a rational discussion of means and ends (Held 2006:171, 177). There is less consideration of how a certain ideology, such as neoliberalism, could direct state actions when, as I noted in the introduction, the pursuing of neoliberal ends may not actually be beneficial for capital or the state. This is reflected in the neo-pluralist tendency to announce the death of ideological confrontations around class or between the Left and Right (Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987:290-291). In late modern language, there is not much consideration of the role of expert systems upon either state actors, or those lobbying the state. Hence, whilst there are significant overlaps between the LMLSS and the account offered by neo-pluralists, the account offered here can be separated from the above on the basis of the eventual role of the state and the importance of neoliberal ideology. With a conceptualisation of the principles behind the LMLSS complete, I now turn to a further discussion of its late modern relevance.

Conclusion: Late Modern Relevance

This chapter has outlined a conception of the guiding principles of the LMLSS. I began by outlining a conception of the late modern state influenced by, whilst also updating, the libertarian socialist critique. I discussed how the state's role as the primary holder of authoritative resources, central to the conduct of life politics, puts it in a difficult position to then be the main distributor of these. It was therefore argued that for this role to be performed effectively the state needed to be 'decrowned', with smaller, differentiated, forums for the allocation of such resources. Meanwhile, whilst it could be suggested that the late modern state is a 'neoliberal' state I instead argued that whilst responding to the circumstances of late modernity the state often turns to the market as a mechanism for specialisation. Thus, echoing my theme of there being an 'elective affinity' between late modernity and neoliberalism, the state works in unison with the market, possibly, in an unintentional manner. As a result of this I then outlined how the state would interact with the forms of associations below it. The state is left with some

roles it can perform best, but also performs a role of being the site of counter-ideological claims, as Durkheim puts it being the ‘social brain’ (Durkheim 1992:51).

At this point it is worthwhile to ask how the state form outlined above would be useful for late modernity. Here ‘useful’ is taken to mean that such a state would be an improvement upon the current forms in order to resolve some of the late modern political concerns outlined in this thesis. I have touched on some of these issues above and thus there will be some repetition in what follows.

As has been noted throughout this thesis, the key question raised in the literature is the question of how the individual, as a social actor, links to the collective, which is inevitably the realm in which politics occurs. This system would remove the diametrical opposition between an isolated individual actor and a collective form identified as the state by strengthening an intermediary form in the associations. As has been noted, there are currently forms of associations which have some limited role in governance and therefore the aim is to strengthen these vis-a-vis the state, rather than subordinate to it (Schmitter 1993). By keeping these associations both localised and specialised it means the attachment of the individual to the collective does not require a gulf between these two entities to be crossed, instead that the individual encounters multiple entry points as part of their everyday political activity. This then lessens some of the inevitable difficulties which emerge when trying to imagine how individualized activity can become collective, whilst also allowing political solutions to emerge within the continuing specialisation of late modern action. This also links to a major concern of the political sociology of Bauman, that politics has lost the ability to carry out its central concern, turning private issues into public concerns. Against Bauman’s vague suggestion of a central agora space, this proposed system would allow for specialised forums of issue airing and resolution.

The reason these concerns may be more acute in late modernity returns us the discussion of embedded individualization which, as we have seen, means that, in combination with the post-traditional order and multitude of expert systems, individuals are increasingly encouraged to develop their own solutions to problems they encounter or to situate themselves much more clearly within the social scenario in which they find themselves. This is also part of the increased politicisation of late modern everyday life. Here, the moving of authoritative resources downwards towards the associations

means that the results of the late modern process of embedded individualization would have a forum in which to be expressed and then carried out effectively if need be. At the same time it also acknowledges that if the individual is to engage in the construction of a reflexive biography then this biography must not only be meaningful to the individual, but to have an opportunity, as Mead asserted, to be recognised as meaningful to the other members of the activities in which the individual engages. The representation of this biography as part of the governing body of the association could go some way towards realising this. Subjectivity can be reconciled with institutional forms of political action. By doing so it also realises that such reflexive biographies are not purely individual activities but rather have a relational base with some, also suggested by Mead, needing to be more reflexive than others. The associational form would give these individuals the chance to express the results of their own reflexivity, as well as having it situated within other relations.

In effect then what this proposed state form does is reconcile late modern processes of embedded individualization and the increased politicisation of everyday life with a political forum which not only realises this, but provides a functional form of expression for such processes. The advantage it also offers on the alternatives offered by other writers on late modernity is to be aware that such a system has to both be aware of and reconcile itself to individualization and other late modern processes, without also accepting all the political implications of this outlined by theorists such as Giddens and Beck. In short, a political sociologist of late modernity does not *need* to become a cosmopolitan concerned with a system of life politics, despite Beck's claims that not embracing cosmopolitanism makes sociology a 'museum piece' (Beck 2005c). Therefore there is recognition for the need of not only differentiated forms of representation, but also for this to have an equalising function.

In the next chapter I move the focus more towards the forms of economic governance. These have been mentioned only briefly in this chapter, with the purpose of giving them a greater discussion in what follows. Like any socialist politics, what I will outline concerns the 'socialisation' of production; the question is instead what form that socialisation takes. I will also suggest that the immediate concern is not with this process of socialisation, but with neoliberalism itself, returning the focus to the counter-cultural aspects of socialism mentioned in chapter three.

Chapter 7: Libertarian Socialist Economic Democracy in Late Modernity

‘The material argument for socialism has been weakened’ (Hobsbawm 1991b:320)

‘Without material security there can be no political freedom’ (Beck 2000b:14)

These quotes reflect the problematic position of economic inequality and economic democracy as a late modern political concern within academia. On one hand Eric Hobsbawm, in his defence of socialism ‘after the fall’, acknowledges that the extreme poverty and inequality of life circumstances which made up part of the original basis for socialism no longer have as strong a hold; Engels would not recognise modern day Manchester. Whilst he did not argue socialism should simply forget economic inequality, he did argue socialism needed to focus its appeal on other factors, such as ecology, the gap between rich and poor *countries* and the subordination of individuals to the market. On the other hand there’s Ulrich Beck, whose animosity towards socialism has been clear throughout this thesis, arguing for the centrality of the economic to political sociology. Whilst this has the feel of a ‘throw away’ comment in part of a book-long discussion about forms of work¹, rather than part of Beck’s political project it does suggest the inability to entirely leave the economic behind for late modern political sociology. Socialism, as a political system which has historically been concerned with the economic may have a central place here. Therefore this final chapter is devoted to economic questions within late modern libertarian socialism.

Such inequality ‘unparalleled both historically and compared with the changes taking place at the same time in most other developed countries’ (Brewer et al. 2009:2) is an increasingly important question for late modernity. The consolidation of neoliberalism ideology, and the crash of the economic system which this ideology contributed towards, have not only led to an increasingly unequal economic order, but also have brought the recognition of such inequality front and centre in contemporary political life. The banking bailout and with the corresponding cuts to public services means that the widening gap between rich and poor is no longer a truth revealed only through careful analysis of statistical evidence, but instead is confronted on a daily basis in the news of the latest round of banking bonuses juxtaposed by unemployment figures and the latest

¹ This could also be a reflection of Beck’s tendency to see conflict and inequality at the local level, but consensus and equality at the global (Martell 2008).

cuts. This is a reflection of the reflexive and political processes at the heart of political individualization.

But, it may be asked: why be concerned with equality? Instead, wouldn't it be more effective and fair to ensure poverty is removed, and then from here what the highest earners earn is none of our concern, as long as the poorest can fulfil their basic concerns? In short, be New Labour, but better (Giddens 2002). This returns us to Durkheim's conception of anomie. Allowing inequality to grow, even with the poorest 'taken care of', decreases the 'collective forces' holding these groups together, the relationship becomes one of antagonism as the desires of one group are radically outstripped by the achievements of another. Two opposing forms of civic morals begin to form, as in the confrontation over the justifications for bankers' bonuses. Therefore:

'[T]he chief role of corporations...would be to govern social functions, especially economic functions, and thus to extricate them from their present state of disorganization. Whenever excited appetites tended to exceed all limits, the corporations would have to decide the share that should equitably revert to each of its cooperative parts...by recalling both to the sense of their reciprocal duties and the general interests, and by regulating production in certain cases so it does not degenerate into a morbid fever, it would moderate one set of passions by another, and permit their appeasement by assigning them limits. Thus, a new sort of moral discipline would be established, without which all the scientific discovering and economic progress in the world could produce only malcontents' (Durkheim 1952:350)

In short, a lack of economic equality increases the possibility of anomic forms of social order, creating divisions and resentment. The role of the corporations is not purely a way of achieving professional and civic morals, but also one of ensuring that economic resources are equitably distributed. Whether this role of distribution is actually assigned to the associations or the state is perhaps less significant than the possibility of using the associations, linked directly to individuals' everyday activity, as a way of allowing for the expression of economic needs. In Giddensian language, of using the distribution of authoritative resources to allow for a further distribution of allocative resources, and thus socialisation can build upon what has already been suggested regarding possible libertarian socialist forms². For Durkheim this requires some form of social control, if

² Such concerns also align with my justification for choosing the 'libertarian socialist' label (see chapter three).

not direct ownership, over economic bodies to insure against the spread of anomie. Otherwise the distribution of allocative resources remains outside social consideration. The centrality of economic regulation to Durkheim's political concerns is often overlooked; its importance is demonstrated in the following:

‘[G]overnment, instead of regulating economic life, has become its tool and servant. The most opposite schools, orthodox economists and extreme socialists, unite to reduce government to the role of a more or less passive intermediary among the various social functions. The former wish to make it simply the guardian of individual contracts; the latter leave it the task of doing the collective bookkeeping...But both refuse it any power to subordinate social organs to itself and to make them converge towards one dominant aim. On both sides nations are declared to have the single or chief purpose of achieving industrial prosperity; such is the implication of the dogma of economic materialism, the basis of both apparently opposed systems. And as these theories merely express the state of opinion, industry, instead of being still regarded as a means to an end transcending itself, has become the supreme end of individuals and societies alike. Thereupon the appetites thus excited have become freed of any limiting authority...this liberation of desires has been made worse by the very development of industry and the almost infinite extension of the market’ (Durkheim 1952:216)

Therefore, there is the need to submit economic activity to the demands of those operating working within them, and the wider social concerns. In short, socialise them. Durkheim's socialism was not purely a corporatist concern with representation, but one of the wider purposes of innately social capital. It is to this point of socialisation that I now turn.

Late Modernity and Socialisation

Socialisation is defined here as submitting privately run organisations to the concerns of the wider community rather than leaving them to operate according to their own concerns. Here we follow the principles laid down by the first two tenets of libertarian socialism, that democracy should be utilised in areas over which the individual has a direct interest (functional democracy), and within which they exercise their individuality. This focus on democracy as a mechanism of socialising economic institutions has been a notable aspect of post-Communist socialist theory. To list just a few examples Nove (1983), Rustin (1985), Cunningham (1987) and Bobbio (1987) all utilise a conception of internal workplace democracy as a way of differentiating their

ideas from those of the USSR and other Communist states. This has often been linked to a suggestion for the extension of democracy to be the main advocacy of the Left (Hindess 1990, Hirst 1997).

This returns us to the discussion of individualization. Not only does individualization entail the creation of an individual, reflexive biography, but also includes, partly due to this, 'position taking' on moral, political and other choices confronted by the individual. Reflected in the Bourdieuan concern for identification with an other, and the Foucauldian concern with imparting technologies of the self. As noted by Bauman, the issue here concerns to what extent choices are effective, his distinction between individuality *de jure* and *de facto*. Taking a position on an issue, be it one of what would be the 'best' way to perform a certain procedure or what would be the most moral form of action to take, is only significant if one then has an outlet in which to express, or act out, that view. Beyond the aforementioned issues with models such as life/sub-politics which hope to provide this, they also reach a strange conclusion by placing the limit to such forms of expressions at the 'factory gate'; there seems no reason for position taking to be suspended in the workplace. Hence, the concern is with providing a forum within the activity of work for these private decisions to have public expression and implementation, a work *agora*. This is overlooked in Beck's views on the possibilities for work in late modernity. Here he argues that the increased insecurity of work becomes the possibility for its very personalisation through what he terms 'civil labour' (2000b). This are forms of community service which are then 'paid for' in the form of other community services (such as free childcare). The result of this is that subjectivity and individualization is not seen to exist within the activity of work, but is purely a concern of the choice of job. Not only is this another indication of the classed nature of Beck's disembodied individualization – after all, how many people can 'choose' their job? – but also a somewhat myopic view of social action being divorced from economic action, when the two are inevitably intertwined (Miller 1998, Zelizer 2007).

Socialisation also concerns identity formation and specialisation. I have introduced the concept of identification to libertarian socialism to overcome the dependence on the workplace as the dominant sphere of activity found in both Durkheim and Cole's theories. However, this does not mean we should ignore the continued importance of purely 'functional' activity in late modern identity formation. Work not only continues

to take up a large amount of the individual's time, but may also involve increased investment in an era of late modernity due to the increased need for re-training and 're-skilling'. Indeed, it is possible to find a continued identification with one's job as a form of self-definition (see Savage 2000, Mackenzie et al. 2006, Atkinson 2010b). New, emerging forms of work may also open the door to increased forms of specialisation of labour, both in terms of the tasks performed, and the ends towards which this leads. In short, individualization and new forms of specialised desire, can lead to new forms of economic activity. In late modern language, a job comprises a 'fateful moment' during which the individual has to reorient their reflexive biography towards new circumstances (Giddens 1991a:142-143). This is especially significant when these fateful moments are numerous (Sennett 1998, Bauman 2002a, Skelton 2005, Mackenzie et al. 2006, Warrington 2008). Therefore the work-based components of Cole and Durkheim's theories, although requiring supplementing, still have useful points for a late modern world, and the workplace maintains its functional significance.

This returns us to economic inequality. The political sociology of Beck and Giddens tends to take a supportive attitude towards politics as currently formed; liberal democracy is good, we just need more of it. The unspoken factor behind this has been the increasingly unequal nature of late modern societies, especially the UK, partly due to the neoliberal economics which are conducted in many of them. Sometimes this has been simply wished away, such as in Giddens' suggestion that we should focus on the 'goods' of modernity (surplus production) and not the 'bads' (inequality) (Giddens 1994a:100-101). Beck does take economic inequality a bit more seriously by, along with Bauman, suggesting the universal minimum income. But generally, when inequality is discussed it involves making the case for new forms of inequality, such as Giddens' discussion of social exclusion 'at the top' (Giddens 1994a, 1998b, Diamond and Giddens 2005) and Beck's discussion of 'cosmopolitan inequalities' (Beck 2005b, 2007). Bauman, as always, is distinct from this since inequality, in all its forms, but especially poverty – which he terms 'meta-humiliation'³ – figure large in his account of late modernity. On the other hand Bauman's supposed assertion that class is no longer

³ 'Poverty is not one humiliation among many socially caused humiliations...It is a "meta-humiliation" of sorts, a soil on which all-round indignity thrives, a trampoline from which "multiple humiliation" is launched' (Bauman and Tester 2001:154).

a central term (Bauman 1982)⁴ means some have argued that his sociology can fit quite easily into the middle class claims of Giddens and Beck (Atkinson 2008). This often overlooks the continuing role of class in Bauman's work, for example his claim that late modern society continues to be a 'class society' and that the inequalities this produce are a *collateral casualty* of profit-driven, uncoordinated and uncontrolled globalization' (Bauman 2011a:4). Despite this, a reluctance to acknowledge economic inequality has often been the first, and most effective, criticism thrown at the sociology of late modernity, especially since the emergence of a post-scarcity order is taken as one of the bases for Giddens' late modern political claims (Giddens 1994a:12).

The principle here involves recognising the continued role of economic activity to individuals' activity, and in turn, its continually social nature. As a result, the ability to take part in the political opportunities brought about by late modernity can be hampered by one's economic position. Bauman's individuality *de facto* requires resources to be effective, much as Fraser earlier suggested that recognition *requires* redistribution (Fraser 1997). Socialisation could help produce more equality within organisations, for example through the setting of wage differentials. Also, as Durkheim suggested, the role of socialisation is to bring the distribution of resources within democratic consideration. This means socialisation being conceptualised as the submitting of currently purely privately held capital to subjectivity exercised democratic forms.

In short then, the argument for socialisation continues to have a place in late modernity. To reflect the late modern concern of developing political activity within a collective form, it would seem worthwhile to see socialisation not as nationalisation but rather as the utilisation of democratic forms both within the organisation, as an association, and of those who use it or are otherwise interested parties. This leaves the question of how socialised allocative resources are to be distributed. One way of distributing allocative resources socially is the basic income, which is seen as of especial late modern concern.

The Basic Income and Libertarian Socialism

⁴ I use the term 'supposed' since, although this text is frequently cited as Bauman's rejection of class (often by people who only read the title); it is actually an argument that the corporatist conception of class, based upon a Keynesian form of social control, is no longer relevant. since: 'The consumer orientation, first developed as a by-product, and an outlet, of the industrial pattern of control, has been finally prised from the original stem and transformed into a self-sustained and self-perpetuating pattern of life' (Bauman 1982:179)

The basic income (or citizens' income) is a policy whereby all citizens receive a minimum income, irrespective of work done or sold. This concept has a long pedigree and has received support from across the political spectrum, Right to Left, with slight changes depending on the advocate and audience (cf. Fitzpatrick 1999). It is especially relevant for this thesis due to its support across many of the perspectives utilised in this thesis. Cole advocated the basic income (1920a:146, Fitzpatrick 1999:42) since: 'a well-organised society would distribute as private incomes to its members just enough to buy the entire current supply of individually consumable goods and services' (Cole 1935:253) a long-term goal, rather than immediate policy (Cole 1929:187-189). It has also seen support from late modern political sociology (Beck 1992:149, Bauman 1999), forms of associative democracy (Hirst 1994, Cohen and Rogers 1995), Marxist researchers (Devine 1988, Wright 2004), those hoping to revive social democracy post-New Labour (Lawson 2010, Jordan 2010), and those of more liberal/radical democracy positions (Dahl 1982, Van Parijs 1995, Pateman 2004). In light of this it is not surprising for Fitzpatrick to suggest that it is a policy 'whose time has come' with late modernity (1999:35).

For the purpose of this discussion we can follow Bauman's categorisation of this idea into either 'policy' based or 'philosophically' based justifications (Bauman 1999:182). For Bauman these two are mutually reinforcing, but the latter is superior. The 'policy' justification presents the universal wage as a policy for lessening poverty and as the most effective weapon at the hands of the welfare state in its attempt to ensure a safety net for all⁵. The philosophical justification on the other hand suggests that the wage would be useful as a means of providing a financial recognition of the value of citizenship and by proving the enabling rights for individuals to become politically active. This is especially significant for Bauman given his focus on the ability for individuals to engage within the public sphere as a result of their own individual security (Bauman 1999:182). As a result, this philosophical justification is superior since it not only has a wider scope, but ensures that the universal wage does not end up being attacked and picked apart as so many other policies aimed solely at the lessening of poverty have been.

⁵ As shown in Devine's advocacy. He suggests that in his imagined socialist society very few would take up their wage, since their basic needs would be taken care of through work and thus those who took up the wage would be considered lazy (Devine 1988:206).

The appeal of such a policy is clear. By releasing time it may be able to give individuals more chance to engage in their associations' democratic activity; it brings post-scarcity as part of a universal appeal. It also seems to provide the individual freedom to be political actors by curing the major collective ill, inequality and poverty. Nevertheless there is a notable problem in this policy; its resource-heavy nature (Levine 1995). Fitzpatrick highlights how the main disagreements over the basic income emerge once we go beyond the 'minimal model' (say £5 a week) to an income which is large enough to make a difference but yet not enough to be unaffordable. He suggests, given current conditions, once all the savings that would be made from combining the various forms of welfare are taken into account, the income would vary between £45-61 a week (Fitzpatrick 1999:39). Taking the most optimistic estimate leaves us at the half the £6,000 level suggested by Hirst as most effective (1994). It could be argued however that this is based on a low tax base, and an increase in taxation levels, to those suggested of 65-80%, could make the policy more achievable (Fitzpatrick 1999:40 ff.). This however causes an additional problem: even if the means of production were socialised and centrally directed the sheer amount of capital required to finance the policy, before even considering the state's other obligations – e.g. what if people spend their basic income and have greater needs? (White 2004) – would mean the generation of profit would be central to the state's activities. Thus, it may adopt an 'ends justify the means' approach, the search for efficiencies would perhaps be as brutal as currently experienced. Thus, although the results of such a policy would be desirable the impact of its implementation may open up issues of the relation between the state and capital (here social rather than private). The criticisms of the capitalist state as being dependant on capital (Miliband 1969) would seemingly still exist. The state becomes dependent upon socialised capital accumulation.

So, the basic income may raise problems which make its realisation problematic. In addition to those mentioned above, the policy seems, in the short term at least, politically unlikely (Bauman 1999). A step towards a more achievable and useful measure could be the adoption of a 'partial basic income', whereby those most in need are guaranteed an income (Fitzpatrick 1999:39-40) to aid their individuality *de facto* (Bauman 2007a). Therefore, I would argue the reliance of the basic income as an immediate political alternative for late modernity needs some reconsideration. If it is to be taken as a normative desire – for which, taking Bauman's conception of

individualization, it seems to be worthwhile – this should, much like Cole’s original advocacy, be seen in gradualist terms.

The importance of the basic income can also be seen as exaggerated when we give further consideration to Bauman’s work. For Bauman, this *de facto* individuality is not purely about *having* allocative resources, but rather about their *utilisation* as consumers in a ‘consumer society’ (Bauman 2005b, 2007b). As part of this let us now turn to an area where this individual economic and political activity is seen to be carried out in late modernity: the consumer market.

Consumerism

When discussing economic democracy the workplace is only half the topic, the other half is consideration of economic activity as consumers. Consumerism, as noted in chapter two, figures heavily in Bauman’s discussion of late modernity. This section considers to what extent this central late modern economic and social role can also be given political representation and institutionalisation. For this discussion it is important to flag up a distinction Bauman himself makes between ‘consumerism’, as a central process of late modernity, and ‘consumption’, a human inevitability (Bauman 2007b:25-26).

Consumerism relies on the late modern processes identified by Bauman: the reconciliation of the reality and the pleasure principle, the valuing of freedom at the expense of security, the constant ‘melting’ of any solid structures and the need to self-identify central to individualization. The individual’s entry into the consumer market is one of being confronted by a plethora of choices, which each promise not only satisfaction, but the realisation of freedom resulting from the act of choosing (Bauman 2007b:44). Thus not only does consumerism seem to offer a certain amount of freedom (Bauman 1988, 1996), but also a certain semblance of security, as long as one is able to keep up with the trends (Bauman 2007b).

Bauman’s criticisms of the limited nature of the freedom appeal within consumerism have already been covered (Bauman 1992a, see chapter two). This ineffectiveness is due to the denial of the social and moral at the heart of consumerism (itself a reflection of these processes within individualization), and also its existence outside an institutionalised political structure which offers the ability to be political active:

‘Consumerism promises something it can’t deliver. It actually promises universality of happiness. Everybody is free to choose, and, if everybody is let into the shop, then everybody is equally happy. That is one duplicity. Another duplicity is the limitation of its pretence that you resolve the issue of freedom completely once you offer a consumer freedom. So it is a reduction of freedom to consumerism. That is the other duplicity. People are led into forgetting that there could also be other ways of self-assertion than simply buying a better outfit’ (Bauman 1992a:225)

It is here that libertarian socialism can be useful since in Cole’s work a role for consumers is imagined (Cole 1920a:78-95). Via such a scheme it could be possible to build upon the role of self-determination within consumerism and tie it to an effective form of political expression and individual political agency.

For Cole consumer representation would take place at both regional and local levels and take two specific institutional forms, co-ops to represent specialised consumption (i.e. that of products or services) and collectives to represent collective forms of consumption, such as utilities (Cole 1920a:83). These bodies are then charged with the responsibility of voicing the consumer’s demands to the producer bodies and negotiating the realisation of these demands. This partly occurs through the commune, both central and regional, but can involve forms of direct negotiation, as well as forums for the producer bodies, themselves also consumers, to negotiate (Cole 1920a:89). These forms of negotiation are effectively Cole’s form of economic planning (Cole 1920a:93-94). Behind this of course lies the universal nature of consumption, which makes it into a functional activity. It is possible to imagine the direct application of the model of the *collective* as outlined by Cole; these could be based within a local area and focus either upon specific utilities (say a form for water consumption, another for electricity and so on). A similar contention is found in Durkheim’s claim that the more pluralised and specialised forms of consumptions may lead to consideration of how consumers can voice their demands (Durkheim 1984:liv). However, it would seem that consumerism has advanced since Cole and Durkheim wrote, what difference could this make?

There are clear logistical problems here: firstly, consumerism has become, as part of the wider choice agenda noted in chapter five, not only more political in late modernity, but also more specialised. The sheer amount and diversity of consumer goods available, especially those which we could term ‘non-essential’, is unmatched by the society

which Cole confronted⁶. This poses problems concerning the amount of consumer representation, and how specialised it should be. Secondly, and partly due to this specialisation, certain forms of consumerism may be more regular than others in individual's lives. For example the buying of clothes would be relatively regular and even more so when compared to the consumption of something irregular, such as furniture. This then raises questions of how do we understand exactly what 'the consumer' is at certain points, since this group of people would seemingly change at differing times. In this sense consumerism is akin to other late modern trends, it is privatised and, whilst maintaining some form of regularity, due to its individualized nature has a certain specialised and differentiated nature. Finally, the extent to which consumer representation displaces (and removes the need for) markets. In Cole's scheme they remove the market, since the collectives and the guilds engage in a process of negotiation via the commune, a similar process occurs in Devine's (1988) scheme of negotiated co-ordination. Whilst this does not remove market exchange, it does remove 'market forces', which are defined by their self-interested and 'coercive' nature (Devine 1988:5-24). In the suggested implementation of Devine's scheme however, the large amount of 'negotiated coordination bodies', concerned with the production and consumption of goods, introduces a large element of planning, albeit democratic planning (Devine 1988:235-258)⁷. On the other hands forms of associative democracy without socialist aspirations, such as Hirst and Cohen and Rogers, imagine forms of consumer representation existing alongside some forms of markets. These concerns can partly be answered by adjusting Cole's scheme to late modern conditions.

In effect it is possible to draw a distinction between two roles and purposes for forms of consumer political organisation; one is representation, the other planning. Each of these often involves the other, but is not restricted to it. Consumer representation is the principle that consumers, as economic actors, should have some form of forum for voicing their desires and being capable of political action. This also concerns the recognition that consumption, as a moral and political act, could be brought into the wider political and moral considerations of civil society. This is the founding premise

⁶ Cole did consider different preferences of consumption, but this was mostly different preferences of the same product, rather than of different non-essential products, as in the following: 'One housewife prefers a 'Ewbank' and another a 'Star Vacuum Cleaner': one smoker fancies cut plug and another John Cotton; and these differences are matters of taste and opinion as much as of price' (Cole 1920a:81).

⁷ The role of the market partly differs my scheme from Devine's work. There are other differences, suggested in the possible criticisms section below.

of Cole's work, where consumerism is a function and thus requires representation. Given the inevitability of consumption the principle of consumer representation, especially given consumerism's continued non-economic forms of justification, is a desirable normative principle to develop in late modernity. Consumer planning on the other hand extends and enhances this representation in order to argue that it replaces the market in order to co-ordinate economic activity. The justification for this can be based upon the same justification as representation, i.e. to make consumer's demands effective they must become binding in a form of negotiation, or can be advocated on a broadly 'anti-market' basis. The combining of these two seems plausible in the case of the collective, utilities based, forms of consumerism. However, in the more specialised forms of consumption, the combining of representation and planning could lead to undemocratic ends, since the transitory and episodic nature of some forms of consumerism could mean decisions are made based upon the negotiation of a select group who do not represent the desire of all consumers of the product. The alternative would be either to require membership of a collective before becoming a consumer, which seems incredibly time-consuming and over-bureaucratic, or to organise economic activity into large bodies which provide everything an individual could need, kinds of libertarian socialist hypermarkets. Needless to say the limited capability for specialisation in the latter form makes the scheme undesirable.

The principle instead should be one of supplementing market entry to create another point of entry in addition to those outlined thus far. This can in turn build upon already present trends within late modernity. As we have seen, consumerism is one field in which people try to express political (Adams and Raisborough 2008, Pleyers 2010:240-242) and ethical (Hoggett et al. 2007, Connolly and Prothero 2008) agency. This is also reflected in the success of certain companies who advertise themselves as 'ethical', such as the Co-op (Co-operative Bank 2008, Co-operative Group 2010). What is often missing is the ability, and the forum, for individuals to 'test' these claims, and to express how the political agency of the companies themselves should be exercised. Such consumer representation bodies could exist on a company basis, or for a certain consumer good. If we follow Cole's principle that consumer activity requires representation with late modern adjustments we can see links to what has been outlined already concerning political individualization.

The implication of this is that markets remain. Their continuing role is recognition of possible criticisms of the libertarian socialist model which utilises forms of associative democracy, most notably what Cohen and Rogers (1995) call the need for an 'exit'. It is argued that a model which relies heavily upon associations will have two flaws: the loss of individuality and divisionalism. With regard to the first, it could be said that by placing democratic forms within individuals' collective activities this model forces individuals to collectively identify and be collectively organised, not furthering their individuality, but denying it. This then leads to the second claim, that by encouraging these forms of associational politics we create a situation in which each association will simply follow its own interest and ignore the wider social interests. In response to the first claim I would point out that this model is not claiming to invent or force forms of collective identification, but rather recognises that collective identification already occurs, best seen in the Bourdieuan critique of individualization. It is in fact this very collective identification which becomes the basis for forms of individual political expression, as in Plummer's (2003) intimate citizenship. Libertarian socialism is simply aiming to give these collective forms an area for expression, an *agora* space. This recognises that individuals may still wish to remain outside an associational form, to forego their political agency, with the exception of voting in the occasional national or local election, much as we have now, therefore associational membership should not be seen as compulsory⁸, but rather as an option individuals have for political expression, not creation. To make this a worthwhile option individuals should have the possibility of going about their basic lives without associational membership, including the buying of goods, which of course requires a market for those not part of a consumer association. Those within the associations may decide to receive their goods directly, rather than venturing onto the market. Also, as market consumption is a significant form of self-identification it would seem arrogant and authoritarian to wish to remove it totally, rather than to supplement and improve it.

⁸ The compulsory nature of the associations under libertarian socialism is somewhat problematic. It seemed that Cole imagined the associations would be compulsory due to the inevitable actions of producing and consuming (1920a). Durkheim confronts the issue more directly by arguing that it is unimportant, whether the associations are made compulsory or not 'once constituted, a collective force draws into its orbit those who are unattached: any who remains outside are unable to hold their ground' (Durkheim 1992:39). This is partly due to Durkheim's work-based focus, and his role of imagining the associations as, effectively, trade unions (Durkheim 1992:9-10). Their role in creating professional ethics was partly behind Durkheim's antipathy to trade unions as formed at the time (Durkheim 1908).

So what of the second claim, of increased divisions? It would be impossible to deny that there is a possibility of this in any model which relies upon associational forms and it may be that in practice there would need to be rules put down to lessen the, ‘problem of faction’ (Cohen and Rogers 1995). However, we should also consider the opposite claim, that membership of associations can lessen conflict by placing the desires on the individual within a collective concern. Part of the Foucauldian critique of individualization highlighted how the implementation of neoliberal technologies of the self has led to individuals taking steps which reassert a collective concern (Brady 2007, Ferguson 2007). The realisation of individuality has gone hand in hand with the realisation of moral responsibility this brings (Bauman 1993, 2008a). The concern can often be discerning the collective concern; how I, as an individual, ‘fit’ into the social network. Therefore the associations may help to bring into the view the ‘social interests’ of the individual which are currently ‘dimly perceived...because they are exterior to himself (sic)’ and thus the association, as an *agora* can help ‘bring them to mind’ (Durkheim 1992:14). In this sense, solidarism exists *within* individual activity. Once again, this doesn’t ignore the importance of having an exit, such as the market but does suggest the concern with divisions may be less of an automatic concern than assumed. I should also make it clear that I am not arguing a libertarian socialist system will create a change in the orientation of individuals, to a more collective form. Instead I am arguing such a system could give ‘face’ (Bauman 1990a) to the currently unknown, but exercised, moral considerations of individuals.

State and Market under Libertarian Socialism

The presence of markets may lead the reader to argue that I am following a trend notable in late 20th Century socialist theory towards ‘market socialism’ (Miller 1989, Bardhan and Roemer 1993, Ollman 1998). After all, I have suggested that allocation of goods will continue to be, perhaps dominantly, via the market and have also suggested that the market could continue to be a form of self-identification. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to outline the detail of and the arguments, both for and against, market socialism (cf. Pierson 1995)⁹. Instead I suggest purely that libertarian socialism, as

⁹ For a further discussion of how libertarian socialism, especially Cole’s formation of it, differs from market socialism, please see Wyatt (2004:71-74). The major concern here is the way in which market socialism uses market forces to achieve socialist ends, whilst libertarian socialism uses the associations for these. Hence my focus below on allowing associations to decide what is worthwhile activity, rather than the ‘amoral’ character of the market.

imagined here, would not be a form of market socialism since I am not advocating the use of the market as a means of achieving socialist goals, which lie with the associations. It would be more accurate to term this a form of ‘socialism with markets’ (Tomlinson 1990). However, this does not overcome the problems that could remain with the maintaining of markets, for the sake of this thesis I will mention the main two. The first is that any form of ‘socialism with markets/market socialism’ would inevitably mean that socialist goals would be sacrificed at the altar of markets, which are intrinsically unequal and anti-socialist. For Tomlinson (1990) the advocacy of them means the capitulation of the Left to the ideology of the neoliberal Right. The second criticism leads on from this, since markets are so unequal any socialist system will require so much state regulation in order to make them equal that it could slip into the problems of authoritarian state socialism (Pierson 1995). I will deal with these points in turn.

The first criticism concerns whether markets could overrule the extension of the democratic principle. For example an association may decide to provide a certain good, which not only is the worker’s choice but also takes account of the specialised skills available to them, but the market (made up of those not members of the association, as producers or consumers) could reject this good, meaning the democratic decision of the association is overruled by the impersonalised force of the market. Here we return to Durkheim’s concern of the ‘amoral character’ of the market determining all other activity. His hope was that allowing the associations to self-govern their function would ensure that the activity within them was autonomously decided according to the professional ethics of the grouping rather than the ‘moral vacuum’ that exists when the market determines activity (Durkheim 1992:12). The late modern context of this is the growth of neoliberal conceptions of the market as a guiding principle and the development of technologies of the self noted in the Foucauldian critique of individualization. This poses new challenges – the amoral character of economic life spreads ever further – but also new possibilities by, as noted in chapters one and four, creating situations in which the extension of neoliberal techniques can lead to the critique of those very principles. As we have seen the very nature of the ‘amoral’ character of economic life is what leads to the reassertion of moral activity within individualization, as an extension of, and a counterpoint to, the choice it emphasises (Bauman 1993, 2008).

The principle here, that groupings of individuals determine their own activity is one which would be worthwhile following and one that the state could encourage through subsidising activities. Thus markets are subordinate to the civic morals generated by democratic forms and this could lessen the ability of the markets to disrupt individually determined activity. It seems likely that, even with this in place, some groups would choose to follow the demands of the market and make profit. Here the work of Nove can be a useful guide. For Nove (1983:210-211) profit itself is not objectionable from a socialist viewpoint, but rather the *private* appropriation of it. An excess amount of profit could be used to subsidise the activities of some groups, working with the principle that individuals, not the market, determine their activity.

This leads onto the role of the state and Pierson's criticism, the concern of which is allocative resources. These are defined as capital in its many forms, the distribution of these and the regulation of activities which centre upon monetary exchange (for example banking regulation). In these roles the LMLSS would largely maintain its current role, and in many cases may take an even more central position than it has under neoliberal conditions. The use of a central state body here has obvious advantages, since the capital roles require a body not only large enough to collect the resources and distribute them, but which is also able to apply these rules consistently over a large area. However, it also uses the associations as a form of distribution; recognised and regulated by those who act within the association. This is especially significant in a late modern context whereby, following Durkheim, such an unequal distribution of allocative resources is partly caused by the lack of directly accountable, function specific, forms of governance which could allow for an equitable, and recognised distribution (Durkheim 1952). Also, the role of the state as providing collective representations means its socialisation of resources is recognised as legitimate

However, this does not mean that these economic roles cannot still influence other societal processes. It is partly the inability of the state to limit this fully which led Durkheim to favour the associational forms (Durkheim 1984:liv). Whilst the state would still have a major role in demarcating, and restricting, the spread of economic considerations (cf. Durkheim 1992), the associations would provide areas where alternative moral considerations can be born from professional ethics. The role of libertarian socialism here is to provide an alternative expert system, emerging as part of the associations, as to the role of the state whilst also moving some market regulation

down to the associations directly involved within those markets (Durkheim 1992:36). This ensures that the specificity of the good and circumstances of the market do not get lost within the wider social concerns. In short, that market regulation is done in order to recognise the importance of individual autonomy, rather than capital accumulation. This is a way of moving the concern from the corrosive aspects of neoliberal policy found in the Foucauldian critique, and more towards the positive forms of technologies of the self. Hence, this thesis' response to Pierson's criticism is that whilst it is important to caution against the state becoming too enlarged, the role of a strong market regulator is not necessarily negative, as long as this does not pollute other roles, which can also be achieved by moving some regulation down to the associations and restricting the state's role in the distribution of authoritative resources.

Transition

Thus far in this chapter I have argued that economic inequality continues to be a major concern for late modern political sociology, and for the libertarian socialist critique thereof. Therefore, a form of socialisation via democratic forms could be significant to aid towards a more equitable distribution of money within the organisation, whilst a partial basic income outside the associations could also help lessen this inequality. The prevalence of consumerism within late modernity also feeds into the role of consumer representation imagined by Cole, and we have seen how this could be accounted for given the late modern nature of consumption. All of what has been said above would continue the process in previous chapters of building up forms of associational, democratic activity within individuals' lifeworlds' in order to allow multiple points of access to the political realm beyond the state, and also to allow individuality *de facto* to be more readily available.

At this point the discussion of this thesis has come full circle. Having outlined the potential form of a libertarian socialist society the question remains of how realistic the transition to this is? How would we get there? It seems that every text which deals with a possible socialist form will eventually turn to a discussion of the transition phase. It is this section which is often the most troubling. This is not due to what is said therein (although this can sometimes be most troubling) but instead in the section's very appearance. Any outline of a political system which, detailed as it may be, can be perceived as advisory and embryonic can suddenly achieve a blueprint like status when

tied to an outline of a transitory period. It is this which makes me careful when outlining how a transition could occur; nevertheless there is an obvious need for such a discussion. If this system is appropriate for late modernity, how could it be achieved? The shortness of this sketch is reflective of the fact that the system outlined in this thesis is not intended to be a literal blueprint, but rather something offered in conversation, in this sense a hermeneutical device¹⁰. Rather it is an instigation to conversation and critique for Left wing politics and sociology in late modernity.

A transition period would have two characteristics. The first is the factor of encroaching control outlined by Cole (1920a), whereby socialisation is not achieved overnight, but instead via a process of more and more parts of society and the state being submitted to democratic control. As highlighted by Poulantzas (1978:138) some areas are more at the control of the state than others, hence this process can happen more quickly in some areas than others. This socialisation might well begin in the economic sphere, but would extend beyond the economic sphere into other areas. This could be tied to a wider theme of devolution which, as noted earlier, has come to be the rhetoric of political parties. This encroaching control then allows for experimentation with different forms and also gives the time needed to establish it as an attractive alternative across many areas of social life.

However, this is more a description of the implementation of the libertarian socialist system, rather than a discussion of pure transition; there would need to be a government sympathetic to libertarian socialism in place for this to happen. It is here where the major challenge for transition would need to occur. The key would be an ideological challenge, to try to unite the many different social movements present in late modern society around the counter-culture of late modernity. I do not presume this would mean converting all to libertarian socialism, but rather to the recognition and promulgation to an alternative to neoliberalism. This in turn would eventually need the forum of a political party to have it realised. In the 'neoliberalism and ideology' section I highlight some possible sources of such a counter-culture.

Before this, I turn to possible criticisms, I have already covered some of these (divisionalism, loss of individuality) but there are others which concern who would participate.

¹⁰ The role of hermeneutics within late modern political sociology is expanded upon in the conclusion.

Possible Criticisms: The 'New Individual', Time and The Non Politically Active Individual

To what extent does the transition to socialist politics require (or lead to) the emergence of a 'new individual'? By this I mean someone who is no longer concerned with narrow self-interest and more concerned with the collective interest. For Devine (1988) it is exactly this potential transformation which is of importance to any socialist system. In advocating his system of 'negotiated coordination' (mostly an economic measure, but also one of general governance) he claims that it:

'Offers the possibility of those involved of modifying their perceptions and behaviour in the light of a detailed awareness of the way in which their own interests are interdependent with those of others. Thus, while conflicts of interests are not wished away, the process incorporates a transformatory dynamic in which particular interests are viewed in relation to one another and are integrated into a socially constructed general interest at each level of decision-making' (Devine 1988:189)

He describes this as a shift from 'subaltern' to 'hegemonic' consciousness (Devine 1988:143). It is for the lack of such a transformatory dynamic that he criticises market socialists, and those associated with this project, such as Nove (1983). There is a troubling aspect to this claim however. Devine starts on solid sociological ground, by arguing that individuals will be impacted by the social surroundings in which they find themselves, but then asserts a more troubling claim by saying that this impact *will be* the development of a specifically socialist hegemonic consciousness. Such a prediction is troubling since it assumes, to some extent, that individuals can be viewed as blank slates and thus adopts an inherently behaviourist viewpoint. Instead we should accept the possibility that changes in behaviour are unpredictable, either wholly or in part. Although we can make suggestions based upon our current understanding of behaviour – much as I did above concerning the possibility of a collective 'face' – and some outcomes are more likely than other, definite predictions beyond this are to be warned against. Especially when, like Devine's, they tread on the grounds of social engineering. It is this focus on the importance of the 'transformatory dynamic', which for Devine is

central to any socialist politics (Devine 1988:106) which presents a difference between my conception of socialism and Devine's¹¹.

Instead I would suggest that the view of Durkheim is more useful for suggesting that what a form of socialism may allow is for the *awareness* of a plurality of interests. This becomes important for the democratic process of negotiation by helping the individual become reflexively aware of plurality. However, I would hedge against Nove's suggestion that currently individuals have only self-interest to pursue (Nove 1983:4). The latter is a significant flaw in the new individual debate, namely that it often equates the 'capitalist' individual wholly with self-interest and the 'socialist' individual is equated with wider interests¹². As shown in chapters four and five, there are clear attempts to act in a moral fashion via the market, the problem is that these are limited (Miller 1998, Zelizer 2007, Adams and Raisborough 2008, Connolly and Prothero 2008). Any change in forms of democratic governance are therefore not about 'changing' individual's ideas of interest, but instead ones of opening up the possibility for these forms of action, which are currently restricted and/or ineffectual, to provide an outlet for individualized action to become *de facto* individualized. Transformatory dynamics raise multiple concerns, especially when what they claim to 'transform' people into already exists.

As a second criticism, it could be suggested that multiple forms of associational activity and government could be incredibly time consuming. Therefore it would be government by activists, rather than by everyday individuals. To reiterate an earlier point, libertarian socialism, as understood here, is not automatically a system of direct democracy, in fact the use of representative democracy is not only inevitable, but preferable given the multiple associations individuals may choose to be part of. Some smaller groups may choose direct democracy, but it is expected that representative forms would be the norm. Those representatives may well themselves be activists, but it is likely that, given the amount of associations, there will not be an activist 'elite'

¹¹ There is also another difference between our schemes. Whilst, as I suggest in the conclusion, the dividing line between Bauman's legislators and interpreters is not as clear cut as some have suggested, Devine certainly leans much more towards the legislative side (best shown in his 'blueprint' schema and his focus on 'transforming' individuals) that I favour in this thesis. Although, it should be said he is not alone, Giddens' focus on creating certain forms of life politics would certainly put him in the same group, despite his protestations (Giddens 1984, 1995b)

¹² Both Devine and Nove are guilty of this (at least at points), although, as I have said, they disagree on what the 'socialist' individual would be. It is also possible to find suggestions of this in Miliband (1994) and Cunningham (1987).

across the associations, but rather individuals chosen for reasons within the specific concern of the association. This means that whilst there may be certain individuals who are more willing/able to devote time to be representatives within the associational form they would (a) still be responsible to their voters within the association and (b) have a smaller realm of reference than the large one currently given to MPs. If this proves to be a notable issue it may be worthwhile to provide term limits or some level of pay for the representatives.

A third point is that such a system, by emphasising the desirability of multiple forms of democratic governance at many levels will be biased against two groups, the apolitical and the shy. These are separate issues, and I will deal with each in turn. When discussing the apolitical there is an important distinction to make. This is between those who could be described as ‘circumstance apolitical’ and ‘truly apolitical’. The first group includes those who may have an interest in politics, but do not engage in it due to the drawbacks of the political system of which they find themselves. This seems to be a rather substantial group in late modern Britain. Whilst this is sometimes put down to a general ‘apathy’ on the part of younger generations it has been shown that this group is as politically interested as any other, but is more inclined to feel that their voice is unheard, or that ‘political’ action (in the narrow sense) is pointless (Giddens 2007a:186-195). Let us make what seems to be a safe assumption, namely that such groups are apolitical because ‘politics’ seems withdrawn from and irrelevant to their daily lives (as suggested by Benton 1999, Ødegårda and Berglund 2008, Riley et al. 2010). In light of this it would seem possible that a form of governance which embedded within day-to-day activity may be able to ‘politicise’ these individuals, by allowing for an expression of their ideas and desires concerning the organisation of the society they find themselves in. As suggested in chapter three, it is partly the role of libertarian socialism to restore ‘trust in systems’ (Giddens 1990).

The truly apolitical are a separate group of people who, we can suggest, are entirely disinterested in politics and would not wish to engage with it, by which we can include simply voting occasionally up to activism, under any political system. There is possibly a tendency to underestimate the prevalence of such a group in political sociology (perhaps naturally given the topic matter). My response to this is to reassert that it would not be essential for individuals to join associations, or be democratically active within them, in order to have access to goods or services. These could be provided for

monetary exchange in much the same way as they are now. If individuals choose not to engage politically within a libertarian socialist system it is quite possible to imagine their life continuing much as it does currently. This may seem a slight on what has been suggested here, on the contrary, any system which aims to force individuals to be politically active or to enact major changes in lifestyle without the individual's desire to do so being freely expressed is one which would seem to have some authoritarian tendencies at its very base. I do acknowledge however the difficulties of forms of representative democracy to represent the apolitical. The benefit is that as long as individuals continue to vote it can claim some form of representative nature and this is true here. Once the relevant parties are taken into consultation (i.e. consumers, if applicable, local communities etc.) the idea of a select 'associational elite' holding all the influence is lessened. However, when it comes to the issue of the apolitical one must be honest and say that although a system can be set up to try to take consideration of their desires, by the very nature of being apolitical, this can be very difficult. I suspect this is true of many, if not all, political ideas however, including liberal democracy.

Finally, the shy. It could be argued that by emphasising forms of associational democracy, even if some forms have representative government, I am automatically overlooking that whilst some may be politically interested and driven, such a system would not be of benefit to them due to their shyness. There are two responses I would make to this claim. Firstly, it would be entirely possible to imagine some of these manifestations of democracy occurring via the internet. This could be true of discussions, petitions and electioneering. By placing this on such a platform it may go some way towards lessening the adverse impact of such proposals on the shy. Such proposals could be decided upon in specific cases, according to what is most appropriate. Secondly, since some forms of representative government seem inevitable in such a system, their utilisation should remove the pressure on the shy individual to be personally politically active, rather than active by proxy. Once again here, the monitoring of the representative's performance could also be done electronically, in a system akin to what is beginning to emerge from the British parliament. Being an 'active' member of an association can involve looking at information at one's convenience and voting as such, rather than attending meetings and taking part in debates. Whilst the argument against this is that it can lead to uninformed voting or

stifle debate, the information would be available in this setting for the individual to consider. Indeed, individual physical involvement in a debate is no guarantee that voting preferences will be ‘informed’ ones. Instead the concern is with ensuring individuals have the opportunity to be fully informed, as I have suggested here.

However, it is not enough to simply respond to criticisms. During the thesis’ introduction it was outlined how neoliberalism can be seen as more important in its ideological expression than in its material reality. If this is so the plausibility of the above type of economic system can be questioned. Therefore in the final section I wish to point to the role of libertarian socialism in responding to, and perhaps overcoming, this ideological claim.

Neoliberalism and Ideology

Part of the appeal of socialism as a form of late modern critique is that, most notably in the UK and US, it has become a stage where neoliberal ideology has achieved a close to hegemonic position. It has been highlighted during this thesis how the automatic linking of late modernity and neoliberalism is flawed, nevertheless the claims of neoliberalism maintain precedence despite the economic crisis into which they led. Socialism is useful here for exactly the reason that Bauman argues the socialist critique will always be present, that it is the ‘counter-culture’ of capitalism *and* modernity (Bauman 1976b, 1987c). By setting itself up against the claims of capitalist modernity it can become both a form of critique of the existing reality, and also a rallying point for the disparate dissident elements currently found within society. This section discusses to what extent such a counter-culture is possible in late modernity. Of course this is not to say that everything that it is anti-capitalist and particularly anti-neoliberalism is automatically ‘socialist’. It has not been my argument that there is a ‘libertarian socialist constituency’ waiting to vote in the policies as they are, rather that it offers a uniquely late modern view of critique and a possible alternative.

Consequently, I would argue that the form of libertarian socialism outlined in this thesis can offer what Laclau and Mouffe (2005) called the counter-hegemonic project. This starts at the very level of the individual. Here socialism goes against the claim of the neoliberal isolated and self-interested individual to argue that although individualization is a late modern reality this process is still relational and inequalities and forms of identification by association remain significant in the individual’s lifeworld. This was

especially found in the Bourdieuan critique of individualization and was the base of Bauman's assertion of the importance of ethical consideration to late modernity. Meanwhile, whilst neoliberalism aims at the reducing of the state in order to allow governance through the market, this model sees governance through self-defined and self-actualising associations, both economic and non-economic, with a state to arbitrate and be a distributor. In Durkheim's terms: insure that the state achieves the associational support of the society by resting upon a set of civic morals (Durkheim 1899a, 1992). In addition it argues that the 'usefulness' of activities is to be decided by individuals' democratic decisions, rather than the 'decisions' of the market. Locating places for such a counter-culture is always challenging for two reasons, firstly, because movements based upon a call to 'socialism' will inevitably mean very different things in this term, with perhaps few of them meaning something close to libertarian socialism. Secondly, if one notes other movements and argues their aims align with one's normative viewpoint it could be a case of overgeneralising their view, or ignoring certain parts of it. With these caveats in mind there are five sources of such a critique present in late modernity.

The first of these was mentioned at the start of this chapter, the credit crunch and ensuing recession, with the spending cuts this brings. This is a rare instance in which the problems of capitalism are not only demonstrated clearly, but also have a dramatic impact in many other spheres of social life. Whilst at the time of writing it seems that the consensus around a broadly neoliberal capitalism (at least in the UK) still holds many adherents, among the elite, if not the wider population, the role of the socialist critique is to link these disparate events not only into a specific instance of capitalist instability, but rather to the general functions of capitalism itself. Bauman's (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrado 2010) argument that the credit crunch was the logical realisation of late modern consumer capitalism would be a useful resource here. In the meantime it is possible to see counter-forms emerging around this. Movements such as 38 Degrees, mentioned in the last chapter, as well as demonstrations and strikes which emerged as a response to the Conservative government's cuts suggest a desire to reassert social considerations as part of government activity, rather than market considerations (cf. Jordan 2010). In light of the UK government's continuing cuts to benefits it also seems entirely plausible that the realisation of economic inequality, and poverty, will become even more central as well.

Secondly, and more related to late modernity generally, has been the general trend towards an acceptance of ‘devolution’ and ‘localism’, at least in the pronouncements (if not the actions), of the main political parties in the UK. Whilst slogans such as the ‘Big Society’ are used in a vague manner to make them almost meaningless or contradictory; the proclaimed, if not the acted upon, principle behind it, of individuals taking a greater role in the governance of their daily lives, fits into what this thesis has outlined. What the libertarian socialist critique is important for here is pointing out that for this to be effective it has to involve a transfer of power and responsibility twinned with an extension of democracy into the lifeworld of individuals. This is then a counter to the way in which ‘Big Society’ bodies can often be private interests, or profit-making industries. In this sense the libertarian socialist critique contained in this thesis is a late modern counter-culture, in the same way that Bauman saw state socialism as a counter-culture in simple modernity. Both start out with the same principles and end-goals, but argue it is their methods which can best achieve it. The counter-culture confronts neoliberalism on its own terms. Such counter-cultural promise is reflected in the way that, despite claims elections have become national, presidential, contests (Foley 1993, 2000) the contextual circumstances and class position of the individual continue to impact voter choices (Anderson et al. 2006, Johnston and Pattie 2006). The form of socialism used here is also significant; its focus on Cole, associations and individualism places it in the camp Bauman terms ‘British socialism’ itself initially a response against Marxist forms of socialism (Bauman 1972:172)¹³. Whilst it is not my claim that Marxist forms are no longer of value, the post-Cold War period, especially with the ‘Big Society’ focus, allows these theories to reassert their central claims and importance. This critique also suggests that it is no longer acceptable, if it ever was, to follow Giddens’ formula of arguing that we should focus on the ‘goods’ of liberal capitalism and pay less attention to the ‘bads’ (Giddens 1994a:100-101).

Thirdly, what can broadly be termed the ‘identity politics’ highlighted in chapter four. Throughout this thesis I have highlighted at various points the role of forms of late modern activism such as LGBT groups, green movements and feminist movements, as

¹³ By this Bauman means to suggest that in the early 20th Century socialist ideologies such as guild socialism, or some forms of Fabian socialism, aimed their critique just as much at the Marxist project as at capitalism, if not at Marx himself. In turn the focus here was often much on an ethical viewpoint and the place of the individual, along with a more ‘anti-intellectual’ standpoint. Despite this anti-intellectualism the tradition provided us with Cole, and the overlooked presence of Durkheim, who foreshadowed much of the British concern, partly due to his engagement with Marx and Proudhon (Durkheim 1897, 1899a, 1959).

well as less ‘identity based’ groupings such as UK Uncut and 38 Degrees. Limits of space have not allowed me to delve into these movements to the depth I would’ve liked, therefore the following comments are somewhat brief suggestions of their relevance to this thesis, rather than an in-depth discussion. Their relevance returns us to Pleyers’ (2010) argument concerning ‘the way of subjectivity’. By asserting the value of alternative ways of acting (rather than being politically active in a way which intends to make the current system ‘fairer’, which Pleyers terms ‘the way of reason’) activists not only present an alternative lifestyle, but critique the status quo, often drawing upon broadly anarchist forms of critique. For Brown (1995) this directly concerns a late modern conception of *individual* freedom. When the conception of freedom is placed within the dominant discourse of society, it comes to be seen via a neoliberal lens, i.e. defined by self-interest and market exchange. Brown focuses heavily, if not exclusively, on radical feminist and sexuality based movements which, while questioning this very conception of freedom by valuing non-economic or positive forms of freedom can also be categorised by sharing the following four characteristics (adapted from Brown 2001:38-40):

1. They are made up of ‘counterhegemonic cultural and political formations’ which not only relative discourse but also imagine themselves as ‘truer’ and more moral.
2. These movements are disparate and fragmented, often meaning all forms of power, especially horizontal power, are treated as a threat. This was also a major aspect of Pleyers’ aforementioned way of subjectivity, which he saw as defined by ‘anti-power’ (Pleyers 2010:90-104).
3. When discussed in academia and political they become essentialised and seen as defined by causes (i.e. the ‘troubles’ in Northern Ireland becomes purely a ‘Protestant vs. Catholics’ issue). This means their diversity and critique is effectively depoliticised due to others speaking on their behalf.
4. Although they have a strong form of critique, they have less of what Laclau and Mouffe (2005) would term a new hegemonic project and instead, due to their disparate nature, tend to seek more immediate goals.

Factors three and four are especially significant since, as found by other activism scholars (Cooper 2004, Fraser 2009), neoliberalism succeeds, often with the help of the contemporary Left, in reducing these to questions of ‘rights’, inevitably blunting the

critique and seeing equality as simply a quantitative measure (Brown 1995:23-29, Cooper 2004:196, ff.). The value of the libertarian socialist critique is its emphasis on allowing for the self-government of association with the recognition of forms of identification. In this sense, it seeks to allow for the critique and diversity listed as factors one and two above to have a form of institutional expression, without also reducing this to the coercive power of the state to 'recognise' (or not) certain groups' demands. This can go some way to fulfilling Cooper's (2004:201-207) goal of allowing for these 'counter-normative practices' to 'strengthen and amplify their capacity to dig into mainstream institutional and everyday life' without also blunting their radical nature (Cooper 2004:207). As Brown suggested above, while many of these movements do not possess a new hegemonic project, here libertarian socialism can play a possible role. Whilst of course this is not a 'natural' fit, the focus on the removal of the state within the anarchist critique of such and the focus on 'civic morals' within my conception of libertarian socialism are two obvious areas of conflict, the principles these movements suggests would seem relevant to late modern political forms. In effect, such groups build upon the utilisation of technologies of the self previously identified as part of the Foucauldian critique via the functionalisation mentioned earlier of such groups. Libertarian socialism seems more promising than the current neoliberal order for their practice and continuation.

Fourthly, the growth of the ethical consumer, whether regarding the environment or fair trade. As pointed out earlier in the thesis, the presence of such consumers can be exaggerated; nevertheless the emergence of them has led companies to sell themselves on their ethical credentials. The significance of this is twofold: firstly, the disconnect between the ethical claims of many companies and their actual practices can become a major news story. Perhaps the best example of this is BP's record after the 'Deepwater Horizon' spill. Such instances can make the ethical claims of companies hard for individuals to adjudicate between. In late modern language, the expert systems they appeal to rely on the impersonalised trust of individuals (Giddens 1990), however once trust in one of these is breached; it becomes more difficult to trust the other expert systems. The appeal of libertarian socialism is to place the knowledge of each company's operation within the democratic association itself; the expert systems become personalised. The second significance of the ethical consumer is that it signals something neoliberalism is not fully ready to confront, the other-orientated, rather than

purely self-orientated, actor (Mouzelis 2010). In this sense libertarian socialism recognises that although individualization can lead to self-constitution the ethical question of the other, as Bauman (1993) argues, maintains a central importance. This was also reflected in the Bourdieuan critique and was a central part of my argument that Bauman and Beilharz's 'individualized socialism', will inevitably take a social form (see chapter four). We can also turn to the consideration of voting here; despite claims of 'dealignment' (Sarlvik and Crewe 1983) as individuals consider issues of purely 'valence politics' (Stokes 1992), there is evidence to suggest personal identification with left-wing positions has remained relatively steady (British Social Attitudes Survey 2004, 2008, 2009, European Commission 2009) and some policies, such as the desire to have a controlling hand in the distribution of wages, has increased (Yougov 2009). It has also been suggested that those who hold left-wing positions will increasingly identify with the libertarian aspects of left-wing ideology (Kitschelt 1994).

Finally, the processes of late modernity increasingly find themselves frustrated by the governing settlement of neoliberalism and liberal democracy. In many ways this has been the guiding theme of this thesis and it is upon this ground that libertarian socialism can place its claim for an ideological project. In short, the claims for autonomy clash with the market forum in which these are pursued. The elective affinity between late modernity and neoliberalism can be greatly questioned and is not an inevitable connection.

Thus, whilst it is true that any project which goes against neoliberalism will need to have a strong ideological claim as part of this competition, libertarian socialism is useful here not only because it does offer the basis of such a claim, but also since some of these claims align with processes of late modernity which are frustrated by neoliberalism itself. I cannot claim to have done more than layout the basis of such a claim in this thesis, its full construction would inevitably involve a process of discovery and adaption. As I outline in the conclusion, this has not been an exercise in drawing a sociological blueprint, but rather an exercise in sociology as hermeneutics. So, perhaps the question to ask at the end of this is: where now for the political sociology of late modernity? The conclusion to this thesis will recap the argument made, and then consider this important question.

Conclusion: Where now for the political and Political Sociology of Late Modernity?

The goal of this thesis has largely been to question the political ends of late modern thinkers on the basis of their sociological observations. This has led towards an elaboration of an alternative political project which is influenced by the school of libertarian socialism. This concluding section recaps exactly why the socialist system outlined here is relevant to late modernity. This will be achieved by returning to the three tenets of libertarian socialism outlined in chapter three, and recapping how each could be realised in late modern forms.

But, reflexivity is not just a quality of those sociology studies in late modernity, but is also part of the way in which the discipline views itself. This concluding section is a reflexive consideration of the sociological worth of this thesis when sociology is conceptualised as, to use Bauman's term, an interpretative, rather than legislative science. It will be argued that, as suggested during the introduction, by outlining an alternative political form this thesis doesn't fall into the modernist legislative mode, but rather allows for an amplification of the hermeneutical project of critique found within Bauman's sociology. The object of the critique here is as much the sociology of late modernity as neoliberal capitalism or liberal democracy. I conclude by suggesting what may lie ahead for the sociology of late modernity, in Bauman's terms: what is the next rung of the hermeneutical circle?

The Three Tenets and Late Modernity

1. *The differentiation between individuals' functions is essential, and overlooked by liberal democracy-* The first tenet concerned the way in which liberal democracies make no distinction between individual's multiple functions and the way in which a democratic voice can be expressed in each of these. This was of course part of a broadly simple modern theory of libertarian socialism, so how is this significant for late modernity? The answer to this is twofold, firstly that the differentiation of functions has become more pronounced. This was due to late modern individualization meaning that service provision can become increasingly specialised and personalised. In turn the growth of expert systems means that forms of both labour and services can be the subject of differential expectations and points of orientation for those conducting them

or accessing them. In turn however it was essential to reconsider whether functional differential, as constructed in the theories of Cole and Durkheim, and focusing on one's occupation, was still relevant for late modernity. As covered in chapters four and seven, whilst the workplace would still be a significant site of identity formation and activity the central position this was assigned in these earlier theories can no longer be sustained. Thus the concept of identification was added to this, as an area in which democracy should be exercised upon the same basis as that advocated for by functional democracy. This means in turn that whilst individualization has accounted for the growth of individually-determined spheres of activity and realisation, the relational and collective nature of these (as noted in much of the Bourdieuan critique of individualization) must be fully recognised. This in effect means that late modern libertarian socialism must base its appeal upon multiple points of entry which provide the strengths of functional democracy twinned with the multiple forums of activity and identification individuals engage in. The result of this is that associational forms exist in many areas of social life, such as in the forms of identification covered in chapter four, and as consumers, as seen in chapter seven.

2. *Individuality can develop fully with the collective associational control of functions*- The original focus here was on the ways in which individuals have a chance to develop fully. It relied upon the ability to exercise democratic activity in many different functions in order to have a full realisation of communal needs. Hence, at the base of the appeal of Cole and Durkheim, was an assertion that individuality can only be fully developed within political systems of collective control. As discussed in chapters one, two and four, the emergence of individualization in late modernity can be more fully understood as embedded individualization. This is categorised by both an understanding of the effects of individualization being most prominent in the emergence of privatisation of collective concerns to the level of individuals, and the continuation of structural inequalities (partly now established through the reflexive awareness which is itself part of individualization). In this sense individuality is the starting point of late modernity, or to be more exact, it is the starting *demand* of late modernity¹. In turn however this individuality did not have a functional output; Bauman's distinction between individuality *de jure* and *de facto* brought home the realisation that some

¹ Hence the disembedded theory of individualization was not rejected, but rather was seen as an elaboration of the late modern 'common vocabulary of motives' (Mills 1940).

would be able to act out their individualized demands more easily than others, through their advantage in allocative and authoritative resources. In this sense the extension of democracy into individuals' everyday life, where these choices are developed – as covered in chapters four and five – can help overcome some of this inequality, by giving an outlet for these individualized desires. In turn the extension of associations was advocated as a way of achieving this. This is of course a collective form of political activity, not an individual. The reason for advocating this, and seemingly going against individualization was twofold. Firstly it relates to the previously noted collective nature within individualization, identification and orientation continues to be collective acts, in this sense it is worthwhile to recognise this. Secondly, much of these individualized desires occur within social fields which are, by their very nature, collective. For example consumption raises ethical questions which involve the other. In this sense late modern libertarian socialism would not be the spur to individuality, but rather the forum through which all would have the expression of it. Combined with policies of economic distribution and consumer representation this is not only linked to the devolving of authoritative resources, but also involves an evening out of allocative resources at the same time.

3. *Libertarian socialism exists as a counter-culture to neoliberalism-* The focus here is on socialism itself as a counter-culture, and in particular what role the libertarian socialist critique outlined here plays. In effect there are four aspects in which this critique has gone against the dominant ideals of neoliberalism and liberal democracy. Firstly the focus has been on individual demands, but in a way which is notably different to how individuals are formulated under neoliberalism (Bauman 2007c) and under more corporatist forms of capitalism (Abercrombie et al. 1986). This is the conception of the individual who has their own desires and identities, but yet also has both a collective orientation and experience of this individuality. Political individualization does not lead to individualized life politics, but rather to ways in which individuals have the chance to express their desires and views without the areas in which they gain this identity. Secondly, whilst neoliberalism and its allied concepts such as the Big Society rest upon the transfer of responsibility, this model rests upon not the transfer of responsibility, but of power to decide how that responsibility is carried out (this was discussed more fully in chapter five). Thirdly, as covered in chapters five and seven, this critique is also aimed at the market as a means of allowing for political

activity. In essence the centrality of the market has become a political shibboleth for perspectives not only of the Right, but of the Left². It has been argued here that whilst markets would remain (as both an ‘exit’, and as a way of providing for basic consumer needs) the centrality of it as a decision making body (i.e. having the ability to determine what action should, or should not, be conducted on the basis of its market appeal) would be removed and returned to the associations. This is particularly important in the context of late modernity, since the individualized choice advocated as part of embedded individualization is then blunted by the limits of market, as discussed in chapter six. Finally, the system of libertarian socialism partly takes its justification from the continued inequality of late modernity. It is this inequality which then justifies the extension of democracy into everyday life. This inequality was not only one of authoritative resources and ‘recognition’, but also of allocative resources and ‘redistribution’. The reflexivity of individuals will inevitably have a greater strain on those at the bottom of the social hierarchy who are forced to aim their reflexivity to a higher level (see chapter four) and the distinction between individuality *de jure* and *de facto* increases in line with this inequality. In this sense the system outlined here fits with Bauman’s claims of how socialism is a counter-culture (Bauman 1976b, 1987c). But, more significantly, it has become the counter-culture of late modernity in its neoliberal expression. The counter-culture of libertarian socialism has effectively ‘come of age’.

Bauman, Hermeneutics and the Question of ‘Political’ Sociology

During the introduction I laid claim to this thesis being a form of sociology. Nevertheless it would be true to say it has been a certain type of sociology, not just ‘political sociology’, in the sense that the analysis has focused upon both contemporary political structures and the ways in which political action occurs. But, also ‘Political sociology’, in the sense that it has been guided by a normative vision, and has set out an alternative political project. The fact that much of the basis of this alternative project has relied upon the sociology of Bauman would seem to open it up to criticism: doesn’t Bauman’s very sociological view rest upon the unattractiveness of the role of the ‘legislator’? Whilst this doesn’t mean the end of normative sociology in late modernity, it may well mean the end of normative sociology backed up by a political project, hence

² Here I point towards Tomlinson (1990) and Pierson’s (1995) critique of market socialism, as well as Bauman’s views on Giddens, which have been covered in this thesis (1993, 2000b, 2007c).

Bauman's own reluctance to suggest alternatives, as noted in chapter two. It may be argued that despite my claims I have actually done quite a bit of 'legislating' in this thesis; suggesting alternatives and outlining some of their institutional form. There are two reasons why I believe such a reading of Bauman's sociology, and the suggestion that I have adopted the role of the legislator, is false.

Firstly, as noted in chapter two the suggestion that it is only with the shift to late modernity that the role of the legislator becomes inappropriate rests upon a limited reading of Bauman's sociology pre-*Legislators and Interpreters*. Bauman's critique of the Bolshevik project rests on the claim that Lenin et al., as intellectuals, belong in the civil sphere, rather than in government (Bauman 1976b, 2011b). Also, in *Hermeneutics and Social Science* (1978), he outlines a view of sociology in which the impossibility of objective truth claims about the social world is seen not as an obstacle, but as an opportunity to embrace, one which opens up the role of the sociology as entering into a privileged position. This position is one which aims at reintegrating understanding and communal life (Bauman 1978:246). This occurs through the presentation of interpretations, themselves then re-interpreted and represented through conversations with the objects of sociological analysis, unique in that that they are both objects and subjects (Bauman 1978:36). It is this process which Bauman terms the 'method of sociological hermeneutics' (Bauman 1978:246). Bauman traces this conception of the social sciences back to, at the earliest, Marx, whilst also noting its role in the work of thinkers such as Weber, Husserl and Heidegger. Simply put, the hermeneutical approach, with the sociologists as an interpreter, is the only one open to a sociology which not only recognises the subjectivity of its objects, but also which aims at human emancipation. All other approaches for Bauman not only lessen the unique and valued role of sociology in favour of making it a lesser cousin of the natural sciences but also have a closed political ending. Their discussion 'helps as much as a painstaking description of the technology of making nooses helps the convict to overcome his fear of the gallows' (Bauman 1978:193)³.

This then leads onto the second point. If we accept Bauman's view of the inevitably hermeneutical and interpretative nature of sociology we must reject what he terms

³ Guilty of such an approach in Bauman's view are the sociologies of Durkheim, Comte, Shutz and the, broadly defined, school of ethnomethodology (Bauman 1978:15, 172-193). I would argue Durkheim's inclusion with Comte involves a misreading of Durkheim common to much late modern sociology (Mestrovic 1998).

‘engineering-via-manipulation’ (i.e. legislating) but, this leaves the path open for what he terms ‘engineering-via-rationalisation’ (Bauman 2007c:237). Bauman’s terminology here is unusually sloppy. Engineering-via-rationalisation suggests a sinister process of subtle manipulation, mostly because of the use of the term engineering. If we were to rephrase this to ‘persuasion-via-rationalisation’, it is much easier to depict Bauman’s intention. The goal here is to help sociology fulfil its unique goal of furthering human freedom by presenting interpretations as part of an on-going conversation:

‘I came to believe that the stories sociologists tell...are bound to be and to forever remain stages of the on-going communication unlikely ever to grind to a halt; successive links in an unfinished and unfinishable string of exchanges. Each story is a response and a new opening; each one ends, explicitly or tacitly, with the “to be continued” formula; each one is a standing invitation to comment, to argue, to modify, to contradict or to oppose. That dialogue neither knows of nor admits a division into blunderers and people-in-the-know, ignoramuses and experts, learners and teacher. Both sides enter the conversation poorer than they will in its course become and it is on their mutual respect and the seriousness with which they treat each other’s voices that the volume of riches they would eventually collect and store depends...Maurice Blanchot said once that the answer is the back luck of the question. I would say that consensus is the bad luck of the voyage to mutual understanding’ (Bauman 2007c:235-236)

In this conversation part of the goal of sociology remains the discussion of ‘unfreedom’ (Bauman 1976a), the differences between what is and what could be (Bauman 1978, 1989b, 1999, Bauman and Gane 2004). In this process alternatives, particularly a socialist alternative, serve the role of relativising the present (Bauman 1976a, 1987c). Like most critiques, they rest upon the human ability to doubt and question (Bauman 1978:116), which in turn is manifested in the use of the word ‘no’ (Bauman 1998b:17).

As Durkheim puts it, ‘the sociologist’s task is not that of the statesman (sic)’ (Durkheim 1984:1). A piece of Political sociology offers alternatives not with the assumption that these should be treated as directly applicable systems of organisations, but rather they are ways of amplifying the common understanding achievable through the hermeneutical circle of conversation. The most effective way of questioning what is, is to say ‘no’ and suggest what could be (Bauman 1973, 1990a, 1998b). A similar process has occurred in this thesis; the alternatives I have offered are not in the form of a

‘blueprint’ to be followed, but rather as a way of critiquing society as we find it. Any traction such alternatives have will only be through either their reinterpretation by the objects/subjects of sociological analysis or via the conversation with other sociologists. The reaction of the former group is unknown. The thesis’ position within the hermeneutical circle of the latter is my finishing point.

What does it all mean for Late Modernity?

This thesis has effectively placed itself within the hermeneutical circle of late modernity. This is an idea which has received a large amount of consideration, both favourable and critical. The attempt here has been largely to question late modernity on its own political basis. Much of the sociological critique of late modernity has largely focused on the ‘newness’ of the claims made on behalf of the term or on more specific factors, such as the Foucauldian and Bourdieuan critiques of individualization. Whilst these are worthwhile avenues of critique, they have largely ceded the political ground to theorists such as Beck and Giddens who have used late modernity as the basis for their own political project. Such a step is flawed empirically (as we have seen, there is empirical backing for much of the claims regarding individualization in late modernity), but dangerous politically. By allowing the influential claims of the late modernists to go unchallenged on their own grounds it allows theorists such as Beck to claim his critics are backwards looking: left longing nostalgically at a simple modernity of clear dividing lines between the two classes and socialism vs. capitalism. This is an indicator of the lack of truly late modern political sociology; rather we have political sociology which places itself against late modernity. If this continues sociology will be much worse off as a result. The world of life/sub-politics sounds enticing, however without radical political and economic change, critics are right to claim it remains a middle class, white, male experience, and even then, a limited one. The role of political and Political sociology is surely to question the claims of its universality, of the picture painted of a late modernity in which we as sociologists are left purely to kneel at the altar of liberal capitalism, cosmopolitanism and free individuals. This is especially important when it is argued that political sociology currently faces a ‘liminal’ stage, as an era of certainty is progressively replaced by one of ‘complexity’ (Taylor 2010).

In effect, the sociology of late modernity remains in its infancy. Such early days are dominated by the ‘fathers’ of the perspective. However there comes a point at which

the infant must become a rebellious teenager and question the very foundations of knowledge upon which its existence has been based up to that point. It is at this point that the fathers' claims that late modernity is a time of individualized, internally driven politics which lends itself to the consumer market and capitalism with Third Way qualifications – that there is no alternative to the alternative – should face extreme questioning. However, this questioning may not lead to total rejection, much as the mature adult sometimes reflects that although they don't agree with everything their parents have to say, but can now identify with some of it, the Political sociology of late modernity can take the emancipatory principle at the heart of the discipline, and tie it to a political project able to realise it. In the words of one of the fathers:

‘Sociology is one voice among a cacophony of other voices, and its audibility is not assured. Most of the time, sociology is a voice crying out in the wilderness. What sets it apart, however, from many other voices that share this fate is that it speaks of the ways in which the wilderness turns wild and the ways in which it sheds the wildest of its qualities, so that, hopefully, no human voices need cry in the wilderness...’ (Bauman and Gane 2004:44)

The goal of late modern sociology from this point is attempting to make a contribution towards ways in which these wild qualities may be shed. This thesis has been but one small contribution to such a project.

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