


**C. B. Macpherson's Views on Liberalism :
A Marxist Critique**

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DECLARATION



This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "C.B. Macpherson's views on Liberalism : A Marxist Critique" submitted by Amarnath Mohanty for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) is his original work to the best of our knowledge and has not been previously submitted for any other Degree of this or any other University.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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INTRODUCTION

The work of Prof. Crawford Brough Macpherson is significant and relevant to understand the cul-de-sac which liberal political theory and institutions (liberalism as a whole) have entered. At a time, when the societies of advanced capitalism are facing a major crisis it is worth inquiring how far Macpherson's views do succeed in providing a valuable guide as to how the world could appropriately be changed, how the western societies could at least be rendered more genuinely democratic. Considering the experience of socialist societies in this present crisis-ridden century, the necessity for a non-market political theory to retain a positive connection to western liberal values has become the prime concern of the serious liberal thinkers. Any post market liberal society requires (as the liberals claim) not pious reassurances, but institutional support for individual liberty and rights, that are the most vehemently defended in the liberal tradition. Contemporary societies have already been ignoring liberal individualism through massive organisation and manipulated consumption. The inability of the liberal theory to analyse effectively and propose alternatives to the contemporary decline of the individual suggests that the cul-de-sac is rooted in the conceptual foundation of

liberalism itself.¹

Macpherson's rigorous analysis of the market assumptions of liberal theory pinpoints this conceptual inadequacy and attempts to maintain a commitment to liberal values in a post-market society.

Unlike many contemporary political thinkers, C.B. Macpherson has for many years been the single major radical voice in the traditional disciplines of political philosophy and the history of political thought. Prof. Macpherson began his well-known and classical study "The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism" (a groundbreaking work) by pointing to the persisting difficulty of finding a firm theoretical basis for the legitimacy of the liberal democratic state. He has done much to repoliticize political philosophy, giving it some foundation in history, and economy, and revealing its ideological function. In an age, when radicalism is almost automatically equated with Marxism, he (being necessarily a liberal) almost alone among his contemporaries, has devoted the bulk of his work to one particular tradition of thought, namely, liberalism, with which he has developed a fascinating and ambiguous relationship.

1. Ian H. Angus, 'On Macpherson's Developmental Liberalism', Canadian Journal of Political Science, XV:1, March 1982, p. 145.

For more than three decades C.B. Macpherson, a serious and constructive political philosopher, has waged a relentless campaign to expose and criticise 'possessive individualist' assumptions of classical and liberal democratic theory. All his writings give a clear focus to this mission (campaign) and provides the fullest expression to date of its positive side: the elaboration of social philosophy incorporating liberal values but free from possessive individualist assumption.² What is defective in the assumptions is less the theoretical problem than they have become historically outmoded. For Macpherson liberal democracy is historically-even politically-inadequate, before it is theoretically inadequate. It is inadequate for the west now because it rests on postulates, that have ceased to be historically relevant. Macpherson argues that liberal democratic theory has proved to be inadequate and unscientific in late 20th century because of its adherence to the 17th century roots; the doctrines and ideas of 17th century which were suitable and scientific for the then society cannot be retained in the present society.

2. Possessive individualist assumptions have been elaborated in the book: C.B. Macpherson, 'Political Theory of Possessive Individualism : Hobbes to Locke' (Clarendon Press), Oxford, 1962) pp. 263-64.

The title of C.B. Macpherson's 'Democratic Theory : Essays in Retrieval'³ expresses the concern underlying almost all his writings. That concern is to retrieve liberalism and its ethical principle of the free and equal development of essential humanity and its system of civil and political liberties from their longstanding connection with capitalist market society and the ethos of market man.⁴ According to Macpherson this rescue is necessary because capitalism and the ethos of market man have become barriers both to the realization of the principles of each man's free and equal development and to the preservation of human rights.

Taken together all his works⁵ on liberalism and

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3. C.B. Macpherson, 'Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval' (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973)
 4. Macpherson Comments: "What I have been trying to do all along (and am still trying to do) that is to work out a revision of liberal democratic theory, a revision which owes a good deal to Marx, in the hope of making that theory more democratic while rescuing that valuable part of the liberal tradition which is submerged when liberalism is identified with capitalist market relations' (C.B. Macpherson 'Humanist Democracy and Elusive Marxism : A Response to Minogue and Svacek', Canadian Journal of Political Science', IX:3, 1976 p. 423).
 5. C.B. Macpherson, 'Political Theory of Possessive Individualism:Hobbes to Locke', Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1962).
 C.B. Macpherson; The Real World of Democracy' (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1966).
 C.B. Macpherson, 'Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval' (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973)
 C.B. Macpherson, 'Life and Times of Liberal Democracy' (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977).

its inadequacies represented the most extensive and coherent critique of the continuing dependence of liberal democracy upon a capitalist economic base to be attempted by any political theorist since second world war. It was a critique which had the major virtue of taking the strengths of liberalism at least as seriously as its defects.

The argument to this effect is one of Prof. Macpherson's recurrent themes. He offers a historical theory about possessive individualism which is found in Hobbesian and Lockean Psychology, the ideology which was needed to provide capitalism all its rationality and legitimacy to get it going. Its political impact was to equate capitalist accumulation with rational self-love and to justify a class distribution of political powers to match the distribution of ownership. But now, according to Macpherson, it has become worn-out and irrational since the world has moved from scarcity to abundance.

Macpherson's is a 'political intervention', 'an ideological battle'. He advises that what is needed is a set of values or an ideology that would allow the west to maintain a position of world importance while contesting with the other two-thirds of the world.⁶

6. Macpherson - n3, p. 167.

A viable western ideology must be built on the recognition, that the world ^{is} no longer a western preserve; (this is difficult but not impossible).⁷

Macpherson warns that 'Liberal democratic nations cannot expect to run the world, nor can they expect that the whole world will run to them'.⁸ Since it cannot impose its pattern on the rest of the world, the most it can do, is to compete with it; but the west can only compete with it by bringing fundamental change in liberal democratic theory which the prospective conquest of scarcity has made possible. Macpherson consoles the leaders—more accurately the established order, the dominant class that 'the requisite adjustment of western ideology does not involve altering or abandoning the values on which the west must pride itself'.⁹

Macpherson's project is more tactical, strategic and defensive. He wants to infuse new blood into liberal democracy. He is in search of a new vision, new insight and he argues that unless the leaders and politicians in

7. Ibid

8. C.B. Macpherson, 'Life and Times of Liberal Democracy' (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977), pp 2-3.

9. Macpherson, n3, p. 167.

the west are prepared to make or accept the fundamental change in the liberal justifactory theory the west stands to loose. Macpherson notes that the utilitarian consumer ethic i.e. man is a bundle of appetites seeking satisfactions¹⁰ which traces back its origin in Hobbes' and Locke's writing for justifying market assumptions, corresponds closely to the prevailing market society and is, in this sense, realistic whereas the ethic of self development i.e. man is a bundle of conscious energies seeking to be exerted,¹¹ contradicts market assumptions. Since I.S. Mill, liberalism has struggled with these two inconsistent principles, wavering between 'realistic' and 'ethical' premises. The goal of Macpherson's critique is to establish this inconsistency which has never been clearly perceived by liberal theorists, and to contribute to a replacement of utilitarian premises by the ethic of individual self-development.¹²

What Macpherson holds is that contemporary liberalism is in crisis; it has lost its validity and relevance in socialist countries and holds no appeal for the third world because of its link with an inegalitarian and exploitative capitalism, and as a theory of democracy

10. ibid- pp. 4-5

11. ibid.

13. Macpherson, n.2, p. 295; n 3, pp. 22-23; n 8, pp 51 and 99.

it is hopelessly hampered by its entanglement with possessive individualism. And possessive individualism simply cannot provide the true basis of a theory of democracy because it is essentially inimical to equality.

In this critique of Macpherson an attempt has been taken to use two kinds of criticism : internal and external. The one tests the internal inconsistency of Macpherson's argument, that is, whether the end of his theoretical project can be achieved by the means he prescribes. The other is external to Macpherson's argument, referring to what Macpherson omits in his theoretical project to achieve the end.

This work is mainly analytical and deductive. The analysis is based on two sources - primary i.e. the original works of Macpherson and secondary i.e. the works other than Macpherson's own works relevant for this purpose. In this analysis and deduction enough care has been taken to avoid misinterpretation.

Then the next question comes : Why a Marxist critique? Far from being refuted, rejected or dismissed, Marxism with its powerful analytical method is today as relevant as ever to any attempt at understanding and, therefore, changing the world. Macpherson is also fully

right in reminding us that 'it may even be that the utility of Marxism as means of understanding the world is increasing over time'.¹³

Questions of partisanship can be raised in this exercise. In a study of social and political thought, Sabine writes, 'one can make no profession of impartiality beyond the fidelity to sources which is the obligation of every serious historian, or beyond that vowal of conscious preferences which should be expected of every honest man. In any other sense the claim of detachment is a superficiality or a pretense'.¹⁴ Our assumptions, opinions, beliefs, principles and attitudes towards life together constitute our philosophy to which also belong, our general ways of looking at things and ideas, our philosophical preferences and perceptions. As A.E. Taylor says, 'we have no choice whether we shall have a philosophy or not, but only the choice whether we shall form our theories consciously and in accord with some intelligible principle, or unconsciously and at random'.¹⁵

13. Macpherson - n 3, p. 184.

14. G.H. Sabine, 'History of Political Theory, Ed. .3 Gorge G. Harrap, London, 1960, p. viii

15. Quoted by John Lewis, 'Introduction to Philosophy' London, 1954, p. 3.

So we must recognise and analyse our philosophical preferences or perceptions, subject them to most careful and critical scrutiny, in order to make them as rational and scientific as we possibly can. No view can be wholly objective and impartial (which is an illusion) and each scholar of this type of study is more or less a victim to the ideological impact and so also the researcher here.

There is an additional advantage in analysing Macpherson's thought from a Marxist angle since he himself has accepted Marxism as a means of analysis. As a result there can be a more objective and scientific evaluation devoid of misinterpretation of Macpherson's thought as well as his means and ends. It is always more effective to attack the person with the same or more developed weapon which he himself uses. Here Marxism serves both the purposes.

This polemical work does not claim to much of originality or scholarship or creativity but its claim is primarily one of meaningful relevance to the present situation of contemporary political theory. In this endeavour, enough care has been taken to study Macpherson's thought as objectively and impartially as possible, taking its argument seriously and in its own right, and examining

its validity primarily on rational ground but within the limits of the researcher. It does not, however, examine either Macpherson's analysis or prescription within the parameters of empirical evidence of contemporary western democracies. At this stage the researcher regards that problem beyond the scope of this inquiry.

The present study is divided into four chapters. Chapter I deals with the evolution of liberalism in its socio-historical perspective. An attempt has been made to show how liberalism because of its adherence to bourgeois ideology is faced with an insurmountable obstacle, for its starting-point and its goal are always an apologia for the existing order of things or at least the proof of its immutability. This also includes Macpherson's failure to analyse liberalism in its true socio-historical context.

Chapter II includes Macpherson's critique of liberalism and his attempt^m to liberate its major concepts such as man and society, power, freedom, property, right, equality on which liberalism is based, from the capitalistic market envelope. There also has been an attempt to show how Macpherson remaining necessarily within liberal parameter has failed to transcend its inherent limitations.

Chapter III deals with Macpherson's critique of different models of liberal democracy and also his own model of democracy. An effort has been made to point out how, despite all his efforts, Macpherson has not been able to rescue liberal democracy from its inherent weaknesses and especially from possessive individualistic assumptions.

In Chapter IV an overall evaluation of Macpherson's contribution to liberal political theory has been made. There has been an attempt to show how Macpherson despite his trenchant criticism against possessive individualistic assumptions, has failed to rescue liberal democracy and liberal values from its trap rather he gets circumscribed within it.

CHAPTER - ILIBERILISM : EVOLUTION

Liberalism, in its classical sense had always meant freeing the individual from the outdated restraints of old established institutions. The liberals claim that the goal of liberalism, since the term came into use in its ideological-political meaning, was emancipation i.e. emancipation of minds from dogmas and superstitions and of citizens from despotism. Emancipation meant an institutional structure within which people would decide what direction to move in if they wanted to move. Some liberals claim that so crucial is the idea of liberty to liberalism that liberalism might be quite summarily defined as this effort to organize liberty socially and to follow its implication.

Both the term liberalism and the reality : which it connotes have changed during the course of history. The defence of liberalism at the hands of so many thinkers and statesmen belonging to different period of history has resulted in complicating and mystifying the real meaning of the term. There has been an intractable dispute among contemporaries about the proper use of these concepts and so about the nature of liberalism.

Liberalism traces back its genealogy to Renaissance; and at this juncture the distinctive world-view of liberalism began to emerge; and for it is not until that period that we find the development on a significant scale of the view of humanity and the world which forms the indispensable philosophical core of modern liberalism.¹ From this period only liberalism was conceived not merely as a movement of ideas but as a real and substantial social and political force. But the idea of a clean break between the medieval and modern era is no longer tenable, if indeed it ever was. However, to trace its emergence much further back to classical Greece involves a great deal of anachronism since this is really a weird hypothesis.

The liberal world view is essentially anthropocentric, individualistic and secular in character. Liberalism emerged as a new ideology to serve the purpose of a particular class and the freedom it strived for had no title to universality, since its practice was limited to men who had property to defend. The claims of birth had been succeeded by the claims of property. The set of all moral rules sanctioned by the religious authority and institutions which put constraints in the exploitation

1. Anthony Arblaster, 'The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism', Oxford, Basil Blackwell Inc., New York, 1984, pp 95-98.

of the means of production was evaded, criticized and abandoned. It sought to vindicate the right of individual to shape his own destiny. It fought for the removal of all obstructions, trammels law might impose upon the right to accumulate property.

Contrary to the views of the liberals who claim the universality of liberal temper, liberalism from its very birth has, in its institutional result, inevitably been more limited and narrow in its benefits than the society it sought to guide. For though it has refused to recognize any limit in theory, whether of class or creed, to its application, the historic condition within which it has operated effected a limitation despite itself and it is the meaning of this limitation which is the key to the understanding of the liberal idea.² The scope of conscience it has created has been narrowed by its regard for property and its zeal for the rule of law has been tempered by a discretion in the breadth of its application.

In the sixteenth century, liberalism saw a new light, a new spirit of enterprise, a fresh activity, a zest for innovation. And capitalist spirit for the first time began to colour the whole mentality of society and

2. H.J. Laski, 'The Rise of European Liberalism : An Essay in Interpretation', London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, p. 16.

shape the attitude of individuals to every department of behaviour. It started rationalising the operation of capitalist ethos.

Max Weber and Prof. Tawney acknowledge that the rise and growth of 'protestantism' made possible the triumph of capitalist temper and it was a potent force in preparing the way for the commercial civilization. Homocentricity and teleology, the two great medieval principles were rejected, the hold of dogma was weakened, and the empire of reason and science extended their boundaries.

By the sixteenth century, the state had built all the institutional instrumentalities it required for new purposes. Liberalism made the state a capitalist state, almost despite itself; it created a new physical world, both in geographical and ideological sense which was expansive utilitarian, self-sufficient and self-confident.³ Machiavelli despite all his limitations provided all the requirements that perfectly matched the development of his time. The state wielded wide power because the emerging bourgeois found in a strong central authority

3. ibid, pp 83-85.

the best guarantee of its own survival and prosperity.⁴

The classical liberalism had its roots in the political theory and practice of ^{the} seventeenth century. Laski has rightly termed the seventeenth century as the age of genius for even after three hundred years the implication of its discoveries are not yet exhausted.⁵ In the seventeenth century liberalism had its final victory over all odds and anything inimical to it was hardly discernible. Macpherson argues that 'whether individualism of the 17th century is deplored as having undermined the christian natural Law tradition, or applauded as having opened new vistas of freedom and progress, its importance is not disputed, nor is it doubted that the 17th century individualism has been an outstanding characteristic of the whole subsequent liberal tradition. Even the utilitarian doctrine which seemed to supercede them in the 18th and 19th centuries is at bottom only a restatement of the individualist principle which were worked out in 17th century; Bentham built on Hobbes.⁶

4. Macpherson has completely ignored the development of liberalism in fifteenth and sixteenth century which is of cardinal importance to understand the possessive individualistic aspect of seventeenth century political theory because these possessive individualistic assumption did not come into existence all on a sudden rather it developed through successive stages of history.

5. H.J. Laski, n.2, p. 86.

6. C.B. Macpherson, 'Political Theory of Possessive Individualism : Hobbes to Locke, op. cit., pp 1-2.

The academic bias towards empiricism is itself ^a part of the history. The atomistic assumption is inevitable and also ubiquitous. Philosophical atomism got its reflection in the conception of society as a collection of discrete self-moving individuals which found profound expression in the writings of Hobbes and later Bentham. And its possessive quality is found in its conception of the individual and society.⁷ The scientific revolution provided the most powerful psychological aid for the rationalization of capitalism and generated in its ardent followers the qualities and the temper that the new commercial life demanded.

Individualism, as a basic theoretical position dates back to Hobbes. Although his conclusions can scarcely be called liberal, his postulates were highly individualistic.⁸ Hobbes' rationality had a mercantile flavour. It was not strong enough to withstand the force of competitive appetites, only strong enough to show men that they must submit to a sovereign to avoid worse; thus the bourgeois assumptions which were found in the premises of Hobbes' thought led to the erection of the sovereign state.⁹

Hobbes

7. ibid., pp. 263-264.

8. Ibid., p. 1.

9. C.B. Macpherson, 'Democratic Theory : Essays in Retrieval, op. cit., p. 244.

Absolutism was the price which the propertied were willing to pay for their security for an end to the threat of social revolution which had threatened them since last one hundred years. Liberalism was born not in democracy but in absolutism. Prof. Macpherson aptly argues that the predominance of mathematical thinking in 17th century is closely related to the rise of capitalism. Quantitative analysis of the material world, of which mathematics is the purest form, was demanded increasingly from the 15th century in the service of capitalist technology and of the nation-state. The bourgeois mind is apt to mathematical mind and the mathematical mind is generally a bourgeois mind; and the mathematical method is also congruous with the reduction of all men to the equality of market.¹⁰

According to Macpherson, Hobbes' materialism was an advance; it made possible a deeper understanding of the new forces at work in society, as well as helping to destroy the ideological supports of the old order and to provide foundations for the kind of state necessary to contain and support capitalist development.¹¹ Hobbes'

10. Ibid., p. 246.

11. Ibid., p. 247.

absolutism is the necessary response to his individualism and reflects a tendency within liberal thought to negate itself by pushing individualism to the point where authoritarianism seems to be the only possible political answer. There was a beautiful congruity of both 'feudal' and 'bourgeois' elements in Hobbes' thinking.¹²

John Locke was indeed 'the fountain-head of classical English liberalism',¹³ who began to put the science of man on a new footing. Modern critics point out that Locke is 'the confused man's Hobbes; and inconsistent and lacks the vigour and probing thoroughness of the very greatest philosophers. His political philosophy lacks the systematic constructiveness of Hobbes, or Bentham. It is because Locke happens to be a transitional figure in the development of liberalism whose critical success in demolishing the thinking of Filmer was not matched by the development of a coherent system. A tension between liberal individualism and the traditional corporate notion of the English community is found in Locke's writings.¹⁴ It is also quite ambiguous in case of Locke, whether he

12. Keith Thomas, 'The Social Origin of Hobbes' Political Thought', K.C. Brown (ed) 'Hobbes Studies', Oxford Basil Blackwell, 1965.

13. Macpherson, n.6., p. 262.

14. G.H. Sabine, 'History of Political Theory', (pp. 524-25.) Gorge G. Harrap, London, 1960.

meant the people as individual or as corporate entity symbolized by the sovereign.

The conception of rational man which is so central to liberal ideas of rationality and rational knowledge, has its philosophical roots in Lockean empiricism with its stress on passive perception. Locke conceived the image of a bourgeois man who is eminently rational and peaceable. Locke's individualism demanded the supremacy of the state. It is not a question of the more individualism, the less collectivism rather, the more thorough-going the individualism, the more complete the collectivism.¹⁵ Locke's astonishing achievement was to base the property right on natural right and natural law, and then to remove all the natural law limits from the property right.¹⁶ The assertion of the free rational individual as the criterion of good society is a tremendous achievement of Locke but the very assertion with differential rights and rationality of the 17th century society was necessarily a denial of individualism to more than the half of the population.

15. Macpherson, n.6, p. 255-56.

16. Ibid., p. 199.



Locke

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The state was the last conquest of the rising bourgeois. It made the state first ally, then enemy in the pursuit of its objective. Built on multiplicity of grievances, the real result of ^{the} English revolution was to make the state apt to the purpose of man of property. The rise of bourgeois was no longer a claim to be challenged, but a fact to be accepted. The (17th) century liberalism shaped all the contours of civilization to an appetite for acquisition which recognized no boundaries to its claim.¹⁷

Then comes the era of 'protective' liberalism (to use Macpherson's adjective). This liberalism of the (18th) century is more often called individualist liberalism and more rudely atomistic liberalism. The 18th century liberalism was so imbued with the ethos of capitalism that its main basic thrust was to establish and nurture a free market society and protect citizens from the depredation and oppression exercised by the rapacious government. The regulation of market was governed by the blind forces of demand and supply. Protective liberalism predates the 18th century. It found its emergence in the writings of Locke who is called as the intellectual father of protective liberalism. He provided all the basic requirements on which it erected its own super-structure.

17. H.J. Laski, n.2., p. 160.

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The out-break of the French Revolution was a turning point in the history of liberalism. Without the French Revolution the liberal and radical ideas of liberalism and the Enlightenment would have remained essentially ideas, circulating among the progressive intelligentsia, without any substantial influence on political life. But - such is the dialectic of history - the Revolution marked not only the decisive victory of liberalism, it also initiated a fundamental crisis for and within liberalism : a crisis which persisted throughout its subsequent development. Surprisingly the very Revolution, which assured the future prospects of liberalism, began to challenge the hegemony of liberalism. It revealed some of the dilemmas and contradictions inherent in liberalism : problems centred around on the critical issues of property, equality, freedom and right. There was a rise of consciousness among the urban Working Class which gave an entirely new urgency; and it was to be the cause of fundamental divisions within the liberal tradition. There was first, the fragmentation of political tradition in which the Revolution acted as a catalyst; and secondly, there was the rise to dominance of traditional conceptions of classical political economy.¹⁸

18. Macpherson has not taken enough care to discuss these aspects which definitely played a vital role in restructure and reconceptualisation of liberalism in the 18th century.

The classical political economy, by and large a doctrine of the free market or laissezfaire, had a major share in the rise of 18th century liberalism. For Adam Smith, the founder of classical political economy, the myraid spontaneous actions of individuals made for their own private benefit results, by a mysterious alchemy in social good. There has been much discussion of how Smith's view that the interests of the multitude of economic actors, each persuing his or her own selfish interest, might be reconciled by an 'invisible hand' on the market so that the common good is attained. For Smith the state is a police state and its coercive power is mainly to safeguard the individual against injustice and violence i.e. injustice to the spontaneous activities of the individual and violence to property. With Smith the practical maxims of business enterprise achieved the status of theology and the state became its instrument.¹⁹

Smith's association of government with property is one of those points at which he is close to Locke, though without Locke's equivocation; and like Locke, he takes labour and person's property in labour as his starting point.

There was a striking shift from relative confidence and optimism of Adam Smith to the fatalism and pessimism

19. H.J. Laski, n. 2, pp 181-182.

of Ricardo and above all, Malthus. A confident out-look was replaced by a grimmer and more defensive one which was a indication of the gradual decline and retreat of liberalism after the supreme moments of Enlightenment^{en} and the Revolution.²⁰

Ricardo, the Champion of mercantile class, assumed two fundamental principles i.e. private property in land and capital was to be beyond hazard; and free contract between individual were to be enforced as sacred. Ricardo concealed neither from himself nor from his contemporaries the immense gap his principle would give rise to between rich and poor nor did he doubt that the huge gap would produce grave popular discontent. He looked upon state activity as an enemy to be defeated rather than an ally to be invoked. Living in the age of profound disillusion with the result of French Revolution any other prospect would have seemed to him Utopian.

Faced with realities the liberal out-look in the market mechanism seemed grimmer and pessimistic. The first and most damagingly influential element of pessimism was injected into classical economics by Robert. Malthus. Malthus did more than any single individual to push the English middle class liberalism towards attitude of defeatism and harshness where mass poverty and misery were

20. Anthony Arblaster, n.l, p. 238.

concerned and it was the poor who paid the price. The economic sphere was left to function as free market and the social sphere of life was subjected to governmental intervention.

Liberal political economy refused to recognise that poverty and misery were there because of the basic structural contradictions rather they were seen as misfortune of the poor for which they were blamed. Harshness towards poverty and the poor had always been a part of the hidden and unadvertised history of liberalism which became distinct in this period. Critics from within and outside the mainstream of liberalism directed their angry and eloquent onslaught against the increasing dehumanisation, harshness and complacency of liberalism.

Utilitarianism forms an indivisible part of protective liberalism. Its culminating phase involved the sequence of eminent writers that extends from Smith through Bentham, James Mill, Austin, Malthus and Ricardo, to J.S. Mill and Herbert Spencer but it had its foundation in the writings of Hobbes and Locke with their very different emphases. It was first around Bentham, the most typical utilitarian of them all that a school began to form.

According to the utilitarian Ethical principle the

only rationally defensible criterion of social good was the greatest happiness of the greatest number, happiness being defined as the amount of individual pleasure minus pain. The most general ends of laws, according to Bentham are, to provide subsistence, to produce abundance, to favour equality and to maintain security.²¹ Bentham perhaps saw no need to mention the property-class differential when stating his case for equality because he had already decided that the claims of equality were entirely subordinated to the claims of security.²² The individual was seen primarily as a consumer of utility, pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. What appeared, therefore, was a timeless theory of human nature in which history was denied and reduced to a habit of a particular time, and cultural determinants were ignored. Even the claim to maximise utilities and the claim to do so equitably, which forms the core of utilitarianism, both failed in the capitalist society because of sharp class division. This psychology of maximizing individual, which might have been adequate for the then society, is certainly ahistorical, inadequate and irrational and a denial to individualism itself.

The democracy advocated by the Utilitarians was very much in the tradition of liberalism perceived and

21. C.B. Macpherson, Life and Times of Liberal Democracy op. cit., pp 25-27.

22. Ibid., pp 30-31.

pursued since Locke. The state was reduced to the status of a watch-dog whose function was to safeguard property and interest of the propertied. What had changed in the period since Locke was not the function of democracy but the psychological motivation which legitimised and rationalised it. A new form of natural law emerged, called utilitarianism based on rational political actors maximising their utilities which depended no longer on theories of social contract.

In the perspective of social history the Enlightenment, a synthesis of the rationalist and the empirical tradition, played no less a vital role in the development of western liberal bourgeois thought, which as a whole, constitutes a unique and vital part of intellectual history.²³ The important thinkers of this tradition are Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, Holbach, Diderot, etc., A fundamental contradiction was found in the social and political ideal of the Enlightenment i.e. between freedom and equality when each entails a definite restriction on the other and specifically in an individualist society it conceived. The co-existence of a strong bourgeois and strong nobility could then be made the basis of a

23. Lucien Goldman, "The Philosophy of the Enlightenment : The Christian Burgess and the Enlightenment" : Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973, pp 17.

modern enlightened monarchy.²⁴

The nineteenth century is the epoch making of liberal triumph; from Waterloo until the outbreak of the Great War no other doctrine spoke with the same unequivocal authority, exercised the same widespread influence.²⁵ But towards the later part of the 19th Century some changes in the society were thrusting themselves on the attention of the liberal thinkers; changes which required a quite different approach. It was no longer a question of popular discontents surfacing in occasional eruptions of anger and desperation, but the people as a constant force to be reckoned with, conscious of their own distinctive existence and confident of the legitimacy of their rights and demands. Contrary to the thoughts of Bentham and James Mill, class consciousness among the working class developed and it began to appear perilous to property. The condition of the working class was becoming so blatantly inhuman that sensitive liberals and socialists could not accept it either morally justifiable or economically inevitable.²⁶ As a result, there developed the liberal and socialist critique of capitalism coupled with the demand for social and economic changes which challenged the very basic principles of the liberal capitalist economy.

24. Ibid., p. 41.

25. H.J. Laski, n.2, p. 237.

26. Macpherson, n. 21, p. 44.

The social impact of this policy and growing criticism of it by the socialist movement led to a reappraisal of its ideological basis; and understood in this sense the policy of consistent and unbridled laissezfaire was bound to be transformed into a method for social emancipation. The emergence of capitalist social philosophy which exalted the homo-economicus as the true representative of humanity and made economic success the measure of this value no longer held good.

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The perilous socio-economic scenario of the mid-19th century was of crucial importance for liberalism that provoked fresh doubts in theoretical rethinking which marked the beginning of developmental liberalism. In this critical juncture J.S. Mill, being fully aware of all these changes, for the first time recognised the existence of crisis within liberalism. Liberalism, being unable to absorb this crisis within itself took the help of a technique of crisis management i.e. welfarism. Welfarism, as a technique, also recognised the split between theory and practice with the tacit admission that theory and practice can and do diverge. The major problem was to make the new liberal philosophy coherent and humanitarian rather than rely on its ideological function to remove the repressive institutions of the past.²⁷

27. A.D. Lindsay: "Introduction to J.S. Mill, Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government", 2nd edn., Dent. London, 1968, pp XV-XVI.

J.S. Mill, like Locke, is a central transitional figure in the development of liberalism. Mill's role was to break with the ahistorical liberalism of the early 19th century and pave the way for the new historically conscious liberalism of the late 19th century.²⁸ He was to bridge up the gap between the excessive concentration on the negative conception of liberty and the attempt to reconcile both positive and negative conception in the works of T.H. Green and his followers. By departing from the protective liberalism of the 18th century and accepting the developmental concept of man Mill became the forerunner of the 'developmental liberalism' (to use Macpherson's phrase) which constituted the high-turning point of liberal doctrine. Mill's transitional role and his reluctance to part his father and Bentham left him open to quite trenchant criticism. Yet he remains as the most famous of all the liberals.

J.S. Mill was aware of the growing militancy of the working class and at the same time he was also convinced that 'the poor' could not be shot out or held down much longer.²⁹ Mill the first philosopher of the

28. Bill Brugger : 'Classical British and European Liberalism and Democracy' in Norman Wintrop ed. "Liberal Democratic Theory and its Critics" London; Croom Helm. 1983, pp 30-31.

29. Macpherson, n. 21, p. 45.

crisis management technique, being more grappled with the resurging problems than any other utilitarians, had attempted for reconceptualisation and revision of liberal trends within its theoretical parameter. His emphasis was not, like that of Bentham, to protect the individual from oppressive government but on the moral vision of the possibility of the improvement of mankind, and of a free and equal society not yet achieved. Unlike his predecessors he took the essence of man as an exerter, developer and enjoyer of his or her capacities and the good society is one which promotes it.³⁰

It seems that Mill's compartmentalisation of liberty into self-regarding and other-regarding actions stemmed from the old liberal notion that the individual is prior to the society. Mill cannot be ranked as a full eg-alitarian because of his views in favour of plural voting and perhaps it was because Mill tended to associate the cause of individuality with the cause of the hegemony of intellectuals. Mill did stray all that far from the paths in which he was brought up. He was a youthful enthusiast for Malthusianism and remained a defender of Malthus' doctrines throughout his life. Mill was less realistic about the necessary structure of capitalist

30. Ibid., p. 48.

society : he saw the existing class inequality and saw it was incompatible with his developmental democracy but thought it accidental and remediable.³¹ As a result Mill failed to visualize the contradiction between capitalist relation of production and the democratic ideal of equal possibility of individual self-development. In this advocacy, Mill introduced an element of what Marx called 'Utopianism' and it was in this sense that Mill became a socialist. Whatever he had done and whatever humanitarian changes he had brought were all to salvage liberalism and to save it from imminent crisis which was a crying need of the hour. Liberalism as a political movement could ill-afford for a long to part company with humanitarianism for this had always been a powerful motive among liberals even though it got little overt recognition from the philosophical radicals.

It is also misleading to call Tocqueville a 'sincere democrat'. He accepted democracy because there was no choice for him. But when democracy threatened to open up the way to socialism, Tocqueville drew back and joined the side of 'order', which in 1848, was a euphemism for direct brutal repression of the urban poor and it was not a mere personal aberration or failure, it represents the liberal crisis of 1848, and one kind of liberal response

31. Ibid., p. 61.

to that crisis.³² He was an uncritical believer in laissezfaire economics, and he believed that the demands for work and for unemployment relief, raised in Paris in 1848, rested upon a simple failure to understand the economic laws doomed such enterprise to failure.³³

Towards the end of the 19th century, liberalism was becoming ideologically bankrupt and was running out of ideas and steam. Liberalism was occupied with the political forms i.e. superstructural role it had created and it failed adequately to take account of their dependence on the economic foundation they expressed. Due to the resultant class relations liberalism could not maintain a balance between the power to produce and the power to distribute. The forces of production were very much in contradiction with the relation of production. Out of an ever intensifying struggle there emerged the frantic search for colonies, the clash of competing imperialism, the economic nationalism which made the political configuration of the world the plainest implication of its economic configuration. According to L.T. Hobhouse, 'the 19th Century might be called the age of liberalism, yet its close saw the fortunes of that great movement brought their lowest ebb. Its faith in itself was waxing cold...

32. Anthony Arblaster, n.l, pp 272-273.

33. Hugh Brogan, 'Tacqueville' (Collins/Fontaner, 1973) p. 68.

it had the air of a creed that is becoming fossilized as an extinct form.³⁴ At this stage emerged the 'New Liberalism' which devoted much intellectual and political energy to reviving that 'great movement'.

Originally guarded and ambiguous in their attitude to socialism the New Liberals preferred to call themselves 'Collectivists'.³⁵ The New Liberalism is a curious mixture of German idealist Philosophy of Kant and Hegel, British empiricism and Mill's socialism. T.H. Green happened to be the intellectual father of this school and other exponents are L.T. Hobhouse, J.A. Hobson, John Dewey, A.D. Lindsay, R.M. MacIver, G.D.H. Cole, R.H. Jawney, H.J. Laski and Earnest Barker. They turned to other assumptions and aspirations to create and popularise what came to be known as 'Social liberalism' or 'Collectivist Liberalism' renamed by Macpherson as developmental liberalism but they could not significantly deflect much from the liberal tradition.

At the centre of the problem laid two connected issues : the nature of freedom and the role of the state. The new liberals asserted the emphasis on positive freedom

34. L.T. Hobhouse, 'Liberalism', London; Williams and Norgate, 1930, p. 110.

35. Norman Wintrop, 'Liberal Democratic Theory : The New Liberalism', Norman Wintrop ed. op. cit., p. 87.

and assigned a greater role to the state. They broke down the old hostility to state activity and tried to justify interventionism in liberal terms. Hobhouse said much the same that 'there are many enemies of liberty besides the state and it is in fact by the state that we have fought them'.³⁶

The adjustment to the New Liberalism was less complete, and more superficial than has been suggested and that the new liberals ultimately failed to redirect the new whole tendency of liberalism away from its traditional channels. Its concern for welfare and its commitment to intervention was somewhat misleading. Not surprisingly, in common with the liberal tradition as a whole, they were regarded by left critics as cunningly concealed conservatives, without even the backbone of the genuine article, who tried to dilute, render harmless and absorb into existing structures the policies and demands of genuine radicals; for conservatives they were insidious threat to the nation and western civilization.³⁷ Macpherson aptly argues that these theorists increasingly lost sight of class and exploitation because of a steady decline in the realism of analysis of liberal society.³⁸

36. L.T. Hobhouse, 'The Element of Social Justice' London; George Allen and Unwin, 1930, p. 83.

37. Norman Wintrop, op.cit., p. 123.

38. Macpherson, n. 21, p. 70.

These liberals could scarcely see the incompatibility between the claims of equal human development and the existing class inequalities of power and wealth rather they were sanguine that it could be overcome by a revival of idealist morality, or a new level of social knowledge and communication. They can appropriately be called as 'petty bourgeois' thinkers.

The positivistic approach, developed in the late 19th and early 20th century, whilst sharing the realist conception of an objective, rational and explanatory science, did not aim to get behind the phenomena to reveal underlying essences, necessary mechanisms or connections in nature rather searched for regularities which could be represented as universal laws, valid for all time.³⁹ The pioneers of this approach are August Comte, Max Weber and Karl Mannheim. The underlying assumption of this ideology is that science and technology are politically neutral and propose no values or social goals of their own and are only the means for achieving particular pre defined ends.

This ideology buttressed and put rationale to the technocratic, elitist, managerial or bureaucratic society.

39. Geoff Stokes and Bill Brugger, 'The technocratic challenge to democratic theory', Norman Wintrop ed. op. cit., p. 364.

The positivist social science failed to deal with the relationship between freedom and necessity adequately. It however, degenerated into the mapping of surface regularities, and freedom was seen as constrained not so much by essential limitations on human action but by the surface phenomena of the world and the original revolutionary mood of rationalism became conservative.⁴⁰ The positivistic ideas reinforced the general 19th century belief in progress and tended to confuse the relationship between telos and techne or ends and means.

In the 20th century the liberal sense of alienation and isolation was greatly enhanced, doubt and disgust led to withdrawals, despair and despondency and even the ethos and temper of the movement repelled the liberals. The first World War followed by the victory of Bolshevism in Russia and the socialist revolution in different parts of the world marked the end of an era, the collapse of old liberal hopes and optimism; and it shattered the dream of progress and the perspective of steady humanizing and liberalizing of its social life and institutions. Liberalism seemed weak and outdated. This horror-stricken situation generated a reactionary ideology i.e. 'Cold-War liberalism', a militant moderation and an aggressive

40. Ibid., pp 364-365.

defence of a strongly conservative version of the liberal tradition, whose main aim was to contain communism.⁴¹ Cold war Liberalism was polemical and topical and was obsessed with the politics of anticommunism. This cold war liberalism failed to conform to its own precepts. The terror-stricken liberals in the grip of hysteria did not hesitate to betray their own essential principles abjectly which turned at least some of them into advocates and apologist for political inquisition and persecution.

Liberalism, by creating a climate of intolerance, fear and conformity, constituted the grim but necessary prelude to the very different climate of opinion which was celebrated in the U-S.A. at the end of 1950 : end of ideology. The critique of utopianism and ideology developed by the liberals like Bell, Shils, Lipset, Ramond Aron were quintessentially conservative in their outlook. The belief that 'the fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved'⁴² was very soon made to look ridiculous. The unmasking of persisting forms of deprivation behind the veil of universal affluence,

41. Anthony Arblster, n. 1, p. 299

42. S.M. Lipset, 'Political Man', William Heinemann Ltd., 1960, p. 406.

the co-existence of public squalor with private wealth, the emergence of black civil right movements in the U.S.A., the deep political apathy created by the American War in Vietnam, the world depression of the 1970s and 80s, the return of the galloping inflation and mass unemployment to the developed capitalist world, and the undermining of the welfare state - all these destroyed the subterfuge and revealed the illusion of conflict free, unideological politics as soon as it had been proclaimed a reality. It confirmed that the end of ideology, which itself an ideological episode, was indeed no more than that a political and intellectual smugness of the post - 1945 capitalist boom. The liberal alliance with political empiricism, apathy to political radicalism, and renunciation of ideology in the name of Utopianism shifted the whole spectrum of western liberalism to the 'Right'.

There was also a new development in de-radicalisation of liberalism by revising the conception and theory of democracy known as 'pluralist-Elitist-Equilibrium model of democracy'. Just as a crude version of the free market was imported from economics into political science, so also notions of functionalism from biology via anthropology and sociology into political science. Even in its less grotesque forms, the revisionist conception of democracy impoverished the classical ideal

by stripping it off its distinctive essence. The discrepancies in this theory reflected the structure of flaring inequalities of power and wealth in society.

It was not until the world economic crisis of the 1970s and the apparent breakdown of welfare state policies that there began to develop a new 'liberatarian' ideology⁴³ which found its expression in the writings of the people such as F.A. Hayek, Milton Friedman, Karl Popper, Isaiha Berlin and John Rawls. Popper's supposed refutation of Marx hinged upon his contention that Marx was rigid determinist, who viewed the human beings as 'mere puppets' irresistibly pulled by economic wires - by historical forces over which they have no control.⁴⁴ Many of the anti-

43. Bill Brugger, n. 28, p. 38.

44. Karl Popper, 'Open Society and its enemies' vol. 2, London; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962. p. 101.

But it was this same Marx, after all, who wrote in 'The Eighteenth Brumaire' 'that men make their own history but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted' and Marx himself was at pains in later years to disown such an interpretation of his theory ('Letter to Mikhailovsky' in Karl Marx: Selected Writings, David McLellan ed. Oxford University Press, 1977; pp. 571-572).

Utopian writers are of the opinion that secular 'Utopianism'⁴⁵ is a modernized version of an older religious vision, usually called 'chiliastic', 'millenarian' or 'messianic'. Berlin says that 'the heart of 'Utopian dream' is the pattern of sin and death and resurrection. Its roots lie deep in the religious imagination of mankind.⁴⁶ Popper argues that the Utopian or 'Wholistic' method turns out also to be impossible; it is in the last resort unworkable.⁴⁷ The liberal writers claim that monism leads to fanaticism and provides the philosophical basis for utopianism and totalitarianism whereas political pluralism is based on philosophical pluralism which asserts the diversity and complexity of reality itself. Although Rawls' justice does not lack a sense of social justice and a concern to eradicate basic poverty and deprivation, it is essentially a liberalism which endorses the status-quo and it could not free itself from the impact of possessive individualism.

This libert^arianism has often been called conservative despite the fact that many of the proponents see

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45. The intellectual source of communist totalitarianism was held to be the 'Utopianism' of the left.
46. Isaiah Berlin, 'Russian Thinkers', Ed. by Henry Hardy and Aileen Kelly London; Hogarth Press, 1978, p. 217.
47. Karl Popper, n. 44, p. 193. and Karl Popper, 'Poverty of Historicism', London; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, pp 68-69.

themselves as liberal. It provides the rationale to the market philosophy with additional theoretical ammunition. In the context of unforeseen combination of galloping inflation with rising unemployment and the absence of an popular alternative, the pre-keynesian economics, thinly refurnished in the guise of 'monetarism' appeared in the actual policies of capitalist government to heal up the vacuum produced by the practical and theoretical impasse of Keynesian and expansionist economics. These liberatarians plead for the economic liberty with the plea that the infringement of economic liberty leads to the infringement of other freedom. But unfortunately they failed to visualize that so long as inequality and discrepancies is socially generated and the fault lies with the very structural root of the society, complete economic freedom leads to Chaos and anarchy ie. Hobbesian state of nature.

Hence liberal (i.e. bourgeois) thought is faced with insuperable obstacle, for its starting-point and its goal are always, if not always consciously, an apologia for the existing order of things or at least proof of their immutability and also of the pessimism which perpetuates, the present state of affairs and represents it as the uttermost limit of human development. 'Thus there has been history, but there is no

longer any',⁴⁸ Marx observes with reference to bourgeois economics, a dictum which is equally applicable to all attempts by bourgeois thinkers to understand the process of history. As a result, while bourgeois thought is indeed able to conceive of history as a problem, it remains an intractable problem.⁴⁹

48. Karl Marx, 'The Poverty of Philosophy', p. 135.

49. "Either it is forced to abolish the process of history and regard the institutions of the present as eternal laws of nature. Or else, everything meaningful or purposive is banished from history. It then becomes impossible to advance beyond the mere 'individuality' of the various epochs and their social and human representatives. In the first case it ceases to be possible to understand the origin of social institutions. The objects of history appear as the object of immutable, eternal laws of nature. History becomes fossilised in a formalism incapable of comprehending that the real nature of socio-historical institutions is that they consist of relations between them. On the contrary, men become estranged from this, the true source of historical understanding and cut off from it by an unbridgeable gulf. In the second case, history is transformed into irrational rule of blind forces which is embodied at best in the 'spirit' of the people' or in 'great men'. It can therefore only be described pragmatically but it can not be rationally understood". (Gorge Lukacs, 'History and Class Consciousness : Studies in Marxist Dialectic', Merlin Press, London, 1971, pp. 48-49.

The tragedy of the bourgeoisie is reflected historically in the fact that even before it had defeated its predecessor, feudalism, its new enemy, the proletariat had appeared on the scene. Politically, it became evident when at the moment of victory, the 'freedom' in whose name liberalism had joined battle with feudalism, was transformed into new repressiveness. "In the absence of a real, concrete solution the dilemma of freedom and necessity of voluntarism and fatalism is simply shunted into a siding. That is to say, in nature and in the 'external world' laws still operate with inexorable necessity, while freedom and the autonomy that is supposed to result from the discovery of the ethical world are reduced to a mere point of view from which to judge internal events".⁵⁰ Ideologically, the same contradiction is found in the fact that liberalism endowed the individual with an unprecedented importance, but at the same time that same individuality was squeezed and annihilated by the economic conditions to which it was subjected, by the reification created by commodity production. All these contradictions are only the reflection of the deepest contradictions in capitalism itself as they appear in the consciousness of the

50. Ibid., p. 124.

bourgeoisie in accordance with their position in the total system of production.⁵¹ 'It becomes evident that the man who now emerges must be the individual, egoistic bourgeois isolated artificially by capitalism and that his consciousness, the source of his activity and knowledge is an individual isolated consciousness and it is this that robs social action of its character as action'.⁵²

The hegemony of the bourgeoisie embraces the whole of society and it attempts to organise the whole of society in its own interests. To achieve this it was forced both to develop a coherent theory of economics, politics and society and also to sustain its faith in its own mission to control and organise society. The insoluble internal contradictions of the system reveal with increasing rigidity and so confront its supporters with a choice. Either they must consciously ignore insights which become increasingly urgent or else they must suppress their own moral instincts in order to be able to support with a good conscience an economic system that serves only their own interests.⁵³

It is evident from all that the attempt at a solu-

51. Ibid., p. 135.

52. Ibid., p. 62.

53. Ibid., p. 66

tion represented by the bourgeois philosophers towards the practical, does not succeed in resolving the antinomies, on the contrary it fixes them for eternity. For just as objective necessity, despite the rationality and regularity of its manifestations, yet persists in a state of immutable contingency because its material substratum remains transcendental, so too the freedom of the subject which this device is designed to rescue, is unable, being an empty freedom, to evade the abyss of fatalism.⁵⁴

According to Lukacs, intellectual genesis must be identical in principle with historical genesis. The course of the history of ideas which bourgeois thought has developed, has tended more and more to wrench these two principles apart. As a result of this duality in method, reality disintegrates into multitude of irrational facts and over these a network of purely formal 'laws' emptied of content is then cast.⁵⁵

The unhistorical and anti-historical character of bourgeois thought becomes glaring when we consider the problem of the present as historical problem. This

54. Ibid., p. 133.

55. See for detail ibid., pp. 155-156.

complete failure has reduced bourgeois thinkers to the contemptible mental level. It is grounded in a theoretical approach based on unmediated contemplation which opens up an irrational chasm between the subject and object of knowledge. Lukacs argues that as a result of its incapacity to understand history, the contemplative attitude of the bourgeoisie became polarised into two extremes: on the one hand, there were the 'great individuals' viewed as the autocratic makers of history, on the other hand there were the 'natural laws' of the historical environment. They both turned out to be equally important - whether they are separated or working together - when challenged to produce an interpretation of the present in all its radical novelty.⁵⁶

Macpherson has also not been able to analyse liberalism in its true socio-historical context. The criticism applicable to the classical liberal thinkers can be applied with equal force to Macpherson because of his failure to understand history and its role in revealing the antinomies of liberal society. Being seduced by liberalism Macpherson has not been able to

56. Ibid., p. 158

go deep into the reality of liberal society and reveal its contradictions at the base.

The same inability of Macpherson also gets reflected in the analysis of the liberal values (which has been discussed in the chapter II).

CHAPTER - II

LIBERLISM : CRITIQUE BY MACPHERSON

At the centre of the liberal world-view is a particular picture of the individual human person and of his relations to the world in which he lives. It is of cardinal importance since from this conception of the individual and of his relations to the world flows much of the liberal system of political values.

There is no denying that the concept of man as well as humanism, contains certain permanent elements which are subject to the specific conditions of time and space; and are thus enriched both by the introduction of new elements and by keeping old elements alive. Man always exists 'here and now'; his present existence is at least as important for determining his essence as the conviction that this essence is determined by historical determinants.¹

Macpherson argues that possessive individualism²

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1. Bogdan Suchodolski, 'Renaissance Humanism and Marxian humanism', Erich Fromm ed. Socialist Humanism : an international symposium, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, London, 1967, p. 28.
 2. Macpherson, Political Theory of Possessive Individualism : Hobbes to Locke, op. cit., pp. 262 f.

finds its genesis in the seventeenth century political theory; and these possessive individualistic assumptions about man, society and politics were derived, implicitly or explicitly, from seventeenth century realities. But these possessive individualistic assumptions traced much further back to Renaissance humanism. Renaissance truly first began to comprehend that man's genuine autonomy consisted not only in freedom vis-a-vis religious and philosophical authorities, but also in liberation from the slavery of the social world, which was in contradiction to humanity. It is also true that Renaissance rediscovered man buried under conditions but paradoxically renaissance humanism was a denial of itself; it was not a collective man but an aggressive image, a paranoid individual.

Renaissance Humanism had truly a paradigmatic depth and richness of possibilities. It had started with the idea of liberating men from the trammels of the super-human world of church metaphysics but posed a central problem of the philosophy of man and his liberation from the secular bonds laid upon all. From the very moment the empirical conception of man's cognition started to take shape and multifarious knowledge about empirical human variety grew. Machiavelli was the first to state his philosophical conclusion quite in conformity with

At this phase the conflict between 'reason' and 'history' emerged with particular sharpness.³ More importance was attached to 'reason' by the believers of the empirical concept of man to liberate him from conservatism and opportunism. Closely bound up with this conflict between reason and history, was the conflict between reason and social reality which was in essence the same conflict revealed in contemporary life. The philosophers of the empirical tradition were alarmed by this problem and finally chose reason and relegated history to the background, as a result man solitary being left on his own in the universe. This was glaring particularly in 17th century. The Enlightenment also stressed the idea that the reality ought to be transformed according to the requirements of reason.

The 'Ontological nominalism' and 'ontological realism'⁴ both have deeply permeated the thought, philo-

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3. Bogdan Suchodolski, n.l. pp. 31.32. and M.P. Thompson, A note on Reason and History in late 17th Century Political Thought, 'Political Theory', Vol. IV, No 4. (Nov. 19
 4. Society in the former is no more than a chance accumulation, an aggregation of interests or the locale in which individual wills and interests are operative (or join together on complete or struggle); Society in later sense is some sort of higher, organic and closed entity to which the individual is subordinated in every respect (See Rudi Supek, 'Freedom and Polydeterminism in cultural Criticism', Erich Fromm, 'Socialist Humanism' op. cit., p. 258.

sophy and sociology of bourgeois society. While the ontological nominalism had its inception in the classical liberalism (Hobbes, Smith, Bentham), the ontological realism thus carried from Hegel and Schelling to the theoreticians of organic positivism (Comte, Spencer, Durkheim) and thence to the most recent totalitarian doctrine of the fascist varieties.

Macpherson argues that the difficulties of liberalism lie in the assumption latent in the liberal tradition of possessive individualism. He attempts to show that this postulate was at the root of 17th century political theory and continues to influence twentieth century accounts of liberal democracy. This new notion of 'possessive individualism' therefore involved an almost total break with classical and medieval conceptions of the nature of man, of society and of freedom.

Macpherson claims that Hobbes's analysis of human nature from which his whole political theory is derived, is really an analysis of bourgeois man; that the assumptions explicit and implicit upon which his psychological conclusions depend are assumptions peculiarly valid for bourgeois society.⁵ Hobbes's theory was an inexhaustible

5. C.B. Macpherson, Democratic Theory : Essays in Retrieval, op. cit., pp 239.

reservoir of insights into the functioning of capitalist society; and his was a more objective and aggressive theory of capitalism (without ideological cosmetics) than the liberals.⁶ Hobbes was a mechanist with exceptional imagination; he mirrored all features of bourgeois rationalism without any hypocrisy. Macpherson has aptly pointed out that Hobbes committed the blunder by eternalising the bourgeois characteristics he saw in men in contemporary society around him,⁷ which lacked the historical character of man. It is the acuteness of Hobbes's analysis of bourgeois man that made him the profoundest political thinker of the 17th century and that led to the revival of his concept of sovereignty by the Benthamist.⁸ Macpherson is wrong in his acknowledgement that from Aristotle until the 17th century it was more usual to see the essence of man as purposeful activity, than the consumption of satisfactions and it was only with the emergence of market society in 17th century, the essence of rational behaviour was increasingly held to lie in unlimited individual appropriation or acquisitive individualism.⁹ Because this acquisitive or possessive individualism had its traces in Renaissance individualism (which has been discussed earlier).

6. But the liberals do not accept him as liberal because his crude objectivity in analysis helped the critics of capitalism more than its admirers.

7. C.B. Macpherson, n.5, p. 240.

8. Ibid., p. 250.

9. Ibid., p. 5

According to Macpherson, from Locke to James Mill the concept of man as an infinite appropriator and an infinite consumer became increasingly prevalent.¹⁰ Macpherson argues that from the 17th century until roughly the middle of the 19th century everyone came to understand, whether explicitly or implicitly, that he, the individual was equally subordinated to the laws of the market. This common perception created a 'sufficient basis for rational obligation of all men to a political authority which could maintain and enforce the only possible orderly human relations, namely market relations.'¹¹ Bentham and other 18th century political thinkers insisted again on the atomic competitive individual as the basic unit of society to make the new capitalism adequate to the market. Macpherson states that the confusion in the Benthamist theory of society between the assumption of a natural harmony and the need for the state to create an artificial harmony between conflicting self-interests, comes from the Benthamist failure to resolve into a consistent theory the two views of society - one inherited from Hobbes and the other from 18th century optimists; and the failure is

10. Ibid

11. Macpherson, n.2., pp 272-273.

understandable, reflecting a contradiction in the society they were analysing.¹² Marx has aptly criticised Bentham who "takes the modern shop-keeper, especially the English shop-keeper, as the normal man... this yard measure, then he applies to past, present and future".¹³ Marx accuses the thinkers who mistook the latest transient historical expression of the protean capacity for human nature itself, and Macpherson also subscribes to the same view.

Both the acceptance of the inevitability of everyone's equal subordination to the laws of the market and a cohesion of self-interest persisted until the middle of the 19th century; and thereafter the emergence of a politically articulate and class-conscious working class undermined the first condition and weakened the second. The class conscious and politically articulate members of the working class no longer accepted the inevitable subjection to the domination of the market. To meet the exigencies John Stuart Mill was bound to add a moral concept of man i.e. the man is essentially a doer, a creator, an enjoyer of his human attributes.¹⁴ It was thus necessary to present an image of liberal democratic

13. Karl Marx, Capital Vol. 1, (New York, 1967), p. 609 (Note 2).

14. Macpherson, n.5, p. 4.

society which could be justified more morally appealing (to the liberal thinker, and hopefully to the new democratic mass) than the old utilitarianism.¹⁵

Yet the remarkable fact is that this picture of society as a collection of discrete, atomised and isolated individuals has never been effectively discarded, and appears in its traditional simplistic form even in some of the writings of twentieth century theoretician like Hayek and Karl Popper and his disciples. For all most all liberals retain belief in the ontological primacy of 'the individual' together with a concomitant tendency to regard society and its institutions and all collectivities as abstractions, less 'real' than the individuals of which they are either in whole or in large part composed.

Macpherson insists that possessive market society continues to persist in the twentieth century with one decisive modification or change which, he claims, has seriously challenged the foundations of liberal-democratic theory. That change is 'the emergence of working-class political articulacy.'¹⁶ The very existence of a self-conscious class of workers, who find themselves deprived of the essential prerequisites for the acceptance of the

15. ibid., p. 6.

16. Macpherson, n.2, p. 271.

assumptions of possessive market society, creates a tension between the actual social system and the democratic ideal which is supposed to regulate it. Despite the fact that the essential conditions of a valid theory of political obligation based on possessive market assumption have been greatly weakened. Macpherson notes that liberal democratic states have nevertheless persisted. As Macpherson sees it, the actual persistence of liberal democratic societies is no argument against his thesis : in a possessive market society the individual is human only as a proprietor of his own person, his humanity depends on his freedom 'from any but self-interested contractual relations with others' and his society amounts to a 'series of market relations',¹⁷ but 'the structure of market society no longer provides the necessary conditions for deducing a valid theory of political obligation from these assumptions.'¹⁸ Hence Macpherson needed an ontological change in the liberal views of man as well as society.

Macpherson's account of Locke's intentions and achievements met with a chilly reception from Locke

17. Ibid, p. 275.

18. Ibid, pp 1, 9, 106; Macpherson, 'Hobbes Today' Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, II, (Nov., 1945).

scholars for though it was conceded that the portrait was brilliantly executed it was generally deemed seriously flawed by an almost compulsive passion to point from projective imagination rather than textual life and from the distorted perspective of only one chapter of the second Treatise 'of property'.¹⁹ Macpherson has been accused that he ignores the historical specificity and his interest in the 17th Century roots was always subordinated to his interest in the diseased 20th century tree. Bernard Wand argues that although Macpherson may recognise that 'on the model of formal calculi, moral utterances cannot be entailed in factual statements',²⁰ he continually holds that Locke's assumption both 'led logically' and 'made possible, indeed almost guaranteed' differential rights. There is an obvious gap between assumptions leading logically to a conclusion and merely making it possible and it is this gap which must be closed.²¹ Macpherson himself acknowledges that the political climate of a different time may not have had the same notion of logic that we have and we should not impose on any thinker

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19. John Dunn - The Political Thought of John Locke, Cambridge University, press, 1969.
20. Macpherson, n.2, p. 82
21. Bernard Wand, 'C.B. Macpherson's Conceptual Apparatus', Canadian Journal of Political Science IV: 4, Dec. 1971, pp 527-32.

logical canons which are not of his time.²² Now, if indeed, Macpherson's argument is a logical canon, it is logically questionable and not historically questionable.²³ Hence a reference to Locke's social and historical context is irrelevant to the appropriateness of the inference; and this explains the historical inadeve^rtence of Macpherson's analysis of 17th century political thinker.

For Macpherson the essence of man differs from animals. Man has several capacities and of these, the capacity for 'self-direction' is the most important.²⁴ By self-direction Macpherson means the capacity to choose one's purposes and to undertake activities capable of realizing them which makes man unique in the world. Thus he is an end in himself but not a means to be exploited by others. Macpherson acknowledges that excluding various 'uniquely human capacities', man also possesses some other distinctive capacities such as capacities to cheat, lie, exploit his fellow men but he insists that they are not essential to man and therefore

22. Macpherson, n.2, pp. 5, 14.

23. Ibid., p. 14.

24. Macpherson, n.5, pp. 43, 51, 54, 56, 58.

not 'human'. The distinction Macpherson proposes between these capacities which belong to man's essence and those which do not gets blurred by his circular and ambiguous argument. Although plausible, the distinction between the natural and the socially derived capacities runs into obvious difficulties. For Macpherson essential human capacities are fundamentally harmonious but not 'destructively contentious'.

Of the two ontologies, the ontology of developmental man is the one immediately visible in Macpherson's writing. For Macpherson man is by nature an active being, not a passive consumer of utilities, nor an infinite appropriator; he is an active exacter, developer and enjoyer of his humanly attributes. Man is not a bundle of appetites seeking satisfaction but a bundle of conscious energies seeking to be exerted.²⁵ Macpherson is clear that his developmental view of man is not so much a set of empirical inferences about what man does, but rather a moral conception which provides the needed 'higher set of values'. The developmental view he contends is a proposition about 'the end or purpose of man'.²⁶ For Macpherson, the developmental conception of man which is

25. Ibid., p. 5

26. Ibid., p. 8

His developmental
conception of man is not
of empirical reference
is a normal developmental man

primarily ethical in nature and it is also one whose ethical import is sufficiently strong to provide an automatic justificatory basis for social and political institutions, for 'rights and obligations'. Unlike the comparatively non-discriminating liberal outlook the developmental ontology on the whole condemns consumer man and the developmental man is not a man of acquisition.²⁷

Macpherson's formulation of the ethical principle as an assertion of 'equal effective right',²⁸ makes it, on the surface at any rate, practically indistinguishable from the liberal premise of self-governance; and the developmental conception and its status as an independent ontology seems to have lost its credibility.²⁹ Macpherson's ethical principle now appears as a straight forward restatement of the liberal proclamation of freedom constrained only by the equal right of others as the core of a retrieved theory of liberal democracy.

Macpherson's work too, is thoroughly imbued with a class analysis. In the 'political theory of Possessive Individualism' Macpherson distinguishes three different

27. Ibid, p. 32. Macpherson Contrasts 'developmental' activity and acquisitive activity elsewhere as well ibid., 4-5, 19-23, 24-38.

28. Ibid., p. 55

29. John W. Seaman and Thomas J. Lewis, 'On Retrieving Macpherson's Liberalism', Canadian Journal of Political Science XVII:4, Dec. 1984, p. 717.

models of society : the customary or status; the simple market; and the possessive market;³⁰ and in each model the definitive characteristics are the relation of production and exchange. Work or labour, ownership and property are the operational concepts of this analysis³¹. We also find 'an expression of the dynamic nature of the Marxist concept of class'³² when we are told of 'the development of the market system producing a class...'³³

Macpherson is misleading in his insistence on looking human nature through the concept of essence. Macpherson's use of concept of essence, though innocent of any misleading or confusing connotations, seems for the most part trapped by them. For his deductions and demonstrations depend in a large measure, on the systematic confusion to which the concept gives rise. His use of the concept of essence refers both to evaluations and descriptions. The concept of essence, as Macpherson recognises, is necessarily related to the concepts of potentiality and actuality. Macpherson's acknowledgement of the wisdom of

concept of
essence.

30. Macpherson n.2, pp. 47-48.

31. Ibid, pp. 53-4.

32. Victor Suacek, 'The Elusive Marxism of C.B. Macpherson', Canadian Journal of Political Science IX:3, Sept, 1973, pp 401-402.

33. Macpherson, n.2, p. 273.

the classical liberal theorists in rejecting the language of essence³⁴ can be appreciated but unfortunately Macpherson has fallen into almost every trap which it invites.

U)* The concept of essence is fundamentally a metaphysical one whose use in political theory has had disastrous practical effects. For it has led to the view that once the nature of the human essence has been grasped, all that is required for practice is to make its content explicit.³⁵ Moreover, those who like Macpherson fail to elucidate the concept of human essence in the appropriate manner, are somehow morally reprehensible.

2 (X) Macpherson pays scant attention to the nature and development of human capacities. He does not notice that the capacities he mentions are too general to have unequivocal meanings or to indicate how they can be exercised. Contrary to Macpherson's view there is hardly any possibility of complete harmony since some human capacities conflict and the development of one may obstructs the other. And again Vikhu Parekh points out that 'human capacities are disparate, not easily measurable and not transferable into a common currency or gradeable

34. Macpherson, n. 5, pp. 218-19.

35. Bernard Wand, op. cit., p 535-536.

on a single scale and it is therefore difficult to see what the maximisation of human capacities and powers means, and one may even wonder if the concept of minimizing human development is logically coherent. The ghost of Bentham haunts even the shrewdest critic of liberalism'.³⁶

Macpherson does not reveal what sort ^{of} factor and how it frustrates the realisation of human capacities. He remains obsessed with the liberal individualist belief that if only an individual is provided with the necessary material resources, he can and would develop his potentialities and satisfy his needs for which he lays so much stress on material scarcity. Like many a liberals, he sees self-development as essentially an individual process and is preoccupied with material means rather than the quality of both the relations of production and other social relations. Macpherson admits that human capacities cannot be developed and exercised by an individual in isolation when ^{he} talks about harmony. They are located within, and sustained by the framework of social relations and are developed when the latter make them both possible and necessary.³⁷ A social theorist should be cautious

36. Vikhu Parekh, 'Contemporary Political Thinkers' Martin Robertson and Company Ltd., Oxford (1982) p. 70.

37. Steven Lukes, 'The Real and Ideal Worlds of Democracy', Alkis Kontos (ed) Powers, Possession and Freedom (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1979) pp. 145 f.

enough to enquire about the kinds of social relations that stimulate and nurture and nourish the exercise of these capacities which Macpherson aptly emphasises.

Macpherson has examined the exploitative nature of capitalist society and its conception of man within the marxist framework-though in a limited extent. But in his own conception of man he pays scant attention to the marxist conception of man and gets himself more inclined with the liberals, as a result his criticism of liberal individualism hits him back. Despite his penetrating criticism of liberal individualism, Macpherson fails to transcend its basic inherent assumption and is unable to lay the foundation of an alternative theory of man. Because of his adherence to liberal individualism he has not been able to come out of its trap,

True to the essentialist tradition, Macpherson approaches the concept of human powers through a consideration of the adequacy of the definition of man. Any definition of man must be one such that whatever is essential to his nature as a man from his bare survival to the exercise of his highest capacities, must be included and only if it does will the definition be 'non-slavish'.³⁸

38. Macpherson, Real World of Democracy, op.cit., p. 56.

Despite Macpherson's jaundiced views of life in a market society, it is clear that the powers which, as exercised, would realize the essence of man are powers which at least some men at some time have had even though they have lived in market societies. Macpherson's contention is not merely that economic conditions deprive men * from maintaining desirable goals or engaging in morally worthy activities, but that some how a change in the basic structure of human nature is required for them to be 'truely human'.³⁹ Much of Macpherson's condemnation of the market society rests on his view of the way it defines the concept of powers in contrast to the way in which it ought to be defined.

For Macpherson power refers to the 'actual ability to exercise one's capacities' or what comes to the same thing 'access to the means of using one's capacities'.⁴⁰ When a man is capable of doing something but lacks the access to the necessary means, he has the capacity but not the power to do it. According to Macpherson the less the impediments in the way of the exercise of one's potentialities, the more the power or to say that power and

39. Ibid., p. 38

40. Macpherson, n. 5, p. 53.

impediments are inversely proportioned to each other. As Macpherson says, 'a man's power is to be measured in terms of the absence of impediments to his using his human capacities'.

Out of two types of impediments i.e. (i) natural such as the force of gravity and man's physical inability to do certain things and (ii) social, Macpherson rightly disregards the first. Social impediments also fall into three categories, i.e. first the lack of adequate means of Life,⁴¹ second, the lack of access to the labour,⁴² and third, the lack of protest against invasion by other.

In Macpherson's view, the third impediment does not pose a threat in liberal capitalist society because of its legal system which guarantees the protection of life, liberty and property. In a capitalist society Macpherson argues, the means of production are privately owned and owned by a few, and the vast majority of men depend on their labour-power for their livelihood. During the contracted period the worker loses control over his

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41. By this Macpherson means both the means of material sustenance and the general level of material comfort needed to enable an individual to take full part in the cultural life of his community.
42. Macpherson uses the term labour in the broadest sense, that of the exertion of human energy.

activities and suffers a 'diminution of human essence' since freedom or self-direction is the chief ingredient in man's humanity. Again the worker transfers to the capitalist his ability to use his capacities and whatever value he produces belong to the capitalist. He receives back a small part of the value of his product in the form of wages; the rest of it constitute the capitalist's profit.⁴³ The worker also finds no satisfaction because of the monotonous, mindless and degrading working condition. As a result, he builds of frustrations and resentment has little zest and enthusiasm left at the end of the day and tends to develop the attitude of a passive and mindless consumer, with little interest in developing his essential human attributes.⁴⁴ Macpherson argues that capitalist society involves not only a continuous net transfer⁴⁵ but also a good deal of unnecessary wastage of the worker's power.

Then Macpherson divides the power into two: First, Extractive Power i.e. the ability 'to control the capacities of and to extract benefits from other individuals,⁴⁶ and second, the developmental or ethical concept of power

43. Macpherson, n. 5, pp 64,65.

44. Vikhu Parekh, op. cit., pp 56-57.

45. Macpherson, n. 5, p. 12.

46. Ibid., pp 42-44.

i.e. the ability of man 'to use and develop his own potentialities under his own conscious control for his own human purposes.'⁴⁷ This developmental or ethical power is said to be what a man needs to be fully human. The Capitalist property rights violates the leading requirement of the ethical principle : they do not allow every one equal effective rights to be fully human, hence a vast inequality of power. Since inequality of power implies the unequal development of capacities and inequity in the degree of self-direction. Macpherson suggests that it ultimately implies inequality in men's humanity. In capitalist society some men are human, while the rest are deduced to a commodity. The detachment of labour from the person means that the majority of people are prevented from using strength and skill creatively : 'The power of a horse or machine may be defined as the amount of work it can do whether it is set to work or not. But a human being to be human, must be able to use his strength and skill for purpose he has consciously formed'.⁴⁸ Here Macpherson's concept of man is replete with Marxist view. Macpherson also blames the liberal welfare state for the continuing net

47. Ibid., pp. 41-42.

48. Macpherson, n. 38, p. 43.

transfer of power from owners to non-owners because of its reliance on capitalist incentive to get the main productive work of the society done.

Macpherson is unable to specify the forms of life that obstruct or promote human development, and his critique of capitalism lacks depth. Macpherson does not specify any reason to believe that if the transfer of powers were to be eliminated, men would want to develop and help others to develop their capacities rather than remain and encourage others to remain, passive consumers of utilities. Within the framework of his individualist account of human development, Macpherson is unable fully to appreciate that human-development is cooperative process.⁴⁹ Definitely, he is not fully unaware of this profound insight of Marx, however, he does not explore its full implications or make it the basis of his social and political theory though he claims so.

Macpherson's argument does not carry him towards his destination. The idea of maximising a value which is not in any obvious sense measurable, or even linear, is a notion which wears an air of slightly bogus precision at the best of times and in relation to the development

49. [Vikhu Parokh] op. cit., p. 71.

of human powers this air of precision is especially implausible.⁵⁰

The idea of each individual maximising the development of his own powers tells us more about Macpherson's usage than it really speak something specific and plausible. Even if one could arrive at an agreed list of all desirable human abilities, it is hard to see in principle what it would mean to maximise them as a whole : whether their sum or their product or their average.⁵¹ John Dunn argues that collective responsibility would be legal fact, collective material benefit a possible distributive policy: but collective control as it has so far been described and imagined would be little more than verbal placebo; and at no point Macpherson gives serious consideration to any obstacles to the development of human powers which arise from the division of labour other than those produced by the control of private capital.⁵²

Bernard Wand's criticism of Macpherson's concept of power on the basis of ethical neutrality of power⁵³

50. John Dunn, 'Review Article : Democracy Unretrieved, or Political Theory of Prof. Macpherson', British Journal of Political Science, 1974, p. 494.

51. Ibid., p. 495.

52. This thing has been elaborately discussed in Anthony Giddens, 'The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies', (London, Hutchinson, 1973).

53. Bernard Wand, op.cit., p. 539.

does not hold much validity because Steven Lukes and Ted Benton have rightly pointed out that the concept of power is value dependent and 'essentially contested' because of definitional link between power and interests and the relevant values being, of course, different ones, depending on the account of interests which is offered.

From the conception of the 'individual' and of his relations to the world and to other individuals flows much of the liberal system of political values. If man is self-propelling, self-contained and responsible for his own values as has been conceived by liberal individualism, then it is clear that what he needs is space and opportunities to realise his aims and gratify his wishes. Liberalism distinguishes itself from other political doctrines by the supreme importance it attaches to freedom or liberty. Man needs freedom and privacy - that 'area of non-interference' which for classical liberals from Constant, de Tocqueville and Mill to Berlin is the essence of liberty. Within liberalism the autonomy of individual is both an existential fact about him, and an ideal, and the 'fact' of his autonomy provides a metaphysical-empirical foundation for the principle of the freedom of the individual.⁵⁴

54. Anthony Arblaster, 'Liberal values and socialist values', The Socialist Register, 1972, p. 91.

It is the area of non-interference, the area free from social and political pressure i.e. negative liberty, which really matters to the liberals. And this makes it clear that the original picture of man as an isolated, non-social (if not actually anti-social) being still retains its force. It is not through society by craving out independent enclaves within the overall context of society, that man fulfils himself. Freedom understood in this sense, can be identified as the paramount liberal value because of this intimate connection it has with the liberal version of human nature.

Macpherson has pointed out that this concept of freedom is central to 17th century political theory.⁵⁴ Macpherson has vehemently criticised the negative concept of liberty that 'it is too narrowly conceived and at bottom a mechanical, inertial concept of freedom which is fully appropriate only to a complete market society.'⁵⁵ Macpherson argues that the negative liberty i.e. absence of coercion is not universally applicable in a capitalist society. Institutions such as the laws of property and contract coerce non-owners (who do not own the means of production), and the coercion is also the result of arrangements made by this haves and this sort of unfreedom (i.e. coercion) has not been properly written off.

54. Macpherson, n. 2, pp. 263, 264.

55. Macpherson, n. 5, p. 95.

Macpherson brands this negative liberty as **Spencerian** which is too narrow mechanical and inertial to serve the minimum purpose. Macpherson acknowledges that it traces back through Bentham to Hobbes, and beyond him to Galileo, from whom Hobbes borrowed the concept of inertial motion which is applicable to an atomized market society in which everyone is put on his own to compete with everyone for everything.⁵⁶

J.S. Mill and other classical English Political Philosophers put the rationalia in this concept. According to Macpherson Mill neglected or repudiated as important source of unfreedom the capitalist property institution; he attributed directly to the monopoly of ownership by the ruling class.⁵⁷ Macpherson insists that the concept of liberty adequate for 20th century can not afford to ignore all that Mill and classical English liberal tradition neglected. He argues in a marxist way that the unequal access to the means of life and labour inherent in capitalism is, irrespective of what particular social and economic theory is put forward, an obstruction to the freedom of those with little or no access; and it

56. ibid., p. 104.

57. ibid., p. 98-99.

diminishes the negative liberty and diminishes the area in which they can not be pushed around. Macpherson concludes that a formulation of negative liberty which ignores the class-impediments is not entirely adequate.⁵⁸ The welfare-state not merely to provide some conditions for freedom of choice, it is to broaden the area of choice for those who previously had few doors open to them.

A man's positive liberty i.e. to act as a fully human being is virtually the same as what Macpherson calls a man's power in the developmental sense. Macpherson subscribes to Berlin's view that Idealists and any extreme rationalist, believing in the self-mastery and a 'higher' or 'real' self over a lower, desirous and or 'inauthentic' self have often sought to impose their own concepts which has apparently been led to monstrous denials of liberty and this slippery road finally ends in coercion : the individual is forced to be free.

Macpherson insists, 'individuals are stunted by the social institutions in which they have had to live: they cannot be fully human, or fully free, until these institutions have been changed and in some circumstances the institutions may be unchangeable except by revolutionary coercion.⁵⁹

58. Ibid., p.101.

59. Ibid., p. 106.

Macpherson accepts Berlin's view that the theory of positive liberty has been perverted and degenerated into a wholesale denial of liberty and argues that it is due rather to a specific failure of liberal theory to take account of the concrete circumstances which the growing demand for fuller human realization has encountered and will encounter.⁶⁰

Macpherson criticises the conservative : doctrines ranging from Hegel's to the conservative property liberalism to T.H. Green, and including various elitist theories, which try to maintain the status-quo i.e. the existing class structure of power and property. Macpherson finally concludes that the concept of positive liberty arose only after the ideal of individual liberty had taken pretty firm hold and that is to say that the concept of positive liberty is a product of bourgeoisie society.⁶¹

Macpherson finally concludes that Berlin's division of liberty into positive and negative fails to serve the purpose for which it was designed. Even the positive liberty neglects (and does not include within its ambit) the impediments caused by the lack of access to the means of life and labour and as a result becomes an abstraction.

60. Ibid., p. 107.

61. Ibid., p. 115.

Negative liberty no longer is the shield of individuality rather it has become the cloak of an un-individualist, corporate, imperial free enterprise and even the current pluralist political theory can not be relied upon for the reformulation of negative theory.⁶²

After a vigorous and intensifying analysis of both negative and positive concepts of liberty and pointing out their lapses and fallacies, Macpherson presents an alternative division of liberty which he thinks can better serve the purpose. He redefines the negative liberty 'as immunity from the extractive power of other (including the state)' which might be described as 'counter extractive liberty.'⁶³ And he changes the name of positive liberty to 'developmental liberty' to better mark the division. Macpherson claims that his own division of liberty better serves the liberatarian purpose by warning people off the kind of debased and perverted liberty which negates liberty. According to him the former i.e. counter-extractive liberty is a pre-requisite of the latter i.e. developmental liberty.

Macpherson argues in a Benthamite way that since each individual's liberty may diminish or destroy another's

62. ibid., p.116.

63. ibid., p. 118.

the only sensible way to measure individual liberty is to measure the aggregate net liberty of all the individuals in a given society.⁶⁴ He prescribes in a Greenian way that there should be interference by the state to protect me from interference by other individuals: interference to protect man from interference.⁶⁵ Like a liberal individualist being very much suspicious of state power the plea that state an engine of domination of one class over others redefines the liberty, particularly the measure of liberty, as the absence of extractive power.⁶⁶

Notwithstanding his claim to the contrary, Macpherson too conceives of the individual as the proprietor of his capacities. Each individual is the master of himself and aims to develop his capacities as he freely chooses. He needs liberty in order to cooperate with others in developing a common way of life but to 'live in accordance with his own conscious purposes... and decide for himself rather than to be acted upon and decided by others'.⁶⁷ This is an exclusivist definition of liberty (which is no way different from the liberal individualistic concept of liberty). Unlike the liberals Macpherson rightly

64. Ibid, p. 117

65. Ibid , pp. 117-118

66. Ibid, p. 118

67. Ibid, p. 108f.

stresses the development of non-contentions and socially oriented human capacities, however, the form and content of their development remain individualistic. Further, Macpherson even outbids liberalism and views liberty, Political participation, the quality of life and so on as possessions to which individual has a proprietary right. No doubt he does so in order to secure recognition of the individual's right to the conditions of his development. However, to deploy the vocabulary of possessive individualism, that to for a defensible purpose, is to be contaminated by the very disease one is determined to eradicate.

Macpherson is indeed aware that liberal conception of freedom can be used against capitalism, suggesting in one context that the doctrine of negative liberty could provide the grounds of a case for socialism.⁶⁸ He also simultaneously employs ethical principle of the free and equal development of man's humanity to retrieve democracy from capitalism and consumer man. While this ethical principle does retain the liberal ontology of self governance as one of its integral elements, it problematically combines this with an anti-consumer or developmental ontology of man, thus, the ethical principle embodies

68. ibid., p. 103.

two divergent ontological or justificatory doctrines.⁶⁹ His ethical principle is construed from these two ontologies and both are fundamental to his analysis though Macpherson nowhere explicitly mentions it. Seaman and Lewis argue that Macpherson's developmental ontology does not always play the dominant role in forming the meaning of the ethical principle; an occasion the liberal ontology of self-governance also performs a vital role, giving the ethical principle a substantially different meaning.⁷⁰

In contending that to be fully human a man's capacities must be exercised under his own control rather than at the dictates of another, Macpherson has, in effect, made the liberal ontology of self-governance the prerequisite of the developmental ontology of 'essentially human capacities' and this makes Macpherson the inheritor of J.C. Mill to whom he strongly criticises.

Despite his sarcastic criticism Macpherson could not save himself from Benthamite infection. Macpherson always speaks about the measurement of aggregate net of values like power, liberty etc. when he knows very well that there is no such measuring instrument to measure these values.

69. John W. Seaman and Thomas J. Lewis, op. cit., p. 715.

70. Ibid., p. 719-721.

Macpherson has failed to place (freedom) in its historical and dialectical perspective which has been properly explained by MacIntyre. 'Freedom is not something which at any given moment men either do or do not possess; it is always an achievement and always a task. The concrete content of freedom changes and enlarges from age to age; in the dialectical growth of human nature what was the freedom of the past may be the slavery of the present.'⁷¹

Macpherson's concept of freedom remains necessarily a liberal freedom in its essence. Despite his attempt he has failed to liberate it from the clutches of possessive individualism which he attacks. In the absence of a real, concrete solution the dilemma of freedom and necessity of voluntarism and fatalism is simply shunted into a siding.

It has been widely and univocally acclaimed by the liberals that equality occupies an important position among all other liberal values on which liberalism has erected its superstructure and as a doctrine it has been able to distinguish itself as more humanistic than others. But contrary to their assertion it is equality which is the worst casualty among all the values and it has

71. Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Breaking the chains of Reason' in Out of Apathy (London, 1960), p. 202.

consistently got the step-motherly treatment from the successive liberal philosophers. Only in the eighteenth century the concept of equality was backed by rationalism and enlightenment. It also finds its genealogy in Renaissance and Reformation and specially in the French Revolution and American Declaration of Independence. Marx showed that the freedom and equality guaranteed in the French Constitution as the Rights of man, and taken over in similar form by all liberal democratic constitutions, was an adequate expression of human relations in a market society, where no one's social condition is fixed by the privileges of birth and everyone as a 'commodity owner' is free to dispose of his goods and is bound only by the terms of contract to which he agreed. According to Marx the juridical equality and freedom is an integral part of capitalist relations of production. Equality and freedom of a particular kind - are, suggests Marx, inherent in exchange based on exchange values. The relation between subjects of exchange in a relationship of formal equality; more over it is a relationship in which the parties recognise each other as proprietors and who appropriate each other's property not by force, are free. Capitalism as generalised system of commodity exchange, then is the perfection of this form of juridical equality and freedom;

but there of course, freedom and equality acquire a rather special meaning since the particular exchange which constitutes the essence of capitalism is that between capital and labour, in which one party (juridically free and free from the means of his labour) has only his labour-power to sell.⁷² Thus wage-slavery, based on the commodification of labour power, is characterized by a kind of 'freedom' and 'equality' that distinguishes this form of exploitation from all other relations between exploiter and exploited in which surplus-extraction relies more directly on relations of juridical or political domination and dependence.⁷³

Macpherson has dealt with the concept of equality in a Marxist way. For example, in 'The Meaning of Economic Democracy' published in 1942, Macpherson argues that : 'The basic postulate of democrats is the equal humanity of every individual, the belief that each human being has a life to live as much as any other human being...' This essential human equality requires 'equal access with others to the means of self-development'

72. Ellen Meiksins Wood, 'C.B. Macpherson, Liberalism, and the task of socialist Political Theory', Socialist Register, 1978, p. 228.

73. Ibid.

and mitigates against 'class privilege'.⁷⁴ No uniformity of result is required by equal self-development, yet no prospect for this valuable and valid end exists where there is an unequal distribution of the material condition which are its precondition: 'the right which it was once the chief objects of the democrats to secure, because it was then regarded as a right without which the free and equal individual could not attain his full stature - i.e. the right to the unrestricted use of private property - has not become incompatible with most individuals' attainment of that stature. The inference drawn... is that the unrestricted right to property must go if real democracy is to have a chance'.⁷⁵

Macpherson argues that the egalitarian principle inherent in democracy requires not only 'one man one vote' but also one man, one equal effective right to live as fully humanly as he may wish. Macpherson contends that the rights or freedom, men need in order to be fully human are not mutually destructive and it must be asserted that the right of any man which are morally

74. C.B. Macpherson, 'The Meaning of Economic Democracy', University of Toronto Quarterly XI, 4 (July 1942), p. 404 cited from Victor Svacek, op. cit., p. 399

75. Ibid., pp. 408-409.

justifiable on any egalitarian principle are only those which allow any man to be fully human.⁷⁶ Macpherson argues that consumer equality is not adequate.⁷⁷ The compelling conclusion for Macpherson is that simply redistributing goods and services evenly within a capitalist society, even if it were be possible, will not be enough to effect equality because the class relations in capitalist society is a necessary measure of social inequality and they are viewed as obstacles that ought to be overcome.⁷⁸

Marx comments on the 'foolishness' of those socialists (especially the French and in particular Prudhon, though he might just as well be commenting on any number of modern social democrats, revisionist, and Labourites - perhaps even Macpherson himself?) 'Who want to depict socialism as the realization of the ideals of bourgeois society' and argue that freedom and equality characteristics of that society have simply been perverted by money, capital, etc.⁷⁹ For Marx, the unfreedom and inequality of capitalist relations

76. Macpherson, 'n. 5, p. 55.

77. ibid., p. 94.

78. ibid., p.140

79. Ellen Meiksins Wood, op. cit., p. 228.

are, of course, not perversions but realization of the form of freedom and equality implied by simpler forms of commodity exchange. Thus, while bourgeois freedom and equality represent an advance over preceding forms, it is a mistake to regard them as antithetical to capitalist inequality and domination.

Macpherson does not have any conception of right of his own. He suggests that in the present prospect of abundance any concept of human rights which would be acceptable must meet at least two requirements.⁸⁰ First, the right must be in some effective sense equal. The minimum acceptable equality may be stated as equal access to the means of 'convenient' living (not an equal right to a certain standard of life, but an equal right to attain it by one's energies). Secondly, the right must be rights of reciepnce as well as rights of action. That is to say that there must be an obligation on others to respect each man's rights.

Despite his incisive criticism Macpherson could not rescue himself from the impacts of the school of natural rights. In his view human rights can only be asserted as a species of natural right in the sense that they must be deduced from the nature (i.e. the

80. Macpherson n.5, p. 233.

needs and capacities) of men as such, whether of men as they now are or of men as they are thought capable of becoming.⁸¹ According to him neither legal right nor customary rights are a sufficient basis for human rights.

He again argues that in the measure that abundance replaces scarcity, the postulate of necessary contentiousness becomes increasingly unrealistic and can progressively be discarded. Macpherson hopefully thinks that if this can be discarded, the prospect of a generally acceptable doctrine of human rights becomes realistic. He concludes that the present prospect for a generally acceptable and realistic doctrine of human rights depends chiefly on the generality and rapidity of the transformation from the economy of scarcity to the society of abundance. But Macpherson has not mentioned about that generally acceptable and realistic doctrine of human right, concretely. Whenever he talks about the technological revolution and prospects of abundance he forgets about the negative effect of technology.⁸²

81. Ibid., p. 236

82. This part (i.e. damaging effect of technology) will be dealt elaborately in the chapter of democracy.

According to Macpherson, the theory and practice, or the concept and institution of property is the root of all evils i.e the major weaknesses of the traditional liberal-democratic theory. The retention of the concept of man as infinite consumer and appropriator, the denial to most men of equitable access to the means of life and the means of labour causing the diminution of powers of the non-owners, the reduction of democracy to a dehumanized market phenomenon, last but not the least the exploitation of man by man, all these find their origin from the concept of property. Since all these roads lead to property Macpherson asks how it came into being and whether there is an alternative to it.

Macpherson says that the theory and practice of property both change over time (in discernible ways with rise of modes capitalism) and the changes are related; and it is a man-made device which establishes certain relation between people.⁸³ In his view the concept of property embodied in a capitalist economy goes no further back than the 17th century. He detects some important differences between pre-modern and modern concepts of property.⁸⁴

83. Macpherson, n. 5., p. 121.

84. ibid., pp. 120-140.

Until the 17th century, the term property was viewed in a broad sense to include life, limbs, liberties, capacities, rights and so on. It was both material and non-material in nature. In Macpherson's view, this broad meaning of property was lost in the measure that modern societies became full market societies and the term property came to be confined to material property. The acquisition of property was justified and rationalised on the ground that in a bourgeois society an individual's ability to develop his capacities depended almost entirely upon the amount of material property owned by him. Furthermore, the ownership of material means gave him control over the capacities and liberties of others and helped him a lot to accumulate.

Second, until the advent of capitalist market society, i.e. 17th century ownership of property entailed two kinds of rights : first, the right to exclude others from the use and enjoyment of a thing and second, the right not to be excluded from the use and enjoyment of such things as common land, parks and roads that had been declared to be for common use. Men enjoyed both these rights, which constituted their property. From the 17th Century onwards only the first kind of right came to be regarded as part of their property and the

property reduced to that of private property - an exclusive, alienable 'absolute' individual or corporate right in things.⁸⁵ In Macpherson's view, this was so because a bourgeois society required the universal marketability of goods and services. And since only the first kind of right could be alienated, it came to be considered the essence of property.

Third one is a really corollary consequence of the second-in a bourgeois society the right to dispose of a thing came to be considered a crucial component of the right to ownership of property. It was not enough that one was able to use and enjoy something; one had to be able to sell it, destroy it and do with it whatever one liked.

Finally, until the 17th century property largely meant the right to revenue rather than to a thing. His property consisted in the revenues accruing from his land but not the land itself. With the emergence of market economy the concept of property was replaced and the bulk of individual property was in the form of freehold land, saleable leases, physical plant and money. Property, therefore, came to be defined as a

85. Ibid., p. 127.

'right to things' rather than a right in things' as is evident in such every-day expressions as 'properties for sale' and 'property to let'. Macpherson argues that as a result of these and other changes, the right to property came to imply a more or less absolute and exclusive right to own, use and alienate material things. The new concept of property justified the private ownership of the means of production and the appropriation of the products of the workers, Who, having nothing to sell but their labour power, offered themselves for hire. This new concept in turn was justified on the ground that the conditions of scarcity created by the hiatus between low productivity and infinite desires could not be conquered without giving the individual an absolute and exclusive right of ownership.

Macpherson argues that the situation today is very different. Thanks to the enormous development of productivity, scarcity is no longer the inescapable human predicament it once was. And thank to the increasingly democratic temper of our age. Our moral values have undergone important changes, and we now believe that every human being has an equal right to the conditions necessary for his fullest development. As a result of both these developments, the concept of

property is undergoing significant revision. The developed capitalist economy is being regulated by the state and the exclusive and absolute right to property is being questioned. The increasingly unbearable pollution of the environment (of air, water and so on) has meant that these are now being thought of as common property, and a right to them is coming to be regarded as a form of property from which nobody should be excluded. The recognition of an individual's right to a job, a pension or a guaranteed annual income has meant that property is increasingly being defined as a right to revenue rather than to a thing. Macpherson welcomes these and other attempts to break out of and, indeed, reverse the 'narrowings' suffered by the concept of property from the 17th century onwards and suggests that our revisions of it should proceed along the following lines 'if they are to be consistent with the needs' of a fully democratic society.

Macpherson suggests that we must 'recapture' the older concept of property and define it broadly to include ownership not only of things and revenues but also of 'life and liberty... the use and development and enjoyment of human capacities'. Macpherson goes

further and argues that rather than seeing it as a human right, we should see it as a property right. His 'compelling reason' for this is that since the institution of property enjoys enormous prestige and sanctity in our society, a right is likely to be respected and enforced only if it is seen as a part of property.⁸⁶

According to Macpherson, life, liberty, a guaranteed income, access to the means of production and even the right to political participation should also be seen as forms of property. By defining property so widely and turning every right into a property right, Macpherson seems to fall victim to the bourgeois virus of possessive individualism that he so strongly condemns.⁸⁷

He has not been able to transcend the basic categories of bourgeois society, he merely universalizes them and invests them with a new content that they seem hardly capable of accommodating.

The capitalist concept of property, Macpherson tells us, involves the rights to exclude others from its uses. To vary the conditions of exclusion (for example, by opening up the property to all members of the community) is quite different from a change in the con-

86. Ibid., p. 138.

87. Vikhu Parekh, op. cit., p. 60.

cept of property. The attitude towards property are certainly changing in the midtwentieth century as per Macpherson's description, but it seems curious to describe it as a change in this concept of property rather than as a claim, demand or right.⁸⁸ Again Macpherson contends that property as exclusive, alienable, absolute, individual right in things becomes less necessary because of some changes brought by the welfare measures of the state.⁸⁹ But is this new situation a change in the concept of property? Is it even something which renders the concept of property less necessary? There has been no change in the pattern of ownership but some regulations have been imposed—like increase in taxes of revenue, regulations concerning possible effect on others, etc. Property is more hedged about by restriction of this sort, but as property it is not at all less absolute and exclusive than it used to be. The other side of the coin is that the agency which is taking over the regulatory work of the market, an agency which provokes Prof. Macpherson to a positive explosion of euphemisms and variants, is

88. K.R. Minogue, op.cit., p. 388.

89. Macpherson, n 5. p. 134.

not 'society in general' (which is non-entity) but the state, an agency that now exercises property rights not one less exclusive than those of any earlier period. Whatever welfare measures the state is taking now, is only to protect itself from the immediate crisis. It is not a voluntary one but out of compulsion it is a crisis-management attempt. What is not owned by individuals and corporations is now, as it ever was, owned by public authority. But these remain property (i.e. common property) in the sense that whoever owns them can set very precise limits to exclude people from them. Thus, when Macpherson tells us that governments 'will have to acknowledge that property can no longer be considered to consist solely of private property but must be stretched to cover the opposite kind of individual property - an individual right not to be excluded from the use or benefit of something,'⁹⁰ he is confusing political reality with abstract argument.

The opposite of a right to exclude is the absence of a right to exclude, or possibly an obligation not to exclude on the part of owners. But this is not at all the same as a right not to be excluded, for, as we have seen, the situation described by Macpherson is not a change in the concept of property, but merely the growing power of a new type of owner: public authority alias

90. Ibid., p. 143.

the state. And what matters is the actual behaviour of this new owner who is doubly powerful because, unlike a private owner, it has the legislative power to determine the conditions of ownership, and it is also a monopolist. It is the actual behaviour of this new owner, rather than the logic of the concept of property, which will determine whether people have a right not to be excluded or whether they will not. Most probably Macpherson has been disillusioned by the welfare measures of the state but one has to admit that now-a-days the state has acquired enormous power and is able to suppress any dissenting voice in the name of greater-national interest which actually serves the interest of the capitalist class. This welfarism is a misnomer, it is to save capitalism from its imminent crisis by reating an illusion among the masses.

Macpherson's work begins by taking note of the inconsistent epistemological foundations of the ethical principles of utilitarianism and self-development. Macpherson is indeed correct to see the justification of rampant consumerism in utilitarianism and also justified in rejecting it which provides only a mediate and revocable defense of private property. However, the idealistic principle of self-development contains a defense of property on entirely different grounds. The

principles of self-development presupposes an idealistic epistemology which can justify the notion of autonomy. Kant defends an exclusionary property right because it externalizes the individual will in the world of things. On the idealist epistemology, the defense of property is neither mediate nor revocable, it is an essential prerequisite for the maintenance of individual autonomy in the external and social world. Development of one's capacities require a concrete guarantee of independence through possession. At the very least, a critique based on autonomy and self-development would have to show how this ethic could be disentangled from its historical justification of private property - a task that Macpherson does not address.⁹¹ Marx is important from this perspective in so far as he attempts the supersession of both the 'consumer' and 'autonomy' traditions through his analysis of labour.

In spite of his trenchant criticism of possessive individualistic assumptions, Macpherson could not rescue himself from the same virus. His analysis of liberal assumptions and his solution to it remain necessarily within that liberal tradition. Hence his thought is

91. Ian H. Angus, 'On Macpherson's Developmental Liberalism', Canadian Journal of Political Science XV: 1, March 1982, p. 149.

faced with insuperable obstacle, for its starting-point and its goal are always, if not always consciously, an apologia for the existing order of things or at least proof of their immutability. This reflects his failure to understand the history.

CHAPTER - III

'LIBERAL DEMOCRACY : MACPHERSON'S CRITIQUE'

For Macpherson the single and concentrated vision is the vision of democracy as a humanistic ontology accompanied by a critique of liberal ideology as possessive individualism which has been accepted unchallengingly since the time of Hobbes. The chief concern of Macpherson has been with the problem of democracy in the contemporary world. The core of Macpherson's positive doctrine, in contrast to this critical work that otherwise preoccupies him, emerges even more fully in his most recent work, 'The life and times of liberal Democracy'.

Macpherson has very neatly summarised the intentions of his theoretical enterprise and has opened up several paths of inquiry in his efforts to clarify the limits and possibilities of liberal democracy and liberal democratic thought. In the book 'The life and times of Liberal democracy' Macpherson has given an account of changes in liberal democratic theory presented as a series of historically successive 'models' which present several major doctrinal shifts since the foundation of modern liberal democracy in the utilitarianism of Bentham and James Mill. The purpose of this schematic

history is, writes Macpherson, 'to examine the limits and possibilities of liberal democracy;¹ that is not merely to examine the nature and development of the liberal tradition up to now, but to explore its future possibilities. The book is not only an intellectual history, but also a political programme. However, liberal democracy is not as surgeon would say, beyond operation. On Macpherson's view nearly everything that is attractive, essential and most cherished in liberal theory can be salvaged from the clutches of possessive individualism.

Macpherson argues that liberal democracy most of its life so far, has failed to realise its vision of good society because of its attempt to combine uneasily two images of man : Consumer of utilities and developer and enjoyer of the humanly potentialities. He suggests that a liberal position need not be taken to depend for ever on an acceptance of capitalistic assumption, though historically it has been so taken. According to him, the ethical principle or the appetite for individual freedom has outgrown its capitalistic market envelope and can now live as well or better without it.²

1. C.B. Macpherson, Life and Times of Liberal Democracy, op.cit., p. 8.

2. ibid, p. 2.

He again asserts that this change is tangible and permissible and required partly because of inherent defects, partly because of changed circumstance.

Macpherson argues that although liberal state accepted democratic demands, its structure and basic assumption could allow it to accommodate them upto a point. The liberal democratic state was liberal and market oriented first and democratic later. It was the strongly liberal state that was democratized and in the process democracy was liberalized. The democratic franchise was a latter addition to a well established liberal state, the mechanism of which was competitive non-democratic parties and the purpose of which was to provide the condition for a competitive capitalist market society.³ As Macpherson puts it; 'The liberal state fulfilled its own logic. In so doing it neither destroyed nor weakened itself; it strengthened both itself and the market society'.⁴

The marriage between liberalism and democracy took place in the early 19th century, and a new form of government called liberal democracy came into existence. Even

3. C.B. Macpherson, 'The Real World of Democracy' op.cit., p. 57

4. ibid., p.11.

as Hobbes and Locke were the first to theorise about market oriented liberalism. Bentham and James Mill were the first to articulate the basic principles of liberal democracy.⁵ Macpherson brands the pre-nineteenth century democratic vision and theories as precursors of liberal democracy rather than as part of classical liberal democratic tradition because of the fact that the then democratic vision depended on or were made to fit, a non-class divided society. According to Macpherson liberal democracy is specifically associated with a class divided society; the doctrine presupposes and accepts the division of society into classes, and merely seeks to fit a democratic structure' to a class divided society. The pre-nineteenth century democracy was utopian which was intended as reaction against class societies.

The four models of liberal democracy are designated as 'Protective Democracy', 'Developmental Democracy', 'Equilibrium Democracy', and 'Participatory Democracy'.

Liberal democratic theory is a doctrine which emerged only in the late 18th and early 19th century precisely because it was only then that some - albeit limited - form of political liberal democracy no longer

5. C.B. Macpherson, n. 1, pp. 23 ff.

appeared incompatible with class division and the security of property. This first model makes its case for democracy on the grounds that it alone can protect

the governed from oppression, is found in the utilitarianism of Bentham and James Mill, the reluctant democrats who simply felt that the need of an essentially capitalist economy in the then prevailing conditions demanded such political reforms as the extension of the franchise. (Although Macpherson does not explain why this was so, an explanation based on Marx's account of capitalism would serve the purpose very well here : with the increasing separation of producers from the means of production what Marx calls 'other than economic' modes of exploitation are increasingly replaced by 'economic' and the role of the 'political' in the relations of production accordingly changes. However, Macpherson avoids any language or mode of analysis which suggests a Marxist conceptions of productive relations and class dominations). According to Macpherson, neither Bentham nor James Mill had great moral enthusiasm for democracy. They attempted to limit in various ways and saw it largely as a mechanism for no restraining the government and for ensuring fair competition in the political market.

Moved by the inhuman condition of the working classes and the danger they posed to property, J.S. Mill developed the developmental view of democracy⁶ (although Macpherson recognises the anti-democratic elements in Mill). Mill first articulated the principle which for Macpherson is the essence of the tradition, that aspect of it he wants to preserve; the commitment to the self-development of all individuals equally. Mill did not, however, appreciate that his democratic ideal of the equal development of all conflicted with the capitalist relation of production and rather naively imagined that class inequalities were 'accidental and remediable'. For Macpherson Mill's idealistic view of man represented an advance over that of Bentham and his father. However, his view of society marked a 'decline of realism'. Unlike them he could not fully appreciate the reality of class-conflict and postulated a universal harmony of interests. Mill's theory of man was subverted by his theory of society. In the 20th Century, this developmental model, represented by philosophical idealists like Barker or Lindsay, pragmatists like Dewey or modified utilitarians like Hobhouse, while retaining Mill's ethical commitment lost his realism

6. Ibid, pp. 44 ff.

concerning the obstacles to the fulfillment of the liberal goals posed by the realities of class and exploitation. They simply assumed that the regulatory and welfare state would suffice to bring about the desired end.

Macpherson's analysis of the first two models has been done excellently. Still more could have certainly been said about the ways in which the doctrine expressed the realities and structural needs of capitalism at a particular stage of development. Something more could have been told about how the particular nature of capitalism at that stage and in those places which helped in the emergence of this version of liberal doctrine affected the nature and demands of the working class. And no doubt a good deal needs to be said about the ways in which the liberal bourgeois state has been able both to conduct and contain class conflict and the dominant class has maintained hegemony. It is very clear that both models in various ways responded to the practical demands of capitalism and were imbued with its assumptions, values, and contradictions. One essential assumption is crystal-clear in Macpherson's analysis that liberal democracy whatever disinterested moral commitment, he may attribute to it - is still the ideology of a class divided society, still an ideology expressing

the needs of a class committed to the prevailing capitalist relations.

The third model currently prevalent one, is that of modern social scientist, the 'pluralist elitist equilibrium model' inaugurated by Schumpeter and developed by political scientists like Robert Dahl, Almond Verba and others.⁷ This model argued Macpherson, lacks the ethical dimension of the previous one and offers a description, and a justification of stable democracy as a competition between elites which produces equilibrium without much popular participation. Democracy according to this model is simply a mechanism for choosing and authorizing governments not a kind of society or a set of moral ends.⁸

For them politics is about achieving an equilibrium between the supply of and the demand for political goods. In their view, the masses are apathetic, incapable of taking an effective and intelligent part in the conduct of public affairs and hence the only viable form of democracy is one in which voters freely choose between competing elites, whose main job is to forge from a mass of chaotic popular opinions a coherent set of political goals and policies.

7. ibid. pp 77 ff.

8. ibid., pp 78.

Much of the validity of Macpherson's analysis is lost in his account of Model-3 which is by far the weakest; and the weakness is serious and apparent since this model is the currently prevailing one and reflects the realities of capitalism today. Moreover, it is in his analysis of this model that the shortcomings of Macpherson's whole approach becomes most glaring.

Macpherson analyses this model as a description an explanation and sometimes a justification of the actual system in western democracies, while conceding that these theoretical functions cannot always be kept distinct. Macpherson's first and most extraordinary judgement on this model, however, is as follows: As a description of the actual system now prevailing in western liberal democratic nations, Model-3 must be adjudged as substantially accurate.⁹ With this apparent acceptance of the pluralist-elitist democratic description of politics in capitalist society, Macpherson sweeps away most important aspects to know about capitalism as a system of class relation, about class power in capitalist society, about political powers as a means of maintaining class dominance and about the liberal bourgeois state as a class state.¹⁰ Macpherson's apprent

9. ibid., p. 83.

10. Ellen Meiksins Wood, op. cit.,* p. 222.

deliberate ideological mystification of the pluralist democratic model like that of Dahl, calls into question his earlier useful insights about liberal democracy as a class ideology and it seems as if there is no such thing as 'class power' or 'ruling class'. Above all there is no conception of the state as an institution whose function is to sustain a particular social order, that is, a particular set of productive relations and a particular system of class dominance.¹¹ Indeed, his very criticism of the model only serves to confirm that he shares its most fundamental premises and is unwilling to confront in more than the most superficial ways the consequences of class power and the nature of the state in a class society.

Having critically examined each of these models in turn, explaining the reason for their successive failures and eventual replacement by a new model, Macpherson finally turns to the emerging model of 'participatory democracy' which began as a slogan of the New Left Student Movement.¹² He proposes to develop this

11. Ralph Miliband, 'The state in Capitalist Society' (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969), pp.2-4.

12. Macpherson, n-1, pp. 93ff.

into a complete model to supersede the earlier ones, embodying a specific political programme and some suggestions about the kinds of social and ideological changes which would be needed to make the political programme realisable and feasible. For him democracy is a 'pyramidal system' with direct self-government at the base and indirect self-government at every level above that. Delegates are mandated and subject to recall. Macpherson appreciates that any system of government in modern industrialised society requires political parties, but he is worried lest these should acquire a monopoly of political initiative and power. He attempts to combine the two by introducing pyramidal organisations within the structures of the political parties themselves. He acknowledges that participatory cannot be sustained unless the citizens see themselves primarily as exerts of capacities and unless prevailing social and economic inequalities are drastically reduced (not eliminated). Macpherson visualises the vicious circle i.e. change of image of man as consumer and great reduction of social and economic inequalities are prerequisites of participatory democracy and again the change of the image of man and reduction of economic and social inequality is scarcely possible without democratic

participation - but instead of finding an outlet he himself has been circumscribed within it. Macpherson rejects both Mill's and Marx's way of finding out the outlet from the vicious circle because of their obsolence.

After offering somewhat an unconventional tracing of the pedigree of current liberal democratic theory and a vivid picture of his own model i.e. participatory Democracy, Macpherson has clarified his stand and asserts that his model would be in the best tradition of liberal democracy rather than a denial of it. According to him democracy is not merely a mechanism for choosing and authorizing government rather a society where the egalitarian principle inherent in it requires not only one man one vote but also one man, one equal effective right to live as fully humanly as he may wish.¹³

He also argues that contrary to widespread belief in the western world, democracy should not be equated only with liberal democracy, which is only one of several forms. In the contemporary world he traces out two 'non-liberal' variants of democracy - the Communist variant and that of the Third World - both of which have a 'genuine historical claim to the title democracy'.¹⁴

13. C.B. Macpherson, 'Democratic Theory :Essays in Retrieval', op. cit., p. 51.

14. Macpherson, n 3, p. 3.

According to Macpherson Communist society aims at the fullest self-realization of all its members; and if the term 'democracy' is defined in its broader sense and is used to refer a type of society, then a Communist Society may be called democratic, at least so long as it remains true to its purpose.¹⁵ In Macpherson's view Communist societies are democratic but states are not. The 'undeveloped variant' of non-liberal democracy is neither communist nor capitalist but is based on a rejection of both the possessive individualism of the liberals and the class analysis of the communists. It is rather based on the Rousseauian General Will.¹⁶

According to Macpherson it was scarcity in relation to unlimited desire that made the drama of liberal society. a tragedy which has now become a melodrama where scarcity in relation to unlimited desire can be seen merely the villain.¹⁷ He alleged that the scarcity in relation to unlimited desire is the exclusive creation of the capitalist market society which emerged only after the advent of capitalist market society in the 17th century. Man is not by nature an infinitely desirous creature but has been made so by the market society. The capitalist

15. ibid., pp. 18-22.

16. ibid., pp. 27-31.

17. ibid., pp. 61-62.

market society has created an overwhelming and all-pervasive consciousness of scarcity only to rationalize itself and to give it its driving force.

Macpherson advises that the west can retrieve itself from its imminent crisis by only discarding the contradiction implicit in the market concept of freedom and human essence. The level of productivity and abundance makes it no longer necessary to maintain the pervasive, artificial and temporary concept of man; and in one possibly crucial respect the passage of time itself may be thought to have weakened the concept as a whole, or at the very least to have diminished its vulgar appeal. In its assurance about the imminent transcendence of scarcity his position was fully stated with their confidence in the assured persistence of industrial affluence. Anxiety over the depletion of fuel reserves, the costs of putting an end to industrial pollution and the persisting ecological deterioration of the large areas of the world has made scarcity a focus of urgent concern once again. In a world of plenty, according to Macpherson, a social system organised around compulsive greed does seem not merely morally ugly but also slightly absurd. But today it takes a more bracing

imagination to see the world as a whole as a world of plenty that it did earlier. The ending of scarcity has appeared in Macpherson's writing as an available condition, both necessary and sufficient, for abandonment of the psychology of possessive individualism and consequent liberation from the toils of the market. It may, however, be preferable to treat it as a sufficient condition for our capacity to make that escape. The defects of market as a system of distributive justice, painstakingly outlined by Macpherson, do not depend in any way upon an attitude, satisfied or dissatisfied, to the total supply of goods. The persuasive effect upon capitalist societies of the existence of contrasting social systems in other parts of the world is another component of his arguments, much insisted on in 'The Real World of Democracy', which might serve as an alternative mechanism of release.

If the 'Political Theory of Possessive Individualism' records the negative side of Macpherson's doctrine, with its account of how shades of the prison house began to close around the growing capitalist labour force, the treatment of the conditions for the development of human powers in the first six chapters of 'Democratic Theory' gives a firm statement of his positive doctrine. The

key element is the claim that an adequate theory of democracy would have to be a theory in which all citizens had an equal right to enjoy themselves (unpossessively) and to develop their human powers to the full.¹⁹ What Macpherson does attempt to do (that to successfully) is to show that no theory which gives all citizens an equal right to develop their human powers to the full is compatible with the institutions of a society in which labour is treated as a commodity and in which there exists any significant measure of private property in the means of production. But since western democracies are still preponderantly capitalist societies with their productive systems operating on a (sometimes heavily doctored) form of market and since their population are not universally educated in the deficiencies of the market as a system of distributive justice, the weary sense of déjà vu which sometimes comes over the reader may fairly be rejected as unworthy; and the patience and doggedness of Macpherson's exposition ought to make it far harder for those who read him through to lose sight of these important truths.²⁰

19. See Macpherson, n. 13, Chap. II and especially Chap. III

20. John Dunn - Review Article : Democracy Unretrieved Op.cit., p. 494.

Macpherson's explicit political programme is far too sketchy to sustain close analysis. His characterization of liberal democracy and his own programme as extension of that tradition obscures the realities of capitalist society and one of its hegemonistic doctrines in ways which have serious programmatic consequences. He puts stress in the wrong place and has missed the chance to illuminate the aspects of the liberal legacy which may be of great relevance to his programme.

Macpherson's own account of the foundation of liberal democracy as class ideology makes the rest of the argument rather ambiguous, futile and invalid. If it is so then his characterization of this doctrine as a commitment to the free and equal development of all individuals is questionable. Another crucial question arises regarding Macpherson's simplistic analysis of scarcity and its abandonment. Is it so easy to dissociate the liberal democracy from its foundation in capitalism by simply assuming away the 'economy of scarcity'? It seems that Macpherson treats Capitalism as if it were merely the transitional and temporary instrument of liberal democracy and its ethical goal; and it can be withered away by abandoning the economy of scarcity.

It may, in retrospect, be significant that throughout the book, 'Life and Times of Liberal Democracy' he consistently speaks of 'Capitalist market relations' rather than capitalist relation of production, even though he seems most conscious of its importance and he also avoids the concept of class.²¹ On this score Macpherson steps into the legacy of Max Weber who so often serves those who want to evade the issues posed by Marx. The idea of class as a relation is conspicuously absent in Weber's definition of class; and class struggles seem to amount to little more than extensions of the competition for goods and services.²² Even Macpherson's ground-braking work *Possessive Individualism* apparently lacks the concept of class. More recently in an article in Robin Blakburn's edited book 'Ideology in Social Science'

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21. "For concepts and notions are never innocent and by employing the notions of adversary to reply to him, one legitimizes them and permits their persistence. Every notion or concept only has meaning within a whole theoretical problematic that founds it. They always surface when they least expected, and constantly risk clouding scientific analysis. This is more serious : for it is then no longer a question merely of external notions imported to Marxism, but of principles that risk vitiating the use made of Marxist concepts themselves" (Nicos Poulantzas - *The Problem of Capitalist State* - (ed) Blackburn-op.cit., pp.241-42.
22. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*' (New York : Bedminster Press, 1968), pp.227-228.

Macpherson defines capitalism by ostensibly attacking the mystification of contemporary economics.²³ Although this purports to be an attack on the ideological mystification of conventional social science still there lies the typical obfuscation of the nature of capitalism. Indeed Macpherson's characterization of capitalism is significant precisely because of the extent to which it shares the fundamental premises of modern economics: the reduction of relations of production to market relations, the transformation of social to individual relations and relation of exploitation to relations among equally free and sovereign individuals, and even an acceptance of the marginal utility theory of value.²⁴ All these premises obscures the ways in which the mode of production structures the 'free' choices of individuals. Furthermore there is nothing in Macpherson's account of state intervention in capitalism in reproducing capitalist relation of production or maintaining the structure of class domination characteristic of that mode of production.²⁵

23. C.B. Macpherson 'Politics: Post liberal Democracy' in R. Blackburn ed. 'Ideology in Social Science' (London, Fantana/Collins, 1972), pp. 29-30.

24. Ellen Meiksins Wood - op.cit., p. 225

25. Ralph Milliband, n. 11.

Macpherson's own model i.e. participatory democracy is the most controversial part which is content with sketchy suggestions and largely with unsupported arguments. The problem as he sees, is not so much how to make a participatory system work but as how to bring about it. More significant is the project implicit in his analysis of liberal democratic theory : what that analysis says and fails to say about the nature of the society that spawned the doctrine and what it implies about the conditions and possibilities for transforming that society. What institutions are most likely and most hopeful for participatory democracy, has been dealt in his closing pages which needs detailed elaboration if it is to be worked out.

He notes the failure of a pyramidal representative system to produce participatory democracy in the Soviet Union. He believes that participatory democracy will only be successful if it is brought about democratically with broad and solid popular support after the great moderation of social and economic inequalities. But he does not mention how these conditions are to be obtained especially the removal of inequality. He does not recommend to follow the Soviet pattern (apparently because of his obsession for liberalism and because

it won't get the necessary support within liberal tradition). Macpherson puts a great deal of reliance on the political parties in the operation of the pyramidal system. No more detail is vouchsafed. In view of the record of indirect elections in ensuring top-down control, this seems a curious path for reforms aimed at increasing responsiveness. Macpherson visualizes the non-class divided society for the success of participatory system but never says how existing classes are to be eliminated or even moderated. This problem seems to be serious for Macpherson because of his belief that it is social and economic institutions that shape man and his political institutions.

It is necessary to consider Macpherson's most cherished beliefs, the core of his doctrine. Macpherson, it seems clear, substitutes participatory democracy and a command economy for both representative government and the laws of the market. But as John Chapman points out, Macpherson's position raises numerous doubts.²⁶ Chapman alleged that Macpherson's call for participatory

26. John W. Chapman, 'Justice, Freedom and Property' Unpublished paper prepared for the meeting of the European Consortium for Political Research, Grenoble, April 6-12, 1978. (cited from 'Kirk E. Koerner - 'Liberalism and its Critique' op. cit, p. 104).

democracy rests upon a fatally incoherent moral psychology. Could individualism and collectivism fuse in the manner Macpherson assumes? In Chapman's view Macpherson's call for participatory democracy is fatally flawed in that it rests upon an incoherent moral psychology. Macpherson wants both individual freedom and social solidarity but never tells us how these two goals are to be brought about or reconciled. It is not enough, Chapman argues, to conjoin command-economy socialism and participatory democracy and to affirm that the conjunction will work.²⁷



If Macpherson's case for participatory democracy is fatally flawed, so too is the call for 'vanguardism' to bring about the type of society he desires. Macpherson is quite ready, it will be recalled, to allow for the 'moral regeneration' of a debased mass by manipulative elite or dictator. The rationalisation, of course, is that 'if it is not done by a vanguard it will not be done at all'.²⁸ The vanguard state, argues Macpherson, will merge into the democratic state when the people 'freely support the kind of society that the vanguard

27. ibid, p. 15

28. Macpherson, 'Real World of Democracy', op. cit. pp. 19-20.

state has brought into being'.²⁹ But what if the people do not want it, do not accept it or want to change it? Will a plurality of values and goals and responses and feeling and choices and chances be allowed for which he is striving? This question too remains unanswered. In the real world of Macpherson's democracy, it seems, both democracy and freedom may be effectively prescribed or postponed indefinitely.³⁰

Macpherson's own, model suggests, however, schematically, cautiously, superficially, and often naively - something beyond a merely reformed bourgeois liberal state grounded in capitalist relations of production. It is fair to say that Macpherson's programme does at least appear implicitly, though not explicitly, to take for granted that social conditions must be radically transformed if participatory democracy is to work; and the bourgeois state apparatus must not simply be appropriated by the right people but must be replaced by radically different political forms. His account of how the transformation might be achieved places considerable faith in some of the currently fashionable expressions of social protest : environmentalism, neighbourhood organisation and movements for 'decision-making'

29. Ibid
30. K.E. Koerner op.cit., p. 105.

in the work place, and in general, growing doubts about the ability of corporate capitalism to meet consumer expectations in the old way.³¹

In short, his own sketchy programme is less significant even programmatically than the analysis of liberalism on which most of his efforts are concentrated. His treatment of phase four is quite unconvincing even self-contradictory, in theory, and almost wholly lacking in practical detail. However radical the explicit programme may be, the analysis essentially contradicts it by accepting capitalism in its own terms.³²

Macpherson argues that there has been a historic linkage between democratic liberalism and capitalist market assumptions and the link between them seems to hinge largely upon the ideas and perceptions of particular thinkers in the particular period; and capitalism almost appears as an instrument of liberalism whose contribution to the capitalist system is secondary,

31. Macpherson - n.l, p- 105

32. Ellen Meiksins Wood-op.cit., p. 226.

tangential contingent and transitional.³³ His arguments provide no explanation of how and what in the fundamental nature of capitalist relations of production that made the linkage with liberal democracy possible, it not actually necessary under given historic conditions. Macpherson's mode of analysis totally obscures (though not oblivious of) the explanation that how and why capitalist relations of production have historically been a necessary (if not sufficient) condition for the development of liberal democracy, and to what extent and in what ways liberal democracy has been able to sustain those productive relations. This treatment of liberal democracy as merely a reflection of capitalism must be regarded as simply a deception,

33. It is because of these assumptions which is implicit in Macpherson, Social Democratic revisionism seems to have been based on a strategy of 'pathwork reform' and passive faith in some 'peaceful process of dissolution' which would eventually and more or less automatically transform capitalism into socialism. It is because of this lack of scientific insight to go into deeper reality (or deliberate avoidance of true nature of capitalism), the thinkers (who support this view) are popularly known as 'petty-bourgeois thinkers'.

a mystification and a travesty of truth.³⁴

However, Macpherson's assumption is not only that democratic transformation is possible, but also that it is the only justifiable route for social change in liberal democracies. He also admits in his 'Maximization of Democracy' that the 'absence or severe restriction of civil and political liberty must be held, on ethical concept of powers, to diminish men's powers more than does the market transfer of powers'.³⁵ Again after constructing his third model of democracy he appreciates one positive feature in it that is its protection-against

34 A proper evaluation of liberal democracy implies an analysis of the ways in which the capitalist state contains the class struggle, the ways in which political powers are deployed in the interest of the dominant class, how the state enters into directly into the relation of production; the ways in which the repressive organ of the state i.e. legal apparatus and police function of the state are the necessary foundation of the contraction at relationship among the 'equals' which constitute the domination of the working class by the capitalists. An analysis of the link between capitalism and liberalism must recognise that the 'autonomy' and 'universality' of the capitalist state are precisely the essence of its perfection as class state; that this 'autonomy' and universality, the appearance of class neutrality which is the special characteristic of the capitalist state, are all made possible and necessary by precisely that condition which also makes capitalism the most perfect form of class exploitation.

35. Macpherson, n. 13, p. 14.

tyranny function.³⁶ The implication of this is undisputable: existing liberal market societies are more preferable than a tyrannical or dictatorial system. Then social transformation must be based on the consent of a sizeable part of the population. This implied view of Macpherson entails the Lockean liberal assumption that individuals must be treated as natural governors of their own person. Here it speaks in a decidedly liberal tone, advocating the equal treatment of every person to develop and exert their human capacities or not to do so - a position which, incidentally, would oblige Macpherson to treat capitalist market institutions as legitimate at least until they are revoked by consent.³⁷

Macpherson remarked in his discussion of method that 'we find inconsistent positions being taken in a single sentence we are entitled to ask whether any assumption the writer may then have had in mind can account for such statements.'³⁸ There are such major inconsistencies in Macpherson's thought. He holds that liberal democracies need not face the problem of imposing moral regeneration and that liberal society

36. Macpherson, n 1, p. 91.

37. John W. Seaman and Thomas J. Lewis- op. cit., pp. 726-727.

38. Macpherson, "The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism : Hobbes to Locke", op.cit., p. 8.

debases human beings. Why does Macpherson not claim that a large number of people living in Western democracies have been debased by their society? It is obvious that if tastes are manipulated and labour is alienated, the kind of moral intellectual and creative development prescribed by Mill is being frustrated. The solution to this problem seems to lie in Macpherson's assumption that 'people who have been debased by their society cannot be morally regenerated except by the society being reformed and this requires political power'. It is reasonable to surmise that Macpherson has been hesitant to face of to the consequences of his own assumption and he covers over the problem by stating that the liberal democracies have already undergone their revolution.³⁹ He does not will to believe that large segment of population must be forced to be free, if freedom means human development in ethical sense.

Macpherson holds, liberal-democracy is justified by a commitment to human development and the liberal society frustrates human development. Macpherson proclaims the ultimate morality of liberal democracy and denounces the immorality of liberal society because, given his failure to will the means to overcoming

39. Michael A. Weinstein, 'C.B. Macpherson : The Roots of Democracy and Liberalism' - op.cit. pp. 269-270.

human debasement, he must attempt to rescue whatever human values are present in liberal-democracy and hope that they will eventually leaven the mass.⁴⁰ The final assumption, is that, given an aversion to imposing moral regeneration on significant numbers of debased people, the rescue of liberal-democracy is the best hope for the west. But this assumption does not resolve the inconsistency, but does expose clearly enough the limitation and directions of Macpherson's myopic vision. 'Macpherson accepts the logic of revolution but not the revolution in logic'.⁴¹

In Macpherson's writings the market, despite its repeatedly affirmed moral obsolescence, appears as virtually the sole agency in social processes with the capacity to impose real structure on society. At no

40. ibid, p. 270.

41. Macpherson's vision is that of an intellectual who cannot condone the use of force to impose moral transformation, but who believes that force is necessary to lead the unregenerate masses towards moral fulfillment. This fundamental dilemma leads a 'humanistic political scientist with socialistic leanings to launch a rescue operation to save liberal democracy and its accompaniments the power-seeking nation-states. Yet the operation is doomed to failure from the beginning because Macpherson can hardly avoid attacking liberal society at its very roots and showing how it is intrinsically related to liberal democracy.

point does he devote serious discussion to institutions other than those connected with market exchange which might be thought to offer potential obstructions to the realisation of democracy. This restriction of attention seems oversanguine in itself. But if it is accepted as in any measure realistic, it also raises grave doubts about the pointfulness of Macpherson's entire undertaking; and if it is right to see the market as a social agency of such unique structural potency, it is hard to imagine it softly and silently vanishing away merely because of a shift even a unanimous shift, in the moral affection of the professional guild of political theorists.⁴² It seems apparent that the sway of the market is sustained by something more robust than the moral affections of political theorists.⁴³ But Macpherson's assumptions regarding it is extremely simple-

42. John Dunn - op.cit., pp 495-496.

43. The rationality of market operations, however rigged, cannot be eluded merely by looking down one's moral nose at them. What keeps markets operating is not on the whole moral credulity. What stops them operating has never been simply a shift in moral tastes. It is their difficulties in functioning effectively which are likely to imperil their continuation, not the mass character of their moral self-descriptions.
(Bill Warren, Imperialism and Capitalist industrialization', New Left Review, 81(1973) pp. 3-44).

minded and more than a little airy. What Macpherson invokes is the prospect of peaceful transition to libertarian socialism for the mechanics of which he fails to give any plausible characterization whatever.

Today technology has become an integral part of our thinking and doing. And Macpherson is also not an exception. He has been circumscribed by the ramification of technocratic rationality and precludes a full understanding of the all-inclusive nature and impact of technocentric rationality on man's domination of man and nature.⁴⁴ Hwa Yol Jung has pointed out the possibilities and limits of Macpherson's sociologistic thinking with reference to liberal philosophy and to explore the internal, structural weaknesses of conceptual framework resulting from his treatment of Hobbes's scienticism as mere superstructure of bourgeois individualism and, conversely, his failure to confront some of the basic aspects of technology and its damaging effects on men today.⁴⁵ Macpherson's view of the role

44. Jaques Ellul, 'The Technological Society' trans. John Wilkinson (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1964)
Herbert Marcuse, 'One-Dimensional Man : Studies in the ideology of Advanced industrial Society' (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

45. Hwa Yol Jung - Democratic Ontology and Technology: A critique of C.B. Macpherson, 'Polity' vol. xi No. 2, Winter 1978, pp. 254-267.

of the technology with regard to ontology emerges clearly from his statement that 'technology assists ontology'.⁴⁶ Because of his fascination for technology Macpherson fails to explore the utilitarian tendency of 'labour' and 'work' to exploit nature thereby strengthening and perpetuating the ethos of technocentric culture as an integral part of Lockean liberalism.⁴⁷ The ideology of Lockean liberalism promotes the ethos of technological civilization. Based on the subjugation and negation of nature by human labour and industry, it builds the society of acquisitive 'economic men'. Technological thinking minus its antihumanistic tendencies and its extractive power over human development is necessarily utilitarian, instrumental, exploitative and manipulative. In contemporary technocentric culture, technology absorbs ontology rather than, as Macpherson suggests, technology assists ontology. Macpherson fails to come to grips with the destructive, antihumanistic tendencies of technology as the main driving force of contemporary thought because he separates relation of men to men and of men to nature and views technology as a morally, though not ideologically neutral instrument.⁴⁸

46. Macpherson n.13, p. 37.

47. This has been brought to a sharp focus in Victor Frankiss, 'The Future of Technological Civilization' (New York: George Brazillier, 1974).

48. Hwa Yol Jung op. cit. p. 266.

Now we may inquire whether Macpherson looks revolution as a practical exigency of the transition from possessive market society to a fully democratic society. But perhaps we are knocking at the wrong door and asking the wrong question, since his view of theory does not see it instrumentally, but rather as a mode of penetrating, providing insights and 'seeing' : the material conditions of society are taken to be a 'setting' from which a 'problem' is abstracted.⁴⁹ Then what is Macpherson's view of the historical process of transition? At this crucial juncture this inevitable question is very vital because when a vision of good society is linked with the view that history is conscious transformational process, and when that process is seen to be only step away from yielding the vision as reality how can the step be accomplished?

It is extremely difficult to find out a blueprint of any particularist and clear-cut theory of transition. In some places, Macpherson has scatterdly confined himself to rather unspecific general remarks on

49. Macpherson, 'The Economic Penetration of Political Theory' : Some Hypothesis', revised version of a paper presented at the Conference for the study of Political Thought, 19 April 1974, 4a, cited from Victor Svack, 'The Elusive Marxism of C.B. Macpherson', op. cit. p. 416.

the prospects of change towards socialism, without elaborating any theory of transition whatsoever.⁵⁰ Indeed there was none-forthcoming. Macpherson in any case does not accept the traditional Marxist theory of revolution;⁵¹ it is therefore almost needless to say that he does not recommend the practice of it either. But the silence or rejection of one does not necessarily imply the affirmation of any other particular alternative. Ultimately, a close review of his works show that, with the exception of hoped-for breakdowns and break-throughs, Macpherson does not provide a theory of transition to the fully human classless society from capitalist market society which he prescribes.

50. Macpherson, 'The Maximisation of Democracy', 'Problems of Non-Market Theory of Democracy', 'A Political Theory of Property', 'Revolutions and Ideology in the Late Twentieth Century' - in the Book Democratic Theory - Essays in Retrieval', op.cit.

51. It is expected that Macpherson should have assumed to accept revolution by implication, though he suggested to the contrary. It is worth-mentioning that just as the appropriation of material goods, utilities, is relatively meaningless in essentially human terms to the extent that a person does not consciously, directly participate in the process of production of these utilities; the appropriation of the good life, the fully human society, is relatively meaningless unless those who are to make up the society participate consciously in its creation and direction. (Victor Svacek op.cit., p. 420) The right to a good society, if viewed as an enforceable claim to a set of power relations, must entail the duty to exert oneself in creating and sustaining those relations. Revolution now may be seen as considerably more than an instrumentality for achieving the good life : it may be considered a part of good life.

Then next question comes why there is the absence of a transition-theory in Macpherson's work? The absence of a theory of transition in Macpherson's work now appears as an oversight, an as-yet-uncultivated plot in the whole terrain of his other assumptions.⁵² Whether the theorist is waiting for the fertility of the soil to be demonstrated? Whether this is a scarcity derived from the assumptions about the unchanging nature of man, his inherent revolutionary infertility, or, rather a scarcity due to the niggardly provisions of the earth in combination with man's productive powers? Whether Macpherson's subscribes to the Marcusean one-dimensionality of working class as a real phenomenon that all the seedlings are mildewed and tools worn away? But the questions remain unanswered.

Macpherson's answer to these questions⁵³ is quite

52. Victor Svacek op.cit., p. 420.

53. Macpherson argues that 'the times have changed and are still changing. Because they have changed since Marx's time his prognosis may require alteration. Or perhaps only a more informed understanding of his full prognosis may be required. Because times are still changing it would be foolish for a theorist to offer a definitive alternative blue print'. (Macpherson 'Humanist and Elusive Marxism: A response to Minogue and Svacek' - Canadian Journal of Political Science, Vol. ix, No. 3, Sept 1976, p. 423).

It is quite admissible that time is never constant, is changing and will change. It is also sheer foolishness to accept Marx's theory of revolution without any modification to suit the time. But still a changed theory of transition can be and should be prescribed for a particular period to change the situation,

unconvincing; and he deliberately avoids this question; regarding the theory of transition, though he is very conscious of its importance. If Macpherson really wants to have a true humanistic and classless society, he should at least come forward with a theory of transition which can overthrow all circumstances in which man is humiliated enslaved abandoned and despaired and not allowed to live a fully humanly life. Macpherson's plea shows the vagueness and superficial commitment; and all his analysis becomes meaningless and invalid. The extreme vagueness with which Macpherson envisages the external competitive pressure on capitalist ideology is matched by the absence of any plausible identification of the mechanism of transition in which western societies are to reject the market concept of the essence of man. It is also matched by a persisting obscurity as to just what audience he supposes himself to be addressing, an issue which is plainly important for a thinker intent on fostering desirable changes in the world.

Macpherson tries to establish a link between liberalism and socialism by arguing that the essence of liberal democracy is an ethical commitment to individual self-development for all, a commitment that issues logi-

cally in socialism. This is rather empty formula, however. To extract this 'ethical commitment' from liberal democracy as its essential principle is to evacuate its socio-historical substance and to forget the association of liberal individualism with class exploitation and class domination.

CHAPTER IVCRITIQUE OF MACPHERSON

For Macpherson, Political theory is two-dimensional inquiry : explanatory and normative.¹ He argues that in so far as it has an explanatory intention, political theory analysis the nature of political system, the ways its various parts are held together, the pattern of causal and other relations between them and so on. However, a political theory does not exist in a vacuum; it is an integral part of, and is profoundly shaped by, wider society.

Political theory is also normative prescriptive, justificatory or advocatory. Macpherson uses these terms interchangeably. According to Macpherson to justify a social order is to find a moral basis for it. In his view the adequacy of a political theory is to be assessed by, among other things, the penetration of its analysis of human nature.²

Macpherson argues that no political theory is ever

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1. Macpherson, 'Do we need a theory of State?' European Journal of Sociology, XVIII, 1977, pp. 223f.
Macpherson, 'Democratic Theory Essays in Retrieval', op.cit., pp. 195.f.
 2. Macpherson, 'Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval' op.cit., p. 202.

exclusively explanatory or normative. In his opinion, a well considered political theory must pay adequate attention to both explanation and justification. He regrets the increasingly sharp division of labour between the two types of theory on the ground that it impoverishes them and prevents them from giving adequate accounts of political life.³

Macpherson is right to insist that every political theory is inescapably historical in nature. First, political theory is undertaken by socially situated men at a specific time, in a specific society, about a specific subject matter to which they stand in a specific relationship. The political theorists subject matter consists of man and society as they are in specific historical epoch. Second, political theory is not a transcendental activity operating in a historical vacuum. Political theorist is a member of, and is shaped by, a specific society at a specific stage of its development.⁴

According to Macpherson, then, every political theory has a 'time-bound quality'⁵ i.e. it is applicable accurate and relevant only for a specific period and specific situation. For Macpherson, the so called permanent significance of a theory 'is usually only a recurrent

3. Macpherson, 'Political Theory of Possessive Individualism', op.cit., p. 15.

4. Ibid., pp 6 f.

5. Ibid., pp 100, 104.

significance'.⁶ No political theorist can hope to give a satisfactory account of his subject matter unless he has a carefully worked out theory of the nature of society and the relations between its major institutions.

Macpherson has argued that the political theorists commit two fallacies when they end up universalising the basic features of contemporary man and society and in turning 'an historically valid relationship into necessary and universal principle.'⁷ First, they have been guilty of historical anachronism, and second by claiming universal validity for their historically derived views of man and society. They have presented the latter as if they were natural and unalterable. In so doing they have idealized prevailing types of man and society and have placed them above all criticisms.

Macpherson has pointed out four basic problems of the time-bound nature of political theory are set by its age. Different historical epochs throw up different problems and the theorists concentrate on that particular set of agenda. Macpherson has mentioned that with the emergence

6. Macpherson, Canadian Journal of Economic and Political Science, XXIX, 1963, p. 566, cited from Vikhu Parekh op.cit., p. 50.

7. Macpherson, n.3., p. 99.

of market society, basic problems were no longer moral but economic. Macpherson says that the unprecedented 'economic penetration of political theory in the modern age completely changed the latter's character and structure.'⁸

Second, every political theory vests on several unarticulated assumptions which constitute the limits of its thought. Its assumptions shape its questions, methods of analysis, basic concepts and answers. The most effective way to criticize it, therefore, is to articulate and scrutinize its basic assumptions. This is how Macpherson analyses Hobbes, Locke, Bentham, James Mill, J.S. Mill and others. Of course, it is not that easy to identify the assumptions of a thinker specially when he belongs to a particular type of society of which one is oneself a part, as in the case with most of the thinkers whom Macpherson discusses.

Third, in Macpherson's view, the most satisfactory way to understand a tradition of political thought is to understand a tradition of political thought is to understand its terms of the changing fortunes of its basic assumptions.⁹ According to Macpherson a tradition of

8. Macpherson, 'The Economic Penetration of Political Theory', 'Journal of the History of Ideas', XXXIX, 1978, pp. 101 ff.

9. Macpherson - n.2, pp. 195 ff.

of thought can be best studied in terms of how different writers see or fail to see, the need to revise their assumptions, of how they may only partially revise them, juxtapose old and the new assumptions and so on.

Fourth, Macpherson argues that the 'strength' of a political theory lies in its ability to penetrate and articulate the basic features of its age. The deeper it penetrates into the innermost structure of its age, the greater its power to explain it and the more persuasive power its prescriptions acquire. A philosophically satisfactory political theory is one that best articulates its age, and that there is less tensions between its historical and philosophical character. Its historicity, therefore, does not impugn its philosophical integrity. On the contrary, a political theory that aims to transcend its historical epoch in search of abstract universal truths will turn out to be neither historically nor philosophically illuminating. For Macpherson, the truer a theory is to its age the more philosophically satisfactory it is likely to be.

Macpherson is primarily concerned to construct not a universally valid theory but one that is specific to the modern age. Such a historically relevant theory has two objectives: first, to develop a historically relevant

theory of man's capacities and needs; and second, to explain the character of the modern state and society and to explore how they can be so structured as to realise human capacities and needs.¹⁰

Again Macpherson is fully right to insist that a political theorist cannot rise above the political and ideological battles of his society. Although he operates at a highly general and broader level, he remains rooted in his society and is profoundly influenced by its controversies. For Macpherson the issue of value judgement, which is central to modern social theory is not primarily methodological. Rather under the veil of value neutrality ultimate support for status quo finds its rationale. The clash between possessive individualism and Macpherson's humanistic ontology is an ethical one i.e. valuational. Therefore, primary importance is assigned to a social theory not to which is methodologically and or epistemologically 'true' or 'false' but which better serves the perception of reality and the future fulfillment of 'the essence of man'. The function of more adequate social theory is to emphasize the historical connections between things in order to grapple with problem at its roots and to study things in a constant state of flux and change.

10. Macpherson, 'Do we need a theory of State?', op.cit. p. 243.

It is to look into the past to understand the present in order to plan the future thus taking up every phenomenon in all its three dimensions. Consequently the study of the past has a didactic purpose. Macpherson tells that, 'the purpose of scholarly reappraisals of political theories is to help us to see the limits and possibilities of a great tradition as applied to our own day...'¹¹ Thus Macpherson sees the function of theory as both interpreting the world and improving it.

Despite all the enumerations Macpherson's view of political theory is not wholly free from difficulties. He is mistaken in his view that Political theory is wholly historical or time-bound and lacks a universal dimension. Further, when he stresses that the explanatory task of political theory, he defines explanation almost in empirical terms. He fails to notice that although the so-called grand political theory and empirical theory are both explanatory, they offer different types of explanation, the former being interested in the philosophical, the latter in scientific explanation. Again while he is right to stress the justificatory dimension of political theory, he fails to appreciate that it is subordinate and derivative, and that philosophical justification is much more subtle and complex than mere advocacy of a specific

11. Macpherson, 'Halevy's century Revisited', Science and Society, 31, No. 1, (Winter 1967)p. 37. Cited by Michael A. Weinstein op.cit., p. 252.

social order.¹² Further Macpherson does not adequately analyse the complex logical relationship between explanation and justification and suggests that the two somehow lie side by side in a theoretical system.

Despite his valuable insights Macpherson's thought is prone to several criticisms. Although the concept of human essence is pivotal to his social and political theory, Macpherson's analysis of it is not adequate enough to stand several criticisms made against him. He is ambiguous about whether or not man has a historically invariant nature. Sometimes he answers in the affirmative.¹³ Sometimes he says that man has 'no permanent unchanging nature' and that he 'changes his nature by changing his relation to other men and the material environment.'¹⁴ On yet another occasion he draws an interesting distinction. Although he lacks much clarity, he divides human nature into two things ; first, we may refer to highly formal capacities as reason, sense perception, imagination and memory; secondly, to the substantive contents of human desires and motives.¹⁵ He seems to suggest implicitly

12. Vikhu Parekh, op.cit., p. 68

13. Macpherson, n.2, p. 38.

14. Ibid., p. 34.

15. Macpherson, n.3, p. 18.

that the former are historically invariant and characterize the human animal as such whereas as the latter is subject to historical changes.¹⁶ Macpherson's distinction of this is quite perplexing, it does not develop distinction nor does it explain how to decide which human characteristics belong to which category and whether they can be compartmentalized so neatly.

Macpherson subordinates epistemological and methodological to ontological issues, as the main function of theory is to clarify the human condition substantively in a social and historical perspective. He is primarily concerned with liberalism as an ontology and the ethics of its possessive individualism. This, his critique of Friedman's elegant tombstone' of economics and Down's economic theory of democracy is not primarily aimed at their positivistic methodology - positivistic economics and positivistic politics respectively - but at their ontological assumptions of man and society, that is, possessive individualism as an ontology which reduces the essence of man' to the economic relations of market society.¹⁷ Sheldon S. Woin's criticism against Locke¹⁸ is quite

16. Vikhu Parekh, *op. cit.*, p. 70

17. Hwa Yol Jung, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

18. Sheldon S. Woin, 'Politics and Vision', (Boston: Little Brown, 1960), pp 286-434.

applicable here. The reduction of human essence to the economic relations of market society contributes to the decline of political philosophy and the sublimation of politics by subordinating homo politicus to homo economicus. The root of the problem is 'economism', viewed in the hedonistic philosophy of homo-faber as one of life without limits to economic gain and growth and this legacy basically started from Locke who saw nonhuman external nature simply as means to satisfy human need and desires.

The problematic aspect of Macpherson's conception of the function of theory, and thus the relationship between theory and practice, finds its divergence in his critique of liberal ideology as possessive individualism. Macpherson does not admit that possessive individualism is inherently or essentially faulty rather he maintains that it is faulty because of its 'cultural lag' since the assumptions of possessive individualism, the product of the 17th century bourgeois culture, which was scientific and rational for the then society no longer match the conditions of the twentieth century.¹⁹ This is the Achilles

19. Macpherson, n. 2, p. 192.

heel of Macpherson's conception of theory in relation to practice, which has a venerable tradition in Karl Manheim's sociology of knowledge.²⁰ Jung calls Macpherson's views 'sociologistic' and argues that the function of theory as a critique of ideology or reduction of theory to a sociologistic orientation undermines the normative purpose of his own democratic ontology of fulfilling essence of man beyond the postulates of possessive individualism both now and in future.²¹ This sociologistic explanation of Macpherson finds its exemplification in his critique of Hobbes.²² Therefore it is not surprising that Macpherson, who ignores Hobbes scienticism, also ignores the basic issues of technology - technological rationality as the all-inclusive logos of man's domination of other men as well as nature - in the construction of his own democratic ontology.

20. Hwa Yol Jung, op. cit., p. 250.

21. Ibid.

22. However prolific and penetrating, Macpherson's critique of Hobbes is one sided since it does not take Hobbes's scienticism seriously enough rather treats it merely as superstructure or an epiphenomenon of the market society. As a result he fails to comprehend the profound and indelible impact of scienticism on human ontology in his analysis of Hobbes's philosophy.

Macpherson being disillusioned by the technological rationality has succumbed to the instrumental and utilitarian rationality though he is oblivious of it. The difficulty of this utilitarianism, as Arendt points out, is its innate inability to understand the distinction between utility and meaning-fulness in which all ends are bound to have a short duration and to be transformed into means for some other ends. She writes that "the perplexity of utilitarianism is that it gets caught in the unending chain of means and ends without even arriving at some principle which could justify the category of means and ends, that is of utility itself... In other words, utility established as meaning generates meaninglessness".²³ In the utilitarianism of homo faber, technology gains a life of its own independently of man who fabricates, and man becomes a mere appendage to machine - a condition which Marx called objectification. If Marx's and Arendt's analysis is right, a new ontology of man must envisage possibility of liberating him from the 'necessity' of labour and 'utility' of work (and technology) with which Macpherson unfortunately fails to come to grips in his democratic ontology. Only because of this, for Macpherson scarcity is a form of the 'reification' of a market

23. Hannah Arendt, 'The Human Condition' (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 154.

society.²⁴ As a result this undermines the quality of life, which is the essence and rationale of Macpherson's democratic ontology.

Macpherson as a critique of possessive individualism definitely writes from a perspective that rejects the consequence of capitalism but the rejection of capitalism is not consistently grounded in a commonsurate analysis of capitalist social relations. Even sometimes Macpherson's analysis of capitalism appears to accept that system at its own valuation because of his avoidance of the role of the state and capitalism as an ideology

24. For reification (scarcity is reified) is the way of defining social relations of men by the mechanism of producing, buying, selling and consuming commodities in the market system. Macpherson is aware of the danger of technology in contriving wants, needs and demands for more and more material things and in perpetuating a consumer society. However, to view scarcity as a cultural variable of the market society along is take the 'banality of evil' inherent in technology too lightly. More importantly, to view scarcity solely as a cultural or social variable of the market society is to fail to see it as an unreified problem of the economies of the finite earth (Hwa Yol Jung, op. cit., p. 265).

in maintaining the class-hegemony.²⁵ As a result at such times, the effectiveness and validity of his argument does not differ so much from the very theories he attacks; and he concludes by confirming their ideological mystification.

It is very difficult and risky to characterize Macpherson's stand point especially because of its fluctuation. Throughout his career he has vehemently criticised modern political theory for obscuring social realities and particularly for neglecting the consequences of class relations. He has rightly stressed that the deeper it penetrates into the inner-most structure of its age, the greater its power to explain the reality. But unfortunately Macpherson has failed to grapple with

25. The Capitalist ideology was able not only to fulfil the functions discovered and analysed by Marx and Engels but also to move on to new even more ambitious task. The bourgeois ideology as a tranquiliser has been able to control the very thought structure of the people and their very thought process has become unidirectional. "It no longer serves merely as a brake on people's striving for a better society, it no longer represents merely a barbed wire entanglement keeping people from satisfying their basic needs and potentialities - it has now reached what might be called its ultimate target : it has crippled that striving itself, it has driven a powerful wedge between human 'needs' and human 'wants'. With bourgeois taboos and moral injunctions internalized, people steeped in the culture of monopoly capitalism do not want what **they need** and do not need what **they want**". (Paul A. Baron, 'Longer View; Essays towards critique of Political Economy' Ed. by John O'Neil, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1969. pp. 29-30)

the totality of social forces with all its interconnections and undercurrents for which he ignored completely the structural and functional as well as ideological role of the liberal capitalist state in rationalising the class -rule.

His socialist programme enshrined in his 'Life and Times of Liberal Democracy' is contrasted by its theoretical Democracy' is contrasted by its theoretical underpinnings. His reluctance to deal with class with all its implications unmask a more fundamental methodological problem and his veiled intentions. Even if he explicitly prescribes some political and social changes that can hardly go beyond the mere reform of capitalism. He has never gone to the root of the problem to find out the solution rather kept himself busy merely at trimming the branches.

Although Macpherson's analysis combines a penetrating critique of present-day liberal market societies with an alluring vision of human possibilities, his proposed retrieval of liberal democracy has been found wanting by liberals and socialists alike. There is a curious mixture of individualism and communal sentiment in Macpherson's thought and that he is likely to be assailed by liberals for the communal bias of his political theory which harbours the seeds of totalitarianism

and destruction of liberal individualism, yet attacked by the socialists for his retention of liberal (or bourgeois) individualism in his theorizing that he can not generate the revolutionary doctrine needed to get the development and classless society he advocates.²⁶

Macpherson's straddling position is not fully reconcilable. The source of tension in his political theory lies within his ethical principle itself, and also between his ethical principle (or its vision of classless society) on the one hand and some other features of his political theory - for example his critique of capitalism, his views on social transformation, or his continued attachment to the liberal notion of negative liberty - on the other. All these tensions or contradictions loom largely because of his failure to integrate the essential insights of liberalism (more specially thoughts of Mill) and Marxism into a harmonious conceptual whole, although strictly speaking he belongs to no school of thought.

Macpherson retains not only the individualism and some of the possessivist ethos but also several other important features of liberalism. Like the liberals, he

26. K.R. Minogue, *op. cit.*, p. 394.
John W. Seaman and Thomas J. Lewis, *op. cit.*
pp. 707-708.

appears to think that the essence of man mutely inheres in each individual rather than in the ensemble of social relations. Macpherson's socialist and bourgeois man only differ in their objectives but share the same basic view of life in general and reason in particular. Liberal utilitarianism has its weighty influence on Macpherson's thought. Like Mill Macpherson is much more concerned about the injustice of exploitation and the unfair transfer of powers in capitalist society than the atomization and dehumanization of man and the distortion and corruption of human potential. In these cases Marx has hardly been able to influence Macpherson. Marx's influence is largely confined to his analysis of society and that to a limited extent but it does not extend to his conception of man. Macpherson wants to create a socialist society of his own variety for the realization of a liberal man. He wants to super impose the retrieved ethical value of liberalism on his own brand of socialism i.e. an extension of liberalism devoid of its evils. Macpherson is primarily committed to liberalism and absorbs as much as Marxism as his liberal assumptions permit and as a result he liberalizes Marxism but does not Marxianize liberalism.²⁷ Macpherson's theoretical enterprise, despite

27. Vihū Parekh, op. cit., p. 73.

its socio-historical foundation, necessarily dwells to a great extent within the methodological conventions of traditional political philosophy i.e. abstracting political theory from its social realities that underlie it, to which he himself has vigorously attacked.

His failure to give an analysis in proportion with his apparent ethical commitment to socialism is a part of a political and intellectual tradition which has too much of obsession for liberalism despite all its limitations. This is a tradition which has produced a form of socialism riddled with contradictions between its moral indignation at capitalism and its 'inadequate understanding of the social phenomenon that provokes that indignation.²⁸ Although Macpherson does not represent the typicality of that tradition, it can be argued that his inadequate analysis - regarding class and state, the true nature of capitalism, the organic link between capitalism and liberalism, his abstraction of liberalism from its social historical foundation, his emphasis on economism and scientism, lack of structural articulation and elaboration of humanistic ontology - can be explained by the fact that he has taken under the spell of liberalism like other liberals.

28. Ellen Meiksins Wood, op. cit., p. 217.

More truly Macpherson steps into the legacy of J.S. Mill. Like Mill, Macpherson represents the crisis-phase of liberalism when its very survival is at stake and liberalism as an ideology is unable to face the imminent menace with its own justificatory theory. Macpherson here plays the role of a transitional figure in the development of liberalism by trying to bridge up the gap between possessive and socialist individualism. Like Mill, Macpherson's is a crisis-management theory who only prescribes some piecemeal changes. Macpherson's critique of Mill i.e. contradiction between Mill's ethical position and his conception of capitalist relations of production as such, hits him back since his own argument is not less plagued by the same contradictions. Macpherson's transitional role and his reluctance to renounce liberal (or bourgeois) individualism left him to quite trenchant criticism. Hence, Prof. Macpherson can now be seen to be in Marxist tradition but not necessarily of it.²⁹

Although Macpherson's critique of possessive individualism is tenacious, systematic, detailed and conclusive, his democratic ontology still requires structural articulation and elaboration, since it is more a negative

29. Victor Gvacek, op.cit., pp. 419f.

a positive one. It is this 'ontological turn' exceeding methodological and epistemological issues that deserves the serious attention of political theory, although he is oblivious to the implication of epistemology for the ontology of democratic man. In attempt to prescribe new ontology of democratic man as an alternative to bourgeois individualism, the logic of Macpherson's orientation encounters an impasse, which seems to be unintentional.³⁰ By avoiding a theory of transition Macpherson necessarily denies the truly creative function of theory in transformation of society. According to Marx man is human precisely because he is capable of transforming or transcending a given social condition he considers undesirable; he is the only creature who is conscious of his own activities and knows that he is making and changing history

30. "Unintentional does not mean lacking in 'meaning'. Beyond the field of his conscious activities, the domain of the unintentional is not, for man a silent desert in which he suddenly petrifies into a 'thing' like the rest, but is the other face of his world in which all his behaviour finds part of its meaning. It is the place where the hidden regulators are organised that correspond to the deep-lying logic of the system of action he invents and practices. It is the hidden aspect of our social relations where part of the 'meaning' of our behaviour is actively organised." (Maurice Godelier, 'Rationality and irrationality in Economics' Tr. from the French by Barian Pearce. London NLB, 1972, p. 317.

that is, he is capable of thinking an alternative future and achieving it at the same time. To deny this to deny the very essence of man. Macpherson is well aware of this but the logic of his sociologicistic thinking denies him that possibility. Thus Macpherson's philosophy finds itself historically in the paradoxical position that it is concerned to find a philosophy that would mean the end of bourgeois society, and to resurrect in thought a humanity destroyed in that society and by it. In the upshot, however, it did not manage to do more than provide a complete intellectual copy and a priori deduction of bourgeois society. This antinomy is admittedly the most profound and the most magnificent intellectual expression of those antinomies which lie at the roots of liberal society and which are unceasingly produced and reproduced by it - albeit in confused and inferior form.

Despite all limitations, some of which are not inherent and deliberate in his approach but incidental and tangential to his pioneering application of it, much of his works offers a stimulating and thought provoking perspective on the nature and history of political thought. Macpherson has certainly contributed a lot in enriching political philosophy by repoliticising it and grounding it firmly in its socio-historical context and

revealing its ideological function. To acknowledge that his novel analysis of history of liberalism illuminate its ideas in a fresh way is implicitly to acknowledge the value not only of his historical methodology but also of his conception of the nature of political theory. His negative critique, though a precondition for his positive thinking, is his more valuable contribution. Macpherson is definitely a serious and constructive political philosopher and his basic moral and intellectual commitments to the enhancement of creative freedom and to socialist humanism is beyond dispute. He has really championed the cause of liberalism by providing a moral foundation to liberal democratic theory by a more humanistic and democratic idea of the essence of man. It will be worthwhile to assess Macpherson's position by his own appraisal. "What I have been trying to do all along and am still trying to do is to work out a revision of liberal-democratic theory, a revision which clearly owes a good deal to Marx, in the hope of making that theory more democratic while rescuing that valuable part of the liberal tradition which is submerged when liberalism is identified with capitalist market relation".

Finally it can be concluded that there should be a symmetry between subject and object, theory and practice, means and ends, form and content, individual and society, which combinly form a coherent whole; to weaken one is to weaken the other.

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